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[Israel's big political earthquake is coming after Hamas war - analysis - Israel News - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](https://www.jpost.com)

Israel's big political earthquake is coming after Hamas war - analysis

The colossal catastrophe of October 7 has made a tectonic shift in the country's political landscape all but certain.

By [HERB KEINON](#) DECEMBER 19, 2023 20:02 Updated: DECEMBER 19, 2023 22:12



Protestors gather against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu near his residence, as the conflict between Israel and Hamas continues, in Jerusalem, November 4, 2023 (photo credit: AMMAR AWAD/REUTERS)

Israel is on the verge of a political earthquake.

Like all earthquakes, you don't know exactly how it will unfold or when it will hit, but you know it's coming. The colossal catastrophe of October 7 has made a tectonic shift in the country's political landscape all but certain.

Common sense dictates this conclusion, historical precedent affirms it, and the polls show its inevitability.

One need not be a brilliant sociologist to feel that something dramatic has changed in Israeli society. The Israel of December 20 is not the Israel of October 6 – everyone realizes that. Its self-confidence has been hit, its sense of security has been dented, and its trust in its political and military leaders has been shattered.

The country is hurting, worried, and angry. There is a burning hatred toward Hamas, and there is [seething anger toward the government](#) – how could this have happened? How could Israel have failed so miserably?

One indication of the whirling anger is the reluctance of government ministers and Knesset members to make public appearances. There are not a lot of high-profile politicians visiting the wounded in hospitals or even attending funerals these days – common courtesies in the past – because of concern about the reactions they will meet.

It will be impossible for the government – for [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) – to ignore this anger that will inevitably erupt into a flood of protests and demonstrations when the intensity of the fighting in Gaza wanes and the reservists return from Gaza.

Netanyahu was asked at one of his recent press conferences whether he would step down after the war. He answered, as he does when asked these days any question about politics, that he is now preoccupied with waging the war, and not thinking about politics. And then he added that he received a mandate from the public to govern.

That mandate was from pre-October 7, Israel. Post-October 7, Israel will demand a chance to repeal or reaffirm that mandate.

The possible precedent to Israel's future

Israel has been here before, which is why it is safe to say that a political earthquake is on its way.

In October 1973, Israel faced a similar catastrophe, the Yom Kippur War, which upended society, causing burning anger, frustration, and thousands of casualties. In the elections held just two months after the war, elections that were postponed during the war, the ruling Labor-led Alignment of Golda Meir, the party that had dominated the country's politics since its founding, lost five seats and Menachem Begin's Likud picked up seven.

Meir resigned a few months later after the interim findings of the Agranat Commission were released, and Yitzhak Rabin was elected Labor Party leader, taking over as prime minister. The government fell two years later and in 1977, the country – still traumatized from the Yom Kippur War and seething from the failures of the government and military leaders in the run-up to the Yom Kippur War – went back to the polls.

In that election, the Alignment lost a whopping 19 seats, Menachem Begin's Right-wing Likud picked up four, and a political realignment swept over Israel, a political realignment that has held, with a few brief intervals of Left-wing governments, for most of the last half-century.

It is fair to say that the failures of October 1973 helped usher in Begin and the Likud's control of politics for much of the next 50 years. In the same sense, it is fair to predict that the failures of October 2023 will lead to the end of the Likud's long grip on power.

The October 7 massacre will definitely not be pushing the country Left, in any way similar to the Yom Kippur War and the failures of the left-wing government pushed the country into the arms of the Likud and the Right. But it will lead to something different. The country's political constellation will change, even if the Right-Left balance is unlikely to change significantly. There will be dramatic shifts within the Right, Left and Center blocs, though few significant changes between them.

What is likely to change, however, is the stars in the political constellation. Much of the polling these days, polling showing that Benny Gantz's National Unity is far ahead of any of the current parties in the Knesset, asks respondents who they would vote for based on the existing parties.

And when asked in this way, Gantz's party soars, Likud and Yesh Atid fall precipitously, as does the Religious Zionist Party, while Yisrael Beiteinu adds seats, and Otzma Yehudit, the Arab parties, and the haredi parties remain pretty stable.

But that is when those queried are asked about the current parties, while there will be other parties in the mix the next time around.

First of all, Gantz's party – which is averaging about 39 seats in the major polls, as opposed to the Likud's 18 – is expected to split in two, with Gideon Sa'ar's New Hope party, which joined Gantz in the last election, widely expected to split off and run as a liberal right-wing party, perhaps with former prime minister Naftali Bennett. Such a party would put a big crimp in Gantz's numbers.

Secondly, there will be other parties as well: former Mossad head Yossi Cohen may lead a party, and Meretz's Yair Golan, whose stock rose considerably following his courageous actions during the October 7 fighting, may lead a unified left-wing party. There is also talk of a party being formed from the leaders of the anti-judicial reform protest movement.

The parties contesting the next election will be quite different from the line-up the last time around.

With the current Netanyahu government coming up to only its first-year anniversary on December 29, some Likud stalwarts may be saying, "What is all the talk about new elections, we still have three years to go?"

But to think the current government and Netanyahu can withstand the public's anger and frustration and last out its term, or even come close to lasting out its term, is indulging in tooth fairy-like wishful thinking.

An Israeli Democracy Institute poll yesterday shows that just over two-thirds of the public (69%) thinks that new elections should be held immediately after the war. While it is obvious that those on the Left and in the Center would like to see immediate elections, what is surprising is that 51.5% of those who identify themselves as right-wing want to see new elections as well, showing the degree to which there is anger and a desire to see those responsible held accountable.

The only path to new elections now would be for the Knesset to dissolve itself as a result of the coalition losing its majority and being unable to pass legislation.

There is, however, another way of bringing down the government, and that is through a constructive vote of no-confidence, whereby 61 MKs vote no confidence in the current government and agree on a new prime minister, who would then be entrusted with the task of forming a new government. In this scenario, the government would change without the public going back to the polls.

Governments also fall in Israel if they are unable to pass a budget, something not relevant for the current government, since it passed a two-year budget in May giving it a pass on this issue until 2025.

Some may look at the above options and say that there is no chance of new elections: the budget has already passed and the government is unlikely to dissolve itself. Unless there is massive pressure from the grassroots for it to do just that, something that given the current sour public mood is a real possibility.

According to the IDI poll, 44% of the population said they would take part in demonstrations if a wave of protests breaks out after the war to hold the political and military echelon responsible. Tellingly, 28% of Likud voters said they would participate in these demonstrations.

Those poll numbers indicate that much of the public will not, after the war, allow the Israeli political scene to return to what it was beforehand.

As Likud MK and Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee head Yuli Edelstein said in a Yediot Aharonot interview on Friday, “I don’t think that everyone in the political system internalized the magnitude of the event. October 7 changed everything in the country, but this sentence has not been entirely internalized.”

According to Edelstein, anyone who thinks that things will return to business as usual after the war is mistaken. “I truly believe business will not be as usual,” he said. “Not in the Knesset, and not in politics in general.”

A political earthquake is on its way. The question is not if; the question is when.

20 December (Jerusalem Post)

[Hamas uses hospitals for terror purposes, Gaza hospital director admits - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](#)

Hamas uses hospitals for terror purposes, Gaza hospital director admits



The director of the Kamal Adwan Hospital Kahlot said he joined Hamas in 2010 at the equivalent rank of a brigadier general.

By [YONAH JEREMY BOB](#)

DECEMBER 19, 2023

The IDF's interrogation of Kamaal Aduan Hospital head Ahmad Kahlot (IDF SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT)

[Kamaal Aduan Hospital](#) head Ahmad Kahlot of Jabliya in Gaza has confessed to the Shin Bet that Hamas took over his hospital as a military operations center, it was revealed on Tuesday.

Kahlot told his interrogators that he joined Hamas in 2010 at the equivalent rank of a brigadier-general.

Next, he said that many of the hospital staff doubled as members of Hamas's az-al-adin al-Qasam brigades. These include doctors, nurses, paramedics, and other staff.

More specifically, he said that the hospital had 16 staff members who doubled as [terror operatives for Hamas](#).



Men holding raised weapons are led out by Israeli soldiers near Kamal Adwan hospital, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas, in Jabalya in the northern Gaza Strip, in this handout photo released December 14, 2023. (credit: IDF/Handout via REUTERS)

Kahlot was arrested on December 12 and since then has explained in detail how Hamas concealed its weapons and wove its operations into the workings of the hospital.

Hostage IDF soldier held in hospital

In addition, he confessed that Hamas brought one of the [IDF soldier hostages](#) to the hospital and used ambulances to move around Israeli hostages' bodies.

Further, he described Hamas as having its own separate offices, ambulances, and equipment with different colors and signs.

The IDF has put out general evidence of Hamas abusing nearly all of its 20-plus hospitals and specific evidence of more extensive abuse of a few hospitals, such as Shifa and Rantisi.

Shifa Hospital's Director Muhammad Abu Salmiya was arrested by the Shin Bet on November 23 and his detention was extended for 45 days by a videoconference court hearing on November 27.

No agency has distributed any statements by Abu Salmiya to date and the Post understands that the defense establishment's view is either he has not yet "cracked" in admitting a connection to Hamas or the extent of information he has requires a longer period of questioning.

20 December (FAZ)

[Hamas-Terror und Israel im Gazastreifen: Die Gefahr der Täter-Opfer-Umkehr \(faz.net\)](#)

HAMAS-TERROR:

Es darf keine Täter-Opfer-Umkehr geben

In der Öffentlichkeit wird Israel zunehmend als Aggressor dargestellt. Aber der Hamas-Terror hat das Elend im Gazastreifen selbst produziert. Ein Gastbeitrag.

[Hamas Terrorism: There must be no reversal of perpetrator-victim roles In public, Israel is increasingly portrayed as the aggressor. However, Hamas terrorism has produced the misery in the Gaza Strip itself. A guest essay.]

VON RALF FÜCKS

-AKTUALISIERT AM 19.12.2023-18:53



Archäologen untersuchen die Asche der beim Hamas-Terrorangriff verbrannten Häuser - 29.Oktober 2023. Bild: dpa

Die Bilder aus dem Gazastreifen sprechen eine vermeintlich eindeutige Sprache: die palästinensische Zivilbevölkerung als Opfer einer rücksichtslosen israelischen Kriegführung. Verstärkt wird diese Botschaft durch die Schreckensmeldungen internationaler Agenturen über die verzweifelte Lage der palästinensischen Zivilbevölkerung, drohenden Hunger, Zusammenbruch der medizinischen Versorgung, Tod und Zerstörung. Im Internet kursieren Tausende Fotos und Videos über das Leid der Palästinenser, die Bilder und Berichte vom 7. Oktober sind fast verschwunden.

Die UN-Vollversammlung forderte [Israel](#) mit Zweidrittelmehrheit zur Einstellung der Kampfhandlungen auf, ohne die Hamas und den Terrorangriff vom 7. Oktober auch nur zu erwähnen. Deutschland enthielt sich. Israel hat den Kampf um die internationale öffentliche Meinung weitgehend verloren. Allzu gut passen die bruchstückhaften Informationen aus Gaza in das tief verwurzelte Bild von Israel als Täter, den Palästinensern als Opfer. Kaum jemand thematisiert noch die Politik und Ideologie der Hamas, kaum jemand wirft ein Licht auf die Rolle Irans, kaum jemand fragt nach der (Mit-)Verantwortung der Palästinenser für ihre miserable Lage, kaum jemand stellt den routinierten Rollenwechsel zwischen ständigen Terrorattacken auf Israel und dem Status des unschuldigen Opfers infrage. Für die „postkoloniale“ Szene ist ohnehin klar, dass Israel schon durch seine bloße Existenz ein „rassistischer Kolonialstaat“ ist, der die Palästinenser unterjochte.

Die nationale Urkatastrophe

Die Opferrolle der Palästinenser wird von den UN-Institutionen noch bestärkt. Die UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) ist die einzige UN-Organisation, die ausschließlich für eine spezielle nationale Gruppe zuständig ist und den Flüchtlingsstatus von ursprünglich etwa einer halben Million Palästinensern über Generationen hinweg fortschreibt.

Die militärische Niederlage und die daraus resultierende Flucht und Vertreibung von 1948 gilt als nationale Urkatastrophe der Palästinenser. Der „Nakba-Mythos“ wird bis heute gepflegt. Dabei wird verdrängt, wer den Angriff auf den frisch ausgerufenen, von den [Vereinten Nationen](#) legitimierten jüdischen Staat begonnen hat. Die Besetzung des Westjordanlands war wiederum Folge des Sechstage-Krieges von 1967, mit dem die Juden

ins Meer getrieben werden sollten. Der Yom-Kippur-Krieg von 1973, bei dem Israel am Rande einer Niederlage stand, führte immerhin zum Friedensabkommen zwischen Israel und Ägypten. Israel gab den Sinai auf, weil von Kairo kein Angriff mehr drohte. Das hätte ein Muster für eine umfassende Lösung des Nahost-Konflikts werden können, wurde es aber nicht, weil sich weite Teile der „arabischen Welt“ wie auch des „palästinensischen Widerstands“ nie mit der Existenz des jüdischen Staates abfinden wollten..



[Bomben in Jerusalem: Ben-Yehuda-Straße am 22. Februar 1948 :Bild: Picture Alliance](#)

Am Scheitern des Oslo-Prozesses, der das Prinzip „Land gegen Frieden“ auch zwischen Israel und den Palästinensern umsetzen sollte, war der Maximalismus der Fatah zumindest mitverantwortlich. PLO-Chef Arafat bestand auf dem „Recht zur Rückkehr“ für die Flüchtlinge von 1948 und ihre Nachkommen – eine verkappte Formel für die Nicht-Anerkennung Israels als jüdischer Nationalstaat.

Was folgte, war die „zweite Intifada“ mit Hunderten Raketenangriffen und Tausenden Terroranschlägen, denen mehr als tausend israelische Zivilisten zum Opfer fielen. Die Folgen waren verheerend, vom weitgehenden Zusammenbruch des Vertrauens in eine friedliche Koexistenz mit den Palästinensern (bei denen die Selbstmordattentäter als „Märtyrer“ gefeiert wurden) in Israel bis zum Bau der „Schutzmauer“, der empfindlichen Schwächung der Palästinensischen Autonomiebehörde, der Sprengung von Wohnhäusern von Attentätern, der Einschränkung der Arbeitserlaubnisse für Palästinenser und des ökonomischen Verkehrs mit der Westbank.

Wer wen besiegt, vertreibt, vernichtet

Politisch führten das Scheitern von Oslo und die Terroranschläge in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv und anderen Städten zu einer Verschiebung der israelischen Politik nach rechts, während sich der palästinensische nationale Widerstand religiös auflud und die radikalen Islamisten der Hamas stärkte. Die Zwei-Staaten-Lösung scheiterte (auch) daran, dass es immer stärker zurück zu „1948“ und dem israelisch-palästinensischen Urkonflikt ging. Wenn es aber um die „Befreiung ganz Palästinas“ geht, gibt es keinen Kompromiss. Dann zählt nur die Frage, wer wen besiegt, vertreibt oder vernichtet. Das gilt spiegelbildlich auch für den radikalen Flügel der israelischen Siedlerbewegung, der Anspruch auf ganz „Erez Israel“ erhebt.

Das Beispiel des [Gazastreifens](#) zeigt, wie die ideologische und militärische Radikalisierung des „palästinensischen Widerstands“ nach dem Scheitern von Oslo in eine Sackgasse führte. Der damalige israelische Premier Sharon entschloss sich im Zuge der zweiten Intifada zu einem einseitigen Rückzug aus dem Gazastreifen, der aus seiner Sicht auch im Rahmen eines Verhandlungsfriedens niemals israelisches Staatsgebiet sein würde. Mehrere Tausend israelische Siedler wurden 2005 gegen erbitterten Widerstand umgesiedelt. Man kann dieses Manöver Sharons, das letztlich der Hamas in die Hände spielte, kritisieren. Aber es eröffnete die Chance auf den Aufbau einer palästinensischen Selbstverwaltung in Gaza, das keineswegs immer ein Armenhaus war und es auch nicht bleiben musste.



[Am „Kilometer 101“ auf der Straße von Suez nach Kairo: Israelisch-ägyptische Verhandlungen zur Beendigung des Yom-Kippur-Kriegs am 28. Oktober 1973 :Bild: Picture Alliance](#)

Als aber die Hamas nach einem blutigen Bruderkrieg mit der Fatah die alleinige Macht an sich riss, hatte sie nichts anderes im Sinn, als den Gaza-Streifen in eine Raketenabschussrampe und einen Militärstützpunkt gegen Israel zu verwandeln. Statt in Landwirtschaft, Tourismus, Bildung und Gesundheit zu investieren, baute sie mit militärischer und finanzieller Hilfe des Iran und Qatars eine massive Infrastruktur für Terrorangriffe gegen Israel auf. Dem 7. Oktober gingen zwischen 2008 und 2022 bereits fünf (!) Gazakriege voraus, die von der Hamas vom Zaun gebrochen wurden. Jeder Waffenstillstand wurde von ihr gebrochen, sobald sie sich wieder stark genug fühlte, Israel herauszufordern. Weshalb sollte es diesmal anders sein?

Die weitgehende Blockade des Gaza-Streifens, die Schließung von Grenzübergängen, des Hafens und des Flughafens durch Israel wurden faktisch von der Hamas erzwungen, die aus ihrem Vernichtungswillen gegenüber dem jüdischen Staat nie ein Hehl gemacht hat. Das konnte allerdings nicht den Schmuggel von Waffen, Ausrüstung und Baumaterial für das Tunnelsystem über Ägypten verhindern. Gleichzeitig ermöglichte Israel die humanitäre Grundversorgung der Bevölkerung, die Behandlung Tausender Patienten in israelischen Kliniken und die Erteilung von Arbeiterlaubnissen für Palästinenser aus Gaza. (Allein) Israel für die trostlose Lage in Gaza verantwortlich zu machen verdreht Ursache und Wirkung.

Wer vertraut auf die Hamas?

[Die Hamas](#) und andere militante Palästinenserorganisationen haben das Leid ihrer Bevölkerung mit ihren Angriffen gegen Israel bewusst heraufbeschworen. Es ging ihnen darum, Israel ins Unrecht zu setzen und mit hungernden und toten Zivilisten Politik zu machen. Sie hatten nie Interesse am Frieden, sondern suchten die Eskalation. Wer die Bilder von jubelnden Männerhorden vor Augen hat, als halb nackte israelische Geiseln in Gaza zur Schau gestellt wurden, ahnt den Grad der Brutalisierung in Teilen der palästinensischen Gesellschaft. Gleichzeitig zeigen Umfragen des „Arab Barometer“, dass eine Mehrheit in Gaza kein Vertrauen in die Hamas setzt. Deren Kriegspolitik nach außen geht einher mit brutaler Gewaltherrschaft nach innen. Auch deshalb muss Israel seinen Gegenangriff auf die politisch-militärischen Strukturen der Hamas konzentrieren. Zivile Opfer sind unvermeidlich, weil sich die Hamas systematisch in Kliniken, Schulen und Wohngebäuden verschanzt.

Was am 7. Oktober stattfand, war ein alle Grenzen sprengender Gewaltexzess mit dem Ziel, Furcht und Schrecken zu verbreiten und möglichst viele Juden zu ermorden, weil sie Juden sind. Richtig: Es gibt keine Kollektivschuld, und es darf keine Kollektivstrafe für ein ganzes Volk geben. Aber es gibt eben doch die Mithaftung einer Nation für brutale Gewaltverbrechen, die von ihrer politischen Führung und Tausenden „bewaffneten Kämpfern“ begangen werden. Wer die Ereignisse vom 7. Oktober herunterspielt, um Israel in die Rolle des Aggressors zu rücken, betreibt Täter-Opfer-Umkehr. Jeder Staat dieser Welt würde nach einem solchen Massaker alles daransetzen, um eine Wiederholung zu verhindern. Israel kann mit der Bedrohung durch die Hamas nicht länger leben.

Das auszusprechen bedeutet in keiner Weise, den israelischen Teil der Verantwortung zu negieren: die immer tiefer in das palästinensische Kernland vordringenden jüdischen Siedlungen, die schleichende Verdrängung der eingesessenen Palästinenser aus Jerusalem, die Gewalt militanter Siedler gegenüber Palästinensern, die alltägliche Schikane und Demütigung an den Checkpoints, die systematische Demontage der Palästinensischen Autonomiebehörde durch Netanjahu und seine extremistischen Partner. Es bedeutet auch nicht, jede israelische Militäraktion in Gaza zu rechtfertigen. Auch in einem gerechtfertigten Krieg ist nicht alles erlaubt. Ob Israel gegen das Kriegsvölkerrecht verstoßen hat, müssen Fachleute klären, nicht Propagandisten.

Solange aber ein großer Teil von Palästinensern nicht bereit ist anzuerkennen, dass sie die Politik der Gewalt beenden und den Traum einer Revision von 1948 beerdigen müssen, wird es keinen Frieden zwischen beiden Nationen geben.

Ralf Fücks (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) ist Mitbegründer des Zentrums Liberale Moderne.

20 December (NYT)

[Trump Ballot Ruling: Trump Is Disqualified From Holding Office, Colorado Supreme Court Rules - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

Trump Ballot Ruling

Trump Is Disqualified From Holding Office, Colorado Supreme Court Rules

The ruling, which said that former President Donald J. Trump engaged in insurrection, applies only to Colorado. His campaign said it planned to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Dec. 19, 2023

[Maggie Astor](#)



Former President Donald J. Trump at a rally in Durham, N.H., last week. His political opponents have sought to keep him off the 2024 presidential ballot by citing the 14th Amendment. Credit...Doug Mills/The New York Times

Colorado's top court [ruled on Tuesday](#) that former President Donald J. Trump is disqualified from holding office again because he engaged in insurrection with his actions leading up to the Jan. 6 storming of the Capitol, an explosive ruling that is likely to put the basic contours of the 2024 election in the hands of the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Colorado Supreme Court was the first in the nation to find that Section 3 of the 14th Amendment — which disqualifies people who engage in insurrection against the Constitution after taking an oath to support it — applies to Mr. Trump, an argument that his opponents have been making around the country.

The ruling directs the Colorado secretary of state to exclude Mr. Trump's name from the state's Republican primary ballot. It does not address the general election.

“We do not reach these conclusions lightly,” a four-justice majority wrote, with three justices dissenting. “We are mindful of the magnitude and weight of the questions now before us. We are likewise mindful of our solemn duty to apply the law, without fear or favor, and without being swayed by public reaction to the decisions that the law mandates we reach.”

Mr. Trump's campaign said immediately that it would appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Colorado justices anticipated that likelihood by putting their ruling on hold at least until Jan. 4; if Mr. Trump appeals before then, the hold will continue until the Supreme Court rules. And while Tuesday's ruling applies only to one state, it could all but force the nation's highest court to decide the question for all 50.

“It’s hard for me to see how they don’t take this one, because this certainly seems to be one of those questions that requires some national resolution,” said Anthony Michael Kreis, an assistant professor of law at Georgia State University who has closely followed the Colorado case and related lawsuits around the country.

If the justices take up the case, it will join a pile of other Trump-related matters they have agreed or are likely to decide, including [whether he is immune from criminal prosecution](#) for actions he took in office and [the scope of an obstruction charge](#) that is central to his federal Jan. 6 case.

The U.S. Supreme Court has a 6-to-3 conservative majority, with three justices appointed by Mr. Trump himself, and it is already under extraordinary political pressure and scrutiny both for [its rulings](#) and [its justices’ ethics](#).

“Once again, the Supreme Court is being thrust into the center of a U.S. presidential election,” said Richard L. Hasen, an election law expert at the University of California, Los Angeles, who compared the stakes to [Bush v. Gore](#). “But, unlike in 2000, the general political instability in the United States makes the situation now much more precarious.”

In [the Colorado court’s lengthy ruling](#) on Tuesday, the justices there reversed [a Denver district judge’s finding last month](#) that Section 3 did not apply to the presidency. They affirmed the district judge’s other key conclusions: that Mr. Trump’s actions before and on Jan. 6, 2021, constituted engaging in insurrection, and that courts had the authority to enforce Section 3 against a person whom Congress had not specifically designated.

“A majority of the court holds that President Trump is disqualified from holding the office of president under Section 3 of the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution,” the justices wrote. “Because he is disqualified, it would be a wrongful act under the Election Code for the Colorado secretary of state to list him as a candidate on the presidential primary ballot.”

Mr. Trump’s campaign denounced the ruling, which is likely to inflame a Republican base that he has primed to see the array of civil and criminal cases against him as a witch hunt. Politically, his standing among Republican primary voters has only risen in the wake of the dozens of criminal charges against him.

“Unsurprisingly, the all-Democrat appointed Colorado Supreme Court has ruled against President Trump, supporting a Soros-funded, left-wing group’s scheme to interfere in an election on behalf of Crooked Joe Biden by removing President Trump’s name from the ballot and eliminating the rights of Colorado voters to vote for the candidate of their choice,” a campaign spokesman, Steven Cheung, said. “We have full confidence that the U.S. Supreme Court will quickly rule in our favor and finally put an end to these un-American lawsuits.”

Similar lawsuits in [Minnesota](#) and [New Hampshire](#) were dismissed on procedural grounds. A judge in Michigan [ruled last month](#) that the issue was political and not for him to decide, and an appeals court affirmed the decision not to disqualify Mr. Trump there. The plaintiffs have appealed to the Michigan Supreme Court.

Tuesday’s ruling “is not only historic and justified, but is necessary to protect the future of democracy in our country,” Noah Bookbinder, the president of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, said in a statement. His organization represented the voters seeking to disqualify Mr. Trump in Colorado.

Mr. Trump himself, who has routinely railed against unfavorable rulings, did not explicitly mention the Colorado Supreme Court decision in a speech Tuesday evening in Waterloo, Iowa — but his campaign was already fund-raising off it. An email to his supporters accused Democrats of trying to “nullify” Trump votes and asked for contributions to help defend his place on ballots.

Republican elected officials quickly circled the wagons around Mr. Trump, and a super PAC supporting him blasted out some of their comments to supporters.

In one more illustration of the unusual nature of the 2024 Republican primary race — in which even the candidates seeking to defeat Mr. Trump for the party's nomination have largely shied away from condemning him — his main rivals, Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley, both suggested that the ruling was an abuse of judicial power.

The case hinged on several questions: Was it an insurrection when Trump supporters stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, trying to stop the certification of the 2020 election? If so, did Mr. Trump engage in that insurrection through his messages to his supporters beforehand, his speech that morning and his Twitter posts during the attack? Do courts have the authority to enforce Section 3 of the 14th Amendment without congressional action? And does Section 3 apply to the presidency?

Judge Sarah B. Wallace, who made [the district court ruling](#) in Colorado, had said yes to all but the last question.

Because Section 3 enumerates several offices but not the presidency, and because the presidential oath is worded differently from the oaths of the enumerated offices, Judge Wallace concluded that the broad phrase “officers of the United States” was not intended to include the presidency. The Colorado Supreme Court disagreed.

“We do not place the same weight the district court did on the fact that the presidency is not specifically mentioned in Section 3,” the majority wrote. “It seems most likely that the presidency is not specifically included because it is so evidently an ‘office.’”

The three justices who dissented did so on procedural grounds, not on the merits of whether Mr. Trump engaged in insurrection or whether Section 3 applies to the presidency. In three separate dissenting opinions, each based on different legal arguments, they all concluded that the court had overstepped its authority.

“Even if we are convinced that a candidate committed horrible acts in the past — dare I say, engaged in insurrection — there must be procedural due process before we can declare that individual disqualified from holding public office,” Justice Carlos Samour Jr. wrote in his dissent.

He added, “I am disturbed about the potential chaos wrought by an imprudent, unconstitutional and standardless system in which each state gets to adjudicate Section 3 disqualification cases on an ad hoc basis.”

Several legal experts emphasized in interviews with The New York Times that the case involved novel legal and constitutional questions — ones for which there is no clear precedent. “This is a provision of the Constitution that we just didn't expect to start using again,” Jessica Levinson, a professor at Loyola Law School, said of Section 3, which was written after the Civil War to prevent members of the Confederacy from holding office.

Professor Hasen, of U.C.L.A., called the ruling “very carefully crafted and considered.”

“That said, many of the issues that the Colorado Supreme Court resolved could well be decided differently by the U.S. Supreme Court if it ends up reviewing the case on the merits,” he said. “Many of these are issues of first impression that courts have never had to address before.”



Former President Donald J. Trump campaigned in Waterloo, Iowa, on Tuesday. Credit... Rachel Mummey for The New York Times

The short answer is: It's too soon to know.

The Colorado Supreme Court's decision to disqualify former President Donald J. Trump from the ballot for the state's Republican presidential primary is almost certain to be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court — Mr. Trump's campaign has already vowed to do so.

He and his allies have expressed confidence that a possible ruling there would be in his favor, as three of the Supreme Court's six conservative justices were nominated under his administration. Should the court take up the case, the decision would most likely determine Mr. Trump's eligibility for the ballot in all 50 states.

The decision in Colorado alone would probably have little effect on the electoral map — the state awards just nine Electoral College votes and Democratic presidential candidates have won it for the last four general elections, with Joseph R. Biden Jr. winning in 2020 by the widest margin of those four, with 55.4 percent of the vote.

But if the court's decision is upheld, it could set a precedent that allows for other states, including potentially more competitive ones, to invoke the 14th Amendment in a similar fashion.

The court's ruling as it stands would obligate Colorado's secretary of state to bar Mr. Trump from the state's presidential primary ballot. That primary will be held on March 5, also known as Super Tuesday, because a large number of other states host their primaries then as well.

Tuesday's ruling does not directly address the general election. But the legal argument — that Mr. Trump took part in an insurrection and thus is disqualified from running for office — could reasonably be expected to extend to the general election if the state's Supreme Court were to take up a separate case relating to it.

On the campaign trail, Republican presidential candidates will again be pressured to weigh in on the legal woes of their chief opponent, who is still the overwhelming front-runner for president among G.O.P. primary voters.



Migrants lining up to be transported to a processing center at the U.S.-Mexico border near Lukeville, Ariz., this month. Credit... Rebecca Noble for The New York Times



Former President Donald J. Trump on Tuesday doubled down on his widely condemned comment that undocumented immigrants are [“poisoning the blood of our country,”](#) rebuffing criticism that the language echoed Adolf Hitler by insisting that he had never read the Nazi dictator’s autobiographical manifesto.

Mr. Trump did not repeat the exact phrase, which has drawn criticism since he first uttered it in an interview with a right-leaning website and then [repeated it at a rally](#) in New Hampshire on Saturday.

But he said on Tuesday night in a speech in Iowa that undocumented immigrants from Africa, Asia and South America were “destroying the blood of our country,” before alluding to his previous comments.

“That’s what they’re doing. They’re destroying our country,” Mr. Trump continued. “They don’t like it when I said that. And I never read ‘Mein Kampf.’ They said, ‘Oh, Hitler said that.’”

He added that Hitler said it “in a much different way,” without making his meaning clear.

Undocumented immigrants, he added, “could be healthy. They could be very unhealthy. They could bring in disease that’s going to catch on in our country.” And he again said that they were “destroying the blood of our country” and “destroying the fabric of our country.”

Mr. Trump and his campaign have dismissed the comparisons between his remark and language used by Hitler using the words “poison” and “blood” to denigrate those who Hitler deemed a threat to the purity of the Aryan race.

In one chapter of “Mein Kampf” named “Race and People,” Hitler wrote, “All the great civilizations of the past became decadent because the originally creative race died out, as a result of contamination of the blood.” In another passage, he links “the poison which has invaded the national body” to an “influx of foreign blood.”

Mr. Trump's comment was widely criticized as racist and xenophobic, and the Biden administration has recently drawn more attention to the comparison.

Some Senate Republicans also criticized the remark this week, including [Mitch McConnell](#), the body's top Republican. But others embraced the language, including Senator J.D. Vance of Ohio, who said that it was "objectively and obviously true" that "illegal immigrants were poisoning the blood of the country."

Mr. Trump has made anti-immigrant sentiments a centerpiece of his past political campaigns, and as he runs for the White House for the third time, his tone has grown harsher. He was also accused of echoing the dehumanizing language of fascist dictators, including Hitler, when he described his political opponents as "[vermin](#)" that needed to be rooted out.

In his speech on Tuesday, he once again claimed that leaders of unspecified countries were emptying prisons and mental institutions and sending their inhabitants to the United States, a broad claim for which there is no clear evidence.

Mr. Trump also used his speech to issue a defense of Christians in America, who he portrayed as being under attack by Democrats. As he stood between two Christmas trees, Mr. Trump said he would create a "federal task force on fighting anti-Christian bias" to investigate any "discrimination, harassment and persecution." He added, "They are going after Christians in America."

20 December (The Economist)

[The head of the hard-right Alternative for Germany is riding high \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

The blue queen

The head of the hard-right Alternative for Germany is riding high

Alice Weidel's laments for the decline of Germany, and broadsides against immigrants, strike a chord among voters



image: imago

Dec 19th 2023 | BERLIN

From her sixth-floor office next to the Bundestag Alice Weidel looks west over an expanse of winter-brown treetops. This is the Tiergarten, Berlin's most famous park. At its centre rises a 67-metre (220-foot) column celebrating Prussia's defeat of Denmark in 1864. Glinting in gilded glory at its top strides Victory, this particular version of the winged goddess modelled on the then-crown princess of Prussia, a daughter of Britain's Queen Victoria.

With her pulled-back blonde hair, sharp nose, erect posture and simple, crisp business attire, Ms Weidel does carry the air of a queen-in-waiting. As the co-leader of the Alternative for Germany (afd), the furthest-right of the country's seven main political parties, her influence has been [steadily rising](#). True, the party, which was launched only in 2013 and represents itself with the colour blue, fields just 78 of the Bundestag's 736 mps. It controls none of Germany's 16 states, and just three small municipal governments. A majority of Germans say they would never vote for it, and the other leading parties have all sworn to shun it. The Federal Office for Protection of the Constitution, an internal-security agency, has put several local afd branches under surveillance for extremism.

Yet in the 19 months since Ms Weidel rose to the top, the afd has more than doubled its share of national "voting intentions", from 10% to well over 20%. That makes it Germany's second most popular party, after the opposition centre-right Christian Democrats (cdu) but ahead of all three parties in the coalition government. A recent poll suggests that Ms Weidel is more popular than Olaf Scholz, the Social Democrat chancellor.

In elections to the European Parliament in June the afd is expected to surge far past its current nine seats, echoing a continent-wide trend that has boosted right-wing populists from Sweden to the Netherlands to Italy. In September the eastern German states of Brandenburg, Saxony and Thuringia will head to the polls; the afd is the leading party in all three. By the next Bundestag elections, due in 2025, Ms Weidel and her co-leader, Tino Chrupalla, could indeed be republican royalty of a sort, as kingmakers rather than monarchs.

Regal bearing aside, the 44-year-old Ms Weidel seems a paradoxical figurehead for the afd. The party is male-dominated; women make up just one in nine of its MPs compared to 35% across all parties. Mr Chrupalla seems more typical: like many afd voters, he is an eastern German and proudly working-class. He embodies the

resentment against elites that has powered the party through the turbulence of covid-19, high inflation and war in Ukraine.

Ms Weidel comes from a well-to-do family in a small west German town. She is armed with a phd in economics, and tends to prefer the controlled arena of the boardroom or studio to flesh-pumping through crowds. Her career trajectory before politics was rocket-fuelled. She worked for Goldman Sachs, a global investment bank, as well as Allianz, an insurance giant, before starting a private consultancy. She spent several years in China, but heeded warnings that it could be a career mistake to be branded a “China hand”.

Openly gay, Ms Weidel lives primarily in Switzerland. She and her partner, a Swiss filmmaker with Sri Lankan origins, are raising two sons, aged seven and ten. Ms Weidel says that although her partner holds “very, very liberal” views—and despite the German media’s intrusions into their privacy—she has been strongly supportive of her political career.

Sipping green tea in her office, the afD co-chief admits that her decision to take her political convictions into public life has been challenging. Impressed by its anti-euro stance, she worked part-time for the party for four years before getting sucked into national elections, and the limelight, in 2017. Representing a district in the southern German state of Baden-Württemberg, Ms Weidel joined Mr Chrupalla in the leadership in 2022.

Aside from press scrutiny, she and her party now face official surveillance in three German states. “I find it really absurd that Stasi spies read my private correspondence and can listen to my phone conversations although I am an elected opposition leader,” she says. Especially, she adds, since her “cardinal sin” is merely to call for Germany to have secure borders. “Apparently if you don’t say open borders for everybody, then you’re in this far-right corner!”

In Ms Weidel’s telling, most of Germany’s problems can be traced to what she describes as deeply irresponsible immigration policies, particularly the welcome given by Angela Merkel, the chancellor from 2005-21, to an influx of refugees from the Syrian civil war and other migrants. “I believe politicians must point to the negative sides of certain population groups of Muslims,” she says. “Crime rates have gone through the roof and people from this context, above all Afghans, followed by Iraqis and Syrians, have by far the highest crime burden.”

She also faults immigrants for Germany’s poor showing in a [recent pisa study](#) comparing education across countries. “The level is automatically reduced if they come from a non-[German]-linguistic, non-[German]-cultural and educationally uneducated context,” she says, citing a big recent brawl in a Berlin school involving boys she describes as Middle Easterners.

Over one-quarter of Germany’s 85m people now have some form of immigrant background. Yet police records show that rather than rising after the migrant surge, the country’s overall crime rate dropped steeply from 2016-21 before going up slightly last year. European rankings of public safety place Germany unremarkably in the middle of the pack. Foreigners do make up a growing proportion of schoolchildren, and tend to score lower than native Germans in tests. But [pisa results](#) show narrower differences in neighbouring countries with similar proportions of immigrants. Immigrants in the uk score higher than native-born Britons, suggesting that Germany’s problem may lie with its school system rather than the ethnicity of pupils.

Yet Ms Weidel’s mix of claims of persecution, alarmism, insinuations against immigration and nationalism plays well not only to the afD base, but to a growing number of Germans. One sign of this was a recent shift by the cdu, the party of Mrs Merkel. A new cdu manifesto issued on December 10th pointedly replaced the phrase “Islam belongs to Germany” with wording that welcomes Muslims “who share German values”.

This surely pleased Ms Weidel, although she also seems to suggest that it may be too late. Germany has already lost its Leitkultur, or “leading culture,” she sighs. And after Mrs Merkel opened a path to ruin, the country’s current left-of-centre coalition has accelerated the decline. “We’ll have to see what’s left of the country when they are done,” she says, daintily replacing her empty teacup in its saucer. ■

20 December (The Economist)

[The hard right is getting closer to power all over Europe \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Swell of pride

The hard right is getting closer to power all over Europe

It does not need to join governments to affect policymaking



image: getty images

Sep 14th 2023 | SINT-GENESIUS-RODE AND RAGUHN-JESSNITZ

In sint-genesius-rode, a well-to-do commuter town in the hills south of Brussels, a crowd of 50 or so gathered on September 2nd in a parish hall to drink champagne and promote the dismemberment of Belgium. The meeting was organised by Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest), a right-wing party that rails against such threats to the Flemish way of life as Islam, immigration and—most pernicious of all—the French language. The town is in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking half of Belgium), but French-speakers have been moving in for decades and are now the majority. The only way to stop the rot, explains Klaas Sloopmans, a member of the Flemish regional parliament from Vlaams Belang, is for Flanders to declare independence.

It may sound parochial, chauvinist and disruptive if not delusional, but it goes down well. People have a right “to be the boss in their own country”, Mr Sloopmans proclaims; the crowd applauds. Vlaams Belang is Belgium’s most popular party, with an average of 22% support in recent polling. Barring a sudden reversal, it should triumph in simultaneous elections next year for the national, European and regional parliaments. Other Belgian parties have hitherto declared it too extreme to do business with, and refused to include it in coalitions. But this so-called cordon sanitaire may have to be abandoned if the party wins a fifth or more of parliamentary seats. Anyway, the ostracism may in fact be helping Vlaams Belang. Its support has tripled over the past five years.

The right moment

It is a common pattern. Across much of Europe, populist right-wing parties like Vlaams Belang, once relegated to the fringe, are going from strength to strength. In Hungary, Italy and Poland they hold power. In Finland, Sweden and Switzerland they have a share of it. In Germany polls put the [Alternative for Germany \(afd\)](#) party at 22%, up from 10% in the election in 2021. In France the National Rally (rn), the biggest hard-right party, has 24% support. Add in 5% for Reconquest, another anti-immigrant party, and the hard right becomes the biggest voting block in the country. In the Netherlands, too, a smattering of right-wing populists claim a quarter or more of the vote. Even newish democracies that for decades lacked big nationalist parties—Portugal, Romania and Spain—now have them.

The advance of the hard right is neither uniform nor one-way. Support for populist nationalists has recently slumped in Denmark and Spain, for instance. Nor are all these parties the same: some are eager Atlanticists, others pro-Russian; some are libertarian, others want a more generous welfare state, albeit only for people of

native stock. What is more, hard-right groups tend to mellow the closer they get to power, or to splinter, or both. The government of Italy, for one, although led by the Brothers of Italy (fdi), a party with links to fascism, has proved much more moderate than many had feared.

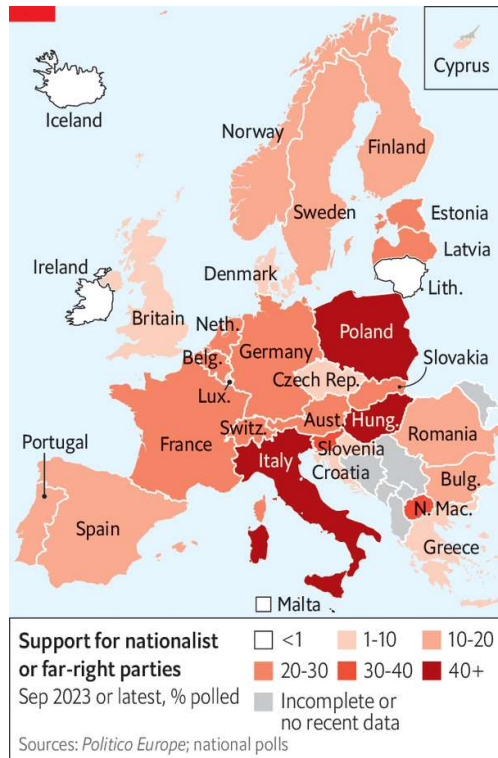


image: the economist

Nonetheless, the trend is alarming, for three reasons. First, it is remarkably broad. Four of the five most populous countries in the European Union have hard-right parties either in government or polling above 20% (see map). Second, the current circumstances are especially propitious for populist parties, with immigration rising after a hiatus during the pandemic, inflation high and the growing cost of climate policy creating a potent new focus for popular ire. Third, and most important, the hard right does not need to win power to have a baleful impact on politics. Simply by attracting a big share of voters, it is already skewing the debate, and so making it harder for European governments to adopt sensible policies on pressing problems, such as the war in Ukraine, immigration and climate change.

Freedom fighters

When the Freedom Party, Austria's main hard-right outfit, joined a coalition government in 2000, other eu governments were so horrified that they reduced contact with Austria's to the bare minimum in protest. To no avail: the hard right has since broken through barrier after barrier. It first led a government in 2010, when Fidesz, a once-centrist outfit that had taken a populist turn, swept to power in Hungary. Those who said the same thing could never happen in mature democracies in western Europe were proved wrong last year when fdi took power in Italy.

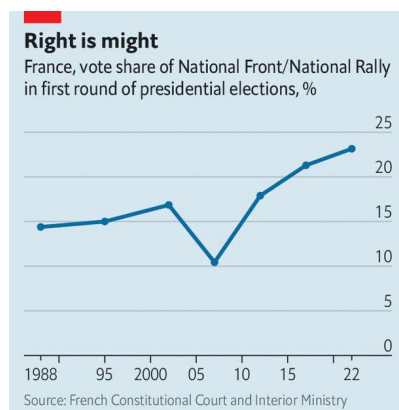


image: the economist

More milestones loom. Hard-right parties are expected to do well in next year's European elections. Giorgia Meloni, the leader of fdi and prime minister of Italy, is trying to persuade the centre-right alliance in the European Parliament, the European People's Party (epp), to join forces with the hard-right European Conservatives and Reformists (ecr), which she heads. That would move the legislature of all of the eu in a populist direction. In France, meanwhile, the hard right's performance is improving at each presidential election (see chart). It is possible that Marine Le Pen, the runner-up at the past two contests, may win the next one, in 2027.

A series of external factors are helping to propel support for the hard right. Illegal immigration, which spurred support for populist parties when it surged in 2015, is growing again after a lull during the pandemic. There have already been more than 165,000 unauthorised arrivals in Europe this year, as many as in all of last year, although still well below the level of 2015. Populists also tend to do well in times of economic upheaval, and so are benefiting from the high inflation that has plagued Europe for the past two years, and especially from soaring energy prices.

Expensive petrol, heating and electricity have helped foment a backlash against policies to fight climate change, which the hard right has seized on. This began in France with the gilets jaunes movement in late 2018, initially a protest against a carbon-tax hike on motor fuel. The afd's rise this year was touched off by a proposed government ban on oil and gas boilers in homes. In the Netherlands the Farmer-Citizen Movement (bbb), a new populist party, began as a farmers' protest against nitrogen-emission limits. It won an astounding 20% of the vote in regional elections in March.

There has also been a broader slide in trust in government in many European countries, after a brief resurgence during the pandemic, to the benefit of the hard right. American-style culture wars are becoming fiercer, too, which, again, helps the populists. Maximilian Krah, the afd's lead candidate in the European elections, went viral over the summer with dating advice posted on TikTok: "Real men are right-wing. Don't watch porn." In other videos Mr Krah argues that "multicultural means multi-criminal", bemoans rainbow flags and warns that BlackRock, an investment firm, wants to replace Germans with "minorities and immigrants".

The European politician most adept at exploiting such ideas to win and hold power is Viktor Orban, Fidesz's leader and the prime minister of Hungary since 2010. He readily bashes migrants, gay people and the eu as at odds with homespun Hungarian values. He has used the parliamentary majorities he has won with such talk to pack the courts with loyalists and gerrymander the electoral system. Cronies have bought up critical media outlets. In addition to undermining democracy at home, Mr Orban's rule has scrambled policymaking at nato and in the eu, owing to his friendliness with both China and Russia.

But harnessing right-wing populism to take control of a state is not easy. When Poland's Law and Justice (pis) party came to power in 2015, it followed Mr Orban's script. It turned the state media into a propaganda bureau and tried to pack the courts. But pis's efforts have not got as far as Fidesz's. Many judges have fought back, and the eu has withheld billions of euros in aid to force pis to reverse some of its court-packing. The media have not been cowed. The opposition remain competitive, even though pis is favoured in next month's election.

Other right-wing populists using Mr Orban's template have also had mixed results. Janez Jansa, a former prime minister of Slovenia nicknamed "Marshal Tweeto" for a social-media style reminiscent of Donald Trump, lost power in 2022. Estonia's far-right ekre party tried to go after the media while in government in 2019, but that coalition collapsed and the party did poorly in an election this year.

Even where it has been electorally successful, the hard right has struggled to put in place radical policies such as ending political asylum or scrapping measures to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. Take Sweden, where the Sweden Democrats, long shunned by other parties because of their roots in the neo-Nazi movement, took 21% of the vote in 2022. They signed a confidence-and-supply deal to back a centre-right minority government, giving them direct influence over policy on immigration and crime. But in a speech in August Jimmie Akesson, the party's leader, had to make excuses for the government's slow progress implementing the deal.

Ms Meloni is the first leader in western Europe with the parliamentary clout to enact a hard-right agenda. Yet so far, she has run a fairly conventional government. Her only populist measures have been to introduce a

misconceived tax on banks, limit some airline fares and prevent same-sex parents from registering their partner's child as their own. In part, she is constrained by European fiscal rules. But the fdi is also simply less extreme than it once was. "This is a pragmatic centre-right government with, now and again, some identitarian [culture-war] policies," argues Giovanni Orsina of the luiss school in Rome.

On the question of Europe, in particular, many hard-right parties have softened. A few of the edgiest populists want to dismantle the union they sneeringly refer to as the "eussr". But fdi abandoned the idea of leaving the euro and restructuring the eu before coming to power. Ms Meloni instead wants the eu to do more to help Italy, by keeping out the migrants that flood Italy's shores. This summer she went to Tunisia with Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission's president, to negotiate a migration deal. She also wants the bloc to relax its fiscal rules so that her government can spend more. She even cultivates Europhiles by praising the union as the guardian of European peace and civilisation.

The rn, in similar fashion, no longer calls for France to leave the eu and the euro. Its rhetoric remains anti-European, but with few specifics. This retreat from more radical policies was presumably intended precisely to broaden the rn's appeal and so help it win power. And even if Ms Le Pen were to become president, she might still struggle to implement her policies, despite the immense formal powers of the office. After all, reforms to state pensions championed by Emmanuel Macron, the incumbent, met ferocious opposition even though he clearly advertised them during his re-election campaign last year.

Far-right parties, which are often young, full of zealous ideologues and dependent on charismatic leaders, are prone to schisms. The Finns Party's first stint in government, in 2015, split in two. Its second, which began in May, has already been marred by scandals and resignations. In Poland, pis's generous benefits policies have alienated fiscal conservatives, some of whom have defected to a libertarian party called Confederation. Ms Le Pen, having softened her radical image, now faces competition on the right from Reconquest, whose lead candidate in the European election is her niece, Marion Maréchal.

The most vivid illustration of such chaos is in the Netherlands, which since 2002 has seen a series of right-wing populist parties rocket to prominence only to implode. In provincial elections in 2019 Forum for Democracy, a party led by Thierry Baudet, a dandyish Eurosceptic, finished first with 17%. Within months it had split into three. Mr Baudet now hawks conspiracy theories about covid-19 and immigration; his rump of the party is polling at 3%. Earlier this year the bbb had a brief moment as the standard-bearer of the right, but it has already slumped to 11% in the polls. It has been losing votes to yet another new party on the right with populist overtones, New Social Contract, which was launched by an mp famous for investigating abuses by the tax authority.

What all these parties have in common is a vague sense that they stand with ordinary people against the elite. Their positions on hot-button issues can be hazy, as with the rn's new stance on Europe. At a local level their candidates are often pragmatic. In June the rural town of Raguhn-Jessnitz in Saxony-Anhalt became the first to elect an afd mayor. Hannes Loth is an energetic 42-year-old former vegetable farmer ("cabbage, sweetcorn, onions—all kinds of onions"). During the pandemic, when locals had trouble getting travel permits because of the lack of a covid-testing centre, Mr Loth opened one himself.

Mr Loth's main concerns are run-down streets and fire stations and the town's budget deficit, which was €1.5m (\$1.6m) last year. That is partly because high energy prices sent heating bills for the Rathaus (town hall) through the roof. Mr Loth, toeing the afd's line, says the solution is to restart the nuclear plants the government has closed and negotiate peace in Ukraine so gas pipelines to Russia can reopen.

The disconnect between genuine problems and far-fetched solutions encapsulates something important about hard-right populist parties. Mr Loth is acutely sensitive to his constituents' suffering from high energy costs. But the afd's response is in part a fantasy: whatever it might wish, cheap Russian gas will not be an option for the foreseeable future.



Making their presence felt image: getty images

Similarly, the worries of the voters at the meeting in Sint-Genesius-Rode are natural. They have seen their town change its language around them; they have trouble finding good Dutch-language schools for their kids. But Vlaams Belang's solutions are illusory. Flemish independence is unlikely. Even if it happened, there is no way to force Sint-Genesius-Rode to speak mostly Dutch again. It has become French-speaking not because of a bureaucratic conspiracy, but because immigrants are more interested in learning French (a widely spoken language) than Dutch (a relatively obscure one).

The changes Europe's populist parties rail against tend to be inexorable or at least not easily reversed: demography, sexual liberation, gender equality, the shift away from fossil fuels. As with Vlaams Belang, the policies they propose to set the world to rights tend to be incoherent or unachievable. For populists, unrealistic programmes are no bad thing: candidates cannot thunder indignantly at election rallies about problems that have been solved.

Moreover, simply by railing and attracting support, far-right parties help to shift the debate. All across the continent, centre-right parties have toughened their immigration policies and heightened their culture-war rhetoric to stop voters defecting to the populists. The most glaring example of this was in Britain, where Brexit was set in train by the Conservative Party's decision to support a referendum on Brexit in an effort to diminish the appeal of the insurgents of the UK Independence Party.

This is probably the biggest risk of the rising vote share of Europe's far-right parties. Certainly, they tend to be associated with bigotry and misogyny, and to undermine the rule of law. Occasionally they may win enough power to damage democracy, as in Hungary and Poland. But more often, big populist-right blocs simply impede countries from getting to grips with their most pressing problems by offering illusory solutions.

That is the last thing the EU needs. The next European Parliament must make grave decisions regarding institutional reform in the EU, energy security, climate, support for Ukraine and more. If a quarter of its members refuse to wrestle seriously with such problems, they are unlikely to be solved. The hard right does not need to seize control of the levers of power to gum them up.

20 December (FAZ)

Paris: Woher kamen die Stimmen für das Einwanderungsgesetz? (faz.net)

UMSTRITTENES EINWANDERUNGSGESETZ:

Le Pen feiert, Macron unter Druck

[Controversial Immigration Law: Le Pen celebrates, Macron under pressure; The debate ends in a scandal: After the vote on the tightened French immigration law, six ministers are said to have threatened to resign. Le Pen celebrates an "ideological victory." Macron plans to explain himself.]

VON MICHAELA WIEGEL, PARIS

-AKTUALISIERT AM 20.12.2023-10:19



Nach der Annahme des Gesetzenwurfs: Abgeordnete der linken Koalition NUPES halten Schilder mit der Aufschrift „Liberte“, „Egalite“, „fraternite“ („Freiheit, Gleichheit, Brüderlichkeit“), das nationale Motto Frankreichs hoch. Bild: AFP

Die Debatte endet mit einem Eklat: Nach der Abstimmung über das verschärfte französische Einwanderungsgesetz sollen sechs Minister mit Rücktritt gedroht haben. Le Pen feiert einen „ideologischen Sieg“. Macron will sich erklären.

Nach dem Abstimmungserfolg über das verschärfte Einwanderungsgesetz mit Hilfe des Rassemblement National (RN) will sich der französische Präsident Emmanuel Macron an diesem Mittwochabend im Fernsehen erklären. Bis in die Reihen seiner Partei hinein führte das Zweckbündnis mit Marine Le Pens Fraktion zu Unverständnis.

Sechs Minister sollen mit Rücktritt gedroht haben. Gesundheitsminister Aurélien Rousseau hat laut der französischen Presse noch am Abend ein Rücktrittsschreiben verfasst. Premierministerin Elisabeth Borne sagte am Mittwochmorgen, sie habe davon keine Kenntnis. „Ich habe meine Pflicht erfüllt“, sagte die 62 Jahre alte Regierungschefin im Radiosender France Inter. „Dieses Gesetz entspricht nicht den Plänen der Präsidentenmehrheit“, kritisierte der Vorsitzende des Rechtsausschusses, Sacha Houlié.

Die Infragestellung des Bodenrechts für die Staatsangehörigkeit, die Einschränkung des Familiennachzugs, Bußgelder für illegalen Aufenthalt und die Benachteiligung von Einwanderern bei den Sozialleistungen seien nicht geplant gewesen, sagte der Abgeordnete, der den Vermittlungsausschuss für die Präsidentenpartei geleitet hatte. „Es gibt zahlreiche Maßnahmen, die aus meiner Sicht der Verfassung widersprechen“, kritisierte Houlié.

Sozialleistungen künftig erst nach fünf Jahren

Sozialleistungen wie Kindergeld und Wohnbeihilfen sollen an außereuropäische Einwanderer künftig erst nach einer Wartezeit von fünf Jahren gezahlt werden. Das Bodenrecht (ius soli) wird eingeschränkt:

Wer von ausländischen Eltern auf französischem Boden geboren wird, soll fortan nicht mehr automatisch mit der Volljährigkeit die Staatsbürgerschaft erhalten. Stattdessen müssen Jugendliche zwischen 16 und 18 Jahren einen Antrag stellen und nachweisen, dass sie sich in Frankreich integriert haben.



Marine Le Pen während der Debatte im französischen Parlament am Dienstagabend :Bild: AFP

Auch die Regeln für den Familiennachzug sollen verschärft werden. Marine Le Pen (RN) sprach von einem „ideologischen Sieg“ für ihre Partei. Die Regierung werde mit dem Gesetz eine „nationale Priorität“ im französischen Recht verankern, lobte sie. Bereits ihr Vater [Jean-Marie Le Pen](#) hatte mit dem Slogan „nationale Präferenz“ unterschiedliche Rechte für Franzosen und Einwanderer gefordert.

Zustimmung nur mit Unterstützung des Rassemblement

Die Nationalversammlung hatte am späten Dienstagabend mit 349 Stimmen bei 186 Gegenstimmen den Gesetzentwurf angenommen. Alle 88 RN-Abgeordneten stimmten dafür. Auch die 62 Abgeordneten der rechtsbürgerlichen Republikaner (LR) stimmten geschlossen zu. Im Präsidentenlager hingegen kam es zu einer nie dagewesenen Fronde. 69 Abgeordnete enthielten sich der Stimme oder stimmten dagegen. Damit wurde noch sichtbarer, dass die Regierung nur über eine relative Mehrheit in der Nationalversammlung verfügt.

Innenminister [Gérald Darmanin](#) begrüßte einen „starken und entschlossenen Text“. Er sei das Ergebnis „eines langen Kampfes, um Ausländer besser zu integrieren und Straftäter schneller abschieben zu können“. Darmanin äußerte, der Gesetzentwurf sei „ohne die Stimmen des RN“ angenommen worden. Wie der Wahlfachmann Mathieu Gallard vom Meinungsforschungsinstitut Ipsos erläuterte, trifft die Aussage des Innenministers aber nicht ganz zu. Ohne die Stimmen des RN hätte es nur eine relative Mehrheit von 261 Stimmen für den Gesetzentwurf gegeben. Die absolute Mehrheit liegt bei 268 Stimmen. Wenn der RN gegen das Gesetz gestimmt hätte, wäre es gescheitert. Alle Parteien links der Präsidentenfraktion stimmten gegen den Entwurf.

Konfuse Rede des Innenministers

Innenminister Darmanin hielt den Linksparteien in einer erhitzten Debatte in der Nationalversammlung vor, sich mit dem RN verbündet zu haben. Am 11. Dezember hatte ein Bündnis vom linken bis zum rechten Rand überraschend einen Ablehnungsantrag durchgesetzt. Daraufhin hätte Präsident Macron den Gesetzentwurf zurückziehen lassen können. Er entschied hingegen, einen „intelligenten Kompromiss“ zu verlangen und die Arbeit einem Vermittlungsausschuss zu überlassen, in dem die Republikaner die Feder führten. Innenminister Darmanin vermied es in der Debatte, auf die umstrittenen Änderungen einzugehen. In einer konfusen Rede kritisierte er Le Pen und behauptete, dass mit dem Gesetz ausländische Beschäftigte in Bereichen mit Arbeitskraftmangel massiv eingebürgert würden.

Im Elysée-Palast führte der Präsident derweilen ein Krisengespräch nach dem anderen. Er ließ ankündigen, dass er gemäß Artikel 10 eine neue Lesung des Gesetzes anberaumen werde, sollte eine Mehrheit nur mit den Stimmen des RN zustande kommen. Berater im Elysée-Palast erläuterten hinterher, da die relative Mehrheit auch ohne die Unterstützung Le Pens gestanden habe, sei eine zweite Lesung nun nicht mehr notwendig. Der Präsident hofft darauf, dass sich mit den Weihnachtsferien der politische Trubel schnell legt.

Die Republikaner sprachen hingegen von einem Sieg für die bürgerliche Rechte. Der LR-Parteivorsitzende Eric Ciotti will am Vormittag zu einem Gespräch mit dem CDU-Fraktionsvorsitzenden Friedrich Merz in Paris zusammentreffen. Der LR-Fraktionsvorsitzende im Senat, Bruno Retailleau, sagte im Radiosender Europe 1: „Wir haben den Text eigenhändig geschmiedet und überarbeitet. Es ist das Gesetz des Senats, das verabschiedet wurde. Es ist ein Text der Entschlossenheit.“

20 December (Le Monde)

https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2023/12/20/loi-sur-l-immigration-une-rupture-politique-et-morale_6206843_3232.html

Loi sur l'immigration : une rupture politique et morale

Éditorial

Pour faire voter à tout prix son projet, l'exécutif a multiplié les concessions à la droite, aboutissant à un texte dont certaines mesures, dignes d'un tract du Rassemblement national, mettent en cause des principes républicains fondamentaux comme l'égalité des droits sociaux et le droit du sol.

Publié aujourd'hui à 09h50, modifié à 09h59 Temps de Lecture 2 min.

Une loi inspirée par l'extrême droite, votée en panique sous la pression d'un exécutif qui prétendait incarner la modération. Depuis quarante ans que le débat politique français s'est emparé du thème de l'immigration, rarement un gouvernement avait manifesté un tel degré de compromission avec les forces qui prospèrent sur la désignation de l'étranger comme bouc émissaire. Jamais un exécutif n'avait accepté qu'un projet de loi sur l'immigration conçu par lui-même pour tenter de rallier la gauche et la droite finisse en catalogue digne d'un tract du Rassemblement national (RN). Sans même, au surplus, que ce dernier y ait été associé, sinon lors du vote final. Jamais un gouvernement n'avait été à ce point, et le pays avec, à la merci du RN.

Le texte auquel a abouti, au forceps, la commission mixte paritaire (CMP), mardi 19 décembre, et [qui a été ensuite adopté par le Sénat et l'Assemblée nationale](#) ne rompt pas seulement avec l'équilibre du projet initial défendu pendant plus d'un an par le gouvernement. Il retient aussi des mesures qui mettent en cause des principes républicains fondamentaux comme l'égalité des droits sociaux et [le droit du sol](#).

Alors que le projet de loi initial, soutenu par l'opinion publique, alliait une série de dispositions répressives ou restrictives – destinées à faciliter les reconduites à la frontière, à accélérer les décisions sur l'asile, à exiger un niveau minimum de français pour obtenir un titre de séjour – et une mesure libérale inédite depuis des décennies – un droit à la régularisation pour les sans-papiers travaillant dans les métiers en tension –, cette dernière a pratiquement été effacée.

« Victoire idéologique » de Marine Le Pen

En revanche, une série de dispositifs piochés par Les Républicains dans le programme du Rassemblement national et complaisamment acceptés par le gouvernement ont finalement été incorporés au projet de loi : la restriction de l'accès aux prestations sociales à des étrangers en situation régulière, la fin de l'acquisition de la nationalité de plein droit pour les enfants d'étrangers nés en France, mais aussi l'exclusion des sans-papiers de l'hébergement d'urgence et la promesse d'une réforme de l'aide médicale d'Etat (AME).

Autant de mesures sans grand effet attendu sur les problèmes auxquels elles prétendent s'attaquer, mais qui constituent des signaux validant les discours vindicatifs de l'extrême droite, marquant de fait la « *victoire idéologique* » de Marine Le Pen, selon sa propre expression.

L'exécutif, qui aurait dû renoncer à un projet hors de son contrôle, en a accepté la dérive. Le piège a débuté avec [le vote, lundi 11 décembre, d'une motion de rejet par toutes les oppositions coalisées](#) et s'est poursuivi lorsque la CMP, dominée par la droite, a été chargée de trouver un compromis.

Le gouvernement, pris en tenaille entre sa volonté d'aboutir à tout prix à une loi, et les manœuvres des élus Les Républicains, eux-mêmes à la remorque du Rassemblement national, a tout cédé : les valeurs qu'il prétend porter, la cohérence de sa démarche et l'unité de sa majorité, qui a volé en éclats lorsque Marine Le Pen, refermant la nasse, a annoncé dans l'après-midi qu'elle voterait en faveur du texte.

Le débat puis le vote de cette loi vont laisser de lourdes traces : près d'un quart des députés de la majorité, parmi lesquels le président de la commission des lois, Sacha Houlié, ont fait défection en se réfugiant dans l'abstention ou en votant contre ; plusieurs ministres, dont celui de la santé, Aurélien Rousseau, ont envisagé de démissionner. La rupture est à la fois politique et morale.

Emmanuel Macron, qui, par deux fois, a été élu avec la promesse de faire barrage à l'extrême droite, s'est comporté en passeur de ses idées, mises en avant comme jamais au cours de ces joutes politiciennes dramatisées. Peut-il encore jouer ce rôle de rassembleur et de combattant contre l'usage politique de la xénophobie dont le pays a tant besoin ?

20 December (Le Figaro)

[La loi immigration va laisser des traces profondes \(lefigaro.fr\)](https://www.lefigaro.fr)

La loi immigration va laisser des traces profondes

Par [Vincent Trémolet de Villers](#)

Publié hier à 23:32, mis à jour il y a 32 minutes

L'ÉDITORIAL DU FIGARO - Cette loi immigration, formidable chamboule-tout politique, a complètement échappé à Emmanuel Macron qui a perdu sur tous les tableaux.

Est-ce la IVe République se déchirant en 1958 sur la guerre d'Algérie ou [l'Assemblée nationale en 2023 débattant sur l'immigration](#) ? Des ministres qui font au chef de l'État un chantage à la démission, le président de la commission des lois qui s'érige en premier opposant du projet qu'il a validé, les députés qui tournent comme des toupies. Un texte qui depuis la motion de rejet a failli disparaître avant d'être adopté à un prix mirobolant. Emmanuel Macron a été rattrapé par le tourbillon. Lui qui avait lancé cette loi dans l'atmosphère sans en dessiner les contours ni en mesurer les effets l'a vu retomber avec fracas dans l'Hémicycle au point d'ébranler tout son système. [Le RN a fait la preuve de son opportunisme redoutable](#) : une consigne de vote a suffi à mettre le feu dans la majorité. La droite LR a montré une remarquable efficacité stratégique : d'un texte insipide, elle a tiré une loi offensive. La macronie, dépassée par les événements, a laissé passer un à un les articles.

Cette histoire laissera des traces profondes. Elisabeth Borne est exsangue, Gérald Darmanin exténué, la majorité en charpie. La source de tout cela, c'est l'aveuglement persistant du chef de l'État. Dénier sur son absence de majorité absolue à l'Assemblée, qui l'expose aux sables mouvants des oppositions, déni surtout sur la part centrale que prend l'immigration dans le mal français.

Longtemps, le président de la République a refusé même d'évoquer cette question. Puis, sous la pression de l'opinion, il s'est trouvé contraint d'y consacrer une loi. Plutôt que de répondre au consensus populaire, il a cherché à ne pas déplaire aux derniers cercles de la gauche «morale», celle qui crie au «racisme» quand elle entend le mot «frontière». C'est ce choix mondain plutôt que politique qui a rendu cette loi aussi vulnérable. Il a tenté ensuite de se rallier à ceux qu'il avait ignorés. Il s'est enfin lancé dans une dernière hypocrisie en demandant que l'on retire les voix du Rassemblement National du vote final. Précaution ridicule. Cette loi immigration, formidable chamboule-tout politique, lui a complètement échappé. Elle est la preuve cristalline que le macronisme peut être l'autre nom de l'inconséquence.

20 December (Le Monde)

https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2023/12/19/la-crise-politique-autour-du-projet-de-loi-immigration-est-un-moment-de-verite-ou-toutes-les-fragilites-du-mandat-d-emmanuel-macron-se-conjuguent_6206641_3232.html

« La crise politique autour du projet de loi “immigration” est un moment de vérité où toutes les fragilités du mandat d’Emmanuel Macron se conjuguent »

Chronique

[Françoise Fressoz, Editorialiste au « Monde »](#)

Quelle que soit son issue, le texte sur l’immigration va obliger le chef de l’Etat à définir un dispositif politique de combat contre l’extrême droite, qui domine aujourd’hui le champ politique, observe dans sa chronique Françoise Fressoz, éditorialiste au « Monde ».

Publié hier à 08h30, modifié hier à 16h40 Temps de Lecture 4 min.

Les crises servent toujours de révélateur. Celle qui s’est nouée autour du projet de loi sur l’immigration, dont les oppositions ont refusé de débattre, lundi 11 décembre, à l’Assemblée nationale, dépasse le sujet incriminé : contrairement au projet de loi reportant l’âge de départ à la retraite qui était très impopulaire, ce texte était soutenu à la fois dans son équilibre et dans le détail des mesures par une majorité de Français. Et, lorsque [la motion de rejet a été votée à cinq voix près](#), 60 % d’entre eux ont estimé que le gouvernement et les oppositions se devaient de trouver un compromis, selon [un sondage Elabe - BFM-TV](#) publié le 13 décembre.

Ce hiatus entre l’opinion et le jeu politique dans l’hémicycle de l’Assemblée nationale interroge la capacité de la V^e République à survivre en l’absence de majorité absolue et en présence de forces d’opposition qui, par nature, intérêt ou calcul, sont rétives à toute idée de compromis.

L’expérience menée depuis juillet 2022 n’autorise pas de conclusions définitives : 61 textes ont été adoptés dont 56 sans recours à l’article 49.3 de la Constitution, ce qui veut dire que le gouvernement est parvenu à trouver une majorité, tantôt avec une partie de la gauche, le plus souvent avec Les Républicains (LR), sur des projets loin d’être anodins (justice, police, armée, relance du nucléaire, etc.). Mais, sur les textes financiers, Elisabeth Borne a dû systématiquement, soit vingt-deux fois depuis sa nomination, engager la responsabilité du gouvernement. La première ministre essayant à chaque fois le même procès en corsetage du Parlement.

La dissolution, une arme trop risquée

Sur deux projets de loi emblématiques – la retraite et l’immigration –, l’exécutif n’est pas parvenu à trouver un accord avec la droite. Il en a résulté dans les deux cas un affaiblissement du pouvoir présidentiel symboliquement éprouvé dans sa double capacité d’entraînement et de riposte : le recours au 49.3 pour porter l’âge du départ à la retraite à 64 ans a été perçu comme un passage en force, une violence faite au Parlement et à la majorité des Français qui combattaient le texte, alors même que celui-ci faisait partie du projet présidentiel sur lequel a été réélu Emmanuel Macron.

La coalition des oppositions contre le projet de loi relatif à l’immigration a été le moyen d’ébranler le « en même temps », devenu le symbole du macronisme : les soutiens du chef de l’Etat défendaient un volet répressif sur les expulsions et une main tendue pour les travailleurs sans papiers dans les métiers en tension. La droite et la gauche leur ont signifié ne pas trouver leur compte dans l’énoncé de cet équilibre. Et, lorsque l’Elysée a cherché la riposte, celle-ci a consisté à prier le gouvernement et les parlementaires de surmonter ce blocage par un « compromis intelligent », quitte à ce qu’en cas d’échec le projet de loi soit finalement abandonné. Recourir à l’arme de la dissolution était bien trop risqué.

La survie du macronisme, en situation de majorité relative, épuise les acteurs qui s'y frottent. Sur la réforme des retraites, Elisabeth Borne a beaucoup perdu de son crédit en cherchant en vain un accord avec les députés LR, qui n'ont eu de cesse de se dérober. Sur l'immigration, le ministre de l'intérieur, Gérald Darmanin, vient de vivre la même mésaventure alors qu'il pensait être paré des atouts ayant manqué à la première ministre : lui venait des rangs de la droite et pas elle ; lui avait l'art de mettre du liant dans les discussions et pas elle ; lui savait faire de la politique et pas elle. Patatras, tout s'est écroulé à cinq voix près.

LR, un parti divisé et affaibli

Aujourd'hui, par-delà leur antinomie et leur antipathie, la cheffe du gouvernement et son ministre de l'intérieur ont partie liée pour tenter de sauver ce qui peut l'être : un accord en commission mixte paritaire. Si accord il y a, il devra ensuite, pour valoir approbation, être entériné par un vote au Sénat et à l'Assemblée nationale. Le résultat pèsera lourd dans la suite du quinquennat : s'il est négatif, il vaudra sanction, s'il est positif, il ne dispensera pas d'une clarification.

La vaine chasse aux élus LR menée depuis plus d'un an ressemble à un leurre tant ce parti, divisé et affaibli, apparaît lui-même à la remorque du Rassemblement national. Sur les retraites, la crainte de payer le prix de l'impopularité a conduit nombre de députés de la droite républicaine à renier ce que leur candidate, [Valérie Pécresse, avait pourtant ardemment défendu pendant la campagne présidentielle en 2022](#). Sur l'immigration, LR a tellement emprunté au projet de Marine Le Pen (référendum, remise en cause du droit du sol, contestation de la primauté des traités et du droit européens) que seule subsiste entre les deux partis la frontière ténue de la préférence nationale.

Pour Emmanuel Macron, le sujet central n'est pas l'hypothétique stabilisation de son quinquennat par une adjonction de tel ou tel pourcentage de ce qu'il reste de la droite républicaine. Il est de définir une ligne et un dispositif politiques de combat face à Marine Le Pen, qui, à la faveur de l'affaiblissement de tous ses adversaires politiques et de l'avachissement du pouvoir parlementaire, est parvenue à dominer le champ politique.

Quelle que soit son issue, cette crise est un moment de vérité où toutes les fragilités du mandat se conjuguent : l'affaiblissement progressif du pouvoir d'un président de la République qui se veut pourtant omniprésent ; la faiblesse politique de son gouvernement, mal armé pour résister au jeu de défausse des oppositions dites de « l'arc républicain » ; l'affadissement de la doctrine : à force de se déporter vers la droite, le macronisme a perdu de sa substance. Immédiatement résumé à deux textes : les retraites et l'immigration. Il est en passe de devenir un repoussoir pour la gauche de gouvernement qui, dans le cadre des élections européennes de juin 2024, va chercher à [se compter derrière la liste menée par Raphaël Glucksmann](#). Pour conjurer la déliquescence, un retour aux sources s'impose. Emmanuel Macron en a-t-il encore les moyens ?

20 December (NZZ)

[Dilemma Klimaschutz: Vorreiter und Anpasser \(nzz.ch\)](https://www.nzz.ch)

GASTKOMMENTAR

Dem Klima ist nicht geholfen, wenn Versorgungslücken mit Kohlestrom gestopft werden und energieintensive Industrien abwandern

Der Handlungsdruck an der Uno-Klimakonferenz in Dubai war hoch, denn die Begrenzung der Erderwärmung auf 1,5 °C ist kaum noch erreichbar. Das Problem: Klimaschutz ist irrational, wenn nicht alle mitmachen.

[Climate is not helped when supply gaps are filled with coal power and energy-intensive industries migrate. The pressure for action at the UN Climate Conference in Dubai was high because limiting global warming to 1.5°C is barely achievable. The problem: Climate protection is irrational if not everyone participates.]

Jochen Andritzky und Stefan Zsolt Tari

19.12.2023, 05.30 Uhr 3 min



In Deutschland führt die Klimaschutzpolitik zu Energieengpässen und Abwanderung von Industrien. Rupert Oberhäuser / Imago

Aus spieltheoretischer Sicht steht die Klimaschutzpolitik eines Landes vor einem klassischen Gefangenendilemma, wie es die Spieltheorie beschreibt: Für ein einzelnes Land ist Klimaschutz kostspielig, weil es fossile durch teurere regenerative Technologien ersetzen muss. Doch die globale Erwärmung wird nur dann ausbleiben, wenn sich viele Länder kollektiv an den teuren Klimaschutzmassnahmen beteiligen.

Klima-Champion auf Verliererposten?

Die dominante Strategie jedes Landes besteht somit darin, andere Länder die Kosten des Klimaschutz tragen zu lassen. Am Ende wählt kein Land den Klimaschutz. Folgt man der Logik des Gefangenendilemmas, macht es keinen Sinn, eine Vorreiterposition im Klimaschutz einzunehmen. In Deutschland stellt sich derzeit Ernüchterung ein, da die dortige Klimaschutzpolitik eher zu Engpässen in der Energieversorgung und zur Abwanderung von Industrien führt.

Nachahmer findet dieses Modell wohl kaum. Und auch dem Klima ist nicht geholfen, wenn Versorgungslücken im Stromnetz mit Kohlestrom gestopft werden und die energieintensiven Industrien in Länder mit niedrigeren Umweltstandards abwandern. Der rasante Anstieg der CO₂-Emissionen in China, das mittlerweile viele energieintensive Güter wie Stahl exportiert, ist die Folge.

Klima-Champion zu sein, macht nur in zwei Varianten des Gefangenendilemmas Sinn. Bei der ersten muss es eine glaubhafte Kooperation der massgeblichen CO₂-Emittenten geben, die sich auf Klimaschutz einigen. So hat der Nobelpreisträger William Nordhaus dafür den sogenannten «Klimaklub» erdacht, dessen Mitglieder glaubwürdig Klimaschutzanstrengungen vereinbaren. Auf der COP28 wurde auf die Initiative Deutschlands ein

solcher Klimaklub gegründet. Der Klub zählt 36 Mitglieder, darunter die Schweiz, die sich alle zu konkreten Klimaschutzmassnahmen verpflichten.

Doch muss der Klimaklub gross genug sein und hinreichend starke Klimaschutzmassnahmen umsetzen, um das globale Klima zu beeinflussen. Zwar sind die USA Mitglied des Klubs, doch China und Indien sind es nicht. Statt mit kleineren Ländern zu verhandeln, sollte der Fokus auf diesen grossen Emittenten liegen. Und auch die bisher vereinbarten Massnahmen sind zu schwach. Der Einbezug von Klubgütern wie gemeinsamen Fördertöpfen oder Handelserleichterungen könnte als Zuckerbrot dienen. Und ein CO₂-Zoll, wie er von der EU entwickelt wird, könnte aufgrund seiner extraterritorialen Wirkung den Ländern, die auf den Klimabemühungen anderer Trittbrett fahren wollen, wie eine Peitsche vorkommen.

Eine zweite Lösungsvariante besteht darin, durch Innovation die globalen Kosten für Klimaschutz zu senken. Wird Klimaschutz billiger als Klimaanpassung, wäre es für alle Länder optimal, Klimaschutz zu betreiben und so kollektiv die Erwärmung zu verhindern.

Diese Variante kann eine Vorreiterrolle in der Umwelttechnologie und somit umfangreiche Innovationsförderung begründen. Doch wäre es falsch, auf hohe Profite aus den Innovationen einer solchen Strategie zu setzen. Denn das Ziel einer globalen Senkung der Klimaschutzkosten erfordert die rasche weltweite Verbreitung der Innovation. Dafür müsste zum Beispiel der Patentschutz für solche Innovationen eingeschränkt werden. In der Corona-Pandemie wurde dies für Impfstoffpatente bereits heiss diskutiert.

Lokale Klimaanpassung

Angesichts der Zweifel an einem global effektiven Klimaschutz stellt sich die Frage, ob es sich eher lohnt, in die Klimaanpassung statt den Klimaschutz zu investieren. Nach Schätzungen des Internationalen Währungsfonds können Investitionen in die Klimaanpassung die volkswirtschaftlichen Kosten der Erderwärmung mehr als halbieren.

Für viele Klimaschützer ist die Klimaanpassung jedoch ein rotes Tuch. Da Klimaanpassungen wie höhere Dämme zumeist einen lokalen Nutzen stiften, reduzieren sie die Anreize eines Landes zum globalen Klimaschutz, der kaum einen lokalen Nutzen stiftet. Fallen aufgrund von Innovationen die Kosten der Klimaanpassung relativ zum Klimaschutz, verschärft dies das Dilemma.

So nüchtern dieses Argument wirkt, für ärmere Länder mit sehr begrenzten Ressourcen spielt die Abwägung zwischen Klimaschutz und -anpassung eine wesentliche Rolle. Entsprechend ist es naiv, zu glauben, ein Fonds für Klimaanpassungskosten, wie er auf der COP28 in Dubai beschlossen wurde, könne auch auf den Klimaschutz einzahlen.

Klimapolitik muss sich ehrlich machen. Das inhärente Koordinationsproblem erfordert keine nationalen Klimaschutz-Champions, sondern Innovation und internationale Kooperation. Europa und die Schweiz sind aufgrund ihres Innovationspotenzials und ihrer Rolle in der internationalen Diplomatie gut positioniert, die Welt auf den Pfad einer erfolgreichen Klimapolitik zu bringen. Dieser besteht nicht darin, im Inland die Bürger und Unternehmungen zu gängeln, sondern mit Weitsicht das Gefangenendilemma zu überwinden.

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20 December (NZZ)

[Der Kolonialismus allein erklärt Europas Aufstieg nicht \(nzz.ch\)](https://www.nzz.ch)

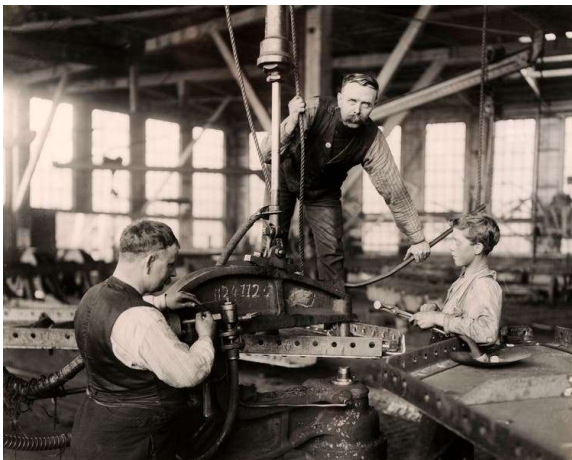
Das Rätsel der Industrialisierung: Der wirtschaftliche Aufstieg Europas lässt sich nicht allein mit dem Kolonialismus erklären

Was hat die industrielle Revolution ausgelöst? Die Historiker Friedrich Lenger, Maxine Berg und Pat Hudson widerlegen verbreitete Erklärungsmodelle.

[The Puzzle of Industrialization: The economic rise of Europe cannot be explained solely by colonialism What triggered the Industrial Revolution? Historians Friedrich Lenger, Maxine Berg, and Pat Hudson refute widespread explanatory models.]

Tobias Straumann

20.12.2023



Die Wurzeln des modernen Wirtschaftswachstums sind komplex. Arbeiter auf der Werft Harland & Wolff in Belfast, Aufnahme um 1920. Paul Popper / Getty

Die industrielle Revolution, die vor 200 Jahren begann, markiert zweifellos den grössten Einschnitt der jüngeren Wirtschaftsgeschichte, wenn nicht der Neuzeit überhaupt. Das durchschnittliche Einkommen ist seither explodiert, die Globalisierung hat ein beispielloses Ausmass angenommen, und Institutionen wie unser Bildungssystem, der Sozialstaat oder Kunst und Kultur wären ohne sie nicht finanzierbar.

Vor 1800 war die menschliche Existenz demgegenüber voller Entbehrungen. Eine hohe Kindersterblichkeit, tödliche Krankheiten und Hungersnöte waren normal, und selbst in guten Jahren war der Lebensstandard auf einem äusserst bescheidenen Niveau. Auch Louis XIV. (1638–1715), Inbegriff des absolutistischen Herrschers, konnte vom materiellen Wohlstand einer heutigen mittelständischen Schweizer Familie nur träumen.

Weil die industrielle Revolution so wirkungsmächtig ist, werden ihre Wurzeln wie kein anderes wirtschaftshistorisches Thema seit langem intensiv diskutiert. Naturgemäss ist es nie gelungen, sich auf eine bestimmte Erklärung zu einigen. In den Sozial- und Geisteswissenschaften ist es grundsätzlich unmöglich, bei einem so komplexen Thema letztgültige Kausalitäten zu identifizieren. Erschwert wird dies auch dadurch, dass die industrielle Revolution nur an einem Ort, in England, stattgefunden hat. Singuläre Ereignisse sind immer schwierig zu erklären.

Blick nach Asien

Um dennoch zu einigermaßen gesicherten Ergebnissen zu kommen, haben vor rund dreissig Jahren einige Historiker damit begonnen, England mit aussereuropäischen Regionen zu vergleichen, die sich im 18. Jahrhundert auf einem ähnlichen wirtschaftlichen Niveau wie England befanden, insbesondere mit China und Japan.

Auch diese Bemühungen vermochten keine Klärung herbeizuführen, aber die Kontroverse ist höchst anregend und hat zu einer Horizonterweiterung beigetragen. So hat sich herausgestellt, dass viele Strukturen, die von der älteren Forschung als spezifisch europäisch bezeichnet wurden, durchaus auch in Ostasien existierten – etwa eine hochentwickelte Landwirtschaft, heimindustrielle Baumwollverarbeitung und das Bankwesen bei der Aussenhandelsfinanzierung.

Um diese Debatte und die Bedeutung der industriellen Revolution einem breiten Publikum zu vermitteln, hat der Giessener Geschichtspräsident und Leibnizpreisträger Friedrich Lenger ein Buch geschrieben, das auf fünfhundert Seiten die «Globalgeschichte des Kapitalismus» seit dem 15. Jahrhundert beschreibt. Die Syntheseleistung ist eindrucklich.

Eine neue Geschichte des Kapitalismus

Gekonnt beschreibt Lenger die unterschiedlichen Phasen in allen Erdteilen der Welt, fasst die wichtigsten Positionen der Forschung zusammen und beurteilt diese aufgrund von eigenen Argumenten. Man erfährt enorm viel über die Wirtschaftsgeschichte der letzten fünfhundert Jahre. Wer sich auf den neusten Stand bringen und überprüfen will, ob der in der Schule gelernte Stoff noch gilt, dem sei dieses Buch empfohlen.

So widerlegt Lenger zum Beispiel die verbreitete Ansicht, die Ankunft der Portugiesen im Indischen Ozean habe ein neues Zeitalter in dieser Weltregion begründet. Vasco da Gama wird zwar zu Recht als der erste Europäer in Erinnerung gehalten, der mit seinem Schiff um das Kap der Guten Hoffnung segelte. Doch die Vorstellung, dass sich damit etwas Wesentliches geändert hätte, ist nicht haltbar.

Die Europäer bildeten zunächst nur eine unter vielen Händlergruppen, die sich zwischen der afrikanischen Ostküste und den südostasiatischen Inselgruppen bewegten. Lesenswert ist auch Lengers konzise Zusammenfassung der grossen Veränderungen seit den 1970er Jahren. Er beschreibt die Erweiterung der Weltwirtschaft, die Veränderung des Industriekapitalismus im Zeichen neuer Wertschöpfungsketten, den Strukturwandel des Welthandels und die Strukturmerkmale und Krisenhaftigkeit des Finanzmarktkapitalismus. Man gewinnt auf wenigen Seiten einen guten Überblick.



Friedrich Lenger widerlegt die These, dass die Ankunft der Portugiesen im Indischen Ozean ein neues Zeitalter in dieser Weltregion begründet habe. «Vasco da Gama in Indien», Gemälde von José Veloso Salgado, 1898., PD

Eigentum und Kapital

Allerdings lässt sich das Buch nicht vorbehaltlos dem geschichtsinteressierten Publikum empfehlen. Nicht untypisch für die deutsche Wissenschaftskultur, ist der Erzählstil stellenweise komplizierter, als es der Inhalt erfordern würde. Besonders die Einleitung, in der Lenger die verschiedenen Kapitalismusvorstellungen seit Karl Marx diskutiert, um eine «Arbeitsdefinition des Kapitalismus» zu entwickeln, dürfte für viele Laien schwer verdaulich sein.

Die Definitionsbemühungen gipfeln in folgendem Satz: «Sinnvoll scheint es zunächst, als Grundvoraussetzungen kapitalistischen Wirtschaftens lediglich die Existenz von Eigentumsrechten, von Warenmärkten und von Kapital zu postulieren, und dann mit Weber die «Erwartung von Gewinn durch Ausnutzung von Tausch-Chancen» in den Mittelpunkt zu rücken, ohne seine Einschränkung auf formell

friedliche Erwerbchancen zu übernehmen.» Nach wie vor gilt, dass die angelsächsischen Historikerinnen und Historiker klarer und eleganter formulieren können.

Bemerkenswerterweise nimmt Lenger nur kurz Stellung zur Frage, inwiefern die Sklavenplantagen auf dem amerikanischen Kontinent zur industriellen Revolution in England beitrugen. Er erwähnt zwar die 1944 erschienene Dissertation «Capitalism and Slavery» von Eric Williams, welche die ganze Debatte ausgelöst hat, diskutiert aber die Hypothesen und Argumente nur cursorisch. Um sich bei diesem Themenkomplex auf den neusten Stand zu bringen, empfiehlt es sich deshalb, das neue Buch von Maxine Berg und Pat Hudson zur Hand zu nehmen, das vor kurzem unter dem Titel «Slavery, Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution» erschienen ist.

Die Bedeutung der Sklaverei

Die beiden emeritierten britischen Wirtschaftshistorikerinnen, die Professuren an den Universitäten Warwick und Cardiff innehatten, versuchen zu zeigen, dass die Sklaverei durchaus eine prägende Wirkung auf die britische Wirtschaftsgeschichte hatte: «Der Sklaven- und Plantagenhandel war der Dreh- und Angelpunkt, um den sich viele andere dynamische und innovative Wirtschaftszweige drehten.»

Berg und Hudson können zeigen, dass die Sklaverei auf dem Höhepunkt direkt und indirekt eine Reihe von Branchen und Sektoren förderte, insbesondere die gewerbliche Produktion, die Landwirtschaft, den Gross- und Detailhandel, den Schiffstransport, das Banken- und Versicherungswesen und den Aussenhandel. Die beiden Autorinnen schätzen, dass all diese Wirkungen zusammengenommen Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts etwa elf Prozent der britischen Wirtschaft betrafen. Frühere Schätzungen waren deutlich tiefer.



Die industrielle Revolution lässt sich nicht primär mit Ausbeutungsverhältnissen erklären. Sklaven auf einem Feld in South Carolina, Aufnahme um 1862. Corbis/Getty

Doch so sehr sich Berg und Hudson bemühen, die Bedeutung der Sklaverei und der Sklavenplantagen herauszustreichen, so wenig getrauen sie sich, ihnen eine entscheidende Rolle bei der Herausbildung des Industriekapitalismus zuzuschreiben. Um kein Missverständnis aufkommen zu lassen, schreiben sie bereits in der Einleitung: «Wir behaupten nicht, dass die Sklaverei die Ursache der industriellen Revolution war. Wir behaupten auch nicht, dass die Sklaverei für die Entwicklung des industriellen Kapitalismus in Grossbritannien notwendig war.»

Erfindung und Produktivität

Diese Feststellung ist umso bemerkenswerter, als Berg und Hudson eine durchaus skeptische Haltung gegenüber dem Kapitalismus einnehmen. Noch so gerne würden sie einen Konnex zwischen Sklaverei und industrieller Revolution herstellen. Doch aufgrund ihrer früheren Forschungen wissen sie nur zu gut, dass sich die technologischen Innovationen, die der industriellen Revolution zugrunde lagen, nicht primär mit Ausbeutungsverhältnissen erklären lassen.

Die Wurzeln des modernen Wirtschaftswachstums sind viel komplexer. Es braucht ein Zusammenspiel verschiedener Faktoren, damit Erfindungen in hoher Kadenz auftreten und so einen sprunghaften Anstieg der Produktivität auslösen. Man kann die intellektuelle Redlichkeit von Berg und Hudson nur bewundern und sich

wünschen, dass alle historischen Debatten auf diesem hohen Niveau ausgefochten würden. Leider ist dies eher selten der Fall, solange die Geschichte nur als Politik mit anderen Mitteln begriffen wird.

Friedrich Lenger: Der Preis der Welt. Eine Globalgeschichte des Kapitalismus. C.-H.-Beck-Verlag, München 2023. 669 S., Fr. 53.90. – Maxine Berg, Pat Hudson: Slavery, Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution. Polity Press, Cambridge 2023. 282 S., Fr. 39.90. – Tobias Straumann ist Professor für Wirtschaftsgeschichte an der Universität Zürich.

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19 December (Jerusalem Post)

[Now is the time for sketching out a new political horizon - opinion - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](https://www.jpost.com/opinion/now-is-the-time-for-sketching-out-a-new-political-horizon-opinion)

Now is the time for sketching out a new political horizon - opinion

Israel should declare its commitment to a two-state solution right now, but it lacks leaders who will openly admit this truth.

By AVI GILDECEMBER

19, 2023 00:47



VOLUNTEER from London visits a home gutted by fire in Be'eri this week. The test of victory is in the world of facts: if the residents of the South do not return to their homes, we will not have won, says the writer.(photo credit: Alexi J. Rosenfeld/Getty Images)

‘The day after’ preoccupies international diplomacy and challenges commentators around the world. Countless articles and position papers have laid out action guidelines that address the question of how to move forward after the war ends.

Some questions, however, mask false assumptions that frustrate analysis and render any recommendations derived from it moot. Such is the case with the dangerous conclusion that initiating an Israeli-Palestinian political process should wait until “the day after” the war. We may find that waiting too long precludes the chances of ever reaching an end to the conflict.

The expectations and emotions stirred up by the phrase “the day after” cloud its meaning. Arik Einstein’s hopeful words in his “Song After the War” are on the lips of many Israelis. We want to believe that a comforting light awaits us at the end of the dark tunnel, and that it will wake us from this nightmare and put our lives back on track.

But the war in Gaza can be expected to disappoint those who hang their hopes on “the day after.” Even if that day is ceremoniously announced, it will not necessarily mark the end of the bloodshed.

What will be in store the day after the war ends?

Politicians are known to break promises, but the reality is different this time. An Israeli government that does not act to eradicate Hamas, will eradicate itself. The spin doctors will find it impossible to “engineer” the public consciousness and convince us that “we won.” The test of victory is in the world of facts: if the residents of the South do not return to their homes, we will not have won.



Israel's Knesset. (credit: MARC ISRAEL SELLEM/THE JERUSALEM POST)

It will take the IDF a long time to restore a sense of security to those [traumatized families](#). Even when the Hamas government collapses and its top leaders are eliminated, it will still be necessary to deal with the brushfires of its vestiges. The fighting will continue to fall on the shoulders of the IDF.

Many governments, in the region and outside of it, support the annihilation of Hamas, but they have no appetite for endangering their own soldiers to that end. Moreover, will those displaced from the South return to their homes if their children's safety relies on an international force?

The imperative imposed on the Israeli government to destroy Hamas and the fact that Israel cannot entrust this task to foreign hands will not lead us to a brand new "day after" but to the reoccupation of the Gaza Strip. As the occupation becomes more advanced, fewer tanks will maneuver through the Strip and the fighting will become less intense, but terrorism will not disappear, and we will continue to bleed into the mud of the Gaza quagmire.

Israel's friends around the globe assume that this grim reality will force the nation to contend with the strategic dilemma of how to tackle the conflict between us and the Palestinians. They yearn to see us opt for the two-state solution over a continuing occupation, which can only lead to a binational reality and the forfeiture of Israel's Jewish and democratic character.

Alas, a severe disappointment awaits these friends. Today, no significant Israeli leader stands in ideological opposition to the right-wing concept of unending occupation. The convenient excuse is that we have to wait for "the day after" the war, but waiting exacts a heavy price:

- As an occupying power, Israel may find itself responsible for the fate of two million Palestinians living in misery in the devastated Gaza Strip. Countries willing to invest the necessary billions for its reconstruction are already conditioning their contributions on an Israeli commitment to a political process that will lead to a two-state solution. They insist on not financing the Israeli occupation.
- Israel is treading a dangerous path toward conflict with the United States. US President Joe Biden has voiced his opposition to the reoccupation of Gaza and the necessity of moving toward a two-state solution. Annexation adherents praying for a Trump victory in the November 2024 elections should refresh their memory: the vision of the establishment of a Palestinian state where the West Bank and Gaza are connected as one entity, is at the heart of Trump's "deal of the century."
- Postponing moves that lead to a political settlement grants additional time to the expansion of the settlement enterprise. Eventually, division of the land will no longer be possible, and Israelis will find themselves condemned to live in a violent binational state that has lost its Jewish character.
- A political settlement is the biggest threat to Hamas. In order to defeat the idea that gave rise to the horrors of October 7th, a competing idea must be advanced. A reliable horizon of Palestinian independence will gradually erode the attraction of the Hamas ideology and strengthen the Palestinian camp that supports a historic compromise with Israel.

- The fight against the threat of the radical Islam espoused by Iran requires the establishment of a regional front.

Only a reliable Israeli commitment to the two-state solution will allow the US to establish such an alliance, which will also be key in reaching peace agreements with Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Arab and Muslim world.

Israel has a huge interest in not waiting for “the day after” and should declare its commitment to [a two-state solution](#) right now. But it lacks leaders who will openly admit this truth and work tirelessly to convince the Israeli public of its necessity. Unfortunately, we have just one desperate hope left: a new government that, despite its fear of taking the initiative on its own, will be smart enough to yield to external pressures that insist on a path toward political settlement.

The writer, a former director-general of the Foreign Ministry, is a senior fellow at the Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPPI). His novel *Toronto Junction* was published this year by 2sfarim Publishing.

19 December (Ahram)

[World leaders congratulate Sisi for winning third presidential term - Presidential Elections 2024 - Egypt - Ahram Online](#)

World leaders congratulate Sisi for winning third presidential term

[Radwa ElSayed Hani](#) , Monday 18 Dec 2023

World leaders, foreign embassies, local parties, and syndicates congratulated Egypt's President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi for winning his third presidential term, after the National Elections Authority (NEA) announced his victory in the 2024 elections with 39.7 million votes, representing 89.6 percent of valid votes.



Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud sent a cable of congratulations to El-Sisi on the occasion of his re-election.

In turn, the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, congratulated El-Sisi on his victory, wishing the Egyptian President all the best in the continuing development of Egypt.

Other foreign leaders who have offered their congratulations to President El-Sisi include UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said of Oman, the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Chairman of the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad Muhammad Al-Alimi, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain, and King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Jordan.

In an interview with the Middle East News Agency, Egyptian party leaders congratulated El-Sisi on his win, stressing that his victory affirms the confidence of the Egyptian people in his 'New Republic,' which he outlined upon assuming power in 2014.

Furthermore, Egypt's Coordination Committee of Party Youth Leaders and Politicians extended its sincere congratulations to El-Sisi for winning the elections.

Moreover, the Secretary-General of the Arab League Ahmed Aboul-Gheit, US Ambassador in Egypt Herro Mustafa Garg, Speaker of Egypt's House of Representatives Hanafi Jebali, President of Egypt's Senate Abdel Wahab Abdel-Razeq, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Dr Ahmed El-Tayeb, and Pope Tawadros II of Alexandria congratulated El-Sisi for winning a new presidential term.

In its [press conference](#) on Monday, the NEA's head Hazem Badawy said that the elections saw a turnout of 66.8 percent, with 44.7 million citizens voting in the elections at home and abroad, out of 67.3 million eligible voters.

During a [televised speech](#) on Monday, President El-Sisi expressed his sincere appreciation and immense gratitude to every Egyptian who participated in the elections, while the state grapples with a multitude of challenges across all levels.

El-Sisi also expressed his joy at the sight of Egyptians' lining up at polling stations, "which demonstrates that the will of the Egyptian people is affirmed with the voice of every Egyptian man and woman," he said.

19 December (Le Monde)

https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2023/12/19/en-ukraine-les-prises-de-risque-extremes-des-pilotes-d-helicoptere_6206624_3210.html

En Ukraine, les prises de risque extrêmes des pilotes d'hélicoptère



Par [Emmanuel Grynszpan](#) (Kiev, envoyé spécial) Publié aujourd'hui à 06h00

ReportageAux commandes de vieux Mi-8 soviétiques, deux jeunes militaires témoignent de la difficulté de mener des combats face à une armée russe bien mieux équipée.

Ils rêvent de pouvoir un jour piloter des Black Hawks [*fabriqués par Sikorsky, dont le fondateur a grandi en Ukraine*], des Apache américains ou le Caracal européen. Mais ne se font pas d'illusions. Mykola et Pavlo [*leurs prénoms ont été changés*] sont tous deux commandants de Mi-8, un vieil hélicoptère soviétique, plutôt réservé au transport, comptant un équipage de quatre personnes en mission de combat et dont le maniement se révèle particulièrement complexe et risqué. Avant de livrer leur frustration et leurs espoirs au *Monde*, leur hiérarchie leur a enjoint de ne divulguer qu'une quantité très limitée de détails personnels, pour des raisons de sécurité.



« Pavlo », commandant de Mi-8, devant un monument en hommage aux soldats ukrainiens, le 15 décembre 2023. RAFAEL YAGHOBZADEH POUR « LE MONDE »

Agés respectivement de 25 et 24 ans, ils ont étudié ensemble à l'université nationale de l'armée de l'air Ivan-Kojedoub, à Kharkiv (Ukraine), dont ils ont été diplômés en 2021, juste avant la guerre. Mykola totalise aujourd'hui quatre cents heures de vol, dont plus de cent cinquante en mission de combat, comme l'atteste l'écusson noir sur son épaule gauche. Une expérience déjà énorme pour son jeune âge. Celui de Pavlo, bleu, témoigne quant à lui d'un actif de plus de cent heures de vol en mission de combat.



« Mykola », commandant de Mi-8, le 15 décembre 2023. RAFAEL YAGHOBZADEH POUR « LE MONDE »

Leurs hélicoptères, des Mi-8 plus âgés qu’eux (30 ans en moyenne) ont essuyé de lourdes pertes depuis le début de l’invasion russe, le 24 février 2021. Le nombre exact d’appareils que compte l’armée ukrainienne – un secret militaire – s’élèverait, selon des sources ouvertes, à près de trente-six, dont une partie ne serait probablement plus en état de voler, mais « cannibalisés » pour leurs pièces détachées. Au moins vingt-cinq hélicoptères Mi-8 ont été détruits ou gravement endommagés au cours de combats ou de bombardements.

« Le 8 mars 2022, nous avons reçu l’ordre de détruire une colonne de blindés russes avançant sur Bachtanka [sud de l’Ukraine], se souvient Pavlo. Je commandais le quatrième hélicoptère. A l’approche de la cible, le premier hélicoptère a été abattu au moment où il survolait une colline. Le second, qui le suivait de près, a également été abattu. Le troisième hélicoptère a immédiatement viré pour échapper au feu ennemi, mais a également été touché par un impact sur le flanc. C’est un miracle s’il a pu rentrer à la base. Les équipages des deux premiers hélicoptères sont morts », explique le commandant.

Le danger de la chasse russe

Pour Mykola, le souvenir le plus marquant reste celui d’une mission nocturne de ravitaillement du contingent assiégé d’Azovstal, à Marioupol, fin avril 2022. *« Nous avons pénétré à 23 kilomètres derrière les lignes ennemies [sur 120 kilomètres au total pour rejoindre Azovstal], mais nous avons dû rebrousser chemin face au feu extrêmement nourri de la défense antiaérienne russe. Nous volions pourtant en rase-mottes et il faisait très sombre. Les Russes tiraient avec tout, du canon antiaérien, des missiles sol-air. Il ne nous restait plus du tout de leurres [thermiques]. S’ils avaient tiré un seul missile supplémentaire, nous étions cuits », se souvient le jeune homme.*



Lors de la cérémonie funéraire du pilote Andriy Pilshchykov, à Kiev, le 29 août 2023. Surnommé « Juice », il était l’un des pilotes de chasse les plus célèbres d’Ukraine. Il a trouvé la mort lors d’une collision en vol, le 25 août 2023. RAFAEL YAGHOBZADEH POUR « LE MONDE »

Tous les deux ont perdu beaucoup de camarades, mais assurent être toujours déterminés à poursuivre leurs missions. Leur brigade effectue des rotations de deux ou trois semaines sur le front. *« A chaque fois, les trois premiers jours, on a peur. Puis on s’habitue. Les derniers jours de la rotation, on prend trop de risques », concède Mykola dans un sourire. « Je dis à ma femme que je ne fais que du transport », plaisante Pavlo.*

La défense antiaérienne russe s’est mise en place à partir de la mi-mars 2022, lorsque le front s’est stabilisé. *« C’est à ce moment-là que nous avons subi les plus lourdes pertes », révèle Pavlo. De part et d’autre, les*

tactiques ont changé. Les Mi-8 sont devenus très vulnérables dans un rayon de 30 kilomètres autour des positions russes. Auparavant, le plus grand danger venait, selon les deux pilotes, de tirs amis. *« Au début, c'était assez chaotique et nous prenions soin d'éviter de survoler nos propres troupes. Un algorithme a été mis en place dès mars 2022 et ce problème a disparu »*, se souvient Pavlo.

En septembre, un danger bien plus sérieux est apparu : la chasse russe. *« Leurs avions tirent sur nous des missiles R-37 à 150 kilomètres de distance, pour rester hors de portée de notre défense antiaérienne. Leurs missiles mettent moins d'une minute pour nous atteindre. »* Les pilotes sont parfois informés qu'un missile est tiré sur leur appareil, mais c'est loin d'être toujours le cas. Même si leurs hélicoptères sont équipés de systèmes de guerre électronique pour « tromper » les missiles russes, le risque d'être abattu reste élevé. *« Ce danger est supérieur à celui de la défense antiaérienne. Leur chasse patrouille en permanence dans le ciel »*, explique Mykola.

Le « vol du cabri »

Dans les premières heures de la guerre, les deux camarades, qui ne volent pas dans la même escadrille, avaient pour mission de sauver un maximum d'hélicoptères lorsqu'une pluie de missiles russes visait les aérodromes ukrainiens. Les jours suivants, ils ont acheminé vers Kiev des [missiles antichars occidentaux \(NLAW et Javelin\)](#). Puis leurs Mi-8 ont été armés de lance-roquettes afin de tirer des salves sur les colonnes de blindés russes en mouvement, parfois de concert avec les avions de combat.

« Nos tactiques, comme celles de l'ennemi, évoluent sans cesse », précisent-ils. *« Ces jours-ci nous travaillons à Avdiïvka [le point le plus chaud du front]. Le renseignement nous donne les coordonnées du lieu où ils [les Russes] regroupent leurs troupes et blindés en préparation d'un assaut. Ils forment alors une cible pour nos roquettes non guidées et nous tâchons de les frapper avant qu'ils lancent leur attaque »*, explique Pavlo. *« Les premiers jours de l'assaut russe contre Avdiïvka, c'était si intense, il y avait une telle concentration de forces ennemies, tellement de fumée et de poussière qu'il était difficile de voler. Jamais vu ça, même à Bakhmout. Il nous est arrivé de faire trois missions en une journée »*, raconte Mykola.

Des dizaines de vidéos sur Internet montrent la spectaculaire figure de vol effectuée par les vieux et massifs hélicoptères ukrainiens au moment du tir. Surnommée « vol du cabri », elle consiste à voler si bas que les Mi-8 frôlent le sol pour éviter d'être repérés par les radars ennemis. Arrivé sur la zone de tir, le pilote cabre brusquement l'appareil pendant une poignée de secondes, pour monter le plus rapidement possible. L'opérateur de tir déclenche alors deux salves de roquettes, puis le pilote vire immédiatement à gauche et plonge vers le sol dans la phase la plus périlleuse du vol, afin de revenir en rase-mottes. Parfois, des grappes de leurres sont lâchées pour parer un éventuel tir de missile.

Les générations ultérieures d'hélicoptères de combat sont capables de tirer à plus grande distance des missiles guidés vers leur cible, mais les Mi-8 *« n'ont pas la possibilité d'embarquer de tels missiles »*, se désole Mykola, qui admet que, ces dernières semaines, leurs vieilles roquettes non guidées viennent à manquer. *« Il nous faut impérativement des avions de combat occidentaux récents pour faire la différence dans le ciel. Même si on nous donnait vingt Apache, ça ne changerait pas grand-chose sur le front »*, témoigne Pavlo. L'arrivée d'hélicoptères plus récents et en bon état de marche aurait au moins une vertu, celle d'augmenter les chances de survie des pilotes ukrainiens.

19 December (The Economist)

[Alexei Navalny, Russia's opposition leader, is missing in the gulag \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Navalny vanishes

Alexei Navalny, Russia's opposition leader, is missing in the gulag

His last message announced a campaign against Vladimir Putin

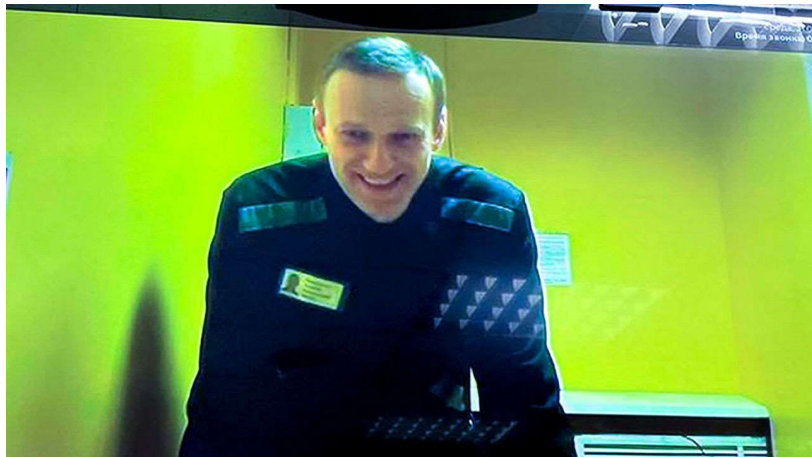


image: ap

Dec 14th 2023

The last time the world heard from Alexei Navalny was on December 7th, when Russia's most important opposition leader, who has been sentenced to 19 years in jail on various trumped-up charges (a term which could be extended to 30 years on new terrorism charges), announced a campaign to discredit Vladimir Putin's re-election as president. On that day, a post from Mr Navalny appeared on X (formerly Twitter): "The presidential elections will take place on March 17, 2024... We encourage everyone to use the 100 days before the vote to fight against Putin and his power."

At the same time, Mr Navalny's allies put up a website called "Russia Without Putin". The purpose was not to influence the electoral result, it said; Mr Putin's re-election is a foregone conclusion. Rather, it was to expose its hollowness: "The result will be rigged. Our task is to make it obvious to everyone that Russia does not need Putin." As ever, Mr Navalny showed that he is able to make an impact even from behind bars. Barred from fighting for Russians' votes, he is fighting for their minds, hoping to turn them against the war and Mr Putin.

The next day, on December 8th, Mr Putin confirmed that he would run in the 2024 elections. The announcement was quietly inserted into a comment made by Mr Putin at a Kremlin reception, in response to a staged plea from a former military commander in Ukraine's Donbas region. The goal was to limit attention to Mr Putin's campaign rather than to highlight it, said Ekaterina Schulmann, a fellow at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Centre, a think-tank in Berlin. The Kremlin does not fear opposition politicians; they are all dead, in exile or in prison. Rather, it worries about popular doubt over the legitimacy of Mr Putin's re-election.

Mr Navalny's goal is to fan those doubts. He wanted to make sure, he said in his post, that on election day "no one cares about the falsified result, but that all of Russia has seen and understood" that it was faked. The Kremlin, as usual, took Mr Navalny's threat seriously, and has made him disappear, from public view at least.

In October several of Mr Navalny's lawyers, who carry his messages to the outside world, were harassed and jailed. On December 11th lawyers who had replaced them were told that Mr Navalny was no longer in his most recently known prison, Penal Colony No. 6, east of Moscow. The authorities have not told them where he has been taken. Mr Navalny has been kept in conditions amounting to torture since his arrest in 2021, and has been awaiting a transfer to an even harsher jail for months. But the timing of his disappearance was almost certainly co-ordinated with Mr Putin's pre-election operation.

In the past several days Mr Navalny's lawyers have desperately tried to locate him within Russia's vast gulag system, contacting 200 prisons. On December 18th Russian courts suspended hearings where Mr Navalny was supposed to appear (whether by video link or in person) until his "whereabouts" could be "established", his lawyers said. For prisoners, the period when they are in transfer between prisons is particularly dangerous; it is de facto impossible to hold anyone accountable for their life and safety. Mr Navalny has never before gone missing for more than a few days. If Mr Navalny's lawyers and family cannot locate him, nothing stops the Kremlin from turning days into weeks. On social media the question "Where is Navalny?" is more and more prominent.

Mr Navalny is not the only political prisoner who has gone missing in recent days. Alexei Gorinov, a former Moscow municipal deputy, who has been sentenced to seven years for speaking out against the war and whose health has deteriorated in prison, disappeared; he was seen by his lawyer in his penal colony on December 8th.

On December 14th Mr Putin staged his annual call-in press conference. Its main purpose was to demonstrate continuity and the lack of an alternative to his rule. The war, he said, will continue for as long as it takes to fulfil its goals. Meanwhile, in a rare daytime attack, a salvo of supersonic missiles struck Kyiv and other cities across Ukraine. But other news suggested that Mr Putin's goals are not close to being achieved: while Russia was showering Ukraine with rockets, eu leaders [agreed to start accession talks](#) with Ukraine. (It was Ukraine's aspiration to move closer to the eu that triggered the overthrow of a Russia-backed government in 2014, which was followed by the Kremlin's first attack on the country.)

The Russian president did not say how many hundreds of thousands of Russian and Ukrainian lives have been consumed by his war, but some figures he used inadvertently hinted at it. By September 2022, he said, 318,000 people had been mobilised; this year another 480,000 have been signed up. Russian and foreign sources agree that some 150,000 were deployed at the start of the invasion. And Mr Putin also said that at present some 615,000 troops are directly involved in the fighting. The figures suggest that well over 300,000 have been killed or wounded—a toll that corresponds to the latest American estimates.

Mr Putin said his war has already brought benefits: Russia's economy is expected to grow by around 3.5% this year, and unemployment is at a record low. In his four-hour appearance, he said nothing about the presidential election. He did thank one supporter who said he had "been in power for as long as I remember". But one question hung in the air without being asked: "Where is Navalny?" ■

19 December (The Guardian)

[Russian courts halt cases against Alexei Navalny after jailed activist disappears](#) | [Alexei Navalny](#) | [The Guardian](#)

Russian courts halt cases against Alexei Navalny after jailed activist disappears

Judges halt seven judicial hearings as UN official says his absence amounts to ‘forced disappearance’



Alexei Navalny on a video link during a hearing at the Russian supreme court in Moscow on 22 June. Photograph: Alexander Zemlianichenko/AP

[Andrew Roth](#)

Mon 18 Dec 2023 18.13 CET

Russian judges have halted new criminal proceedings for the jailed opposition leader [Alexei Navalny](#) as supporters say he has not contacted his lawyers in nearly two weeks and a UN official has said his absence amounted to a “forced disappearance”.

Courts halted seven judicial hearings on Monday “until [Navalny’s] whereabouts [is] established”, his lawyers said, further raising concerns that the Kremlin critic could be muzzled or even killed as [Vladimir Putin](#) has announced plans to extend his rule for a fifth presidential term.

Navalny, who has been sentenced to nearly three decades in prison, [disappeared from a prison in the Vladimir region near Moscow last week](#), and was suspected to have been transferred into a “special regime” colony, where he could be held incommunicado under Russia’s harshest prison regime for years.

Kira Yarmysh, an aide to Navalny, said his team had sent requests to nearly 200 Russian pre-trial detention centres searching for more information on the missing opposition leader but had not been able to find him.

The Kremlin has not answered questions on Navalny’s whereabouts, with Putin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov saying his team had “neither the intention nor the ability to track the fate of prisoners.”

Supporters are also worried that he may have been hospitalised after collapsing earlier this month due to poor sanitation and nutrition in Vladimir’s IK-6 prison, where he was serving a prison sentence on fraud charges. He was sentenced to a further 19 years in a “special regime” colony on extremism charges in August. He has contended that the charges against him are political.

“I am greatly concerned that the Russian authorities will not disclose Mr Navalny’s whereabouts and wellbeing for such a prolonged period of time, which amounts to enforced disappearance,” said Mariana Katzarova, the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation.

“I have learned that the court hearing on the violations of Mr Navalny’s human rights in detention, scheduled for Friday, did not take place. Mr Navalny’s lawyers, who have been prevented from meeting him since 6 December, were told by the court that their client is no longer held in the Vladimir region, without providing any further details,” Katzarova said.

Navalny's disappearance comes as Putin launches his campaign for a fifth presidential term. He is the longest-serving Kremlin leader since Stalin and could surpass him if he continues to run for a sixth term in power.

Navalny's supporters have launched an anti-Putin guerrilla campaign including billboards in Moscow, St Petersburg and Novosibirsk with a QR-code linking to a website that calls for Putin critics to use nonviolent "partisan" tactics to voice their dissent.

Navalny was poisoned in Russia with novichok in 2020, evacuated to Germany for treatment, and then [returned to Russia in 2021, where he was arrested](#), convicted on fraud and extremism charges, and sentenced to three decades in prison. His supporters say he has suffered from mysterious stomach ailments in prison and believe that he is likely to be kept in prison for as long as Putin remains in power.

19 December (The Economist)

[Donald Tusk must undo years of populist subversion in Poland \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Return to the rule of law

Donald Tusk must undo years of populist subversion in Poland

The prime minister has a tough job restoring democracy and judicial independence



image: reuters

Dec 14th 2023 | WARSAW

The handover was just as bitter as the years-long political brawl that preceded it. After losing an election in October, Poland's hard-right Law and Justice (pis) party finally ceded power on December 12th to a coalition headed by Donald Tusk, a veteran former prime minister. After pis lost a vote of confidence in parliament, the party's leader, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, took to the lectern to call Mr Tusk "a German agent"—a puerile insult pis used throughout the campaign, referring to Mr Tusk's German ancestry and his experience as president of the European Council.

A refusal to go gently is common among ousted populists. But it will only bolster Mr Tusk's resolve. In a two-hour speech on December 12th, he promised to mend the rule of law in Poland and win back the favour of the European Union, and with it €60bn (\$65bn) in withheld recovery funds. "No one can outplay me in the eu," he quipped. The cabinet, sworn in on December 13th, includes tough old hands such as Radoslaw Sikorski, who will return as foreign minister, and Borys Budka, a former justice minister tapped to clear pis cronies out of state firms. Mr Tusk is ready for a fight. He will need to be.

In its eight years in power, pis plugged thousands of apparatchiks into courts, public media and state-owned companies, and siphoned off funds to benefit the party. In its final weeks in office, the party changed the rules in the Supreme Court to make it harder to oust illegally appointed judges. Mr Tusk's new government is also hemmed in by Andrzej Duda, the president, who hails from pis and can veto legislation. Mr Duda signed many of pis's legal reforms and may see unravelling them as challenging his own power. A presidential election is not expected until May 2025.

Another problem is the Constitutional Tribunal, which pis packed with loyalists soon after coming to power in 2015. The opposition can use eu court judgments to remove immediately three judges whom pis appointed illegally. But it will need to wait out the nine-year terms of the remaining judges. One of them, Krystyna Pawlowicz, has compared Mr Tusk to Hitler (she later apologised) and more recently said that Germany and the eu intend to liquidate Poland. The court can derail any of the new government's laws.

The final task in fixing the judiciary will be dealing with some 2,200 judges who, courts have ruled, were appointed illegitimately. pis changed the law in 2017 so that the National Council of the Judiciary (ncj), which appoints justices, was selected by parliament. The eu's top court has ruled that this violates judicial independence and that the appointments are void. But scrapping them all would wreak havoc. Many simply

graduated from judicial academy at an unlucky time; the government may let them stay. Others who were hand-picked, often from non-judicial careers, by the pis-controlled ncj will probably be vetted again or fired.

Repairing the system is as delicate as a game of jackstraws, says Ewa Letowska, who was Poland's first ombudsman and later a judge on the Constitutional Tribunal. Yet some moves are relatively simple. The government can end disciplinary cases against judges who opposed pis's reforms or enforced European law.

The winning coalition has already started to use its majority. Starting on November 28th it created several parliamentary commissions to investigate alleged pis misdeeds, including corruption and the deploying of spyware against rivals. In its manifesto Mr Tusk's party, Civic Coalition (ko), promised to hold accountable those it accuses of breaching the constitution—including the president, a former prime minister and the governor of the central bank.

Critics worry that Mr Tusk's party lacks the necessary resolve. (In 2015, they recall, it missed a chance to prosecute Zbigniew Ziobro, who later became pis's fanatical justice minister.) But the government should avoid the appearance of vengefulness, warns Marcin Matczak, a law professor at the University of Warsaw. Criminal proceedings against populists, such as Donald Trump, often boost their popularity. A further challenge will be to rebuild public trust in the rule of law.

To do so, the government will need to take back control of public media, which have become a crude propaganda outlet. The key obstacle here is the National Media Council, a body created by pis in 2016 to appoint heads of public television and radio. Parliament could try replacing some of its members, or attempt to scrap it, relying on a court ruling that it is unconstitutional. Another route would be to liquidate the public media and bring in caretaker managers. (pis tried to block this possibility by changing the media law on its last day in office, but may have botched the paperwork.) Journalists loyal to pis are already accusing the new government of "purges".

Turning back the clock is not enough. It is a cliché in Poland to say that pis had the right diagnosis but the wrong solutions. The judiciary was inefficient and mistrusted, but the party's reforms have made it even slower and less fair. Mr Tusk could start with digitisation: Polish lawyers must still submit procedural documents by mail. Kamila Gasiuk-Pihowicz, an mp from ko, suggests encouraging more out-of-court settlements. Iustitia, an independent organisation of judges, proposes flattening the wage differences between levels of courts to prevent judges from leaving lower ones.

For now, liberal Poles are optimistic about a democratic renaissance. Ms Gasiuk-Pihowicz thinks pis's attack on judicial independence has fostered an appreciation of the rule of law: "When viruses attack the body, it reacts by creating antibodies. It was the same in Poland." Mr Tusk, who likens his coming task to wading into the muck of the Augean stables, is hoping the antibodies are strong.

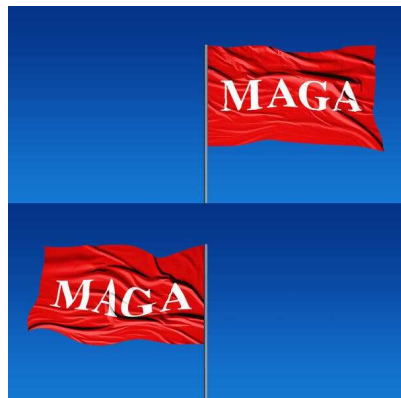
19 December (NYT)

[Opinion | The Secret to Trump's Success Isn't Authoritarianism - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

GUEST ESSAY

The Secret of Trump's Appeal Isn't Authoritarianism

Dec. 18, 2023



Credit...Matt Chase

By Matthew Schmitz, founder and editor of Compact, an online magazine.

If the presidential election were held today, Donald Trump could very well win it. Polling from several organizations shows him [gaining](#) ground on Joe Biden, [winning](#) five of six swing states and [drawing](#) the support of about 20 percent of Black and roughly 40 percent of Hispanic voters in those states.

For some liberal observers, Mr. Trump's resilience confirms that many Americans aren't wedded to democracy and are tempted by extreme ideologies. Hillary Clinton has [described](#) Mr. Trump as a "threat" to democracy, and Mr. Biden has [called](#) him "one of the most racist presidents we've had in modern history."

In a different spirit, some on the right also take Mr. Trump's success as a sign that Americans are open to more radical forms of politics. After Mr. Trump's win in 2016, the Russian philosopher Aleksandr Dugin [crowded](#) that the American people had "started the revolution" against political liberalism itself. Richard Spencer [declared](#) himself and his fellow white nationalists "the new Trumpian vanguard."

But both sides consistently misread Mr. Trump's success. He isn't edging ahead of Mr. Biden in swing states because Americans are eager to submit to authoritarianism, and he isn't attracting the backing of significant numbers of Black and Hispanic voters because they support white supremacy. His success is not a sign that America is prepared to embrace the ideas of the extreme right. Mr. Trump enjoys enduring support because he is perceived by many voters — often with good reason — as a pragmatic if unpredictable kind of moderate.

To be sure, Mr. Trump's wild rhetoric, indifference to protocol and willingness to challenge expertise have been profoundly unsettling to people of both political parties. His term in office was frequently chaotic, and the chaos seemed to culminate in the Capitol riot of Jan. 6, 2021. In the current presidential campaign, Mr. Trump has [promised](#) to appoint a special prosecutor to "go after" Mr. Biden; he continues to argue that the 2020 election was stolen and that America does not have "much of a democracy right now"; his fondness for incendiary language has not abated.

But it is worth remembering that during his presidency, Mr. Trump's often intemperate rhetoric and erratic behavior ended up accompanying a host of moderate policies. On matters ranging from health care and entitlements to foreign policy and trade, Mr. Trump routinely rejected the most unpopular ideas of both political parties. Voters seem to have noticed this reality: When [asked](#) whether Mr. Trump was too conservative, not conservative enough or "not too far either way," 57 percent of voters in a recent poll picked "not too far either way." Only 27 percent of voters regarded him as too conservative.

Such characterizations may baffle Mr. Trump's detractors. But even his most provocative comments since leaving the White House — that he [would be](#) a “dictator” for the first day of his second term; that Mark Milley, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, [deserves](#) to be executed for “a treasonous act” — likely matter less to many voters than how he governed while in office. Inured to his braggadocio, they see him now as he was then: less an ideological warrior than a flexible-minded businessman who favors negotiation and compromise.

This understanding of Mr. Trump, more than any other factor, may explain why so many voters have stuck with him, and why, a year from now, we may be looking ahead to a second Trump administration.

Mr. Trump's moderation can be easy to miss, because he is not a stylistic centrist — the sort who calls for bipartisan budget-cutting and a return to civility. His moderation is closer to that of Richard Nixon, who combined a combative personality and pronounced resentments with a nose for political reality and a willingness to negotiate with his ideological opposites. Mr. Nixon, an ardent anti-Communist, displayed his pragmatism most memorably by going to China. But his pragmatic nature was evident also in his acceptance of the New Deal order, which many conservatives continue to reject.

Likewise with Mr. Trump. Start with his stance on health care, which defies Democratic and Republican positions alike. When asked in 2015 whether he supported universal health care, he [said](#), “Everybody's got to be covered” and “The government's going to pay for it.” In office, he proposed an alternative to Obamacare that conservative congressmen [denounced](#) as a “Republican welfare entitlement.” Last month, when he again [attacked](#) Obamacare, he emphasized that he didn't want to “terminate” the program but rather “replace it with much better health care.”

Mr. Trump's views on Medicare and Social Security have a similar middle-of-the-road quality. “He and I fought about Medicare and entitlement reform all the time,” the former Republican House speaker Paul Ryan [complained](#) last year. “It became clear to me there was no way he wanted to embrace that.” In the current Republican primary race, Mr. Trump has [attacked](#) Ron DeSantis, the governor of Florida, as a “wheelchair-over-the-cliff kind of guy,” citing votes that Mr. DeSantis cast as a congressman for proposals to replace Medicare with vouchers for private insurance and to raise the eligibility age for Social Security.

On trade, Mr. Trump broke with the free-market orthodoxy popular among Democratic and Republican elites — but out of favor with much of Middle America. Accusing China of unfair trade practices, he [placed](#) tariffs on more than \$300 billion worth of Chinese goods. Mr. Biden has maintained these tariffs, lending Mr. Trump's act bipartisan legitimacy. Mr. Trump also pulled the United States out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the free-trade agreement supported by the Obama administration. Mr. Trump's economic record is now his main selling point in 2024. Voters may regard his businessman's instincts as preferable to the formal training of economists, especially in the face of inflationary pressures that many economists understated.

On foreign policy Mr. Trump displayed a prudence and a willingness to negotiate that was at odds with the strident post-Sept. 11 tendencies of both parties. In 2019, for example, he defied hawks such as Mike Pompeo, his secretary of state, and John Bolton, his national security adviser, by calling off a planned missile strike in response to Iran's destruction of a U.S. drone. Mr. Trump argued that an attack that could kill 150 people wasn't “proportionate to shooting down an unmanned drone.”

Among Democrats and Republicans alike, the imperative of condemning adversaries as war criminals and terrorists has increasingly overtaken the conventional art of diplomacy. Mr. Trump, with his love of deal-making, has attempted to buck this trend. In July he [rejected](#) calls to prosecute Vladimir Putin as a war criminal, warning that politicians who endorsed this effort increased the risk of escalation by making it “impossible to negotiate peace.”

On social issues, Mr. Trump has also positioned himself as a kind of moderate. Though he championed the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and has charged Democrats with supporting laws that make it legal to “rip the baby out of the womb” in the ninth month of pregnancy, he has also broken with abortion opponents. After Mr. DeSantis signed Florida's ban on abortions after six weeks, Mr. Trump [called](#) the move “a terrible mistake.” Mr. Trump's critics on the right often accuse him of being insufficiently committed to conservative social views.

That may be true — but it is hardly an electoral liability. By criticizing both late-term abortions and the most comprehensive restrictions on access, Mr. Trump has managed to reflect the muddled views held by much of the electorate.

Consider, too, controversies over gender and sexuality. Mr. Trump did not hesitate to approve limits on transgender people in the military. But no one mistakes him for a Bible-believing evangelical or Midwestern moralist. His irreverent demeanor and promises to “protect our L.G.B.T.Q. citizens” are a reminder that life in New York’s real-estate and media worlds taught him a rough form of tolerance, however politically incorrect he may be. (Senator Ted Cruz of Texas was pointing to this reality in 2016 when he [accused](#) Mr. Trump of embodying “New York values.”) In this way, Mr. Trump represents a conservatism that has come to terms with the fact of diversity, even as it resists the left’s understanding of everything “diversity” should mean.

People on both sides of the political aisle, overlooking Mr. Trump’s moderation, have assumed incorrectly that his rise has been powered by appeals to fringe ideologies. The presidential campaign of Mr. DeSantis offers a vivid example of this mistake.

The campaign has boasted of Mr. DeSantis’s uncompromising conservatism and sought to deploy the quasi-ironic aesthetic radicalism of the online right. One [video](#) it [created](#) this year criticized Mr. Trump for promising to protect L.G.B.T.Q. people, and bragged that Mr. DeSantis had signed “extreme” and “draconian” laws. Another [video made](#) by a campaign aide superimposed a sonnenrad, a symbol associated with neo-Nazis, over Mr. DeSantis’s face. Mr. DeSantis’s subsequent slide in the polls reflects a host of factors, including his reserved personality, but his dead-on-arrival attempt to channel the energy of the online right suggests that its “meme magic” isn’t the reason for Mr. Trump’s success.

To be sure, Mr. Trump has had contacts with members of the bizarre right-wing fringe, most famously in a dinner last year to which the performer Kanye West (now known as Ye) brought Nick Fuentes, an outspoken racist and antisemite. But Mr. Trump differs in significant ways from the extremists with whom he is sometimes identified. For example, he has pushed for criminal justice reform, signing the First Step Act — a bipartisan measure [denounced](#) by Mr. DeSantis as a “jailbreak bill” — and explicitly [promoting](#) it as part of his outreach to Black Americans.

More recently, Mr. Trump [shared](#) on social media the results of a [Reuters investigation](#) that found he was the only living American president who wasn’t descended from slaveholders. (“I hope that every African American in our country is reading this right now,” he wrote. “Remember!”) In the eyes of some conservative critics, Mr. Trump had lent credence to the case for reparations. It is well known that the left objects to Mr. Trump’s record on race, but — more quietly — so does the right. This underappreciated fact may help to explain why Mr. Trump has increased his support among Black voters.

How does one square Mr. Trump’s moderation with his frequent rhetorical excesses? In his 1987 book, “The Art of the Deal,” he offers a clue. He describes his approach to negotiation with a story about preventing a bank from foreclosing on a widow’s farm. When Mr. Trump’s initial pleas are ignored, he threatens to accuse the bank of causing the suicide of the widow’s late husband. Faced with this unpleasant prospect, the bank relents. Mr. Trump observes, “Sometimes it pays to be a little wild.” Whether or not this story is perfectly factual, it illustrates what Mr. Trump aspires to be: a canny negotiator whose outrageous statements help to achieve reasonable settlements.

Of course, Mr. Trump has not been moderate at every moment or on every issue. Looking ahead to a second term, he and his policy team [promise](#) to use the U.S. military to attack drug cartels in Mexico and overhaul civil-service rules to allow him to aggressively reshape the federal bureaucracy. His vow to appoint “a real special prosecutor to go after” Mr. Biden should prompt a more serious consideration of the arguments some [have made](#) that special prosecutors are inconsistent with our legal traditions.

Claims from Trump campaign officials that some of the most ambitious of these proposals [are](#) “purely speculative” and “merely suggestions” may be an attempt to obscure the full extent of Mr. Trump’s ambitions. Or perhaps those proposals reflect his longstanding negotiating strategy of talking big before making more

modest deals. A second Trump term may indeed be more radical and less pragmatic than the first; it's a possibility voters can't dismiss, but also one that his first term gives them reason to discount.

Immigration is the issue on which the promise and limits of Mr. Trump's form of moderation will be put to the test. He now [pledges](#) a more comprehensive and effective crackdown on illegal immigrants than he achieved in his first term, including the construction of detention camps. According to a recent survey, 53 percent of registered voters [trust](#) Mr. Trump more than Mr. Biden on immigration, with only 41 percent preferring Mr. Biden.

Perhaps that disparity reflects a lack of knowledge about the extent of Mr. Trump's plans. Or it may indicate widespread dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs. In October, staff members from Customs and Border Protection [interacted](#) with more than 240,000 people who attempted to enter the United States along the southern border, and between October 2022 and September of this year, 169 people whose names matched those on the terrorist watch list were [arrested](#) while trying to cross.

Indeed, it is easy to overstate how radical Mr. Trump's record is on immigration. Mr. Biden [kept](#) in place Title 42, a Covid-era measure that Mr. Trump had used to speed deportations, and [expanded](#) its use before ending it this year. In 2021, Mr. Biden [declared](#) that "building a massive wall that spans the entire southern border is not a serious policy solution," but he has nonetheless extended Mr. Trump's signature policy. Alejandro Mayorkas, Mr. Biden's homeland security secretary, [acknowledged](#) in October "an acute and immediate need to construct physical barriers" so as to "prevent unlawful entries." Even Mr. Trump's promise to construct detention camps is not entirely at odds with current policy: This fall, the Biden administration [reopened](#) two camps to house minors who have crossed the border.

It is also worth considering that many voters may not consider Mr. Trump's excesses to be as unusual as his opponents do. They may regard the events of Jan. 6, for example, as comparable to the violence that occurred after the death of George Floyd (when protests outside the White House resulted in the injury of [more than 60](#) Secret Service agents and [more than 50](#) members of the U.S. Park Police). They may regard Mr. Trump's effort to overturn the 2020 election results as not altogether unlike Mrs. Clinton's [statement](#) that she "would not" rule out questioning the legitimacy of the 2016 election over claims of Russian collusion. Whether or not such equivalences are warranted, they are available to voters who remain angry that Mr. Trump's opponents, including elected officials, [challenged](#) the legitimacy of his presidency even before he first took office — and seem no less committed to the project today.

The idea that Mr. Trump poses an existential threat to democracy is now closely intertwined with taking certain extraordinary legal steps against him. Though the legal merits of the four criminal cases brought against Mr. Trump vary, their political effect, given their timing and Mr. Trump's continued popularity, is the same: They imply that defending democracy requires burdening, shutting up or even jailing one of the two highest-polling candidates. This is also true of lawsuits filed in several states arguing that Mr. Trump is ineligible to hold office.

If support for Mr. Trump really did indicate an incipient radicalism in the American electorate, such legal actions would be more understandable. Their political costs, however grave, would be easier to justify. But even those who think that some of the indictments of Mr. Trump are well grounded [might conclude](#) that the costs of prosecution, given the possible appearance of a partisan motive, are too high — that they pose the sort of threat to democratic norms that they purport to guard against.

For those sincerely concerned to preserve our democratic traditions, there is no need to take such drastic measures. As disruptive as Mr. Trump can be, his success testifies to American voters' desire for moderation and skepticism of extremist ideologies. In November, Americans may well decide that they again prefer Joe Biden to Donald Trump. But if the United States really is a democracy, they will be permitted to make that choice freely

19 December (NZZ)

[Chinas Angst vor Kritik gefährdet die freie Welt \(nzz.ch\)](https://www.nzz.ch)

KOMMENTAR

Chinas Angst vor Kritik gefährdet die freie Welt

Personen mit Einfluss, die unabhängig denken und unerschrocken handeln, lösen in Peking grosse Verunsicherung aus. Genau so einer war der Verleger Jimmy Lai. Er muss nun als mahnendes Beispiel erhalten.

[The fear of criticism in China jeopardizes the free world. Individuals with influence who think independently and act fearlessly cause significant unease in Beijing. One such person was the publisher Jimmy Lai. He must now serve as a cautionary example.]

Katrin Büchenbacher

19.12.2023, 05.55 Uhr 3 min



Die Zeitung «Apple Daily» war Peking zu regierungskritisch. Dem Verleger droht nun lebenslange Haft. Imago

Im Vokabular der Regierungsvertreter in Peking fehlt der Begriff des Journalisten. «Liebe Freunde von den Medien» heisst es da bezeichnenderweise bei direkter Ansprache. Jimmy Lai, der die Hongkonger Zeitung «Apple Daily» gegründet hat, war das Gegenteil eines «lieben Freundes» – und damit ein Journalist, wie es eine Demokratie braucht: unabhängig, unbequem, kritisch.

An Jimmy Lai wird ein Exempel statuiert

Hongkong ist jedoch keine Demokratie, sondern ein Teil des autokratischen China. Seit die Regierung in Peking der Stadt 2020 ein Gesetz für nationale Sicherheit übergestülpt hat, ist das offensichtlicher denn je. Kritiker wie Jimmy Lai werden nun beseitigt. Der Prozess gegen ihn, der am Montag begonnen hat, soll ein Exempel statuieren. Ab jetzt gelten die Regeln der Kommunistischen Partei, die keine Kritik duldet. Lai könnte zu lebenslanger Haft verurteilt werden.

Was hat er getan? Seine Zeitung «Apple Daily» war bei den Hongkongern zur Stimme der Demokratiebewegung geworden. Von den Demonstrationen 2019 hatten Videoreporter der Zeitung live berichtet. Selbst in den Newsrooms der Pekinger Staatsmedien klebten die jungen «Freunde von den Medien» vor den Bildschirmen und verfolgten die Live-Sendungen von «Apple Daily». Hunderttausende, die gegen die Regierungspolitik auf die Strassen gingen! So etwas hatten sie noch nie gesehen.

Freie Medien wären systemgefährdend für China

Genau davor fürchten sich die Herrscher in Peking: dass sich lokaler Widerstand durch die Medien im ganzen Land ausbreiten könnte. Journalisten wie jene von «Apple Daily» recherchieren, analysieren und berichten. Sie erarbeiten eine Faktenbasis als Grundlage von Debatten. Sie schaffen eine Öffentlichkeit und geben der

Bevölkerung die Macht, sich eine eigene, informierte Meinung zu bilden. So stabilisieren die Medien das System in Demokratien. In Autokratien bewirken sie das Gegenteil.

Chinas Regime hat nicht die Stärke, sich den spontanen Fragen von Journalisten zu stellen. Das zeigt, wie bröckelig der Sockel der Macht ist, auf dem die Herrscher in Peking stehen – und wie viel sie zu verbergen haben. Sie müssen die Medien streng kontrollieren, um zu vermeiden, dass eine Öffentlichkeit entsteht, die ihr Machtmonopol infrage stellen könnte. In China sind deshalb die meisten Medienunternehmen in Staatsbesitz.

Chinas Einschüchterungstaktik funktioniert weltweit

Unter Xi Jinping hat sich der Gestaltungsraum für heimische Journalisten noch weiter verringert. Inzwischen erhalten nur noch wenige überhaupt eine Akkreditierung. Erfahrene investigative Reporter sind ausgewandert. Berufseinsteiger dominieren die Newsrooms der staatlichen Medien. Nach wenigen Jahren wechseln sie in der Regel den Job, der zu gefährlich oder zu langweilig ist. Übrig bleiben die «lieben Freunde von den Medien».

Was geht uns das an? Viel. Denn Peking hat ein Interesse daran, dass die Journalisten auch über Festlandchina hinaus zu «Freunden» werden. Notfalls durch Abschreckung. Ende Oktober war die Journalistin Minnie Chan von der «South China Morning Post» in Hongkong zu einem Sicherheitsforum in Peking gereist. Seither gilt sie als vermisst. Sie hatte viel zu Chinas Armee recherchiert. Im selben Monat war die australische Journalistin Cheng Lei nach drei Jahren Haft in China freigelassen worden. Und im April war der chinesische Verleger Li Yanhe während einer Reise von seinem Wohnort Taiwan aufs Festland verhaftet worden. Die chinesischen Behörden sagten, sowohl Cheng wie Li hätten die nationale Sicherheit gefährdet.

Diese Fälle sind so wie der Prozess gegen Jimmy Lai, der einen britischen Pass hat, Teil der chinesischen Einschüchterungstaktik. Sie werden von Journalisten, Verlegern und auch Akademikern in Hongkong, Taiwan und darüber hinaus als Warnung verstanden. Wer sich mit China beschäftigt und von Zugang zu China abhängig ist, wird in Zukunft diese Schicksale im Kopf haben und sich eine heikle Recherche oder Kritik möglicherweise zweimal überlegen. Die Welt wird ein Stück unfreier.

19 December (The Economist)

[Why Congo's chaotic election matters \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Land of confusion

Why Congo's chaotic election matters

The country is a vortex of instability at the heart of Africa



image: ap

Dec 18th 2023

One of the world's least orderly elections will be held on December 20th. Or will it? A presidential ballot is scheduled in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a mineral-rich but breathtakingly poor country of 100m people. However, the preparations have been [so shambolic](#) that some locals expect a delay, or an extension of voting. Many areas will not receive crucial papers for recording the results by election day. By one estimate 70% of voter-identity cards are illegible, raising fears that some people will be barred from voting, while others will vote twice. And those are just some of the problems in the parts of the Congo that are not at war.

Fighting has forced 7m Congolese people to flee from their villages, including 450,000 in the six weeks to the end of November. A confusion of conflicts makes life in much of the east of the country unbearable—some of the militias there loot rapaciously and seek to subjugate local populations through mass rape. No other country, [bar Sudan](#), endures displacement on such a scale.

One of the strongest militias, the m23, is backed by Rwanda, though Rwanda denies it. Tensions between the two countries are frighteningly high. Some observers fear open war may break out; Avril Haines, the White House intelligence chief, has been bending ears in both countries' capitals to avert such a calamity, and seems to have brokered a temporary ceasefire in their proxy war. On the campaign trail, Congolese politicians denounce their neighbour in incendiary terms. Around the time Britain's Parliament was declaring Rwanda to be safe for asylum-seekers, Congo's president, Félix Tshisekedi, was telling a cheering crowd near the border that his Rwandan counterpart, Paul Kagame, was acting "like Hitler" and would end up like him.

Against this backdrop, the odds of a free and fair ballot are not good. The last time Congo voted, [in 2018](#), an independent tally recorded a thumping victory for Martin Fayulu, a candidate who promised to curb corruption. But the electoral authorities announced wildly different numbers and handed the presidency to Mr Tshisekedi. Many Congolese suspect a stitch-up, whereby the outgoing regime of Joseph Kabila handed power to Mr Tshisekedi in return for a promise not to touch Mr Kabila's economic interests. (Both men deny it.) America turned a blind eye for fear that if it did not, Congo might turn to China for support. It is a threat Congolese politicians use often and shrewdly.

Five years on, Mr Tshisekedi wants a second term. He has done little to deserve it, even if one overlooks the way he took power in the first place. His big reform was to declare education free, which prompted more children to go to school. But some teachers complain that when parents stopped paying them, the state did not

make up the difference. Classrooms are even more overcrowded than they were before, and teachers are often absent. Meanwhile, although the economy has grown robustly, thanks largely to higher prices for Congo's minerals, ordinary Congolese have seen few benefits. Some 60% of them subsist on less than \$2.15 a day. Food-price inflation is an agonising 173%. And corruption appears to have grown even worse, if the grumbles of local businessfolk are true.



image: the economist

The 26 candidates include Moïse Katumbi, a respected entrepreneur-turned-governor, and Denis Mukwege, a doctor who won the Nobel Peace prize for treating war-rape survivors. Against this divided opposition, Mr Tshisekedi, who hints without evidence that Mr Katumbi is really “Rwanda’s candidate”, needs to secure only a plurality of votes. Given the advantages of incumbency—Mr Tshisekedi’s posters are everywhere, his rivals’ are practically invisible—he could perhaps win without cheating. (Polls are unreliable.) If he loses, however, many fear the count will be rigged. A European Union observer mission was forced to withdraw almost completely when the government did not give it permission to bring essential equipment into the country.

For all its dysfunction, Congo matters. It has 70% of the world’s production of cobalt, a mineral essential for the green transition. It is so big and so central that its problems cannot be contained: a civil war from 1998 to 2003 sucked in eight other African countries and cost between 1m and 5m lives, depending on which highly speculative estimate you believe. If the country were ever to stop fighting and start developing, it could be a fulcrum for trade and a huge source of hydroelectric power for the continent. So the question of whether Congolese people can freely choose their rulers has consequences.

Their will could still, conceivably, be respected. Congolese NGOs will try to spot and report rigging, as will some of the remaining international observers. But if the vote turns out to be a sham again, outsiders should say so, including other African governments and the West. If America wants to be taken seriously as a champion of democracy, it should not endorse electoral theft. ■

19 December (NYT)

[Pope Francis Allows Priests to Bless Same-Sex Couples - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com)

Pope Francis Allows Priests to Bless Same-Sex Couples

A church official said the blessings amounted to “a real development” that nevertheless did not amend “the traditional doctrine of the church about marriage.”



Pope Francis at the Vatican last year. The decision to allow blessings was based on his “pastoral vision,” officials said. Credit...Andreas Solaro/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

By [Jason Horowitz](#)

Reporting from Rome

Dec. 18, 2023

The Vatican said Monday that Pope Francis had allowed priests to bless same-sex couples, his most definitive step yet to make the Roman Catholic Church more welcoming to L.G.B.T.Q. Catholics and more reflective of his vision of a more pastoral, and less rigid, church.

The Vatican had long said it could not bless same-sex couples because it would undermine church doctrine that marriage is only between a man and a woman.

But the new rule made clear that a blessing of a same-sex couple was not the same as a marriage sacrament, a formal ceremonial rite. It also stressed that it was not blessing the relationship, and that, to avoid confusion, blessings should not be imparted during or connected to the ceremony of a civil or same-sex union, or when there are “any clothing, gestures or words that are proper to a wedding.”

Blessings instead are better imparted, the Vatican says, during a meeting with a priest, a visit to a shrine, during a pilgrimage or as a prayer recited in a group.

The new rule was issued in a declaration, a rare and important Vatican document, by the church’s office on doctrine and introduced by its head, Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, who said that the declaration did not amend “the traditional doctrine of the church about marriage,” because it allowed no liturgical rite that could be confused with the sacrament of marriage.

“It is precisely in this context,” Cardinal Fernández wrote, “that one can understand the possibility of blessing couples in irregular situations and same-sex couples without officially validating their status or changing in any way the church’s perennial teaching on marriage.”

In his introduction to the declaration, which was signed and approved by Pope Francis, Cardinal Fernández nevertheless acknowledged that broadening the scope of who could receive blessings amounted to “a real development” and an “innovative contribution to the pastoral meaning of blessings.” He said the decision was “based on the pastoral vision of Pope Francis.”



A demonstrator waved a rainbow flag in front of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome during the annual Pride march in 2021. Credit...Gregorio Borgia/Associated Press

In recent decades, many Christian denominations have decided to allow blessings and marriages of same-sex couples, and to ordain openly gay clergy. But debates over the issue have led to conservative breakaways in Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and other churches. The Roman Catholic Church has long been seen as among the least likely to change its stance.

But Francis, who turned 87 on Sunday, has in recent weeks sought to jump-start discussion on the church's most sensitive topics as he has cracked down on his most incessant conservative critics. The new declaration is something akin to an executive order outside the more deliberative process he has favored.

More on the Roman Catholic Church

A High-Profile Case: A Vatican criminal court sentenced Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu, once one of the church's most powerful officials, to [five and a half years in prison for financial crimes](#).

Cremation Rules: The Vatican said that Catholic families [may ask to preserve "a minimal part of the ashes" of a relative](#) in a place of significance to the deceased, softening a previous mandate that ashes could be kept only in "sacred spaces" like cemeteries.

Running Out of Patience: Pope Francis, who recently [moved against two](#) of [his most vocal critics](#) in the United States, seems increasingly [focused on settling scores and cleaning house](#).

In the American Catholic Church: The pope's increasingly open pushback against conservatives in the church [has nurtured a deep wariness of his leadership](#) in certain pockets of Catholic life in America.

"The request for a blessing," the declaration states, "expresses and nurtures openness to the transcendence, mercy and closeness to God in a thousand concrete circumstances of life, which is no small thing in the world in which we live. It is a seed of the Holy Spirit that must be nurtured, not hindered."

Supporters of a church more welcoming to same-sex couples agreed.

"This new declaration opens the door to nonliturgical blessings for same-sex couples, something that had been previously off-limits for bishops, priests and deacons," said the Rev. James Martin, a prominent advocate for L.G.B.T.Q. Catholics, who has met frequently with Francis, a fellow Jesuit, and talked to him about the church's need to better recognize L.G.B.T.Q. Catholics. "Along with many priests, I will now be delighted to bless my friends in same-sex unions."

There has been a burst of activity on the L.G.B.T.Q. issue in recent months from the office of the Doctrine of the Faith, run by Cardinal Fernández. It comes after many advocates for L.G.B.T.Q. Catholics were frustrated by a lack of progress, or even recognition, during [a major October meeting](#) of bishops and lay people that will be repeated next year and could potentially lead to major changes in the church.

On Oct. 31, Francis approved another document by Cardinal Fernández's department, making clear that transgender people can be baptized, serve as godparents and be witnesses at church weddings.

Earlier in October, the Vatican released Francis' private response to doubts from conservative cardinals about the possibility of blessing same-sex couples. Francis instead suggested the blessings were a possibility, seemingly reversing a 2021 Vatican ruling that came down hard against the blessing of gay unions, arguing that God "cannot bless sin."

While the pope then upheld the church position that marriage could exist only between a man and a woman, he said that priests should exercise "pastoral charity" when it came to requests for blessings. But Francis also made clear that he did not want the delivering of a blessing to a same-sex couple by an ordained minister to become a simple protocol, as had been the case in parts of the liberal German church that support same-sex blessings. He has urged priests to be open to "channels beyond norms."

Indeed, the heart of the new declaration, "Fiducia Supplicans: On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings," is a resistance to a rigid church, one that excludes people from blessings because they fail doctrinal or moral litmus tests, but also one that turns blessings — including to same-sex couples — into another suffocating formality. Francis wants most of all a spontaneity and closeness to the faithful that he considers vital to the church's survival.

The blessing "should not become a liturgical or semiliturgical act, similar to a sacrament," the declaration states. "Such a ritualization would constitute a serious impoverishment because it would subject a gesture of great value in popular piety to excessive control, depriving ministers of freedom and spontaneity in their pastoral accompaniment of people's lives."



Victor Manuel Fernández being appointed cardinal by Pope Francis during a ceremony in September in Saint Peter's Square in Vatican City.Credit...Giuseppe Lami/EPA, via Shutterstock

It also does not want the blessings to be seen as a substitute for the marriage sacrament for same-sex couples or other couples in "irregular situations."

Conservatives from Africa, where bishops are highly skeptical of the church's opening to L.G.B.T.Q. people, to North America, where much of the opposition to Pope Francis is financed, expressed reservations.

"After today's statement," John Oballa, the bishop of Ngong Diocese in Kenya, southwest of the capital, Nairobi, said in an interview Monday, "we are sure many questions will be coming from the congregation" about what all this means. "They will like to know how far this goes, what implications it will have and what it portends for the future."

LifeSite News, a conservative outlet based in North America, wrote Monday that the document was issued "in contradiction to the unchangeable Catholic teaching that the church cannot bless sinful relationships."

But the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which has a large conservative contingent, accepted the new rule, noting that it marked a distinction between sacramental blessings like marriage and a pastoral blessing for people seeing "God's loving grace in their lives."

"The church's teaching on marriage has not changed," said Chieko Noguchi, the conference's spokesperson.

The rules are a clear opening toward L.G.B.T.Q. Catholics.

The declaration notes that the prior judgment from the Vatican, in 2021, stressed that the church did not have the power to bless human relationships that failed to conform with “God’s designs,” including sexual relations outside marriage and same-sex unions that presumed “to be a marriage.”

But the new Vatican declaration argued that this was an overly narrow view of blessings, which are intended to evoke God’s presence in all facets of life, and can be bestowed on people, objects of worship, places of work, ships and much else. It makes the case that blessings are a “a pastoral resource to be valued rather than a risk or a problem.”

In a secular era when the church is often on the defensive, the Vatican apparently did not want to deprive itself of one of its most effective tools for connecting with a popular piety that Francis sees as critical for the church’s future.

By restricting blessings, the new declaration states, “there is the danger that a pastoral gesture that is so beloved and widespread will be subjected to too many moral prerequisites,” and “overshadow” its intention to express God’s love.

It adds: “Thus, when people ask for a blessing, an exhaustive moral analysis should not be placed as a precondition for conferring it. For, those seeking a blessing should not be required to have prior moral perfection.”

The issue of blessing same-sex couples has exploded in recent years, especially in Germany, where priests have regularly offered blessings despite Vatican resistance.



A public blessing ceremony for same-sex couples and remarried couples in September outside Cologne Cathedral in Germany. Credit...Martin Meissner/Associated Press

“It cannot be overstated how significant the Vatican’s new declaration is,” Francis DeBernardo, the executive director of New Ways Ministry, a Maryland-based group that advocates for gay Catholics, said in a statement. He welcomed the pope’s decision not to make blessings subject to a moral litmus test, which he called a step “to overturn the harsh policing of pastoral care” by his predecessors.

Francis, who has received official expressions of doubt on his teaching on the issue from conservative critics, but who is also under constant pressure from liberals in Germany on blessing same-sex unions, seemed done with the issue.

“Beyond the guidance provided above,” the declaration states, “no further responses should be expected about possible ways to regulate details or practicalities regarding blessings of this type.”

Abdi Latif Dahir contributed reporting from Kenya.

[Jason Horowitz](#) is the Rome bureau chief for The Times, covering Italy, the Vatican, Greece and other parts of Southern Europe.

19 December (The Economist)

[The best books of 2023, as chosen by The Economist](#)

Shelf help

The best books of 2023, as chosen by The Economist

This year's picks transport readers to mountain peaks, out to sea and back in time

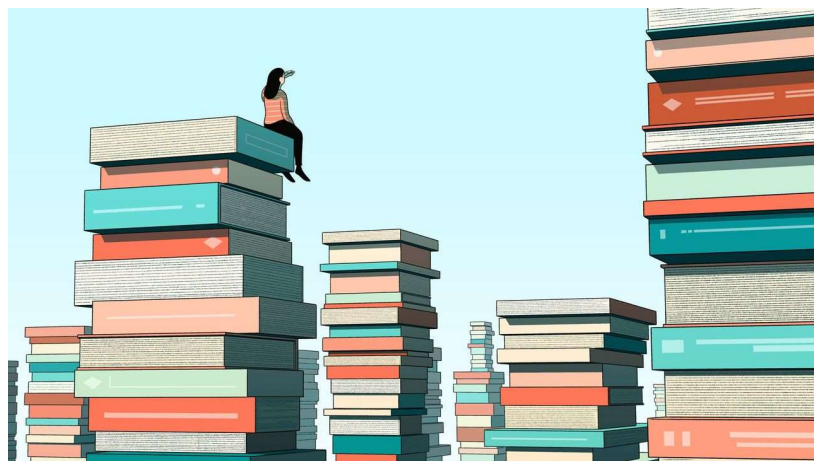


image: bianca bagnarelli

Dec 1st 2023

Current affairs and politics

Deadly Quiet City. By Murong Xuecun. *New Press*; 336 pages; \$27.99. *Hardie Grant*; £14.99

In 2020, at the start of the pandemic, a celebrated Chinese writer interviewed people in Wuhan about their experiences during lockdown. His [brave and vital book](#) follows eight people, including a doctor at a small hospital, an unlicensed driver of a motorcycle taxi, and a citizen journalist, whose daring efforts resulted in a prison sentence.

Fear Is Just a Word. By Azam Ahmed. *Random House*; 384 pages; \$28. *Fleet*; £22

Since the early 2000s, the number of Mexicans who have disappeared and not yet been found has risen from a handful to more than 100,000. A journalist for the *New York Times* tracks Miriam, whose youngest daughter is kidnapped and then killed by the Zeta gang. By focusing on one mother's extraordinary story, the author evokes the cartels' painful toll.

Flowers of Fire. By Hawon Jung. *BenBella Books*; 304 pages; \$18.95 and £15.99

A [brilliant examination](#) of South Korean feminists' struggle for equality with global resonance. It describes how many South Koreans still see women only as cooks, cleaners and "baby-making machines" and tells tales of misogyny, from spycams in public toilets to bigots in public office.

The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory. By Tim Alberta. *Harper*; 496 pages; \$35

This chronicle of the modern evangelical movement in America is a horror story told from the inside. Its author, a staff writer for the *Atlantic*, is angry and heartbroken as he watches the religious community in which he was brought up being hijacked by power-hungry hucksters and right-wing nationalists.

Some People Need Killing. By Patricia Evangelista. *Random House*; 448 pages; \$30. *Grove Press*; £20

A rigorously reported look at Rodrigo Duterte's campaign against illegal drugs from a Filipina journalist. It is also a story of lost innocence, as she learns that the vast majority of people in the Philippines supported their president's lawless war on drugs, in which perhaps 27,000 people were killed extra-judicially.

Sparks. By Ian Johnson. *Oxford University Press*; 400 pages; \$27.95. *Allen Lane*; £25

A Pulitzer-prizewinning journalist describes the valiant efforts of [China's "underground historians"](#), a motley and persistent group of academics, artists, film-makers and journalists attempting to correct the official record and provide truthful accounts of history. An insight into the risks that some Chinese take to illuminate the darkest episodes of Communist Party rule.

Business and economics

Anansi's Gold. By Yepoka Yeebo. *Bloomsbury*; 400 pages; \$29.99 and £20

This is the story of one of the [world's greatest \(but least famous\)](#) con artists. Ghana's John Ackah Blay-Miezah bilked investors on several continents by promising he knew where lost gold was hidden. Exhaustive reporting by the author makes this a riveting addition to the canon on great swindlers.

Best Things First. By Bjorn Lomborg. *Copenhagen Consensus Centre*; 314 pages; £16.99

A forceful argument to replace the sprawling and vague Sustainable Development Goals from the United Nations with 12 cost-effective policies to help the world's poor. "Some things are difficult to fix, cost a lot and help little," the author writes. Others are solved "at low cost, with remarkable outcomes".

The Fiscal Theory of the Price Level. By John Cochrane. *Princeton University Press*; 584 pages; \$99.95 and £84

An economics professor at Stanford University [builds out a new\(ish\) theory](#) for how government debt, not interest rates, ultimately determines prices. Not for the faint-hearted, this book is provocative to economists and well-timed for an age of big deficits and high inflation.

The Geek Way. By Andrew McAfee. *Little, Brown*; 336 pages; \$30. *Pan Macmillan*; £22

A technology-and-business guru at mit explains how the mindset that inspires Silicon Valley could be usefully applied in life and in other fields of business, with a focus on teamwork, producing prototypes quickly and avoiding bureaucracy through individual accountability.

How Big Things Get Done. By Bent Flyvbjerg and Dan Gardner. *Crown Currency*; 304 pages; \$28.99. *Macmillan*; £18.99

Megaprojects often turn into megasnafus. [This entertaining book](#), co-written by an academic at Oxford University and a journalist, looks at why ambitious schemes so consistently miss deadlines and budgets and what can be done about it. Project management has never been more fun.

Material World. By Ed Conway. *Knopf*; 512 pages; \$35. *WH Allen*; £22

The economics and data editor of Sky News in Britain travels the world in this study of how six crucial materials—copper, iron, lithium, oil, salt and sand—have altered human history and underpin the modern economy. As countries seek to decarbonise, a battle is raging to control their supply.

The Missing Billionaires. By Victor Haghani and James White. *Wiley*; 416 pages; \$29.99 and £22.99

A compelling book dealing with an [important and neglected question](#) in finance: not what to buy or sell, but how much. Even sophisticated professionals tend to answer this question badly, leading to lost fortunes. But financial theory provides the answer. Mathematical but not excessively so, this will appeal to anyone with an interest in markets.

Scaling People. By Claire Hughes Johnson. *Stripe Press; 480 pages; \$30 and £21.99*

Good books about the nuts and bolts of management are vanishingly rare. A former executive at Google and Stripe [offers a practical guide](#) to everything from giving feedback and delegating to running a meeting and building teams.

Unscripted. By James Stewart and Rachel Abrams. *Penguin Press; 416 pages; \$32. Cornerstone Press; £25*

A [deeply reported and unsparring account](#) of the final years of Sumner Redstone, an American media mogul who died in 2020. Like a lot of reality tv, “Unscripted” is riveting because its cast is so awful. It delves into (sometimes excruciating) detail about his domineering character and extraordinary antics.

Biography and memoir

Hitler, Stalin, Mum and Dad. By Daniel Finkelstein. *PublicAffairs; 560 pages; \$35. HarperCollins; £25*

Both sides of the author’s family were remarkable. His maternal grandfather, Alfred Wiener, was a prominent German Jew who created the most extensive archives documenting the Holocaust; Alfred’s wife and daughters were deported to a concentration camp. The author’s paternal grandmother was transported to a gulag in Siberia. A tale of survival, eloquently told.

Ian Fleming. By Nicholas Shakespeare. *Harvill Secker; 864 pages; £30. To be published in America by Harper in March; \$35*

Almost everyone on Earth has heard of James Bond. But fewer know the details of how exciting and tormented the life of 007’s creator, Ian Fleming, was. [This biography](#) has flaws, but it will still be remembered as definitive, tracing Fleming’s childhood, military service, espionage, love affairs and writing career.

Into the Amazon. By Larry Rohter. *W.W. Norton; 480 pages; \$38*

Cândido Rondon, an orphan from Brazil’s poor hinterland, rose to become a military officer who oversaw monumental engineering works in the Amazon and pioneered a non-violent approach to local indigenous groups. A vivid look at a hero whose humanism was ahead of his time, by a journalist for the *New York Times*.

J.L. Austin. By M.W. Rowe. *Oxford University Press; 688 pages; \$38.95 and £30*

Most people are lucky if they enjoy one distinguished career: J.L. Austin had two. He shook up the study of philosophy at Oxford. And, as this scrupulous and engrossing biography shows, he played a crucial role as an intelligence analyst in the Allied invasion of France in 1944.

King. By Jonathan Eig. *Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 688 pages; \$35. Simon & Schuster; £25*

[This magnificent biography](#) is an overdue attempt to grapple with Martin Luther King in all his complexity. The author, an American journalist, makes the civil-rights leader’s courage and moral vision seem all the more exceptional for having come from a man with so many ordinary human flaws.

Milton Friedman. By Jennifer Burns. *Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 592 pages; \$35*

The most complete biography of the economist who did more than any other to inspire free-market reforms around the world in the 1980s. It documents Friedman's role in shaping laissez-faire economic policies and libertarian thought and shows his enduring relevance, despite the world's protectionist turn.

Monet. By Jackie Wullschläger. *Penguin*; 576 pages; £35

[Written sympathetically and with skill](#) by the chief art critic of the *Financial Times*, this is the first account in English of the much-loved artist's life and work. Monet was a tempestuous man, whose most lasting relationship—in art as in life—was with water.

Still Pictures. By Janet Malcolm. *Farrar, Straus and Giroux*; 176 pages; \$26. *Granta*; £14.99

A kind of [posthumous memoir](#) in which a *New Yorker* writer (who died in 2021 and once compared journalists to con-men) probes memory, childhood and storytelling itself. "Do we ever write about our parents without perpetrating a fraud?" she asks, with characteristic incisiveness.

Waiting to Be Arrested at Night. By Tahir Hamut Izgil. Translated by Joshua Freeman. *Penguin Press*; 272 pages; \$28. *Jonathan Cape*; £14.99

A memoir from a [Uyghur poet now living in exile](#) in America. He recounts how Xinjiang was transformed into a panopticon of state control, as the Chinese government began the detention and torture of Uyghur Muslims. An urgent tale of survival and subversion.

Wifedom: Mrs Orwell's Invisible Life. By Anna Funder. *Knopf*; 464 pages; \$32. *Viking*; £20

In this [thought-provoking inquiry](#) into the life of Eileen O'Shaughnessy, George Orwell's long-suffering wife, the author's aim is not to "cancel" Orwell, a thinker she deeply admires. Instead, by imaginatively resurrecting Eileen, she explores patriarchy and asks why women still vanish into subordinate roles.

History

A Day in the Life of Abed Salama. By Nathan Thrall. *Metropolitan Books*; 272 pages; \$29.99. *Allen Lane*; £25

An American journalist in Jerusalem examines the events that led up to a bus crash in the West Bank in 2012 that killed six Palestinian children and one of their teachers. Part history, journalism, diatribe and lament, [the book](#) builds a relentless case that this crash and the ensuing trauma must be remembered.

The Blazing World. By Jonathan Healey. *Knopf*; 512 pages; \$38. *Bloomsbury*; £30

A [page-turning yet erudite history](#) of the 17th century in revolutionary England. This account of a time of religious and political turmoil, intellectual ferment, scientific innovation and media upheaval is accessible and abounds with contemporary resonances.

Emperor of Rome. By Mary Beard. *Liveright*; 512 pages; \$39.99. *Profile Books*; £30

A much-loved Cambridge professor, known for her passion for unearthing the "real" Rome, describes a chariot-load of extraordinary characters, [examining around 30 emperors](#) over 250 years. Readers will enjoy learning about the lives of these blood-splashed, technicolour rulers. Prepare to be shocked and entertained.

In Her Nature. By Rachel Hewitt. *Chatto and Windus*; 528 pages; £25

For hundreds of years women have had to fight for space to pursue outdoor sport. This inspiring book interweaves the author's personal story of loss with the hidden history of trailblazing women who became cyclists, hikers, mountaineers and runners.

Judgment at Tokyo. By Gary Bass. *Knopf*; 892 pages; \$46. To be published in Britain by Pan Macmillan in January; £30

A [meticulously researched and authoritative](#) account of efforts to prosecute and punish Japanese generals and politicians deemed responsible for some of the horrors of the second world war. The author, a former writer for *The Economist*, looks at why attempts to produce a shared sense of justice failed.

The Lumumba Plot. By Stuart Reid. *Knopf*; 624 pages; \$35 and £30

An editor at *Foreign Affairs* recounts the rise and demise of Patrice Lumumba, who was prime minister of post-independence Congo for less than three months in 1960 before he was assassinated, establishing the playbook for future cia interventions. A shameful story, [recounted with verve and thoughtfulness](#).

Revolutionary Spring. By Christopher Clark. *Crown*; 896 pages; \$40. *Allen Lane*; £35.

A historian at Cambridge traces the [events of 1848](#)—the year revolutions spread to almost every country in Europe. “Hierarchies beat networks. Power prevailed over ideas and arguments,” he writes. This scintillating book features a compelling cast of idealists, thinkers, propagandists and cynics and argues that their sacrifices were not wholly in vain.

On Savage Shores. By Caroline Dodds Pennock. *Knopf*; 320 pages; \$32.50. *Orion*; £22

An [absorbing account](#) of indigenous peoples in 16th-century Europe. Using archival documents and oral histories, the study shatters the Eurocentric assumption that, half a millennium ago, people and ideas flowed in only one direction, from the old world to the “new”.

The Wager. By David Grann. *Doubleday*; 352 pages; \$30. *Simon & Schuster*; £20

A thrilling account of a shipwreck off the coast of Patagonia in 1741 from the author of “Killers of the Flower Moon” (recently adapted into a film by Martin Scorsese). It revolves around three complex figures. Those who love yarns involving cannon fire, sea-chests and mainmasts [will find this book worth plunging into](#), as will those less intrigued by the age of sail.

Fiction

The Bee Sting. By Paul Murray. *Farrar, Straus and Giroux*; 656 pages; \$30. *Hamish Hamilton*; £18.99

The story of one unhappy family told from multiple perspectives. Paul Murray is a confident, stylish writer: he convincingly evokes a teenage girl's rage, a boy's fear, a father's secrets and a mother's disappointments and grief.

The Fraud. By Zadie Smith. *Penguin Press*; 464 pages; \$29. *Hamish Hamilton*; £20

[This historical novel](#) centres on a butcher's claim to be the heir of an English aristocrat. It focuses on an ex-slave who backs his story and on a woman who, fascinated by the case, becomes a writer. Slavery, populism and women's roles are serious themes in an often funny book.

Kairos. By Jenny Erpenbeck. Translated by Michael Hofmann. *New Directions*; 335 pages; \$25.95. *Granta*; £16.99

A tale of an affair gone sour between a middle-aged male academic and a young female student in East Berlin in the dying days of the German Democratic Republic. It brilliantly weaves the personal with politics and history and does a fine job of [unsettling the reader](#).

North Woods. By Daniel Mason. *Random House*; 384 pages; \$28. *John Murray*; £16.99

[Set in a single home](#) in the forests of Massachusetts, the interconnecting stories of this enthralling novel span four centuries. It offers a timely musing on what and who are lost to history.

Prophet Song. By Paul Lynch. *Atlantic Monthly Press*; 320 pages; \$26. *Oneworld*; £16.99

The winner of this year's Booker prize is a cautionary tale of war, parenthood and loss. Tender and terrifying at once, it follows a mother-of-four trying to keep her family together in an imaginary dystopian Ireland, where the government has succumbed to authoritarianism and is trampling on civil liberties.

Soldier Sailor. By Claire Kilroy. *Scribner*; 240 pages; \$26. *Faber*; £16.99

A skilful and disquieting exploration of motherhood. In limpid, brisk prose, Claire Kilroy describes the difficulty of completing everyday tasks when accompanied by an infant, including making breakfast and going to the supermarket.

Western Lane. By Chetna Maroo. *Picador*; 160 pages; \$17. *Pan Macmillan*; £14.99

After her mother dies, Gopi, the 11-year-old narrator, takes up the game of squash at the urging of her bereft father. A slim, subtle debut novel of grief and growing up that conjures a powerful panoply of emotions [in an elegant style](#).

Culture and ideas

Eight Bears. By Gloria Dickie. *W.W. Norton*; 272 pages; \$30 and £25

Wonder, fear and friction characterise the relationship between bears and people. The author, a journalist for Reuters, travels the world in search of eight surviving species of bruin, including grizzlies and pandas, bringing readers on a riveting and [unique sort of bear hunt](#).

Gradual. By Greg Berman and Aubrey Fox. *Oxford University Press*; 240 pages; \$29.95 and £22.99

A [passionate argument for incrementalism](#), the idea that humanity has grown more prosperous by making a long series of only modest improvements. Revolutionaries promise paradise but tend to bring about bloodshed, breadlines and book bans. Gradualism works.

High Caucasus. By Tom Parfitt. *Headline*; 352 pages; £25

This gripping travelogue recounts the author's hike across the Caucasus mountains from Russia's Black Sea coast to the Caspian. A meditation on the role of memory in a fascinating place with a tumultuous, tragic past, it is liable to instil an unexpected urge to visit Dagestan.

The Identity Trap. By Yascha Mounk. *Penguin*; 416 pages; \$32. *Allen Lane*; £25

A [well-argued treatise about wokeness and cancel culture](#) from a political scientist at Johns Hopkins University. The left's swerve towards authoritarianism is "oddly unexplored territory" in intellectual history, Yascha Mounk contends. Bold and timely, this book asks questions about identity politics that many on the left are too afraid to ask.

Magisteria. By Nicholas Spencer. *Oneworld Publications; 480 pages; \$32 and £25*

The common misconception that science and religion are at odds is revised in a [deeply researched history](#) of the interplay between the two ways of understanding the world. Religion produced the critical thinking that welcomed scientific knowledge, and science was often inspired by appreciating forces beyond our ken.

Pandora's Box. By Peter Biskind. *William Morrow; 400 pages; \$32.50. Allen Lane; £25*

A [binge-worthy book](#) about television, which argues that the risky, rule-breaking shows that defined the golden era for tv in the early 21st century are giving way to less original fare.

Sailing Alone. By Richard King. *Particular Books; 512 pages; £25*

An engaging, beautifully written book that asks what possesses an ever-growing number of people to get into a small boat and [sail on their own](#) across the world's seas. Both wimps and thrill-seekers will delight in this literary voyage.

A Thread of Violence. By Mark O'Connell. *Doubleday; 304 pages; \$29. Granta; £16.99*

In this scrupulous, [penetrating true-crime inquiry](#), the author tries "to understand the darkness and violence that run beneath the surface of so many lives". His subject is Malcolm Macarthur, who committed an infamous double murder in Ireland in 1982.

Science and technology

The Coming Wave. By Mustafa Suleyman, with Michael Bhaskar. *Crown; 352 pages; \$32.50. Bodley Head; \$32.50*

A [cogent look](#) at the potential of ai to transform the economy and society, along with the risks of misuse and surveillance. By a co-founder of DeepMind, a leading ai company, and board member of *The Economist's* parent company.

The Heat Will Kill You First. By Jeff Goodell. *Little, Brown; 400 pages; \$29 and £25*

A [thorough, sometimes frightening examination](#) of the many ways that rising temperatures threaten environments and societies. The author, a climate journalist, tells his story through intrepid reporting and memorable characters. It is one of the rare books on climate change that anyone can pick up and understand.

Outlive. By Peter Attia, with Bill Gifford. *Harmony; 496 pages; \$32. Ebury; £22*

A longevity expert shows just how behind the times much of modern medicine is, partly because it so often seeks to cure rather than prevent chronic disease. There are very simple things people can do to live longer and more healthily.

Time to Think. By Hannah Barnes. *Swift Press; 288 pages; £20*

This book focuses on a medical scandal at a paediatric gender clinic in Britain, but it also tackles a controversy that is playing out across the rich world: how to treat gender-identity dysphoria in children. A journalistic and sobering take on a divisive subject.

Ultra-Processed People. By Chris van Tulleken. *W.W. Norton; 384 pages; \$30. Cornerstone; £22*

There is much to cheer about calories being cheap and abundant, when for most of history they were neither. But the cheapness and abundance of “ultra-processed” food comes at a cost. (Warning: [this book may ruin](#) the joy of junk food.)

What an Owl Knows. By Jennifer Ackerman. *Penguin Press*; 352 pages; \$30. *Oneworld*; £16.99

A natural-history writer draws on recent research to explain the magic and allure of owls. An [ear tuft-to-tail appreciation](#) of the raptor that Mary Oliver, a poet, called the “god of plunge and blood”.

This article appeared in the Culture section of the print edition under the headline "Shelf help"

19 December (NZZ)

[Ironie, Zorn und ein exklusiver Body: Der Weltstar Brad Pitt wird sechzig \(nzz.ch\)](https://www.nzz.ch)

Ironie, Zorn und ein exklusiver Body: Der Weltstar Brad Pitt wird sechzig

Brad Pitts Inszenierung von Männlichkeit kommt immer schon mit einem Augenzwinkern daher. Das lässt ihn nun auch dem Alter trotzen.

[Irony, anger, and an exclusive physique: The global star Brad Pitt turns sixty.

Brad Pitt's portrayal of masculinity has always come with a wink, and now it allows him to defy age as well.]

Daniel Haas

18.12.2023, 05.30 Uhr 6 min



Das Etikett «schön, aber immer gleich», das Pitt zu Anfang seiner Karriere drohte, hat er sich nicht ankleben lassen. Aufnahme aus dem Jahr 1988. Michael Putland / Hulton Archive / Getty

Hollywood, diese gigantische Mythenproduktionsmaschine, hat das Bild von Männern und Frauen, ihr Selbstverständnis gemäss inszenierten Rollenmustern, vermutlich tiefer geprägt als jede andere Form populärer Kunst. Weibliche Schönheit ist seit den 1940er Jahren, als die grossen Filmstudios Stars wie Judy Garland und Katharine Hepburn als glamouröse Ikonen in die Welt entsandten, eine Version des amerikanischen Blicks auf Frauen. Und auch die Männer der Traumfabrik waren Idole dieses künstlich hergestellten Begehrens. Cary Grant, Humphrey Bogart, John Wayne: alle Chiffren für prächtig zu bebildende Ideale von Maskulinität.

Brad Pitt wird nun sechzig Jahre alt, und seine Karriere fasst im Schnelldurchlauf jene Erfolgs- und Verfallsgeschichte zusammen, in der Männlichkeit immer wieder medial zugerichtet und aktualisiert wird. Sechzig Jahre – für weibliche Darsteller ist das ein geriatrisches Alter, ihre Verwendungsweisen reduzieren sich von diesem Zeitpunkt an meist auf ein eng umgrenztes Rollenspektrum: Mütter, Schwiegermütter, Grossmütter. «Als ich vierzig wurde, war es, als hätte ich Lepra bekommen», sagte Sharon Stone einmal in einem Interview. Feminine Leinwandschönheit muss kosmetisch verwertbar sein. Entsprechend tauchen die jüngeren Stars regelmässig als Markenbotschafterinnen grosser Beauty-Konzerne in Erscheinung.

Diese Verwertungslogik hat vor den Männern nicht haltgemacht. Seit Arnold Schwarzenegger seinen Körper zum Fetisch stilisierte, ist auch der Mann Objekt des Blicks. Als Daniel Craig 2007 in der Rolle von James Bond ähnlich lasziv aus den Meeresfluten stieg wie fünf Jahre zuvor die Bond-Gespielin Halle Berry, hatte sich die Blickpolitik Hollywoods endgültig subvertiert. Angeschaut, im Sinne von fetischisiert, wurden nun alle, Männer wie Frauen.

Äquivalent des Pin-up-Girls

Brad Pitt, mit Leonardo DiCaprio und George Clooney das Dreigestirn lukrativer Männlichkeitsdarstellung aus Hollywood, stellte sein Gesicht nur einmal der Kosmetikbranche zur Verfügung, in einer Filmwerbung für den

Frauenduft Chanel Nummer 5. Da steht er mit schulterlang gelöstem Haar vor der Kamera und räsoniert über Träume, das Schicksal und die Fügung. Mit noch so viel diagnostischem Elan ist nicht zu ermitteln, was der Reklame-Clip bedeuten soll – wenn man Bedeutung als dramaturgisch konsistente Idee begreift. Das legendäre Frauenparfum, der legendäre Darsteller: Es sollte wohl eine Reklame-Innovation aus dem Geist postmoderner Genderflexibilität sein, die so auf die weltweite Konsumentinnengemeinde kam.

In seiner Filmkarriere hat Pitt derartige Spielchen mit den Geschlechterrollen weitgehend vermieden. Zwar trat er 1991 in «Thelma & Louise» als Waschbrettbauch-schlanker Beau ins Geschehen, aber dieser Part, der seinen Aufstieg zum Superstar erst richtig in Gang setzte, bildet eine Ausnahme. In «Thelma & Louise» war er das männliche Äquivalent des Pin-up-Girls. Entsprechend schmachtete ihn Geena Davis, seine Filmpartnerin, an – und mit ihr vermutlich Millionen Kinogängerinnen weltweit. Warum nicht? Lange genug war das weibliche Publikum punkto Schauwerte mit zugeknöpften Männertypen kurzgehalten worden. Pitt, so die gängige Deutung seines Karrierebeginns, war ein Eye-Candy und damit bei aller Frivolität unverdächtig, der nächste Agent patriarchaler Machtstrukturen zu sein.



Früh etabliert Pitt die Stilgeste, die er über Jahrzehnte verfeinern und bewirtschaften wird: Ironie. Szene aus «Thelma & Louise», 1991. Percy Main / Pathe Entertainment / Imago

Stilgeste Ironie

Schon in diesem frühen Film etabliert sich die entscheidende Stilgeste, die Pitt über Jahrzehnte verfeinern und bewirtschaften wird: Ironie. Das machte ihn auch einem männlichen Publikum vermittelbar. Klar war der Typ umwerfend attraktiv, einer, vor dem man die eigene Freundin besser in Sicherheit brachte, wenn er mit aasigem Lächeln und dem berüchtigten Schlendergang auf der Bildfläche erschien. Aber er war eben auch amüsant, seine Männlichkeit kam mit Augenzwinkern daher. Hey, Leute, das ganze Sex- und Romantik-Ding ist am Ende auch nur ein Spiel. Und wer wird ein Spiel schon allzu ernst nehmen?

Ironie ist ein zweischneidiges Schwert, sie wird schnell zur Marotte. Das Spiel mit der Uneigentlichkeit – man stellt einen sehr männlichen Mann dar, begreift diese Männlichkeit aber als inszeniert, vorläufig und wie mit Führungszeichen versehen – gelingt nur, wenn es kontrastiert wird mit dramatischer Wahrhaftigkeit. Mit untrüglichem Gespür für die Bedingungen, die eine Hollywoodkarriere an ihre Akteure stellt, hat Pitt seine Arbeitsbiografie mit ernstesten Rollen angereichert. Er spielte Agenten («Mr. & Mrs. Smith», «Allied»), Kriegshelden («Troja», «Herz aus Stahl») und kauzige Eigenbrötler («Moneyball», «The Big Short»).



Im Film «Mr. & Mrs. Smith» von 2005 sind Brad Pitt und Angelina Jolie ein Paar, und im Leben machen sie damit bis 2016 weiter.
Imago



Er spielte Agenten («Mr. & Mrs. Smith», «Allied»), Kriegshelden («Troja», «Herz aus Stahl») und kauzige Eigenbrötler («Moneyball», «The Big Short»). Szene aus «Troja», 2004. Warner Bros / Everett Collection / Imago

Vor allem seine Hauptrolle in «Sieben», David Finchers fatalistischem Serienkiller-Drama, zeigt ihn als zornigen jungen Mann, der seine Aggressionen nicht im Griff hat. Wenn er am Ende nicht nur am teuflischen Plan seines Widersachers, sondern auch an der eigenen Impulskontrollstörung zerbricht, ist das eine überragende Darstellung toxischer Männlichkeit.

Daneben jede Menge ironische Parts: nuschelnder Gangster in «Snatch», Gentleman-Gauner in Steven Soderberghs «Ocean's Eleven» und «Ocean's Twelve», cooler Nazi-Jäger in «Inglourious Basterds» und lässiger Stuntman in «Once Upon a Time in Hollywood» (beide von Quentin Tarantino) – immer war Pitts Darstellung von einem Hauch Amusement über die eigene Männlichkeit und ihre Rituale durchzogen.

Dass ihn Tarantino als feste Größe in seinen Filmen etablierte, ist konsequent: Das Kino des «Pulp Fiction»-Regisseurs ist auf die Subversion von Genres und Erzählstoffen durch Ironie fixiert. Pitt verkörpert die doppelte Signatur von Tarantinos Kino in Reinkultur: den hohen moralischen Anspruch bei gleichzeitiger Verpflichtung zum schockierenden Witz.

Womöglich ist auch die enge Zusammenarbeit mit Tarantino mehr strategisches Kalkül als schicksalhafte Fügung. Wie Frauen sind Männer in Hollywood ab einem bestimmten Alter auf das Wohlwollen grosser Regisseure angewiesen, wenn sie nicht in Nebenrollen versacken wollen. DiCaprio hält sich konsequent an Martin Scorsese und wird nach Robert De Niro der zweite männliche Star sein, der mit den Werken seines Mentors alt werden und zugleich erfolgreich bleiben kann. George Clooneys Filmkarriere ist in dieser Hinsicht volatiler, wobei es auch bei ihm Präferenzen gibt. Die Coen-Brüder, Steven Soderbergh und nach Möglichkeit Filme, in denen Julia Roberts auftritt, gehören zu den Konstanten seiner Filmografie.



Seine Hauptrolle in «Sieben» (1995), David Finchers fatalistischem Serienkiller-Drama, zeigt Pitt als zornigen jungen Mann, der seine Aggressionen nicht im Griff hat. Peter Sorel / Imago



Auf Pitts zunächst romantische Frührollen in «Thelma & Louise» folgen mit Szenen aus den «Ocean's»-Filmen die mittleren, entspannten Jahre, die mit «Inglorious Basterds» 2009 endeten. Imago

Die ironische Geste ins Extrem gesteigert hat Brad Pitt in «Babylon» von Damien Chazelle. Da spielt er einen Stummfilm-Star, der, Frauen erobernd, saufend und Bonmots absondernd, seine Rolle als Leindwandikone so lange nicht ernst nimmt, bis die Zeitläufte ihm die drastische Wahrheit vor Augen halten: Er ist alt geworden, als Ressource des Unterhaltungsmarkts beschädigt und letztlich entbehrlich. Es ist eine fulminante Inspektion der eigenen Männlichkeits- und Rollengeschichte, die Pitt in diesem Film verkörpert. Dass er dafür keinen Darsteller-Oscar bekommen hat, liegt vielleicht an der rigorosen Deutlichkeit, mit der hier ein Star das Verfallsdatum von Startum anschaulich werden lässt.

Moralische Integrität

Jede grosse Filmkarriere wird begleitet von einer zweiten Medienerzählung, dem Kolportageroman der privaten Dramen. Der Ironiker Pitt hat auf diesem Spielfeld von Anfang an moralische Integrität bewiesen. Er war es, der Harvey Weinstein Gewalt androhte, sollte er sich Gwyneth Paltrow noch einmal in unsittlicher Weise nähern. Die Szene fand Ende der 1990er Jahre statt, lange vor #MeToo und seinen Umwälzungen im Filmbetrieb, und Pitt riskierte damals das Aus in Hollywood.



Während der fast dreijährigen Liaison inklusive Verlobung mit der Schauspielkollegin Gwyneth Paltrow wurde Pitt das erste Mal zum «Sexiest Man Alive» gekürt.

Später dann befeuerte die Leidenschaft um Pitt und seine beiden Partnerinnen Jennifer Aniston und Angelina Jolie jahrelang die Bewusstseinsindustrien und mündete zeitweise in einen Kulturkampf mit dem globalen Boulevard als Arena. Frauenbilder standen da in ihrer Vulgärfassung zur Debatte – die heitere Bodenständigkeit von Aniston contra das neurotische Künstlertum von Jolie –, und Pitt wirkte in diesem Orkan aus Spekulationen, Gerüchten und Zuschreibungen zeitweise wie ein grosser Junge, der eigentlich nur schauspielern und sonst Spass mit seinen Kumpels George Clooney und Matt Damon haben will. Die Ironie hatte in der konkreten Wirklichkeit, die im Falle des Stars nur eine weitere Form der medialen Bühne ist, keinen Platz.

Aber auch diese Rolle ist abgespielt. Den Part des toxisch-romantischen Tragöden im Medienzirkus hat unterdessen Johnny Depp übernommen. Ein sechzigjähriger Brad Pitt kann sich ganz auf die Herausforderungen der Leinwand konzentrieren. Sie werden gross sein, denn es gibt ein Wort in Hollywood für sechzig, es gilt heute für Frauen und Männer: alt.



Das Zen-like Brad-Pitt-Lächeln: Auch im fortschreitenden Alter hat der Schauspieler damit noch einen Rest von Jungenhaftem.

Samir Hussei

18 December's Topics

Today's articles are classified in the following order:

Israel and the war in Gaza

Page 2: Why is Israel using so many dumb bombs in Gaza? (The Economist)

Page 5: As 'Day After' Debate Looms, the Palestinian Political Arena Is Divided Over Post-war Direction (Haaretz)

Page 9: "To humiliate Palestinians is common for the Israeli army" – those who inform themselves about the Gaza War in the Finnish media receive a different picture than in Switzerland. (NZZ)

Page 12 : Gaza aid trucks stolen by gunmen and looted, as convoys start crossing from Israel (Times of Israel)

Page 14 : Do you condemn Žižek? Amid the genocide in Gaza, the incoherence of western philosophers has come to the fore. (Al-Jazeera, Opinion)

Immigration

Page 17 : Germany: CDU seeks to win back German voters with its own Rwanda asylum plan (The Guardian)

Page 19 : Agnès Verdier-Molinié : «Les immigrés viennent-ils en France pour travailler ?» (Le Figaro, Guest Essay)

Page 21 : Boneheaded anti-immigration politicians are throttling globalization (The Economist, Opinion)

Poutine and the war in Ukraine

Page 23: Five Takeaways From Putin's Marathon Annual News Conference (NYT)

Page 25: Rough draft: Ukraine's army is struggling to find good recruits. Russia is suffering immense casualties—but it has the edge in manpower (The Economist)

Climate change

Page 28: Global coal use to reach record high in 2023, energy agency says (Al-Jazeera)

Germany and Remembrance

Page 30 : Stolpersteine grieve for victims of the Nazis, one at a time. Gunter Demnig's paving stones spark countless acts of remembrance (The Economist, Columnist)

In need of guidance

Why is Israel using so many dumb bombs in Gaza?

Smart bombs are more precise but less plentiful. More civilians in Gaza may be dying as a result

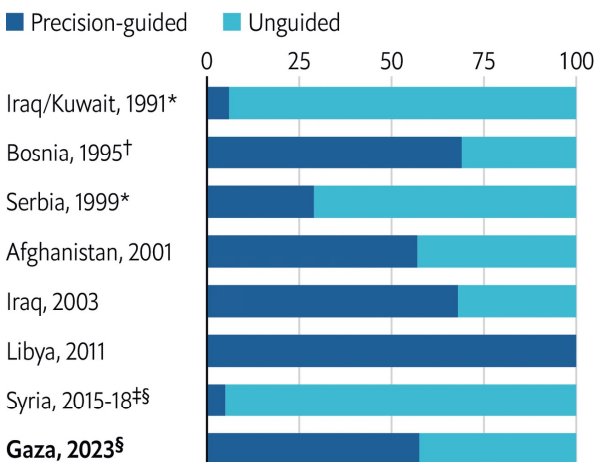


Dec 16th 2023

On december 12th Joe Biden, America’s president, publicly rebuked Israel for its air war in Gaza. “They’re starting to lose [global] support by indiscriminate bombing that takes place,” he said, in a reflection of his growing impatience. America’s intelligence agencies judge that 40-45% of Israel’s air strikes since October 7th have used unguided or “dumb” bombs, as opposed to precision-guided munitions (pgms) or “smart” bombs, according to reports first published by cnn. What does that figure reveal?

Laser-guided smart bombs first appeared in the Vietnam war and matured in the 1990s when America invented the joint direct attack munition (jdam), a gps-guidance kit that could be attached to ordinary dumb bombs. In the first Gulf war against Iraq in 1991, just 6% of American bombs were pgms (see chart). When it bombed Serbia in 1999 the rate had risen to 29%. By the Afghan war in 2001 it was 57%—around the same as Israel’s rate today—and 68% by the second Iraq war in 2003.

Selected air campaigns, % of munitions deployed



*US weapons †Excl. anti-radiation missiles

‡Russian weapons §Estimate

Sources: “Precision and purpose: airpower in the Libyan civil war”, by K. Mueller et al., 2015; American intelligence estimates

That Israel is using so many dumb bombs is surprising. Russia still uses a lot: about 95% of those it dropped on northern Syria in 2015 were thought to be unguided. But America and its allies rarely use unguided munitions now. Almost all the bombs dropped by nato on Libya in 2011 were pgms. So were around 90% of those that Israel used in the first two weeks of the war.

Marc Garlasco, a former Pentagon weapons expert now at pax, a Dutch ngo which focuses on civilian protection, says the Israeli figure is “shocking”. The last time America dropped unguided weapons in populated areas was probably its use of cluster bombs on the outskirts of Baghdad more than 20 years ago. Mr Garlasco argues that the lower accuracy of unguided bombs and their wide-area effect might explain why the death toll in Gaza is so high.

In general, pgms are more accurate and thus more efficient. Studies from the first Gulf war showed that, for many targets, one tonne of pgms replaced 12 to 20 tonnes of unguided munitions. In Vietnam it took around 30 sorties to destroy one target. In Iraq in 2003 a single sortie could hit up to 16 different targets.

There are probably two reasons Israel is using dumb bombs nonetheless. First, the fighting conditions in Gaza mean that it might be able to strike certain targets using unguided munitions reasonably effectively. An American official told cnn that Israel’s air force was employing dive-bombing—releasing after a steep dive—making its attacks more accurate. Edward Stringer, a retired air marshal in the Royal Air Force, says that this was once a routine tactic, used by British Jaguar ground-attack jets in the first Gulf war. “If you have a small area target, this is as valid an attack as dropping a laser-guided bomb,” he says. “You will achieve accuracy within 20 to 30 feet.” The majority of Israel’s unguided bombs are being dropped on Hamas tunnel entrances in northern Gaza, according to people familiar with the targeting.

A report published last year by Operation Inherent Resolve, the American-led coalition against Islamic State (is), which has been bombing Iraq and Syria for almost a decade, made the same argument in explaining why Iraq’s air force was using dumb bombs: “properly employing unguided bombs is cheaper than using bombs with costly guidance kits, and can achieve the same effect.” In that campaign, America occasionally dropped unguided bombs ostensibly to crater roads, to constrain the jihadists’ movements, but in practice to raise the morale of Iraqi soldiers who were cheered by evidence of air support, says Stacie Pettyjohn of the cnas think-tank in Washington.

Each type of munition is delivered in a different way, though. Smart bombs are most accurate when dropped at 15,000 to 23,000 feet, which gives their steering fins ample time to correct their aim, notes Phillip Meilinger, the former dean of the School of Advanced Airpower Studies at the us Air Force’s Air University in Alabama. Dumb bombs need to be dropped from much lower, around 5,000 feet.

That would normally put planes within range of surface-to-air missiles, but Hamas does not have significant air-defence capability. The group has previously used 1970s-vintage Soviet-made Strela-2 or SA-7 shoulder-fired missiles, but these have a relatively low ceiling. Moreover, since the Gaza Strip is barely a few miles wide, Israeli jets are exposed only for a few seconds, not enough time for defenders to acquire a target and launch; Israeli pilots therefore feel safe to dive-bomb.

After the ceasefire

Israel’s use of unguided weapons is probably not the main cause of high casualties. More likely, Israel is mostly hitting the targets it wants to hit, including with precision bombs, but is tolerating a high level of civilian harm in the process. The use of unguided bombs may be a contributing factor, however. The pgm is more likely to land squarely in the middle of the targeted area, acknowledges Mr Stringer; the dive-delivered dumb bomb will end up somewhere within it. “The difference between 20 and 30 feet is huge when it comes to the civilians who are living in this environment,” argues Emily Tripp, the director of Airwars, which tracks civilian harm in war.

The Economist’s [latest satellite analysis](#) finds that almost 43,000 buildings in Gaza (16% of the total) have been damaged and that at least 450,000 people (20% of the population) are now homeless. “While I’m sure some have been dropped with such pinpoint accuracy,” says Mr Garlasco, “I have grave reservations about such

widespread use of this tactic... Though the US and Western militaries train to this standard there's a reason we use pgms."

pgms, however, are in short supply. That gets to a second possible reason for Israel's weaponry choices. In the Libyan war many nato countries quickly exhausted their small stockpiles and had to turn to America. In 2015, 15 months and 20,000 bombs into the campaign against is, America's air-force chief acknowledged his service was "expending munitions faster than we can replenish them". A year after that jdam kits were being dropped within 48 hours of coming off the production line in Missouri.

In theory, Israel should have plenty in reserve. It has bought around \$1.9bn-worth of pgms from American companies since 2015, including 14,500 jdam kits and thousands of laser-guided missiles. Since October 7th America has sent at least 15,000 bombs to Israel, including an estimated 3,000 jdams. In November Mr Biden told Congress he planned to send \$320m-worth of spice munitions, which are like jdam kits.

But Israel's air campaign has been [unusually fierce](#). It is reported to have dropped 29,000 munitions in total. That is almost exactly as many as America and Britain dropped on the entirety of Iraq in the first month of the war in 2003 and equivalent to just under 500 bombs per day. "This is still significantly higher than what we've seen in any other conflict, at least in the last 20 years," says Ms Tripp, adding that this includes Russia's air war in northern Syria since 2015. If American intelligence is correct, Israel will have consumed roughly 16,000 to 17,000 pgms.

Israel is not necessarily running out. Many Israeli officials worry that a bigger war is looming with [Hizbullah](#), a Lebanese militant group. Israel has also threatened to strike the [Houthis in Yemen](#), another Iran-allied militant group that has been firing ballistic missiles towards Israel. These groups, along with Iran, have access to more sophisticated air-defence systems than those of Hamas, capable of striking targets farther away and higher up. Israel's air force probably wants to preserve its stockpile of smart bombs for these better-defended enemies.

17 December (Haaretz)

[As 'Day After' Debate Looms, the Palestinian Political Arena Is Divided Over Post-war Direction - Israel News - Haaretz.com](#)

As 'Day After' Debate Looms, the Palestinian Political Arena Is Divided Over Post-war Direction

Recent declarations by Hamas leaders are not intended for Israeli ears, and Hamas isn't and doesn't have to be a partner to negotiations with Israel over resolving the Gaza issue. Ismail Haniyeh and Mousa Abu Marzouk's statements are directed at Palestinians



Hamas official Mousa Abu Marzouk, on the right, along with chairman Ismail Haniyeh and militant spokesman Abu Ubaida, greeting supporters in Gaza City in 2014. Credit: AFP

[Zvi Bar'el](#)

Dec 16, 2023

Mousa Abu Marzouk, the deputy chief of Hamas's political bureau, has a message: "We want to be part of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and we've said that we would abide by the PLO's commitments. Israelis have rights, but not at the expense of others...we have to cling to the official position, which is that the PLO has recognized Israel's right to exist," he said in a TV interview to the al-Monitor news website.

In other times, [such a statement](#) could have been considered a turning point, a turnaround in the worldview of an organization that does not recognize Israel. However, history shows that we've already seen such 'other times' and that this is not the first time Abu Marzouk has thrown a bombshell and created waves which quickly dissipated.

In September 2014, Abu Marzouk said that "in terms of religious law, there is no impediment to negotiating with an occupying force. Just like we negotiate with weapons, we can also negotiate through talks."

In an interview with the al-Quds TV station, Abu Marzouk admitted that "if the situation stays the way it is, under the present circumstances – and I say this openly – Hamas will have to turn to this path (negotiating with Israel) since that is the popular demand across the Gaza Strip."

Shortly afterward, Hamas issued a sweeping denial, stating that its determined position is that no negotiations can be held with the Zionist enemy.

Senior officials in [Fatah, Hamas's bitter rival](#), said at the time that Abu Marzouk's statement were meant to harm the Palestinian Authority and the PLO, presenting Hamas as a possible partner to negotiations while undermining the status of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

Three years later, in 2017, Hamas published its amended charter, which said that "the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, along the borders of June 4, 1967, is a consensual and shared national formula."

This too was an unprecedented message, except that one line below that, it stated explicitly that "we will not yield any part of Palestine regardless of the conditions, reasons, circumstances and pressure, no matter how long the occupation prevails."

One can already hear commentators saying that one can view Abu Marzouk's current words as incisive proof that Hamas is recognizing its defeat, not seeing any way out except by recognizing Israel, or at least presenting itself as willing to be partner to some diplomatic process that starts on the day after the war in Gaza ends.

Such analysis was already heard this week after [Ismail Haniyeh](#), the head of Hamas's political bureau, warned that "any arrangement in Gaza that doesn't include Hamas is a delusion and a false vision." He repeated this three times, and in Israel this was seen as definitive proof that the organization was recognizing its defeat, to the extent that Haniyeh was "begging" on behalf of Hamas, before someone steals the Gaza Strip from under the nose of Yahya Sinwar.

Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh, in 2014. Credit: Adel Hana / AP

So far, no response has been heard to Abu Marzouk's statement, by Haniyeh or other senior Hamas officials, and it is not known whether this statement reflects the positions of Haniyeh or Sinwar. The two are in a deep dispute from before the war. It is also not known whether Fatah leaders are ready to renew negotiations with Hamas over the establishment of a unified governing body.

Declarations by Hamas leaders are not intended for Israeli ears and Hamas isn't and doesn't have to be a partner to negotiations with Israel over resolving the issue of Gaza. Haniyeh and Abu Marzouk's statements are directed at the Palestinian arena, which is now swinging between two poles.

One is [represented by Mahmoud Abbas](#), who said in an interview to Reuters that "I am in favor of non-violent resistance. I am for negotiations based on an international conference under international patronage, which will lead to a solution enjoying the protection of countries around the world, leading to the establishment of a Palestinian state in Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem."

In the same breath, he emphasized that the PLO "is the only representative of the Palestinian people." Until something else is decided, Hamas and Islamic Jihad are not part of the PLO, and if they want to join, they will have to meet two criteria: accepting non-violent resistance and the adoption of agreements already signed by the PLO and Israel.

The other pole is represented by a group of senior Fatah officials, including Jibril Rajoub, [Marwan Barghouti](#), Nasser al-Qudwa, Hamada Farana, who are part of the bloc that has long been demanding reforms in the structure of the PLO, including the addition of Hamas, and mainly, the ending of the long tenure of Mahmoud Abbas, which has long exceeded its legal framework.

Two years ago, it seemed that this was about to happen, when Abbas announced a general election for a president and for a legislative council. However, he realized that he may be facing a new generation. Though not necessarily young (most members of this bloc are in their sixties or older), it relies on a frustrated and despairing younger generation, Palestinians who don't see a diplomatic horizon under the rule of the Palestinian Authority.

One of the prominent contenders, [Nasser al-Qudwa](#), a nephew of Yasser Arafat and former foreign minister of the Palestinian Authority, was expelled from the Fatah central committee after he announced that he intended to form an independent list that would run against the "traditional" Fatah one. Al-Qudwa continues to criticize Abbas and the movement's veteran base.

Recently, in an interview with MBC-Egypt TV, he said the reform in Palestinian leadership is not an American or Israeli demand but that of a clear Palestinian majority. The reform, he said, must see Hamas as a full partner in the Palestinian leadership.

"A ruling Palestinian government must preserve Hamas, respect it and open up to it, since a Palestinian majority wants a government that will protect the dignity of Palestinian citizens." Similar words were said this week by Jibril Rajoub in an interview with the Turkish newspaper Daily Sabah.

"Our position with regard to our future focuses first of all on the unity of Palestinian land that was occupied in 1967. Second, it focuses on an agreement between all the national factions, including Hamas, in order to establish a national unity government that would address defined tasks, for a specified amount of time. It will be responsible for distributing food, for reconstruction and provision of services. It will be responsible for all Palestinian territories and will prepare the Palestinian people for an election. This will be the first step in building a partnership (between the factions)."

These positions are light years away from Israel's position, as [expressed by Benjamin Netanyahu](#), which totally rejects any transfer of control over Gaza to the Palestinian Authority in its present form, particularly not if Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other factions join it.

This position also dismisses President Biden's outline, which relies on a "renovated Palestinian Authority," without specifying what this means, taking over Gaza. Biden, who dismisses any participation of Hamas in any form of government in Gaza or any other territory, believes that there will be no reason not to hold an election in the territories in the future, meaning that Hamas, in any form it assumes, could then participate and possibly win the election.

The establishment of a new Palestinian Authority without an election, as proposed by Rajoub, as a first step on the way to taking responsibility for the Gaza Strip, will require negotiations and agreements with Hamas and other factions.

Anyone believing that the solution lies in releasing Marwan Barghouti – who according to a [survey done by Khalil Shikaki](#), reported [in Haaretz by Amira Hass](#) on Thursday, enjoys the support of 51 percent of respondents (compared to 34 percent before the war) – as a move for [establishing a new Palestinian leadership](#), should pay attention to words he said in a press release he issued from prison on December 8.

Among other things, he called on every Palestinian to take part in the "liberation campaign" now underway. "We must make every Palestinian home a stronghold of the revolution, and every man a soldier in this campaign. We must unite and prove to the world that we are a force that is unbreakable in our long and ongoing heroic campaign, created by the resistance [Hamas], which is launching a new stage in our nation's history."

Beyond the lofty words in a declaration noting the anniversary of the first intifada, Barghouti was also talking about the required unification of all Palestinian factions. Barghouti, who was among the people formulating the "prisoners' document" in 2006, in which Palestinian prisoners from all factions agreed that Hamas would join the PLO, with the establishment of a national unity government, never abandoned the idea of national unity.

This was also true in 2016, when he presented his plan for national dialogue to create a new leadership for the PLO and for holding elections that would determine the share of each faction in government.

Since then, dozens of meetings have been held between the PLO and Hamas, directly or with Egyptian, Qatari or Turkish mediation, among others, without yielding any practical results. The last attempt to unite the factions was made last November in Egypt, with an unusual meeting between Ismail Haniyeh and Nasser al-Qudwa, as well as others.

Interestingly, whereas Haniyeh was the most senior figure Hamas could send, al-Qudwa could not claim to represent Fatah. It seems that Egypt, which invited the participants and has for years invested great efforts in achieving inter-Palestinian reconciliation, is starting to prepare for [the day after](#). It is trying to "engineer" a new Palestinian leadership, possibly stemming from the recognition that Abbas' time is over, while examining the strength of the next Fatah generation.

Given the shakeup Fatah leaders are going through at this point, it's hard to see how Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority, even if Israel changes its position, could assume responsibility for managing the [Gaza](#)

[Strip](#) even temporarily. A pivotal move which could break through the bottleneck could be a declaration about the convening of an international conference for discussing the future of Palestine and a two-state solution.

Such a declaration could meet the basic condition set by Mahmoud Abbas, meeting his demand whereby before taking responsibility for Gaza there must be a debate on an overall diplomatic solution. It's hard to imagine at this point the realization of such a move, but even if there is a miracle, the question will be whether Abbas can navigate the volatile minefield awaiting him in the PLO, mainly in Fatah, which sees the war as an opportunity to revive the movement without him.

17 December (NZZ)

[In Finnland beschreiben Medien den Gazakrieg komplett anders als in der Schweiz \(nzz.ch\)](https://www.nzz.ch)

«Palästinenser zu demütigen, ist für die israelische Armee üblich» – wer sich in den finnischen Medien über den Gaza-Krieg informiert, bekommt ein anderes Bild als in der Schweiz

In keinem Land ist das Vertrauen in die Medien höher als in Finnland. Journalisten verstehen sich dort als neutrale Vermittler. Dass dies problematisch sein kann, zeigt die Berichterstattung über den Gaza-Krieg.

[**"To humiliate Palestinians is common for the Israeli army" – those who inform themselves about the Gaza War in the Finnish media receive a different picture than in Switzerland.**

In no country is trust in the media higher than in Finland. Journalists there see themselves as neutral intermediaries. The reporting on the Gaza War illustrates that this can be problematic.]

Linda Koponen, Tallinn

18.12.2023, 05.30 Uhr 5 min



Bilder, wie dieses hier von Anfang Dezember aus der palästinensischen Stadt Shijaiyah, zeigen nur ein Ausschnitt aus einem Geschehen, den es korrekt einzuordnen gilt, Moti Milrod / AP

Ein Nahostexperte, der Israel auf Instagram als «kolonialistisches Projekt» bezeichnet, wird als neutraler Experte zitiert. Ein Professor mutmasst öffentlich über die wahren Ziele der israelischen Regierung in Gaza. Wer sich in finnischen Medien über den Nahostkonflikt informiert, bekommt ein komplett anderes Bild von den Geschehnissen vermittelt als im deutschsprachigen Raum. Der finnische Medienforscher Tuomas Näveri findet das nicht problematisch. Vielmehr zweifelt er an der objektiven Berichterstattung deutschsprachiger Medien.

In Deutschland sei der Konflikt zwischen Israel und Palästina aus historischen Gründen ein sehr sensibles Thema. Näveri sagt: «Diese Sensibilität schwächt die Qualität des Journalismus.» In Finnland dagegen sehe man den Gaza-Krieg als einen Konflikt unter vielen. Experten könnten sich daher auch freier äussern. Die finnische Zeitung «Helsingin Sanomat» würde Näveri deutschsprachigen Publikationen jederzeit vorziehen.

Tatsächlich ist das Vertrauen in die einheimischen Medien in keinem Land höher als in Finnland. [Zu diesem Schluss kommt eine Studie des Reuters Institute.](#)

Was machen die Finnen anders? Und machen sie es wirklich besser?

Journalismus ist Ausdruck der Kultur

Journalismus entsteht nicht in einem Vakuum. Wie und über welche Themen berichtet wird, spiegelt die Kultur eines Landes wider. In Finnland steht Direktheit über Höflichkeit. Man grüsst sich nicht auf der Strasse, aber man ist mit allen per Du – auch mit dem Ministerpräsidenten.

Diese Intimität ist auch in der medialen Berichterstattung zu spüren und in der Sprache, die gebraucht wird. In einem Porträt über die Finanzministerin Riikka Purra beschreibt die Journalistin, wie die damals 12-Jährige eines Nachts vom [«Todesröcheln ihrer Mutter»](#) geweckt wird. Es sei eine kulturelle Frage, wie viel man den Lesern zumuten könne, sagt Näveri. «Die deutschsprachige Welt ist viel korrekter, in Finnland sind wir uns harschere Formulierungen gewohnt.»

Näveri kennt sowohl die finnische als auch die deutschsprachige Medienlandschaft gut. Er hat mehrere Jahre in Berlin studiert und vergleicht in seiner Dissertation die Digitalisierung des deutschen Axel-Springer-Verlages mit dem finnischen Medienhaus Sanomatalo. Er hat in Finnland auch eine Journalistenschule abgeschlossen.

Finnische Journalistinnen und Journalisten verstünden sich vor allem als neutrale Vermittler, sagt Näveri. «In der Ausbildung wird viel Wert darauf gelegt, dass die Person und Meinung des Journalisten im Artikel nicht vorkommen soll.» Stattdessen sollen die Zitate der Interviewten für sich sprechen.

In der Praxis zeigt sich das als Aneinanderreihung von verschiedenen Aussagen. Diese Zitate als Journalist zu werten oder zu kontextualisieren, gilt als verpönt. Bis auf die Parteizeitungen vermeiden es finnische Medien, offen eine politische Position einzunehmen.

Vorwürfe wie «Lügenpresse» und «Fake News», wie man sie aus Deutschland und den USA kennt, gibt es in Finnland nicht. Insbesondere die durch Steuergelder finanzierte Nachrichtenanstalt Yle genießt ein hohes Ansehen. Das hohe Vertrauen in die Nachrichten hänge auch mit der Neutralität der Berichterstattung zusammen, sagt Näveri.

Doch falsch verstandene Neutralität kann problematisch sein. Nämlich dann, wenn man als Journalist die Deutungshoheit den Interviewten überlässt. Das sieht man an der Berichterstattung über den Gaza-Krieg.

Keine semantischen Diskussionen

[Die Fernsehanstalt Yle hat eine ganze Sendung der Frage gewidmet, wie gut die finnische Berichterstattung über den Gaza-Krieg gelungen sei.](#) Krista Taubert, die Leiterin der Auslandsredaktion von Yle, sagte in der Sendung: «Für uns ist es die vorrangige Aufgabe, zu beschreiben, was gerade geschieht. Das Wichtigste ist es, Wissen zu generieren.» Darüber, als was man die Hamas bezeichnen wolle, könne man in aller Ruhe in einem zweiten Schritt diskutieren.

«Helsingin Sanomat», die auflagenstärkste Zeitung des Landes, tut sich bis heute schwer damit, die Hamas einzuordnen. Je nach Journalist und Experte wird sie als Terrororganisation, extremistische Organisation, politische Bewegung oder auch gar nicht betitelt. Statt selbst eine journalistische Einordnung zu liefern, zitiert die Zeitung Experten und lässt ihre Aussagen unkommentiert stehen.

[In einem Artikel mutmasst Hannu Juusola, Professor für Nahostforschung an der Universität Helsinki, dass Israel womöglich die Palästinenser endgültig aus dem Gazastreifen vertreiben wolle.](#) Viele Palästinenser seien besorgt, dass sich die Nakba oder eine ethnische Säuberung wiederholen könnten. Nakba heisst auf arabisch Katastrophe und meint die Gründung des Staates Israel 1948, als 700 000 Palästinenserinnen und Palästinenser vertrieben wurden.

Juusola sagt: «Wenn man sich die Zerstörung in Gaza anschaut, dann fragt man sich schon, ob es auch ein anderes Ziel gibt, als die Hamas zu zerstören.» Mit diesem Zitat endet der Text. Im Text bleibt das Massaker vom 7. Oktober, als die Hamas 1200 Menschen in Israel hingerichtet und 200 Personen entführt hat, unerwähnt.

Im deutschsprachigen Raum müssten Experten, die sich zu Opfern in Gaza äusserten, immer auch sagen, dass die Hamas Israel zuerst angegriffen habe, sagt Näveri. Es würde über einzelne Begriffe gestritten. «In Finnland gibt es diese semantische Diskussion nicht.»

Anfang Dezember berichtet «Helsingin Sanomat» über Bilder, die von entkleideten palästinensischen Gefangenen aufgetaucht sind. Im Titel wird abermals Juusola zitiert: [«Palästinenser zu demütigen, ist für die israelische Armee üblich.»](#) Im Artikel hat die Zeitung ein Video publiziert. Es zeigt gefesselte Männer in Unterhosen. [Die NZZ hat über die gleichen Bilder berichtet, sich aber dagegen entschieden, die Fotos und](#)

[Videos der Gefangenen zu zeigen](#). Das Zurschaustellen von Kriegsgefangenen verstösst gegen die Genfer Konvention.

[In einem Erklärstück beantwortet der Nahostexperte Antti Tarvainen Fragen zur Feuerpause](#). Wie Juusola forscht auch Tarvainen an der Universität Helsinki. Er vertritt eine klar propalästinensische Haltung. Auf seinem Instagram-Profil bezeichnet er Israel als «kolonialistisches Projekt». Er schreibt von Apartheid und von Medien, die das israelische Narrativ replizierten. Im Artikel wird das nicht thematisiert. Stattdessen tritt er als neutraler Wissenschaftler auf.

Als die internationale Sektion von «Fridays for Future» auf Instagram von «ethnischer Säuberung» schrieb und westliche Medien der Gehirnwäsche bezichtigte, war die Entrüstung vor allem im deutschsprachigen Raum gross. In Finnland können ein Professor und ein Forscher der wichtigsten Universität des Landes nicht minder fragwürdige Positionen vertreten und werden von der grössten Tageszeitung im Land als neutrale Experten aufgeboden. Dass auch zum Nahostkonflikt unterschiedliche Sichtweisen aufgezeigt werden, ist nicht per se problematisch. Heikel wird es jedoch dann, wenn sich Meinungen und Fakten vermischen.

Kein Aufschrei von aussen

Finnland ist ein grosses Land: Vom nördlichsten bis zum südlichsten Punkt ist die Distanz gleich gross wie von Berlin nach Rom. Auf dieser Fläche leben 5,5 Millionen Einwohner. Sie sprechen eine Sprache, die kaum jemand anders versteht. Das schafft einen geschützten Rahmen. Zudem liegt Finnland an der europäischen Peripherie. Was in Finnland geschrieben wird, bleibt in der Regel in Finnland. Der Aufschrei von aussen bleibt aus.

Neben den Medien geniessen auch [Wissenschaftler ein hohes Vertrauen in der Bevölkerung](#). Dieses Vertrauen ist durch die Corona-Pandemie sogar gestiegen. In der Schweiz ist die Bevölkerung es sich durch die direkte Demokratie gewohnt, zu allen möglichen Themen eine Meinung zu bilden. In Finnland hört man hingegen oft den Satz: «Ich bin keine Expertin.» Zu einer eigenen Meinung, so könnte man meinen, ist man nur befugt, wenn man vollständig informiert ist. Einen Professor in Zweifel ziehen würden die wenigsten. Deshalb wäre eine Einordnung seitens der Medien umso wichtiger.

17 December (The Times of Israel)

[Gaza aid trucks stolen by gunmen and looted, as convoys start crossing from Israel | The Times of Israel](#)

Gaza aid trucks stolen by gunmen and looted, as convoys start crossing from Israel

Videos appear to show trucks carrying crucial supplies seized by Hamas, fallen goods taken by civilians; Red Cross official says 79 trucks entered Sunday via Kerem Shalom crossing

By [TOI STAFF](#) and [AGENCIES](#) 17 December 2023, 7:44 pm [2](#)



Armed, masked men reportedly affiliated with Hamas can be seen atop trucks carrying humanitarian aid that arrived in the Gaza Strip via Egypt's Rafah crossing, December 17, 2023. (Screenshot, used in accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law)

Videos circulating on social media Sunday showed gunmen, reportedly Hamas operatives, stealing trucks delivering humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip from Egypt, as aid convoys also started entering the Palestinian enclave through the Kerem Shalom border crossing for the first time since the outbreak of the war on October 7.

In the videos, masked and armed men can be seen sitting on top of the humanitarian supplies — usually food, water, medicine and fuel — as the trucks drive deeper into the Strip.

Hebrew-language media reported the men were affiliated with the Hamas terror group that rules the coastal enclave.

In October, the United Nations organization that works with Palestinian refugees and their descendants [indicated](#) that Hamas authorities in Gaza had stolen fuel and medical supplies meant for refugees, though the posts were later deleted.

An unnamed Egyptian Red Cross official told AFP that “79 trucks began entering” on Sunday, after Israel on Friday approved the “temporary” delivery of much-needed aid from Israel directly to Gaza.

The trucks seen in the video did not appear to be the same trucks that entered via Kerem Shalom, as the cabinet decision that allowed the crossing to open only extended to aid from Egypt, and not from the United Nations. The supplies on the trucks shown in the videos bore the United Arab Emirates flag.

Other footage appeared to show Gazan civilians looting supplies falling off the trucks shortly after they were transferred through Egypt's Rafah crossing.

While there is a growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Israel has long said that Hamas stockpiled supplies and kept them from increasingly desperate civilians.

The Rafah crossing, which until this weekend had been the only one open for the entry of aid to Gaza, has only been able to keep up with 100 trucks per day, even after Israel began using Kerem Shalom for inspections last week, in addition to its Nitzana Crossing, the Prime Minister's Office said in a Friday statement.

COGAT, the Defense Ministry body responsible for Palestinian civilian affairs, said Sunday that “starting today (December 17), UN aid trucks will undergo security checks and be transferred directly to Gaza via Kerem Shalom.”

Kerem Shalom was used for 60 percent of goods entering Gaza before October 7, when some 3,000 terrorists burst across the border into Israel by land, air and sea, killing some 1,200 people and seizing over 240 hostages of all ages — mostly civilians — under the cover of a deluge of thousands of rockets fired at Israeli towns and cities.

In response, Israel vowed to eliminate Hamas, and launched a wide-scale offensive aimed at rooting out the terror organization’s military and governance capabilities. The offensive has drawn international reproach for its mounting death toll, with the Hamas-run health ministry in Gaza reporting over 18,000 Palestinians dead. However, these figures cannot be verified and are believed to include both combatants and noncombatants, as well as civilians killed by misfired Palestinian rockets.

The UN estimates 1.9 million people in Gaza have been displaced, while aid groups fear the territory will soon be overwhelmed by starvation and disease.

On Friday, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, who was wrapping up a visit to Israel on Friday, said Washington hoped “this new opening will ease congestion and help facilitate the delivery of life-saving assistance.”

The World Health Organization welcomed the announcement, but also called for the aid to be distributed throughout the Strip, including the north which has been largely cut off by the fighting.



Trucks with humanitarian aid wait to enter the Palestinian side of Rafah on the Egyptian border with the Gaza Strip on December 11, 2023. (Giuseppe Cacace/AFP)

Following the decision to reopen Kerem Shalom, two US and Israeli officials told The Times of Israel that US President Joe Biden’s administration has set its sights on its next ask from Jerusalem: to allow commercial goods into the Strip.

Since Hamas’s October 7 onslaught, only basic humanitarian goods have been entering Gaza.

The officials told The Times of Israel that the US aims to get Gaza’s limited economy up and running again after it effectively stopped operating on October 7.

Both the US and Israeli officials said that Jerusalem is currently resistant to the idea, but the US official expressed optimism that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government will soon agree, as it did on reopening Kerem Shalom, allowing in fuel and allowing in humanitarian trucks from Egypt after initially rejecting all three requests.

“The Israelis understand that the more aid that gets in, the more time they’ll have to continue operations in Gaza,” the US official said.

Jacob Magid contributed to this report.

17 December (Al-Jazeera)

[Do you condemn Žižek? | Opinions | Al Jazeera](#)

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Do you condemn Žižek?

Amid the genocide in Gaza, the incoherence of western philosophers has come to the fore.

[Jamil Khader](#), Dean of research at Bethlehem University

Published On 17 Dec 2023 17 Dec 2023



Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek speaks at the authors' forum 'Blue Sofa' during the Frankfurt Book Fair on October 12, 2018 [File: EPA/Hayoung Jeon]

Over the past two months, as Israel has waged a genocidal war in Gaza, killing more than 19,000 people, more than a third of them children, Western philosophers have come under criticism for their positions on the matter. These self-proclaimed beacons of morality and ethics have either condoned war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and forcible evacuations or taken ambivalent positions on them.

For example, on November 13, German philosophers Jürgen Habermas, Nicole Deitelhoff, Rainer Forst, and Klaus Guenther issued a statement in support of Israel, rejecting the term genocide in reference to its actions in Gaza and claiming that Hamas's October 7 attack intended to "eliminate Jewish life in general".

Habermas subsequently became the subject of a social media [meme](#) that asked "do you condemn Habermas?" mocking the repeated insistence on condemning Hamas that Palestinians interviewed by Western media outlets face.

While Habermas's position is hardly surprising, the writings of another European philosopher, Slavoj Žižek, have been disappointing given his previous statements on Israel-Palestine. So here I ask, do we condemn Žižek?

It is important to recognise that the Slovenian philosopher has been put in a difficult position. After giving a speech at the opening of the Frankfurt Book Fair on October 17, he was viciously attacked and even accused of anti-Semitism. He was even heckled at the event for pointing out that "Palestinians are strictly treated as a problem. The state of Israel doesn't offer them any hope, positively outlining their role in the state they live." Since then, he has spent considerable effort trying to defend himself against being falsely identified as an anti-Semite.

But in trying to navigate the genocidally charged environment of Germany and the rest of Europe, Žižek has inadvertently betrayed his radical leftist aspirations.

Most of what he said in the speech first appeared in an article he [published](#) with Project Syndicate on October 13 under the title "The Real Dividing Line in Israel-Palestine".

In the piece, he writes “the situation demands historical context” but then goes on to reduce “the situation” to a confrontation between “fundamentalists on both sides”; he talks about the Israeli occupation and the “truly desperate and hopeless conditions faced by Palestinians in Gaza and the occupied territories”, but reaffirms Israel’s “right to defend itself”.

Much of what he says in the piece is disconnected from and contradicts his previous writings about state terrorism, Zionism, peace, “hamatzav”, the two-state solution, or even the critique of the American invasion of Iraq.

While he links the war in Gaza to “the mass of Palestinian Arabs who have been living in a state of limbo for decades”, Žižek fails to bring up the history of the ongoing Nakba and its significance for understanding the extremist Zionist messianic ideology.

He also repeats a major talking point from the Israeli hasbara repertoire about Hamas’s role in undermining any possibility for peace, despite previously identifying Israel as the main actor that is undermining peace. Just two years ago, he wrote in an op-ed published by RT that the protraction of the occupation “is in Israel’s interest: they want the West Bank, but they don’t want to annex it because they don’t want to grant Israeli citizenship to West Bank Palestinians.”

He then dished out his pizza analogy to show how Israel consistently undermines the peace process: “So the situation drags on and is occasionally interrupted by negotiations which a Palestinian participant perfectly described. Both sides sit at opposite ends of a table with a pie of pizza in the middle, and while negotiating over how to split the pie, one side constantly eats “its” parts.”

These contradictions in Žižek’s present analysis of Israel-Palestine are compounded by his inadequate analytical framework. In his article and the speech, he insists on reducing this genocidal war to a conflict between the two sides of the same fundamentalist logic, epitomised by what Hamas leader Ismael Haniyeh and Israeli government minister Itamar Ben-Gvir have said.

However, Ben-Gvir’s ideology is not fringe in Israel; it just does not dress its intentions in the rhetoric of “democracy” and human rights as the Israeli liberals do. It reflects the whole fabric of the settler colonial Jewish apartheid ethnocratic state. Official statements about the intent to “[nuke](#)” Palestinians, to destroy “[the human animals](#)”, and to carry out a second Nakba are mirrored by children’s songs about the “annihilation” of Palestinians and ordinary Israelis saying they want “[Gaza gone](#)”.

Even Israeli liberal intellectuals like Yuval Harari – whom Žižek quotes in his speech and writings and seems to regard as someone discerning of the dangerous “fundamentalism” of the likes of Ben-Gvir – are openly endorsing the ethnic cleansing of Gaza under the guise of “protecting civilians”. In fact, this is the only difference between the Israeli “fundamentalists” – as Žižek calls them – and the Israeli liberals: the latter would just wrap the same policies in the language of humanism to make them more palatable to the world.

Žižek also insists that Israel has the absolute right to defend itself against Hamas. In a November 20 op-ed published in The Philosophical Salon, he even states that he “gave Israel the full right to destroy [Hamas]”. A few lines down, he writes that he stands in complete solidarity with the victims of Hamas’s attack and with the Jewish community, but does not extend his support to the actions of the State of Israel and its current administration. It is not clear how he can endorse Israel’s “right to self-defence” while refusing to support it.

More importantly, such a position is completely disconnected from his previous analyses of Zionist settler colonialism and occupation. Just back in March 2023, he wrote a [piece](#) for Project Syndicate in which he argued that condemning Russia properly makes it imperative to “be consistent and also condemn other examples, not least Israel’s subjugation of Palestinians in the occupied territories”.

As many [commentators](#) have pointed out, according to international law, an occupier cannot claim self-defence against the people it occupies. In fact, the use of this word in a settler-colonial context is code for ethnic cleansing and land grab.

Žižek’s Hobbesian equivocations on Israel’s “right to self-defence” cannot be excused as a defensive reaction.

Even more incomprehensible is his insistence to cling in his writings to some liberal politics of hope in this catastrophic context. In a December 12 op-ed he published with the Israeli outlet Haaretz, he sees change coming through “the slow rise of solidarity between the Palestinian citizens of Israel and the Jews opposing the all-destructive war”.

But this lofty aspirational vision is completely disconnected from the realities on the ground. Palestinian citizens of Israel have been subjected to a brutal [McCarthyist campaign](#) of arrest, surveillance, intimidation and exclusion even for calling for the end of the war. Any statement or activity that is not in favour of this genocidal war is deemed as hostile and anti-Israel.

Undoubtedly, the fear of being painted with the demonising brush of anti-Semitism is very real and cannot be overstated. It is being weaponised even against Jewish people, as the controversy over Masha Gessen’s reception of the Hannah Arendt Prize for Political Thought sadly illustrates. Gessen was attacked for writing in a piece for the New Yorker, that Gaza is “like a Jewish ghetto in an Eastern European country occupied by Nazi Germany”.

Despite his ambivalent position on the Palestinian genocide, Žižek should not be dismissed as an irrelevant thinker. After all, the core truths of many philosophies exist beyond the biographies of their authors.

I think Žižek is aware of his failings and can revise his position in future writings. As he may well know, it is never [too late](#) to awaken.

The views expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera’s editorial stance.

[Jamil Khader](#)

Dean of research at Bethlehem University

Jamil Khader is professor of English and dean of research at Bethlehem University, Palestine. His numerous articles on postcolonial women writers, fantastic literature and cosmopolitanism have appeared in various national and international journals.

17 December (The Guardian)

[CDU seeks to win back German voters with its own Rwanda asylum plan | Germany | The Guardian](#)

CDU seeks to win back German voters with its own Rwanda asylum plan

Official says party favours sending refugees to third countries such as Rwanda for application processing

[Kate Connolly](#) in Berlin

Sun 17 Dec 2023 15.58 CET



The Rwandan capital, Kigali. The remarks by the CDU's Jens Spahn suggest the UK's Rwanda policy is gaining further traction internationally. Photograph: Phil Moore/AFP/Getty Images

Germany's opposition conservatives are seeking to win back voters with a sweeping change to the country's immigration and asylum policy, including plans to send asylum seekers to Rwanda.

Jens Spahn, a leading member of the Christian Democrats (CDU), said at the weekend that his party was in favour of the transportation of future refugees to third countries for processing of asylum applications such as Ghana and Rwanda in Africa, or to non-EU European countries such as Moldova and Georgia.

"If we did this and kept it up consequently for four, six, eight weeks, we would see the numbers [claiming asylum] reduce dramatically," said Spahn, who is vice parliamentary leader of the CDU.

The remarks suggest the concept of the UK's Rwanda policy is gaining traction internationally. The Italian prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, has proposed to sending asylum seekers to Albania.

Austria has also expressed its interest in such a scheme.

Spahn was defending a 70-page position paper presented by the CDU last Monday, in which the party said if in government it would propose limiting the number of asylum seekers coming to Germany, and move those who entered the EU to "safe third countries" where their applications would be processed.

The CDU has made no secret of its aims to win back voters from the far-right nationalist AfD, which is running second in opinion polls, citing migration, alongside inflation, as the top issue for many Germans that are likely to dominate campaigns for regional elections next year and the federal election expected to take place in autumn 2025.

Spahn called third countries "safe harbours" that "would fulfil the terms and conditions of the UN refugee convention".

Speaking to the newspaper Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung, Spahn said the plan would act as a disincentive to refugees who chose "irregular ways" to reach Germany to claim asylum. "If we are consequent about this ...

many people wouldn't even set off on the journey in the first place, if it's clear to them that within 48 hours they will find themselves in a safe third country outside the EU," he said.

The proposal is a core item on the CDU's so-called "basic principle" programme, according to which the party, in government, would seek to forge contractual agreements with third-party countries that would be legally obliged to grant the new arrivals protection.

Countries such as Morocco and Senegal have also been put forward as possible third-party countries.

Spahn said: "Rwanda has said it would be prepared to do this, probably also Ghana. We should also be in talks about this with eastern European countries like Georgia and Moldova."

He said that nowhere in the Geneva refugee convention did it state that the protection of people from war should be vouchsafed in the EU. "If we ensure that persecuted people have a place of protection where they'll be well looked after and can live without fear, then the goals of the Geneva convention will have been fulfilled," he added.

Spahn said Germany's weight in the EU would ensure that whether it was behind the concept, "it will be capable of securing majority approval and with a coalition of the willing it would also be implementable".

"Once this message has got through, people will no longer pay smugglers and traffickers, will no longer set out on these dangerous Mediterranean routes. Then these terrible deaths will cease, and then the rights of the strongest – because it's almost only young men who are coming – will stop," said Spahn, adding that he believed if a solution was found to the "migration problems", he was "very certain that radical parties will lose their popularity".

Legal and humanitarian experts have been vocal in expressing their concerns about the third-country strategy. Germany's Council of Experts on Integration and [Migration](#) issues has repeatedly called on advocates of the strategy to explain how it is possible to ensure that procedures are implemented in compliance with European asylum and human rights standards. No country has so far managed to implement the practice.

Irene Mihalic, of the Greens, accused Spahn of pandering to rightwing voters. "Thankfully we find ourselves in a constitutional state and need legally viable solutions in order to deal with the large numbers of people seeking protection, not populism that violates human rights," said Mihalic, who recently lambasted Spahn's calls for "physical violence" to be used on the EU's outer borders against "irregular migration".

The CDU's position is viewed as the party's attempt to break away from the era of Angela Merkel, under whose leadership Germany registered about a million refugees in 2015.

Her slogan "Wir schaffen das" ("we'll manage") now seems to stand in stark contrast to the CDU's current position.

Merkel's successor as chancellor, Olaf Scholz, has stressed the importance of reducing the record numbers of asylum applications – which in the first seven months of this year had increased by 80% compared with last year – by introducing caps on benefits, speedier processing of claims and tighter restrictions on the number accepted and their countries of origin.

Scholz has also toyed with the option of a third-country plan, despite widespread misgivings within his own party, but has not mentioned Rwanda explicitly, only showing himself to be open to discussion about its practical and legal feasibility. "There is a whole range of legal questions," he said recently.

17 December (Le Figaro)

[Agnès Verdier-Molinié: «Les immigrés viennent-ils en France pour travailler ?» \(lefigaro.fr\)](#)

Agnès Verdier-Molinié: «Les immigrés viennent-ils en France pour travailler ?»

Par [Agnès Verdier-Molinié](#)

Publié hier à 19:24, mis à jour hier à 22:27



Agnès Verdier-Molinié. *Fabien Clairefond / Fabien Clairefond*

TRIBUNE - L'iFrap (think-tank libéral) a réalisé une étude sur la situation des immigrés dans plusieurs pays d'Europe. Sa directrice* en présente les principales conclusions et souligne l'importance du taux de chômage chez les personnes d'origine étrangère.

**Dernier livre paru : « Où va notre argent ? » (L'Observatoire, 2023).*

En matière d'immigration, en France le travail n'est jamais central. C'est une grave erreur. Si le rejet du projet de loi immigration est un échec pour le gouvernement, c'est aussi l'opportunité pour renforcer un texte qui souffre d'une absence de clarté et de l'incapacité des pouvoirs publics de se saisir des questions régaliennes. Dans une étude à paraître, la fondation iFrap a analysé les dernières données disponibles et comparé les caractéristiques de notre population immigrée à celles de nos voisins européens. Plusieurs tendances émergent. En parallèle des débats sur la loi immigration, les négociations sur le budget 2024 confirment le sous-investissement dans notre politique d'éloignement. En 2023, 44 millions d'euros étaient versés dans cette politique pouvant faire respecter 20 000 OQTF, loin des 180 millions d'euros qui seraient a minima nécessaires. En face, 900 millions d'euros sont versés en subventions aux 1 350 associations qui assurent des missions d'accueil, d'accompagnement et d'assistance juridiques (notamment pour des recours contre les OQTF) auprès des immigrés.

Au final, ces subventions ont été multipliées par trois depuis 2016 (de 306 à 981 millions) quand le nombre de reconduites à la frontière a été divisé par trois (de 22,3 % à 7 %). La conséquence première ? Le non-respect des OQTF est désormais normalisé avec seulement 6,9 % des obligations respectées au troisième trimestre 2023, très en dessous du taux avant la crise du Covid : 19 % en 2019, un taux déjà anormalement faible ! Cela veut dire que, tous les ans, 75 000 individus environ se maintiennent sur le territoire... Mais les statistiques sur le nombre de personnes présentes illégalement sur le sol français ne sont même pas correctement évaluées par le ministère de l'Intérieur (ou ne sont pas rendues publiques ?) contrairement à ce qui se pratique au Royaume-Uni et en Allemagne. Le ministère de l'Intérieur évoque 600.000 à 700.000 individus mais la Fondation iFrap estime ce stock entre 780.000 et 900.000 individus dont 400.000 arrivées nettes depuis 2015. Soit un quasi-doublement du nombre d'illégaux en sept ans.

À côté de l'immigration illégale, il y a l'immigration légale qui concerne 4,5 millions d'individus avec un titre de séjour valide dont 700.000 nouvelles arrivées depuis 2015. Alors qu'on se focalise sur l'article 3 de la loi qui souhaite régulariser les clandestins qui travaillent avec un risque évident d'effet d'aubaine, il manque, dans le débat sur l'immigration, le sujet du travail des immigrés légaux. Notre immigration légale est plus âgée : en 2020, en France, 25 % de la population non native avait plus de 65 ans contre 15 % en Europe. La France est

l'un des rares pays où la part de non-natifs de plus de 65 ans est supérieure à celle des natifs : 25 % contre 19,4 % (contre 15 % et 21,1 % en Europe). Et cette population augmente en France alors qu'elle diminue en Europe : par exemple - 9,6 % en Allemagne... pays où aucun minimum vieillesse n'était en place jusqu'en 2021.

Renouer un lien entre immigration et travail

Notre immigration légale arrive principalement pour des raisons familiales : selon les données de l'OCDE et hors migrations de citoyens européens, les arrivées pour une raison de « famille » ont représenté 41 % des entrées sur le territoire français de 2005 à 2020 : ce qui nous place en première position en Europe, tandis que le travail n'a concerné que 10,5 % des arrivées en France sur la période. Les personnes immigrées en France sont plus au chômage qu'ailleurs en Europe : en 2021, en France, la population d'origine étrangère affichait un taux de chômage de 12,3 % contre 7,9 % pour la population nationale. Cet écart existe dans presque tous les pays mais la situation française se démarque par une différence de 5 points entre ces deux populations, au-dessus de l'écart constaté ailleurs en Europe, et de 4 points au-dessus du Royaume-Uni. Ramener le taux de chômage des non-natifs installés en France dans la moyenne européenne reviendrait à ce qu'environ 50.000 d'entre eux renouent avec l'emploi, 120.000 dans le cas d'un alignement sur le taux britannique.

Les personnes immigrées en France sont plus au chômage qu'ailleurs en Europe : en 2021, en France, la population d'origine étrangère affichait un taux de chômage de 12,3 % contre 7,9 % pour la population nationale.

Agnès Verdier-Molinié

Pour la Fondation iFrap, la colonne vertébrale de la loi immigration devrait être de renouer un lien entre immigration et travail. Prenons l'exemple canadien : depuis 2012, le pays a doublé la part de sa population immigrée avec un seul mot d'ordre « priorité aux travailleurs » (via un permis à points qui prend en compte l'âge, les études et la maîtrise de l'anglais). Entre 2005 et 2020, 60 % des arrivées avaient un motif de travail et 26 % concernaient l'accompagnement d'un travailleur. Cette stratégie a permis de réduire l'écart de taux d'emploi entre les natifs et les non-natifs depuis 2010, tandis que le revenu annuel de la première année d'immigration augmentait de 39 %. En Europe, le Portugal nous montre l'exemple d'un pays où, sans dérogation au droit européen, 30 % des arrivées depuis 2005 avaient une raison de « travail », c'est la première place en Europe. Le système est simple : l'obtention d'un permis de résidence, à renouveler tous les ans, est directement liée à un contrat de travail.

Cette fermeté n'empêche pas le pays d'exercer une politique de regroupement familial généreuse : 35,7 % des arrivées avaient ce motif mais chaque demande est conditionnée au permis de résidence du demandeur... lui-même conditionné à un contrat de travail. Conditionner les arrivées à un emploi stable, c'est garantir, à la fois, une meilleure intégration et de meilleurs revenus aux immigrants tout en leur évitant de dépendre du système de protection sociale. Dans une approche semblable, en Allemagne, aux Pays-Bas et en Belgique, faire une demande d'aides sociales peut remettre en cause le permis de résidence ou son renouvellement et ce, jusqu'à cinq ans après sa délivrance aux Pays-Bas. Pour rappel, en France, les prestations « nationales » versées aux étrangers réguliers représentent entre 6 milliards et 7 milliards d'euros. Quand allons-nous revoir notre politique migratoire pour que les arrivants légaux en France viennent dans notre beau pays avant tout pour travailler ?

17 December (The Economist)

[Boneheaded anti-immigration politicians are throttling globalisation \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Boneheaded anti-immigration politicians are throttling globalisation

There is something about border crossings that breeds insanity in America's elected officials



image: brett ryder

Dec 14th 2023

Laredo, on America's southern border, does not look like a crown jewel. The Texan city of 250,000 people appears more like a dusty trading outpost in the middle of nowhere. Sure, it has a quaint centre. Laredo dates back to 1755, making it older than the United States—though for part of its history it was almost as poor (and not nearly as much fun) as Nuevo Laredo, the Mexican town just across the Rio Grande. Yet since the covid-19 pandemic, it has become a shining symbol of American commerce. This is expected to be the first year when the value of goods passing through Laredo eclipses that of any other port in America—even that of mighty Los Angeles, where stuff is shipped in from China.

Laredo's trade is lubricated by axle grease. Every day about 20,000 lorries trundle back and forth across its two trade bridges, transporting everything from cars to chewing gum. Commerce is booming. The value of imports and exports passing through the inland port rose by 8% between January and October, year on year. That bucks the trend in other ports, such as LA, where trade has declined. Because of bilateral trucking restrictions, all that cargo has to be transferred between American and Mexican drivers, requiring 43m square feet (4m square metres) of warehousing—an area bigger than Manhattan's Central Park. Investment is pouring in. Over the next two years, the city is expected to add another 10m square feet of warehouse space. It is daunting to think about. The number of lorries is already so large that tailbacks can stretch almost ten miles (16km) into Mexico.

The explanation for the buzz is nearshoring, which posits that, given the risks from overstretched supply chains and the trade war with China, manufacturers should move to North America. Although the potential is huge, so far it is more visible in truck traffic than investment flows. This year Mexico once again became America's biggest trading partner, overtaking Canada and China. Yet foreign investment into Mexico as a whole, though rising, does not signal a flood of new money. The problem is politics. There is something about border crossings that breeds insanity in elected officials. Instead of keeping the vital arteries unblocked, they favour putting up barriers. Laredo is a case in point.

It is an unusual city. With a 95% Hispanic population, most people, even those who have lived there for generations, speak Spanish. Many residents feel as much cultural affinity with Nuevo Laredo, even though it is plagued by violence, as they do with other parts of America. This came across clearly during a meeting of the Border Trade Alliance (bta), a coalition of business executives and local officials, in Laredo this month. After greeting each other with Mexican-style abrazos, those present quickly turned to concerns about decisions taken in Austin, Texas's state capital, and Washington, DC, that were thwarting the free flow of goods. Héctor Cerna, the bta's treasurer, says knee-jerk policies related to illegal migration have hit the supply of vegetables to

American supermarkets, Corona beer to distributors, car parts to companies like General Motors and Nissan, and refrigerators to firms like Whirlpool. “It’s self-inflicted pain,” he says.

Travel to the Colombia Solidarity bridge, on the outskirts of Laredo, and you see what he means. Built in preparation for the start of the North American Free Trade Agreement (nafta) in 1994, it was once called the “bridge to nowhere”, because there was no highway on the Mexican side. Now it is a flourishing transit point for avocados, cherry tomatoes and other goods from Mexico. Yet the governor of Texas, Greg Abbott, wants to strong-arm Mexico to do more to halt the wave of migrants trying to enter America. Under his orders, a state law-enforcement agency is imposing random safety checks on vehicles that have already passed us customs, creating long queues. The result is spoilage and ruined just-in-time delivery schedules. The costs are passed on to consumers.

The border crisis has led to other counterproductive policies. bta delegates complained that Customs and Border Protection, an American federal agency, has responded to the surge of asylum seekers by temporarily closing international bridges to free up manpower to process asylum claims. This forces shippers to wait—or divert cargoes elsewhere. Logistics executives worry that hot-button issues such as illegal migration and fentanyl will take centre stage during next year’s presidential election in America, causing further trade-disrupting demagoguery. No one yet knows whether Donald Trump, the most likely Republican contender (and wall-builder-in-chief), will proceed with his ruinous plan to slap a 10% levy on all imports to America. But, by 2026, whoever leads the government will oversee a sexennial review of the usmca, an update to nafta signed by America, Canada and Mexico in 2020. Given its importance to the trio’s economies, it will probably survive. But opponents to free trade with Mexico, such as Florida’s fruit growers, are already lobbying for a trade war.

The threats to cross-border trade are, of course, not just American-made. Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the Mexican president, has committed his own act of sabotage by imposing state control over the energy industry, which discourages firms from relocating to Mexico. He has militarised the border, putting oversight of trade into the hands of soldiers with little customs experience. Lawlessness is another hindrance.

Light up the border

Yet in America the border is a perennially touchy subject. Those far away see it as a place of chaos and crisis. Those who live near it think that if only it were managed with more sensitivity, the result would be more trade and a regulated flow of guest workers to ease labour shortages. Testament to their optimism is Laredo’s love of bridges. It hopes shortly to increase the number from four to five, with a new trade bridge built by a public-private partnership. Mexico has given the green light. But officials in Washington are stalling on permit approval. There the focus is squarely on walls.

17 December (NYT)

[Takeaways From Putin's Address on the Ukraine War and More - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com)

Five Takeaways From Putin's Marathon Annual News Conference

The Russian leader suggested that Western support for Ukraine was drying up and also gave his first comments about Evan Gershkovich, an American reporter detained in Russia.

Mr. Putin said Russia's vague goals of "demilitarization" and "denazification" in Ukraine remained unchanged. Credit: Pool photo by Alexander Zemlianichenko

By [Valerie Hopkins](#) and [Anton Troianovski](#)

Valerie Hopkins reported from Moscow and Anton Troianovski from Berlin.

Dec. 14, 2023

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia spent more than four hours on Thursday answering questions at his year-end news conference, resuming an annual tradition at a critical moment for his war in Ukraine.

Russian forces are now attacking on several areas of the front line after fending off a Ukrainian counteroffensive, and there are signs that U.S. support for Ukraine is waning as a new aid package stalls in Congress.

Here are five takeaways from the news conference in Moscow, which was tightly controlled but gave some reporters a rare chance to pose direct questions.

The Russian leader's confidence was on full display.

Mr. Putin said his goals in Ukraine had not changed: the "demilitarization" and "denazification" of the country. Those are the same vague and unfounded justifications that he used as he launched the invasion nearly two years ago, but Mr. Putin now finds himself in a position of relative strength.

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, left empty-handed after traveling to Washington this week to press lawmakers to approve more aid — and Mr. Putin made clear that he thinks Western military support for Kyiv is running dry. Ukraine has been "getting everything as freebies," he said. "But these freebies can run out at some point, and it looks like they're already starting to run out."

While the Russian leader reiterated that he was open to peace talks, he offered no hint of a willingness to compromise. "Peace will come when we achieve our goals," Mr. Putin said.

Putin is open to a 'deal' to release two Americans detained in Russia.

For the first time, Mr. Putin commented on Evan Gershkovich, a correspondent for The Wall Street Journal who was detained in March on espionage charges that he, his employer and the U.S. government have vehemently denied. Analysts have said that Mr. Gershkovich's best hope of being released is through a prisoner exchange.

"We want to make a deal, but it should be mutually acceptable to both sides," Mr. Putin said, referring to Mr. Gershkovich and to Paul Whelan, a former Marine and corporate executive who is serving a 16-year sentence on espionage charges that the United States has also called politically motivated.

Russia in Dialogue With U.S. on Detained Americans, Putin Says

Mr. Putin described talks with U.S. officials over two detained Americans, Evan Gershkovich, a reporter for The Wall Street Journal, and Paul Whelan, a former Marine and corporate executive, as "difficult."

My colleague, the Wall Street Journal correspondent Evan Gershkovich has been held in Lefortovo Prison without a trial for 37 weeks. His detention was today, again, the extension on his detention was today, again, upheld. Paul Whelan, another U.S. citizen, has been in prison for nearly five years. A spokesman for the U.S. State Department, which considers both men wrongfully detained, recently said that Moscow had rejected what

it called a substantial offer to return both of them to the United States. Is that true? What will it take to bring them home?

Mr. Putin described talks with U.S. officials over two detained Americans, Evan Gershkovich, a reporter for The Wall Street Journal, and Paul Whelan, a former Marine and corporate executive, as “difficult.” CreditCredit...Dmitry Serebryakov/Associated Press

Russia’s ballooning inflation is a source of concern.

Despite a flurry of international sanctions, Russia’s economy has regained its prewar size and is expected to grow by about 3 percent this year, as a significant increase in military spending stimulates production, while labor shortages force wages to rise.

But record state spending has come at a cost: Inflation has climbed sharply since the spring, and Mr. Putin acknowledged on Thursday that it could reach 8 percent this year. Reflecting the public anxiety about prices, one person asked the Russian leader what he planned to do about the rapidly rising cost of eggs. Mr. Putin responded with an off-color joke, before apologizing for his government not having come to grips with the problem.

With the war in Gaza, Putin sees an opportunity.

Amid international condemnation of the enormous civilian toll from Israel’s war against Hamas in Gaza, Mr. Putin sought to make a distinction between the actions of the Russian military and those of Israeli forces, an argument he has been leveraging to try to discredit the West and garner sympathy.

“Look at the special military operation” — his term for the war in Ukraine — “and look at what’s happening in Gaza, and feel the difference,” Mr. Putin said. “Nothing of the sort is happening in Ukraine.” (In fact, Russia’s invasion has killed [thousands of Ukrainian civilians](#).)

Mr. Putin also attempted to counter Western efforts to turn Russia into a global pariah over the invasion. “In many cities in Europe and the U.S., not to mention other world regions, a lot of people think that we are doing everything right,” he said.

Still, he predicted that relations with the United States could someday improve. “As for the United States, we are ready to build relations with them,” he said. “We believe that the world needs the U.S.”

With an election looming, Putin didn’t seem inclined to campaign.

Russia’s presidential election was barely mentioned, suggesting that Mr. Putin may view the outcome of the race as a foregone conclusion. With the political system under his firm control, Mr. Putin is widely expected to win [another six-year term](#) in the election in March.

One journalist at the news conference expressed support for Mr. Putin’s candidacy, telling the Russian leader that “you’re in power as long as I can remember myself.”

[Valerie Hopkins](#) covers the war in Ukraine and how the conflict is changing Russia, Ukraine, Europe and the United States. She is based in Moscow.

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17 December (The Economist)

[Ukraine's army is struggling to find good recruits \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Rough draft

Ukraine's army is struggling to find good recruits

Russia is suffering immense casualties—but it has the edge in manpower

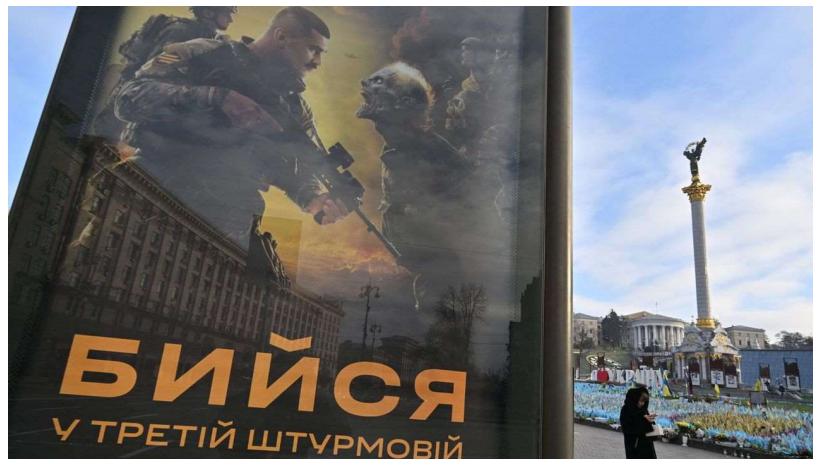


image: getty images

Dec 17th 2023 | KYIV

The new recruits came from a variety of backgrounds, but they shared one thing: after rudimentary training in western Europe, none of them expected to be deployed to an assault unit at the hottest section of the Ukrainian front line. Some had signed up voluntarily, expecting to be given places in units that suited their profiles: as drone operators or artillery men. Others were plucked from their villages with little warning. One older recruit didn't even have the chance to pick up his false teeth. After less than a week in the trenches of the Donbas, in eastern Ukraine, the platoon of 20 had been reduced by six. Three had been killed in action, three seriously wounded.

This is one of the worst recruitment stories, but it is far from isolated. Ukraine is desperately looking to plug its front lines against new Russian attacks. No army offers new recruits guarantees about where they will be deployed, let alone in wartime, and the assault brigades are among the most desperate units.



The Economist

image: the economist

But what lawyers describe as a “deployment lottery” is straining the recruitment process. Army chiefs are struggling to fill places with the willing; some are resorting to conscription raids on gyms and shopping centres. Few of those who are signed up this way make good soldiers. “We’re seeing 45- to 47-year-olds,” complains one senior officer. “They are out of breath by the time they reach the front line.”

Recognising the problem, in September Ukraine’s defence ministry began work on a new mobilisation strategy. Illarion Pavliuk, a spokesman for the ministry, says part of the problem lies in the army’s success: many citizens no longer view the war in the existential terms they did immediately after Russia’s invasion in February 2022. “Some mistakenly think there is someone else who can do the job for them,” he says.

The reforms aim to give those who are wavering more choice: new recruits can, more or less, sign up for a specific position. A new digital register will improve the ministry’s understanding of Ukraine’s manpower resources. There will be a clearer system of rest and rotations. Eventually, volunteers will be mobilised for a finite period, not indefinitely as is the case now.

There are several examples of successful recruitment campaigns into individual units. The 3rd Assault Brigade, created nine months into the war as a branch of Ukraine’s special forces, is perhaps the most visible. Skyscraper-sized adverts in Ukraine’s cities glamorise life as one of the brigade’s stormtroopers, slaying goblin-like caricatures of evil. But no less important is the brigade’s reputation for competent command, good equipment and low attrition rates. New recruits typically undergo months of training, unlike the one-month standard.

Khrystyna Bondarenko, a spokesperson for the brigade, says it has no shortage of volunteers. By the start of next year the brigade will be Ukraine’s largest, she says, at around the size of a nato division. (Ukraine’s army does not have divisions.) The majority of its new recruits are under 25, and she turns down 150 applications a month from minors. “No one is saying there are millions of people waiting to fight in Avdiivka [a town in the Donbas that has recently seen fierce fighting],” she says. “But there are people you can work with.”

Russia, too, is having difficulty [mobilising the numbers it needs](#). Its tactic of hurling vast numbers of men at defended positions, often without proper equipment, can mean [daily losses as high as 1,000](#). But the fundamentals point to a gargantuan challenge for Ukraine. With a pool of potential soldiers about four times greater, Russia looks favoured in the long run. In its prisons and poorest areas, joining the army looks rational.

Elsewhere, the Kremlin has been able to meet its minimum needs with secret recruitment for a full-scale war that it still pretends is not happening. If it did need to ramp up its mobilisation the Kremlin would need to admit that Russia is at war. That would not be without political consequences.

Ukrainian critics of the government in Kyiv, meanwhile, charge that the country is only “pretending to mobilise.” Viktor Kevlyuk, a retired colonel who oversaw the implementation of mobilisation policy for the western half of the country from 2014—when Russia first invaded—to 2021, says Ukraine risks falling into a trap. Russia will step up its mobilisation after its presidential election in March is over, he thinks. (hur, Ukraine’s military-intelligence agency, agrees.)

Vladimir Putin has already signed an edict increasing the size of Russia’s armed forces by 170,000. Colonel Kevlyuk argues that Ukraine must respond with a nationwide mobilisation of industry, government and resources. The often-decadent lifestyles of those enjoying safety in Kyiv need to change, he thinks. “This is not a time for imported smoked salmon.”

Throughout the war Volodymyr Zelensky has resisted the maximalist urgings of his soldiers, much to their chagrin. His top generals have, for example, pushed to lower the age at which non-reservists can be mobilised, which currently stands at 27. Others have proposed a stricter implementation of mobilisation laws.

The president has pushed back partly for political reasons: he does not want to irritate the population unnecessarily. But Mr Zelensky is also driven by more noble concerns. “Zelensky wants to do the right thing by Ukrainians,” says a high-level government source. “He doesn’t want to be a dictator”.

Tough decisions lie ahead. For Colonel Kevlyuk, the army is a beast that must be fed: “We have no choice other than to be bloodthirsty,” he says. But some officials prefer a more consensual approach. The high-level source predicts media campaigns promoting national sacrifice and warning that Russia continues to pose an existential threat. “If we lose, it will be bad for all of us,” he says.

The task is to convince potential recruits. “Conductor”, one of the men deployed to the ill-fated unit in the Donbas, says he is committed to serving his country, “but only in a way that can be useful”. In the meantime he is occupied “24/7” in securing a transfer away from the assault forces. “You can’t just write people’s lives off like this,” he says. ■

17 December (Al-Jazeera)

[Global coal use to reach record high in 2023, energy agency says](#) | [Climate Crisis News](#) | [Al Jazeera](#)

Global coal use to reach record high in 2023, energy agency says

IEA report says demand is expected to grow in India, China but decline in United States, European Union.



An excavator sifts through dunes of low-grade coal near a coal mine in Pingdingshan, Henan province, China [File: Aly Song/Reuters]

Published On 15 Dec 2023 15 Dec 2023

Global coal use is expected to reach a record high in 2023 as demand in emerging and developing economies remains strong, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has said.

The demand for coal is seen rising 1.4 percent in 2023, surpassing 8.5 billion tonnes for the first time as usage in India is expected to grow 8 percent and that in China up 5 percent due to rising electricity demand and weak hydropower output, IEA said in a report released on Friday.

Coal is the largest energy-related source of the CO₂ emissions responsible along with other greenhouse gases for global warming.

Half of the world's coal use comes from China, the agency said, so the outlook for coal will be significantly affected in the coming years by the pace of clean energy deployment, weather conditions, and structural shifts in the Chinese economy.

Coal use is set to drop by about 20 percent this year in both the European Union and the United States, the report said.

The agency said it was difficult to forecast demand in Russia, currently the fourth-largest coal consumer, because of the continuing conflict in Ukraine.

But the IEA noted that overall coal use is not expected to drop until 2026, when the major expansion of renewable capacity in the next three years should help lower usage by 2.3 percent compared with 2023 levels, even with the absence of stronger clean energy policies.

Global consumption is forecast to remain well over 8 billion tonnes in 2026, the report said. To reach goals set by the Paris climate agreement – reached in 2015 by governments who agreed to phase out fossil fuels in favour of renewable energy in the second half of the century – the use of unabated coal would need to fall significantly faster, it added.

At the United Nations COP28 climate talks in Dubai this week, world leaders [agreed](#) to a deal that would, for the first time, push nations to transition away from fossil fuels to avert the worst effects of climate change.

However, the agreement did not go so far as to seek a “phase-out” of fossil fuels, for which more than 100 nations had pleaded. Rather, it called for “transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade”.

“The absence of explicit ‘phase-out’ language in the draft is significant, as it is a more measurable and definitive term, sending a strong message globally about a total shift away from fossil fuels,” Harjeet Singh, head of global political strategy at Climate Action Network International, [told](#) Al Jazeera.

“The current terminology – ‘transitioning away’ – is somewhat ambiguous and allows for varying interpretations.”

17 December (The Economist)

[Stolpersteine grieve for victims of the Nazis, one at a time \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Stolpersteine grieve for victims of the Nazis, one at a time

Gunter Demnig's paving stones spark countless acts of remembrance



image: peter schrank

Dec 14th 2023

Max Kösterich lived for a time at 204 Chaussée de Waterloo, an elegant apartment block on a hilly thoroughfare in Brussels. A married father of four sons, he probably arrived in the Belgian capital from Frankfurt in 1934, aged 50. What Kösterich did for a living is lost to time, though a previous stint working in the Dutch East Indies suggests a well-off trader of some sort. Why the family moved is also not known, but might be guessed at. For if history remembers Kösterich at all, it is as a statistic: one of 6m Jews murdered by the Nazis. Three of his sons died with him at Auschwitz. Only the second one, Manfred, survived. In 1938 an opportunity came up for just one brother to emigrate to Australia, an escape from the impending horror. It was Manfred who drew the winning straw. Those not so lucky were rounded up, landing in French camps before being loaded onto eastbound trains.

Last month the Kösterich family returned from Australia to the Chaussée de Waterloo. Manfred died in 1984, unable or unwilling to share with his loved ones much about the circumstances of his emigration. His son Joe Kosterich (the umlaut on the “o” was lost in the move down under), a medical doctor from Perth in his early 60s, had made the journey with his wife Cathy and their grown children. Number 204 is a little faded these days, its entrance flanked by a dingy bar and a dental practice. One drizzly Saturday morning in November the Kosterich family looked on as a small slab of pavement in front of the building's threshold was excised. In its place, a brass plaque the size of a cobblestone was cemented in. “Here Lived Max Kösterich. Born 1884”, it starts, before noting his grim fate. As trams rolled by and city life went on, a few short speeches were attempted to a dozen well-wishers. “My grandfather until today was just another number,” said Joe, unable to hold back a tear. Cathy laid down a few flowers by the plaque: a kangaroo paw and some eucalyptus, an Australian wink to the new life the tides of history had foisted upon the Kösterich/Kosterich clan.

The man on his knees expertly laying the brass that morning was Gunter Demnig. Since 1996, the German artist has chipped away at pavements in around 30 countries in Europe, filling them with what he calls [Stolpersteine](#), or “stumbling stones”. Earlier this year the 76-year-old laid the 100,000th memorial. Each plaque cites just one victim and is placed at their last freely chosen abode; when entire families were killed a sort of family tree of Stolpersteine is recreated, with parents placed above their children. Most are Jews, but there are stones for Roma, deserters, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, mentally or physically disabled people and various others deemed “undesirable” by Nazis. (A few are dedicated to survivors who managed to escape.) The memorials are discreet yet impossible not to stumble upon, at least metaphorically. One house in Brussels has 16 in front of its threshold. Berlin alone has more than 10,000 Stolpersteine.

The Holocaust is richly remembered in cities across Europe; a giant memorial in the German capital, opened in 2005, is a staple of the tourist circuit. But to honour the victims collectively is not the same as remembering each for who they were. “Six million Jews is abstract, it is a number,” says Mr Demnig. “You cannot imagine a number.” A plaque evokes a person, a story, perhaps some descendants in faraway lands. What started off as a one-off project of a few dozen stones snowballed as demand for the decentralised memorial scheme kept coming. A Jewish custom beseeching the living to remember the dead helped spur requests across Germany and, from 2006, the rest of Europe. At first the stones were laid without much in the way of permission. Now local authorities are generally happy to help.

Sporting a wide-brimmed fedora, a red bandanna around his neck and a denim shirt, Europe’s rememberer-in-chief is no establishment figure. Mr Demnig is from the 1968 generation, the first to have only heard about the war rather than lived through it. In his student days protesters sought to understand better what the Nazis—and Germany—had wrought. There was something provocative in remembering, like a rebuke to those who had hoped it would all be forgotten. Kids started to ask their parents questions that few relished answering. Such as, in Mr Demnig’s case, how to explain the picture he had found in his family’s attic of his own father in uniform, manning an anti-aircraft gun.

Casting the first stone

These days Mr Demnig has complemented his artistic talent with expertise in logistics and civil engineering. In the back of the Peugeot van that he drives alone across Europe for over 200 days a year are the various angle grinders, chisels and shovels needed to prise open pavements, though mostly the holes are dug in advance these days. After making the first 7,000 stones himself, Mr Demnig roped in help. Now a small team and a non-profit foundation assist with manufacturing the Stolpersteine and taking appeals for new ones. Many requesters are descendants of the victims; the family’s assent is always sought anyway. Sometimes the initiative comes from neighbours, or students. Mr Demnig insists on laying the first stone in a new town himself, after which community groups can take over, sparing the ageing German’s knees.

The elegance of the Stolpersteine has caught the public imagination; around 700 a month are installed these days. Their glistening patina, regularly cleaned by volunteers, is art in itself: each plaque is handcrafted, better to contrast with the machine-like efficiency of the Nazis. But, Mr Demnig says, the process of a community looking for new ways never to forget is a form of art, too.

The ceremony in Brussels lasted only a few minutes. When it was over, Mr Demnig drove off: there was a stone to lay by the Belgian coast that afternoon, then another dozen in the Netherlands over the following week. After the speeches, the crowd on the Chaussée de Waterloo dispersed. The flowers from Australia were soon swept away by the rain. The stone remains.

17 December's Topics

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The war in Ukraine

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Climate change

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Culture / Media

Page 42 : What 'The Crown' Teaches Us About Power and How to Wield It (NYT, Guest Essay)

17 December (The Economist)

[A new Suez crisis threatens the world economy \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Red alert in the Red Sea

A new Suez crisis threatens the world economy

Global shipping firms are suspending voyages in the Red Sea



image: afp

Dec 16th 2023

Over a thousand miles from Gaza, a naval crisis is unfolding that could transform the war between Israel and Hamas into a global affair with implications for the world economy. Since December 15th four of the world's five largest container-shipping companies, cma cgm, Hapag-Lloyd, Maersk and msc have paused or suspended their services in the Red Sea, the route through which traffic from the Suez Canal must pass, as Iran-backed Houthi militants, armed with sophisticated weapons, escalate their attacks on global shipping flows. As one of the world's major trade arteries suddenly closes, America and its allies are ramping up naval activity in the Middle East, and may even attack the [Houthis](#), in order to re-establish free passage.

Bab al-Mandab is a narrow strait between Africa and the Arabian Peninsula through which an estimated 12% of global trade by volume normally flows, and perhaps 30% of global container traffic. It has become a no-go zone as the Houthis, based in Yemen, attack shipping, ostensibly in support of the Palestinians in Gaza. The strikes have been going on for weeks but have now escalated sharply. On December 15th the Houthis threatened to attack one ship, struck another one with a drone and launched two ballistic missiles at the mv Palatium III, one of which hit the vessel. The attack on the Palatium III was the first ever use of an anti-ship ballistic missile. All the ships were Liberian-flagged. On December 16th the American naval vessel, uss Carney (pictured), shot-down 14 drones over the Red Sea while a British ship, hms Diamond, destroyed another.



image: the economist

Faced with a soaring risk of ships being crippled and their crews killed, the global shipping industry is switching into emergency mode. On December 15th Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd paused their services. On December 16th cma cgm followed, as did msc, the owner of the Palatium III, which said that its ships would not use the Suez Canal in either direction “until the Red Sea passage is safe”, and that some vessels would be rerouted via the Cape of Good Hope. Together these four companies account for 53% of the global container trade. Smaller container operators, as well as dry-bulk carriers and oil tanker firms, may now follow their lead.

The crisis has two big implications; one for the world economy and the other regarding the risks of military escalation in the Middle East as Western countries try to re-establish order. Start with the economy. Revenue from the Suez canal is a major source of income for Egypt, which is already in the midst of a [financial crisis](#). Israel will be less affected, with only about 5% of its trade passing through Eilat, its Red Sea port. For the world economy a prolonged closure of the Suez route would raise the costs of trade as shipping is rerouted around Africa, taking more time, and insurance premiums soar. Short-term supply-chain snarls could also result from wide-scale rerouting of trade: in 2021 the [Ever Given](#), a Taiwanese-operated ship, ran aground and blocked the canal for six days, amplifying a global supply-chain crunch. If the Red Sea security crisis is perceived to threaten shipping in the nearby Arabian Sea, through which perhaps one-third of global seaborne oil supply passes, the economic costs would be dramatically higher.

These risks are why America and its allies will be inclined to act. But the Houthi threat is a daunting and complex one. The militant group’s motto includes the exhortation “Death to Israel. A curse upon the Jews,” and it claims that it is targeting “all ships heading to Israeli ports” until food and medicine are delivered to Gaza. But most of the ships being attacked neither are headed to Israel nor have Israeli ownership. Countries from around the world are affected: one of the vessels attacked by the Houthis was sailing under a Hong Kong flag.

The apparent incoherence of the Houthis’ stated aims should not be confused with ineffectiveness: for years, Iran has trained, armed and supported the group in its successful insurgency within Yemen and in a war against Iran’s regional rivals, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (uae). The sophistication of some of the weapons involved is high. “The Houthis have a giant anti-ship missile arsenal at this point,” says Fabian Hinz of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (iiss), a think-tank in London, including those with ranges of up to 800km.

Western officials are unclear as to whether Iran is directing individual attacks. Israeli intelligence is not yet convinced the latest strikes were sanctioned by the Corps 6000, a unit of Iran’s expeditionary Quds Force that

works with the Houthis in a joint command centre. However, the group is thought to receive intelligence on shipping from Iran's surveillance ships in the Red Sea. And the broad campaign against shipping fits with Iran's strategy of calibrated pressure, avoiding an all-out attack on Israel while drawing on its regional proxies to harangue Israel violently from all sides. The danger now is that Iran does not have perfect control over Houthi attacks and the strikes are dragging in a far wider range of countries.

It is possible that diplomacy might help de-escalate the crisis. In 2015 Saudi Arabia and the UAE intervened in Yemen's civil war in favour of the internationally recognised government. In March 2022 the Saudis agreed to a ceasefire, leaving the Houthis in control of the capital, Sanaa, and the strategic western coast. They may soon announce a road map to make the ceasefire permanent and end the war. Commitments to cease maritime attacks might conceivably be part of any talks.

Nonetheless, a bigger military response to the Houthi threat is now likely. A multinational task force, currently led by America's navy, is already operating off the Yemeni coast in order to try to deter the Houthis from forcibly boarding ships—a raid was disrupted in November—or firing missiles. It includes both Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In recent weeks American, British and French warships have all intercepted Houthi drones and missiles, and America has asked Australia to send a warship, too.

But this defensive armada has struggled to keep the crisis under control. The Houthis have demonstrated that a few drones and missiles are always likely to get through. One potential next step involves armed escorts for merchant shipping, which America used during the so-called tanker war between Iran and Iraq in the 1980s. But these are resource intensive, requiring a very large number of warships, according to naval sources involved in the debate.

The main alternative is to strike the Houthis and their arsenal directly. America and Israel have both developed plans to attack Houthi depots and launchers. America will be loth to broaden its involvement in the Middle East: the Biden administration had been focused on expanding the Red Sea task force and putting diplomatic and economic pressure on Iran. Israel does not want a new conflict: it is already facing pressure from America to wind down this phase of the Gaza war, and is concerned about Hizbullah, the Lebanese militant group, which has been firing missiles at Israel almost daily. Yet if Iran and its Houthi proxies continue attacks that keep one of the world's major trade routes closed, escalation may be inevitable.

17 December (The Times of Israel)

[Poll: Most young Americans think Israel should be 'ended and given to Hamas' | The Times of Israel](#)

Poll: Most young Americans think Israel should be ‘ended and given to Hamas’

Majority of all respondents support Israel, but results from 18-24 age group show majority think IDF campaign ‘genocidal,’ while saying calls for genocide of Jews is legitimate

By [TOI STAFF](#) Today, 9:45 am [0](#)



File: Pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel demonstrators rally near Columbia University in New York on November 15, 2023. (SPENCER PLATT / Getty Images via AFP)

Over half of young Americans surveyed on Israel’s conflict with Hamas believe the Jewish state should cease to exist, and instead be replaced by a Palestinian entity, according to an online poll conducted this week.

The monthly [Harvard CAPS/Harris poll](#) found continuing support for Israel in its campaign against Hamas among every age demographic but 18- to 24-year-olds.

Overall, the survey found that 81 percent of respondents back Israel. Among the youngest age bracket, though, support is evenly split between Israel and Hamas.

On several questions, voters in that age group seemed to express contradicting or muddled views. For instance, despite 51% replying in the affirmative when asked if Israel should be “ended and given to Hamas and the Palestinians,” 58% of respondents in the group also thought Hamas should be removed from running Gaza.

However, most of the entire pool of respondents (60%) preferred a two-state solution to the conflict.

The survey found that 66% of respondents in the 18-24 age group think that Hamas’s October 7 massacre constituted genocide. At the same time, 60% think that the attacks were justified by Palestinian grievances, indicating that they believe that genocide of Israelis is justified.



File: Israeli soldiers walk past houses destroyed by Hamas terrorists in Kibbutz Be'eri on the Gaza border, October 14, 2023. (AP Photo/Ariel Schalit)

Overall, 73% of respondents said the onslaught was genocide, and similarly 73% believed it to be unjustified.

Additionally, a majority of all respondents across the board view the October 7 massacre — when Hamas-led terrorists rampaged through southern communities, killing 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and kidnapping some 240 to Gaza — as a terrorist attack (84%), including 73% in the 18-24 bracket.

Sixty-three percent of all respondents answered that Israel was trying to defend itself with its military offensive aimed at eliminating Hamas, which has ruled the Strip since 2007. But 60% of 18- to 24-year-olds said that the campaign constitutes genocide against Gazans.

The Hamas-run health ministry in Gaza has claimed that, since the start of the war, more than 18,800 people have been killed, mostly civilians. These figures cannot be independently verified and are believed to include some 7,000 Hamas terrorists, according to Israel, as well as civilians killed by misfired Palestinian rockets. Another estimated 1,000 terrorists were killed in Israel during and in the wake of the October 7 onslaught.

Young people were also against the overall trend on the question of a ceasefire: While 64% of respondents said a ceasefire should be agreed to only after the release of hostages and Hamas being booted from power, 67% of 18- to 24-year-olds favored an unconditional deal that would leave things as they are.

The poll also asked respondents about antisemitism on university campuses, which has been on the rise since the beginning of the war.



Smoke rises following an Israeli bombardment in the Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel, Saturday, Dec. 16, 2023. (AP/Ariel Schalit)

Many 18- to 24-year-olds seemed to be okay with hate speech at universities: According to the poll, 53% of young people thought students should be free to call for Jewish genocide on campus without punishment, though 70% said such calls constituted hate speech.

Out of all respondents, 74% answered that those who make the calls should face disciplinary action, while 79% said the calls were hate speech.

The survey also asked respondents about the congressional hearing on college antisemitism earlier this month, when the presidents of Harvard, MIT, and the University of Pennsylvania failed to answer in the affirmative that calls for Jewish genocide violate the universities' code of conduct, saying only that they do so in certain contexts.

Their responses provoked a backlash from Republican opponents, along with alumni and donors who said the university leaders are failing to stand up for Jewish students on their campuses. Penn's president Liz Magill resigned due to the criticism, while the other two have remained in their positions.

While 67% of 18-to 24-year-olds think the presidents of Harvard, MIT, and Penn universities went far enough in condemning antisemitism, when faced with comments they made during congressional testimony — that calls for Jewish genocide are only punishable depending on the context — 73% said they should resign.

Furthermore, a majority of respondents (68%) acknowledged that antisemitism is prevalent on university campuses, with 63% of 18- to 24-year-olds responding in the affirmative.

The poll also asked respondents who they believed was responsible for antisemitism on campus, with 24% saying the hatred has always had a presence; 20% blamed students; 18% left-wing political movements; 11% university presidents and administrators; 11% foreign funding of universities and student groups; 7% university professors; and 8% answered none of the above.

Only 8% in the 18-24 bracket believed antisemitism had always existed on campus.

Most of those in that age bracket said they watched or read about the presidents' testimonies in the poll, which was conducted online among 2,034 registered voters on December 13 and 14.

JTA contributed to this report.

17 December (The Guardian)

[‘Israel only responds to force’: support for Hamas soars in West Bank after October attack | Hamas | The Guardian](#)

‘Israel only responds to force’: support for Hamas soars in West Bank after October attack

Residents of Jenin say Israeli army seems intent only on revenge as they pick through wreckage of their homes

[Bethan McKernan](#) and [Sufian Taha](#) in Jenin

Sat 16 Dec 2023 19.23 CET



A house graffitied by members of the IDF during a three-day incursion into the Jenin camp in the occupied West Bank. Photograph: Zain Jaafar/AFP/Getty Images

Fluffy pink slippers on her feet and scarves thrown over her hair and pyjamas, Amal Abu Ghazi, 39, leaned against a wall as she watched her family clear out the rubble from their ruined house in the Jenin refugee camp, in the north of the occupied West Bank.

Her husband used a stick to smash the remaining shards of glass out of the window frames of their two-storey home and her brothers-in-law hauled out the remains of sofas and tables; somehow, a laptop had managed to survive intact. Israeli soldiers had burst in two nights ago, Abu Ghazi said, arresting her sons, 20 and 18, and ordering the rest of the family to wait outside before troops used explosives to demolish the building.

“I can’t tell you why. They have been here so many times and they know our family has nothing to do with politics or resistance,” she said.

In July this year, the Jenin camp experienced [the worst spasm of violence](#) in the West Bank in 20 years in the form of a two-day-long Israel Defense Forces (IDF) incursion that used airstrikes designed to flush out Palestinian militants. Twelve people were killed, including at least three civilians.

At the time, it was the biggest Israeli operation in the territory since the second intifada, or Palestinian uprising. But in the wake of 7 October, when [Hamas](#) gunmen from the Gaza Strip killed 1,139 Israelis in a devastating surprise attack, raids on this scale have become routine in Jenin and other restive areas of the West Bank.

Another 12 people were killed in last week’s raid on Jenin’s camp and about 100 arrested, according to the Palestinian Prisoners Club, a non-governmental rights group. While war is still raging in the Gaza Strip, where nearly 19,000 lives have been lost, the Israeli media has now dubbed Jenin’s slum-like camp “Little Gaza”.

The spiralling bloodshed is fuelling both armed Palestinian resistance and popular support for groups such as Hamas, several residents of the Jenin camp said during the Observer’s visit.

“The army has used my house as a firing position for snipers three times now in the last month,” said 64-year-old Abu Ali as he clambered through his damaged home. “My father was a martyr in the second intifada. My

son lives in Europe, far away from this hell, but the youth of the camp, of course they are fighting back. We are just in our homes, and the Israelis come to us, not the other way around.”



Scenes of destruction in Jenin following an Israeli incursion into Jenin refugee camp this week which killed 12 people.

Photograph: Anadolu/Getty Images

The camp in Jenin is home to around 10,000 Palestinians whose grandparents fled their homes after the creation of Israel in 1948, and it has long been a centre of resistance to the 56-year Israeli occupation of the [Palestinian territories](#). Today it still suffers from high rates of poverty, crime and unemployment.

A [new generation of fighters](#) here, calling themselves the Jenin Brigades, is only loosely affiliated with the traditional Palestinian factions such as Fatah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad. But Hamas, in particular, is riding a wave of newfound popularity in the West Bank in the aftermath of 7 October, polling from the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research suggests.

Despite the devastation caused by the new war, support for Hamas had risen in Gaza and more than tripled in the West Bank. Fifty-two percent of Gazans and 85% of West Bank respondents - or 72% of Palestinian respondents overall - voiced satisfaction with the role of Hamas in the war.

Just 10% of the poll's 1,712 respondents said they had seen evidence that Hamas committed war crimes during the 7 October attack, despite the fact that extreme violence towards Israeli civilians has been well documented by the international media.

Support for Hamas among the Palestinian public has typically spiked during recent conflicts, lead pollster Khalil Shikaki said. The group appears to have also earned significant goodwill for securing the release of 240 Palestinian women and children held in Israeli jails in return for 100 hostages, mostly Israeli, during the week-long ceasefire in Gaza at the end of November.

Shikaki's research also found waning patience with the West Bank's semi-autonomous Palestinian Authority (PA). After 17 years without elections, President Mahmoud Abbas's administration is widely seen as corrupt and illegitimate: 90% of respondents said that the 88-year-old should resign.

Viewed by many Palestinians as little more than a subcontractor for the Israeli occupation, the PA has no presence or legitimacy in Jenin's camp and other restive areas such as the Nablus casbah and the Balata and Tulkarm camps.

The much-touted idea that the PA should assume responsibility for the Gaza Strip after the war, nearly two decades after being driven out by Hamas, seems ludicrous in the face of such fierce domestic opposition. It has long been feared that Abbas's death [will create a dangerous power vacuum](#) in the West Bank: he has refused to appoint an official successor.

“Where is the PA when we are arrested and beaten, when the Israelis handcuff us, blindfold us and make us sing Israeli songs at gunpoint?” said 34-year-old Abu Mahmoud. “This week they burned cars for fun and celebrated and they graffitied the mosque and our homes with the Star of David. Before, there were some rules when the army came; now there are not. They act like they are looking for revenge.”

The IDF did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the allegations made by the residents of Jenin camp. The army previously told the Observer that it operates in the camp – and everywhere else in the West Bank – in order to minimise the threat of terrorist attacks.

“Abbas believed in peace,” said Abu Ali, referring to the long dormant peace process with Israel of the 1990s. “Thirty years later, it is clear that dream is over. We have learned that Israel only responds to force, and force must be met with force.”

17 December (The Jerusalem Post)

['The Only Woman in the Room': A feminist biography of Golda Meir - Israel Politics - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](#)

'The Only Woman in the Room': A feminist biography of Golda Meir - review

Most books about Golda Meir in English project her as a celebrity, “the grandmother of the nation,” and gloss over the politics. This book has chosen another direction.

By COLIN SHINDLER DECEMBER 16, 2023 20:00



(FROM L) US secretary of state Henry Kissinger, prime minister Golda ‘the only woman in the room’ Meir, and Israeli ambassador to the US Simha Dinitz at the ambassador’s house in Washington, DC, 1970s.(photo credit: Moshe Milner/GPO)

Pnina Lahav’s book *The Only Woman in the Room: Golda Meir and Her Path to Power* tells Golda’s story through “the lens of gender.”

When Israel’s Declaration of Independence was signed, only two of the 37 signatories were women – Rachel Kagan and [Golda Meir](#). This is symbolic of the profound difficulty that women faced in the ideologically male-centered world that existed in the days of early Zionism, in which women were generally expected to remain at home and forget about a career.

Lahav, an American law professor, acts as both narrator and interpreter, coloring Meir’s career from the palette of having to deal with the hard men of politics.

The unknown real, authentic personal life of Golda Meir

Growing up in the poverty of socialist Milwaukee, where many Jews were forced to go to work on Shabbat to provide for their families (like many children of Jewish immigrants across the country), Meir became imbued with the idea of revolutionary change – and Zionism was the engine for it.

Her mother tried to impress upon her the importance of roshkosh, the Russian word for opulence. Instead, she preferred to read the speeches of Abraham Lincoln and the radical writings of Eugene V. Debs, Prince Kropotkin, and Emma Goldman. Preferring Yiddish over Hebrew, Meir was known locally as “Miss Bolsheviki.”



GOLDA MEIR, 1964. (credit: Wikimedia Commons)

As the author notes, all this was omitted from her formal autobiography.

Meir's future husband, Moshe (Morris) Myers, introduced her to the world of the English poets: Shelley, Keats, and Byron.

She dropped out of school at 15, rejected "a bourgeois way of life," and believed that sex was not restricted to marriage; she [had an abortion](#) in Chicago.

Her determination to build Zion was also an addiction. It led to the fragmentation of her family and to separation from her husband, but it fueled her demand to be heard. Motherhood was never at the top of her agenda; she felt more at ease with the party.

Meir began by changing the operation of Kibbutz Merhavia's kitchen, and 50 years later ended up as Israel's prime minister.

She followed what the author has termed "a moderate feminist philosophy." Unlike figures such as Ada Fishman Maimon, she never propagated an overtly [feminist agenda](#). She was careful in the way she plied her politics but felt "harmony in the company of men."

When David Ben-Gurion appointed her labor minister in March 1949, she sat beside two lovers, David Remez and Zalman Shazar, in the cabinet.

Although by the 1960s, when she was foreign minister, she had already begun to tire of the political bear-pit, Meir was brought back after Levi Eshkol's sudden death in order to delay the succession of the factional second generation.

Lahav describes Meir as "a wizened woman with grey hair, tied in a simple bun, dressed neatly but not extravagantly, often wearing a brooch or a string of pearls around her neck."

A new generation satirized her – as in Hanoch Levin's 1970s play Queen of the Bathtub. Her pronouncements on the nonexistence of the Palestinians, the "not nice boys" of the Black Panthers, and the "crazy women who burned their bras" did not endear her to the young.

Lahav suggests that she leaned more towards pragmatism than principle, and recognized that compromise could, at the end of the day, be harmful. She never uttered any criticism of the war in Vietnam.

The 20th century had taught Meir to embrace "catastrophic Zionism." She was a close ally of Ben-Gurion until they fell out in the mid-1960s. He bestowed upon her "the only man in the room" epithet – which she deeply hated – and Moshe Sharett, Israel's first foreign minister, tried to block her entry into the cabinet on the grounds that she was "too hawkish."

This is an unusual rendition of Meir's life and times, describing several interesting episodes such as the clandestine meeting with King Abdullah in Amman during the War of Independence. But there are also omissions.

In the chapter "The African Connection," there is remarkably no mention of her courageous stand against apartheid, despite Afrikaaner threats against the South African Jewish community. There is no mention of her decision in 1969 to openly proclaim a campaign for Soviet Jewry's right to emigrate to Israel – a legacy of her time as Israel's first ambassador to the USSR. And Labor's election victory in 1969 was not "the greatest victory of her party," since it had only been formed the year before from other groups, and actually lost seven seats.

Most books about Meir in English project her as a celebrity, "the grandmother of the nation," and gloss over the politics. This book has chosen another direction and rightly describes her as "the only woman in the room" in an era when the door to the room was closed to women.

This feminist biography of the only woman to become prime minister of Israel is a book which will appeal to the general reader interested in America and Israel.

17 December (NYT)

[Ukrainian Marines on ‘Suicide Mission’ in Crossing the Dnipro River - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com)

Ukrainian Marines on ‘Suicide Mission’ in Crossing the Dnipro River

Soldiers frustrated by positive reports from Ukrainian officials break their silence, describing the effort as brutalizing and, ultimately, futile.



For two months, Ukraine’s Marine Corps has been spearheading an assault across the Dnipro River in the southern region of Kherson to recapture territory from Russian troops. Credit...Mauricio Lima for The New York Times

For two months, Ukraine’s Marine Corps has been spearheading an assault across the Dnipro River in the southern region of Kherson to recapture territory from Russian troops. Credit...Mauricio Lima for The New York Times

By [Carlotta Gall](#), Oleksandr Chubko and Olha Konovalova

Photographs by Mauricio Lima

A team of Times journalists reported from the cities of Odesa and Mykolaiv and the Kherson region in southern Ukraine.

Dec. 16, 2023

There was a faint tremor in the marine’s voice as he recounted the murderous fighting on the east bank of the Dnipro River, where he was wounded recently.

“We were sitting in the water at night and we were shelled by everything,” the marine, Maksym, said. “My comrades were dying in front of my eyes.”

For two months, Ukraine’s Marine Corps has been spearheading an assault across the Dnipro River in the southern region of Kherson to recapture territory from Russian troops. The operation is Ukraine’s latest attempt in its flagging counteroffensive to breach Russian defenses in the south and turn the tide of the war.

Soldiers and marines who have taken part in the river crossings described the offensive as brutalizing and futile, as waves of Ukrainian troops have been struck down on the river banks or in the water, even before they reach the other side.

Conditions are so difficult, a half-dozen men involved in the fighting said in interviews, that in most places, there is nowhere to dig in. The first approaches tend to be marshy islands threaded with rivulets or meadows that have become a quagmire of mud and bomb craters filled with water.

The soldiers and marines gave only their first names or asked for anonymity for security reasons, and commanders declined almost all media requests to visit military units in the Kherson region.



Ukrainian soldiers approaching a lifeless woman minutes after a rocket landed outside a school, while explosions could still be heard nearby, this month in Kherson.



A crater left by a missile strike in Kherson city. As Ukrainian soldiers have pressed an assault on the Russian-held east bank of the Dniro River, Russia has retaliated with heavy bombardment on the Ukrainian side.

Several soldiers and marines spoke to journalists out of concern about the high casualties and what they said were overly optimistic accounts from officials about the progress of the offensive.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said that it was not immediately possible to comment on the soldiers' accusations but that it would provide a response in due course.

Some of the heaviest fighting has been in the village of Krynyky, on the east bank 20 miles upriver from Kherson city, where Ukrainian troops seized a narrow strip of fishermen's houses — the only place where they managed to establish a toehold.

Map locates the region of Kherson in southern Ukraine, as well as the cities of Kherson and Krynyky on the Dniro River. The map also locates the cities of Posad-Pokrovske, Mykolaiv, and Odesa, to the west of city of Kherson.

But footage of the area, livestreamed from a drone and seen by The New York Times, verified soldiers' accounts of heavy Russian airstrikes that have destroyed the houses and turned the river bank into a mass of mud and splintered trees.

The State of the War

Harsh Recruitment Tactics: With Ukraine's military facing mounting deaths and a stalemate on the battlefield, [army recruiters have become increasingly aggressive](#) in their efforts to replenish the ranks, in some cases pulling men off the streets and whisking them to recruiting centers.

News From the E.U.: Hungary [blocked the E.U. from approving a financial aid package](#) for Ukraine, though E.U. leaders agreed to [open accession negotiations for Ukraine to join the bloc](#).

Shifting Dynamics: With Western support for Kyiv softening and U.S. lawmakers [holding up military aid](#), a new sense of urgency [is gripping Ukraine](#), just as Moscow appears more confident after months of brutal fighting.

Frozen Russian Assets: After months of political wrangling, the E.U. officially [began a lengthy process to deliver on its pledge](#) to use money derived from frozen Russian central bank assets toward the reconstruction of Ukraine.

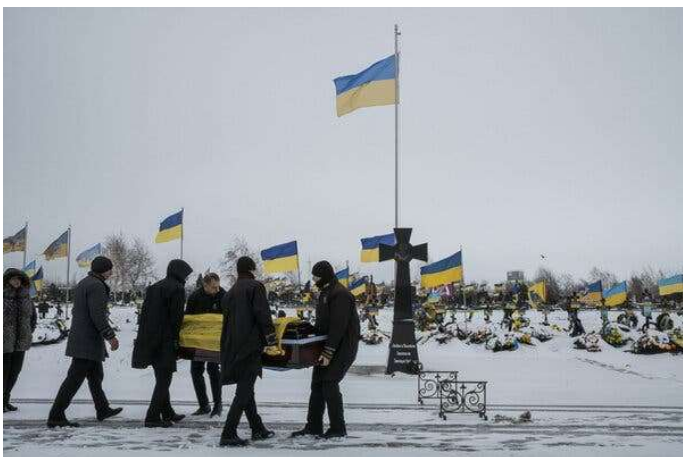
Fresh troops arriving on the east bank have to step on soldiers' bodies that lie tangled in the churned mud, said Oleksiy, an experienced soldier who fought in Krynky in October and has since crossed multiple times to help evacuate the wounded.

Some of the dead marines have been lying there for as long as two months, as units have been unable to retrieve the bodies because of the intense shelling, said Volodymyr, a deputy company commander who was attending the funeral of one of his men, identified only as Denys, last week.

“The left bank is very difficult,” Volodymyr said. “Those who do it are the real heroes, men with great will power.”



Ukrainian soldiers paying final tribute to a fallen comrade, Denys, who died in the fighting over the Dnipro River. Soldiers and marines say they have paid a heavy price in battles they call futile.



Denys, 39, died in a Russian mortar strike in Krynky, on the east bank of the Dnipro River. “He was always sunny, he never gave up,” one of his friends, Serhii, said. “He was really one of the bright stars.”

With Ukraine's counteroffensive bogged down and the United States and even the European Union showing signs of cutting back aid, the cross-river offensive has been keenly watched for signs that Ukraine can regain momentum against Russian forces. The hope is that they can create a breakthrough deep enough to threaten Russia's supply routes and its hold in the south. The Marine Corps, rebuilt to full strength this year with several newly formed brigades, was assigned the task.

Since the war's outset, Ukrainian officials have sought to maintain a positive narrative in an effort to maintain morale at home and support abroad. Casualty numbers are not published, nor are details of setbacks suffered by Ukrainian troops.

In the case of the Dnipro, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine and other officials have suggested recently that the marines have gained a foothold on the eastern bank. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs [posted a statement](#) last month claiming they had established several strongholds.

But marines and soldiers who have been there say these accounts overstate the case.

“There are no positions. There is no such thing as an observation post or position,” said Oleksiy. “It is impossible to gain a foothold there. It’s impossible to move equipment there.”

“It’s not even a fight for survival,” he added. “It’s a suicide mission.”



A destroyed gas station in the village of Posad-Pokrovske, which was leveled during fighting last year to oust Russia from Kherson city.



A worker replacing a Ukrainian recruitment billboard with a new one in a residential neighborhood in Kherson. Ukrainian forces have taken heavy casualties in recent efforts to cross the Dnipro River.

Oleksiy said the Ukrainian commanders' poor preparation and logistics had decimated his battalion. Wounded men were being left behind because of a lack of boats, he said, and the brutal conditions were degrading morale and soldiers' support for each other.

“People who end up there are not prepared psychologically,” he said. “They don’t even understand where they are going. They are not told by the command that sends them there.”

Oleksiy agreed to let The Times publish his account out of frustration at the losses. “I did not see anything like this in Bakhmut or Soledar,” he said, referring to two of the most intense battles on the eastern front. “It’s so wasteful.”

Russian airstrikes along the river banks marked on the [Ukraine Control Map](#), which geolocates video footage of strikes on both sides of the front, confirm his description. The map shows heavy Russian aerial bombardment of several crossing points along a 40-mile stretch of the river.

Russian troops are taking heavy losses, too, by several accounts. The map details multiple hits by Ukrainian artillery, rockets and drones on Russian troops and armor in all of the main settlements along the eastern bank. The city of Kherson has come under repeated Russian attack, but it also resounds with the constant firing of Ukrainian artillery.

“Generally, we are on hunting duty,” said Yevhen Karas, 36, deputy commander of the 14th Separate Regiment, who was visiting one of his units operating drones against Russian targets across the river. He asked for the location not be revealed for security reasons.



A Ukrainian soldier at a compound in the Kherson region, preparing a kamikaze drone to target Russian positions across the Dnipro River. The attacks have helped suppress Russian artillery.



A surveillance drone operated by a Ukrainian soldier monitoring Russian positions across the Dnipro River.

“The main priority is Russian artillery and to defend our operations,” said Karas, whose surname is also his military call sign. After two months of operations, he said, the Russian units in the area and long-range artillery had been heavily suppressed. Russian troops were generally staying under cover during the day and moved only at night as a result, he said.

Karas headed a volunteer military group, C14, from 2014, which has been described as extreme right-wing by watchdog groups. In 2016 it was integrated as a special operations force in the Ukrainian army.

The marines were suffering, Karas said, but the Ukrainian attacks had unnerved Russian commanders, who brought back an airborne unit from the Zaporizhzhia front to bolster the defense.

“They are very scared that Ukraine this month, or in the spring or the summer, will increase its territory to expand and liberate” the east bank, he said, adding that he followed radio intercepts of Russian communications, among other sources of intelligence.

Even small territorial gains would give Ukraine the ability to strike Russia's supply routes into Crimea, he said. But for now, the cross-river operation was focused not on a breakthrough but on drawing in and killing as many Russian troops as possible, he said.

Drones were proving critical in that fight, providing reconnaissance and guiding artillery, while increasingly targeting troops and equipment with explosives. A kamikaze drone was cheaper and more accurate than expensive artillery shells, which are in increasingly short supply, said the unit commander, Dzhmil, 37, giving his call sign.

"We read the papers and we know who is helping us and that everything has its price," he said, referring to growing debates in the United States and Europe over aid to Ukraine. This week the threat of future aid cuts only deepened, as Mr. Zelensky's efforts to rally support in the European Union and the U.S. Congress were rebuffed.

Ukrainian artillery and drone units were well placed along the river's western bank, which has the advantage of having higher elevation than the eastern bank and allows access to supplies, electricity and logistics, Karas said.



A Ukrainian rescue team evacuating a wounded civilian after a rocket hit a compound in Kherson city. Russia has pounded the west bank of the Dnipro in recent months.



Ukrainian soldiers unpacking mortar shells for use against Russian forces on the east bank of the Dnipro. The fighting there has been bloody and futile, soldiers say.

Yet if Russian artillery has been suppressed in some areas, its forces have retaliated with devastating aerial bombardment, rocket strikes and a multitude of drones.

The marine Maksym, who was recovering in the hospital after being wounded in Krynky in November, said Russian airstrikes and tank, artillery and mortar fire were so intense that his platoon could not advance from the basements where the soldiers had first taken shelter.

After three men were killed in an airstrike, the platoon was ordered to evacuate. It turned into a chaotic and disastrous retreat. The soldiers came under shell fire as they made their way to the river bank in the dark, only to be told upon arrival that they would have to wait for three hours for boats to pick them up.

“It was a swamp, all in craters filled with water,” Maksym said, adding, “We had no choice but to try to dig in as deep as we could.”

“Everyone was already wounded by that time,” he said. A boat came, on a different mission, and took the most seriously wounded.



Volunteers with the Ukrainian charity Peaceful Heaven preparing breakfast for residents of Kherson. “I will not leave,” said its administrator, identified only as Nataliya. “I will not abandon the people.”



Residents gathering outside their apartments to receive meals provided by Peaceful Heaven at a residential neighborhood in Kherson. The group has delivered 2,500 meals and 500 loaves of bread to residents around the city every day since June.

As they waited for more boats, Russian planes bombed the river bank, with three glide bombs, massive half-ton explosives that gouged great holes in the earth.

Another boat arrived and took away five more wounded men. Maksym had to wait another 40 minutes for the next boat.

“The left bank was like purgatory,” he said. “You are not dead yet, but you don’t feel alive.”

Of the 10 men in his platoon, half were dead or missing, he said. “Not a single one survived without injury,”



Civilians in Kherson city live with the possibility of sudden death from above day in and day out since the Ukrainian campaign to drive Russians from the east bank began in October.

[Carlotta Gall](#) is a senior correspondent, covering the war in Ukraine.

17 December (The Guardian)

[Paris is saying ‘non’ to a US-style hellscape of supersized cars – and so should the rest of Europe | Alexander Hurst | The Guardian](#)

Paris is saying ‘non’ to a US-style hellscape of supersized cars – and so should the rest of Europe

[Alexander Hurst](#)

From emissions to road deaths, the trend for ever-bigger SUVs is a disaster. We need regulation to turn the car industry back to smaller vehicles

Sat 16 Dec 2023 08.50 CET



Traffic on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris, France, December 2023. Photograph: Anadolu/Getty Images

The United States is in the midst of a full-blown size crisis. No, I’m not talking about the mad [rush for Wegovy](#), which is selling so swiftly that Denmark has to remove data relating to manufacturers [Novo Nordisk](#) to measure (the rest of) its economy properly. And no, I’m not talking about ... something else. I’m talking about the enormous monstrosities filling up its roads. (Yeah, I see you on the streets of downtown Cleveland alone in your \$85,000, [7,000lb Dodge Ram](#) and I can tell you’re not a farmer ... maybe that actually says something about the “something else”.)

There are lots of trends, ideas, music and films that cross the Atlantic. Some of them are good. This is not one of them. Neither are the [500 Krispy Kreme](#) “points of access” the American chain is planning to open across France over the next year. (One, OK, fine, for the novelty, but 500 in the next year? In a country that exists in a completely different universe when it comes to pastries?)

Whether France is chauvinist enough on its own to resist an invasion of American doughnuts remains to be seen. When it comes to oversized passenger cars, though, [Europe as a whole](#) should be doing more to make sure that they remain confined to the other side of the Atlantic.

This year, the [average weight of a new car](#) in the US was more than 4,300lb (2,000kg) – a full 1,000lb (450kg) more than in 1980. It’s not just that people are opting to drive larger models; the same models themselves have expanded. You can see the evolution most clearly with pickup trucks. Take, for example, the iconic [Ford F-150](#), as Axios does [in this comparative graphic](#). Since 1970, the truck has become progressively larger, even as its bed – the fundamental point of owning a pickup truck, one would think – has become smaller.

It should be obvious that bigger, heavier cars are an ecological disaster. Without the trend towards bigger and bigger SUVs, global emissions from the motor industry [would have fallen by 30%](#) between 2010 and 2022. And even though a heavier electric vehicle (EV) is [still preferable](#), emissions-wise, to a lighter petrol-engine vehicle, a lighter EV is obviously more efficient than a weightier one. The heavier the vehicle, the larger the battery it requires – and with it, more critical metals, and more electricity required for each charge.

The arms race in vehicle size is also a [safety disaster](#), for other drivers and certainly for pedestrians. The individual logic makes sense: would you want to drive on the same highway as Mr Tinydick's 7,000lb (3,175kg) Dodge Ram if you're in a Mini? Of course not – in a collision, the Ram would probably just drive straight over you, like a monster truck rally malfunction. And the driver of a similarly sized vehicle [wouldn't even see a small child](#) in front at close distance. The macro-level [effects are deadly](#). In the US, deaths in car crashes rose by 33% between 2011 and 2021, while pedestrian deaths have risen by 77% since 2010.

The mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, has now [proposed](#) tripling [parking rates](#) for SUVs in central Paris to €18 an hour, and €12 an hour for the rest of the city. The measure, which would include hybrids and electric vehicles over a certain weight limit – though with an exemption for Paris resident parking – would affect roughly 10% of the cars in the city. And beyond Paris, Tesla's [6,800lb \(3,080kg\) Cybertruck](#) probably won't be coming to Europe at all, because at that weight, it [requires a trucking licence](#) to drive (I write this with a sigh of relief).

Hidalgo's administration has pitched the increased parking fee as a form of social justice (taxing the owners of expensive cars) as well as a way to encourage use of public transport. It's a good start, but we need bolder regulation to redirect the automobile industry towards smaller instead of bigger, the same way Europe gave industry clear incentives to [move away from plastics](#): a progressive tax on vehicle weight.

Some EU countries already do this, such as France, which applies a [€10/kg tax above 1.8 tonnes](#). I'm not sure this is sufficient to head off the upsizing trend when it comes to luxury vehicles. And at the moment, the weight tax exempts EVs, which is good in theory, because ideally EVs should always be more economical than internal combustion engines across every vehicle class. But EVs aren't inherently exempt from size inflation, and so a progressive weight tax on EVs – just staggered lower than the tax on internal combustion engine cars – seems like a logical thing to do.

The next time I go back to the US, I wouldn't be surprised to find someone driving an actual tank down the street, probably on their way to Krispy Kreme. Please let that be a novelty combination I'll never see in [Europe](#).

Alexander Hurst is a Guardian Europe columnist

17 December (Le Figaro)

[Aquilino Morelle: «Le “racisme social” des néobourgeois pousse les Français dans les bras du RN» \(lefigaro.fr\)](#)

Aquilino Morelle: «Le “racisme social” des néobourgeois pousse les Français dans les bras du RN»

Par [Alexandre Devecchio](#)

Publié le 14/12/2023 à 12:00, mis à jour le 15/12/2023 à 15:20



Aquilino Morelle. *Jean-Luc Bertini pour le Figaro Magazine*

ENTRETIEN - Marine Le Pen a de fortes chances d'être élue à la présidence de la République en mai 2027. C'est ce qu'affirme l'ancien conseiller de François Hollande à l'Élysée dans «La Parabole des aveugles» (Grasset).

Pour empêcher le scénario d'une présence de [la présidente du groupe RN à l'Assemblée nationale](#) à la tête de l'État, il faut, selon [Morelle](#), combattre les fléaux qui font le malheur français: la désindustrialisation, l'immigration «du fait accompli» et la dérive fédéraliste de l'Union européenne.

Dans «La Parabole des aveugles», vous annoncez que [Marine Le Pen](#) est aux portes du pouvoir. Peut-elle vraiment gagner la prochaine élection présidentielle?

Oui. Une nouvelle donne politique conduit à le penser. Aux [présidentielles de 2017 et de 2022](#), sa victoire était impossible. Le «front républicain», mis en place après [le traumatisme du 21 avril 2002](#), était encore efficace: beaucoup d'électeurs restaient sensibles à l'argument «faire barrage à l'extrême droite». Le RN faisait peur, Marine Le Pen était jugée dangereuse et «pas au niveau». Avec [les législatives de juin 2022](#), les choses ont changé - et vite.

Le RN a alors décroché 89 sièges de députés, au suffrage majoritaire, une vraie performance soulignée par les quatre «grands chelems» obtenus dans l'Aude, les Pyrénées-Orientales, la Haute-Marne et la Haute-Saône, une prouesse électorale qu'aucun autre parti n'a pu réaliser. Il détient désormais deux vice-présidences de l'Assemblée nationale, où il fait bonne figure comparativement aux outrances de LFI ; il joue le jeu des institutions ; pour nombre de Français, il s'est normalisé. Après [le FN de Jean-Marie Le Pen](#) (1972-2011), un parti marginal, dirigé par un homme qui ne désirait pas vraiment conquérir le pouvoir, après le passage de témoin à sa fille qui [a donné naissance au RN](#), recentré sur la crise sociale, ayant adopté un discours républicain et dédramatisé (2012-2022), est ainsi apparu en 2022 ce que j'ai appelé «le troisième FN»: une machine de guerre politique, dirigée par un tandem complémentaire - Marine Le Pen et Jordan Bardella -, incarnée par une femme dont l'image publique s'est transformée - elle est désormais jugée «*proche de leurs préoccupations*», «*crédible*» et «*compétente*» par une majorité de Français - et bien décidée, elle, à gagner la prochaine présidentielle.

Et ce «troisième FN» serait capable de l'emporter en 2027...

Oui, car le RN connaît une progression politique spectaculaire, aussi bien géographiquement - il n'existe plus de département ou de région indemne, même la Bretagne et l'Ouest sont gagnés par le vote RN -, sociologiquement - toutes les couches sociales, même désormais la fonction publique, longtemps épargnée, votent Le Pen - qu'en termes d'âge - la jeunesse, en particulier, se tourne de plus en plus vers lui, seuls les «seniors» résistant pour l'heure. Cette dynamique a fait du RN la première force politique en France. Une force qui se nourrit de tous les spasmes de la société française: la reprise du chômage, l'insécurité chronique, les émeutes urbaines, l'immigration incontrôlée, l'emprise de l'islamisme radical, les attentats qu'il provoque, le regain d'antisémitisme lié au conflit entre le Hamas et l'État d'Israël. Marine Le Pen campe désormais aux marches du palais de l'Élysée. Elle n'en détient pas encore les clés, mais elle toque déjà à la porte. Le temps joue pour elle.

La diabolisation peut-elle être une réponse suffisante?

En aucun cas. Après quarante ans d'usage immodéré, la diabolisation du FN, stratagème inventé par François Mitterrand pour faire oublier sa mystification politique de mars 1983, est un échec total: la progression du FN-RN a été continue, ou presque, durant ces quatre décennies. Ni «l'antiracisme» d'Harlem Désir et de SOS Racisme, ni «l'antifascisme» de la gauche mitterrandienne, ni la dénonciation de la *«lepénisation des esprits»* de Robert Badinter n'ont eu le moindre effet sur la poussée du RN. Au contraire. Ce discours purement moral et moralisateur a contribué à précipiter dans les bras de ce parti de nombreux Français - ceux des classes populaires en premier lieu, mais le phénomène est dorénavant général -, horripilés par ce *«racisme de l'intelligence»* dénoncé en son temps par Pierre Bourdieu.

Imaginer barrer la route à Marine Le Pen en 2027 avec une rengaine telle que la diabolisation serait à la fois immoral et suicidaire

Un racisme social d'un nouveau genre qui voit la néobourgeoisie diplômée, lovée dans les centres-villes des métropoles, morigéner les ouvriers, les employés, les petits commerçants et artisans, tous les «gens de peu» vivant, eux, dans le *«périurbain subi»*, pour reprendre l'euphémisme de la sociologie contemporaine, ou dans *«la France périphérique»*, et qui choisissent de voter RN parce qu'ils ont été abandonnés par les partis dits de gouvernement. Pour ces donneurs de leçons-là, ce que j'ai appelé la «jurisprudence Tapie» vaut toujours: les électeurs du RN sont soit des *«salauds»* soit des *«stupides»*, ainsi que l'avait exprimé l'ancien ministre de Mitterrand. Or l'immense majorité d'entre eux sont en réalité des citoyens oubliés, méprisés, toisés, qui expriment par ce vote leurs inquiétudes, leur malaise, leurs préoccupations, leur désir de reconnaissance et de respect aussi. Ce ne sont ni des «fachos» ni des crétins. Leur vote a ses raisons qu'il convient de saisir et non de dénoncer par principe et de façon pavlovienne.

Dès lors, imaginer barrer la route à Marine Le Pen en 2027 avec une rengaine telle que la diabolisation serait à la fois immoral et suicidaire. Trois chiffres permettent de le comprendre: à la présidentielle de mai 1974, Jean-Marie Le Pen obtenait un score ridicule (190 921 voix, 0,74 %) et se voyait même dans l'incapacité de se présenter à celle de 1981, faute de réunir les 500 parrainages nécessaires. Le 21 avril 2002, il réunissait 4.804.772 suffrages (16,86 %). Sa fille, elle, a atteint 13.288.686 voix en avril 2022. Soit 70 fois le résultat de son père en 1974 et presque 3 fois celui du 21 Avril! Le RN de 2023 n'est plus le FN de 1974 ni même celui de 2002. Refuser de voir cette réalité humaine et politique revient à se condamner à l'élection de Marine Le Pen.

Des événements comme celui de Crépol et le déni d'une partie des «élites» politiques et médiatiques peuvent-ils la renforcer?

Certainement. Tout ce qui illustre la forme particulière d'aveuglement de ces élites alimente le vote RN. Car il s'agit d'un aveuglement, la volonté de ne pas voir. Cette cécité volontaire de tous ceux dont la responsabilité devrait précisément être de regarder, d'analyser, d'interpréter, de comprendre en un mot, et cela afin d'indiquer le chemin à suivre, est particulièrement condamnable. À quoi bon avoir fait des études, obtenu des diplômes, occuper des fonctions sociales prestigieuses, si c'est pour se détourner de ceux qui n'ont pas eu une telle chance, pour s'enfermer dans sa confortable bulle morale, refuser l'exercice de la lucidité et, finalement, favoriser la victoire du «mal» que l'on prétend combattre? Cette attitude est absurde et irresponsable. C'est pour la dénoncer que j'ai écrit ce livre.

Aujourd'hui, le Bassin minier du Nord-Pas-de-Calais, berceau du socialisme, vote Le Pen ; la circonscription de la Nièvre dont Mitterrand fut le député vote Le Pen...

Votre livre, précisément, revient aux sources de la percée du FN, puis du RN. Une percée rendue possible par l'abandon des classes populaires par la gauche et par la droite...

Après le «grand tournant» de mars 1983, décidé par François Mitterrand, seul et sans débat, un tournant à la fois fédéraliste sur le plan européen, libéral sur le plan économique et multiculturaliste sur le plan sociétal, la gauche a progressivement tourné le dos aux classes populaires, en effet. S'est ainsi installé un grand schisme : la gauche sans le peuple, le peuple sans la gauche. Les électeurs populaires du PC et du PS se sont peu à peu réfugiés dans l'abstention et le vote RN. Résultat? Aujourd'hui, le Bassin minier du Nord-Pas-de-Calais, berceau du socialisme, vote Le Pen ; la circonscription de la Nièvre dont Mitterrand fut le député vote Le Pen ; Carmaux, la patrie de Jaurès, vote Le Pen ; Cintegabelle, le bastion de Jospin, vote Le Pen ; les DOM-TOM, ceux de Césaire et de Taubira, votent Le Pen. Mais la droite n'est guère mieux lotie. Si Mitterrand et Delors ont liquidé le socialisme, Chirac et Juppé ont, eux, sabordé le gaullisme. Dans les deux cas, la rupture s'est faite par et pour «l'Europe», au nom de celle-ci et par son truchement. Dans les deux cas, la coupure avec le peuple est nette et profonde.

Parmi les causes de la montée du RN, il y a la dérive fédéraliste de l'Union européenne. Avant la présidentielle, il y aura les élections européennes: seront-elles décisives?

Pas en tant que telles: les pouvoirs du Parlement européen sont encore limités. Mais ces élections auront à l'évidence valeur de test politique à trois ans de la prochaine présidentielle.

La question européenne est une des trois composantes, avec la question sociale et la question migratoire, de la crise d'identité qui travaille le pays. La résoudre est essentiel, car, outre la dilution de la France dans un ensemble fédéralisé à laquelle elle conduit, elle conditionne largement les deux autres: la désindustrialisation, le déclin économique, le chômage de masse, l'extension de la pauvreté ont des racines dans le libéralisme béat par lequel s'est construite l'Europe depuis quarante ans ; l'immigration incontrôlée renvoie, elle aussi, à l'Europe et au carcan juridique qui enserme les gouvernements successifs. Il est donc urgent de faire respecter le principe de subsidiarité prévu à l'article 5 du traité sur l'Union européenne et d'empêcher ainsi la Commission d'empiéter systématiquement sur les prérogatives des États ; de garantir aussi la supériorité juridique de notre Constitution sur toute norme européenne ; d'abandonner enfin publiquement toute perspective d'une Europe fédérale. Bref, de faire le contraire de ce qui est fait aujourd'hui, insidieusement, et qui contribue à pousser les Français vers le RN.

Vous refusez de diaboliser Marine Le Pen, partagez une large part de son diagnostic. Dès lors, pourquoi persistez-vous à craindre son élection? En quoi une victoire du RN serait-elle un véritable tournant?

Votre questionnement illustre un point central: ce sont les reniements successifs et l'aveuglement de la gauche et de la droite qui font la force du RN. Ce parti s'est saisi, en quarante ans, de tous les thèmes laissés en jachère par ces deux forces politiques: la République, la laïcité, l'assimilation, le rôle de l'État, la place de l'islam, les services publics, l'industrie, la lutte contre le chômage, l'Europe des nations. La question de l'identité française, en un mot, celle dont l'importance - décisive - fut soulignée en leur temps par Fernand Braudel, Alain Touraine, Jean Daniel ou Bernard Stasi - de hautes figures qui ne sauraient être considérées comme des «fachos», cette question, le RN n'a pas eu à l'arracher à la droite ou à la gauche: elle lui a été abandonnée par celles-ci! En particulier par la nouvelle gauche, issue du mitterrandisme, qui ne comprend rien, ne veut rien comprendre à la question de l'identité, dans laquelle elle veut voir, par bêtise idéologique ou ignorance historique, une forme de «fascisme» et qui croit pouvoir tout ramener au «social»... Sans comprendre que tout se tient et que le «social» participe de l'identité de la France, qui s'appelle République!

Si Marine Le Pen n'est pas raciste ni antisémite, on n'en dira pas autant de certains des militants ou des élus de son parti.

Il faut donc reprendre - et vite - la question nationale à Marine Le Pen. Car si elle sait bien dire le mal qui taraude le pays, elle ne saurait pas faire le bien qui conviendrait. Sa vision de la France est celle de la division et son projet celui d'un affrontement programmé, alors que c'est l'unité de notre pays qu'il faut rebâtir. Son talent consiste à savoir verser du sel sur les plaies françaises, alors qu'il convient de les suturer et de les panser. Certaines de ses propositions - la suppression du droit du solet duregroupement familial, la préférence nationale pour les emplois et les prestations sociales - sont inacceptables. Si elle n'est pas raciste ni antisémite, on n'en dira pas autant de certains des militants ou des élus de son parti. Le lendemain de son élection, les vaches

françaises continueraient à donner du lait et le soleil à se lever ; mais la France s'engagerait sur la mauvaise voie.

Que faire alors, selon vous?

Le seul moyen de lui fermer les portes de l'Élysée consiste à combattre les trois fléaux qui font le malheur français: la désindustrialisation et la pauvreté qui en résulte, l'immigration «*du fait accompli*» - pour reprendre la juste formule d'Édouard Philippe -, la dérive fédéraliste de l'Union qui vise à diluer la France au sein d'un «*nouvel empire*» européen. Sans cette prise de conscience - maintenant et non le 9 juin prochain, quand le RN aura remporté les élections européennes -, sans ce sursaut national, urgent je le répète - il ne reste plus que quarante mois avant la prochaine élection présidentielle -, Marine Le Pen a de grandes chances d'être accueillie, en mai 2027, par Emmanuel Macron sur le perron de l'Élysée.

AQUILINO MORELLE

LA PARABOLE DES AVEUGLES

Marine Le Pen aux portes de l'Élysée



«La Parole des aveugles», d'Aquilino Morelle, Grasset, 288 p., 20,90 €.,

17 December (Atlantico)

[La mixité sociale est-elle encore possible à l'école ? | Atlantico.fr](#)

VIVRE-ENSEMBLE

La mixité sociale est-elle encore possible à l'école ?

La multiplication des attaques violentes commises par des enfants ou des adolescents pourrait bien peser plus encore que ça n'est déjà le cas



Une classe d'école (illustration) ©Thierry Zoccolan / AFP

[Marion Oury](#), [Maurice Signolet](#) et [Jean-Marc Ben Kemoun](#)

Atlantico : Quatre mineures ont été placées en garde à vue, vendredi, après la diffusion d'une vidéo montrant l'agression d'une adolescente à Lyon. Une collégienne de 12 ans a aussi récemment tenté d'agresser sa professeur d'anglais avec un couteau dans un collège de Rennes. Les attaques violentes commises par des enfants ou des adolescents se multiplient en France. Quelle est la réalité des chiffres des agressions commises en milieu scolaire, en milieu périscolaire par rapport aux agressions survenues hors des établissements scolaires, dans la rue perpétrées par des adolescents ou des enfants ?

Maurice Signolet : Je ne voudrais en aucun cas inquiéter vos lecteurs, mais les chiffres ne sont pas alarmants, ils sont effarants ! Si l'on se réfère aux seuls signalements d'incidents faits par les responsables des établissements du second degré, ce sont près de 10 000 faits recensés annuellement dans les lycées (soit 10 / 1000 élèves), 15 000 faits pour les lycées professionnels (soit 38 / 1000 élèves) et 8 000 faits pour les collèges (soit 35 / 1000 élèves). Bien entendu il faut relativiser ces chiffres en fonction de leur gravité (50 % verbales, 30 % physiques, 7 % des atteintes aux biens et 13 % des atteintes à la sécurité). On estime cependant à près de 400 le nombre d'agressions à l'arme blanche, et à 1 300 les violences sans arme à l'égard d'élèves, et à 200 agressions physiques à l'encontre des personnels. On relèvera bien sur que ces chiffres montrent une prééminence des faits majoritairement dans les collèges et les lycées professionnels, avec en outre un doublement des faits dans les « zones prioritaires » par rapport au reste du territoire.

La violence des jeunes qui passent à l'acte a-t-elle plutôt tendance à se dérouler à l'intérieur des établissements scolaires ou hors du cadre scolaire ?

Maurice Signolet : Si l'on considère que les établissements scolaires restent malgré tout « des sanctuaires », au sens où ils disposent d'un encadrement, d'une administration, qui peut, limiter les ardeurs belliqueuses, ou tout du moins « canaliser » les comportements, on est en droit d'imaginer le déferlement des violences hors des enceintes scolaires, sur la voie publique, dans les transports en commun, et même dans les échauffourées de territoire qui constellent la rédaction des chaînes d'info en continue ! Si nombre de contentieux peuvent prendre naissance au sein même des établissements scolaires, avec une projection de harcèlement souvent par « réseaux sociaux » interposés, il n'en est pas de même des toutes les autres violences qui caractérisent les relations interpersonnelles des adolescents, voire d'enfants. La fragilité de l'éveil aux émotions, le parcours initiatique mesuré et gradué de la socialisation disciplinaire d'antan, les relais affectifs ancestraux qui permettaient de se

construire dans une relation à l'autre, disparaissent au gré d'une forme basique mais duale de socialisation : la réification de l'autre qui n'apparaît plus que comme « une chose » excluant toute capacité d'empathie, et l'agrégat à un groupe, une meute, qui va devenir structurante.

Autant en milieu scolaire l'agression va être individuelle, surtout si elle s'adresse à un enseignant (encore faudra-t'il y déceler une manifestation d'appartenance même subliminale à une bande ou tout du moins à ses critères d'identification), autant les agressions en dehors du milieu scolaire se feront en bandes ou tout du moins en groupes même très restreints, comme pour cette récente affaire de Lyon.

En matière d'apprentissage comme de sécurité des enfants, la mixité consentie (c'est à dire pour ceux qui ont le choix de leur lieu de résidence ou de l'école de leurs enfants) est-elle encore possible ? Et qui en joue encore le jeu ?

Marion Oury : Cette question est difficile ! J'aurais - comme vous vous en doutez ! - bien du mal à vous garantir que cette mixité « consentie » dont vous parlez existe à l'heure actuelle partout en France... Et qui plus est chez les parents qui sont les plus attentifs à la qualité du parcours scolaire de leurs enfants. Cependant il faut bien s'être assuré que cette « mixité consentie » est encore possible ! Car renoncer à cette idée serait accepter en creux celle qu'une certaine forme de « communautarisme » aurait gagné dans notre pays. Ce à quoi on ne peut, bien entendu, se résoudre.

Considérez-vous que la notion de mixité sociale est pensée correctement ?

Marion Oury : J'entends deux sous-questions dans votre question et me permets donc de vous faire une réponse un peu longue, en deux temps.

Première question : pense-t-on correctement les moyens d'atteindre la mixité sociale ? Je n'en suis pas sûre du tout ! Car on se focalise à l'heure actuelle sur des politiques visant à augmenter d'une manière directe cette mixité. Or (et je rejoins ici l'analyse que Jean Tirole a récemment exprimée [dans un entretien publié dans l'Express](#)), ce type de politique parvient rarement à obtenir les effets désirés car les familles réagissent d'une manière stratégique et rationnelle face aux mesures mises en place. Dans le même temps, on a tendance à négliger le fait que certaines mesures visant des objectifs intermédiaires (et qui sont par ailleurs infiniment souhaitables pour toutes sortes d'autres raisons) peuvent bel et bien permettre d'augmenter indirectement la mixité sociale via l'augmentation de ce que vous nommez « la mixité consentie ». Ces mesures-clés, chacun les connaît assez bien : rétablir l'autorité à l'école, revaloriser drastiquement le métier d'enseignant, protéger les élèves contre la violence scolaire. Enfin, remettre partout la notion de discipline au centre du jeu : rappelons à cet égard que la toute récente enquête PISA a indiqué que « le climat disciplinaire » est « toujours très préoccupant en France ».

J'en viens au second temps de ma réponse. Il me semble que nous ne pensons pas à l'heure actuelle correctement la notion de mixité sociale dans la mesure où nous avons tendance trop souvent à faire de ce concept (sur lequel, comme je viens de le dire, nous avons bien moins de prise directe que ce que nous voulons croire) une fin en soi. Il est temps, je crois, d'ouvrir collectivement cette boîte noire et de réfléchir au concept de mixité sociale comme à un outil. Autrement dit, de nous demander pour quelles raisons précises et distinctes, la « mixité sociale » est désirable, c'est-à-dire quelles sont les fins véritables que nous recherchons collectivement à travers elle.

Sujet complexe sur lequel je me permets d'esquisser ici un commencement de réflexion. Il me semble qu'à travers la notion de « mixité sociale », on vise à l'heure actuelle (au moins) deux objectifs.

D'une part, le « vivre-ensemble » : c'est l'argument selon lequel la mixité sociale doit permettre, par la découverte de l'autre qu'elle implique, d'augmenter la cohésion sociale à l'âge adulte. Il y a indéniablement du vrai là-dedans. Cependant, il faut aussi ajouter que certains chercheurs sont en train de développer à ce sujet une vision assez dangereuse, car simpliste, presque mécaniciste. Ainsi, le Conseil Scientifique de l'Éducation Nationale (organisme dont il serait judicieux – je le dis au passage – d'interroger en des termes rigoureux la « scientificité ») [a récemment publié une note](#) de bilan sur les expérimentations récentes de mixité au collège qui, par son approche scientifique et naïve, prête à sourire. On y apprend entre autres le résultat suivant : grâce à

la mixité, les élèves favorisés « adhèrent un peu plus souvent aux valeurs de solidarité (+8% d'un écart-type). » Que signifie au juste cette affirmation étrange ? Difficile à dire ! Et encore plus lorsqu'on se reporte au travail de recherche dont cette note du CSEN constitue la synthèse. Les questions qui ont été posées aux élèves pour arriver à ce « constat » au sujet de la « solidarité » portent toutes sur des sujets qui relèvent en réalité de la politique : que doit-on penser de la gratuité des soins hospitaliers ? des aides pour les personnes au chômage ? du poids des retraites pour ceux qui travaillent ? Le combat contre la pauvreté en France doit-il constituer une priorité par rapport à celui contre la pauvreté dans le monde ?...

Un second objectif implicitement associé au concept de « mixité sociale » est la lutte contre le « déterminisme scolaire ». Je développe brièvement ce point : les notions de mixité sociale et de mixité scolaire (c'est-à-dire de mixité des niveaux scolaires) sont très liées en termes statistiques. Par conséquent, toute opération d'évaluation et de sélection est indéniablement et mécaniquement aussi un « tri social ». On peut dès lors être tentés de limiter aussi drastiquement que possible, à chaque étape du parcours scolaire, les moyens qu'ont les différentes institutions de réaliser ces opérations de sélection, et de soutenir ainsi la mixité. Une telle approche, centrée sur cette dernière, n'est pas entièrement infondée pour diminuer le déterminisme scolaire, qui est, c'est vrai, particulièrement élevé en France. Le problème est qu'en cherchant à brouiller les cartes de cette manière, on œuvre en même temps – sans le vouloir ! - contre la possibilité de l'ascension sociale par l'école. Car on casse les barreaux de l'échelle. (Sans compter qu'à trop focaliser sur la mixité, on s'expose à créer une école plus inefficace, et donc plus injuste, car plus reproductrice d'inégalités.) L'équilibre à rechercher est donc, là aussi, assez subtil...

Bref : pour le vivre-ensemble comme pour la lutte contre le déterminisme scolaire, la mixité sociale constitue à la fois un outil et un indicateur, mais pas une fin en soi. Il ne s'agit pas bien sûr d'y renoncer entièrement, mais sans doute de devenir plus lucide à son égard.

Par ses politiques, est-ce l'État qui augmente le désir des parents de contourner le système ?

Marion Oury : Ce n'est pas du tout impossible malheureusement ! Je crois qu'une des raisons du grand succès actuel du concept de « mixité sociale » est qu'il est très simple à manier pour une bureaucratie. Il est en particulier très facile pour un rectorat, par exemple, de se mettre en valeur en vantant telle ou telle statistique obtenue via une « politique de mixité ». (Et ce type de publicité est d'autant plus aisé que notre société aime les chiffres sans chercher véritablement à les comprendre. J'ai un peu décortiqué cela dans mon étude pour la Fondapol au sujet de la réforme Affelnet engagée en 2021 dans l'académie de Paris.)

Le problème est que toute cette fausse science, cette « science administrative » (si je puis m'exprimer ainsi) n'a aucune forme de considération pour les effets pervers associés aux politiques qu'elle met en place. Elle est naturellement placée dans le court-termisme, une focalisation myope qui consiste à produire des indicateurs favorables. Or ces risques d'effet pervers sont extrêmement présents sur les questions d'éducation, car les familles, et en particulier celles qui sont le plus soucieuses de transmission culturelle et éducative, savent – et on ne peut guère leur reprocher cela – se comporter d'une manière éminemment stratégique. Il est donc impossible de ne pas prendre en compte ce qu'on nomme en économie les « effets de bouclage », c'est-à-dire la logique d'ensemble du système dans ses différentes et délicates interactions. Ainsi, par exemple, je ne comprends pas que le rectorat de l'académie de Paris puisse continuer de promouvoir une réforme qui vise explicitement à diminuer le niveau des bons lycées publics, sans se soucier de l'impact de cette politique en termes de fuite des familles « les plus favorisées » vers le privé. Il faut arrêter de jouer les apprentis-sorciers !

Les agressions se multiplient dans le milieu scolaire. Les agresseurs sont de plus en plus jeunes. Que peut-on dire de leur profil psychologique ? Sont-ils des monstres en puissance ?

Jean-Marc Ben Kemoun : Il n'y a pas lieu de stigmatiser une fois de plus les jeunes, ni d'opposer les générations surtout sur le sujet de la violence. La stigmatisation des jeunes est une composante classique de notre société. Je rappelle que l'adolescence est une période de vie qui a été individualisée assez récemment.

Il est vrai que les statistiques de la violence montrent que les violences sont plus fréquentes entre 15 et 30 ans. Mais on voit là qu'il ne s'agit pas réellement de jeunes au sens où on l'entend.

De plus, le nombre des faits de violences, tous actes confondus, est statistiquement stable depuis de nombreuses années, même si on peut noter une augmentation des faits de violences conjugales, de féminicides.

Il faut donc aussi se méfier des biais classiques et notamment des biais médiatiques qui seront instrumentalisés par la suite dans le cadre du prosélytisme politique, pour engendrer la peur et les solutions plaquées, qui restent une façon classique de recruter des voix.

Il n'en reste pas moins que des faits divers concernant la violence à l'école envahissent l'espace public.

L'école est le lieu de vie des jeunes.

Elle assure un brassage de la population juvénile, régulée par des adultes qui jouent aussi un rôle dans l'équilibre précaire de cette micro-société.

Et alors que la société se clive de plus en plus en groupe sociaux, politiques, ethniques, religieux...souvent du fait du regroupements géographiques induits ou innés, ou de manipulations par des décideurs dont les objectifs ne sont pas toujours ceux qu'ils distillent savamment pour obtenir des populations auxquelles ils s'adressent les avantages narcissiques ou autres qui les motivent, on va demander à l'école, sans lui en donner les moyens, de ne pas reproduire ces clivages en son sein, pour mieux préparer la société de demain.

On note aussi dans une société de plus en plus exigeante, une intolérance à l'autre, et un individualisme, prompt à ne plus supporter l'autre, la contrainte du vivre ensemble.

L'école est donc le lieu de l'expression de la souffrance des jeunes.

Je rappellerais aussi que l'entreprise peut-être le lieu de cette même expression, et il y a tout autant de faits divers de violence contre soi ou contre l'autre dans l'entreprise sans qu'on stigmatise une tranche d'âge.

Cette stigmatisation vient de l'incompréhension des ediles du fonctionnement de cette tranche d'âge qui les intéresse somme toute peu, vu que cette population de vote pas. Je pense d'ailleurs que la France ne protège pas ses enfants contrairement aux multiples annonces faites au niveau politique sans réelle volonté de les appliquer. Les récentes nominations en sont un exemple, même si j'ai quelques critiques à faire sur la façon dont la CIIVISE a fonctionné, mais je ne cible pas ici seulement cette commission.

Nous aurions été mieux inspirés de créer un ministère de l'enfance, qui régenterait le désordre créé par la départementalisation de la protection de l'enfance, qui crée injustice et inégalité de traitement indignes de la République.

Quelque soit le type d'acte perpétré à l'école, il n'en reste pas moins que même si celui-ci est monstrueux, le sujet qui l'agit, reste un sujet humain et ne peut être déclaré monstrueux, sans quoi on lui ôte son humanité et toute possibilité de le ramener à cette humanité, même si il est vrai qu'un faible pourcentage de sujet ont atteint un tel stade de perversité que l'on sait qu'il sera difficile voir impossible de ramener de l'humanité en eux au sens de l'empathie, de l'altérité.

Comme souvent en criminologie, on va demander de définir un profil type du criminel, en pensant que ce sera plus facile par la suite de repérer les criminels potentiels, et d'aboutir à une sorte de prévention par l'éviction. La définition d'un profil type est toujours à double tranchant, car la dangerosité reste prédictive. Même si on va chercher à prévenir le passage à l'acte, la compréhension de la situation précriminelle, des déclencheurs du passage à l'acte, voir des marqueurs biographiques, n'ont en fait qu'un intérêt limité pour se prononcer sur la dangerosité d'un individu, mais un intérêt majeur pour mettre en place des actions de prévention de la dangerosité au niveau de la société.

Or à l'heure actuelle l'évaluation de la dangerosité qui a pris le pas sur les autres critères dans l'évaluation judiciaire des individus et de l'acte, aboutit à des actions punitives individuelles, même si elles essayent d'être personnalisées, et non à des actions collectives de prévention.

Quels sont les profils des agresseurs ? Qu'est ce que cela traduit de la réalité de la société française et cela doit il remettre en cause la mixité sociale ?

Maurice Signolet : Il serait tellement aisé, comme c'est d'ailleurs la propension interprétative de nombreux commentateurs, de caractériser ces comportements comme déviants, voire relevant de la psychiatrie ! Nous utilisons encore des logiciels d'analyse d'ordre freudien du début du 20ème siècle, alors que la massification des violences relève désormais d'une considération sociétale. Psychologie, sociologie, devraient se fondre pour analyser ces phénomènes de façon quasi anthropologiques ! Il n'y a rien de péjoratif, ni de stigmatisant à considérer la réalité « des ruissellements comportementaux » qui façonnent ce fameux « vivre ensemble » que d'aucuns, avec beaucoup de précautions oratoires, qualifient « d'ensauvagement » ! La ségrégation des quartiers où se cumulent paupérisation, repli identitaire et culturel, privilégie la rue comme lieu de socialisation. Un réseau d'interconnaissances lié au cadre de vie commun s'y développe et l'appartenance à un même territoire en devient le ciment, avec des règles normatives propres dont la violence physique et verbale en est le lexique, et ce dès le plus jeune âge. Plusieurs strates, très contradictoirement, vont associer ressenti d'exclusion et affirmation de soi par la violence : un parcours scolaire qui est en fait un parcours de « décrochage scolaire », un contexte familial représenté par de grandes fratries où l'on ne partage guère que « le frigidaire » et où l'autorité parentale y est inexistante voire destructrice par son incapacité à transmettre les sentiments affectifs nécessaires à la considération de l'autre, et la stigmatisation dont ils sont eux mêmes la cible soit à cause de leur âge, où de leur origine étrangère ou d'agrégat récent. C'est en fin de compte le choc de deux mondes, au travers d'un prisme que l'on se doit de reconsidérer comme anthropologique de par les difficultés d'adaptabilité qu'il accumule. Vous l'aurez compris, répondre à votre question de remise en cause de la mixité sociale à l'école serait bien trop réducteur...

Pourquoi ces enfants sont de plus en plus violents et n'hésitent pas à passer à l'acte ?

Jean-Marc Ben Kemoun : Le passage à l'acte est le fruit d'un processus dynamique qui prend ses origines dans la construction de l'individu et donc du milieu dans lequel il se construit, dans la période récente qui précède le passage à l'acte, et enfin dans le ou les facteurs précipitants qui vont faire que l'individu va passer à l'acte à ce moment-là. Sans l'analyse de ces composantes, il est difficile de comprendre un passage à l'acte.

L'enfant se construit d'abord dans le milieu familial.

La famille contrairement aux idées reçues est le lieu de la violence, même s'il ne faut pas négliger les violences dans le milieu des pairs, et les violences institutionnelles.

Cette violence est perpétrée soit par omission, les négligences, soit par commission, les violences verbales, psychologiques, physiques, sexuelles, administratives, financières....Elles peuvent être intentionnelles mais souvent aussi non intentionnelles, liées à la précarité, la maladie etc...

Ces maltraitances sont en rapport avec le fait que les besoins fondamentaux des enfants n'ont pas été assurés et l'attachement n'a pas été sécurisé. Cela va renvoyer l'enfant à un sentiment d'insécurité affective, physique, sociale...et à un besoin de rechercher cette sécurité au risque d'en être dépendant, de la quémander au risque de se mettre en danger, de la refuser même de façon violente de peur de la perdre. Le fait que ce méta besoin de sécurité n'ait pas été assuré dès la petite enfance par les figures d'attachement primaire, les parents, puis par sphère concentrique : la famille, les voisins, l'école, la cité, l'état....aboutit du fait de la faiblesse de l'estime de soi, de la confiance en soi, de l'amour de soi...à des troubles relationnels majeurs, dont la violence.

Les parents sont souvent en grande difficultés face à leurs enfants qui ne correspondent pas à l'idéalisation qu'ils en avaient, souvent du fait de représentations familiales, culturelles, religieuses... Cela peut aboutir à un sentiment de frustration parentale. Il en est de même de l'exigence scolaire véhiculée par la pression de la société, et de l'image renvoyée par cette réussite scolaire sans quoi on ne deviendra pas un individu respectable.

L'exigence parentale et sociétale reprise par les parents, de conformation à la norme, notamment du milieu d'origine, placera l'enfant dans ce sentiment de ne pas être à la hauteur de cette exigence, voir un sentiment d'injustice et de non-reconnaissance de la part de ses parents tellement importante pour le développement humain. Ce sentiment d'injustice sera le moteur du sentiment de rejet, de colère voire de haine du milieu qui aura rendu cet enfant mauvais aux yeux des parents.

De plus la maltraitance subie, aura aussi un rôle délétère dans le sens où l'enfant maltraité va rejouer cette maltraitance, comme si il avait internalisé une part de l'agresseur, et non pas reproduire comme on a l'habitude de le dire, mais agir en lieu et place de l'agresseur, contre lui-même en s'autoagressant (mutilation, comportement de mise en danger, tentative de suicide... qui vont aussi renvoyer cet enfant à des comportements dissociatif, qui sont une façon aussi d'éteindre la douleur), soit en agressant l'autre, et par projection l'autre adulte qui représentera la projection externe du conflit interne.

La souffrance s'exprime donc de différente manière et il est vrai souvent de façon non verbale. L'adulte doit être formé à repérer ces signes avant-coureurs, qui s'il est là encore formé à cela, peut aboutir à un désamorçage de la crise. La crise a un rôle dans la dynamique des sujets. Elle n'est pas dissociable du milieu, le milieu qui favorise la crise, le milieu qui permet l'expression de la crise.

La crise a un rôle cathartique de résolution, même si elle aboutit au drame. Le rôle de l'adulte référent est de favoriser ce rôle de résolution, sans aboutir au drame. Désamorcer une crise c'est permettre à l'autre de s'exprimer sans avoir eu recours au passage à l'acte.

Souvent ce sont des passages à l'acte de type décharge émotionnelle. Il n'y a plus de pensées, il n'y a plus de paroles, il n'y a plus de mots.

La parole ne vient pas faire tiers, elle ne joue pas ce rôle de résolution, de faire sens. Ce sont des personnes pour qui les mots n'ont pas de sens, ou pire il n'y a pas de mots. Ils sont dans une incapacité à élaborer, à mentaliser, à penser par soi-même. On parle de déstructuration psychique, c'est-à-dire d'incapacité à penser par soi-même, une dissolution de soi.

S'ajoute à cela les modèles externalisés et non contrôlables de l'information par les réseaux sociaux qui favorisent cette incapacité à penser par soi-même. L'individu va penser par le biais du réseau social, par le biais de ce qu'on nous fait ingurgiter toute la journée.

Je ne développerai pas l'impact de la pornographie sur la fabrique de la violence et notamment de la violence de genre, mais aussi sur le fait que plus le sujet est exposé jeune à la pornographie, plus son esprit sera hémétique aux apprentissages et aux processus de sublimation permettant l'ouverture au monde.

Ce passage à l'acte ou plutôt cette absence de mots, cette absence de paroles, déshumanise l'autre comme s'il était un objet. L'individu se dit qu'il ne va pas s'attaquer à un humain. Il va s'attaquer à quelque chose de déshumanisé.

C'est ce qui fait qu'on a ce sentiment d'être face à un monstre.

Comment redonner une part d'humain à ces jeunes, sinon en leur redonnant la parole et en les réinscrivant dans le monde des humains.

Il est certains que si on laisse évoluer chez un individu ce mode de fonctionnement, si on le favorise depuis son plus jeune âge, comme on peut le voir dans des pays élevant des enfants soldats par exemple, il sera très difficile de ramener ces enfants à une humanité sans haine, à un vivre ensemble et un respect de l'humanité.

L'intervention précoce, la prévention individuelle et collective est primordiale pour éviter l'évolution vers un trouble majeur de la personnalité, et l'inéluctabilité du passage à l'acte.

Cela passe par redonner les moyens à l'école d'être aussi un lieu éducatif, un lieu du vivre ensemble, un lieu de l'égalité, de la fraternité, les mots ont un sens, mais aussi par une éducation précoce à la parentalité, dès le désir d'enfant, car dans notre société clivante, individualiste, inégalitaire et de consommation qui cherche à capter les plus jeunes, il est difficile d'être parents.

Quels sont les profils des personnes agressées ? Les professeurs et les membres de l'Éducation Nationale sont-ils les seules victimes et personnes ciblées ?

Maurice Signolet : Tout ce qui ne correspond pas au schéma comportemental que je viens de vous décrire est une cible potentielle ! Il suffit d'inverser la lecture pour en décrypter les antonymes. L'autre, tout simplement, surtout si il est faible, si il est « étranger » à ce que vous êtes, ou pire si il vous ressemble mais n'appartient pas

au cercle extrêmement réduit de votre entourage. Il y a ainsi une forme de rationalité dans l'irrationnel. On pourrait cependant nuancer le cas particulier du corps enseignant. Par sa proximité quasi quotidienne et la forme d'intimité réciproque qu'elle induit, par son statut de dispensateur du savoir, par le caractère institutionnel de sa fonction, le professeur, par effet miroir, peut révéler ou amplifier la déconsidération que l'adolescent violent a de lui-même. Cette fois, je veux bien me faire le disciple de Freud ! C'est parfois lui-même, que l'agresseur frappe en frappant son professeur...

Jean-Marc Ben Kemoun : Là encore il est difficile de proposer un profil des personnes agressées sans risquer de les stigmatiser et de les culpabiliser.

Nous ne reviendrons pas sur les agressions pour des mobiles religieux, politiques, ethniques...où on peut alors parler d'une forme d'emprise dans laquelle l'enfant se retrouve, car rien ne permet de dire que l'enfant est consentant aux valeurs de la religion, de la politique, de l'ethnie dans laquelle on l'élève, ni aux actes qu'on perpétue sur lui dont certains s'apparentent à des mutilations sexuelles concernant les faits religieux.

De plus il est difficile d'imaginer qu'un enfant qui doit s'ouvrir au monde, à la culture, à la diversité, car là encore il s'agit d'un besoin fondamental qui doit être assuré, soit, sans qu'il ait été auparavant instrumentalisé, dans le rejet de ce qu'il ne connaît pas. Ce refus de l'adulte de l'ouverture au monde de l'enfant, aboutit inéluctablement à une incapacité à vivre en société, par le rejet de l'autre différent (fonctionnement de type clanique), et donc à un risque de violence.

Il n'est pas rare que l'enfant qui commet l'agression projette sur l'adulte le conflit interne qui le ronge et rend sa souffrance insupportable. Cette externalisation permet une sorte de décharge émotionnelle qui le libère un temps de cette souffrance.

Certains sujets sont atteints de pathologies psychiatriques avérées et notamment ceux qui sont mus par un délire, souvent de persécution, avec le sentiment que l'autre est le persécuteur. Mais cela constitue une minorité des enfants ou des adolescents qui passent à l'acte. Là encore la stigmatisation des malades psychiatriques est une manipulation politique pour déplacer le débat de la responsabilité politique vers la responsabilité médicale, ce qui n'a pas lieu d'être dans la grande majorité des cas, même si parfois la responsabilité médicale est en cause.

La violence naît d'un long processus de maturation, et chez l'enfant dans le cadre de sa construction, ce qui le rend encore plus vulnérable et en grande difficulté pour la contrôler, mais elle peut ne jamais s'exprimer.

L'individu soumis à la violence chronique, internalise la faute, car c'est un des ressorts de la violence psychologique de l'agresseur, car cela permet à celui-ci de ne pas avoir l'obligation d'être toujours présent pour assouvir sa toute puissance et son emprise.

L'enfant va fonctionner de façon clivée, ce qui traduit la gravité de la violence subie, et non pas reproduire, mais agir comme si il était l'agresseur qu'il porte en lui, dans les situations « interdites », ou se dissocier face à certains indices, et avoir un passage à l'acte désorganisé dans le cadre de cette dissociation, ou enfin projeter sur l'autre la haine inscrite par l'agresseur sans qu'il ne contrôle la raison de cette haine.

Il est alors difficile de cerner un profil type de la personne agressée, sans connaître le milieu dans lequel l'enfant évolue, le starter du passage à l'acte qui peut donner l'illusion d'une immédiateté, alors que le plus souvent, même si on ne peut pas parler de préméditation, il est aux prises avec une situation pré-criminelle que lui-même ne repérera pas, mais que l'entourage lui peut repérer.

Plus que de stigmatiser des profils de personnes en risque d'être agressées, alors que les événements récents vont à l'encontre d'une telle réflexion, il est plutôt primordial d'éduquer les personnes au repérage, et à savoir qui prévenir en cas de repérage, sans avoir le sentiment de dénoncer, mais plus d'alerter, pour protéger, voir pour sauver des vies. Et dans les cas récents médiatisés, certains ont pu dire qu'ils se doutaient que quelque chose allait se passer, mais qu'ils ne se sont pas crus, soit parce qu'ils ne savaient pas quoi en faire, soit par peur des conséquences de leur dires, sur l'individu, mais aussi sur eux-mêmes, si tant est qu'ils ne soient pas dans l'idéologie véhiculée par l'agresseur.

Comment les jeunes agressés se reconstruisent après une violente agression ?

Certains vont vous parler de résilience. La résilience est un concept qui à mon sens a été mal compris et mal vulgarisé, ou dont les gens se sont emparés sans avoir pris le temps d'en saisir toutes les nuances.

Les personnes pensent que la résilience est intrinsèque à l'individu : « il ou elle est résiliente ».

C'est le reliquat du fort qui résiste, et du faible qui craque. Je rappelle l'image de Jean de La Fontaine qui avait bien compris déjà que la résilience n'était pas intrinsèque, que celui qui se rompt, c'est le chêne.

La résilience est dépendante du milieu. Un enfant élevé dans un milieu sûr, et dont les besoins fondamentaux vont être assurés correctement, va développer une bonne confiance en soi, une bonne estime de soi, une capacité d'empathie, un respect de l'autre, de sa différence, et c'est ce qui va faire qu'il va être plus résistant aux attaques. Mais il y a des attaques auxquelles personne ne résiste.

À la suite d'une agression de ce type, la résilience va passer par :

--> La prise en charge collective : la prise en charge de la société

- La reconnaissance politique, qui traduit en fait celle de la société tout entière, et c'est ainsi qu'il faut la comprendre, même si la société a perdu confiance dans ses politiques, mais à ce moment-là, ce n'est pas l'homme politique mais ce qu'il représente, pourvu que par la suite l'événement ne soit pas instrumentalisé par les politiques, ce qui malheureusement est rare

- La reconnaissance passe aussi par les médias pourvu qu'ils sachent respecter l'intimité, la douleur, ne versent pas dans le sensationnel, ce qui malheureusement n'est pas fréquent pour les chaînes d'infos en continue qui vont rechercher le scoop et qui peuvent de ce fait aggraver le traumatisme. De plus la médiatisation à tout prix, peut aussi favoriser le retour en boucle du fait traumatique, et il est recommandé aux personnes de ne pas parler à chaud aux médias, ni de regarder les chaînes d'information continues, qui peuvent aussi par maladresse, employer des termes, des concepts mal maîtrisés, même par des experts qui défilent, et qui peuvent dans cette période de grande fragilité aggraver voir faciliter le risque de passage à une pathologie plus grave

--> La Prise en charge individuelle

- Sur le lieu de l'événement et c'est le rôle notamment des CUMPs, pourvu qu'elles soient suffisamment armées pour remplir ce rôle

- Puis par la suite par des prises en charge médico-psychologiques qui devraient être codifiées, protocolisées, évaluées, reconnues efficaces, pour éviter toute rupture qu'on retrouve encore trop fréquemment, et aussi que les personnes se dirigent pas dépit, ou parce qu'ils ont été démarchés vers des alternatives, non reconnus voir néfastes, ou sectaires

Ces prises en charge doivent inclure

o l'entourage qui accompagne au quotidien la personne blessée. Car on l'a vu c'est ce qui va faire la résilience de l'individu

o l'accompagnement au scolaire, universitaire, ou professionnel

Ces prises en charges doivent être associées et corrélées, non dissociées de la prise en charge judiciaire, pénale mais aussi civile de réparation du dommage, ni des prises en charges administratives ou de gestion du quotidien, sans quoi il sera impossible d'aider le versant psychologique si le sujet est au prises avec des angoisses de survie dans le quotidien, sans rapport direct avec les faits, mais avec les conséquences des faits.

Il faut donc une interrelation médico-psychologique, sociale, juridique, judiciaire, administrative, professionnelle ou scolaire.... Alors oui bien sûr un guichet unique au départ, pour éviter le parcours chaotique auquel on expose les agressés, mais surtout une pérennité des actions et de leur coordination.

17 December (Le Monde)

https://www.lemonde.fr/m-le-mag/article/2023/12/16/serge-klarsfeld-le-chasseur-de-nazis-qui-n-a-plus-peur-du-rn_6206121_4500055.html?lmd_medium=al&lmd_campaign=envoye-par-appli&lmd_creation=ios&lmd_source=mail

Serge Klarsfeld, le chasseur de nazis qui n'a plus peur du RN

L'avocat historien a voué son existence à la mémoire de la Shoah. En traquant les anciens dignitaires nazis ainsi qu'en dénonçant avec constance une extrême droite française alors ouvertement antisémite. Pourtant, à 88 ans, le fils de déporté ne considère plus le RN comme un danger, mais comme un allié face au sentiment antijuif et à la menace de l'islamisme.

Par [Olivier Faye](#)

Publié hier à 05h00, modifié hier à 17h10



Serge Klarsfeld, chez lui, à Paris, le 5 décembre 2023. ILYES GRIYEB POUR M LE MAGAZINE DU MONDE

Sur un mur, un plan du camp d'Auschwitz-Birkenau. Sur un autre, une petite toile ensoleillée de Florence. Serge et Beate Klarsfeld aimaient passer des vacances dans la cité toscane quand ils ne traquaient pas d'anciens dignitaires nazis. Mais tout, dans les bureaux qu'ils occupent au rez-de-chaussée d'un immeuble du 8^e arrondissement de Paris, raconte une vie consacrée à la mémoire des victimes de la Shoah.

Des exemplaires du *Mémorial de la déportation des Juifs de France* (1978), leur livre monument – il pèse 7 kilos –, côtoient ceux de l'autre montagne qu'ils ont érigée, le *Mémorial des enfants juifs déportés de France* (1995). L'un a été le premier à répertorier les noms des 74 182 juifs déportés de l'Hexagone, l'autre à rendre leur humanité, en retraçant leurs courtes existences, aux 11 400 enfants juifs de France morts dans les camps.

Serge Klarsfeld aurait pu être l'un d'entre eux si son père, Arno, ne s'était pas sacrifié en se rendant à la Gestapo, venue frapper à la porte de leur appartement niçois, la nuit du 30 septembre 1943. L'enfant était alors caché, avec sa mère et sa sœur, dans le double fond d'une armoire. Il avait 8 ans.

Le vieil homme en a aujourd'hui 88 et il se tient droit, assis dans son fauteuil en cuir. Son épouse, Beate, 84 ans, court d'un bout à l'autre de l'appartement pour guider, en cette fin du mois de novembre, le chauffagiste de passage. Des coupures de presse punaisées derrière Serge Klarsfeld rappellent ce qu'a été l'existence du couple depuis leur rencontre, un jour de 1960, sur le quai du métro Porte-de-Saint-Cloud : la gifle infligée par la jeune militante allemande, en 1968, au chancelier Kurt Georg Kiesinger, ancien responsable de la propagande radiophonique hitlérienne ; le procès d'ex-dignitaires du III^e Reich à Cologne, en 1979, durant lequel l'avocat

défendit les parties civiles ; la traque rocambolesque, en Bolivie, du « boucher de Lyon », Klaus Barbie, chef de la Gestapo dans la capitale des Gaules, condamné à la perpétuité par la justice française, en 1987 ; les multiples procès intentés – et gagnés – pour antisémitisme contre Jean-Marie Le Pen...

En 2022, faire barrage à Marine Le Pen

Une vie de roman, immortalisée par le téléfilm *La Traque* (2008), dans lequel Yvan Attal interprète le rôle de Serge Klarsfeld et dont l'affiche est placardée au mur, elle aussi. « *Nous avons toujours, Beate et moi, combattu l'extrême droite antijuive* », rappelle l'octogénaire d'une voix assurée. Le 16 avril 2022, le couple signait encore une tribune dans *Libération* pour appeler, lors de l'élection présidentielle, à faire barrage à [Marine Le Pen](#), « *filles du racisme et de l'antisémitisme* ».

Que s'est-il passé, alors, pour que Serge et Beate Klarsfeld acceptent de recevoir, quelques semaines plus tard, le 13 octobre 2022, la médaille de la ville de Perpignan des mains de son maire Rassemblement national (RN), Louis Aliot ? Pour qu'ils décident d'adjoindre la participation du RN à la marche contre l'antisémitisme, le 12 novembre ? Pourquoi Serge Klarsfeld clame-t-il désormais que la formation lepéniste aurait « *abandonné l'antisémitisme, le négationnisme* » et se rapprocherait « *des valeurs républicaines* » ?

« *Nous avons constaté qu'il y avait beaucoup de braves gens au Rassemblement national* », a assuré l'octogénaire dans une interview au *Figaro*, trois jours avant la marche, tandis que, selon lui, « *l'extrême gauche abandonne sa ligne d'action contre l'antisémitisme* ». Des propos qui portent, ébranlent les certitudes et imposent le silence : nul ne veut écorner cette grande figure morale avec des reproches publics. Il est plus simple de lui trouver des défenseurs – comme Richard Prasquier, ancien président du Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France (CRIF), qui se dit « *satisfait de l'évolution du RN* » – que des détracteurs.

« *Le RN, c'est évident, n'a pas rompu avec l'antisémitisme*, estime le philosophe Bernard-Henri Lévy. *Il ne suffit pas d'une marche pour consommer une rupture, de quelques déclarations arrachées par des journalistes insistants pour signifier un retournement des âmes et des esprits.* » Le parti lepéniste, lui, ne s'est pas tu.

« *J'ai été sensible à l'entretien donné par monsieur Serge Klarsfeld, qui dit qu'il n'a rien à reprocher à Marine Le Pen et au Rassemblement national sur le sujet de l'antisémitisme* », a réagi sur la chaîne CNews le président du RN, Jordan Bardella. Le jeune dirigeant essayait ainsi de sortir de la polémique qu'il avait lui-même créée en déclarant que [Jean-Marie Le Pen n'était, à ses yeux, pas antisémite](#).

Il reste d'« extrême centre », affirme-t-il

L'enjeu posé par le militant de la mémoire, historien et avocat est capital. Il consiste à savoir si l'extrême droite française s'est débarrassée ou non de l'antisémitisme, « *cette maladie de l'humanité* », selon les mots de Serge Klarsfeld. Et si l'empathie exprimée par Marine Le Pen envers la communauté juive à la suite de l'attaque terroriste du Hamas, en Israël, le 7 octobre, est sincère ou simplement opportuniste.

Depuis cette date, de nombreux juifs se demandent si l'ancien Front national, ennemi historique, pourrait devenir un protecteur face à l'explosion des actes antisémites et à la menace de l'islamisme, dans un contexte où la gauche radicale de Jean-Luc Mélenchon semble leur tourner le dos. Serge Klarsfeld, en tout cas, a choisi de faire confiance.

Qu'on ne s'y trompe pas : l'homme qui achetait des pages de publicité dans la presse, en 2017, pour appeler à faire barrage à Marine Le Pen, avec des photos évoquant les camps de concentration, n'a pas viré à l'extrême droite. Il reste d'« *extrême centre* », affirme-t-il. D'ailleurs, aux élections européennes de 2024, son « *vote ne sera pas pour le Rassemblement national* », précise-t-il. Qu'on ne s'y trompe pas non plus : l'octogénaire n'a pas perdu la tête avec l'âge, simplement un peu de son audition.

Toutes les personnes contactées pour cet article racontent un homme « *droit* » et « *extraordinairement précis* », dont les années n'ont pas altéré la recherche constante de la « *vérité* ». « *Quand il parle d'un sujet, il entre dans le détail, ce n'est pas quelqu'un de superficiel. Il est intellectuellement alerte, professionnel dans sa*

démarche », souligne Pierre-François Veil, fils de Simone Veil et président de la Fondation pour la mémoire de la Shoah – qui « doute », lui, de la sincérité de la conversion du RN.

La préférence nationale passée sous silence

Non, Serge Klarsfeld revendique simplement le fait de ne « pas être sectaire ». Il veut encourager les bonnes volontés pour mieux les arrimer à son camp. Et ne pas tourner le dos à un parti qui pesait 41,5 % des voix au second tour de l'élection présidentielle en 2022. « J'ai constaté une évolution très nette avec l'arrivée de Marine Le Pen en ce qui concerne l'antisémitisme, explique-t-il, installé dans son bureau. Elle affirme une solidarité vis-à-vis des juifs, qui sont inquiets en France, et une solidarité vis-à-vis de l'Etat d'Israël. Dans des périodes difficiles, il faut des alliés. Pour moi, un parti d'extrême droite ne peut être appelé d'extrême droite que s'il est antijuif. »

Ce qui revient à passer sous silence la préférence nationale – pivot xénophobe du projet lepéniste – et la volonté affirmée de ratiboiser l'Etat de droit, deux éléments objectifs de définition de l'extrême droite. Mais le traumatisme du 7 octobre lui fait reconsidérer l'essentiel. Son épouse, Beate, assume le mot de « peur ». Comme lui, elle soutient l'idée que « c'est bien d'avoir des gens qui supportent Israël et combattent l'antisémitisme » à l'heure où « le monde se réveille contre Israël ». Le monde « arabo-musulman » en particulier, complète Serge Klarsfeld.

« La masse des musulmans qui vivent en France est attentiste et silencieuse, mais ils ont des sentiments propalestiniens qui sont dangereux pour les juifs ici », poursuit-il. Soit la grille de lecture qui conduit Marine Le Pen, depuis une dizaine d'années, à se présenter en rempart de la communauté juive, arguant de son combat contre l'islamisme.

La députée du Pas-de-Calais considère de longue date les chambres à gaz génocidaires comme le « summum de la barbarie ». Mais les déclarations de son père les qualifiant de « détail de l'histoire » ne l'ont jamais empêchée de militer à ses côtés jusqu'à l'heure de l'héritage. Serge Klarsfeld en convient : l'exclusion de Jean-Marie Le Pen du Front national, en 2015, n'a pas été accompagnée d'un discours de rupture « forte » sur le fond.

« Nous n'avons pas à rougir de notre histoire qui a vu des patriotes, réunis par l'amour de notre pays, ramasser le drapeau français que nos dirigeants avaient piteusement laissé dans le caniveau », assurait au contraire Marine Le Pen, en octobre 2022, lors d'un colloque organisé pour les 50 ans de son parti – incluant, de fait, les figures de la collaboration qui ont contribué à fonder le FN... Quand Bruno Gollnisch se rend, en décembre 2022, au dîner du Parti de la France, une petite formation antisémite, aux côtés du [négationniste Hervé Ryssen](#), personne au RN ne songe à l'exclure du conseil national, le « parlement » du parti.

Indulgence

Serge Klarsfeld le reconnaît : la fille de Jean-Marie Le Pen dispose de solides marges de progression. « Marine Le Pen doit admettre le discours de Jacques Chirac reconnaissant la responsabilité de l'Etat français dans la rafle du Vél'd'Hiv et la loi Gayssot [qui a créé, en 1990, le délit de négationnisme] », juge-t-il. L'indulgence de l'historien lui est néanmoins acquise. Elle tient autant aux circonstances qu'aux hommes.

A la rentrée 2022, Philippe Benguigui, militant pour la mémoire de la Shoah à Perpignan, appelle Serge Klarsfeld, son ami de trente ans. Les deux hommes ont travaillé ensemble sur le projet de Mémorial du camp de Rivesaltes. Le premier demande au second s'il veut bien descendre dans les Pyrénées-Orientales afin de lui remettre, lors d'une cérémonie, ses insignes nouvellement acquis de chevalier de la Légion d'honneur. Serge Klarsfeld accepte de bon cœur.

Philippe Benguigui lui précise qu'il a également convié le maire de Perpignan, Louis Aliot, dont il est proche. Pas de réaction défavorable, c'est donc que Serge Klarsfeld approuve. Prévenu de l'initiative par l'antenne locale de son mouvement, le président de SOS-Racisme, Dominique Sopo, met en garde l'historien contre le risque d'une « opération de communication » du parti lepéniste. Son mail reste sans réponse.

[Louis Aliot occupe une place à part au sein du Rassemblement national](#). Pendant des années, l'ancien chef de cabinet de Jean-Marie Le Pen a avalé (presque) sans broncher les propos antisémites de son ex-patron. Mais ce petit-fils d'un juif pied-noir est aussi l'un de ceux qui poussent sa formation à abandonner cette doctrine raciste. L'ancien compagnon de Marine Le Pen a effectué, en 2011, un voyage en Israël, inédit à l'époque pour un cadre frontiste de ce niveau – il était alors numéro deux du FN. « *C'est l'antisémitisme qui empêche les gens de voter pour nous. Il n'y a que cela... A partir du moment où vous faites sauter ce verrou idéologique, vous libérez le reste* », résumait-il, en 2014, face à l'historienne Valérie Igounet (*Le Front national, de 1972 à nos jours*, Seuil, 2014).

De quoi rassurer les Klarsfeld, qui acceptent de recevoir de ses mains, le 13 octobre 2022, la médaille de la ville de Perpignan à l'issue de la cérémonie de Légion d'honneur de Philippe Benguigui. Ces derniers s'entretiennent ensuite avec Louis Aliot pendant près d'une heure et demie. « *Ils m'ont posé des questions sur mon parcours, raconte le maire de Perpignan. Ils ont compris que, pour les pieds-noirs, Jean-Marie Le Pen, c'est l'homme de la IV^e République qui quitte les bancs de l'Assemblée nationale pour aller se battre en Algérie. Ils ont surtout vu que, pour la protection de la mémoire et pour l'avenir, il est important de rallier à sa cause des gens qui n'étaient pas forcément en soutien de leur combat.* » La discussion s'avère fondatrice. « *Au RN, un certain nombre de notables ressemblent à Aliot* », veut désormais croire Serge Klarsfeld.

La soirée d'hommage se transforme en débat

Le retour du couple à Paris est houleux. Beaucoup, au sein des institutions juives, ne comprennent pas cette excursion perpignanaise. [Le nouveau président du CRIF, Yonathan Arfi](#), reconnaît pudiquement une « *différence d'analyse* » face au « *géant* » Serge Klarsfeld en raison du risque d'« *instrumentalisation* » des lepénistes. Le linge sale se déballe une semaine plus tard, le 19 octobre. En famille ou presque.

La soirée d'hommage aux Klarsfeld, prévue de longue date par l'association des Amis du CRIF dans un hôtel parisien, se transforme en débat sur l'attitude à adopter face à l'extrême droite. Arno Klarsfeld, 58 ans, fils de Serge et Beate, s'installe d'autorité à la tribune : il s'est invité à la dernière minute. Le conseiller d'Etat, habitué des plateaux des chaînes d'information en continu, électrise une assistance divisée.

L'extrême gauche, voilà le nouvel ennemi, assure-t-il, défendant l'initiative de ses parents. La majorité des deux cents personnes présentes approuvent. « *Nous ne sommes pas dans un meeting politique !* », s'agace l'animateur de la soirée, Paul Amar, ancienne star du « 20 heures » de France 2. « *Il y avait des intervenants désagréables, agressifs et malpolis envers mes parents. Je n'ai vraiment pas pu le supporter* », justifie après-coup Arno Klarsfeld.



Dans l'appartement du couple Klarsfeld, à Paris, le 5 décembre 2023. ILYES GRIYEB POUR M LE MAGAZINE DU MONDE

De nombreux proches du couple attribuent à cet ancien soutien de Nicolas Sarkozy l'attitude de ses parents à l'égard du RN. Arno Klarsfeld est un invité régulier de CNews et d'autres médias conservateurs, où il critique l'Ukraine, coupable à ses yeux de glorifier certaines figures nationalistes ayant collaboré avec l'Allemagne nazie. Il livre aussi des chroniques sur Radio J, décrivant sa crainte de voir les sociétés occidentales « *se diluer* » sous l'effet de l'immigration.

Très proche de ses parents, Arno Klarsfeld habite dans le même immeuble qu'eux, juste au-dessus de leurs bureaux, au troisième étage, quand Serge et Beate logent au cinquième. Seule sa sœur, Lida, 50 ans, est partie, pour s'installer à Rome. Arno vit lesté du prénom de son héroïque grand-père. Il a longtemps tenté de se ménager une place dans le récit familial en militant contre Jean-Marie Le Pen, à la fin des années 1980, ou en

plaidant comme avocat, dans les années 1990, contre le milicien Paul Touvier et l'ancien préfet Maurice Papon, tous deux condamnés pour complicité de crimes contre l'humanité.

« *Personne n'influence mon père, certainement pas moi, ou peut-être sur le port d'une cravate* », évacue-t-il aujourd'hui. Dans le dernier bulletin de l'association des Fils et filles des déportés juifs de France (FFDJF) – qu'il a fondée avec son épouse en 1979 –, Serge Klarsfeld écrit qu'Arno est « [leur] porte-parole sur les chaînes d'information (...), que ses prises de position sont aussi les [leurs]. »

« Ces notions s'affadissent ou s'affaiblissent »

En rentrant de Perpignan, l'octogénaire s'est un instant senti « *malheureux* » de « *se retrouver un peu seul dans son initiative* », raconte son ami l'écrivain Marek Halter – qui « *comprend sa démarche* » mais « *ne la partage pas* ». Il s'est vite ressaisi. L'historien relève d'ailleurs que les réactions à son interview au *Figaro* se font moins négatives que les critiques émises après sa venue à Perpignan.

Nous relisons à Serge Klarsfeld un extrait des [Mémoires \(Flammarion\) qu'il a publiés avec son épouse en 2015](#), dans lequel il écrivait que, « *par leur culture et par leur mémoire des persécutions si longtemps subies, les juifs portent en eux l'amour de la liberté et le respect de la personne humaine* ». Le vieil homme réagit sans ciller : « *En temps de guerre, et Israël est en guerre perpétuelle, les priorités sont des priorités de survie. Donc ces notions s'affadissent ou s'affaiblissent.* »

La plupart des membres de la FFDJF soutiennent les Klarsfeld dans leur démarche. Le millier d'adhérents qui composent l'association représentent quasiment une seconde famille pour eux. Ils ont passé ensemble tant de temps à étudier les archives du régime nazi, à rédiger des fiches bristol sur les convois de déportés, à inaugurer des stèles commémoratives ou à poser des plaques mémorielles sur les façades des écoles.

« *Ce couple est l'honneur de l'humanité* », vante Claude Bochurberg, membre des FFDJF. Régine Lippe, autre militante de l'association, qui va régulièrement avec les Klarsfeld « *lire les noms de [leurs] disparus* » au Mémorial de la Shoah, les respecte tout autant, même si elle a, au départ, été un peu choquée par leur changement de cap. « *Mais, en réfléchissant, je me suis dit : "Mince, ces 40 % de gens qui votent pour le RN ne sont pas tous antisémites"* », raconte cette retraitée de 86 ans, cachée par des Justes tout au long de la seconde guerre mondiale et dont le père a été déporté.

Parfois consulté par l'entourage présidentiel

A tous, les Klarsfeld proposent de participer à un « *voyage de solidarité* » en Israël, début janvier, pour soutenir l'Etat hébreu dans sa guerre contre le Hamas, ponctué par une rencontre avec le président d'Israël, Isaac Herzog. L'été dernier, la plupart se réjouissaient à l'idée de rallier Berlin pour assister à la remise de la grand-croix de la Légion d'honneur à Serge Klarsfeld par Emmanuel Macron.

Le militant, qui est parfois consulté par l'entourage présidentiel pour préparer les discours mémoriels, s'est souvent affiché à ses côtés. Mais l'événement, prévu début juillet en marge d'une visite d'Etat, a été reporté en raison des émeutes urbaines. Il doit « *en principe* » être reprogrammé, glisse un proche du chef de l'Etat, malgré la gêne qu'ont pu susciter à l'Elysée les prises de position de l'octogénaire.

« *Le but de Serge, c'est la reconnaissance de la mémoire de la Shoah et surtout la pérennité et la sécurité de ce qu'il reste des juifs*, décrypte l'historienne Annette Wiewiorka, dont les grands-parents ont été déportés dans le même convoi que celui du père de Serge Klarsfeld. *Après le 7 octobre, plus rien n'est pareil. On ne peut pas comprendre la violence du sentiment que cela pourrait recommencer. Il y a toujours chez lui l'enfant de 8 ans caché derrière une fausse porte d'armoire.* » Un enfant transi de peur.

17 December (Le Figaro)

[«Si l'OQTF avait été exécutée, ça ne serait pas arrivé» : la colère de Claire, violée par un clandestin dans le hall de son immeuble à Paris \(lefigaro.fr\)](#)

«Si l'OQTF avait été exécutée, ça ne serait pas arrivé» : la colère de Claire, violée par un clandestin dans le hall de son immeuble à Paris

Par [Guillaume Poingt](#)

Publié il y a 39 minutes



Claire, 26 ans, a été violée par un clandestin visé par une OQTF dans son hall d'immeuble, dans le 8e arrondissement de Paris. Guillaume Poingt / Le Figaro.

TÉMOIGNAGE - Agressée en novembre, cette jeune femme de 26 ans souhaite prendre la parole pour «faire bouger les choses d'un point de vue politique».

Claire, 26 ans, a vécu ce que redoutent de nombreuses femmes : être suivie dans la rue par un prédateur sexuel. Samedi 11 novembre, cette jeune femme a été violée dans le hall de son immeuble, dans le centre de Paris. Avec un courage qui force l'admiration, elle a accepté de nous raconter cette journée qui a bouleversé sa vie. «J'ai envie de parler pour prévenir les femmes qu'on n'est plus en sécurité en France, même dans un quartier qui ne craint pas», précise-t-elle.

Le 11 novembre, vers 16h30, Claire revient du Monoprix avec ses sacs de courses. Cette consultante vit dans une petite rue calme du 8e arrondissement, non loin du [parc Monceau](#). Elle doit ensuite rejoindre son petit ami pour la soirée. «J'ai tapé le code de ma porte, j'ai marché cinq mètres dans mon hall et j'ai entendu des bruits de pas derrière moi. Je me suis retrouvée plaquée au sol. Je n'ai pas compris ce qu'il se passait», témoigne Claire. Son agresseur lui met une main sur la bouche. «Je hurlais mais il m'étranglait de plus en plus. Il m'a dit : "Tais-toi sinon je vais te tuer"», poursuit-elle.

Trente minutes interminables

Au départ, la jeune femme pense que l'homme veut «juste» lui voler son sac et son téléphone. Mais elle comprend rapidement qu'il est animé par d'autres intentions. «Tu vas faire ce que je te dis, je vais te b*****», lui assène l'individu. Terrorisée, Claire trouve néanmoins la force de se débattre. Pendant la lutte, la bouteille de vin qu'elle venait d'acheter se fracasse contre le sol. «On se roulait par terre dans des bouts de verre. Il continuait de m'étrangler, je sentais que je m'épuisais. Je me suis dit : "soit je meurs, soit je fais ce qu'il dit"», relate Claire. À chaque instant, elle prie pour qu'un voisin rentre ou sorte. Mais ce n'est pas le cas. «J'entendais des pas de gens qui passaient dans la rue à cinq mètres de moi», se souvient-elle.

Son agresseur finit par lui imposer une fellation de manière violente. Mais le calvaire de Claire n'est pas terminé. L'inconnu veut aller chez elle. Elle lui fait croire que ses parents sont là. «J'essayais de trouver des stratégies pour pouvoir partir. Je réfléchissais à courir vers la rue mais il fallait appuyer sur le bouton et ouvrir la porte qui est lourde... J'avais très peur car j'entendais des bruits de métal dans sa poche. J'ai senti qu'il aurait

pu me tuer», raconte la jeune femme. Claire ne le sait pas encore mais son agresseur a violé une autre jeune femme, une étudiante de 19 ans, sous la menace d'un couteau quelques minutes plus tôt.

Au bout de trente minutes interminables, une voisine finit par entrer dans le hall. C'est la délivrance. Dénudée et en sang, Claire se réfugie derrière elle. L'agresseur, lui, prend la fuite avec ses sacs de courses. Ce SDF de 25 ans, de nationalité centrafricaine, sera interpellé quelques heures plus tard avenue des Champs-Élysées. Déjà visé par une obligation de quitter le territoire français (OQTF), il est [mis en examen et écroué](#).

En plus du traumatisme psychologique, Claire doit suivre par précaution une trithérapie (un traitement médicamenteux contre le VIH, NDLR) et subir une opération d'un doigt, dont un nerf a été sectionné par un bout de verre pendant son agression.

Un quotidien bouleversé

Un mois après les faits, Claire tente de se reconstruire «comme elle peut». Pour chasser ses idées noires, elle a décidé d'être suivie par une psychiatre et une psychologue. Elle a commencé à faire de l'EMDR («Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing», NDLR), une thérapie pour traiter le stress post-traumatique. «Au tout départ je faisais des cauchemars avec des meurtres, dans lesquels ma famille se faisait tuer aussi. Aujourd'hui je prends des médicaments pour dormir», explique la jeune femme.

Ce crime a totalement bouleversé sa vie quotidienne. «Ce n'est pas encore possible de faire mes courses toute seule. Le métro, ce n'est plus possible. Uber, je n'ai plus confiance. Je prends systématiquement des taxis pour me déplacer. Les rares fois où je suis toute seule dans la rue, je me retourne tout le temps. Quand je sors, je reste au téléphone avec mon copain, ma mère ou des amis proches», confie Claire avec pudeur. «Dès qu'il y a trop de gens ou trop de bruit, ça me stresse. Je ne sais même pas si je serai capable de fêter le Nouvel an», poursuit-elle.

Consultante en stratégie dans une entreprise depuis septembre, Claire a récemment repris le travail en mi-temps thérapeutique. «Au départ, j'avais des troubles de l'attention. C'est compliqué car je suis en période d'essai et j'ai envie de faire mes preuves. Mais heureusement ils ont été compréhensifs et à l'écoute», explique-t-elle. Fondatrice d'une marque de vêtements, elle a également dû mettre de côté son projet, du moins pour l'instant.

Une immense colère

Si Claire se confie au Figaro, c'est aussi parce qu'elle ressent une immense colère. «Si cette [OQTF \(obligation de quitter le territoire français, NDLR\) avait été exécutée](#), ça ne serait pas arrivé. Toutes les semaines, on entend des histoires avec des femmes agressées par des personnes soumises à des OQTF ou qui sont récidivistes. Ce n'est pas normal, ce n'est pas un sujet qu'on doit laisser passer. Il faut faire bouger les choses d'un point de vue politique», estime la jeune femme.

Parmi ses objectifs aujourd'hui : «alerter les femmes concernant l'insécurité et donner des conseils à celles qui vont subir ce genre de choses». «Après la déposition à la police, on se sent très seule. Il y a un manque de suivi. On ne sait pas à quel avocat s'adresser, à quel psy.... Ça pourrait être intéressant de lancer une application pour proposer des solutions. J'aimerais aussi créer un podcast avec des témoignages de femmes qui ont vécu ce genre d'agressions et qui racontent leur reconstruction», ambitionne Claire.

Le procès de son agresseur pourrait se tenir courant 2025. «J'ai envie qu'on se regarde droit dans les yeux pour lui montrer qu'il ne m'a pas mis à terre», conclut Claire d'une voix déterminée.

17 December (NYT)

[Opinion | 'The Crown' Gets One Thing About the Royal Family Exactly Right - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

GUEST ESSAY

What 'The Crown' Teaches Us About Power and How to Wield It

Dec. 16, 2023



Credit...Illustration by Rebecca Chew/The New York Times

By Arianne Chernock

Dr. Chernock is a professor of history at Boston University.

The final six episodes of “The Crown” were released this week, bringing Peter Morgan’s engrossing saga of the Windsors — bookended by the marriages of Elizabeth and Philip in 1947 and Charles and Camilla in 2005 — to an end. The Netflix series had all the appeal of a classic prime-time soap, and sure enough, tens of millions of people have tuned in, escaping reality to dwell for an hour in a bubble of fashion, money, gossip, intrigue and betrayal.

To many, escape is the whole point of royal watching — which is why royal mania is so often dismissed as a frivolous distraction. The royals are no longer as powerful as when they oversaw the rise of modern Britain and its empire. But the world of the Windsors is still intimately, and sometimes painfully, connected to our own. In that sense, the saga of the royal family, as captured in “The Crown,” offers supreme lessons in resilience, demonstrating that even the most traditional leaders can change with the times, relinquishing old roles to find new ways of exerting power and influence.

It may be easy to look at the monarchy today and assume its role is almost entirely ceremonial, but kings and queens — and their extended families — still exert tremendous social influence, especially as exemplars of morality. That was a role that King George III and his advisers pioneered way back in the 18th century when, to maintain their relevance, the royal family was expected to establish standards of proper behavior and stand by them. For better and worse, that expectation persists.

In the most favorable instances, royals have used this soft power to engage in cultural repair and provide moral leadership. Queen Victoria, for example, served as the first patron of the British Red Cross, helping to reform the kind of care received by those injured during conflicts. On the eve of World War II, King George VI met with Franklin D. Roosevelt in Hyde Park, N.Y. In eating hot dogs together, the king and president telegraphed Anglo-American solidarity in the face of rising fascism.

Over time, such stories have helped us understand that the actions of the royals affect not just their world but also our own, which may explain both our perpetual curiosity about the family and the intensity of our emotions as we litigate their choices. Many prestige cable shows have insightfully examined the dynamics of a marriage — take Tony and Carmela Soprano, — but when “The Crown” dissects Charles and Diana’s doomed marriage, it is re-enacting a pivotal moment in history that informed how many modern couples think about marital obligation and what we owe our partners and ourselves.

The final season of “The Crown” — and, in many ways, the modern story of the Windsors — has been haunted by the ghost of Diana, a figure who perhaps understood this dynamic between perception and obligation better than anyone. We may remember Diana first for her outfits and her sudden renown but she went on to do humanitarian work that benefited AIDS patients, spoke openly about her bulimia, pursued solutions to homelessness and campaigned for land mine removal in Bosnia and Angola.

In different but no less powerful ways, King Charles III is currently trying to use his influence to help mitigate the impact of climate change. At the core of these efforts is an acknowledgment that, whatever their political role, royals can, and should, have consequence. But their actions also reflect a recognizable human urge to shape the world around us and take control of our circumstances. That’s why we can see so much of ourselves in the royals when they strive for control — and often fail to achieve it.

Of course, the royals can still seem clueless and out of touch. Take their halting and awkward attempts to reckon with the role their ancestors played in shoring up a brutal empire. Centuries ago, monarchs funded the slave trade and Queen Victoria and her descendants provided symbolic glue for the British Empire and Commonwealth realms. The royal family is still tethered to that imperial past. The Prince and Princess of Wales, William and Kate, received significant public criticism during a 2022 royal tour of the Caribbean when some suggested [they failed to adopt a sufficiently apologetic stance](#) toward Britain’s colonial past. King Charles fared better on his recent visit to Kenya [by acknowledging Britain’s violent response to the Mau Mau uprising in the 1950s](#). Even so, the royals are navigating what the British journalist Afua Hirsch [described](#) last year as “a clamoring chorus of global trauma” led by “those colonized in the name of the British crown.”

But what history teaches us — and “The Crown” artfully conveys — is that the royal family can embrace change when forced to. The show has always been most successful when it’s not just penetrating the royal bubble but puncturing it. Yes, we’ve followed the Windsors, but we’ve also entered the homes of the grieving mining families of Aberfan following the sudden collapse of a colliery spoil tip. We’ve observed the Bahamian-born valet Sydney Johnson lovingly care for the exiled Duke of Windsor. And in the final seasons we’ve watched the Egyptian businessman Mohamed al-Fayed and his son Dodi make tragic efforts to recast themselves as British elites. The exploits of the monarch are never just about the monarch. They are also, inevitably, about us. When the queen encounters her subjects, she often comes away changed. Though it could still be improved and modernized, the monarchy we see now, under King Charles, is a far cry from the one in 1947 captured on “The Crown” when it began.

We might thrill to be escorted inside Balmoral Castle and Buckingham Palace, where we keep close company with Queen Elizabeth II and her restless brood. There’s certainly pleasure in listening in to the imagined private conversations of a queen so famously tight-lipped that her unofficial mantra was reportedly “Never complain, never explain.” But all of these stories, from the young Elizabeth to Charles and Diana to William and Harry, have reverberated precisely because they offer more than simply voyeuristic escapism. They help us understand our world a little better — and the way that we have shaped the royals’ rarefied realm.

Arienne Chernock is a professor of history at Boston University and the author, most recently, of “The Right to Rule and the Rights of Women.”

Source photograph by ullstein bild, via Getty Images.