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12 January (The Economist)

[Mayday! War stalks the world's oceans \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Red Sea, Black Sea, South China Sea

Mayday! War stalks the world's oceans

From globalisation to maritime mayhem



image: ricardo rey

Jan 11th 2024

Around the world a storm is building on the oceans after decades of calm. In the Red Sea Houthi militias have launched dozens of attacks on ships with drones and missiles, cutting container activity in the [Suez canal](#) by 90%. On January 12th America and Britain responded with sea and air attacks on over 60 Houthi targets in Yemen in an attempt to restore open passage, expanding the scope of the Middle East conflict. President Joe Biden threatened further military action and said America would not allow “hostile actors to imperil freedom of navigation in one of the world’s most critical commercial routes”.

The escalation in the Red Sea is mirrored by maritime mayhem elsewhere. The Black Sea is filling up with mines and crippled warships; this year Ukraine hopes to eject the Russian navy from Crimea, its base since Catherine the Great. The Baltic and North seas face a shadow-war of pipeline and cable sabotage. And Asia is seeing the largest build-up of naval power since the second world war, as China tries to coerce Taiwan into unifying and America seeks to deter a Chinese invasion. After Taiwan’s election on January 13th, tensions there could soar.

This vast and intricate system faces two challenges. One is fraught geopolitics. China’s naval build-up means the us Navy’s primacy in the Pacific is being contested for the first time since 1945. There are more rogue actors. The Houthis, backed by their sponsor Iran, have proven resistant to attacks from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, suggesting that they will not be quickly subdued by the American and British strikes. As well as the Houthis, landlocked Ethiopia’s dictator is leasing a Red Sea naval base in neighbouring Somaliland. The law of the sea is in decline. China ignores tribunal rulings that it objects to. And the West’s use of sanctions has triggered a smuggling boom: 10% of all tankers are part of an anarchic “dark fleet” operating outside mainstream laws and finance—twice the share of 18 months ago.

Disorder therefore looms on the high seas. One cost will be transient disruptions to commerce. Seaborne trade is worth about 16% of global gdp. The shipping system is adaptable but only up to a point. Single shocks can often be absorbed. The Houthi’s attacks have so far caused a spike in [insurance and shipping rates](#), but have not yet led to broader price rises, because the container and energy markets have spare capacity. But that could easily change. Oil prices rose on news of the American and British attacks and if the disruption spreads to the Strait of Hormuz, through which much of the world’s oil and gas flows, or if Iran becomes directly involved, they could rise much further.

And when markets are tight or there are synchronous shocks, the penalty can be high. The post-lockdown shipping crunch in 2021 and the Black Sea grain disruptions in 2022 caused worldwide inflation. Although shipping is a low share of most products' final price, unpredictability at sea would lead firms to shrink their supply chains, adding to costs.

A different response is needed. Western countries must double-down on maintaining their technological edge, in submarines and autonomous vessels, for example. Government and private-sector co-operation in monitoring vulnerable maritime infrastructure such as pipelines is critical, as are sea-based and satellite backups for data cables.

And alliances need to be broadened in order to make more resources available for policing the seas. America is rebuilding its Asian naval pacts and the emerging response to the Houthis in the Red Sea could ultimately provide a model. While America and Britain launched the latest strikes on the Houthis, four other countries provided military support, and a much larger cast of navies, including those of Asian states, are now active in the Red Sea. Because of the stakes, sustaining a maritime order is the lowest common denominator of international co-operation. It is something that even isolationists should subscribe to. Without it, the world economy would be sunk.

12 January (The Guardian)

[Strikes on Houthis could bring Biden closer to the regional war he sought to avoid | Yemen | The Guardian](#)

Analysis

Strikes on Houthis could bring Biden closer to the regional war he sought to avoid

[Julian Borger](#) in Washington

The strikes by the US, UK and their allies came after continued Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping

Fri 12 Jan 2024 06.43 CET



An RAF Typhoon aircraft takes off to join the US-led strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen. Photograph: Uk Mod/Reuters

When [Joe Biden](#) gave the order for airstrikes on Houthi targets in Yemen, he was taking a step that now imperils one of the primary aims of his own Middle East policy – to prevent a regional war.

US and allied officials argue he had little choice. Diplomacy, back-door channels, signalling and threats had failed to halt [relentless Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden](#), which the Iranian-backed group has claimed are being carried out in solidarity with Gaza.

Container ships have been [forced to reroute all the way around Africa](#), raising global transport costs and threatening to reverse the gains the Biden administration has made against inflation, just as his re-election campaign gets going.

Since the 7 October Hamas attack on Israel and the ferocious Israeli response against Gaza, the Biden administration has worked hard to contain the conflict, persuading the Israelis for example, not to carry out an all-out pre-emptive strike on Hezbollah in Lebanon. That has worked for now, but preventing escalation in the Red Sea is proving even harder.

A multinational naval coalition, Prosperity Guardian, [launched on 18 December to protect shipping](#), has succeeded in intercepting almost all the drones and missiles the Houthis have hurled at the tankers plying the seas off Yemen, but each attempted strike costs the US and its allies many millions of dollars to defend against weapons that sometimes cost just thousands. And it would just require one Houthi projectile to pierce this shield to trigger a geopolitical and environmental disaster. On 13 December, for example, Houthi missiles narrowly missed a tanker carrying a vast cargo of jet fuel.



President Joe Biden gave the green light for the strikes after the Houthis launched one of their biggest salvos to date on Tuesday. Photograph: Evan Vucci/AP

Rather than pulling back, Houthi attacks became bolder. On New Year's Eve, Houthi fighters launched a daring assault on a container ship, the Maersk Hangzhou, racing towards it in four small boats. US ship-launched helicopters came to the ship's protection, sinking three of the boats and killing the crews, bringing US forces into direct combat with the Houthis for the first time since the crisis began.

The next day, Biden convened his national security team to discuss options. According to administration officials, he ordered diplomats to focus on building consensus at the UN, leading to a [security council resolution](#) on Wednesday, upholding the right of free navigation and condemning the Houthi attacks.

Biden also wanted a continued expansion of Prosperity Guardian as a defensive measure and for detailed preparations to begin in earnest for an offensive response. Target lists were refined to maximise impact on Houthi capabilities while minimising potential civilian harm.

Houthis call the west's bluff

Before any attacks were launched however, Biden insisted a final formal warning should be delivered, and on 3 January, the US and 13 of its allies [issued a statement](#) warning that the Houthis would "bear the responsibility of the consequences" if the attacks continued. It was left unspoken but abundantly clear that it would involve attacks on Houthi targets in Yemen.

The warning failed. On Tuesday, the Houthis launched [one of the biggest salvos to date](#), three missiles and up to 20 drones, against commercial shipping and the US-led naval force.

"As soon as the attack was defeated, the president again convened his national security team and was presented with military options for a collective response together with close partners," a senior administration official said.

The defence secretary, Lloyd Austin, took part in the meeting via a secure link from the Walter Reed Military Medical Centre where he was being treated for prostate cancer. At the end of the meeting, Biden gave him the green light for the strikes which would be launched around 48 hours later.

The Pentagon and White House declined to give details on the number of air- and sea-launched missiles fired and the number of targets hit, but the attack seems to have been at the higher end of the range of options presented to Biden on Tuesday. Whether it will be enough to deter further attacks, officials refused to predict.

"This is about sending a message, but I think the key question is, if the message doesn't get through, then what's the next step that the US and the UK have at their disposal? Do they just bomb more targets? Do they bomb longer?" Gregory Johnsen, a non-resident fellow at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, asked.



Yemeni men brandish their weapons and hold up portraits of Houthi leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi during a protest in solidarity with the Palestinian people. Photograph: Mohammed Huwais/AFP/Getty Images

Administration officials said on Thursday night that if the Houthis could not be deterred, their capabilities could at least be degraded, missile sites could be blown up and command centres destroyed.

Johnsen pointed out that Houthis are accustomed to living and fighting under heavy bombardment. They assemble some of their missiles underground and deploy forces in civilian areas. “Saudi Arabia and the UAE [United Arab Emirates] bombed [Yemen](#) for several years and were unable to bring the Houthis to their knees,” Johnsen pointed out.

The US-UK strikes could paradoxically even strengthen the Houthis, some analysts argue, raising their profile in the Iran-led “axis of resistance” in an existential struggle with Israel and the west. It makes them a global player.

“The Houthis have been desperately waiting for 20 years to engage with ‘America and Israel’. Since 7 October, they recruited 45,000 fighters for the ‘battle of promised conquest and holy Jihad’,” Nadwa Dawsari, a non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute, [said on social media](#). “Today the US and the UK made their dream come true.”

Risk of confrontation with Iran grows

The Houthis have continually defied expectations with their resilience. When the Saudis waded into the Yemeni civil war in 2015, they thought it would be over in a few weeks. Nine years on, they are desperate to stay out of a conflict that was an embarrassment for Riyadh and a catastrophe for Yemen, clinging to a truce agreed in April 2022.

Meanwhile, the civil conflict between the increasingly radical, mostly Shia Houthis, and a loose assortment of Sunni groups, the Presidential Leadership Council, continues.

The greatest fear is that in the aftermath of the overnight strikes, the US, the UK and their allies are a significant step closer to direct confrontation with Iran.

“Iran has been involved operationally in the conduct of these attacks,” a senior US administration official said on Thursday night. “They provided information and intelligence to the Houthis. They provided the Houthis the very capabilities that they have used to conduct these attacks.”

The official said the administration’s policy response would be to stick to the campaign of economic pressure and isolation the US has been leading against Iran for years. But any effort to blunt the Houthi threat to shipping is likely to require more, including aggressive action to stop the Houthis replenishing their arms supply, which in turn means stopping ships coming from Iran.

For now however, the US is planning for further strikes if the Houthis keep up their harassment of maritime trade, in the hope that at some point, they change their calculations of costs and benefits.

“This may or may not be the last word on the topic,” a US official said after the overnight strikes. “When we have more to say, or more to do, you will hear from us.”

12 January (Le Figaro)

[Mer Rouge : l'usine allemande de Tesla va suspendre sa production à cause de pièces manquantes \(lefigaro.fr\)](https://www.lefigaro.fr)

Mer Rouge : l'usine allemande de Tesla va suspendre sa production à cause de pièces manquantes

Attaques de bateaux dans la mer Rouge: quel impact pour l'économie mondiale ?

Par Le Figaro avec AFP

Publié il y a 8 heures, mis à jour il y a 1 heure

Le constructeur de véhicules électriques invoque une pénurie de pièces due à l'allongement des itinéraires de transport en raison des attaques en mer Rouge.

Les tensions croissantes en mer Rouge ont leurs premières répercussions tangibles sur le commerce mondial. Le constructeur de voitures électriques Tesla a annoncé jeudi qu'il allait suspendre pendant deux semaines l'essentiel de sa production dans son usine européenne implantée près de Berlin, invoquant une pénurie de pièces due à l'allongement des itinéraires de transport en raison [des attaques en mer Rouge](#).

«L'allongement considérable des temps de transport crée un vide dans les chaînes d'approvisionnement», écrit Tesla dans un communiqué transmis à l'AFP. La production sera suspendue, «à l'exception de quelques sous-secteurs», dans la «Gigafactory» située au sud-est de Berlin entre le 29 janvier et le 11 février, ajoute le constructeur américain. «À partir du 12 février, la production reprendra dans son intégralité», assure Tesla.

Depuis le début de la guerre entre Israël et le mouvement islamiste palestinien Hamas dans la bande de Gaza, la multiplication des attaques près du détroit stratégique de Bab el-Mandeb, séparant la péninsule arabique de l'Afrique, a poussé certains armateurs à contourner la zone. Selon Tesla, «les conflits armés en mer Rouge et le déplacement des routes de transport entre l'Europe et l'Asie via le Cap de Bonne Espérance ont également des répercussions sur la production à Grünheide», la commune au sud de Berlin où Tesla a ouvert sa seule usine européenne.

Choc pour le commerce maritime mondial

Le canal de Suez qui relie la Méditerranée à la mer Rouge constitue la route maritime la plus courte entre l'Asie et l'Europe. C'est l'une des principales autoroutes du trafic de navires par laquelle passe 12% du commerce mondial. L'itinéraire alternatif que doivent emprunter les porte-conteneurs autour du cap sud-africain de Bonne Espérance est beaucoup plus long.

Cette crise sécuritaire est un choc pour le commerce maritime mondial. Outre l'allongement du voyage entre l'Asie et l'Europe de 10 à 20 jours, ce détour implique des coûts importants pour les entreprises. Quelque 11.500 salariés travaillent dans l'usine Tesla près de Berlin, ouverte en 2022, qui produit, selon l'entreprise, plus de 250.000 voitures électriques par an pour un objectif de 500.000 unités à terme. Tesla envisage d'agrandir l'usine pour doubler la production et le nombre de salariés.

12 January (NYT)

[Israel Faces Accusation of Genocide as South Africa Brings Case to U.N. Court - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com)

Israel Faces Accusation of Genocide as South Africa Brings Case to U.N. Court

Arguing to a packed courtroom at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, South African lawyers cited the words of Israeli officials as evidence in their case. Israel has categorically denied the accusation.



Tal Becker, Israel's legal counselor of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the lawyer Malcolm Shaw; and Gilad Noam, deputy attorney general for international affairs at the court on Thursday. Credit...Remko De Waal/ANP, via Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

By [Roni Caryn Rabin](#), [Hiba Yazbek](#) and [Thomas Fuller](#)

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After three months besieging and bombarding the Gaza Strip in its war against Hamas, Israel faced a charge of genocide at the International Court of Justice on Thursday, as South Africa argued that Israel “means to create conditions of death” in Gaza, and demanded the court order an emergency suspension of the military campaign.

Presenting their case to a packed courtroom in The Hague, South African lawyers offered as evidence the words of Israeli officials, including Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, who [said](#) in October that Israel would impose a [complete siege](#) on the territory because it was fighting “human animals.”

Israel categorically denies the genocide accusation, and is set to present its defense on Friday, the second part of the two-day hearing in the United Nations' top judicial body. The hearings will be the first time that Israel has chosen to defend itself in person in such a setting, a sign of the high stakes of the moment, with Israel's international reputation falling around much of the world over its campaign's toll in Gaza.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel described the proceedings on Thursday as “an upside-down world,” in which his country faced such charges.

“Israel is accused of genocide at a time when it is fighting against genocide,” he said, referring to the war in Gaza, which began after Hamas and other armed groups carried out attacks on Oct. 7 that killed about 1,200 people and led to about 240 being taken hostage, according to Israeli officials.

Genocide is among the most serious crimes of which a country can be accused, and the allegation carries particular significance in Israel, founded after the slaughter of Jews in the Holocaust. While the South African government maintains that it is pursuing its case to stop a genocide, analysts say it

is also motivated by longstanding domestic support for the Palestinian cause dating to the presidency of Nelson Mandela, a fervent supporter of Palestinian rights.

To constitute genocide, there must be a proven intent on the part of perpetrators to physically destroy — in whole or in part — a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, [according to the U.N. genocide convention](#), to which Israel is a signatory. Intent is often the most difficult element to prove in such cases, however.

Decisions by the court are binding, but the court has few means of enforcement.

Israel's closest ally, the United States, has staunchly defended the country's campaign against Hamas, and Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken this week called South Africa's accusation "meritless" and "counterproductive."

But American and European officials have in recent weeks added pressure on Israel to scale back the scope of its military operations, and many nations in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America have sharply criticized Israel for the devastating toll of its campaign on Gazan civilians.

More than 23,000 Palestinians have been killed over the past three months in Gaza, a majority of them women and children, according to health officials in Gaza. The vast majority of the enclave's 2.2 million residents have been forced from their homes since the war began, increasing the danger of disease and [hunger](#), according to international organizations.

Image



Palestinian sympathizers rally in The Hague, on Thursday.Credit...Robin Utrecht/EPA, via Shutterstock

South Africa, which filed the case last month, argued that Israeli leaders and lawmakers had communicated in their statements the intent to commit genocide. Showing a video of Israeli troops dancing and singing that "there are no uninvolved citizens," a South African lawyer said that Israeli soldiers had understood "the inciting words" of their prime minister.

"There is an extraordinary feature in this case," the lawyer, Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, told the court, "that Israel's political leaders, military commanders and persons holding official positions, have systematically and, in explicit terms, declared their genocidal intent."

He argued that Israel's "genocidal intent" was "rooted in the belief that, in fact, the enemy is not just the military wing of Hamas or, indeed, Hamas generally, but is embedded in the fabric of Palestinian life in Gaza."

Although the court proceedings on the genocide allegations could take years, the court could rule on possible emergency measures in the coming weeks. As part of its request for an emergency provision to end the military campaign, South Africa asked the court to rescind evacuation orders and allow people in Gaza to receive food, water, shelter and clothing.

Israeli officials have argued that Hamas should face charges of genocide and other crimes, and that many of Israel's critics have insufficiently condemned the group. A spokesman for Israel's Foreign Ministry, Lior Haiat, called Thursday's proceedings "one of the greatest shows of hypocrisy in history," adding that Hamas "calls in its convention for the destruction of the state of Israel and the murder of Jews."



Members of the Israeli delegation during a news conference in The Hague on Thursday. Credit...Robin Utrecht/EPA, via Shutterstock

Mr. Haiat also said the genocide case brought by South Africa overlooked the atrocities committed by Hamas in its Oct. 7 terrorist attacks in southern Israel.

South Africa's justice minister, Ronald Lamola, condemned the atrocities committed by Hamas on Oct. 7 but said the scale of Israel's military response in Gaza was not justified. He told the court that the Israeli offensive had created conditions for Gazans that were designed "to bring about their physical destruction."

Mr. Ngcukaitobi, the South African lawyer, said the statements of Israeli officials like Mr. Gallant — who, after the Hamas attack, said that Israel would let "no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel" into Gaza — were tantamount to a directive to physically destroy Gazans and "communicated state policy."

"This admits of no ambiguity," Mr. Ngcukaitobi said. "It means to create conditions of death of the Palestinian people in Gaza, to die a slow death due to starvation and dehydration or to die quickly because of a bomb attack or sniper, but to die, nevertheless."

Israeli leaders have said that South Africa's allegations pervert the meaning of genocide and the purpose of the 1948 genocide convention. They point to millions of messages, sent by various means, telling Gaza's civilians to evacuate to safer areas ahead of bombings, and say they are constantly working to increase the amount of aid entering Gaza.

Image



South Africa's justice minister, Ronald Lamola, third from left, after the first day of the hearing. Credit...Remko De Waal/EPA, via Shutterstock

Hamas welcomed South Africa's decision to bring the case, saying in a statement on Thursday that it looked forward to "a decision that does justice to victims" and calls on Israel to "stop the aggression."

The court proceedings were also celebrated by Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where hundreds gathered in city squares, Palestinian news outlets showed. The foreign ministry of the Palestinian Authority, which partly oversees the territory, thanked South Africa in a statement and called the proceedings "a historic event in the process of the joint Palestinian and South African struggle in the face of injustice and genocide."

But in Gaza, many feared that the case would have little to no effect on their reality. "It's all nonsense — it's been over 90 days and we're just hearing words," said Abdul Qader Al-Atrash, a 32-year-old resident of Gaza.

"Nothing will change," he said. "The only thing on our minds right now is how will we get water for our family, where will we charge our phones and if we will have anything to eat tomorrow."

Reporting was contributed by Isabel Kershner, John Eligon, Ameera Harouda, Abu Bakr Bashir, Anushka Patil and Rawan Sheikh Ahmad.

12 January (The Economist)

[South Africa's support for the Palestinian cause has deep roots \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Struggling comrades

South Africa's support for the Palestinian cause has deep roots

But opportunism and politics also play a part



Ties bound in struggle image: afp

Jan 11th 2024 | JOHANNESBURG

Hypocrisy has, it would seem, no limits when it comes to South Africa's foreign policy. Exactly a week before the country was due to accuse Israel of genocide before the International Court of Justice (icj) on January 11th, President Cyril Ramaphosa played host to Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo, a Sudanese warlord whose Janjaweed militia and its successor are accused of genocide and war crimes in Darfur. Adding to the insult, Mr Dagalo, also known as Hemedti, later visited the genocide museum in Kigali, Rwanda.

Just as jarring was a ceremony on December 5th marking ten years since the death of Nelson Mandela, a man seen by the world as a symbol of reconciliation and peace. A Hamas delegation led by Bassem Naim, a senior official, joined Mandela's grandson, Mandla, in a march through the streets of Pretoria, the capital. At their destination—the statue of Madiba (as Mandela is honorifically known) that stands proudly outside the president's office—they laid a wreath with Lindiwe Zulu, the social-development minister.

As symbols of solidarity go, it does not get much stronger than that, and puts South Africa in the company of only a handful of countries that have diplomatic relations with Hamas, an outfit widely deemed to be terrorist. This designation holds little weight for the ruling African National Congress (anc), which was itself often called a terrorist organisation before orchestrating South Africa's largely peaceful transition to democracy. In Palestine's plight, the anc sees echoes of its own long fight for freedom.

Other symbols of solidarity with Palestine are visible all over South Africa. Motorway billboards proclaim "Genocide IsREAL". Street artists have painted murals in cities, including a Palestinian flag that covers an entire apartment block in Cape Town's historic Bo-Kaap district. Even homeless people begging at Johannesburg intersections have decorated their placards with #FreeGaza stickers.

A legacy of apartheid

The salience of the Palestinian cause in South Africa has deep roots. The anc developed an antipathy towards Israel during the years of apartheid, or white rule, when the Jewish state supplied weapons and technology to South Africa, which had been put under a un arms embargo. And Mandela saw in Yasser Arafat, the late leader of the Palestinians, a fellow "comrade in arms" who was also trying to win freedom for his people.

"South Africa and Palestine share a common history of struggle," the anc observed in its latest policy document, referring to links with the Palestine Liberation Organisation that go back decades. The document,

published in late 2022, described Israel as an “apartheid state” and called for South Africa to downgrade its diplomatic presence in Israel. Israel strongly objects to the apartheid analogy, which is in any case flawed: Arab-Israelis face discrimination, but they have full democratic rights. Even so, the denial of statehood to Palestinians in land Israel occupied in 1967 resonates.

“South Africa’s voice has been loudest, mainly due to the fact that our liberation history and struggle is most recent, and that the system of apartheid that Israel practises against the Palestinians is eerily similar,” says Suraya Dadoo, a South African writer and pro-Palestine activist.

Perhaps more puzzling was South Africa’s enthusiastic embrace of Hamas after it attacked Israel on October 7th, even as many Arab countries sought to distance themselves from the group. The government was slow to condemn Hamas’s atrocities, though it eventually did so, and was quick to speak out against Israel’s invasion of Gaza and the high civilian death toll.

In the immediate aftermath of the Hamas attack, even before the Israeli invasion began, the foreign minister, Naledi Pandor, had a call with Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of Hamas, ostensibly to discuss getting aid into Gaza. Hamas claimed that Ms Pandor had expressed solidarity with the group, though she denied this later. The call was followed by a whistle-stop visit to Tehran, where she discussed the issue with Ebrahim Raisi, Iran’s president.

At the same time relations between South Africa and Israel deteriorated sharply. In early November South Africa recalled all its diplomats from Tel Aviv. Later that month Parliament voted to suspend all diplomatic ties and shut down the Israeli embassy in Pretoria (the resolution has yet to be implemented, though Israel has now recalled its ambassador). At the end of December South Africa filed its suit against Israel at the icj.

All this is consistent with the anc’s policy positions, but there may be more to it than that. For Mr Ramaphosa’s beleaguered government, the war could not have come at a better time. Before Hamas’s attack, the president’s approval rating was at an all-time low of 40.7%, according to a survey of registered voters by the Social Research Foundation. Voters were fed up because the economy is stalling, the blackouts keep on rolling and there has been little visible action against corruption. In the general election later this year, the anc is expected to dip below 50% of the vote for the first time in a national election.

The war in Gaza is an opportunity to turn this around. “The anc is trying to elevate this into an election issue, to potentially try and distract from some of the core economic issues,” says Ronak Gopaldas, a director of a South African risk-analysis firm, Signal Risk. A new poll released in November shows a four-percentage-point increase in Mr Ramaphosa’s approval rate.

South Africa’s standing abroad has been equally poor, because of its muddled response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. While South Africa’s diplomats insisted it was trying to avoid a new cold war, Western countries were left aghast at South Africa’s failure to condemn the invasion, and viewed its subsequent offers to mediate the conflict with suspicion. Russia did not appear to be any happier with South Africa’s stance: it bombed Kyiv just as Mr Ramaphosa and a number of other African leaders arrived for well-publicised (albeit fruitless) negotiations with Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine’s president.

“South Africa is attempting to regain some of the moral high ground as a voice of the global south, which it lost with its positioning over the Russia-Ukraine crisis,” says Mr Gopaldas. Although South Africa’s case before the icj, which was due to begin as *The Economist* was going to press, has annoyed Israel’s Western allies, it has won the country kudos from emerging “middle” powers. Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey and the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation, among others, have joined the case.

12 January (Jerusalem Post)

[How miserably South Africa's arguments fail laws of war - analysis - Israel Politics - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](https://www.jpost.com)

How miserably South Africa's arguments fail laws of war - analysis

South Africa really only has two arguments to go on which have any remote legal significance - forget about having any chance to actually prove genocide.

By [YONAH JEREMY BOB](#)

JANUARY 11, 2024 19:22 Updated: JANUARY 11, 2024 22:04



Pro-Palestinian demonstrators protest on the day judges of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) hear a request for emergency measures to order Israel to stop its military actions in Gaza, in The Hague, Netherlands January 11, 2024.(photo credit: REUTERS/THILO SCHMUELGEN)

[South Africa](#) never really had a chance in its genocide claims against Israel if applying the laws of war, being that the entire “show” before the International Court of Justice is a political stunt designed to blacken Israel's name, using legal-sounding language to launder an anti-Israel agenda.

But many of the arguments that its lawyers made on Thursday were so specious that they removed any veil of seriousness that they might have held onto.

From the start, South Africa really had two arguments to go on that had any remote legal significance – and forget about having any chance to actually prove genocide.

They were that top [Israeli officials had made horrible statements](#) (many of them should not have been said and were very morally problematic even if legally insignificant) that could allegedly be used to infer genocidal intent, and that the IDF had allegedly killed 23,000 Palestinians, likely 60% to 70% of them being civilians.

If [South Africa had stuck to these arguments](#), any serious lawyer or judge still would have tossed them out of court because: None of the statements they have provided from public officials were official policy or legal statements; many were by officials without real influence over the war; those by key officials could easily be read in context as metaphorical; Israel has publicly produced vast amounts of evidence that it has expended enormous resources to avoid killing Palestinian civilians; and it acknowledged and explained errors, which happen in all wars, where errors have occurred.



Pro-Israel protest outside the Hague ahead of Israel's genocide hearing brought by South Africa, January 11, 2024 (credit: ARSEN OSTROVSKY)

But South Africa could not help itself. It went down a road of a series of arguments that exposed an anti-Israel world view, which has no connection to the laws of war, let alone the Genocide Convention, and further undermined the foundations of any case it might have tried to make.

It also ignored some critical threshold facts that anyone trying to prove a single war crime, let alone the even higher threshold for the penultimate war crime of systematic genocide, would need to confront.

South Africa's disconnected argument

Here is a list of some of the worst offenders:

South Africa did not mention Hamas's systematic use of the Palestinian civilian population and civilian locations, including schools, mosques, and UN buildings, as human shields.

The US and other European countries have condemned Hamas for doing this.

Even the International Criminal Court has made statements implicitly acknowledging that Hamas has done this, with its criticism sometimes being narrower about whether Israel has properly applied the proportionality test – something, even in the worst case, that is far away from genocide.

South Africa clung to prior arguments from the 2004 ICJ case against the legality of Israel's West Bank security barrier, saying Israel had no self-defense right because it was an occupier acting in Palestinian territory.

But this time, there was an "armed attack" by Hamas on October 7, invading 22 Israeli towns, killing 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians, and more than 3,000 rockets were fired against Israel's home front.

So putting aside the 2004 ruling that Israel rejected at the time, even according to the logic of the ICJ at the time, in 2023, there is no question that Israel had the right to counter-strike as part of self-defense.

South Africa claimed that Israel is settling Gaza, but it provided no evidence. Of course, it provided no evidence, because there is none. True, there are some ministers who are not part of the critical five-member war cabinet who dream about resettling Gaza, but the war cabinet, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, all official policy and legal positions, and the actual view in the field show that there has not been a single move to settle Jews in Gaza.

Israel has discussed the need for a limited security zone where only soldiers would stand guard. But that is not remotely the same, and even that is not something that has happened yet, and it would likely require widespread buy-in by the US and other Western countries.

In practically a twilight-zone moment, one South African lawyer said the IDF's warning to Palestinians in mid-October to evacuate northern Gaza within 24 hours was itself a war crime.

Warning civilians to evacuate is an obligation under the laws of war if one is planning to attack an area.

There is no provision in the laws of war that says more than a 24-hour warning is required, and there are an unlimited number of examples where less time is given as a warning.

This is without even mentioning that the IDF did not actually invade until a week and a half after its initial warning, and it later gave additional warnings and extensions that certainly went beyond the minimal obligations laid out by the laws of war.

In fact, the vast majority of northern Gaza's 1.4 million or more people successfully evacuated using times and zones provided by the IDF.

Were there mistakes here and there when Hamas engaged the IDF in an area where Palestinian civilians were evacuating, likely in order to try to lead the IDF into fighting with civilians' lives in the middle of a gunfight? Probably. But mistakes are not a war crime, and certainly not genocide, and a warning to evacuate is the opposite of genocide.

There are some interesting questions about whether it was legal for Israel not to provide water to the Palestinians in the early days of the war, after which Jerusalem did ensure the provision of water.

But these are complex questions since typically, the laws of war refer to allowing a third party to provide water to civilians, not an obligation of one party in hostilities to directly provide water to the other party in hostilities.

Certainly, no one could argue that Israel committed genocide from a short period of days of not directly providing water to Hamas right after the terrorist group had invaded Israel and killed 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians, when for the vast majority of the war, Israel has facilitated the provision of water.

Likewise, there were a few specific instances where South Africa said Israel had denied the entry of humanitarian assistance to specific hospitals, such as on January 8.

An IDF source said they were unfamiliar with the claims, but there have been instances where the IDF had to delay aid delivery to hospitals or other areas because of fighting in the area with Hamas.

This is not a violation of the laws of war, but rather a standard security precaution. The proof is the enormous number of times that Israel has facilitated aid deliveries.

Even if Israel has fouled up in some individual instances with aid deliveries, or its security procedures have sometimes been too time-consuming, these would likely constitute errors in a time of war, not war crimes, and certainly nothing near genocide.

More bizarrely, South Africa claimed that Israel had committed genocide because it did not provide fuel.

There is nothing about an obligation to provide fuel in the laws of war, and most serious international lawyers would recognize that it would be unthinkable to do so when Hamas would have used the fuel to continue firing hundreds of rockets per day on Israel's home front.

Underneath all of this was an opening statement attacking Israel for crimes against the Palestinians – not just since 1967, as some more honest, if misguided, critics go after Israel for, but dating back to 1948.

In other words, South Africa implicitly questioned Israel's right to exist as an independent Jewish state.

That position is probably the only way to make sense of South Africa's strange performance.

12 January (Haaretz)

[Israel Is Paying the Price for Its Bigmouths - Haaretz Editorial - Haaretz.com](#)

Israel Is Paying the Price for Its Bigmouths

[Haaretz Editorial](#)

Jan 12, 2024 12:31 am IST

Thursday's hearing at the International Court of Justice in The Hague on a petition by South Africa, which wants the court to rule that Israel intends to commit genocide in the Gaza Strip and issue an immediate injunction ordering it to stop the fighting, underscored the irresponsibility of Israel's elected officials.

[South Africa's lawyer](#) quoted countless pearls during the hearing that were uttered by people who are supposed to look out for Israelis and lead them responsibly during a difficult war, both militarily and diplomatically.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was quoted as having written in a letter to soldiers to "[remember what Amalek did to you](#)," referring to the Jews' enemy in the Bible, whom God commanded the Jews to utterly destroy. Defense Minister Yoav Gallant was quoted as having threatened that "there will be no electricity, food, water or fuel in Gaza. It will all be shut down, because Israel is fighting animals. You want hell, you'll get hell." Israel Katz, now the foreign minister but then the energy minister, also starred in the hearing for having demanded that Gaza's water supply be cut off because "that's what murderers of children deserve." And Minister Amichai Chikli, who thought dropping a nuclear bomb on Gaza was an option, was cited in the hearing for his statement that Israel "must find ways to cause suffering in Gaza."

But it wasn't just the [prattle from the right](#), which typically uses aggressive rhetoric, that served South Africa's case. President Isaac Herzog, who is supposed to act like a responsible adult, was also quoted as saying that "the rhetoric about civilians uninvolved in the fighting is incorrect. We'll fight until we defeat them." Not only that, but South Africa's lawyer noted that Herzog had signed a shell that was fired at Gaza.

When this is the situation among the country's top officials, what is there to say about the videos from the field of soldiers dancing and singing "Wipe out the seed of Amalek," or saying, "With God's help," Gaza City's Shujaiyeh neighborhood "will be the late Shujaiyeh" or "We've taken down 30 houses. Wonderful"?

The key lesson from Thursday's hearing was that words matter, and real damage – [legal, diplomatic and political](#) – can be caused by reckless, irresponsible statements.

But it seems unlikely that this wanton government, headed by a man devoid of responsibility, will draw the necessary conclusions. Consequently, we can only hope that Israel will make it clear – in Friday's hearing, but above all, through its actions on the ground – [what its intentions in Gaza](#) really are.

The above article is Haaretz's lead editorial, as published in the Hebrew and English newspapers in Israel.

12 January (Ahram)

[Egypt's Al-Azhar fully supports South Africa case against Israel - Foreign Affairs - Egypt - Ahram Online](#)

Egypt's Al-Azhar* fully supports South Africa case against Israel

[Ahram Online](#) , Thursday 11 Jan 2024

Egypt's Al-Azhar declared full support for South Africa's legal move to prosecute Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for its terrorist crimes against civilians in Gaza.



A picture taken from Rafah shows smoke billowing over Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip during Israeli bombardment on January 11, 2024, amid ongoing battles between Israel and Palestinian Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip. AFP

Al-Azhar affirmed in a statement on Thursday that South Africa's stance reflects the will of the free world and the living human conscience that rejects scenes of murder, destruction, innocent bloodshed, massacres, and atrocities committed by what it referred to as “the Zionist entity” against the innocent Palestinians.

The ICJ began [its two days of hearings on 11 January in The Hague](#) in response to an emergency request by South Africa in the form of an 84-page application accusing Israel of committing genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

South Africa argued that Israel committed these acts with “the intent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza.”

According to the statement, Al-Azhar expressed deep gratitude and appreciation for South Africa's legal committee to the ICJ, led by Counselor Ronald Lamola, the South African Minister of Justice.

“The committee's statements on Thursday before the court strongly express our sentiments and those of the free world in rejecting the horrific violations and monstrous crimes committed by the occupation against the isolated, innocent, and vulnerable people of Gaza,” the statement said.

Al-Azhar added that the statements of the South African legal team reaffirmed the clear and explicit violation of the Genocide Convention signed by the Zionist entity, thus demonstrating the entity's blatant and outright violation of the treaty's provisions and its founding principles.

Furthermore, Al-Azhar encouraged other countries to follow suit and expressed profound appreciation for all countries that supported South Africa's legal case.

“Al-Azhar calls on the world to mobilize efforts and participate in this crucial step. It urges nations to adopt strong and similar positions to halt the flow of innocent blood,” according to the statement.

The statement also emphasized the need to intensify international efforts and exert more pressure “on this rogue entity to compel it to cease its massacres and crimes in Gaza.”

*L'université al-Azhar (en [arabe](#) : الأزهر), souvent appelée par métonymie al-Azhar, est une institution [islamique sunnite](#) d'enseignement, connue internationalement et basée au [Caire](#). Elle dépend de l'[État égyptien](#) et comprend, entre autres, l'université al-Azhar (جامعة الأزهر), l'Académie d'études islamiques et la [mosquée Al-Azhar](#), dirigée par un érudit islamique, le cheikh al-Azhar.

12 January (Le Figaro)

[Hubert Védrine : «Nous n'avons plus la capacité d'imposer les valeurs occidentales» \(lefigaro.fr\)](#)

Hubert Védrine : «Nous n'avons plus la capacité d'imposer les valeurs occidentales»

Par [Alexandre Devecchio](#), pour Le Figaro Magazine

Publié hier à 12:00, mis à jour hier à 15:41



Hubert Védrine FRANCK FERVILLE pour le Figaro Magazine

ENTRETIEN - L'ancien ministre des Affaires étrangères a réuni ambassadeurs, historiens et journalistes de renom pour dresser des portraits de diplomates d'envergure qui, de Mazarin à Sergueï Lavrov, ont contribué à changer le monde.

Grands diplomates (Perrin), le dernier livre [d'Hubert Védrine](#), s'impose comme un ouvrage de référence sur les relations internationales. Avec des textes encadrés par de longues préface et postface .

LE FIGARO. – Comment vous est venue l'idée de ce livre sur les grands diplomates ?

Hubert VEDRINE. – C'est Benoît Yvert qui a eu l'idée d'un ouvrage collectif sur les grands diplomates et négociateurs du XVIIe siècle à aujourd'hui, et qui m'a proposé de « diriger » cet ensemble, de l'introduire et de le conclure. Nous avons établi une liste de grandes personnalités qui ont marqué l'histoire des relations internationales des quatre derniers siècles et l'avons étendue à quelques grands diplomates contemporains.

J'ai accepté ce projet par passion pour l'Histoire, celle qui nous nourrit et dont on peut débattre, alors que le [« devoir de mémoire »](#) est le reflet des émotions d'un moment. En revenant sur les vingt grandes figures passionnantes portraiturées dans l'ouvrage, on mesure ce qu'a été l'instable « équilibre européen » et combien le métier de diplomate a changé. Aujourd'hui, il y a en permanence des négociations, dans tous les domaines et dans toutes les configurations, et pourtant, la figure des « grands négociateurs » va sans doute disparaître, car les conditions d'exercice de la politique en général, de la diplomatie en particulier ont été radicalement bouleversées. Manque de temps, de maturation, de sang-froid, pression fébrile.

Cependant, la diplomatie reste un métier à part entière : il ne suffit pas d'être un spécialiste de [l'Intelligence artificielle](#) par exemple pour être un bon négociateur sur le sujet. Nous avons d'ailleurs hésité entre « grands diplomates » et « grands négociateurs », et parmi nos personnages, tous n'ont pas été ministre des affaires étrangères.

Ces dernières décennies, les mondialisateurs et les européistes ont combattu toute survivance de ce système, car ils considèrent que l'Europe doit supplanter les États-nations, responsables selon eux de tous les drames du XXe siècle

Quelles sont les caractéristiques de ce que vous appelez l'ère classique de la diplomatie, c'est-à-dire la période qui va de Mazarin jusqu'à Lavrov ?

Plutôt jusqu'au XXe siècle. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Kofi Annan et Serguei Lavrov viennent après. L'époque classique, aussi appelée l'âge « westphalien », se caractérise par des relations d'État à État, en Europe, un nombre très restreint de décideurs dans chaque pays, une opinion publique encore embryonnaire, même s'il existe par exemple, à la cour du roi de France, un parti de l'Autriche et un parti de l'Espagne. La transparence immédiate n'est pas encore exigée, ce qui laisse le temps aux diplomates de travailler. Enfin, le système westphalien vise à maintenir un équilibre entre 5 à 10 puissances, comprenant ou non la Russie (et ou non l'Empire ottoman), selon les époques.

Au congrès de Vienne – l'apogée, en 1815 – il y a seulement quatre puis cinq puissances. L'ère classique correspond à l'affirmation de l'État-nation. Pour [Kissinger](#), Richelieu est le premier à comprendre qu'il va succéder à la communauté internationale de l'époque, celle du pape ou de l'empereur. Ces dernières décennies, les mondialisateurs et les européistes ont combattu toute survivance de ce système, car ils considèrent que l'Europe doit supplanter les États-nations, responsables selon eux de tous les drames du XXe siècle. Ce qui se discute, car ce système a longtemps maintenu l'équilibre.

Si vous deviez prendre pour modèle une ou deux figures de votre livre, qui choisiriez-vous ?

Je n'ai aucun modèle. Ce livre est une tentative de pédagogie historique qui invite à ne pas se focaliser sur un système en particulier. Il ne s'agit pas non plus de se concentrer sur les Français, d'où la présence de Kaunitz, méconnu aujourd'hui, ou de Pitt, des grands diplomates d'autres puissances.

C'est l'ensemble de la mécanique qu'il faut connaître, même si dans certaines situations un personnage a pu être particulièrement brillant, par exemple Mazarin [lors des traités de Westphalie](#). Se nourrir de références est indispensable pour être un bon diplomate. Il faut bien connaître les biographies des grandes figures mais les contextes très différents rendent l'identification vaine.

La figure de Bismarck est mal connue en France où il jouit d'une mauvaise réputation alors qu'il a cependant mené une politique réaliste. Les choses tournent mal quand Guillaume II le congédie et cherche à obtenir la suprématie navale sur la Grande-Bretagne. Montebourg avait ainsi dit que Merkel se comportait comme Bismarck : j'avais répondu qu'elle ne méritait pas un tel hommage. Ce n'est pas le monstre antifrçais que l'on a souvent décrit.

Il y a aussi une légende noire autour de Talleyrand, qui est déconstruite dans votre livre...

[Elle vient du combat qui l'a opposé à Napoléon](#) – à l'origine de la fameuse formule « une merde dans un bas de soie » –, et des complots variés auxquels il a participé – ce qui a provoqué une condamnation moraliste du personnage. Selon Ballardur, Talleyrand aurait laissé la Prusse s'installer sur les bords du Rhin. C'est une interprétation exagérée. Il faut surtout retenir son coup de maître incontestable, celui d'avoir réussi à faire de la France vaincue un pays partenaire des grandes puissances.

Alors que la France ne compte plus, il retourne la coalition des quatre puissances qui veulent la mettre sous tutelle. Ce geste est encore [plus extraordinaire que celui de Gaulle en 1940](#), qui ne fait qu'anticiper, certes brillamment, l'entrée en guerre des États-Unis. Talleyrand voulait établir une monarchie constitutionnelle, développer le commerce et entretenir une bonne entente avec la Grande-Bretagne. Il a dû faire tout le contraire durant toute sa vie.

Quelles ont été les évolutions récentes [du métier de diplomate](#) ?

Plus que d'évolutions, un vrai bouleversement. Du fait de la mondialisation économique, de la communication, des sommets, des réseaux. Cela dit, il faut distinguer l'ambassadeur bilatéral, qui représente son pays, et le négociateur, qui est souvent, mais pas toujours, un diplomate de métier. Le négociateur doit avoir comme toujours une idée claire de ce qu'il veut obtenir, des concessions qu'il est prêt à faire – en fonction des directives reçues – de la réaction future de l'opinion. Savoir symétriquement ce que veut obtenir la partie adverse, et quelle est sa marge de manœuvre. Ce rôle de grand négociateur a longtemps été tenu par le ministre des Affaires étrangères ou quelques personnes seulement. Ce n'est plus aussi simple. J'en parle dans ma conclusion.

Or, le rôle des ministres des Affaires étrangères s'est amenuisé au fur et à mesure de l'injonction à la transparence et de la pression des opinions publiques. Le risque est que les leaders deviennent des followers. Lorsque j'étais à la tête du Quai d'Orsay, j'avais l'ambition que celui-ci soit la « tour de contrôle » des relations internationales du pays et j'avais établi pour cela un lien régulier avec les autres ministères. Nous avons intérêt à avoir un ministère des Affaires étrangères fort qui maintienne la cohérence entre les diverses négociations. Un organisme spécialisé à Matignon qui donne les instructions à la Représentation permanente auprès de l'Union européenne pour qu'au moins à ce niveau-là, la politique française soit claire.

Le Quai d'Orsay a de plus subi des coupes budgétaires exagérées. Réduire de 0,1 % son budget, cela signifie fermer des instituts français, arrêter des programmes de bourses, etc., avec des conséquences catastrophiques. Pour l'autorité et le rayonnement de la France à l'étranger, il faut se redonner les moyens matériels d'une politique d'influence, ce qui a été enfin décidé.

Lors de la mort de Kissinger le 29 novembre dernier, certains observateurs l'ont dépeint comme un impérialiste et un colonialiste...

Certains l'ont en effet combattu en raison des droits de l'homme. [Kissinger n'a jamais prétendu être un droit de l'homme](#) : il voulait défendre de façon réaliste les intérêts américains. D'autres critiques ne sont pas de même nature : elles jugent que, dans le cadre du réalisme kissingerien, Kissinger lui-même a fait des erreurs dommageables, par exemple l'extension de la guerre au Cambodge.

Si on a tout à fait le droit de critiquer son action et son bilan, ses analyses théoriques font cependant largement l'unanimité

Si on risque l'anachronisme en jugeant Kissinger selon des critères de droits de l'homme, voire wokistes qui sont propres à la France d'aujourd'hui, les critiques kissingeriennes contre Kissinger sont beaucoup plus intéressantes. Pourquoi avait-il approuvé la guerre en Irak en 2003 qui était une erreur monumentale ? Quant à sa politique chinoise, pourquoi maintenir des relations stratégiques avec une Chine de plus en plus hostile ?

Ce sont des questions que Kissinger considérerait lui-même, à la différence des critiques moralistes. D'autre part, si on a tout à fait le droit de critiquer son action et son bilan, ses analyses théoriques font cependant largement l'unanimité, son livre *Diplomatie* par exemple, publié en 1994.

Dans cette ère westphalienne des États-nations, les années 1990 après la chute de l'URSS sont-elles une parenthèse ?

En ce qui concerne les acteurs, trop nombreux aujourd'hui, l'époque n'est plus westphalienne. Ce qui aura été une parenthèse, c'est la croyance des Européens depuis les années 1990, dans un monde post-tragique et post-historique. Les démocraties sont devenues des régimes d'opinion gouvernés par des dirigeants qui courent dans tous les sens pour essayer de suivre les mouvements dominants.

C'est aussi ce qui explique la disparition des carrières et des figures de grands négociateurs, et de la narration, comme on dit aujourd'hui, qui les accompagnait. Le monde réel est bien différent de la perception du monde qu'ont eu certaines élites européennes depuis la « fin de l'Histoire » (!), mais la réalité les rattrape. La pensée kissingérienne est loin d'être obsolète. Les autres portraits dans le livre sont également très instructifs : Pitt, Kaunitz, Disraeli, Choiseul, Vergennes, sans oublier bien sûr ceux des XIXe et XXe siècles.

Quels sont les nouveaux rapports de force aujourd'hui ?

Premier front : entre ceux qui vont freiner, et ceux qui vont accélérer l'écologisation. Les COP vont devenir les sommets internationaux les plus importants, plus que l'Assemblée générale de l'ONU ou les G20. En deçà, le monde géopolitique est une foire d'empoigne, structuré durablement par le bras de fer États-Unis-Chine.

[En ce qui concerne l'Ukraine](#), Poutine a pris une décision qui est horrible pour les Ukrainiens mais également aberrante pour la Russie : il a marginalisé et fait reculer son pays pour longtemps. Ce sera plus difficile pour l'Europe que pour les États-Unis de repenser les relations avec le voisin russe, qui sera toujours là.

Ce qui s'est passé à Gaza est pour les Occidentaux une horreur totale, mais pour 1,5 milliard de musulmans, c'est « un acte de résistance » à l'occupation israélienne

Le concept de Sud global a-t-il un sens ?

Oui et non, mais cela ne sert à rien de contester cette rhétorique. Les Occidentaux et occidentalistes sont choqués par ce concept, car pour eux aucun hérétique ne devrait pouvoir contester la supériorité occidentale. Pourtant, ils n'ont plus le monopole de la puissance et beaucoup de pays du Sud affirment travailler pour un monde « post-occidental » – voyez les déclarations finales des sommets des Brics ou les prises de parole des Chinois. Et quarante pays, représentant les deux tiers du monde en termes démographiques, n'ont pas voulu prendre parti ou condamner l'attaque de Poutine en 2022.

Autre exemple : [ce qui s'est passé à Gaza est pour les Occidentaux une horreur totale](#), mais pour 1,5 milliard de musulmans, c'est « un acte de résistance » à l'occupation israélienne. Sans compter les nombreux pays asiatiques, indifférents. On le voit, nous n'avons plus la capacité d'imposer à tous les autres notre grille de lecture et nos « valeurs », même si les classes moyennes des pays du Sud veulent vivre « à l'occidentale ».

Depuis que Xi Jinping a changé de ton par rapport à l'époque Deng et a proclamé que son système était le meilleur, l'Occident a ricané, puis s'est déchaîné. Les Occidentaux sont ambigus vis-à-vis de la Chine

Ces pays du Sud vont-ils réussir à mettre en place un monde « post-occidental » ? L'Occident ne veut pas le croire du fait des divisions entre l'Inde et la Chine, de la crainte de la Russie de trop dépendre de son voisin chinois, etc. Cependant, s'acharner à démontrer que le Sud global n'existe pas révèle une forme de panique. Du calme ! Soyons pragmatiques et flegmatiques : prenons en note l'existence de cette rhétorique, sans nous y enfermer.

Depuis que [Xi Jinping](#) a changé de ton par rapport à l'époque Deng et a proclamé que son système était le meilleur, l'Occident a ricané, puis s'est déchaîné. Les Occidentaux sont ambigus vis-à-vis de la Chine : d'un côté ils craignent un pays de 1,4 milliard de personnes travaillant jour et nuit, dont l'économie et les progrès technologiques risquent de les dépasser ; de l'autre, dès qu'il y a un problème en Chine, l'Occident affirme que ce régime répressif va droit dans le mur. Gardons l'équilibre !

L'axe Moscou-Pékin-Téhéran dont on a parlé au moment du 7 octobre est-il une réalité ?

Il n'y a pas « d'axe » mais une conjonction d'intérêts pas forcément durable. Depuis longtemps, le Sud, et pas seulement les musulmans, affirmait qu'il y avait deux poids deux mesures dans l'affaire palestinienne. Israël a été condamné quinze fois par des cours internationales, mais rien ne s'est passé. Les dirigeants arabes et européens avaient cru pouvoir oublier la question palestinienne.

Il y a 1,5 milliard de musulmans dans le monde qui condamnent véhémentement la colonisation. Ils se taisaient tant qu'était menée [la courageuse politique de Rabin](#), alors qu'Israël était divisé entre ceux qui se résignaient à un État palestinien et ceux qui se sont résignés à ce qu'il n'y en ait jamais. Depuis une quinzaine d'années, ce sont les maximalistes du Grand Israël, Netanyahu et les colons de Cisjordanie, qui imposaient leur politique.

Dans ce monde de rapport de force, comment la France peut-elle encore peser ? Comment affronter la crise migratoire ?

La France garde plus de poids que ne le pensent les Français. La question migratoire se pose dans le monde entier. Elle ne relève pas de la morale mais de la gestion des nombres : s'il y avait 20 millions d'Africains, leur accueil ne poserait pas de problèmes ; mais il s'agit en fait de 1 ou 2 milliards de personnes... Après des batailles homériques, les Européens finiront par adopter la politique des sociaux-démocrates scandinaves.

Le complet retournement de leur politique a devancé l'Allemagne, l'Angleterre, et ce qui va se passer ailleurs. L'Europe est un niveau de décision important, mais cela ne dispense pas les États de leurs responsabilités. L'adoption du pacte asile et immigration, qui était en négociation depuis longtemps, constitue une étape importante vers une rigueur normale dans la gestion de flux migratoires, et de l'asile. L'asile devra être resserré aux gens en danger.

On voudrait croire que l'Europe est la réponse à tout, mais en l'occurrence il n'est pas écrit dans les traités que l'on doit décider de la politique étrangère au niveau européen

Peut-il y avoir une Europe puissance ?

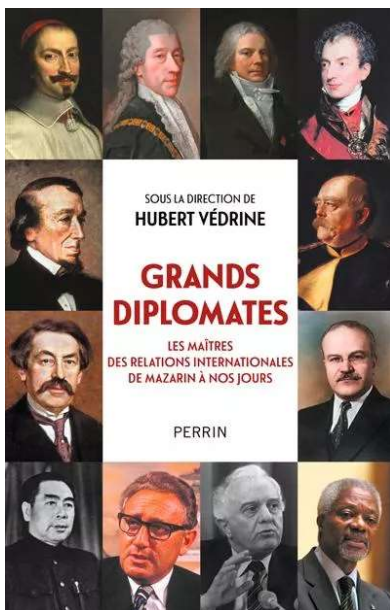
Les deux mots ne se combinent pas bien. On voudrait croire que l'Europe est la réponse à tout, mais en l'occurrence il n'est pas écrit dans les traités que l'on doit décider de la politique étrangère au niveau européen. Mme von der Leyen a affirmé que la Commission devait être « géopolitique » ; qu'est-ce à dire ? L'Europe n'a pas été créée pour devenir une entité géopolitique mais un marché et, après la guerre, ce sont les Européens eux-mêmes qui avaient demandé à être protégés par les États-Unis. Cela n'a pas beaucoup changé depuis. En matière de défense, il n'y a jamais de volonté de puissance « européenne », excepté en France, dont les propositions n'ont jamais été très soutenues. Mais en dehors de la défense, cela a commencé à changer.

Que pensez-vous de [l'entrée de l'Ukraine dans l'UE](#) ?

Impossible de ne pas leur promettre ; impossible à concrétiser avant longtemps, car il y a aussi plusieurs autres pays à la porte ! L'élargissement, presque inéluctable, va conduire à une Europe à 35, moins cohérente, moins capable de prendre des décisions. La vieille idée du noyau dur est impraticable : aucun pays ne voudra être dans l'écorce molle du noyau dur. Comme on ne peut pas ne pas élargir, les européistes plaideront pour élargir le vote à la majorité (l'Allemagne, qui ne peut pas être mise en minorité, y est favorable).

Les Français devraient se rappeler que les politiques auxquelles ils tiennent sont minoritaires. Faire une pause dans le processus serait nécessaire mais je doute que ce soit possible. L'idée à creuser (avancée par Jean-Louis Bourlanges) est celle d'une adhésion progressive, programme après programme. On ferait mieux de tirer le meilleur parti d'institutions, cadres et procédés européens existants, base possible d'un compromis élites-populations.

Méditer sur les mondes d'avant n'est pas inutile pour préparer le monde de demain.



«Grands Diplomates», sous la direction d'Hubert Védrine, Perrin, 416 p., 25 €. Editions Perrin

12 January (NYT)

[Opinion | Here's Why Taiwan's Elections Have Me Worried About the Future - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

GUEST ESSAY

Taiwan's Tightrope Has Become a Knife Edge

Jan. 12, 2024, 1:00 a.m. ET



Credit...An Rong Xu for The New York Times

By Syaru Shirley Lin

Dr. Lin, a Taiwan native and the author of “Taiwan’s China Dilemma,” wrote from Taipei.

My home, Taiwan, is a shining example of freedom, democracy and inclusivity. We have one of the world’s most open societies, the highest percentage of female legislators in Asia and a government minister who is transgender. Decades of hard work, smart policies and entrepreneurial mind-sets have led to enviably high standards of living and made us the global heart of the semiconductor industry.

When Taiwan votes in elections on Saturday, I will go to the polls with a real feeling of worry about our future and whether we can preserve and maintain what we’ve achieved.

Taiwan’s accomplishments were made possible in part by decades of stability between China and the United States. But that is rapidly fading away as the two global rivals descend into distrust and competition. Steps being taken by both sides in that deteriorating relationship are threatening Taiwan’s resilience, its ability to innovate and, importantly, the ability of our people to stay united amid this challenge. The real loser in the U.S.-China competition may end up being Taiwan.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for us to navigate between the two countries.

On one side there is China, just 81 miles away from Taiwan at the closest point, and an existential threat to us. China and Taiwan have been politically separated since the Chinese Civil War ended with a Communist victory in 1949 that sent the Kuomintang (K.M.T.) government, which once ruled all of China, fleeing to Taiwan. Like millions of Taiwanese, I grew up under the threat of a Chinese military invasion. In weekly drills during my school years, we practiced seeking shelter under our little wooden desks in case of an attack. That danger has only intensified as China’s military power has grown and President Xi Jinping, intent on unifying Taiwan with the mainland, has steered Beijing away from trying to win Taiwanese hearts and minds toward [economic coercion](#) and [military threats](#).

And yet we prospered, due in large part, ironically, to our close economic ties with China. After China began opening up its economy in the late 1970s, Taiwanese manufacturers rushed in to take advantage of the lower labor costs. China is both a threat to Taiwan and its most important trading partner.

On the other side is America. Despite having switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979, the United States remains an important economic partner and supplier of military arms to Taiwan. President Biden has repeatedly pledged that the United States would help defend Taiwan if China were to attack. But there are doubts in Taiwan about the U.S. commitment.

The U.S.-China competition for critical supplies of strategic technologies, particularly semiconductors, also has left Taiwan in the crossfire. The United States has [banned](#) the sale of certain high-tech products to China, which also affects some that are made in Taiwan, and has [pressured](#) Taiwanese chip manufacturers to invest in costly plant construction on U.S. soil to keep their products out of China's reach. These policies may help America, but they [reduce the competitiveness](#) of one of Taiwan's most important industries and its economy as a whole.

Taiwan, in essence, is stuck between two unreliable partners.

President Tsai Ing-wen won two terms in part for standing up for Taiwanese autonomy in the face of growing threats from China. But many voters now [feel](#) that she has aligned Taiwan too closely with the United States, at the risk of provoking China and putting Taiwan in the firing line. Competing to replace Ms. Tsai are her incumbent vice president, Lai Ching-te, also of her Democratic Progressive Party, or D.P.P., and Hou Yu-ih of the opposition K.M.T. Mr. Lai had a slight lead in the most recent [surveys](#).

The two parties have been arguing over how to deal with China for decades. The D.P.P. views Taiwan as effectively an independent country and brands itself as the party most committed to protecting the island's sovereignty against Chinese coercion. The K.M.T. argues that positive relations with Beijing are the way to ensure our peace and prosperity. But growing fatigue with the two parties, especially among [younger voters](#), and worsening division over Taiwan's future, has allowed the Taiwan People's Party candidate Ko Wen-je to pose a serious third-party challenge with calls for change.

Despite the concerns of potential conflict between the United States and China, this election, which also includes Taiwan's legislature, may hinge on how to address the kinds of [serious domestic problems](#) that afflict many high-income countries, and which the D.P.P. is blamed for failing to effectively address in the past eight years. Voters are worried about [soaring housing prices](#), [lagging wage growth](#), our [energy future](#) and the need for policies to help deal with challenges like a [rapidly aging population](#) and [slowing population growth](#). Solving problems like these will require consensus, but that may prove difficult to achieve as the latest trends indicate that no party will command a decisive mandate.

All of these problems mean that Taiwan can ill afford becoming further weakened by the contest between China and the United States.

Taiwan's next president will need to be able to work with both Beijing and Washington, diversify our economy and build stronger international trade links, all while maintaining stability in our vital economic relations with China. But it's far from certain whether the individuals we will choose will be able to successfully navigate our complex position. Taiwan's long diplomatic isolation has left it without a deep bench of political leaders experienced in international issues. The presidential hopefuls are all current or former city mayors, with [little foreign policy expertise](#).

External threats can unite a country or weaken it. In Taiwan, there already are deep divisions, not only over how to deal with China and the United States, but on domestic problems. These are being exacerbated by rampant social media disinformation believed to [originate](#) from China and intended to undermine public confidence in our democratic institutions. Taiwan is fracturing at a time when unity is most needed.

This Saturday, and going forward, whether or not Taiwan's people can come together and face these issues effectively may decide whether its admirable achievements persist, or fade away.

Syaru Shirley Lin ([@syaru](#)) is the founder and chair of the Taipei-based Center for Asia-Pacific Resilience and Innovation and the author of "Taiwan's China Dilemma."

12 January (The Economist)

[An influx of Chinese cars is terrifying the West \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

The Chinese EV onslaught

An influx of Chinese cars is terrifying the West

But it should keep its markets open to cheap, clean vehicles



image: justin metz

Jan 11th 2024

Is China about to unleash another wave of deindustrialisation on the rich world? About 1m American manufacturing workers lost their jobs to Chinese competition in 1997-2011, as the country integrated into the global trading system and began shipping cheap goods overseas. This “China shock” has since been blamed for everything from rising deaths among working-class Americans to the election of Donald Trump. The rejection of liberal attitudes to trade also explains why politicians embrace industrial policy today. Now China’s carmakers are enjoying an astonishing rise. That stokes fears of another ruinous shock. In fact, the successes of Chinese cars should be celebrated, not feared.

Just five years ago China shipped only a quarter as many cars as Japan, then the world’s biggest exporter. This week the Chinese industry claimed to have [exported over 5m cars](#) in 2023, exceeding the Japanese total. China’s biggest carmaker, byd, sold 0.5m electric vehicles (evs) in the fourth quarter, leaving Tesla in the dust. Chinese evs are so snazzy, whizzy and—most important—cheap that the constraint on their export today is the scarcity of vessels for shipping them. As the world decarbonises, demand will rise further. By 2030 China could double its share of the global market, to a third, ending the dominance of the West’s national champions, especially in Europe.

This time it will be even easier for politicians to pin the blame for any Western job losses on Chinese foul play. A frosty geopolitical climate will feed the sentiment that subsidised production unfairly puts Western workers on the scrapheap. And there have certainly been subsidies. Since the launch of its “Made in China” agenda in 2014, China has brazenly disregarded global trading rules, showering handouts on its carmakers. It is hard to be precise about the value of the underpriced loans, equity injections, purchase subsidies and government contracts Chinese firms enjoy. But by one estimate, total public spending on the industry was in the region of a third of ev sales at the end of the 2010s. These subsidies come on top of the ransacking of technology from joint ventures with Western carmakers and Western and South Korean battery-makers.

The temptation will therefore be for rich-world policymakers to shield their carmakers from the onslaught of [state-backed competition](#). In October the European Commission opened an investigation into Chinese cars. President Joe Biden is said to be considering increasing tariffs on them, even though America’s carmakers, protected by a 27.5% levy and handouts from the Inflation Reduction Act, currently face little Chinese competition. Yet locking out Chinese cars would be a mistake. The potential gains to the West from a ready

supply of cheap, green vehicles are simply enormous—and dwarf the cost of disruption and the dangers it brings.

One reason is that the market for cars is going to be upended, regardless of trade with China. In 2022, 16-18% of new cars sold around the world were electric; in 2035 the eu will ban the sale of new cars with internal-combustion engines. Though firms are retaining their workers as they switch to making evs, the process is less labour-intensive. Much as the first China shock was responsible for less than a fifth of total manufacturing job losses occurring at the time—many of which were attributable to welcome technological advances—so too there is a danger of confusing disruption caused by the shift to evs with that caused by Chinese production of them.

Next consider the gains from letting trade flow. Vehicles are among people's biggest purchases, accounting for about 7% of American consumption. Cheaper cars mean more money to spend on other things, at a time when real wages have been squeezed by inflation. And Chinese cars are not only cheap; they are better-quality, particularly with respect to the smart features in evs that are made possible by internet connectivity. Nor does the existence of a carmaking industry determine a country's economic growth. Denmark has among the world's highest living standards without a carmaker to speak of. Even as cars roll off Chinese assembly lines, the economy is spluttering—in part because it has been so distorted by subsidies and state control.

Last, consider the benefits to the environment. Politicians around the world are realising just what a tall order it is to ask consumers to go green, as a backlash against costly emissions-reductions policies builds. evs, too, are currently more expensive than gas-guzzling cars (even if their running costs are lower). Embracing Chinese cars with lower prices could therefore ease the transition to net-zero emissions. The cheapest ev sold in China by byd costs around \$12,000, compared with \$39,000 for the cheapest Tesla in America.

What about the risks? The threat to industry from cheap imports is usually overblown. The lesson from the rise of Japanese and South Korean carmakers in the 1980s is that competition spurs local firms to shift up a gear, while the entrants eventually move production closer to consumers. Already, byd is opening a factory in Hungary and many Chinese carmakers are scouting for sites in North America. Meanwhile the likes of Ford and Volkswagen are racing to catch Chinese firms. Last year Toyota said a breakthrough in its “solid state” technology would let it slash the weight and cost of its batteries.

Another worry is national security. Depending entirely on China for batteries, whose importance to electrified economies will go far beyond cars, would be risky. It is also possible that evs, which are filled with chips, sensors and cameras could be used for surveillance. (China has banned even locally made Teslas from some government properties.) But so long as presidents and spooks can travel in vehicles made in the West or by its allies, there is little reason to fear consumers sporting Chinese wheels; they can adjudicate personal-privacy concerns themselves and locally made cars will be easier to inspect.

Policymakers should therefore curb their protectionist instincts and worry only in the unlikely event that Western carmakers implode altogether. A hefty market share for Chinese carmakers that invigorates wider competition, however, is not to be feared. If China wants to spend taxpayers' money subsidising global consumers and speeding up the energy transition, the best response is to welcome it.

11 January (Le Monde)

https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2024/01/11/energies-renouvelables-la-dependance-du-reste-du-monde-a-la-chine-est-totale_6210214_3234.html

Energies renouvelables : « La dépendance du reste du monde à la Chine est totale »

[Chronique](#) de [Philippe Escande](#)

Les capacités de production globales en la matière ont augmenté de 50 % par rapport à 2022. Une forte croissance qui s'explique par l'action des pouvoirs publics et le faible coût des installations, notamment dans la filière photovoltaïque, laquelle est dominée par l'empire du Milieu, observe Philippe Escande, journaliste économique au « Monde ».

Publié hier à 10h38 Temps de Lecture 1 min. [Read in English](#)



Un site de production d'énergie solaire en construction à Zhangye, dans la province du Gansu, au nord-ouest de la Chine, le 19 septembre 2023. STR / AFP

Anecdotes au début des années 2000, les énergies renouvelables entrent enfin dans l'histoire. Un peu agacée que certains politiques n'aient pas compris cette transformation majeure du monde, la patronne d'Engie, Catherine MacGregor, rappelle une réalité indéniable : en 2023, la moitié de l'électricité produite en Allemagne provenait des énergies renouvelables. C'est le cas de plus de 60 % de l'électricité au Portugal et plus de 40 % au Royaume-Uni. Le monde entier se convertit massivement à l'éolien et surtout au solaire.

Le dernier rapport de l'Agence internationale de l'énergie (AIE), publié ce jeudi 11 janvier, raconte cette accélération formidable. Les capacités de renouvelables ont progressé de 50 % sur la seule année 2023 à 510 gigawatts (GW). Les trois quarts de cette augmentation proviennent du solaire. A ce train-là, d'ici un an la production d'électricité d'origine renouvelable dépassera celle produite par le charbon. Les capacités devraient doubler en Europe, aux Etats-Unis, au Brésil et en Inde dans les cinq ans qui viennent.

Les politiques publiques jouent un rôle essentiel. [La dernière conférence des Etats, la COP28, a fixé, en novembre 2023, un objectif de triplement des capacités mondiales à l'horizon 2030](#). Mais l'explication est aussi économique. Le prix des panneaux solaires a chuté de 50 % en 2023 par rapport à 2022, selon l'AIE. L'éolien terrestre et le solaire photovoltaïque sont aujourd'hui moins chers que les nouvelles centrales à combustibles fossiles dans la plupart des pays. Et bien souvent, moins chers que les centrales existantes.

Dépendance du reste du monde

Mais il y a deux éléphants dans la pièce. Le premier est la Chine. Ce pays est de loin celui qui installe le plus de renouvelables sur son territoire. Mais il est aussi le fournisseur du monde. Il contrôle 80 % de la filière photovoltaïque. C'est grâce à lui et ses usines géantes que les prix s'effondrent. La dépendance du reste du

monde est totale. Il est devenu indispensable à la réalisation des objectifs 2030. Fermer ses frontières à la Chine, c'est renoncer à ses ambitions climatiques.

L'autre éléphant est l'engagement du Sud global, de l'Afrique à l'Asie, dans cette transition. Aucune chance de remplir les objectifs sans eux. Il faudra les financer à un moment où les bourses se serrent et les frontières se ferment. Ce sujet-là, non plus, n'est pas anecdotique.

12 January (The Guardian)

[The need for speed: why China and India are fast-tracking their own Top Gun remakes | Film | The Guardian](#)

The need for speed: why China and India are fast-tracking their own Top Gun remakes

State of the art tech, exciting action sequences, swaggering young heroes ... it's no surprise that the world's new superpowers have fallen for blockbuster air force films. But can they be anything more than military propaganda?



Hrithik Roshan as Squadron Leader Shamsheer 'Patty' Pathania in the Indian film Fighter. Photograph: Viacom18 Studios

[Phil Hoad](#)

Fri 12 Jan 2024 09.00 CET

In an era of rising global tension, there are a few status symbols the self-respecting global superpower can't do without. Nuclear weapons? Sure. A space programme? Natch. But the latest geopolitical must-have is superficially more niche: a supersonic, hyper-nationalistic blockbuster air force film. There wasn't a soul on the planet who failed to notice the media sonic boom as Tom Cruise passed overhead with [Top Gun: Maverick](#) in May 2022, while its Chinese counterpart [Born to Fly](#) came out a year later. And this month India gets in on the game with its own flyboy extravaganza Fighter, starring Hrithik Roshan, whose quiff alone qualifies as some kind of national monument.

In the surest sign of its geopolitical decline, Russia has yet to make one. But China and India are on the up, propelled by rulers with autocratic bents who want the full soft-power furnishings. The US went through a similar jingoistic spurt in the 1980s, wallpapered by a set of militaristic movie hits: the original [Top Gun](#), the second and third Rambo films, Commando, Red Dawn and more. China has been flexing its cinematic muscles for a decade now, with actioners such as the Wolf Warrior franchise and Operation Red Sea, not to mention a raft of historic films with patriotic overtones. Narendra Modi's India has been less able to manhandle its film industry into line, with sporadic bellicose output like the Pakistan-cuffing Baaghi 2 and Uri: The Surgical Strike. But Fighter, released for the country's 75th Republic Day and featuring Roshan emerging from a chopper with a billowing Tiraᅅgā, as the Indian tricolour is known, in tow, suggest pressure may be mounting.

The air force flick remains the ne plus ultra of military film-making; pure cinematic surface, those gleaming Ray-Bans and pristine contrails breezily aestheticising the modern superpower's elite capability. It's not hard to see why China and India want a Top Gun: at the same time as being 1986's top-grossing film and launching Cruise as an American icon, the movie also functioned as soft-power projection of hard power, and recruiting advert for the US military to boot. Shot by ad man Tony Scott with the swaggering back-lit glamour of a sportscast, it made warfare look like a blast. Intentionally so: the script was approved by the Department of Defense, in return for access to the military equipment and locations without which the film couldn't have been made. A single F-14 fighter, the plane flown by Maverick, was worth \$38m – more than twice the film's entire budget. Top Gun is – to put it straight – propaganda.



Soft power ... Top Gun: Maverick. Photograph: Paramount Pictures/AP

With *Born to Fly*, China found that pulling the same stunt isn't so easy. Focusing, like *Top Gun*, on a group of trainee pilots, the mission objective is chiding the unspecified foreign powers displaying a lamentably casual attitude to Chinese airspace, such as the two interlopers who declare, with American accents, in the intro: "We can come and go whenever we want." It is also there to put the country's J-20 stealth fighter in the shop window. Director Liu Xiaoshi was a company man, having made films for the Aviation Industry Corporation of China for 15 years. But it seems that in the wake of *Top Gun: Maverick's* mammoth \$1.5bn run (none of which was earned in China, where the film was never cleared for release), Beijing got cold feet about engaging with the enemy. *Born to Fly* was pulled from release in 2022, just prior to the country's National Day on 1 October, supposedly in order to overhaul its sub-par special effects. The film belatedly came out last year to earn \$117.3m; peanuts compared to the *Wolf Warriors'* huge grosses.

But the real inferiority is in the cockpit, with the film's human element. Compared to *Top Gun's* Maverick, with his inverted, middle-finger diplomacy, its protagonist Lei Yu (played by boy band singer Wang Yibo) is hopelessly bland. *Top Gun* operated under a form of opt-in censorship, with Hollywood trading script approval for kit; Chinese directors are subject to the compulsory kind, with every script vetted. And in *Born to Fly*, it shows in the neutered portrayal. There's no question of fraternisation between soldiers on any level, let alone the kind of blazing gay subtext leapt on by Quentin Tarantino. Job thrills in the Chinese air force apparently consist of occasional dumpling nights with your superiors, a strange obsession with the intricacies of parachute-folding, and the masochistic ethos – with an emphasis on suffering for the collective good – that features in all Chinese state-sponsored military films.



High flier ... boy band singer Wang Yibo in *Born to Fly*. Photograph: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy

Hopefully, *Fighter* will be more fun and at least bring in some Bollywood bombast. Unsurprisingly, it has been produced in co-operation with the Indian armed forces, filming partly at the air force academy in the southern Indian city of Dundigal. So it probably won't be some hard-hitting exposé of military inculcation methods, with Roshan not quite having the superstar immunity that has allowed the actor Shah Rukh Khan to make statements in his films that cut across the grain of pro-Hindi nationalism. The title of his recent patriotic covert-forces hit, *Pathaan*, is the Hindi word for the Afghan Pashto ethnic group, which provides his character's origin story; a pluralistic twist on the *Jai Hind* blockbuster.

Fighter, like its gung-ho 1980s American models, may lack this kind of subversive intent. But that doesn't mean it won't employ any guile whatsoever – if it has learned its lessons well. This is the great tactical advantage of the US soft-power model: wrapping propaganda in fluent entertainment. However proselytising Top Gun may be, it is simultaneously massive fun, sweating out attitude and sexual tension – at two ends of the spectrum, apparently – from every pore. And the franchise is emotionally adept too: the sequel manages to turn the “talking points” apparently stipulated by the military into a resonant contemporary story about waning US influence, via our nostalgia for the cocksure Maverick.



Dog fighting ... a scene from Fighter. Photograph: Viacom18 Studios

Both films have a studied neutrality, taking place largely in training academies, and their vaguely outlined climactic confrontations happening in international waters and an unnamed Middle Eastern country respectively. Hollywood stays a safe distance from real-world precision, all the better to maximise its global box office appeal. But propagandist intent is behind all these careful script decisions, the guiding hand of hard power at the heart of Hollywood coordinated by one nondescript military liaison office on Wilshire Boulevard.

Call it stealth propaganda: when audiences swallow the politics – or at least object less to them – because they are cloaked. China and India can feel the need for speed all they like, but they won't be packing the same box-office firepower unless they learn to go in under the radar.

Fighter is released in cinemas from 25 January.

January 10, 2024

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10 January (Le Figaro)

[L'éditorial du Figaro - «Gabriel Attal à Matignon : réarmement politique» \(lefigaro.fr\)](#)

L'éditorial du Figaro - «Gabriel Attal à Matignon : réarmement politique»

Par [Vincent Trémolet de Villers](#)

Publié hier à 12:37, mis à jour hier à 13:12

Vincent Trémolet de Villers. Le Figaro

L'erreur pour Gabriel Attal serait de céder au «en même temps» qu'il a refusé lors de son passage éclair à l'Éducation Nationale.

C'était le choix le plus audacieux. Au regard du jeu médiatique et politique le seul véritable chambardement. Tout dans cette décision est culotté : l'âge du premier ministre (34 ans), la rapidité de son passage rue de Grenelle (moins de six mois), la mécanique de l'ambition qui fait déjà de Gabriel Attal l'héritier naturel du chef de l'État. Ce 9 janvier 2024, n'est pas seulement la date d'un [changement de premier ministre](#) mais aussi le lancement officiel de la campagne de 2027, le premier jour de l'après-Macron.

C'est aussi un ajustement du pouvoir aux volontés de l'opinion. [Le phénomène Attal](#) enclenché par l'interdiction de l'Abaya, entretenu par la lutte contre le harcèlement et la remise en cause du collège unique, c'est la ligne claire : cohérence dans les décisions, efficacité dans l'exécution. Un discours d'autorité contre l'islamisme, un retour aux principes fondateurs de l'école : lire, écrire, compter. Cinq mois c'est assez pour faire des promesses, prendre des décisions courageuses: c'est court pour faire un bilan. Mais la dynamique montrée par le jeune ministre est la bonne : son succès fulgurant dans les sondages en témoigne. Succès fragile pourtant : l'opinion est une bête imprévisible, surtout quand elle est pleine d'espérance. C'est la chance et le grand danger pour le nouveau premier ministre : redescendre des sommets de la popularité pour s'embourber dans la gadoue des arbitrages, des équilibres, des hésitations, ce surplace, vain et bavard, que l'on appelle pudiquement le «en même temps».

L'erreur pour Gabriel Attal serait de renoncer à ce qui a fait son fulgurant succès. Plus populaire à droite que les ministres qui en viennent, cet ancien socialiste ne doit pas, comme le fait son mentor, jouer une mi-temps dans chaque camp. Au souci de l'autorité, de la transmission, du travail qu'il a montré rue de Grenelle, il va devoir ajouter l'obsession de la sécurité du quotidien, la maîtrise des frontières et celle des comptes publics, le retour aussi d'une fierté collective. C'est un chantier herculéen qui se présente à lui. Aujourd'hui, le nouveau premier ministre a le visage souriant du succès mais c'est sur le fond qu'il sera très vite jugé.

10 January (Le Monde)

Gabriel Attal à Matignon, la promotion spectaculaire d'un fidèle du chef de l'Etat

Le ministre de l'éducation nationale, l'un des plus populaires du gouvernement, a été propulsé, mardi, à Matignon. Ancien socialiste, il avait rejoint Emmanuel Macron dès 2016. A 34 ans, il devient le plus jeune premier ministre de la V^e République.

Par [Solemn de Royer](#)

Publié hier à 12h36, modifié à 05h22



Gabriel Attal, alors ministre de l'éducation et de la jeunesse, et Emmanuel Macron, au lycée Gambetta à Arras, le 13 octobre 2023. LUDOVIC MARIN / AP

D'un record historique à l'autre. Elu président de la République en 2017, à moins de 40 ans, Emmanuel Macron vient de nommer le plus jeune premier ministre de la Ve République, [pour remplacer Elisabeth Borne](#) et tenter de redynamiser un quinquennat enkysté. Agé de 34 ans, Gabriel Attal, qui arrive mardi 9 janvier à Matignon, détrône ainsi Laurent Fabius qui, nommé à 37 ans à cette fonction, par François Mitterrand, a longtemps pu se targuer de cette spécificité. Il est aussi le premier à n'avoir pas fait mystère de son homosexualité. Le 5 novembre 2023, il s'était confié dans « Sept à huit » sur TF1 en racontant avoir dit à son père : « Papa, je suis tombé amoureux d'un garçon. »

Au cours des dernières semaines, alors qu'un changement de premier ministre était évoqué à l'Elysée, personne ne croyait vraiment à ce scénario, tant [Gabriel Attal, nommé en juillet 2023 au ministère de l'éducation nationale](#) pour tenter de rassurer un secteur abîmé et en crise, semblait neuf – et indispensable – rue de Grenelle, où il avait commencé à faire ses preuves, en quelques mois à peine.

Finalement, pour la première fois depuis 2017, Emmanuel Macron est sorti de son habituel schéma, en choisissant un profil politique pour Matignon, où il a nommé des hauts fonctionnaires, fins connaisseurs de l'Etat, mais ensuite relégués au rang de simples collaborateurs, destinés à ne jamais lui faire de l'ombre.

Porter le « réarmement civique »

En propulsant Gabriel Attal rue de Varenne, le président de la République, affaibli par sa majorité relative, fait l'aveu implicite qu'il a besoin de la popularité du ministre de l'éducation – l'un des rares visages identifiés de la « génération Macron » – pour redonner du souffle à son mandat. Et porter ce « réarmement civique » [annoncé lors de ses vœux télévisés](#), le soir du 31 décembre 2023. Une promotion spectaculaire pour « le jeune Gabriel » à qui l'ancien premier ministre Jean Castex, dont il est proche, cherchait – à l'occasion du remaniement de juillet 2020 – un « os à ronger », censé calmer la folle impatience de son cadet.

Depuis son entrée au gouvernement, à l'automne 2018, à 29 ans, comme secrétaire d'Etat auprès du ministre de l'éducation nationale et de la jeunesse Jean-Michel Blanquer – plus jeune membre d'un gouvernement sous la

Ve République –, le député Renaissance des Hauts-de-Seine a fait un parcours sans fautes : porte-parole du gouvernement, ministre du budget, avant d'arriver au ministère de l'éducation nationale, où ses premiers pas ont été plébiscités par les Français. Juste avant sa nomination, à l'été 2023, ses proches le mettaient pourtant en garde contre l'exigence d'un poste risqué, dans lequel il est si facile de s'abîmer : « Ne fais pas cette folie, ça va être la fin de ta carrière politique ! »

Le risque, réel, était pourtant savamment calculé. Gabriel Attal savait que l'éducation était une priorité du président, ce qui lui garantissait des moyens. Et aussi – surtout – une garantie de visibilité, ce ministère étant « proche du quotidien des Français ».

Une vraie popularité

En moins de six mois, il s'y est forgé une vraie popularité, équivalente, dans les baromètres, à celle de l'ancien premier ministre Edouard Philippe, devançant tous ses collègues du gouvernement, où il fait des jaloux depuis longtemps : Clément Beaune (transports), issu de la gauche, qui se rêve maire de Paris et voit d'un mauvais œil les prétentions de son rival dans la capitale ; ou encore l'ambitieux Gérald Darmanin (intérieur), issu de la droite, qui reconnaît en grimaçant le talent de Gabriel Attal et sait qu'il le trouvera un jour ou l'autre en travers de son chemin.

Ancien militant au Mouvement des jeunes socialistes et conseiller de la ministre de la santé Marisol Touraine, pendant le quinquennat de François Hollande, Gabriel Attal vient de la gauche et du courant strauss-kahnien. Mais avec l'interdiction de l'abaya et l'expérimentation de l'uniforme à l'école, en promettant d'« élever le niveau » et en tenant un discours d'autorité, il séduit à droite. Lundi soir, sur BFM-TV, le sarkozyste Brice Hortefeux reconnaissait ainsi volontiers qu'il était très apprécié au sein du parti Les Républicains (LR) : « C'est un homme qui vient de la gauche, mais il est vrai que ses paroles étaient fortes et ses actes espérés. »

Persuadé que les mouvements sociaux précèdent toujours les mouvements politiques, Gabriel Attal a, en outre, fait des classes moyennes son cœur de cible. Présenté alors qu'il était au budget, son « plan anti-fraude sociale », signal envoyé à ces « Français qui travaillent et ne supportent plus de financer un modèle permettant à d'autres de ne pas travailler », avait également plu à la droite, avec laquelle il va devoir s'entendre au Parlement s'il veut continuer à réformer. Depuis qu'il est ministre, il multiplie d'ailleurs les cafés avec des députés et des sénateurs LR, et entretient d'excellentes relations avec certains ténors de droite, comme le maire de Meaux (Seine-et-Marne), Jean-François Copé.

Contrairement à Edouard Philippe ou Gérald Darmanin, persuadés qu'en 2027 se reformera le clivage droite-gauche, Gabriel Attal croit à l'inverse que l'espace central, ouvert par Macron, survivra à ce dernier et il entend le préempter. En le nommant à Matignon, le président montre qu'il croit toujours au dépassement qui a fait sa force il y a six ans.

Un redoutable communicant

Redoutable communicant, Gabriel Attal est obsédé par son image, resserrant son nœud de cravate ou refermant d'un geste nerveux le bouton de son veston dès qu'il doit s'exprimer en public, comme s'il redoutait d'être pris en défaut de quelque manière que ce soit.

Ses rivaux le décrivent comme vide et mécanique, sans état d'âme. « Je suis sans tabou », avance l'intéressé, préférant le pragmatisme – selon lui, gage d'efficacité – aux grands principes. Aux régionales de 2021, il plaidait pour « réinventer » le front républicain contre le Rassemblement national, s'opposant à d'autres – issus comme lui de la gauche –, tels l'ancien ministre de l'intérieur Christophe Castaner, pour qui ce principe intangible ne devait jamais être contourné.

S'il a voté, à la présidentielle de 2007, pour la candidate socialiste Ségolène Royal, Gabriel Attal a admiré secrètement la campagne de Nicolas Sarkozy qui le « fascine » et avec lequel il a déjeuné, pour la première fois, à la rentrée scolaire 2023. « Parmi les politiques, il y a ceux qui sentent le pays et les autres », confiait-il au Monde, à l'été 2023. Le nouveau premier ministre est conscient aussi du déficit d'âme qui continue de hanter la Macronie : « Il faut parler davantage au cœur », répète celui qui se revendique à la fois de Jean-Pierre

Chevènement et de Jack Lang ; le premier pour l'affirmation de la geste républicaine, le second pour son élégance, son savoir-faire et son faire savoir.

Elevé dans les beaux quartiers de Paris, Gabriel Attal est un ancien élève de la prestigieuse Ecole alsacienne, fréquentée par les familles privilégiées de Saint-Germain-des-Près. Sa mère, Marie de Couriss, issue d'une famille de Russes blancs d'Odessa, a élevé ses enfants dans la religion orthodoxe. Son père, Yves Attal, issu d'une famille juive tunisienne, était producteur de cinéma (Talons aiguilles, de Pedro Almodovar, en 1991, Beauté volée, de Bernardo Bertolucci, en 1996), avant de disparaître brutalement en 2015, à 66 ans.

Depuis son entrée au gouvernement, Gabriel Attal ne se sépare pas du bureau de son père, qu'il déménage de ministère en ministère. Tout comme il est accompagné par le même entourage politique, dont ses « quatre fantastiques » ou « power rangers », le quarteron formé par la directrice du cabinet, Fanny Anor, les chefs de cabinet, Maxime Cordier et Antoine Lesieur, et le conseiller en communication, Louis Jublin, qui devraient logiquement le suivre à Matignon.

En août 2023, dans l'avion qui le ramenait à Paris après un déplacement à La Réunion, Gabriel Attal, ministre de l'éducation depuis un mois, confiait son enthousiasme : « Tous les soirs, je me dis : "C'est extra ce qui t'arrive !" » Tout en étant conscient des dangers liés à la fulgurance. « Les gens sont hyper sympas, ajoutait-il alors qu'un passager de l'avion venait de lui réclamer un selfie. Quand ils viennent vous voir, comme ça, c'est tentant de s'imaginer un destin, de se mettre à y croire... Mais il faut faire la part des choses entre le soutien politique et le simple "vu à la télé". Il ne faut pas se laisser griser. » Sans doute va-t-il devoir répéter souvent ce mantra dans les prochains mois.

10 January (The Guardian)

[Gabriel Attal's real challenge will be to break French parliament's political deadlock | France | The Guardian](#)

Gabriel Attal's real challenge will be to break French parliament's political deadlock

[Angelique Chrisafis](#) in Paris

The new PM was chosen to boost Emmanuel Macron's agenda but, as his predecessor found out, pushing through legislation won't be easy

Tue 9 Jan 2024 19.12 CET



Newly appointed French PM, Gabriel Attal, during the handover ceremony in Paris. Photograph: Stéphanie Lecocq/Reuters

As [Gabriel Attal](#), France's new prime minister, hastily made his first trip to the northern Pas-de-Calais to assess [flood damage](#) and reassure struggling residents and local politicians on Tuesday, it symbolised the challenges that await him.

A popular former government spokesperson and master political communicator, Attal was chosen to boost government by the centrist [Emmanuel Macron](#) who is approaching the two-year mark of his difficult second term with dipping approval ratings and facing voters' growing distrust of politics in general.

But the task is difficult for the man who has become modern France's [youngest-ever prime minister](#). His first job is to appoint a new government this week according to Macron's wishes – defining whether it will lean firmly to the right or, balance with some figures from the left. Attal is expected to continue Macron's second-term agenda, which has drifted to the right as the president seeks to appeal to conservative voters in an attempt to counter the growing popularity of Marine Le Pen's far right.



Attal will be expected to continue Emmanuel Macron's shift to the right in an effort to appeal to conservative voters. Photograph: Ludovic Marin/AP

The new government must also reflect gender balance, with women in senior government roles. He takes over as prime minister from [Élisabeth Borne](#), who is only the second woman to have held the job, and whose parting shot as she was reluctantly made to leave by Macron was to warn that much remained to be done on equality.

Attal's real challenge will come when he sets out his political project in parliament in the coming days. He has promised to prioritise business, young people, improving work remuneration and education. But he is expected to face the same difficulties passing legislation in parliament that plagued his predecessor. Since Macron's centrists [lost their absolute majority](#) in parliament elections in 2022, the risk of deadlock has hung over the prime minister. Borne, who survived 30 motions of no confidence, was forced more than 20 times to use a special constitutional measure to push through legislation without a parliament vote.

When Macron's unpopular [raise in the pension age](#) was pushed through without a vote last year, it provoked street demonstrations. More recently a [hardline immigration law](#) was passed that incorporated many ideas of the right and was deemed an "ideological victory" by Le Pen's party. Constitutional experts will decide in the coming weeks whether some of the measures are anti-constitutional.

The controversy over the immigration law is not yet over. This month, Attal will inherit a promised new bill on emergency health access for undocumented foreigners, which critics on the left said could pander to the right. It is not clear what Attal's personal position is on this issue. He will also have to steward long-awaited legislation on changes to palliative care, including possible moves toward a form of [assisted dying](#).



Attal with outgoing prime minister Élisabeth Borne, who survived 30 motions of no confidence. Photograph: Ludovic Marin/AP

The ultimate challenge for Attal in coming months is to try to limit the gains of the far right in June's European elections. The staunchly pro-European Macron built his political persona on promising to restore French people's trust in the EU and faith in the European project. But Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration National Rally party, which is already the biggest single opposition party in the French parliament, is now [polling](#) significantly ahead of Macron's centrists for the European parliament elections.

The June vote will be seen as a kind of midterm test for Macron's ability to hold back the far right. Jordan Bardella, 28, the president of Le Pen's party, who has had several heated TV debates with Attal, is leading the National Rally's European campaign and, like Attal, has recently increased in popularity in polls.

One of the key reasons Attal was chosen by Macron was that he is among France's best-liked politicians – a calm and skilled communicator who has gained public support by speaking openly about his life, including his experience of being bullied as a teen. But if Attal recently ranked third in the [list of politicians](#) whom French people would like to have a beer with (Marine Le Pen came ahead of him in second place), his challenge now lies in working behind the scenes. He must bring back together Macron's split and divided centrist grouping – which fell out over the recent immigration law. At the same time, he must appeal to law makers on the right to pass legislation.

Benjamin Lucas, a Green MP, said Attal's appointment was a "change of casting" but ultimately, "everything is decided" in Macron's Élysée office.

10 January (NYT)

[Gabriel Attal Is France's Youngest and First Openly Gay Prime Minister - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com)

France Gets Its Youngest and First Openly Gay Prime Minister

Gabriel Attal, 34, replaces Élisabeth Borne in a cabinet shuffle that President Emmanuel Macron hopes can reinvigorate a term marked by drift and division.



France's newly appointed prime minister, Gabriel Attal, arrives for the handover ceremony with the outgoing prime minister, Elisabeth Borne, at the Hotel Matignon in Paris today. Credit...Pool photo by Ludovic Marin

By [Roger Cohen](#)

Reporting from Paris

Jan. 9, 2024

In a typically bold bid to revitalize his second term, President Emmanuel Macron named Gabriel Attal, 34, as his new prime minister, replacing [Élisabeth Borne](#), 62, who made no secret of the fact that she was unhappy to be forced out.

Mr. Attal, who was previously education minister and has occupied several government positions since Mr. Macron was elected in 2017, becomes France's youngest and first openly gay prime minister. A recent [Ipsos-Le Point opinion poll](#) suggested he is France's most popular politician, albeit with an approval rating of just 40 percent.

Mr. Macron, whose second term has been marked by protracted conflict over [a pensions bill](#) raising the legal retirement age to 64 from 62 and by [a restrictive immigration bill](#) that pleased the right, made clear that he saw in Mr. Attal a leader in his own disruptive image.

“I know that I can count on your energy and your commitment to push through the project of civic rearmament and regeneration that I have announced,” Mr. Macron said in [a message addressed to Mr. Attal on X](#), formerly Twitter. “In loyalty to the spirit of 2017: transcendence and boldness.”

Mr. Macron was 39 when he sundered the French political system that year to become the youngest president in French history. Mr. Attal, a loyal ally of the president since he joined Mr. Macron's campaign in 2016, will be 38 by the time of the next presidential election in April, 2027, and would likely become a presidential candidate if his tenure in office is successful.

This prospect holds no attraction for an ambitious older French political guard, including Bruno Le Maire, the finance minister, and Gérald Darmanin, the interior minister, whose presidential ambitions are no secret. But for Mr. Macron, who is term-limited, it would place a protégé in the succession mix.

“My aim will be to keep control of our destiny and unleash our French potential,” Mr. Attal said after his appointment.

Standing in the bitter cold at a ceremony alongside Ms. Borne, in the courtyard of the Prime Minister's residence, Mr. Attal said that his youth — and Mr. Macron's — symbolized “boldness and movement.” But he also acknowledged that many in France were skeptical of their representatives.

Alain Duhamel, a prominent French author and political commentator, described Mr. Attal as “a true instinctive political talent and the most popular figure in an unpopular government.” But, he said, an enormous challenge would test Mr. Attal because “Macron's second term has lacked clarity and been a time of drift, apart from two unpopular reforms.”



President Emmanuel Macron reviewing troops in Paris last week. A reshuffle, he hopes, will invigorate his government. Credit...Ludovic Marin/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

If France is by no means in crisis — its economy has proved relatively resilient despite inflationary pressures and foreign investment is pouring in — it has appeared at times to be in a not uncharacteristic funk, paralyzed politically, sharply divided and governable with an intermittent recourse to a constitutional tool that enables the passing of bills in the lower house without a vote.

Mr. Macron, not known for his patience, had grown weary of this sense of deadlock. He decided to force Ms. Borne out after 19 months although she had labored with great diligence in the trenches of his pension and immigration reforms. Reproach of her dogged performance was rare but she had none of the razzmatazz to which the president is susceptible.

“You have informed me of your desire to change prime minister,” Ms. Borne wrote in her letter of resignation, before noting how passionate she had been about her mission. Her unhappiness was clear.

In a word, Mr. Macron had fired Ms. Borne, as is the prerogative of any president of the Fifth Republic, and had done so on social media in a way that, as Sophie Coignard wrote in the weekly magazine *Le Point*, “singularly lacked elegance.”

But with elections to the European Parliament and the Paris Olympics looming this summer, Mr. Macron, whose own approval rating has sunk to 27 percent, wanted a change of governmental image.

“It's a generational jolt and a clever communications coup,” said Philippe Labro, an author and political observer.

Mr. Attal has shown the kind of forcefulness and top-down authority Mr. Macron likes during his six months as education minister. He started last summer by declaring that “the abaya can no longer be worn in schools.”

His order, which applies to public middle and high schools, banished [the loosefitting full-length robe](#) worn by some Muslim students and ignited another storm over French identity. In line with the French commitment to “laïcité,” or roughly secularism, “You should not be able to distinguish or identify the students' religion by looking at them,” Mr. Attal said.

The measure provoked protests among France's large Muslim minority, who generally see no reason that young Muslim women should be told how to dress. But the French center-right and extreme right approved, and so did Mr. Macron.



Élisabeth Borne, the departing prime minister, delivering a speech during the handover ceremony in Paris on Tuesday. Credit... Pool photo by Emmanuel Dunand

In a measure that will go into effect in 2025, Mr. Attal also imposed more severe academic conditions on entry into high schools as a sign of his determination to reinstate discipline.

For these and other reasons, Mr. Attal is disliked on the left. Mathilde Panot, the leader of the parliamentary group of extreme left representatives from the France Unbowed party and part of the largest opposition group in the National Assembly, reacted to his appointment by describing Mr. Attal as “Mr. Macron Junior, a man who has specialized in arrogance and disdain.”

The comment amounted to a portent of the difficulties Mr. Attal is likely to face in the 577-seat Assembly, where Mr. Macron’s Renaissance Party and its allies do not hold an absolute majority. The change of prime minister has altered little or nothing for Mr. Macron in the difficult arithmetic of governing. His centrist coalition holds 250 seats.

Still, Mr. Attal may be a more appealing figure than Ms. Borne to the center-right, on which Mr. Macron depended to pass the immigration bill. Like Mr. Macron, the new prime minister comes from the ranks of the Socialist Party, but has journeyed rightward since. Mr. Attal is also a very adaptable politician, in the image of the president.

The specter that keeps Mr. Macron awake at night is that his presidency will end with the election of Marine Le Pen, the far right leader whose popularity has steadily risen. She dismissed the appointment of Mr. Attal as “a puerile ballet of ambition and egos.” Still, the new prime minister’s performance in giving France a sense of direction and purpose will weigh on her chances of election.

Mr. Macron wants a more competitive, dynamic French state, but any new package of reforms that further cuts back the country’s elaborate state-funded social protection in order to curtail the budget deficit is likely to face overwhelming opposition. This will be just one of the many dilemmas facing the president’s chosen wunderkind.

[Roger Cohen](#) is the Paris bureau chief for The Times, covering France and beyond, including Ukraine, Russia, India, the Central African Republic and Israel.

He has been a journalist for more than four decades.

10 January (The Economist)

[The president appoints modern France's youngest prime minister \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Meet a mini-Macron

The president appoints modern France's youngest prime minister

Can the 34-year-old Gabriel Attal revive Emmanuel Macron's fortunes?



image: getty images

Jan 9th 2024

A constitutional perk enjoyed by all modern French presidents is the right to dump his prime minister when in need of a fresh start. So Emmanuel Macron's decision on January 8th to eject Elisabeth Borne, after little over 18 months in the job, was abrupt but not very surprising. Far more so was her replacement: Gabriel Attal, the 34-year-old education minister. Mr Attal will become modern France's youngest prime minister.

The decision, announced on January 9th, is an attempt by Mr Macron to reset his troubled second term. Mr Attal is a daring rather than a safe choice, and one that carries its own risks. The education minister is younger than Mr Macron was when he first won election to the presidency in 2017, at the age of 39. Even Laurent Fabius, the youngest modern French prime minister to date, was 37 when nominated. It marks a distinct rejuvenation of French politics. Jordan Bardella, who is leading [Marine Le Pen's hard-right National Rally](#) at elections to the European Parliament in June, is 28. Mr Macron and Mr Attal have a combined age lower than that of America's Joe Biden.

Youth in Mr Attal's case does not mean inexperience, but this has been crammed into a short and rapid ascent. Mr Attal was also briefly budget minister under Bruno Le Maire, the finance minister, and was a government spokesman when his telegenic ease in public debates first made him a household name. In 2022 he was re-elected as a deputy in the Paris region. Mr Attal also happens to be openly gay, having made this public in 2018.

Politically, Mr Attal is a sort of mini-Macron, and was one of the first supporters of Mr Macron's original political party, En Marche, in 2016. Like Mr Macron, who was a former minister in a Socialist government, Mr Attal hails from the moderate social-democratic left. He served as an adviser to the health minister under François Hollande, then the Socialist president. Also like Mr Macron in his early days, Mr Attal combines this with an appeal to the political right. In his short spell as education minister Mr Attal won praise on the right for banning in schools the wearing of the abaya, a long flowing Muslim robe, under French secular rules.

Above all, Mr Attal brings a degree of popularity that Mr Macron's current team is sorely lacking. A poll in December made Mr Attal the most popular French politician, with a rating of 40%, 13 points above that for Mr Macron, and ahead of both Ms Le Pen (37%) and Mr Bardella (36%). The president will be hoping that this will inject some enthusiasm ahead of [the European elections](#), and help to reduce the crushing poll lead currently held by National Rally.

The trouble for Mr Macron, however, is that no amount of youthful energy and public charm will change the underlying problem: how to continue to reform France, and take difficult decisions while running a minority government. Mr Macron wants to push ahead with further labour-market reforms, in order to boost employment. Mr Le Maire promises to curb public spending. Neither policy will be popular. Nor will Mr Attal's nomination render the right-wing opposition Republicans, or any other party, any more willing to work with him in a formal coalition. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of the left-wing opposition party Unsubmissive France, denounced the appointment. "Attal returns to his position as spokesman. The office of prime minister disappears. The presidential monarch governs alone with his court."

Faced with unruly opposition parties on the left and right, the diligent and technocratic Ms Borne did what she could. After a difficult year in 2023, marked by street protests, a week of summer riots and parliamentary chaos over an immigration bill, Mr Macron is keen to turn the page. He is taking a gamble with Mr Attal, not least because he may well steal the president's limelight.

If the new prime minister gets it right he could, possibly, use the job as a stepping stone to try to succeed his boss, who is constitutionally barred from running for a third term in 2027. But Mr Attal's nomination will irk other potential successors from the broad centre. And under the fifth republic only two former prime ministers, Georges Pompidou and Jacques Chirac, have gone on to win the presidency—neither of them immediately after holding the top government job.

10 January (Le Monde)

https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2024/01/09/proche-orient-les-etats-unis-au-risque-de-l-impuissance_6209843_3232.html

Proche-Orient : les Etats-Unis au risque de l'impuissance

Éditorial

La visite dans la région du chef de la diplomatie américaine, Antony Blinken, illustre l'inquiétude de Washington face à la violence de la riposte israélienne et à l'absence de perspective politique de sortie du conflit.

Publié hier à 11h00

La quatrième [visite au Proche-Orient en trois mois du secrétaire d'Etat américain](#), Antony Blinken, traduit une inquiétude. Et pour cause. Si Washington avait fait le calcul que son soutien sans guère de réserve à la riposte de l'Etat hébreu après les massacres de civils israéliens perpétrés le 7 octobre par le Hamas lui permettrait de peser sur le « jour d'après », ce pari semble très loin d'être gagné. Cela ne laisse pas d'inquiéter, compte tenu de la nature du gouvernement actuel d'Israël.

Tout d'abord parce que le scénario envisagé par le président Joe Biden, une guerre brutale mais limitée dans le temps, suivie de la restauration d'un ordre politique palestinien à Gaza pour permettre sa reconstruction, ne cesse de s'éloigner. Ces étapes sont pourtant un préalable indispensable à une éventuelle relance de la solution dite « des deux Etats » évoquée par Washington.

Les plans encore très vagues esquissés par les autorités israéliennes tracent une perspective qui est celle, en fait, d'un contrôle israélien renforcé sur l'étroite bande de terre, mais aussi de la mutation de la riposte en cours vers une forme de plus basse intensité mais permanente, et surtout dépourvue des règles qui étaient en cours lorsque le Hamas était considéré, de facto, comme un interlocuteur.

Cette vision israélienne est difficilement compatible avec le retour d'une vie « normale », s'agissant d'un territoire sous blocus depuis plus de quinze ans, pour les centaines de milliers de Palestiniens plongés dans un dénuement extrême par le carnage à huis clos auquel a été livrée Gaza. Ces plans, qui se rapprochent d'une forme de réoccupation qui ne dirait pas son nom, ne sont pas non plus de nature à permettre l'aide financière internationale cruciale pour panser les plaies innombrables de ce territoire à vif.

Le risque de « métastases » régionales

Cette perspective particulièrement sombre s'accompagne en outre d'un travail d'influence de la part de l'extrême droite au sein de l'actuel gouvernement israélien. Elle s'efforce ainsi insidieusement de banaliser le concept de « transfert » de Palestiniens hors de Gaza, puis de Cisjordanie, autrement dit de nouveaux nettoyages ethniques.

Les pistes volontaristes esquissées par le président des Etats-Unis à propos de la lancinante question palestinienne sont d'autant moins d'actualité que le conflit toujours en cours peut à chaque instant « métastaser » au niveau régional, selon les propres termes du secrétaire d'Etat. Sa visite a d'ailleurs été marquée par [l'assassinat par Israël d'un haut responsable de la milice du Hezbollah libanais](#), pourtant soucieux jusqu'à présent d'éviter une escalade.

La perpétuation sous une forme ou une autre de l'état de guerre à Gaza permet de fait au premier ministre israélien, Benjamin Nétanyahou, de repousser l'heure des comptes pour les fiascos du 7 octobre et de conserver la majorité la plus à droite de l'histoire d'Israël à la Knesset.

Benjamin Nétanyahou sait aussi que, plus le temps va passer, plus l'administration démocrate en place sera absorbée par une campagne présidentielle délicate, alors qu'un retour à la Maison Blanche de Donald Trump, compte tenu de l'unilatéralisme pro-israélien qui a marqué son mandat, éliminerait définitivement la perspective d'une solution politique. Elle est pourtant la seule susceptible de garantir la sécurité à long terme de deux peuples pour l'instant aveuglés par d'inextinguibles désirs de vengeance.

10 January (Haaretz)

[Israel Must Safeguard Journalists in Gaza - Haaretz Editorial - Haaretz.com](#)

Editorial |

Israel Must Safeguard Journalists in Gaza



Mourners attend the funeral of Palestinian journalist Mohammed Abu Hattab, who was killed in an Israeli strike, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, November 3, 2023. Credit: MOHAMMED SALEM/ REUTERS

Jan 10, 2024 12:17 am IST

The journalist Wael Dahdouh was in the middle of reporting a story in Gaza City on October 25 when he learned that his wife, son, daughter and toddler grandson had been killed in an Israeli attack on a refugee camp near Rafah. Al-Jazeera's Gaza bureau chief, Dahdouh returned to work two days later and became a symbol. On Sunday this week, he lost a third child when his son Hamza Dahdouh – also a journalist – was killed in southern Gaza while traveling in a car with other journalists. Two of them were killed, three survived.

Israel likes to portray every [Gazan journalist](#) as a Hamasnik, or at least as supporters of terror. The rest of the world sees them as journalists who are endangering their lives and working in [impossible conditions](#). Many of them are young people who make use of their many followers on social media to tell the world what is happening in Gaza. Due to the blockade, the foreign press had difficulty dispatching reporters to the enclave even before the war broke out.

Since October 7, at least [79 journalists have been killed](#) in the fighting in Gaza and south Lebanon. Of those, 72 were Palestinians killed in Gaza by Israel and four of them Israelis who were killed by Hamas the day of the October 7 massacre. Three others were killed by Israel in Lebanon.

According to the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#), the organization that compiles the figures, already at the end of December the number of journalists killed in Operation Swords of Iron was a record relative to the length of the fighting. In fact, the toll in Gaza is higher than the number killed in any one country over an entire year, at least since the organization began keeping records in 1992.

The Israel Defense Forces repeatedly denies targeting journalists or regarding them as legitimate targets. It says it does everything in its ability to prevent harm to the innocent. But when the number of dead in Gaza continues to climb and is today more than 23,000, most of them women and children and non-combatant men, the idea that journalists are protected by the IDF seems ridiculous. Last May, the Committee to Protect Journalists published a report saying the IDF had killed 20 journalists since 2001. No soldier has ever been prosecuted in connection with these killings; in only one case was a criminal investigation opened.

In the Israeli media, the killing of civilians and journalists during a live broadcast elicits no concern, nor is it ready to criticize the harm to freedom of the press in the Gaza Strip. One can only hope that Israeli journalists also understand that their Gazan colleagues will not stop doing their work, and that there is no point in hoping that what is happening in Gaza will never be reported. They would do well to speak out against the killing of their colleagues.

The above article is Haaretz's lead editorial, as published in the Hebrew and English newspapers in Israel.

10 January (Times of Israel)

[Saudi envoy says kingdom 'absolutely' still open to normalization deal with Israel | The Times of Israel](#)

Saudi envoy says kingdom ‘absolutely’ still open to normalization deal with Israel

But Prince Khalid bin Bandar, Riyadh’s ambassador to UK, tells BBC ties can only be formed if a Palestinian state is established, after Blinken says ‘clear interest’ remains

By [AMY SPIRO](#) 9 January 2024, 7:53 pm [10](#)



Saudi Ambassador to the UK Khalid bin Bandar bin Sultan al-Saud walks in the Houses of Parliament in London on December 19, 2019. (Adrian DENNIS / POOL / AFP)

Saudi Arabia is still interested in pursuing a normalization deal with Israel after its war against Hamas in Gaza ends, an envoy from the Gulf nation said Tuesday.

Prince Khalid bin Bandar, the Saudi ambassador to the UK, told the BBC in a [radio interview](#) that Riyadh is still open to establishing ties with the Jewish state as long as it is part of an overall two-state solution.

“Absolutely there’s interest, there’s been interest since 1982 and before,” Bandar said of reaching a deal with Israel. “We’ve been at this for a long time, and willing to accept Israel for a long time, it’s a reality that’s there that we have to live with. But we can’t live with Israel without a Palestinian state.”

Bandar said that pre-October 7, “the discussions had been going on for quite some time. I’m not at liberty to go into the details of what was discussed, but it was close, there was no question.” He said that for Riyadh, “the final endpoint definitely included nothing less than an independent state of Palestine. And while we still — going forward, even after October 7 — believe in normalization, it does not come at the cost of the Palestinian people.”

Israel and Saudi Arabia were widely believed to be close to inking a historic normalization deal just before the Hamas onslaught of October 7, in which thousands of members of the terror group stormed across the border and murdered some 1,200 people in Israel, taking another approximately 240 hostage.

In response, Israel launched an extensive war against Hamas in Gaza, in which more than 22,000 people in the Strip have died so far, according to unverified figures from the Hamas-run Gaza health ministry, which do not differentiate between civilians and terrorists.

The IDF says it has killed more than 8,500 Hamas operatives in Gaza, in addition to some 1,000 terrorists inside Israel on October 7. More than 180 IDF soldiers have been killed in the ground operation.

The growing death toll in the now three-month-old war has brought Israel heavy criticism from even some of its closest allies, as the international call for a ceasefire has grown, while Israeli leaders continue to insist they will not stop fighting until Hamas is wiped out from the Strip.

Asked if Hamas can be a part of a future Palestinian state, Bandar largely deflected, saying that “there’s always room for change if you have optimism and hope, but when there’s a conflict, the first thing you have to recognize is that both sides have lost. And when both sides lose, both sides are then willing to compromise. And if there’s no compromise there’s no solution.”

He criticized the “extreme absolutist perspective” he said has long characterized the conflict, and added that in post-war Gaza, the Palestinian Authority must play a role — something the Israeli government has rejected — but “almost certainly it will require international involvement” to stabilize the Strip, “and without question you can’t do it without the Israelis accepting it, so the big stopping point to this is Israel, not everyone else.”

Bandar’s comments came just a day after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the Saudi oasis town of Al Ula, where both figures appeared to indicate that normalization talks were still possible.



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in a tent in the Saudi oasis town of Al Ula, on January 8, 2024. (Saudi Press Agency)

“There’s a clear interest in the region in pursuing that, but it will require that the conflict end in Gaza and it will also clearly require that there be a practical pathway to a Palestinian state,” Blinken told reporters on Monday before he departed the kingdom for Israel.

The Saudi crown prince, the kingdom’s de facto ruler, stressed the importance of stopping the hostilities in Gaza and forming a path for peace, Saudi state news agency SPA reported. It said the crown prince underscored the need to restore stability and to ensure the Palestinian people gain their legitimate rights.

According to a Hebrew media report on Tuesday, the US is floating the Arab Peace Initiative that Saudi Arabia sponsored more than 20 years ago as a possible framework to end the war against Hamas in Gaza.

The unsourced Channel 12 report said that the Biden administration is now bringing up the initiative with Israel, arguing that such an agreement would be in the interest of the US, Israel and the rest of the region.

The 2002 initiative offers Israel normalized ties with the entire Arab world once it reaches a two-state solution to its conflict with the Palestinians.

Blinken is currently in Israel on his third leg of a Mideast tour aimed at heading off a wider conflagration in the region as fighting with Hezbollah on Israel’s northern border intensifies.

In his meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday, Blinken “stressed the importance of avoiding further civilian harm and protecting civilian infrastructure in Gaza,” according to the State Department.

Reuters and Times of Israel staff contributed to this report.

10 January (The Guardian)

[Adopting rightwing policies ‘does not help centre-left win votes’](#) | Politics | The Guardian

Adopting rightwing policies ‘does not help centre-left win votes’

Study of European electoral data suggests social democratic parties alienate supporters by moving towards the political centre

[Jon Henley](#) Europe correspondent

Wed 10 Jan 2024 06.00 CET



Ed Miliband was the leader of the UK Labour party when it lost its 2015 election campaign, which had focused on fiscal responsibility. ‘[When] voters really care about fiscal policy, they’ll go for the “issue owner” – in this instance, the Conservatives,’ said Björn Bremer of the Central European University. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

Adopting rightwing policies on issues such as immigration and the economy does not help centre-left parties win votes, according to new analysis of European electoral and polling data.

Faced with a [20-year decline in their vote share](#), accompanied by rising support for the right, far right and sometimes the far left, social democratic parties across Europe have increasingly sought salvation by moving towards the political centre.

However the analysis, published on Wednesday, shows that centre-left parties promising, for example, to be tough on immigration or unrelenting on public spending are both unlikely to attract potential voters on the right, and risk alienating existing progressive supporters.

“Voters tend to prefer the original to the copy,” said Tarik Abou-Chadi, an associate professor of European politics at the University of Oxford and the co-founder of the [Progressive Politics Research Network \(PPRNet\)](#), which launched on Wednesday.

Abou-Chadi said the team of political scientists, from universities including Barcelona, Lausanne, Vienna, Zurich and Berlin, was not “aiming to advise or act as political consultants” but to present “careful, empirical, data-based” research.

“We’re looking to provide a more solid, accurate foundation for an open political debate about progressive politics, who votes for progressive parties and why, and the strategies available to them,” he said. “That involves a bit of myth-busting.”

One of the most significant misperceptions the team’s work had revealed, he said, concerned the nature of support for centre-left parties in Europe. “Social structures have been utterly transformed since the heyday of social democracy,” Abou-Chadi said.

“The average social democratic voter today is very, very different from 50, even 20 years ago – and unlikely to be an industrial worker. The data also shows much of this new constituency is actually both culturally progressive and economically leftwing.”

Analysis showed little real voter competition between the centre left and the radical right, as some social democratic politicians argue. Progressive parties “need to understand and represent the social structures of the 21st century”, Abou-Chadi said.

One of the key lessons was that “trying to imitate rightwing positions is just not a successful strategy for the left”, he said. Two studies in particular, looking at so-called welfare chauvinism and fiscal policy, illustrated the point, the researchers said.

Björn Bremer of the Central European University in Vienna said a survey in Spain, Italy, the UK and Germany and larger datasets from 12 EU countries showed that since the financial crisis of 2008, “fiscal orthodoxy” had been a vote loser for the centre left.

“Social democratic parties that have backed austerity fail to win the support of voters worried about public debt, and lose the backing of those who oppose austerity,” Bremer said. “Centre-left parties that actually impose austerity lose votes.”

As an example, Bremer cited the UK Labour party’s [losing 2015 election campaign](#), which focused on fiscal responsibility. “[When] voters really care about fiscal policy, they’ll go for the ‘issue owner’ – in this instance, the Conservatives, who they’ll always believe are more credible on that question,” he said.

Fiscal orthodoxy – cutting taxes, capping spending, limiting public debt – worked for social democratic parties such as Tony Blair’s New Labour and Gerhard Schröder’s SPD in Germany, but that was “a period of relative stability and growth”, he said.

“We’re now in a different era. The data strongly suggests centre-left parties can build a coalition of voters who believe a strong welfare state, effective public services and real investment, for example in the green transition, are essential,” Bremer said.

“But doing the opposite – offering a contradictory programme that promotes austerity but promises to protect public services and the welfare state, and hoping voters will swallow such fairytales – failed in the 2010s, and is likely to fail again.”

Similarly, said Matthias Enggist of the University of Lausanne, analysis of data from eight European countries showed no evidence that welfare chauvinism – broadly, restricting immigrants’ access to welfare – was a successful strategy for the left.

“There’s little support for it among actual leftwing voters – Green, social democrat or radical left – or potential leftwing voters on the right,” Enggist said. “And leftwing voters mostly really dislike discrimination between immigrants and nationals.”

Voters who do support welfare chauvinism, meanwhile, are likely to not even consider voting for a left-leaning party, he said, adding there was no evidence that this was a strategy to win back enough traditional working-class votes to significantly boost the electoral fortunes of left parties.

Even in Denmark, where a Social Democrat-led government has [introduced](#) one of Europe’s toughest anti-immigration regimes, electoral data suggested that restricting immigrants’ rights is not popular with a significant number of the party’s voters.

Politicians on the left who argue the case for welfare chauvinism “overestimate its potential to win new voters”, Enggist said.

“The evidence clearly shows they overestimate the electoral relevance of traditional, white working-class voters – and underestimate how strongly their current middle-class voters care about immigrants being treated decently and equally.”

Slippers in the Oval Office

Heart attacks, strokes, dementia—can Biden and Trump beat the odds?

What the science of ageing has to say about the presidential election



image: chantal jahchan

Jan 9th 2024

Age, they say, brings wisdom. But it also [brings decrepitude](#). When the latter begins to outweigh the former, perhaps it is time for even the most ambitious to consider retiring into slippared ease.

If either [Joe Biden](#) or [Donald Trump](#) has contemplated such retirement, though, they have clearly rejected the idea. Instead, both are proposing themselves as candidates for second stints doing one of the most gruelling jobs on the planet. Mr Trump is now 77 and will be 78 come the general election. Mr Biden is 81, and would be 86 at the end of his term, if he won.

The most popular scientific explanation of ageing, disposable-soma theory, holds that natural selection hones youth at the expense of age, since this best serves the task of passing genes to the next generation. In both candidates' cases, that has happened. Mr Biden fathered four children and has seven grandchildren; Mr Trump fathered five, and has ten. But the evolutionary flip-side, in the view of many commentators, is becoming apparent in slips, verbal and physical, being made by both, but especially by Mr Biden. Perhaps, some suggest, the slippers should beckon after all.

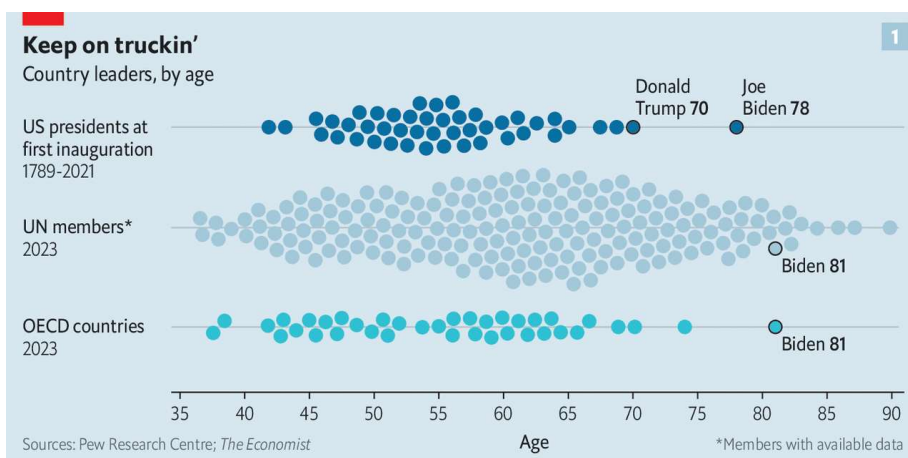


image: the economist

When it comes to age Mr Biden and Mr Trump are outliers compared both with other American presidents and with the present heads of government in other countries (see chart 1). When he became president in 2017 Mr Trump was the oldest person to have done so. That record was superseded in 2021 by Mr Biden.

American exceptionalism

An analysis last year by the Pew Research Centre, a think-tank in Washington, dc (also shown on chart 1), showed that of the 187 countries for which data are available, only eight had leaders older than Mr Biden. (The oldest is Paul Biya of Cameroon, who is 90.) Indeed, among the rich democracies of the oecd, the trend since 1950 has been for heads of government to get younger, with the average age upon starting the job falling from 60.2 to 55.5 in the past half-century. An obvious question, then, is how likely either Mr Biden or Mr Trump would be to last the course.

That is a matter with many variables. Not all of the relevant personal data are in the public domain. And the science of ageing is uncertain. Some studies, for example, suggest that running a country takes its toll. One published in 2015 by researchers at Harvard Medical School and Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine looked at elections for head of government in 17 rich countries, going back as far as 1722. It concluded that winners lived 4.4 fewer years after their last election than did runners-up who never held the top job. On the other hand, presidents top the social hierarchy. That can be lifespan-enhancing, as numerous investigations, starting with the Whitehall studies conducted between 1967 and 1988 by Michael Marmot of University College, London (ucl), of British civil servants, show.

Possibly, the effects balance out. Work published in 2011 by Jay Olshansky, a gerontologist at the University of Illinois, estimated the expected mean lifespan for male contemporaries of America's presidents, based on data from the time, to be 73.3 years. The actual lifespans of those presidents who had died of natural causes averaged 73.0. This suggests either that the job takes no toll, contradicting the Harvard/Case Western Reserve study (and also other work), or that incumbents would otherwise have had more than the average number of years to live. Dr Olshansky's explanation, favouring the latter, is that presidents have tended to hail from privileged backgrounds (all but ten, for example, had been college-educated), with the health advantages that brings.

Death, however, is not the only term-shortening medical event an incumbent might suffer. A debilitating heart attack or stroke might force a resignation or require the invocation of the 25th Amendment to America's constitution, which deals with presidential incapacity. Broadly speaking, the risk of stroke or heart attack doubles with each passing decade. That is a worry.

Beyond each candidate's physical health lie questions of their mental wellbeing. Strokes aside, the passing years brings two threats to the brain: specific dementias such as Alzheimer's disease, and a more general slowing of the wheels—though recent research suggests the two may overlap.

Medical imaging makes it possible to examine the brains of those without symptoms of dementia for the clumps of misshapen proteins that are one of Alzheimer's characteristics. A study from 2019, by Jonathan Schott, a neurologist at ucl, and his colleagues showed that such plaques still seem to cause harm, even in those without a formal diagnosis of Alzheimer's.

Conversely, work published in 2022 by a team from Northwestern University, in Chicago, looked at neurofibrillary tangles, another Alzheimer's marker. It reported that so-called "super-agers"—those lucky enough in the disposable-soma genetic lottery to maintain healthy minds in healthy bodies long after others' decrepitude—had fewer of these tangles than did apparently disease-free non-super-agers.

Regardless of its cause, cognitive decline is the age-related symptom most widely discussed about the candidates, especially in the context of apparent "senior moments" displayed by both men. In 2021, for instance, Mr Biden seemed to forget the name of Lloyd Austin, his defence secretary. Mr Trump has confused Xi Jinping, the Chinese president, with Kim Jong Un, who leads North Korea.

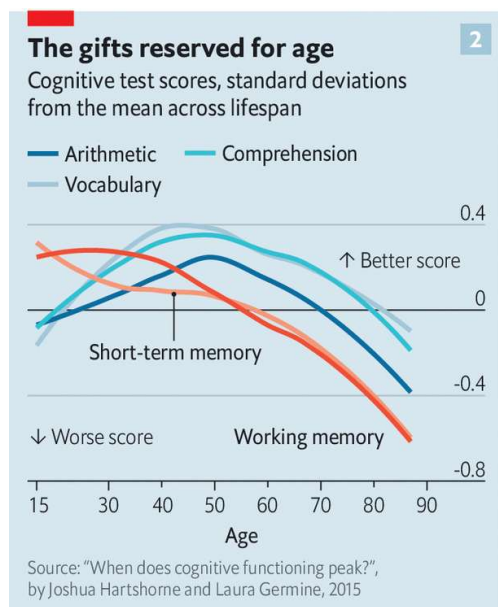


image: the economist

Research suggests one's mental powers change with age in different ways—some declining while others improve, at least for a time. Work by Joshua Hartshorne and Laura Germine, of Harvard and the Massachusetts General Hospital respectively, supports the idea that wisdom does indeed increase with age, up to a point. People's arithmetical and comprehension skills, and their vocabulary, improve until they are around 50, though they start to decline thereafter (see chart 2).

However, for tasks involving short-term memory (remembering things immediately after presentation) and working memory (remembering them half an hour later), it is downhill from the age of 20 or so. Some scores fall by as much as half a standard deviation below the population mean by the time someone is 85.

Not all men are created equal

All this might be grounds for caution when faced with elderly candidates. But Dr Olshansky, at the University of Illinois, is having none of it, for two reasons. One is the general point he makes about most candidates' privileged backgrounds granting them a health-promoting environment in which to grow up. The other, specific to Mr Biden and Mr Trump, is that he thinks they may be made from sterner genetic stuff than most of their fellow beings—in other words, that they are super-agers.

Mr Trump is unquestionably a child of privilege. His father was a multimillionaire businessman. Mr Biden's family fortunes were more mixed. But he still had the leg-up of being sent to a private school as a teenager. So far, so typical. The super-ager argument is more intriguing. Four years ago, during the previous Biden-Trump contest, Dr Olshansky and five colleagues analysed what relevant data they could collect pertaining to the two men.

Both come from long-lived families, with an octogenarian and a nonagenarian parent each. That is a good predictor of longevity. But Mr Trump's brothers died at the ages of 42 and 71 and his father developed Alzheimer's. Both count against him in the calculation—as do his weight and lack of exercise compared with Mr Biden.

Nevertheless, Dr Olshansky concluded from these sorts of data, combined with what is publicly available about the men's medical records, that both had a higher than average probability of surviving the following four years. Mr Biden, they reckoned, had a 95% chance compared with 82% for a typical man of his age; for Mr Trump the figures were 90% compared with 86% for his contemporaries. Notably, then, their calculations gave Mr Trump, the younger man, a worse prognosis.

They have not yet fully pronounced on the matter this time around. But Dr Olshansky stated on January 7th, in an article in the Hill, a Washington-based newspaper, that "Today his [Mr Biden's] chances of surviving

through a second term in office are close to 75% (about 10% better survival than for an average man his age). Similar, although slightly less favourable survival prospects are present for Trump.”

As to senior moments, Dr Olshansky is inclined to write at least some of them off as sampling errors resulting from relentless scrutiny. Of an incident June 2022 in which Mr Biden fell off his bicycle, for example, he observes that the president had caught his foot in a pedal strap rather than losing his balance, an accident that might happen to anyone. More pertinent, he says, is the fact that a 79-year-old (as Mr Biden then was) was cycling in the first place.

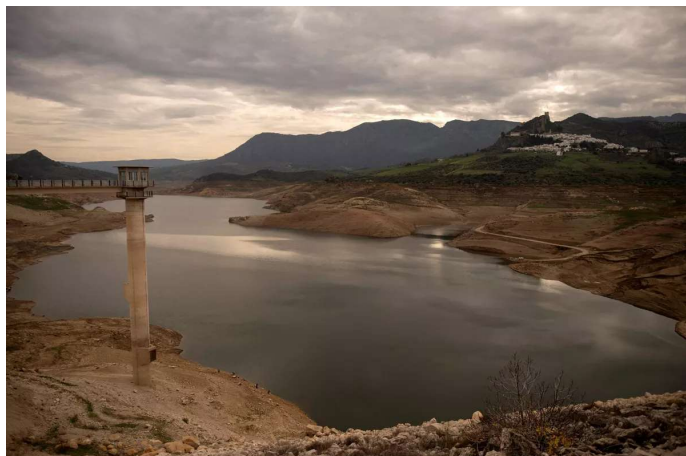
10 January (Le Figaro)

[Climat: 2023, année la plus chaude «de ces 100.000 dernières années» \(lefigaro.fr\)](#)

Climat: 2023, année la plus chaude «de ces 100.000 dernières années»

Par [Anne-Laure Frémont](#)

Publié hier à 13:00, mis à jour hier à 20:24



Réservoir situé à Zahara de la Sierra, en Andalousie, lors d'un épisode de sécheresse le 29 décembre 2023. JORGE GUERRERO / AFP

Le monde se rapproche inexorablement du seuil de +1,5°C de réchauffement mondial fixé par l'accord de Paris, estiment les responsables du programme européen Copernicus.

Les observateurs n'avaient pas attendu la fin de l'année pour l'affirmer, mais c'est désormais chose certaine : 2023 a bel et bien été [l'année la plus chaude jamais enregistrée depuis au moins 1850](#). Elle dépasse même « largement » 2016, le précédent record, a confirmé mardi le programme européen Copernicus sur le changement climatique (C3S).

Ponctuée par des mois de sécheresse en Afrique et des incendies de forêt dévastateurs en Europe et au Canada, « 2023 a été une année exceptionnelle où les records climatiques sont tombés comme des dominos, a réagi dans un communiqué Samantha Burgess, directrice adjointe du C3S. Non seulement 2023 est l'année la plus chaude jamais enregistrée, mais c'est aussi la première année où tous les jours dépassent de plus de 1 °C la température de la période préindustrielle. » Selon elle, les températures de 2023 « dépassent probablement celles de n'importe quelle période au cours des 100 000 dernières années au moins. » Une estimation réalisée en comparant les observations récentes aux données paléoclimatiques citées dans les rapports du Giec, qui s'appuient sur les archives contenues dans les couches sédimentaires profondes, les squelettes de coraux ou les carottes de glace afin de « reconstruire » le climat passé.

Le réchauffement climatique actuel est directement lié à l'augmentation de la concentration des gaz à effet de serre dans l'atmosphère : celle de dioxyde de carbone a, par exemple, atteint 419 parties par million (ppm) en 2023, soit 2,4 ppm de plus qu'en 2022. Il a aussi été renforcé l'an dernier par les variations naturelles du climat [tel que le phénomène El Niño](#), une anomalie chaude au niveau des eaux équatoriales du Pacifique qui tend à augmenter la température mondiale. Samantha Burgess a toutefois tenu à rappeler mardi en conférence de presse que « 2023 aurait été une année exceptionnelle même sans El Niño », qui a émergé en avril et n'a été officiellement déclaré qu'en juillet. Preuve en est des records de température enregistrés dès le mois d'avril à la surface des océans, bien avant que l'influence d'El Niño ne se diffuse au-delà des eaux du Pacifique.

« Désastreux précédent »

Sur l'ensemble de l'année, la température moyenne mondiale a ainsi atteint 14,98 °C, soit 0,17 °C de plus qu'en 2016... et 1,48 °C de plus que la moyenne de la période préindustrielle (1850-1900). 2023 a donc frôlé la limite de 1,5 °C fixée par l'accord de Paris qui vise à limiter le réchauffement de la planète et ses impacts.

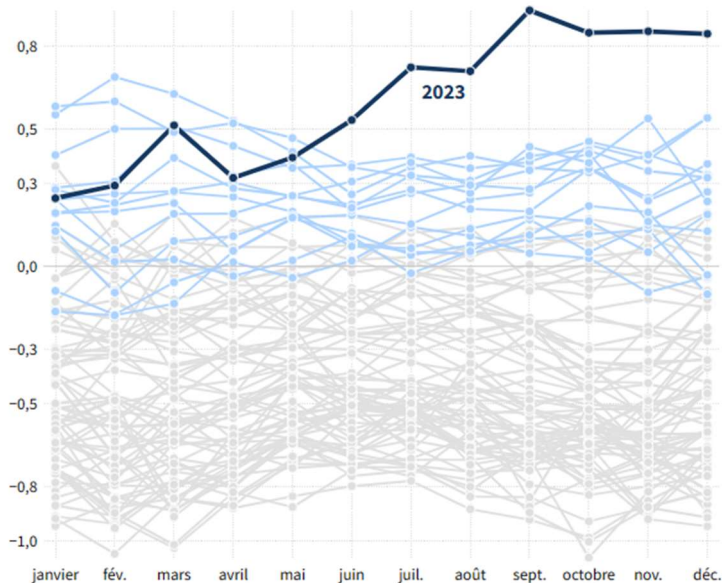
D'ailleurs, « il est probable que sur la période de douze mois se terminant en janvier ou février 2024, on dépasse de 1,5 °C le niveau préindustriel », notent les responsables de Copernicus, qui analysent des milliards de mesures provenant de satellites mais aussi de navires, avions et stations météorologiques à travers le monde.

Les experts rappellent toutefois que « cela ne signifie pas que nous avons dépassé les limites fixées par l'accord de Paris puisqu'elles font référence à des périodes d'au moins vingt ans au cours desquelles cette anomalie de température moyenne serait dépassée ». Néanmoins, « cela crée un précédent désastreux ». Sans compter que, en 2023, près de la moitié des journées excèdent déjà + 1,5 °C ; et pour la première fois, deux jours de novembre ont été plus de 2 °C plus chaud que la moyenne préindustrielle.

2023, une année exceptionnellement chaude à partir du mois de juin

Anomalies mondiales de température de l'air en surface par mois par rapport à la période 1991-2020

En gris, les années de 1940 à 2010. En bleu clair les années de 2010 à 2022



Source: Copernicus



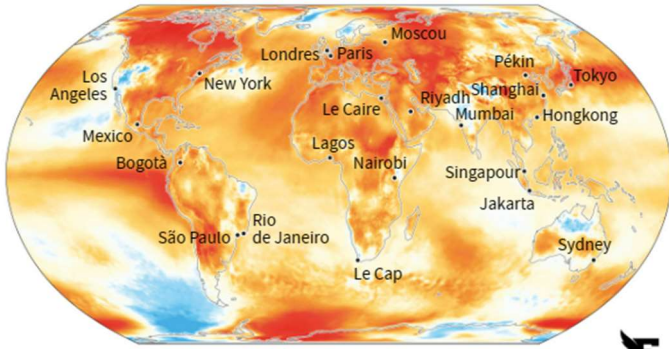
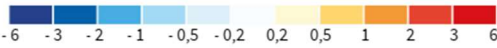
En France, comme en Europe, [2023 s'est classée au deuxième rang des années les plus chaudes, selon Météo-France](#). « Avec une température moyenne de 14,4 °C », elle talonne de très près le record de 2022, affichant seulement 0,1 °C de moins.

Plus globalement, les océans, qui absorbent 90 % de l'excès de chaleur du système terrestre provoqué par l'activité humaine, n'ont pas non plus été épargnés l'an dernier : les températures moyennes de surface de la mer « sont restées durablement et exceptionnellement élevées, atteignant des niveaux records pour la période de l'année allant d'avril à décembre », selon les données européennes. Un record historique pour les océans (20,96 °C) a même été atteint le 30 juillet 2023, le précédent datant de mars 2016. Ce réchauffement a donné lieu à des vagues de chaleur marines dans le monde entier, notamment dans certaines parties de la Méditerranée, du golfe du Mexique ou des Caraïbes.

Au niveau des pôles, qui se réchauffent bien plus vite que le reste du globe, même constat : au sud, la glace de mer de [l'Antarctique](#) a atteint des minima records sur huit mois et son étendue a atteint son niveau le plus bas (quotidien et mensuel) en février 2023. Au nord, l'été dernier a été le plus chaud jamais enregistré dans l'Arctique, avec une température moyenne de 6,4 °C, selon les récentes données de l'Agence atmosphérique et océanique américaine (NOAA).

2023, l'année la plus chaude de l'histoire

Anomalies mondiales de température de l'air en surface par rapport à la période 1991-2020, en C°



Source : Copernicus



2024, encore plus chaude ?

« Les extrêmes que nous avons observés ces derniers mois témoignent de façon dramatique de la distance qui nous sépare aujourd'hui du climat dans lequel notre civilisation s'est développée », a ainsi commenté Carlo Buontempo, directeur du C3S. « Cela signifie concrètement que nos villes, nos routes, nos monuments, nos fermes n'ont jamais eu à gérer un climat aussi chaud », a-t-il ajouté en conférence de presse, appelant à décarboner notre économie « de toute urgence ».

Selon le programme Copernicus, l'événement El Niño devrait culminer au cours des deux prochains mois, puis s'affaiblir. Le Met Office (le service de météorologie britannique) estime pour sa part que l'année 2024 pourrait être encore plus chaude : la température moyenne mondiale devrait se situer entre 1,34 °C et 1,58 °C au-dessus de l'ère préindustrielle.

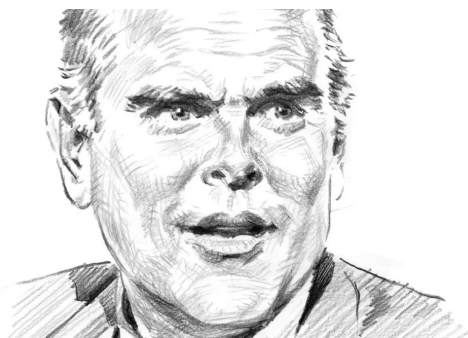
10 January (Le Figaro)

[Harvard: comment une chercheuse aussi médiocre est-elle parvenue au poste universitaire le plus prestigieux de la planète? \(lefigaro.fr\)](https://www.lefigaro.fr)

Harvard: comment une chercheuse aussi médiocre est-elle parvenue au poste universitaire le plus prestigieux de la planète?

Par [Eugénie Bastié](#)

Publié le 08/01/2024 à 19:53, mis à jour hier à 10:58



Christopher Caldwell, journaliste américain. Fabien Clairefond

ENTRETIEN - Pour le journaliste américain Christopher Caldwell, le plus étonnant n'était pas la démission de la présidente de Harvard, mais sa nomination alors qu'elle n'était qu'une universitaire médiocre. L'affaire Claudine Gay reflète un culte de la diversité imposé par l'administration.

Christopher Caldwell est un journaliste américain, éditeur à la Claremont Review of Books, contributeur au New York Times et membre du comité de rédaction de la revue Commentaire. Il a notamment publié « The Age of Entitlement : America Since the Sixties » (Ed. Simon and Schuster, 2020).

LE FIGARO. - La polémique entourant l'attitude de la présidente de Harvard et sa démission ont retenu l'attention du monde entier. Comment analysez-vous cet épisode ? Qu'a-t-il révélé ?

Christopher CALDWELL. - Le scandale s'est tenu en deux temps. Premièrement, à la suite des [manifestations pro-Hamas dans les universités américaines](#), la présidente de Harvard, [Claudine Gay](#), a été convoquée devant le Congrès. Elise Stefanik, une républicaine favorable à Trump, a demandé à Gay si elle pensait qu'appeler au génocide des Juifs violait la politique de Harvard en matière de discours. [Gay a tenté d'esquiver la question en disant que cela dépendait du contexte](#). Deuxièmement, des journalistes d'investigation ont découvert que des passages des écrits publiés par Gay étaient copiés à partir des travaux d'autres chercheurs qui n'étaient pas cités.

Les partisans progressistes de Gay estiment qu'elle a été injustement jugée sur ces deux points. Ils ont raison. La question posée à Gay devant le Congrès était une question piège. Personne n'appelait spécifiquement au génocide des Juifs à Harvard. En gros, Stefanik offrait à Gay l'alternative de se déclarer soit ennemie des Juifs, soit ennemie de la liberté d'expression. Le plagiat était indéniable, mais sans conséquence, car Gay est une savante aux connaissances négligeables, dans un domaine d'intérêt intellectuel marginal. Elle a publié moins d'une douzaine d'articles au cours de sa carrière, tous concernant la représentation politique des minorités.

Mais c'est justement le problème : comment une chercheuse aussi médiocre est-elle parvenue au poste universitaire le plus prestigieux et le plus puissant de la planète ? La réponse est que, au cours de la dernière génération, ses alliés ont procédé à une purge idéologique des universités américaines, qui est désormais achevée. L'un de ses prédécesseurs à la présidence de Harvard, l'ancien secrétaire au Trésor Larry Summers, a été licencié en 2005 après s'être interrogé sur les raisons pour lesquelles les femmes réussissent si rarement dans les sciences dures. Si un démocrate de haut rang et un universitaire de renom ne pouvaient pas s'exprimer librement à Harvard, qui le pouvait ?

Comme beaucoup de gens qui sont allés à Harvard, je suis attristé et embarrassé. Mais les Américains qui ne sont pas allés à Harvard ont une réaction différente. Ils sont furieux. Chaque jour qui passe, le pays est de plus en plus convaincu que la réputation d'intégrité intellectuelle de Harvard a été abusée et que les centaines de millions de dollars des contribuables qu'il reçoit chaque année de Washington ne sont pas méritées. C'est pourquoi les dirigeants de Harvard ont agi. C'est une année électorale. La survie de l'institution pourrait à terme être en jeu.

De nombreuses personnalités pointent du doigt le système DEI (diversité, équité, inclusion) qui existe au sein des universités américaines. Pouvez-vous expliquer d'où vient ce système et en quoi il consiste ?

Il s'agit essentiellement d'une militarisation des possibilités d'application inhérentes aux lois sur les droits civiques, en particulier le Civil Rights Act de 1964. Le problème de la ségrégation raciale dans le sud des États-Unis, qui a duré un siècle après la guerre de Sécession, était qu'elle était maintenue par des institutions démocratiques. Les gens avaient voté pour. Pour l'annuler, il fallait donner au gouvernement fédéral des pouvoirs extraordinaires – des pouvoirs d'urgence. Ce processus est passé par trois étapes.

La première fut l'ère de « l'intégration ». À partir des années 1960, le gouvernement fédéral a eu la possibilité, par exemple, de menacer de supprimer le financement d'un district scolaire qui entretiendrait des écoles séparées pour les Blancs et les Noirs.

Sous l'Administration Obama en particulier, des régulateurs et des avocats militants ont commencé à imposer la restructuration des entreprises et des universités afin qu'elles deviennent culturellement antiracistes

Deuxième étape : l'ère du « politiquement correct ». Dans les années 1990, les régulateurs et les juges ont utilisé de manière agressive les lois sur les droits civiques pour faire progresser les droits des femmes, des immigrants, des non-anglophones, des gays et des lesbiennes, etc. Et les preuves d'actes répréhensibles se sont élargies à tout ce qui pourrait créer un « environnement hostile » aux minorités : un cadre dirigeant qui utiliserait un langage humiliant à l'égard des femmes, par exemple. Vous n'aimez sans doute pas ça. C'est mon cas. Mais, tout à coup, on a basculé dans autre chose : la régulation des pensées des gens.

La troisième étape est l'ère du DEI, ou ce qu'on a appelé wokisme. Sous l'Administration Obama en particulier, des régulateurs et des avocats militants ont commencé à imposer la restructuration des entreprises et des universités afin qu'elles deviennent culturellement antiracistes. Les dirigeants craignaient qu'on leur demande de prouver devant un tribunal qu'ils faisaient tout ce qu'ils pouvaient pour embaucher, promouvoir et encourager les minorités. Ils ont donc créé des « départements des ressources humaines » qui ont fini par jouer le même rôle que les commissaires en Union soviétique. Chaque employé d'une entreprise avait un responsable idéologique qui surveillait par-dessus son épaule.

Cela a été un frein considérable pour l'économie américaine et pour la liberté de pensée. À l'ère du DEI, il est dangereux pour une université d'avoir un président aussi curieux intellectuellement que Lawrence Summers. Avoir une présidente comme Claudine Gay était un choix plus sûr. Jusqu'à présent.

La Cour suprême américaine a en quelque sorte aboli la discrimination positive l'été dernier. Cela a-t-il eu un impact sur DEI ?

Vous avez raison de dire « en quelque sorte ». Je ne suis pas sûr que la Cour suprême ait réellement aboli la discrimination positive. Rappelez-vous, l'un des deux cas concernait Harvard. On a présenté au tribunal la preuve qu'un candidat noir appartenant au 30^e centile des candidats avait de meilleures chances d'être admis à Harvard qu'un candidat asiatique du même groupe.

L'enthousiasme actuel pour la « diversité » n'est pas le produit d'un changement culturel, mais le fruit d'une coercition gouvernementale, même si elle est bien cachée

La Cour a donc jugé le programme d'admission de Harvard injustifiablement discriminatoire – raciste, pour utiliser un terme démodé. Mais cela ne remet pas en question la philosophie de la « diversité » que l'école utilise pour justifier ce programme. L'affaire n'a donc pas touché le DEI. Comme je l'ai dit, le DEI n'est pas un

corps de droit public en vertu duquel les entreprises doivent travailler : c'est l'infiltration d'organisations par des forces de l'ordre idéologiques.

Dans votre livre *The Age of Entitlement*, vous montrez que les lois sur les droits civiques ont été utilisées à mauvais escient pour mettre en œuvre une véritable Constitution parallèle. Est-ce la fin de cette époque ? Assiste-t-on aujourd'hui à un retour de pendule ?

Oui et non. Un point de mon livre était de dire que l'enthousiasme actuel pour la « diversité » n'est pas le produit d'un changement culturel, mais le fruit d'une coercition gouvernementale, même si elle est bien cachée. Le DEI est un système de pouvoir avec un ensemble d'intérêts, déguisé en système de valeurs avec un ensemble de principes. Le système intellectuel s'effondre, mais les pouvoirs d'application des lois sur les droits civiques sont toujours là. Comme dans le cas du communisme soviétique, un système peut perdre toute crédibilité intellectuelle bien avant de perdre sa capacité de coercition et de tyrannisation. Le réfuter ne suffira pas à l'éradiquer. C'est pourquoi la lutte idéologique autour de Claudine Gay a parfois été si brutale.

10 January (NYT)

[Opinion | Claudine Gay Was Not Driven Out Because She Is Black - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

OPINION

Claudine Gay Was Not Driven Out Because She Is Black

Jan. 8, 2024



Credit...Illustration by Sam Whitney/The New York Times; photograph by Adam Glanzman for The New York Times

By [John McWhorter](#), Opinion Writer

Since Claudine Gay’s resignation as president of Harvard University on Tuesday, it has become an article of faith among some of her supporters and other observers that she was targeted, criticized and essentially driven from the job largely because of her race. The idea is that the people who questioned her abilities and academic integrity — be they Harvard donors who found fault with her leadership after Oct. 7 or conservative activists who led an inquiry into plagiarism in her scholarly work — were marked and even motivated by animus toward a Black woman attaining such a degree of power and influence.

The Rev. Al Sharpton denounced Gay’s resignation as “an attack on every Black woman in this country who’s put a crack in the glass ceiling.” Janai Nelson, the president of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, [wrote](#) that the attacks against Gay “have been unrelenting & the biases unmasked.” Harvard’s Corporation, or governing board, [noted](#) the “repugnant and in some cases racist vitriol.” And Gay herself, writing in The Times last week, [referred](#) to “tired racial stereotypes about Black talent” and described herself as an “ideal canvas for projecting every anxiety” because of her status as “a Black woman selected to lead a storied institution.”

But I don’t think the notion that racism was substantially to blame for Claudine Gay’s trouble holds up.

As both Gay and Harvard note, she received openly racist hate mail. This is repulsive. But however awful it must have been for Gay to endure their abuse, those people did not force her resignation.

Nor does it seem that Gay was ousted on the basis of her race in the aftermath of her Dec. 5 testimony before Congress on the topic of antisemitism on campus. Of three university presidents who attended, only one resigned under duress shortly after the hearing, and she — Liz Magill of Penn — was white.

No, the charge that ultimately led to Gay’s resignation was plagiarism, of which more than 40 alleged examples were ultimately unearthed. And plagiarism and related academic charges have of course also brought down white people at universities many times. Ward Churchill [was fired](#) from the University of Colorado for academic misconduct, including plagiarism, in 2007 in the wake of his controversially assailing people working in the World Trade Center towers on 9/11 as “little Eichmanns.” The president of the University of South Carolina, Robert Caslen, [resigned](#) thanks to a plagiarism episode in 2021. And the president of Stanford, Marc Tessier-Lavigne, [resigned](#) because of questions of data manipulation just last July.

For many, the central issue seems to be that Gay’s plagiarism would not have been uncovered at all were it not for the efforts of conservative activists, which is true. The question then is whether the people who led the charge to oust Gay from her job — principal among them the right-wing anti-critical-race-theory crusader

Christopher Rufo and the billionaire financier and Harvard donor Bill Ackman — were acting out of racial animus or even an opposition to Black advancement.

And here things get slightly more complicated. Rufo and Ackman are unabashedly opposed to what both perceive as an ongoing leftward drift at elite universities such as Harvard. And both are opposed to the D.E.I. — or diversity, equity and inclusion — programs that are increasingly prominent on campuses, within corporations and elsewhere. [According to Ackman](#), D.E.I. is “not about diversity” but rather is “a political advocacy movement on behalf of certain groups that are deemed oppressed.” Rufo and Ackman both believed that, in accordance with the precepts of D.E.I., Gay had been appointed as Harvard president more for her skin color than for her professional qualifications.

To analyze this position as mere racism, though, is hasty. No one is trading in stereotypes of Black talent by asking why Gay was elevated to the presidency of Harvard given her relatively modest academic dossier and administrative experience. It was reasonable to wonder whether Gay was appointed more because she is a Black woman than because of what she had accomplished and whether this approach truly fosters social justice. There was a time when the word for this was “tokenism,” and there is a [risk](#) that it only fuels the stereotypes D.E.I. advocates so revile.

To put it succinctly: Opposing D.E.I., in part or in whole, does not make one racist. We can agree that the legacy of racism requires addressing and yet disagree about how best to do it. Of course, in the pure sense, to be opposed to diversity, opposed to equity and opposed to inclusion would fairly be called racism. But it is coy to pretend these dictionary meanings are what D.E.I. refers to in modern practice, which is a more specific philosophy.

D.E.I. [programs today](#) often insist that we alter traditional conceptions of merit, decenter whiteness to the point of elevating nonwhiteness as a qualification in itself, conceive of people as groups in balkanized opposition, demand that all faculty members declare fealty to this modus operandi regardless of their field or personal opinions and harbor a rigidly intolerant attitude toward dissent. The [experience](#) last year of Tabia Lee, a Black woman who was fired from supervising the D.E.I. program at De Anza College in California for refusing to adhere to such tenets, is sadly illustrative of the new climate. (Like Ackman, she [believes](#) that what he calls the “oppressor/oppressed framework” of D.E.I. contributes to campus antisemitism by defining Jews as “oppressors.”)

D.E.I. advocates may see their worldview and modus operandi as so wise and just that opposition can only come from racists and the otherwise morally compromised. But this is shortsighted. One can be very committed to the advancement of Black people while also seeing a certain ominous and prosecutorial groupthink in much of what has come to operate under the D.E.I. label. Not to mention an unwitting condescension to Black people.

Try this thought experiment: Harvard appoints the “White Fragility” author Robin DiAngelo to become the new president of Harvard. She comes equipped with the strongest D.E.I. credentials imaginable but with a very slender academic record. Do you imagine that conservative activists would sit back contentedly, merely because she’s white?

Or take a nonhypothetical example: After a successful tenure as the president of Smith College, Ruth Simmons became the first Black female president of an Ivy League School when she took over Brown in 2001. Yet I am aware of no conservative crusade against her during her decade-plus in that office — despite the fact that she led a yearslong campuswide examination of the school’s role in the slave trade.

The idea that a menacing right-wing mob sits ever in wait to take down a Black woman who achieves a position of power is a gripping narrative. But its connection to reality is — blissfully — approximate at best. It is facile to dismiss opposition to modern D.E.I. as old-school bigotry in a new guise. The lessons from what happened to Professor Gay are many. But cops-and-robbers thinking about racial victims and perpetrators will help answer few of them.

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10 January (NZZ)

[Claudine Gay und das Ende des Wokeismus \(nzz.ch\)](https://www.nzz.ch)

«Angriff auf jede schwarze Frau in diesem Land» – wie Journalisten aus dem Rücktritt einer überforderten Uni-Präsidentin einen Rassismusskandal konstruieren

Weil sie Aufrufe zum Genozid an Juden nicht klar verurteilen mochte, geriet die schwarze Harvard-Präsidentin Claudine Gay in die Kritik. Wer ihren Rücktritt als Zeichen für den Niedergang des «Wokeismus» sieht, irrt.

[**"Attack on every black woman in this country" – how journalists construct a racism scandal from the resignation of an overwhelmed university president.**

Criticism arose against black Harvard president Claudine Gay because she was unwilling to clearly condemn calls for genocide against Jews. Those who see her resignation as a sign of the decline of "wokeism" are mistaken.]

Lucien Scherrer

10.01.2024, 05.30 Uhr 4 min



«Es kommt auf den Kontext an»: Claudine Gay am Hearing vor dem amerikanischen Kongress, 5. Dezember 2023.

Haiyun Jiang / Bloomberg

Claudine Gay sieht sich in einem Krieg. Dieser, so schrieb sie einen Tag nach ihrem Rücktritt in der «New York Times», richte sich gegen «die Säulen der amerikanischen Gesellschaft». Sie selber sei das Opfer einer rassistischen Kampagne, die auf die Bildung, die Forschung, die Exzellenz und überhaupt alle «vertrauenswürdigen Institutionen» ziele. Gewiss, sie habe Fehler gemacht, aber sie sei stolz auf ihre Arbeit.

Gay ist am 2. Januar als Präsidentin der weltbekannten Universität Harvard zurückgetreten. Ihr Amt hat sie erst im letzten Juli angetreten, als erste schwarze Person und zweite Frau in der fast 400-jährigen Geschichte der Universität. Ihr Fall wird international diskutiert. Und er wirft die Frage auf, ob der «Wokeismus», also der pervertierte Kampf für soziale Gerechtigkeit und Antirassismus, seinen Zenit überschritten hat.

Sympathie für die Hamas

Die «Kampagne», von der Gay spricht, begann am 5. Dezember. Damals mussten sich mehrere Präsidentinnen von Eliteschulen wegen antisemitischer Umtriebe auf dem Campus vor dem amerikanischen Kongress erklären. Unter anderem ging es um die Frage, ob man Aufrufe zum Genozid an Juden als Regerverletzungen betrachte. Statt klare Antworten zu geben, erklärten die Befragten, es komme auf den «Kontext» an, etwa, ob jemand «als Individuum» (Gay) angegriffen werde.

Dieses Lavieren löste umso mehr Empörung aus, als in Harvard und an anderen US-Universitäten radikale Studenten seit dem Hamas-Massaker vom 7. Oktober öffentlich Morde an Juden feiern und sich mit den

Terroristen solidarisieren. Gefördert wird dieser neue Linksradikalismus durch postkoloniale und antirassistische Theorien, die Israel als Kolonialmacht und Juden als weisse Unterdrücker einstufen.

Aufgrund des öffentlichen Drucks trat die Präsidentin der Universität Pennsylvania, Elizabeth Magill, am 9. Dezember zurück. Claudine Gay dagegen blieb im Amt. Sie musste erst gehen, nachdem rechte Aktivisten wie Christopher Rufo Plagiate und handwerkliche Fehler in ihren universitären Arbeiten bemängelt hatten. Nach anfänglichem Zögern veröffentlichten selbst linke Medien wie die «New York Times» und die «Washington Post» Artikel, in denen Gays Rücktritt gefordert wurde.

Ibram X. Kendi sieht sie als Opfer eines rassistischen Mobs

Die erste schwarze Harvard-Präsidentin musste demnach nicht abtreten, weil sie zu wenig gegen postkoloniale Antisemiten auf dem Campus unternommen hatte, sondern weil sie die Standards ihrer eigenen Institution verletzte. Dieser Umstand und gewisse Reaktionen lassen einen zweifeln, ob Gays Abgang wirklich eine Zäsur in Sachen «Wokeismus» markiert. Dessen Anhänger neigen bekanntlich dazu, alle Probleme und Misserfolge bestimmter Leute mit strukturellem Rassismus zu erklären – eine Methode, die nun auch Gays Versagen vertuschen soll.

So erklärte der Harvard-Professor Randall Kennedy, Gay habe nur gehen müssen, weil sie als schwarze Frau «viele Leute» gestört habe. Die deutsche «Zeit» witterte schon am 12. Dezember eine Verschwörung republikanischer Rassisten, die jemanden wie sie nicht als Präsidentin duldeten. Ihre Kritiker werden zum Teil kollektiv verunglimpft, etwa von der Schriftstellerin Celeste Ng, die in den sozialen Medien von «böartigen Fanatikern» sprach, «die vorgeben, sich um Antisemitismus zu sorgen» und «insbesondere schwarze Frauen als Sündenböcke missbrauchen».

Der schwarze Rassentheoretiker Ibram X. Kendi, der auch in Europa gefeiert wird, behauptete, Gay sei Opfer eines «rassistischen Mobs»: Ihre Arbeiten seien nur deshalb auf Plagiate geprüft worden, weil sie schwarz sei. Ähnliche Theorien verbreiteten Journalisten von einflussreichen Medienhäusern. Meinungsjournalistinnen von MSNBC und der «New York Times» klagten über Angriffe auf «jede schwarze Frau in diesem Land», die «akademische Freiheit», die Diversität und den Pluralismus. Die Nachrichtenagentur AP bezeichnete die Suche nach Plagiaten als «neue konservative Waffe gegen Hochschulen».

Falsche Pronomen sind nicht o. k., Aufrufe zum Genozid aber schon

Dass es unter Gays Gegnern Rassisten gibt und es vielen Republikanern nur um die ideologische Deutungshoheit an den Universitäten geht, ist eine Tatsache. Von einem Angriff auf die akademische Freiheit und den Pluralismus zu sprechen, ist jedoch absurd. Plagiate, so verbreitet sie auch sein mögen, gehören nicht zur akademischen Freiheit. Und wenn es wirklich um Rassismus ginge, wäre Claudine Gay kaum länger im Amt geblieben als ihre weisse Kollegin Elizabeth Magill in Pennsylvania. Ebenso stellt sich die Frage, weshalb Gay als vermeintliches Rassismusopfer weiter an der Universität Harvard tätig sein kann, für ein Salär von geschätzten 900 000 Dollar.

Vor allem aber werden Freiheit und Pluralismus in Harvard und anderswo gerade von jenen unterdrückt, die sich nun als Opfer einer reaktionären Verschwörung gebärden. Gemäss einer kürzlich vom «Spiegel» zitierten Umfrage stufen sich an der grössten Fakultät in Harvard gerade einmal drei Prozent der Professoren als konservativ ein. Gay selber verfasste Konzepte über «systemischen Rassismus» und «weisse Oberherrschaft». In diesem geistigen Klima werden Studenten aufgefordert, sogenannte Neopronomen wie «ze» und «zir» zu verwenden, um genderfluide Personen nicht zu verletzen; ein Student, der sich als Teenager rassistisch in einem Chat geäussert hatte, wurde 2019 von der Universität gewiesen, obwohl er um Entschuldigung bat.

Beifallsbekundungen für Terroristen und Aufrufe zum kollektiven Mord an Juden sind dagegen erlaubt, je nach «Kontext» zumindest. Claudine Gay räumte nach ihrem Rücktritt zwar ein, sie habe es versäumt, «klar und deutlich zu sagen, dass Aufrufe zum Völkermord am jüdischen Volk verabscheuungswürdig und inakzeptabel sind und dass ich alles dafür tun werde, um Schüler vor diesem Hass zu schützen». Diese Einsicht kommt allerdings spät. Denn die Theorien, die in Harvard und anderen Universitäten kursieren, sind längst im

Mainstream angekommen. Zumindest bei jener Generation, die in einigen Jahren gesellschaftliche Machtpositionen übernehmen wird.

Das geht unter anderem aus einer kürzlich publizierten Wählerbefragung von «Harvard Caps-Harris Poll» hervor. Demnach stimmten 79 Prozent der 18- bis 24-Jährigen der Aussage zu, wonach weisse Personen Unterdrücker seien. 50 Prozent der gleichen Altersgruppe sagten, sie unterstützten die Hamas, nicht Israel. Eine Mehrheit der Befragten fand, das Massaker der Hamas vom 7. Oktober könne wegen des Leidens der Palästinenser gerechtfertigt werden. Und 53 Prozent der Jungen waren der Ansicht, dass man auf dem Campus das Recht haben soll, zum Genozid an Juden aufzurufen.

10 January (The Economist)

[Robert Solow was an intellectual giant \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Free exchange

Robert Solow was an intellectual giant

His criticisms were energetic and witty, which could make them harder to take

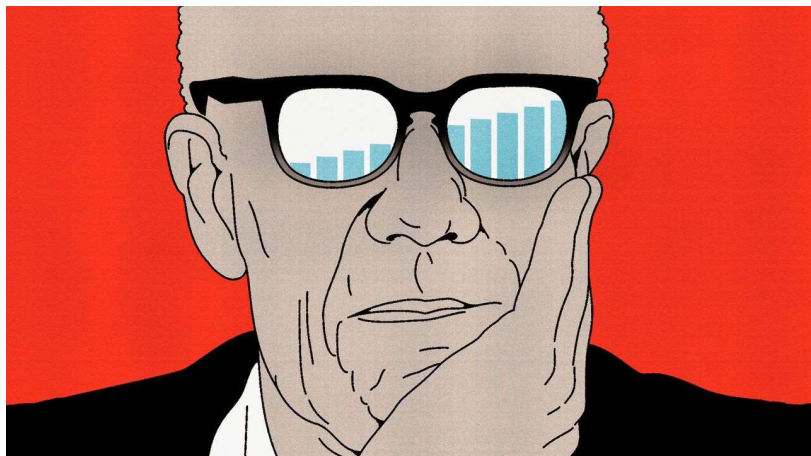


image: álvaro bernis

Jan 4th 2024

Ensnared in a lorry, hidden from the enemy by the brow of a hill, the young Robert Solow decoded the radio signals of Nazi platoons across Italy. “We were very, very good at it,” he said. The trick was to get close to the enemy but not too close: near enough to pick up their transmissions, but not so near as to risk capture.

The codes were not fancy—it was “combat stuff”. But if they could be broken quickly, they might reveal an ammunition delivery that could be thwarted. The radiomen were not fancy either. Most were high-school graduates. Even Solow, who would go on to earn a Nobel prize in economics, the Presidential medal of freedom and a Portuguese knighthood, before his death on December 21st 2023, was “middle-middle-class”. He was educated at Brooklyn state schools. He preferred softball to books, and was destined for Brooklyn College until a teacher spotted his potential, broadened his reading, and encouraged him to apply to Harvard University, which he joined two years early and rejoined after the war.

Solow’s years as a soldier only strengthened his egalitarian streak. He declined to become an officer, so he would not have to boss anyone around. When the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (mit) offered him a job in 1949, he asked what the lowest paid professor earned, and accepted the same. When he served in President Kennedy’s Council of Economic Advisers, the Swiss embassy wanted to know his protocol rank. His answer was that he was a full professor at mit and the government had no rank as high. Informed in the predawn hours in October 1987 that he had won the Nobel prize, his first instinct was to go back to sleep.

What he craved was more precious than prizes: the esprit de corps that comes from membership of a small, highly motivated band of colleagues. “If you’re in a group that is doing good work, it’ll have a high morale. And if it has high morale, it’ll do good work,” he once said. As an economist, he liked formal models and mathematics. But nothing too fancy. Over-refinement reminded him of the man who knew how to “spell banana” but did not “know when to stop”. His strategy was to break big questions—about growth, resources, unemployment—into littler ones, in the hope that small answers would aggregate into larger ones.

The mit culture he embodied disdained hierarchy, cherished collegial lunches and made time for students, many of whom became illustrious friends. Four of Solow’s students later received their own sleep-disturbing calls from Sweden. Economics, Solow maintained, was a “handicraft” industry, often driven by the “extraordinarily powerful research apparatus” of one professor and one undergraduate assistant.

Something he liked about academia was that ideas, no matter how prestigious their source, could be scrutinised by anyone. His own criticisms were energetic and witty, which could make them harder to take. He found the “freshwater” school of macroeconomics, identified with the University of Chicago, preposterous, especially in its early incarnations, which assumed a “representative agent” could stand in for the many actors in an economy. To get into a technical discussion with freshwater types was like discussing cavalry tactics with someone claiming to be Napoleon, he said. The claim is absurd, however well they know their stuff.

The work that made his name began as criticism of the growth theories of the 1930s and 1940s. In these, investment added both to national spending and the economy’s productive capacity. There was no guarantee these additions to demand and supply would stay in line with each other. Moreover, excessive spending, by boosting demand, would inspire firms to invest even more, whereas inadequate investment would induce firms to spend still less. The economy was for ever poised on a “knife-edge” between deepening unemployment or intensifying labour shortages.

This precariousness was hard to square with the relatively stable progress of advanced economies like America, where even the Great Depression eventually ended. Solow showed that the knife-edge disappeared if economies could vary the capital-intensity of production. Strong investment would not then be destabilising. It would merely result in higher capital per worker.

High investment would not, however, result in faster growth over the long run. At some point, capital would run into diminishing returns, leaving growth to be dictated by other factors. Solow calculated that capital accumulation could explain less than 13% of the growth in income per person in America from 1909 to 1949. The remainder was attributable to other forces, which he loosely labelled “technical change”. This vast unexplained portion of growth became known as the “Solow residual”.

Tough paternal love

Although his work created reams of subsequent research, the father of growth theory was not impressed by many of his progeny. He was sceptical of statistical exercises that dissected growth rates across countries at every stage of development. Nor had he intended to imply that technological progress, which he did not model, fell entirely outside economics. A lot of innovation was “dumb luck”. And much of it emerged on the factory floor, “invented” by unheralded foremen. But some was the result of profit-driven investment in research. Later attempts to create formal theories of technological progress nevertheless asked more questions than they answered, he argued.

Part of the problem was that innovation is often peculiar and particular, whereas growth theorists strive for generality and abstraction. Solow, who had himself observed the research labs at General Motors and collaborated with the McKinsey Global Institute on industry-level studies of productivity, thought model-builders could learn from case studies and business histories. The aim was to “extract a few workable hypotheses” without getting lost in the detail. To understand how the economy works, to decode its secrets, you need to get up close, but not too close.

January 9, 2024

Diplomacy

Page 2: Pourquoi l'étoile diplomatique du pape François s'est ternie (Le Figaro)

The war in Gaza

Page 4: In 2008, we were inches from peace in the Middle East. I believe it's still within our grasp (The Guardian, Gordon Brown, Guest Essay)

Page 7: Why Israel Can't Bomb Hamas Into Submission (Haaretz, Opinion)

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9 January (Le Figaro)

[Pourquoi l'étoile diplomatique du pape François s'est ternie \(lefigaro.fr\)](https://www.lefigaro.fr)

Pourquoi l'étoile diplomatique du pape François s'est ternie

Par [Jean-Marie Guénois](#)

Publié hier à 19:52, mis à jour hier à 19:55



Le pape François le 7 janvier 2024. *VATICAN MEDIA / REUTERS*

ANALYSE - Après un début de pontificat haut en couleur, et des réussites manifestes, la diplomatie cléricale est comme usée et décrédibilisée.

Le discours de géopolitique, tel celui prononcé lundi 8 janvier 2024 par [François](#) devant les 184 pays du corps diplomatique accrédités près le Saint-Siège, est une tradition vaticane. Les ambassadeurs présentent leurs vœux au pape qui se livre à un tour d'horizon préparé par les services diplomatiques actuellement sous la responsabilité d'un prélat anglais, Mgr Paul Gallagher, 69 ans, l'équivalent d'un ministre des Affaires étrangères.

François, a lu les huit pages sans hésiter après avoir remonté à pied la longue salle de bénédictions, s'appuyant sur sa canne, signe objectif d'une reprise effective de sa santé après un dernier trimestre 2023 difficile. Le 2 décembre [il avait dû annuler à la dernière minute un déplacement à Dubaï](#) (Émirats arabes unis) pour la COP28.

La seule arme de cette diplomatie, les mots, paraît inefficace dans le royaume mondial du rapport de force militaire, économique et politique. Mais ils ne sont que treize pays à ne pas vouloir entendre ces mots, en refusant les relations diplomatiques : Afghanistan, Arabie saoudite, Bhoutan, Brunei, Chine, Comores, Corée du Nord, Laos, Maldives, Oman, Somalie, Tuvalu, Vietnam. Un premier pas notable a été franchi en 2023 avec ce dernier pays avec l'installation d'un représentant pontifical résident à Hanoï.

Cette diplomatie cléricale est surtout excellemment informée par son réseau de nonciatures mais aussi de prêtres, religieux et religieuses, actifs dans tous les pays ou presque, au plus près des populations, loin des capitales. C'est une diplomatie, lente, à bas bruit, d'influence, de bons services quand des belligérants n'arrivent plus à se parler, mais aussi une diplomatie de la conscience.

François a également fini par lasser en ne cessant de battre la coulpe des États d'Europe et d'Amérique du Nord à propos de l'immigration, des pays dont la plupart font tout leur possible pour gérer les flux migratoires

Cette voix internationale de la conscience était particulièrement écoutée sous Jean-Paul II, pape géopolitique, mondialement et unanimement respectée. Elle le fut dans une moindre mesure sous [Benoît XVI](#) davantage tournée vers la théologie. Après un début de pontificat haut en couleur, et des réussites manifestes comme la participation à une paix fragile au Sud Soudan ou l'appui à la réconciliation entre les États-Unis d'Obama et Cuba, l'étoile diplomatique de François s'est quelque peu ternie, comme usée et décrédibilisée par un interventionnisme perçu comme « brouillon » par les chancelleries et qui a fini par fâcher de grands pays.

On vient à nouveau de le constater dans [le conflit du Proche-Orient](#) ou avec [la guerre russe en Ukraine](#). La précipitation du pape pour parler, poser des gestes forts, être protagoniste de paix à tout prix, loin de porter les fruits attendus a souvent provoqué des séries d'incidents diplomatiques. En interne, on loue l'énergie du pape pour promouvoir la paix mais on lui reproche de peu écouter ses conseillers diplomatiques, pourtant aiguisés, et de trop se fier à ses intuitions personnelles sur des dossiers très épineux. Sur le fond, François a également fini par lasser en ne cessant de battre la coulpe des États d'Europe et d'Amérique du Nord à propos de l'immigration, des pays dont la plupart font tout leur possible pour gérer les flux migratoires. Son silence total sur les droits de l'homme à Hongkong, sacrifiés sur l'autel de l'espoir de François de visiter Pékin a enfin donné l'impression d'une « conscience » à géographie variable.

Ce 8 janvier, le pape a passé en revue tous les conflits de la planète appelant au « cessez-le-feu sur tous les fronts » rappelant beaucoup de prises de position antérieures sur l'écologie et les migrations. Il a aussi dénoncé « la lente marginalisation » de « 360 millions de chrétiens qui subissent un niveau élevé de persécution et de discrimination en raison de leur foi » mais sans nommer l'une de ses causes principales, l'islam radical.

Trois points remarquables toutefois : le passage d'une « troisième guerre mondiale par morceaux » à « un véritable conflit mondial » marqué par l'indifférence pour les « populations civiles aveuglément frappés » avec Gaza et l'Ukraine comme « preuve évidente ». Un nouvel appel ensuite pour une « politique de désarmement » à commencer par le nucléaire, devenu, une dissuasion « illusoire ». Avec cet argent, François voudrait un « Fonds mondial pour éradiquer la faim et promouvoir un développement durable ». Dernière idée, d'ordre éthique, elle vise à « interdire universellement la pratique de la gestation pour autrui ».

9 January (The Guardian)

[In 2008, we were inches from peace in the Middle East. I believe it's still within our grasp | Gordon Brown | The Guardian](#)

In 2008, we were inches from peace in the Middle East. I believe it's still within our grasp

[Gordon Brown](#)

It may seem impossible to seek a deal amid war. But the consequences of not doing so are too painful to contemplate

Tue 9 Jan 2024 07.00 CET



Gordon Brown and Ehud Olmert at a joint news conference in Jerusalem, 20 July 2008. Photograph: Ronen Zvulun/Reuters

With all hope currently buried beneath the rubble of Gaza and Israel's abandoned kibbutzim, it is hard not to despair about the prospects of an Israeli-Palestinian peace. The hostages have to be returned immediately and the killing of civilians has to stop, yet a ceasefire alone will not solve the fundamental challenge of achieving an enduring settlement, and while it is hard to make a plan amid such trauma, it is impossible to end years of violence without one.

And in reality, a blueprint does exist for an alternative to this deadly cycle of destruction and retribution. The attempts in the [Oslo process](#) (whose five-year timetable for a two-state solution did not materialise), the failed Clinton-Arafat-Barak [Camp David](#) talks and the [doomed Obama](#) 2013-14 initiatives are well documented. Less well known is the 2007-08 peace plan. After talking to some of its leading proponents in the past few days, I believe this will, sooner or later, offer anew the best starting point for delivering a durable peace.

After I became UK prime minister in 2007, I met the Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas and had intensive one-to-one discussions with the then Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert and the Saudi King Abdullah – in the Downing Street flat, in Olmert's home in Jerusalem and beneath vast shark-filled fish tanks in the king's palace in Riyadh: perhaps a metaphor for the challenge. And in advance of a face-to-face meeting, these bold leaders, with the help of intermediaries, worked through the parameters of a [22-state pan-Arab agreement](#) to recognise Israel, allowing it to be secure within its borders, side by side with an independent and economically viable Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem.

By the summer of 2008, the two parties were “poring over maps”, as my team minuted. “We've got further than we did at Camp David or Taba [the 2001 Israeli-Palestinian talks],” a leading negotiator reported back. When I addressed the Knesset, the first British PM to do so, I outlined western support for such a deal, not shying away from the fact that a number of settlements would have to be abandoned and Greater Jerusalem divided.

“We were inches away,” [Olmert](#) records in his memoir, “within a hair's breadth of fulfilling the dreams of millions of Israelis who longed for peace.” Indeed, [a 2009 poll found](#) that 78% of Israelis favoured such a

solution. But then, as so often, events conspired against peace: changes of leadership in Israel, then the US and then Saudi Arabia, and the global financial crisis followed by a decade of rising protectionism, saw the diplomatic window of opportunity close.

However, two documents from that moment of promise remain of great potential significance today. The first is the original version of the plan, with a detailed territorial solution based on the 1967 borders, to be adjusted by between 4.6% and 6% – mainly through land swaps – and with the Arab neighbourhoods of Jerusalem part of the future Palestinian state. According to former US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice: “Olmert gave Abbas cause to believe that he was willing to reduce that number to 5.8%,” alongside the building of a tunnel or highway under Palestinian control linking [Gaza](#) to the West Bank.

An international fund would compensate uprooted Palestinians and Jews. The Holy Basin in Jerusalem, containing the sacred sites of the three great monotheistic religions, would be redefined as an international zone. The Palestinian state would control part of the Dead Sea coastline. As Rice said at the time: “[Yitzhak Rabin](#) had been killed for offering far less.” An agreed-upon international force in the Jordan valley would protect the border between Jordan and the new state. Israel would agree to the “right to return” of a number of as yet unquantified Palestinian refugees and [President Bush signalled](#) that the US would offer citizenship to 100,000 Palestinian refugees.

The second promising element was the proposed security arrangements agreed by Israel and the US. Both Israelis and Palestinians would have the right to defend themselves against terrorism. The Palestinians would not enter security or military treaties with those who did not recognise the state of Israel. Warning stations would be placed on mountaintops in the Palestinian state. If a foreign army moved near the border of Jerusalem, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) could cross the border in coordination with Palestine.

Inevitably, the passage of time since 2008 requires some modification of the details and it will take time before any trust is restored. The [Israeli defence minister has now proposed](#) who might manage security in postwar Gaza, but it will need a clear international agreement on that and on the status of the Palestinian Authority, which has had no elections for 18 years and seems rudderless amid accusations of corruption. And, given that international promises to Gaza after military actions in 2002, 2008-09, 2014 and 2021 [were never fully fulfilled](#), we will need dependable guarantees on who will pay for reconstruction and how the money will be spent free of fraud.

Settlement expansion has accelerated, from fewer than 300,000 people in 2008 to [700,000](#). “When the West Bank becomes home to a million Jewish settlers, an Israeli withdrawal will be impossible,” Olmert wrote recently, but by acting now “it is still possible to resettle the great majority of the settlers into settlement blocs that take up only a tiny part of the territory”.

But the seismic shifts in our geopolitics could enhance the possibility of a pan-Arab deal. It is now clear that as long as it is not detached from a solution on Palestine, the once elusive normalisation between the Arab world and Israel for which Olmert and Abdullah hoped – and which was gaining momentum before 7 October – is still within our grasp. But with the Palestinian cause now even more central to the global south’s struggles for self-determination and equality, Israel must also know it cannot ever absorb the Palestinians into one state or fall back on [Donald Trump’s so-called Middle East peace plan](#).

Recent events have also made it clear that the west – in particular the US – cannot now succeed in any peace initiative by acting on its own. It needs to work with the rest of the world, building the widest possible global coalition designed to isolate those most opposed today to a two-state solution: the murderous Hamas and the reactionary clique surrounding [Benjamin Netanyahu](#).

The consequences of doing nothing are too painful to contemplate, not just for Gaza but for the peace of the entire region. One year from now, ceasefire or not, hundreds of thousands of displaced, starving and sick Palestinians could be stranded in overcrowded refugee camps besides rubble-strewn alleyways, hollowed-out buildings and bombed-out infrastructure with no end in sight, and the cycle of violence will threaten to escalate yet again to engulf the region, entrapping a new generation of disaffected young people, who will be easy fodder for recruitment into a [Hamis](#) 2.0.

Breakthroughs in geopolitics are rare, but in the least propitious of circumstances – as I argued to the Saudis and Israelis in 2008 – Kennedy and Khrushchev delivered the first ever nuclear test ban treaty, and Reagan and Gorbachev negotiated the biggest reduction of nuclear weapons in history. The year 2024 starts in deep gloom – but with visionary leadership, building upon the 2007-08 plan, there could be light at the end of a very dark tunnel that still threatens, unless we act, to turn pitch black.

Gordon Brown was UK prime minister from 2007 to 2010

9 January (Haaretz)

[Why Israel Can't Bomb Hamas Into Submission - Opinion - Haaretz.com](#)

Opinion |

Why Israel Can't Bomb Hamas Into Submission

Netanyahu made a stir in 2016 when, in the Knesset chamber, he read a book that argued that decisive wars are won through overwhelming violence. But factors unique to Hamas and Gaza, as well as the threat of regional escalation, mean Israel can't use the 'surrender or die' ultimatum



View of Gaza from southern Israel showing smoke billowing after an Israeli bombardment this monthCredit: JACK GUEZ/AFP

[Anders Persson](#)

Jan 7, 2024

Seven years ago, in December 2016, Benjamin Netanyahu was seen in the Knesset chamber with a book in his hand. Israeli journalists curiously inquired what their prime minister was reading.

[The book turned out to be](#) Nothing less than victory: Decisive wars and the lessons of history by historian John David Lewis. The main argument of the book is that it is possible to break an enemy's will to fight through overwhelming violence, that in decisive wars, the enemy is given two possibilities: surrender or die.

At the time Haaretz [noted](#) that "Time may tell whether Lewis' book influences the prime minister's future military thinking."

Now that time has arrived. Israel is [facing the most difficult counterinsurgency operation](#) in modern times, perhaps ever in military history. The challenge Israel is facing is much more complicated than what America faced in places like Falluja and Mosul.



Netanyahu at the Knesset on Dec. 21, 2016 holding "Nothing Less than Victory" by John David Lewis.Credit: Olivier Fitoussi

Netanyahu appears to be looking to the examples cited in Lewis' book as a playbook. The problem is the war in Gaza may very well have no precedent and Hamas is proving itself to be an especially formidable foe.

In his book Lewis showed with six case studies from antiquity to World War II that overwhelming victories in wars can lead to peace agreements that are not just stable and lasting, but also moral.

His chapters about Nazi Germany and Japan show that it is indeed possible to force great powers to surrender, crush ideologies and bomb away ideas that were arguably more powerful than Hamas and its militant Islamism are today in Gaza.

Regarding [Nazi Germany](#) and [Japan](#), Lewis wrote that it was not enough to defeat them on the battlefield, but total and permanent destruction of both these countries' military capacity and their will to fight. In short: "unconditional surrender."

Their unconditional surrenders meant that millions of Germans and Japanese were saved from certain death and given their lives back. In both countries peace replaced war as a national policy.

It's not controversial in academic war studies to find the argument that the aim of a war is to defeat the enemy's will to fight, or that decisive victories lead to more stable peace.

Studies have noted a trend over the past 15 years toward military victories in favor over negotiated peace agreements, beginning in 2009 when the [Sri Lankan government](#) decisively defeated the Tamil Tigers, which had once been regarded as one of the world's strongest terror organizations. Another example is Russia ending its "anti-terror operation" in Chechnya after brutally crushing an Islamist guerilla there, proving it's possible to bomb even militant Islamists into submission.



Rocket launchers that the Israeli army says they discovered in the Gaza Strip in this handout picture released Sunday. Credit: ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES/ REUTERS

But the [conditions in Gaza](#) are very different to other recent or past conflicts. It's unique because the territory is one of the most densely populated in the world. Hamas has also governed Gaza for almost two decades, which is unique as well among Islamist terror organizations, which typically only govern for a few years before they are overthrown.

[According](#) to Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, his organization had built over 500 kilometers [of tunnels underneath Gaza](#), the so-called "Gaza metro".

Unlike the U.S. and Russia in Iraq and Syria, Israel does not have any local Gaza allies to help fight. The IDF is also active in both the West Bank and along the Lebanon border, which means a significant part of the Israeli military is engaged elsewhere.

With possible exceptions for the 1948 war, which led to a mass Palestinian exodus, and the 1982 Lebanon War, which sought to crush the PLO, Israel has never fought to break its enemies' will to fight.

In all its other wars including the two Palestinians intifadas (uprisings) – Israel contended with formal or informal ceasefires when they ended, often under American pressure.

The big question now is whether Israel will act differently in this war. Israel has without a doubt the military capacity to defeat Hamas and its ideology in Gaza.

Alternatively, Israel has the capability to forcibly drive the Palestinians, including Hamas, out of Gaza through bombings, sieges, starvation, and other means of coercion. However, it's doubtful Israel has the will to do any of this, despite Netanyahu's [repeated](#) promises that he [is committed to crush Hamas](#), kill its leaders and all of its 30,000 of its [combatants](#).

Despite the brutality of its bombing campaign in Gaza, Israel has so far only managed to kill around 8,000 Hamas members, according to the IDF's spokesperson, which would be 30 percent of its force. Likewise, most of Hamas's top political and military leadership, in Gaza and abroad, are still alive, and much of its infrastructure in the southern part of Gaza seems intact as well.



Palestinians search for bodies and survivors in the rubble of a house destroyed in an Israeli airstrike, in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, on Sunday. Credit: Fatima Shbair / AP

The fact that Hamas has managed repeated exchanges of hostages for prisoners during the war proves it's still functioning and in control over large parts of Gaza, and over other militant organizations keeping hostages captured in the strip.

It's increasingly clear that [Israel lacks U.S. support](#) for doing what it takes to militarily defeat Hamas and crush its ideology and ideas. If Israel attacks Gaza even harder than it has, it risks not just a wider regional war and the collapse of the peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, but also weakening the whole American security architecture in the region.

It's also increasingly clear that this war is a political disaster for U.S. President Joe Biden, who had hoped to start off his election campaign with an Israeli-Saudi peace treaty. Instead, Biden enters this election campaign with [dismal polling numbers](#) and betting data clearly against him.

Donald Trump, on the other hand, has received [a major boost](#) from it.

It's difficult today to see a clear path to a decisive military victory for Israel. Likewise, the path to a permanent ceasefire also seems distant, especially with most Hamas leaders still alive, the organization somewhat intact and over half of the some 250 Israeli hostages still in captivity in Gaza three months after the war began – an agonizing blow to the morale of the country.

At the same time, many things could happen in the war which could alter the political and military calculations on all sides: epidemics could break out, the population could rise up against Hamas, Palestinians could flee or be forced out of Gaza threatening regional stability, Biden could force Israel to accept a ceasefire, the Israeli government could fall.

Most harrowing of all, the situation could still escalate into regional war. Then again powerful Saudi Arabia might be able to help de-escalate tensions, and so on. But no matter which way things go, a decisive, crushing of not just Hamas but its ideology, remains elusive three months into the war.

If a decisive military victory is not possible in Gaza, Israel may again have to contend with a formal or informal ceasefire, as it has done in all previous wars [since 1948](#). This would likely mean that Israeli politicians, led by former Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman, were wrong when they promised over and over again after the 2014 war that the next war in Gaza would be the last.

Anders Persson is a political scientist at Linnaeus University, Sweden, specializing in EU-Israel/Palestine relations.

His latest book, "EU Diplomacy and the Israeli-Arab Conflict, 1967–2019," was published by Edinburgh University Press in 2020. On X (formerly Twitter): [@82AndersPersson](#)

9 January (Haaretz)

[Can Gazans Freely Say What They Think About Hamas and the October 7 Attack? - Opinion - Haaretz.com](#)

Opinion |

Can Gazans Freely Say What They Think About Hamas and the October 7 Attack?

The scale of death and destruction caused by Israel's air and artillery strikes dim any willingness to voice criticism or question the logic of Hamas' strategy



Displaced Palestinians, who fled their houses due to Israeli strikes, seek shelter near the border with Egypt, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, January 7, 2024. Credit: REUTERS/Ibraheem Abu Mustafa

[Amira Hass](#)

Jan 8, 2024 11:58 am IST

The hippopotamus in the room during every phone conversation – when there's time between airstrikes and lining up for water – is Gazans' views on Hamas' attack of October 7. It seems the vast majority don't feel free to express their opinions sincerely, not on the phone – whenever the reception allows for a political discussion – and not on social media.

There is a mix of reasons for this. Usually, the perennial sense of terror caused by [bombs, death and flight](#), as well as the daily struggle to obtain water, food, warm clothing and shelter from the rain aren't a good basis for an open political-ideological discussion. As time goes by, [the scale of death and destruction](#) caused by Israel's air and artillery strikes dim any willingness to voice criticism or question the logic of [Hamas'](#) strategy.

Many believe that Israel is carrying out one of its contingency plans to achieve the demise of the Palestinian national project.

The conclusion from this scale is that Israel isn't just retaliating but is carrying out one of its contingency plans to achieve the demise of the Palestinian national project. Public self-criticism could be considered the absolving of Israel of its intentions and direct responsibility for what the Palestinians are experiencing [as genocide](#).

If Israel thinks it can topple [Hamas](#) through mass killings that would turn the people's fury against this Islamic organization, it's forgetting that even Hamas' greatest opponents don't treat Israel as a neutral player or victim, and that it will always be perceived as a regime aiming to harm the Palestinians. People don't want to be a partner, even indirectly, to Israel's propaganda machine.

Another reason is that "resistance" and the "armed struggle" remain a hallowed national ethos, even for most Palestinians who can't or don't intend to join it. Even Hamas' opponents believe it grew out of legitimate opposition to Israel's occupation, viewing it as part of the Palestinian social and political fabric.

The more the settlement-and-siege policy proves that Israel aims to foil any possibility of Palestinian independence, even on territory occupied in 1967 ([the West Bank](#) and Gaza), the more support there is for

armed resistance. Diplomacy failed and unarmed popular struggle was suppressed by Israel. Negotiations and their remaining vestige, security coordination, effectively wiped out the Palestine Liberation Organization and made the Palestinian Authority hated by most Palestinians.

Amid these failures, the armed struggle and its sex appeal stick out. The support for the armed struggle may have several rationales: a wish to avenge 75 years of expulsion and oppression, a belief that this is a logical tactic against an enemy that only understands force (as proved, for example, by Egypt's Anwar Sadat in [the 1973 Yom Kippur War](#)), or a deep conviction in the inevitable need for a struggle against a settler colonial project such as Zionism. The fact that the opposition today to an armed struggle is associated with the corrupt PA actually enhances support for this track.

The unarmed resistance to the occupation – *sumud* (steadfastness) – is the default of every Palestinian, something you imbibe with your mother's milk. Armed resistance, in contrast, is considered superior because it involves a conscious willingness for self-sacrifice.

Three months into the war, Palestinians are impressed with the skills Hamas displayed during and after the attack, including its long-term planning while maintaining secrecy. It was able to arm and [tunnel](#) under Gaza beyond all the assessments of Israeli intelligence, deceiving a powerful enemy that possesses a wide web of collaborators and surveillance capabilities. Hamas has also demonstrated personal and group combat skills that has inflicted many casualties on the Israeli army.

Palestinians who deny the massacre of October 7 or don't believe most Israeli reports (especially about [rape](#)), and those who admit that there were deliberate killings of civilians, still measure Hamas' attack in relation to Israel's systematic and deliberate attacks on civilians over decades. So for them, in the competition over evil and cruelty, Israel remains the winner.

The subversive but relevant political question – whether the price paid by Gazans for Hamas' attack is worth it – comes up here and there but coyly in the form of hints. An indirect answer is provided in touching posts that express longing for the Gaza that no longer is, for community and social life, for the urban scenery and the sea.

But it seems that there is also fear that Hamas members could hear such statements and punish the people making them. This is what a former Gazan now living in the West Bank told Haaretz. People in her family were killed by Israeli airstrikes, while others had to flee to the Muwasi area in southern Gaza. It's still hard to independently verify whether such fear of Hamas relies on rumors, or on an actual silencing or punitive measures. But the fear is there.

Comments about the fear to publicly criticize Hamas' attack have also been expressed by people born in Gaza but now living in the West Bank. They don't fear physical harassment but rather the aggressive silencing of their opinion due to the public's support for the attack.

A Gaza-born man living in Ramallah commented bitterly: "It seems that the farther people are from Gaza, the more determined their support is for Hamas' right and reason to combat Israeli colonialism up to the last Gazan."

9 January (eurotopics)

[Gaza, Lebanon, Iran: a conflagration in the Mid-East? | eurotopics.net](#)

08 January 2024

Gaza, Lebanon, Iran: a conflagration in the Mid-East?

Tensions are still running high in the Middle East: the fighting between Israel and the Lebanese Hezbollah continues, as does Israel's battle against Hamas in Gaza. Shortly before the weekend, the Sunni terrorist militia Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for an attack that left more than 90 people dead at a memorial service for [Qassem Soleimani](#) in Kerman, Iran. The US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has warned of an escalation in the region.



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[EL PAÍS \(ES\) / 07 January 2024](#)

Everyone wants dominance but no one has the means

For El País a tragic dynamic stands in the way of escalation:

“The current sense of a loss of control in the Middle East is compounded by the desire of all players to impose their will at the expense of their neighbours. They have in fact been doing this for decades, but now, in the context of the war, this struggle for dominance is even more obvious, especially among the US, Israel and Iran. ... Everyone wants it, but no one has the means. ... From this it can be deduced that no one - apart from the IS and others who believe 'the worse things are, the better' - is interested in provoking a regional escalation. ... It is rather the case that everyone is dreaming of what they are not, caught up in a tragedy in which they are fanning the flames and hoping that the wind will blow in their favour.”

[Jesús A. Núñez Villaverde](#)

[□ Original article](#)

[AARGAUER ZEITUNG \(CH\) / 06 January 2024](#)

Escalation wouldn't make sense now

The Aargauer Zeitung also doesn't believe that a major conflagration is possible:

“Most likely Hamas had hoped on 7 October to draw Hezbollah and Iran into a major war against the Jewish state with the mass murder of civilians in Israel. ... At the time, Israel was surprised and in a state of shock. ... A multi-front war with Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon would probably have overwhelmed Israel. But this favourable moment for Hamas has long since passed. Seen in this light, it makes no sense for Iran and Hezbollah to be interested in triggering a major war against Israel right now.”

[Kurt Pelda](#)

[□ Original article](#)

[UNIAN \(UA\) / 05 January 2024](#)

Weaken Tehran's influence

In an article in Unian, political scientist Volodymyr Volya lists the things that could guarantee a stable peace in the region:

“One of the factors is the neutralisation of Iran's influence This issue can be resolved by sending in a security mission and creating an architecture of political power in the Gaza Strip. It would be only reasonable to involve the Arab states in such a plan. They would not be seen as occupiers and could assume responsibility for preventing a large-scale resurgence of Hamas activity in the area.”

[Wolodymyr Wolja](#)

[□ Original article](#)

[AVVENIRE \(IT\) / 05 January 2024](#)

Multiplying conflict zones

If more and more states become involved in the war, the worst is to be feared, warns Avvenire:

“Even if the jihadist matrix of the attack in Iran is confirmed, it's clear that the danger of the region being plunged into an ever broader conflict without rules and with multiplying conflict zones and involved parties is growing. ... Despite the generally pragmatic line taken by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. ... Because if the geopolitical scenario in the region becomes ever more inflamed it will inevitably slide towards the worst scenario. ... Especially since the Israeli ultra-right is fuelling violence against Palestinians in the West Bank and openly talking about ethnic cleansing, with hints about deportations.”

[Riccardo Redaelli](#)

[□ to the homepage](#)

[AARGAUER ZEITUNG \(CH\) / 04 January 2024](#)

Escalation can't be ruled out

The situation is becoming increasingly explosive, writes the Aargauer Zeitung:

“The radical Sunni Islamic State already carried out bombings in Shiite Iran last year and in 2022. Soleimani commanded the campaign of Iranian troops against the IS in Iraq ten years ago, and played a major role in driving it out of the country. ... The terror in Kerman is the latest climax in an escalation spiral in the Middle East that began with the Gaza war in October. ... Even if Israel and Iran have no interest in a new war, there is a growing danger that they will stumble into an armed conflict because of the tensions surrounding the Gaza war. Attacks like the one in Kerman harbour the risk of further escalation.”

[Thomas Seibert](#)

[□ Original article](#)

[ADEVĂRUL \(RO\) / 04 January 2024](#)

Restore lost security guarantees

Despite all the current difficulties it is in the interests of the West to keep the region in check, political analyst Cristian Unteanu stresses in Adevărul:

“The explanation for this lies in the huge dependence of the super-industrialised West on the resources of the countries in the Middle East. There are also concerns about the security of the movement of goods. ... Since the defeat in Afghanistan and the failure of the 'war on terror', the US's alliances with the states in the region, which were previously the quasi-absolute guarantee of security, have been weakened or even dangerously eroded. What's more, not only have the terrorist movements in the various countries survived, they have developed into independent, non-state military forces with their own agenda.”

[Cristian Unteanu](#)

[□ Original article](#)

[CORRIERE DELLA SERA \(IT\) / 05 January 2024](#)

Half-hearted solidarity between denominations

Hamas and Hezbollah are not as close as one might think, Corriere della Sera explains:

“At the funeral of Sheikh al-Arouri in Beirut yesterday there were dozens of Hamas flags, a few from the rival Palestinian faction Fatah, and none, not even one, from Hezbollah. ... It was a Sunni ceremony in a Sunni mosque, in a Sunni neighbourhood. Only two representatives of the Hezbollah Shiites who provided a refuge for al-Arouri in their neighbourhood of the Lebanese capital were present. Despite the fact that the Lebanese Shia leader Hassan Nasrallah had made a strong statement in his speech on Wednesday.”

[Andrea Nicastro](#)

[□ Original article](#)

[DNEVNIK \(SI\) / 04 January 2024](#)

Interest in a regional conflict?

Without specifying who the masterminds are, Dnevnik suspects that the entire region is being dragged into a war:

“The [death of al-Arouri](#), who was by no means the most important Hamas leader, is crucial mainly because of the location. ... He was killed by a drone in southern Beirut, where Hezbollah has its headquarters. The attack was an open challenge to Hezbollah to enter the war. ... When more than a eighty people were killed yesterday in Kerman, Iran, the outlines of a policy that seeks to lure the putative 'rebel forces' (Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and the Houthis) into an open regional conflict were revealed.”

[Aleš Gaube](#)

[□ Original article](#)

[EL PAÍS \(ES\) / 03 January 2024](#)

A threat to global peace

The current wars all have the potential to to escalate on a large scale, fears El País:

“While the war in Ukraine is spreading into Russia and increasing the nuclear threat, the war in the Gaza Strip is spreading across the Lebanese border with the rockets and drones of Hezbollah; in the West Bank it is spreading due to the provocations of extremist settlers; in Lebanon with the targeted assassination of Saleh al-Aroui; on the coast of Yemen with the actions of the [Houthi rebels](#). ... And this Wednesday also in Iran. ... Washington is focused on one strategic goal in both wars: preventing them from getting out of control, threatening world peace and dragging its troops into the wasp's nest - as has been the case with so many other wars over the last century. All the big wars began as local feuds that then escalated and spread.”

9 January (Jerusalem Post)

[Fauda star Idan Amedi among wounded IDF soldiers in Gaza - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](https://www.jpost.com)

Fauda star Idan Amedi among wounded IDF soldiers in Gaza

“May God and us avenge their blood,” he said of the October 7th massacre.

By [HANNAH BROWN](#) JANUARY 8, 2024 21:28 Updated: JANUARY 9, 2024 09:00



Fauda star, Idan Amedi, is one of the wounded soldiers in Gaza(photo credit: YES STUDIOS)

Idan Amedi, one of the stars of Fauda and a popular singer, is among the wounded on Monday in Gaza, his family announced in the evening. Unofficial reports on social media that have been circulating for hours said he was seriously injured while fighting in an IDF counterterrorism operation.

Amedi was wounded from shrapnel and was flown from Gaza to Sheba Hospital in Tel Hashomer, where he was sedated and is undergoing treatment for his injuries, which are serious but not life-threatening, according to a report on Keshet 12 News.

About an hour before Amedi was injured, N12 reporter Nitzan Shapira spoke to him in Gaza. "I'm fine, a little tired," he said. "It's strange to see you here in the midst of this thing, suddenly, you feel so clean to me, I don't know how to behave with it," he said.

Asked about what he was doing, he said, "What was built here is crazy, crazy," referring to the tunnels. He said that he and his fellow soldiers had been busy destroying the tunnels and had discovered many weapons in the sophisticated underground network. Asked if he had a message for viewers at home, he said, "Am Yisrael Chai! . . . We are working hard here for everyone's safety, and we love you." Downplaying his celebrity, he said, "There are so many forces here, it's sort of weird that you grabbed me in particular."

Amedi went to fight in Gaza as a reservist in the early days of the war. Amedi documented moments from his service on his Instagram account, posting in November, "This is not a scene from Fauda, this is real life," in a video recorded ahead of an operation, adding that he and his fellow soldiers were motivated by their concern for the victims of Hamas's October 7 massacre. "May God and us avenge their blood," he said.

How did he get his start?



Exclusive photo of Idan Amedi (center) minutes before the incident in which he was critically injured. (credit: Lior Samek)

Amedi began his career as a musician, competing on the eighth season of the Israeli talent competition show, Kochav Nolad. In that competition and throughout his career, he composed and performed many songs related to his military service in the combat engineering corps. He has released several popular albums, and his songs have millions of views on YouTube.

He joined the popular series, Fauda, from Yes Studios, which has become a worldwide hit on Netflix, in its second season, playing Sagi, a member of the counterterrorism unit headed by Doron (Lior Raz). In recent seasons, he began a romance with fellow counterterrorism unit member, Nurit (Rona Lee-Shimon), that was a big hit with fans.

Amedi has been married to Miriam Binyaminov, a social activist for people with disabilities, since 2018. They have a daughter and a son.

As Israelis wait for updates on Amedi's condition, his many fans around the world join his family in wishing a speedy recovery for the actor whose real-life bravery on the battlefield was as bold as anything he portrayed on television.

9 January (The Economist)

[Who is in charge of Europe? \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

A new pecking order

Who is in charge of Europe?

The East is up, Germany is down, Britain is out



image: klawe rzeczy

Jan 8th 2024 | BRUSSELS

Football is a game where “twenty-two men chase a ball for 90 minutes and at the end, the Germans always win,” quipped Gary Lineker, an English player. For decades the eu had similarly predictable political dynamics: whether composed of six countries or 12 or 27, member states chased compromises until whatever had been stitched up by France and Germany was accepted by all. But the old model of dominance by its two biggest members has long been creaking. As Europe faces up to repeated crises a new, more fluid geography of power is taking shape.

Three years of pandemic then war in Ukraine have helped recast the European project. This includes shifting the balance of who matters. Defence and [eastward enlargement](#), once dormant policy areas, are now priorities—giving a new voice to Ukraine’s neighbours in central Europe. The rise of China, and the prospect of resurgent Trumpism in America, has caused the eu to rethink its economic arrangements—often along statist French lines. Climate imperatives have reinforced the value of taking action at collective level—an approach favoured by the eu’s quasi-federal institutions in Brussels. And from Finland to France, populists on the hard right are gaining influence ahead of European Parliament elections in June.

Not so long ago Angela Merkel was the continent’s undoubted leader. Her successor as German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, has not taken on her mantle. Many looked to Emmanuel Macron to seize it, not least the French president himself. But he faces an increasingly fraught political situation at home, which on January 8th resulted in his firing his prime minister in the hope of a reboot. He cannot run for re-election in 2027, and he exudes a self-confident manner that often grates among his fellow eu leaders. Germany and France carry unmatched authority when aligned. But they seldom are.

With no clear leadership, who matters these days depends on what is at stake. Take defence and security, issues at the front of everyone’s minds given the situation in Ukraine (and more recently, the Middle East). After Russia’s invasion in February 2022, few looked to Germany for direction: it had let itself become hooked on Russian gas, and its armed forces were so [unfit for purpose](#) that Mr Scholz declared the need for a *Zeitenwende*, a change in the spirit of the times. In contrast, countries in central Europe, led by Poland and the three Baltic states, felt vindicated after years of warning about the danger posed by Russia, their former overlord.

Their influence has been seen in two policy shifts. One is the eu itself paying for weapons to be sent to Ukraine, a first step into defence spending. The second is enlargement, which had previously been off the agenda; no

country has joined since Croatia in 2013. Now nine candidates are in various stages of talks (see map). Most notable is Ukraine, whose cause was carried by central Europe despite initial reservations from France and Denmark; on December 14th eu leaders agreed to start formal accession talks. If and when the bloc expands to 36 countries—which will take years, if not decades—the centre of gravity will shift decisively eastward.



image: the economist

More broadly, the central Europeans now have enough heft to push back on ideas emanating from farther west. Chief among them is “strategic autonomy”, a shape-shifting concept pushed by Mr Macron. This holds that Europe should be able to act independently of others, for example by carrying more of the burden of defending itself. Policymakers in Poland or Slovakia find the security guarantees proffered by nato—and thus America—far more convincing. French calls for eu armed forces to buy European (ie, often French) military kit have been largely ignored.

Still, for all the sway central Europe holds when it comes to Ukraine, its voice is scarcely heard when it comes to other bits of European policymaking. (The moral authority accumulated in Warsaw and Bratislava by helping Ukraine was somewhat dented after they closed their borders to its farm exports last April, irritating leaders in Kyiv.) For when it comes to economic policy, Europe is being made to think ever more in French terms. Here, Mr Macron’s clarion call for strategic autonomy has proved far more potent. Driven by a long-standing distrust of globalisation—and new fears about supply chains that can be disrupted by pandemics or messy geopolitics—France wants the continent to be more self-sufficient. Tensions between America and China, as well as the prospect of a new Trump administration come 2025, have made other Europeans listen.

Mr Macron has pushed the notion that Europe has been “naive” in its dealings with the rest of the world, keeping its markets open at when its trading partners have not (for example America with its protectionist green-transition plan, or China with outsize subsidies). eu rules banning national governments from coddling favoured industries were shelved during covid-19, and never snapped back. With a mantra of “Europe first”, politicians now wield more control over the shape of the economy. The French idea of Europe having an [industrial policy](#) was once taboo, but now it is the accepted approach.

France’s dirigiste impulses prevailed because its ideas filled the vacuum left by Britain, which voted to leave the eu in 2016 and finally exited four years later. Had it remained a member of the club, it would have foiled French plans with enthusiasm. Now the task is left to its erstwhile northern European allies, such as Denmark, Ireland or the Netherlands, as well as the commission in Brussels. But that loose alliance can merely water down French plans, not prevent them entirely.

Britain is not the only one not to be found at the eu’s top table. A more surprising absentee is Germany: Mr Scholz is seen as missing-in-action on the European scene. A tricky coalition including lefty Greens and free-

market liberals has reduced his ability to cut deals in Brussels. “The German coalition moves slower than the debates within the eu,” rues a senior Brussels official. That has cost it influence.

Germany’s absence has often been France’s gain. Many eu policy decisions have a distinctly French tinge these days, for example the absence of any major new trade deals (abhorrent to French farmers) or a partial relaxation of European rules limiting budget deficits. But mostly the absence of German engagement stymies Mr Macron’s ambitions: federalist schemes hatched in Paris truly take flight only when counterparts in Berlin accede to them. Nobody thinks the poor chemistry between the chilly, northern Mr Scholz and the effervescently Europhile Mr Macron will soon improve.

In other circumstances, France might have sought alliances that could have further shifted the balance of power. But there are few obvious places to look. Italy is led by Giorgia Meloni, whose hard-right populism makes dealing with the mainstream difficult. The Netherlands is losing its long-standing premier, Mark Rutte, perhaps in favour of Geert Wilders, an ideological ally of Ms Meloni. Spain’s chaotic politics have limited its appetite to sway the European debate. The recently returned Donald Tusk in Poland is liberal and pro-eu, but he has his work cut out at home.

Perhaps the biggest beneficiary of this vacuum has been the eu’s centralised institutions in Brussels. Under the stewardship of Ursula von der Leyen, herself a German, since 2019 the European Commission, the eu’s executive arm, has accumulated more power than ever before. The 32,000-strong Brussels machine has long been a formidable regulatory force, as Silicon Valley barons have found over the years. But increasingly it has weighed in on matters of politics and geopolitics, too.

This started with covid-19, when governments asked the commission to oversee the procurement of vaccines for the entire bloc. An upshot of the pandemic-induced downturn was Next Generation eu, a €807bn (\$890bn) recovery fund of loans and grants. The commission, by being in charge of its workings, has been able to steer the money in ways that match its own priorities, for example plans to slash carbon emissions to net zero by 2050—an ambition officials in Brussels are far more enthusiastic about than many national politicians, who have to defend the policy to voters wary that the green agenda will further dent their purchasing power.

Having more discretion over eu money has given the commission fresh authority, dictating to member states how the cash should be spent. These powers can be used as a stick: Hungary and Poland have been deprived of money for hobbling the domestic rule of law, for example the manner in which courts are run. Viktor Orban, Hungary’s authoritarian leader has been clamouring for around €30bn in suspended eu money. In Poland, Mr Tusk in the autumn campaigned in part on his ability to unlock the eu funds that had been blocked due to his predecessor’s policies.

Is this the sign of a federal Europe rising, a European superstate in the making? To the likes of Hungary and Poland, it can feel like it. But there are limits to the powers of the commission. Part of Mrs von der Leyen’s influence stems from the fact she co-ordinates closely with national capitals, for example on sanctions against Russia. She can sway the debate, for example in Europe’s attitude to China, where she pushed for a “de-risking” approach to trade, less confrontational than the “decoupling” suggested by America. Arguably she is the closest thing to a European leader these days. But her power still depends on others following; she will have to convince national leaders to reappoint her for a second term after the European elections in June. And Brussels still spends little more than 1% of the bloc’s total gdp.

Elections have a way of rejigging the European order, too. Populists have fared well in the Netherlands and Slovakia, not so in Poland and Spain. They are expected to gain ground in the European Parliament’s elections. The most powerful force in post-war Europe—a squishy consensus in favour of liberal values and the rule of law—may come under threat.

Once the Euro-elections are out of the way, attention will turn to those in America, still the principal guarantor of European security and a major contributor to Ukraine’s war effort. A Trump victory would be greeted with widespread horror. That votes cast an ocean away from Paris, Berlin or Warsaw will matter so much to Europe’s future will surely unleash arguments that the architecture of power there still has much evolving left to do.

9 January (FAZ)

[Ralf Dahrendorf begrüßt die Stuttgarter Dreikönige \(faz.net\)](#)

HANKS WELT:

Lob des Konflikts

Die liberale Demokratie braucht offensive Verteidiger. Einer davon war der große Soziologe Ralf Dahrendorf. Sich seine Ideen ins Gedächtnis zu rufen, würde nicht nur vielen Liberalen gut tun.

[In Praise of Conflict

The liberal democracy needs outspoken defenders. One of them was the great sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf. Remembering his ideas would not only benefit many liberals.]

VON [RAINER HANK](#)

-AKTUALISIERT AM 08.01.2024-15:33



Ralf Dahrendorf auf einem Bild aus dem Jahre 1983 Bild: Barbara Klemm

Die liberale Demokratie ist in Gefahr. Das hat sich herumgesprochen. Liberale Demokratien, grob skizziert, zeichnen sich durch ein Bekenntnis zur Gewaltenteilung und Rechtsstaatlichkeit aus. Sowie durch die Anerkennung von Meinungsfreiheit und den Schutz von Minderheiten. Und schließlich durch den Glauben, dass Kapitalismus und Marktwirtschaft die besten und freiesten Arrangements sind, den Wohlstand der Menschen zu mehren, zumal dann, wenn darin das Bekenntnis zur grenzüberschreitenden Freizügigkeit für Waren, Dienstleistungen, Kapital und Menschen impliziert ist.

Lange sind die Menschen mit diesen Überzeugungen gut gefahren. **Inzwischen ändert sich das. An die Stelle der Anerkennung von wechselseitig akzeptierten Regeln tritt das Pochen auf die Gesetze der Macht, verbunden mit der Androhung von Krieg und Gewalt. Anstelle des Glaubens an den Wohlstand generierenden Freihandel tritt der Rückzug auf eine Nationalökonomie, die meint, sich selbst zu genügen, und Autarkie beschwört.**

Dabei wird das Vertrauen in Risiko und Selbstverantwortung für Unternehmer wie Arbeitnehmer zunehmend ersetzt durch einen **Wettlauf um Subventionen und Sozialleistungen**. Schließlich wird auch der liberale Wettbewerb um das beste Argument ersetzt durch protektionistische Diskursregeln darüber, wer überhaupt berechtigt ist, sich zu äußern und wozu. **Widerspruch gilt als unfein, es könnte sich ja jemand traumatisiert fühlen.**

Ein Verteidiger der liberalen Demokratie

Merkwürdig finde ich, wie eigentümlich defensiv liberale Denker auf diese Bedrohung ihrer Grundüberzeugungen reagieren. Anstatt offensiv die Gegner einer liberalen Demokratie zu attackieren, üben sie sich in schuldbewusster Selbstkritik.

Prominent steht dafür **Francis Fukuyama**, von dem nach dem Fall des Kommunismus die These stammt, illiberale Systeme seien endgültig zum Scheitern verurteilt, weil sie der liberalen Grundidee (Schutzrechte des Bürgers gegen den Staat, Rechtsstaatlichkeit, Marktwirtschaft) widersprechen.

Dass es anders gekommen ist, lastet er weniger den Feinden des Liberalismus an als vielmehr den Liberalen selbst: Die Rechtsliberalen hätten es mit dem Turbokapitalismus übertrieben und den Liberalismus zum Neoliberalismus verunstaltet, während die Linksliberalen sich in ein wokes Schneckenhaus verkrochen und dabei den liberalen Universalismus verraten hätten. So gesehen wären es nicht die Populisten, die den modischen Illiberalismus zu verantworten hätten, sondern die Liberalen selbst.

Aus Anlass des traditionellen Dreikönigstreffens der deutschen Freien Demokraten am vergangenen Wochenende habe ich mich auf die Suche gemacht nach einer offensiven Verteidigung der liberalen Demokratie. Und bin fündig geworden bei **Ralf Dahrendorf** und seiner Schrift „**Gesellschaft und Demokratie in Deutschland**“ aus dem Jahr 1965, also vor knapp sechzig Jahren erschienen.

Dahrendorf war damals gerade 36 Jahre alt und galt als akademisches Wunderkind. **Studiert hatte er Philosophie, klassische Philologie, später dann Soziologie in Deutschland und an der London School of Economics.** Als „Gesellschaft und Demokratie“ erschien, war er schon seit sieben Jahren Professor, zunächst in Hamburg, zum Zeitpunkt der Veröffentlichung in **Tübingen**.

1966 wechselte er an die neu gegründete **Universität Konstanz**, die man damals eine Reformuniversität nannte. Zugleich engagierte er sich als FDP-Mitglied im baden-württembergischen Landtag, wurde später Staatsminister im Auswärtigen Amt unter Walter Scheel und EU-Kommissar in Brüssel. Leicht haben sich Dahrendorf und die **FDP** nie miteinander getan; **Intellektuelle in der Politik sind notorische Störenfriede.**

Gleichheit ermöglicht Ungleichheit

Dahrendorfs biographischer Weg zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik spiegelt sich auch in der Anlage von „Gesellschaft und Demokratie“: Das Buch vereint historische Erklärung, soziologische Analyse und engagierte politische Theorie, aus heutiger Sicht **eine Ausnahmeschrift, für den liberalen Lernprozess der Bundesrepublik deutlich wirkungsvoller als etwa die negative Hermetik der Frankfurter Schule.** Das Buch erreichte ein ungewöhnlich großes Publikum und wurde rasch ein **wissenschaftlicher Bestseller.**

Doch was steht drin? Ich konzentriere mich auf **drei für eine liberale Demokratie zentrale Begriffe: Gleichheit, Konflikt und Freiheit.**

Dass ein Liberaler mit dem Lob der **Gleichheit** beginnt, ist nur auf den ersten Blick überraschend. Denn **es geht ihm um gleiche Bürgerrechte für alle, nicht um gleichen sozialen Status oder egalisierende Umverteilung.** **Dialektisch** formuliert Dahrendorf, **man könnte den Sinn der Gleichheitsrechte geradezu darin sehen, dass sie Ungleichheit ermöglichen, sofern diese nicht an die Lebensgrundlagen des Einzelnen greift.**

Der Konflikt ist ein produktiver Treiber

Aktueller noch ist die Anerkennung des **Konflikts als konstituierendes Prinzip einer liberalen Gesellschaft.** Konflikte sind gerade keine Störfälle einer demokratischen Gesellschaft. Sondern umgekehrt wäre Harmonie Ausdruck einer gefährlichen Sehnsucht nach Konformität und Synthese, die Andersartiges und Sperriges nicht dulden will. Der Konflikt ist somit nicht nur produktiver Treiber im politischen Wettbewerb der Parteien und Motivator im wirtschaftlichen Wettbewerb der Unternehmen, sondern auch **Legitimation einer wechselseitigen Anerkennung unterschiedlicher Lebensformen, vornehm Ambiguitätstoleranz genannt.**

Dass der andere anderer Meinung ist, ist nicht Ärgernis, sondern Herausforderung. These und Antithese brauchen keine Synthese, auch wenn die Deutschen das gerne glauben. Konflikte in Regierungskoalitionen – abschätzig als „Streit“ denunziert – wären dann dringend erforderlich; sie können verhindern, dass Regierungsgewalt missbraucht wird.

Dahrendorfs Lob des Konflikts mündet schließlich in eine **Theorie der Freiheit:** „**Konflikt ist Freiheit, weil durch ihn allein die Vielfalt und Unvereinbarkeit menschlicher Interessen und Wünsche in einer Welt notorischer Ungewissheit angemessenen Ausdruck finden kann.**“ **Nicht Wahrheitsstreben, sondern der**

liberal verstandene Wettbewerb der Meinungen bewirke Fortschritt und biete ebenso Schutz vor der „Dogmatisierung des Irrtums“.

Dahrendorf – wie gesagt Soziologe, FDP-Mitglied und vor allem frech – bot seine **Konflikttheorie an als Medizin gegen die „Entmündigung des Einzelnen“ durch den Staat** wie auch gegen die „verstaubte Liberalität“ seiner Gegenwart. Wer ahnen möchte, wo Dahrendorf den Staub wahrgenommen haben könnte, der mag sich im Internet Archivberichte über das Dreikönigstreffen der FDP im Januar 1964 ansehen. Motto: „Bewährtes erhalten – Zukunft gestalten.“ Alles ziemlich verschnarcht. Dahrendorf und eine Reihe politischer Mitstreiter haben dagegen in den späten Sechzigerjahren nicht nur dem politischen Liberalismus zu einem Aufbruch verholfen, sondern auch zu einer Liberalisierung der deutschen Gesellschaft beigetragen.

9 January (The Economist)

[The energy transition could make India even more unequal \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Powering down

The energy transition could make India even more unequal

Rich Indian states are sunny and windy, while poor ones have lots of coal



image: saumya khandelwal/redux/eyevine

Jan 4th 2024 | MUMBAI

India's energy transition is well under way. Generation capacity from renewable sources nearly doubled in the five years to last November, from 72 gigawatts (gw) to 133gw. The government of Narendra Modi has set a target of generating 500gw from renewable sources, or half the projected total capacity, by 2030.

But coal will remain an important part of the mix. According to a study by niti Aayog, a government think-tank, demand for it will not peak until 2035-2040. That helps explain why India has given itself until 2070 to hit net-zero emissions. This should provide latitude to develop its economy—and also give the regions most reliant on fossil fuels time to adjust.

India's mineral riches are largely in its eastern and central states. These are among its poorest places. Without proper planning, dwindling coal revenues could throw their economies into disarray. Neither can they rely on much investment in renewables. In a cruel quirk of geography, six of the eight Indian states that receive the most sunshine and wind are in the prosperous south and west.

Consider Jharkhand. It is India's biggest coal-producing state, with 28% of proven reserves. It is also grindingly poor: 28% of its people are classified as living in extreme poverty, the second-highest rate of any state. Mining is a big chunk of its economy, accounting for 78% of non-tax revenues. Of its 24 districts, 18 produce coal or host coal-dependent industries.

Yet of India's 1050gw wind-and-solar potential, Jharkhand accounts for just 18gw, or 1.7%. By contrast, four states in south India and two in its west, along with Madhya Pradesh in the middle and the desert state of Rajasthan in the north-west, account for two-thirds. "The power vector will change from [flowing] east to west or centre to south to the reverse... It is inevitable," says Sutirtha Bhattacharya, a former chairman of Coal India, a state-owned firm that is the world's biggest coal producer.

India's energy economy is already shifting. Nearly 75% of the country's installed solar and wind generation capacity in 2020 was in the six southern and western states. Less than 5% was in ten northern, eastern and central states, excluding Madhya Pradesh. Though coal production and consumption are still growing, coal's share in the electricity-generation mix declined from 57% to 48% in the five years to last November. States such as Jharkhand face a prospect of having to buy energy from other states, even as their revenues from coal

decrease. Their fiscal deficits are likely to balloon, according to a working paper by Rohit Chandra and Sanjay Mitra for the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, a research institution in Delhi.

Jharkhand, the state that will be hardest-hit, is already thinking ahead. In late 2022 it set up a task-force to plan for what it calls a “just transition”. “We were considered to be blessed because we have so much coal. Today people are saying it’s a curse,” says Ajay Kumar Rastogi, the task-force’s chairman. “But we see it as an opportunity for the state to plan.”

The task-force is charged with devising policies to help exploit whatever solar potential Jharkhand has, perhaps on disused coalfields, and to incentivise green industries such as hydrogen. It is also working to ensure its policies are implemented by the state’s bureaucracy. This is an example to other affected states. Chhattisgarh, a similar case, is said to be considering setting up a task-force of its own.

Limiting the negative fallout of the energy transition will be important not just for such states, but also for regions that stand to benefit and for India overall. As part of its federal compact, richer states help fund poorer ones by paying more into central government coffers than they draw out. If Jharkhand and its peers grow poorer, southern and western states will find themselves footing a larger bill. So far, write Mr Chandra and Mr Mitra, the “central government ministries have shown little interest” in thinking through, and mitigating, such economic consequences. That needs to change.

Silicon lowlands

Europe at last has an answer to Silicon Valley

ASML, a mighty Dutch tech firm, is at the heart of it

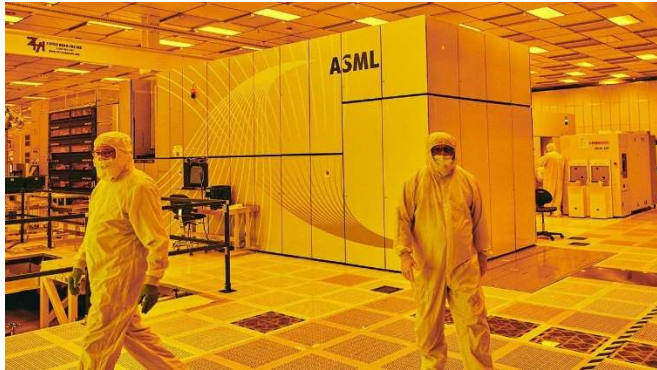


image: eyevine

Jan 8th 2024 | NEUKÖLLN AND VELDHOVEN

Ten times a second an object shaped like a thick pizza box and holding a silicon wafer takes off three times faster than a manned rocket. For a few milliseconds it moves at a constant speed before being halted abruptly with astonishing precision—within a single atom of its target. This is not a high-energy physics experiment. It is the latest lithography machine dreamed up by asml, a manufacturer of [chipmaking tools](#), to project nanoscopic chip patterns onto silicon wafers. On January 5th [Intel](#), an American semiconductor giant, became the first proud owner of this technical marvel's initial components for assembly at [its factory in Oregon](#).



image: the economist

Like the outwardly unassuming machine, its Dutch maker is full of surprises. The company's market value has quadrupled in the past five years, to €260bn (\$285bn), making it Europe's most valuable technology firm (see chart 1). Between 2012 and 2022 its revenues and net income both rose roughly four-fold, to €21bn and €6bn, respectively. At the end of 2023 asml's operating margin exceeded 34%, staggering for a hardware business and more than that of Apple, the world's biggest maker of consumer electronics (see chart 2).

Such stellar performance, which is likely to shine even more brightly when asml reports quarterly results on January 24th, is now routine. The firm holds a monopoly on a key link in the world's most critical supply chain: without its kit it is next to impossible to make cutting-edge computer processors, such as those that go into smartphones and data centres where artificial intelligence (ai) is trained. With global semiconductor sales forecast to double to \$1.3trn by 2032, every big country and every big chipmaker wants asml's gear. The company has become so important in the Sino-American tech-tussle that, as it emerged at the start of the year, President Joe Biden's administration pressed asml to cancel planned deliveries of even its older machines to China.



image: the economist

Yet asml's spectacular success is also underpinned by two other, less obvious factors. The company has created a network of suppliers and technology partners that may be the closest thing Europe has to Silicon Valley. And its business model ingeniously combines hardware with software and data. These unsung elements of asml's success challenge the notion that the old continent is incapable of developing a successful digital platform.

asml's complex machines perform a simple task. They project the blueprints of computer chips onto photosensitive silicon wafers. In 1986, when its first model was delivered, individual transistors measured micrometres and the company's kit was almost like a glorified photocopier, explains Marc Hijink, a Dutch journalist and author of "Focus—How asml Conquered the Chip World", a new book. Today, with transistors shrunk by a factor of a thousand, asml lithography gear is possibly the most sophisticated equipment ever sold commercially.

asml and its partners pulled off this incredible shrinking trick with engineering that has a science-fiction ring to it. The process starts with powerful lasers incinerating droplets of molten tin, each no thicker than a fifth of a human hair and travelling at more than 250km per hour. This produces extremely short-wavelength light (extreme ultraviolet, or euv, in the jargon) which is then reflected by a set of mirrors so smooth that the biggest imperfection is no bigger than the distance grass can grow in a millisecond. To make all this worth a chipmaker's while—the latest model costs more than \$300m—and expose enough chips, the object that holds the wafer, called a "table", has to accelerate faster than a rocket and come to a stop at exactly the right spot.

To get an idea of what it takes to build such a device, pay a visit to a nondescript factory in Neukölln, a neighbourhood of Berlin. This is where asml makes, among other things, "mirror blocks", the main part of a wafer table. These are sturdy pieces of a special ceramic material, a square 8cm thick and measuring about 50cm on each side. Some get polished, measured, repolished, remeasured and so on, for nearly a year—until they are exactly the right shape, including allowances for the fact that they will sag a few nanometers once installed.

The factory is emblematic of the company's unusual network of suppliers. Although its owner, Berliner Glas, was acquired by asml in 2020, it lives halfway between being an independent company and a unit of the Dutch parent. Something similar is true of the 800 or so mostly European firms that help put together asml's machines. asml only owns stakes in a few of them. Yet their interdependence makes them act like a single organisation.

asml outsources over 90% of what it costs to build one of its engineering marvels and directly employs fewer than half the estimated 100,000 people the feat requires. This is partly owing to history. When the company was spun out of Philips, a Dutch electronics giant, in 1984, asml seemed stillborn. Its idea to build a "silicon stepper", the original name of the chip-copying machine, was promising. But it had not much else going for it, in particular no production lines. It instead relied on specialist suppliers, many of them also former Philips units, such as vdl, a contract manufacturer.

Outsourcing is also a function of technology. The different parts of a lithography machine are so cutting-edge that doing it all could easily overwhelm any single company. "You have to decide where you add the most value and let others do the rest," explains a former asml insider. Semiconductor economics likewise favours not doing everything yourself. The chip industry is prone to booms and busts, because demand moves up and down much more quickly than manufacturers can install capacity. Prices rise and fall as shortages turn to gluts. Makers of chipmaking gear are exposed to the same cycles. That makes keeping all the assets in-house risky; better to transfer some of that risk on to suppliers, who can in turn limit it by catering to customers who work to different business cycles.

The required hyper-specialisation prevents the risk-reducing double sourcing that is prevalent in many other industries. In the case of asml, technical demands are so high and production volumes so low (it shipped 317 machines in 2022) that it would be uneconomical to manage several suppliers for a single part even if they could be found. For such crucial components as lasers and mirrors, which are made by Trumpf and Zeiss, two German firms, respectively, it is impossible. Wayne Allan, who is in charge of sourcing on asml's board, talks of "co-dependency".

The upshot is that asml mostly limits itself to being the system's architect. It decides who does what, defines the interfaces between the key parts of its machines, which it calls "modules", and carries out research and development. This set-up makes it easier to test the pieces and transport the machines (shipping the latest model to Intel involved 250 crates and 13 containers). It also gives suppliers more freedom, including to experiment with novel technologies.

It all works because asml has cultivated a culture of trust and transparency while preserving elements of competition. Suppliers are not squeezed to the last penny. Quite the opposite: "We need them to stay healthy," says Mr Allan. Information flows freely throughout the network, particularly between asml, Trumpf and Zeiss. Engineering teams from different firms work together, patents are shared, as is some financial data and, sometimes, profits. "At meetings you can't tell who is from which firm," reports a former Zeiss executive.

At the same time, many suppliers compete with each other indirectly, for instance providing similar parts for different generations of asml's machines. If a supplier runs into trouble, asml dispatches a rapid intervention force, sometimes even if such help is not welcome. As a last resort, asml can buy a supplier, as was the case with Berliner Glas.

It is this loosely coupled structure that allowed asml to outcompete its more vertically integrated rivals, reckons Willy Shih of Harvard Business School. Nikon and Canon, two Japanese firms which once led the market for lithography machines, never managed to commercialise the more complex euv kit. (Canon is trying to stage a return with "nanoimprint" lithography, which physically stamps chip designs onto wafers.)

asml is now entrenching this dominance by complementing its hardware with software and data. When real rockets take off, their trajectory is wobbly and needs to be smoothed out by a guidance computer, which collects data to predict and adapt their course. A wafer table in a lithography machine is similarly likely to miss the mark at first. The same is true of the rest of the device. It is only with the help of lots of data and machine-

learning, a type of ai, that they can be fine-tuned—and made more accurate. This is rapidly turning asml into an ai platform.

Once Intel has received all the modules for its new machine, it will take about two weeks to put the thing together. Adapting it to its new location will take several months. Bits may have moved in transport, gravity may be slightly different in Oregon from in Veldhoven and other machines nearby may create interference. Tests will collect reams of data and trigger adjustments. “We have thousands of knobs we can turn to put it into a perfect state,” says Jos Benschop, another asml board member.

asml also uses the data from one machine to turn the knobs of others. Of the roughly 5,500 devices it has sold since its founding 39 years ago, 95% are still in operation and many send data home to headquarters. That will make its products even better, leading to more chipmaking, which generates even more data—and so on, in a “flywheel” more typically associated with digital services such as internet search. Even if Canon, Nikon or a Chinese competitor finally managed to build euv machines as powerful as asml’s, it would not be able to catch up with the Dutch firm, argues Pierre Ferragu of New Street Research, a research firm. “It’s mathematically impossible, as long as asml keeps collecting data from all the installed base.”

If rivals cannot topple asml, can anything? Physics is one potential hurdle. Even with the best ai, you cannot shrink transistors for ever (certainly not in a commercially viable way). If technical requirements become too otherworldly the supplier network may unravel. Economics is another. Chipmakers may recoil at asml’s data hunger, which extends to other linked devices in their factories. Some have apparently started to push back against its digital expansion, insiders say.

Then there is geopolitics. asml’s share price dipped after news broke about the cancelled deliveries to China. The worry is less over lower sales; asml cannot build its machines fast enough anyway. Of greater concern is the risk that strict export controls could in time push China to build its own chipmaking-gear industry. That could one day threaten asml’s position at the centre of the industry. For the time being, though, the company’s network and its network effects remain indomitable. Who said Europe couldn’t do tech?

[9 January \(The Guardian\)](#)

[Franz Beckenbauer obituary | Franz Beckenbauer | The Guardian](#)

Obituary

Franz Beckenbauer

One of Germany's greatest footballers who went on to be a hugely successful manager of the national team

[Brian Glanville](#)

Mon 8 Jan 2024 21.42 CET



Franz Beckenbauer of Germany, right, shooting past Bobby Moore of England, left, in the World Cup quarter-final that Germany won 3-2 in Mexico, 1970. Photograph: Ullstein Bild/Getty Images

Franz Beckenbauer, who has died aged 78, was widely regarded as the best footballer Germany has ever produced. A pre-eminent figure in the world game after the second world war, he was a phenomenally successful and innovative player who captained West Germany to a World Cup win in 1974 and later managed his country to two consecutive World Cup finals, winning the second of them in 1990 in Rome.

As a club manager he added a Bundesliga title and a Uefa Cup win to his World Cup victory at international level and as a player he won a World Cup, a European Championship, three European Cups and five Bundesliga titles in [Germany](#). However, more than his capacity for winning, it was the elegant, intelligent nature of his play that attracted such admiration around the world.

While he was still a teenager at Bayern Munich, Beckenbauer had become the virtual inventor of what came to be called “total football”. Watching the Milan team Internazionale on television, he was impressed by the attacking forays of their big left-back, [Giacinto Facchetti](#). He asked himself why a defender might not attack from a central role as well as from the flanks, and thus became Bayern's attacking libero. It was a role that became the cornerstone of the total football practised by Bayern and their great Dutch rivals, Ajax, in the early 1970s.



Franz Beckenbauer, right, and Johan Cruyff vying for the ball during the World Cup final between Germany and the Netherlands in Munich, 1974, which Germany won 2-1. Photograph: EPA

Captained by Beckenbauer – a tall, erect figure always ready to sweep out of defence – Bayern at first played second fiddle to Ajax, but eventually emulated them by winning the European Cup three times in a row, between 1974 and 1976. Before that sequence Beckenbauer had already captained an outstanding West Germany team to the European Championship title in 1972, beating the Soviet Union 3-0 in the final. Two years later he led his country to victory in the 1974 World Cup on German soil, defeating the Netherlands 2-1. He played 103 times for West Germany and appeared in 427 league matches for Bayern.

Franz was born to Antonie (nee Huphauf) and Franz Sr, a postal worker in the Munich suburb of Giesing, near the stadium where he would make his name. By the age of eight he was already regarded as a technically accomplished player, even in a city where footballers and football proliferated. Munich 1860 was the club he favoured; [Bayern Munich](#), where he would later excel, were small beer at the time; an upstart by comparison.

However, Munich 1860's loss would be Bayern's gain. In 1958 he was playing for the junior team of a little local club, SC 1906, which actually closed that year, and expected to join 1860. "But in the last game we played for SC 1906 against 1860," he related, "and a half-back gave me a slap. That was enough for me. 1860 would never get me. And so Bayern took me into its ranks." Beckenbauer was, with rare exceptions, always a sporting player, who declared that he would rather be fouled and leave the field than commit a foul himself.



Franz Beckenbauer managing Germany in a 1-1 draw against Italy in the group stage of the European Championship in Düsseldorf, Germany, 1988. Photograph: Bongarts/Getty Images

He made his debut for Bayern Munich in 1964 – when they were in the German second division – and in his first season helped them gain promotion to the Bundesliga.

Thereafter Bayern rapidly became a major force both at home and in Europe, winning the German Cup in 1966–67 and the European Cup Winners' Cup in 1967 (against Rangers). Beckenbauer was made team captain for the 1968–69 season and led the club to its first league title that year, subsequently winning three league championships in a row from 1972 to 1974 and that hat-trick of European Cup wins in 1974-76. Under his inspirational leadership (he was nicknamed the Kaiser for his commanding, almost imperious presence) the Bayern team of that era, which also featured greats such as the goalkeeper Sepp Maier and the centre-forward [Gerd Müller](#), established itself as one of the most accomplished club sides of all time.

Beckenbauer's first game for the national team, at the age of 21 in 1965, had come even before Bayern's dramatic rise to prominence. He was the star member of the West Germany side in the 1966 World Cup finals, where they were runners-up in the Wembley final to England, and again in the 1970 finals in Mexico, where they finished in third place. [Helmut Schön](#), the tall, gentle West Germany team manager who was almost a father figure to Beckenbauer, for many years refused to let him play the libero role for his country. When he finally relented in 1974, West Germany won the competition and Beckenbauer lifted the trophy as captain.



Franz Beckenbauer lifting the World Cup trophy after Germany's 2-1 victory against the Netherlands in the 1974 World Cup final in Munch. Photograph: Schnoerrer/EPA

All seemed set fair for a fourth World Cup campaign for Beckenbauer in Argentina in 1978, but to general surprise, and at the age of only 31, he retired from international football in 1977 to switch to play for New York Cosmos in the North American Soccer League.

It was an unusual move after almost 15 years at the highest level of the game with Bayern, but the contract was lucrative and enormous crowds came to see him play with [Pelé](#) and other stars at the Giants Stadium, New Jersey.

In his four seasons with the Cosmos the team won the national Soccer Bowl on three occasions (1977, 1978 and 1980). "I've done everything in my life – championships for Bayern Munich and the World Cup for Germany – but the New York Cosmos was the best time of my life," he said. "At Munich it was all German players; at the Cosmos it was 14 nationalities and Pelé."

He returned to Germany to play for Hamburg (1980-82), where he picked up another Bundesliga winners' medal at the end of the 1981-82 season before going back to the US for one final campaign with the Cosmos in 1983 and then retiring. In his career in domestic leagues he had made 587 appearances and scored 81 goals.

When Beckenbauer retired he seemed to have no ambition to go into management, so it was a surprise that in 1984 he agreed to manage West Germany in succession to [Jupp Derwall](#). Never before had a West Germany manager been appointed who had not come through the exhaustive qualifying programme of the German football association, one which involved not only the passing of examinations but the running of minor clubs.

In appointing Beckenbauer, the German authorities were abandoning firm principle in the hope that his immense prestige and authority would prevail; and they were not disappointed.

The team he inherited was in the doldrums, yet at the 1986 Mexico World Cup, suitably inspired, they reached a final in which they were plainly inferior to an Argentina team that went into a 2-0 lead, only for the Germans to fight back, catch them up, and then lose 3-2. Four years later, in a grisly final in Rome, Germany had their revenge, beating Argentina 1-0 with a penalty by Andreas Brehme to win the final.

Shortly afterwards Beckenbauer resigned his position to become technical director of the French club Marseille on a two-year contract worth nearly £500,000, taking a German physical trainer with him.

But for once his writ did not run. The French players were unhappy with the training and Beckenbauer withdrew after just four months. He was far happier when he returned to Bayern Munich to serve as manager over two short spells – in 1993-94 and in 1996 – during which time he collected two further honours, the Bundesliga title in 1994 and the Uefa Cup in 1996. Thereafter he was president of the club for two years.

In 1998 he became vice-president of the German football association and at the end of the 90s headed the successful bid by Germany to host the 2006 World Cup, chairing the subsequent organising committee. He was named honorary president of Bayern Munich in 2009, a position he held until his death.

In 1966 he married his first wife, Brigitte; they divorced in 1990. Later that year he married Sybille Weimer; they divorced in 2004. He is survived by Heidi Burmester, his third wife, and by four children, Thomas, Michael, Noel and Francesca. A fifth child, Stephan, who was also a footballer and played for Bayern Munich, died in 2015.

Franz Anton Beckenbauer, footballer, born 11 September 1945; died 7 January 2024

9 January (NYT)

[Franz Beckenbauer, ‘Der Kaiser’ of World Soccer, Dies at 78 - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

Franz Beckenbauer, ‘Der Kaiser’ of World Soccer, Dies at 78

In West Germany, he revolutionized his central defense position and was one of only three people to win the World Cup as a player and a coach.



Franz Beckenbauer, second from right, led West Germany to a World Cup championship as a player in 1974. Credit...Associated Press

By [Rory Smith](#) and [Andrew Das](#)

Jan. 8, 2024

Franz Beckenbauer, a World Cup winner as a player and a coach who became the defining figure in German soccer for more than half a century, died on Sunday. He was 78.

He died at his home, his family confirmed in a statement. The statement did not specify where he lived or state the cause of death. His relatives had previously suggested to German media outlets that he was in failing health.

Known throughout an illustrious, trophy-laden career as “Der Kaiser,” Beckenbauer had retreated from public view in recent years, buffeted by the death of one of his five children, Stephan, from a brain tumor in 2015, and by a heart bypass operation the next year.

Before then he had been a totemic, magnetic presence in both German soccer and German public life. He was a player, a defender of unusual poise and elegance. He was a coach, exhibiting a deft touch and an easy manner with his players. And he was an executive, showing himself to be a skilled diplomat and consummate networker.

Most of all, though, Beckenbauer was a winner. He won relentlessly at Bayern Munich, the club he joined as a teenager and with which he became so intertwined that Uli Hoeness, its longtime president, called him the “greatest personality” in its history.



Beckenbauer, in foreground, during a World Cup match between West Germany and Peru in Leon, Mexico, in June 1970. Credit...Lohmann/Associated Press

Over 14 years with the club, Beckenbauer lifted four German championships, four German cups, three European cups and an Intercontinental Cup, the forerunner of the Club World Cup. He was twice elected Ballon d'Or, the prestigious award given by the magazine France Football to the European Player of the Year, the only defender ever to win it more than once. He went on to pick up three more titles during a spell, in the autumn of his career, with the New York Cosmos.

More notable still, he won with his national team, too. Beckenbauer helped guide West Germany to the final of the 1966 World Cup, losing in extra time to the host, England, in a game that he felt he was “too young” to influence, as he put it. Four years later, he was part of the West German side that lost to Italy in a thrilling semifinal labeled the “Game of the Century.”

In 1974 — two years after winning the European Championship — he finally conquered the game’s global summit, guiding West Germany to a 2-1 victory against the Netherlands on home soil, in Munich. As captain, Beckenbauer became the first player to raise the current incarnation of the World Cup trophy.

He would encounter it again 16 years later. Beckenbauer had, a little reluctantly, agreed to coach the West German national team in 1984, agreeing to take the job only because he felt what he later described as a “moral obligation.”



Beckenbauer coached West Germany to a World Cup victory in 1990. Credit...Bongarts, via Getty Images

He reached the World Cup final two years later — losing 3-2 to [Diego Maradona](#) and Argentina — and then exacted his revenge in 1990, beating the same opponent by a single goal in Rome in the final. In doing so, Beckenbauer ensured his place in an exclusive group of just three men who have won the World Cup as player and coach.

Even after his direct involvement with soccer, on the field, had come to an end, he continued to win. Beckenbauer was at the forefront of a reunified Germany’s attempt to host the 2006 World Cup; the success of the bid, as well as the eventual success of the tournament, led him to nominate that World Cup as the one that [meant the most to him personally](#).

It also came to stain his legacy. Throughout his career his private life and his conduct as an executive led to reputational damage and more than one brush with the law: Both his tax affairs and his romantic life attracted scrutiny and, in the case of the former, seven-figure fines.

“He did everything that a German is not supposed to do,” his former teammate Paul Breitner once said. “He got divorced, he left his children, took off with his girlfriend, got into trouble with tax collectors, left his girlfriend again. But he is forgiven for everything because he’s got a good heart, he’s a positive person, and he’s always ready to help. He doesn’t conceal his weaknesses, doesn’t sweep his mistakes under the carpet.”

The allegations of corruption over the bidding process for the 2006 World Cup, though, were not so easily forgiven. A decade on from his role as the figurehead for that tournament, Beckenbauer evaded criminal

conviction in Switzerland, home of soccer's governing body FIFA, only when a trial was abandoned just before the verdict was due because of a Swiss rule related to the amount of time that had elapsed since the crimes were alleged to have been committed.

He always denied the accusations. "We did not want to bribe anyone, and we did not bribe anyone," he wrote in a column for the German newspaper Bild in 2016.

That trial came a few years after Beckenbauer participated in the tainted FIFA vote that led to the 2018 and 2022 tournaments being awarded to Russia and Qatar. Beckenbauer was among the officials accused of wrongdoing.



Beckenbauer, left, with Herbert Hainer, the chief executive of the sportswear company Adidas, in Berlin in April 2006 as a unified Germany prepared to host the World Cup. Beckenbauer headed the organizing committee for the event, which gave rise to allegations of corruption in the bidding process. Credit...John Macdougall/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Franz Anton Beckenbauer was born in September 1945 to Franz and Antonie Beckenbauer in Giesing, a working-class suburb of Munich, close to what would become the site of the city's Olympic Stadium. His father was a postal worker. Franz was identified as a player of rare talent as a child by both of the city's professional teams, 1860 Munich and Bayern Munich.

His decision to play for Bayern became the moment the team's destiny was set. Without Beckenbauer, Bayern "would never have become the club it is today," as a statement from that perennial German champion put it.

Originally a midfielder, Beckenbauer spent the majority of his career as a "libero," effectively a deep-lying sweeper given license to roam forward and start attacks whenever the opportunity arose.

"For me, he was the best player in German history," the country's current national team coach, Julian Nagelsmann, said. "His interpretation of the role of the libero changed the game. This role and his friendship with the ball made him a free man. Franz Beckenbauer was able to float on the lawn. As a footballer, and later also as a coach, he was sublime. He stood above things."

Beckenbauer made more than 500 appearances for Bayern — and a further 103 for West Germany — before announcing his decision to leave the country and join the Cosmos in 1977. It was a decision that cost him his place at the 1978 World Cup, when the German soccer federation decreed it would not select players working outside Europe.

He did not regret it. He would later describe his years with the Cosmos — where he counted [Pelé](#) among his teammates — as the best of his life.

In Munich, he said, he could not go for a meal without "the newspapers reporting on my main course." The cosmopolitanism of New York, by contrast, offered a degree of freedom. "At Munich, we were all German players," he said. "At the Cosmos, it was 14 nationalities, and Pelé."

The anonymity was only relative, though. One night, Beckenbauer was dining with [Ahmet Ertegun](#), the founder of Atlantic Records and the driving force behind the Cosmos, on Second Avenue. Beckenbauer spotted Woody Allen and asked Mr. Ertegun, impeccably connected, to introduce him.

As detailed by Gavin Newsham in his 2006 book “Once In A Lifetime,” his history of the Cosmos, the impresario duly obliged, heading across the restaurant with Beckenbauer following, uncharacteristically shy. As they reached the director’s table, though, before Mr. Ertegun could speak, Mr. Allen quickly stood up, a look of incredulity on his face. “My God, Franz Beckenbauer,” he said.

Beckenbauer is survived by his wife, [Heidrun](#), known as Heidi, and their two children, [Joel](#) and [Francesca](#), as well as two children from his previous marriages, [Thomas](#) and [Michael](#).

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[Beginning of the end? Still long way to go before goals attained - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](https://www.jpost.com)

Beginning of the end? Still a long way to go before Israel's goals be attained

It must be clear that though this may be the beginning of the end there is still a long way to go before all or most of Israel's goals will be attained.

By [ZALMAN SHOVAL](#)

JANUARY 8, 2024 02:09



SOLDIERS OPERATE in Gaza, last week. Although this may be the beginning of the end, there is still a long way to go before all or most of Israel's goals, unless prematurely stopped, will be attained, says the writer(photo credit: IDF)

"[Israel's ground offensive in Gaza](#) thus far has been a significant success, not only tactically, but also strategically, deterring Hezbollah in Lebanon and other potential aggressors." This is what I was recently told by a senior American strategic expert – who added that “the heavy bombing and shelling by Israel was an integral part of this success since when Hezbollah leaders see the extent of the [destruction in Gaza](#), they cannot ignore what would happen to them too.”

Nor has the determination and efficiency of the IDF escaped the attention of Arab states that see Hamas and Islamic fundamentalism as threats to the stability of their own regimes – while their estimation of Israel's military and technological capabilities has been further enhanced by their groundbreaking interception of an [Iranian ballistic missile fired by the Houthis in Yemen](#), an event probably observed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, among others.

However, realistically adjudged, it must be clear that though this may be the beginning of the end there is still a long way to go before all or most of Israel's goals, unless prematurely stopped, will be attained, nor can one disregard the complicated, often opposing political aspects of the war – not only in matters relating to our closest ally, the United States but also from the point of view of our enemies and of international players who use the images of the destruction – some genuine, some fake – as fodder for their anti-Israel stance.

Credibility of IDF's spokesperson been especially important

In this context, the credibility of the IDF's spokesperson has been especially important.



Israel's military operates in the Gaza Strip during a temporary truce between Israel and Hamas, on November 27, 2023 (credit: IDF SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT)

As for the constraints in connection with Israel letting in humanitarian aid and fuel into the Gaza Strip, this should be seen through the prism of American support; although retired general and former national security adviser [Giora Eiland](#) has written: “This must be the first time in history that a combatant supplies his enemy with ammunition.” Indeed, every “humanitarian aid” shipment, each fuel tank, prolongs the war and potentially makes it more dangerous for Israel’s soldiers.

The US having pressed Israel to deliver the “aid” and the petrol without linking it to releasing the hostages by Hamas, makes it at least partly responsible for the hostages’ fate. In the US and sometimes in Israel questions are raised, some germane to the issue, some not, of Israel’s strategy in the fighting and especially for the “day after.” An example of this was a recent article by Daniel Byman in *Foreign Affairs* criticizing Israel’s supposedly “muddled strategy in Gaza,” although not going into detail in this respect, both for international and domestic reasons, is probably preferable.

Israel's strategy is quite clear

Israel’s strategy is actually quite clear: destroying Hamas’s military and organizational infrastructure; creating a buffer zone along the border of the Gaza Strip; installing a temporary military administration; and eventually establishing a local government body perhaps including mid-level officials from the Palestinian Authority and, if possible, representatives of Arab states having full diplomatic relations with Israel – but no less importantly, linking the military campaign with efforts to release the Israeli hostages.

Viewing the often violent demonstrations against Israel around the world, one could be forgiven for thinking that the whole world is against us, but as renowned Washington-based global affairs analyst Leon Hadar wrote in an article in *Haaretz*: “When the military campaign in Gaza enjoys the support of more than 50% of the American public, what should worry Israel is not hostility toward it or the support for Palestinians among parts of the progressive American Left; the pro-Palestinian demonstrations at American universities and large cities have diverted attention from the bigger picture, i.e. that Israel continues to enjoy broad American support... as long as Israel is fighting against the axis of evil of Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran, it will continue to enjoy the support of the White House and both parties on Capitol Hill...The average American citizen believes that the killing of civilians in Gaza is the price that must be paid to achieve these goals and to secure a clear victory, as Israel has promised to do.”

In other words, if Israel does not follow through with its military campaign to the very end, it could lose American support – because, as Hadar writes, “the Americans don’t like losers.”

Whether admitting it or not, Israel achieving its military goals against Hamas will be also important to the international community irrespective of the Israeli context, as Iran has developed a system of waging war by remote control and without its direct involvement, through operating proxy networks: Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Kata’ib Hezbollah in Iraq, and the Houthis in Yemen – which it can employ anywhere in the world: in the Middle East, North America, and Europe, where hundreds of thousands of migrants from

Islamic countries and hundreds of thousands of militant anti-Western demonstrators can be counted on to enlist, as they did for ISIS.

What is currently happening in the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait is a tangible example of the operations of just such a proxy and of Iran's ability to manufacture a global economic crisis. Unfortunately, it has also been so far an example of the international community's hesitancy to deal with the problem – and although the US is endeavoring to set up an international maritime task force to combat maritime terrorism, at this stage, the scope of the force's planned operations is not clear.

Furthermore, it should also be patently obvious that, without the willingness to carry out [ground operations](#), the effectiveness of any international operation would be limited anyway.

The writer, a former MK, served as ambassador to the US from 1990-1993 and 1998-2000.

8 January (The Economist)

[Israel prepares for a long war in Gaza \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Digging in

Israel prepares for a long war in Gaza

But it is unclear how it will end



image: afp

Dec 30th 2023 | GAZA

As 2023 draws to a close, Israel's forces in the Gaza Strip are deployed across the territory to their farthest extent. An armoured division of the Israel Defence Forces (idf) is operating in the quarter of Gaza city where Israeli intelligence believes the last intact battalion of Hamas's armed force is holding out. Farther south, seven brigade combat teams have converged on Khan Younis, Gaza's second city, where Hamas's leadership and most of nearly 130 Israeli hostages are assumed to be. Other brigades are attacking Hamas strongholds in towns across central and southern Gaza. Israeli commanders acknowledge behind the scenes that these may be the last wide-scale offensives of the war.

In recent weeks the idf has been taking journalists (including your correspondent) into tunnels dug by Hamas beneath Gaza. The main purpose of these organised trips is to reinforce the message that the Islamist movement that has ruled Gaza for over 16 years has built its military infrastructure under Gaza's civilian population, including hospitals and schools. The idf has sought to show that Hamas has wasted precious resources on a subterranean kingdom while the civilian population languishes in poverty.

Israel is fighting a war for global public opinion alongside its military campaign. Its central claim is that the main reason for the high death toll of Palestinians is the way Hamas shields its fighters by placing them among civilians. The Hamas-run health authorities reckon that over 21,500 Palestinians, most of them civilians, have been killed by Israeli bombardments since the war began on October 7th. Israel estimates that between 8,000 and 9,000 of those killed are Hamas fighters.

The idf is also trying to convey a more straightforward military message. It must destroy the entire tunnel network reckoned to stretch hundreds of kilometres under the territory. That will take many more months of a military occupation and a gruelling series of bloody skirmishes with the remaining Hamas fighters hiding there. So the idf is preparing the Israeli people and their allies abroad for a long haul.

This will be difficult. For one thing, the war is already hurting Israel's economy and causing deep disruption. Within hours of Hamas's attack on October 7th, the idf began a massive call-up of reservists. They were needed not only to launch a counter-offensive in Gaza but also to reinforce Israel's northern border in case of an attack by Lebanon's Iranian-supported Hizbullah militia. Around 360,000 were mobilised. Along with Israel's standing army, this meant that over half a million in a population of just under 10m were in uniform.

In recent weeks tens of thousands of reservists, mainly in combat-support units, have been discharged. Many more have been given tentative dates for demobilisation in late January. They have also been warned that they will be recalled at some point in 2024. The idf general staff has defined 2024 as "a year of warfare" while special forces conduct raids on remaining Hamas forces and engineering units destroy the tunnels and caches of weapons.

The other main source of pressure on Israel is the American administration. It wants the government of Binyamin Netanyahu to scale down offensive operations, begin focusing on Gaza's humanitarian crisis and start creating a new local government in Gaza that would be based on the Palestinian Authority now administering parts of the West Bank under Israel's eye. At least 1.6m Palestinian civilians in Gaza have been displaced from their homes and are now concentrated in the south.

Mission incomplete

Two months after Israel's ground offensive began on October 27th the idf has achieved mixed results. Of Hamas's 24 battalions, 12 were based in and around Gaza city. The idf reckons most of these have in effect been "dismantled"—meaning that most of Hamas's commanders and fighters have been killed, badly wounded or captured. The idf is battling against another nine of Hamas's battalions (a further three have not yet been involved in the fighting).

"By now Hamas is no longer operating as a military organisation," says an Israeli intelligence officer. "Most of its command structure is gone. But it still has a large number of fighters who have reverted to guerrilla mode. They emerge from the tunnels in small numbers, trying to ambush our forces." The idf has succeeded in ending most of Hamas's rocket-launches at Israeli cities.

Hamas's political leadership, which is based outside Gaza, is in neighbouring Egypt negotiating a second agreement to free the Israeli hostages. This may require a truce lasting several weeks and provide some vital respite for Gaza's civilians. The movement's overall leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, who ordered the October 7th massacre, is said to be vetoing some proposals his colleagues in Cairo have been prepared to discuss. He is insisting on stiffer terms for freeing the remaining Israeli hostages, who include women, elderly men and a small number of soldiers, than under the previous truce at the end of November. This time it would include freeing more Palestinian prisoners held in Israel, most of whom hail from the West Bank. But Hamas's embattled leadership in Gaza may not be in sync with its counterpart there. Meanwhile Hamas's iron grip over Gaza's people may be weakening, as hungry civilians have begun to mob the supply convoys entering the strip.

However, the idf has yet to achieve its two key aims: to kill or capture Hamas's top leaders and to rescue the remaining Israeli hostages. And while a large majority of Israelis still support the war, signs of frustration are starting to creep in. "It was clear from the start that it would take a campaign of many months to achieve the war aims," says Tamir Hayman, an influential former idf general and military-intelligence commander who now heads Tel Aviv University's Institute of National Security Studies. "But unrealistic expectations mean there's now a feeling of disappointment."

Mr Netanyahu, who has plummeted in the opinion polls since the war started, has been making bombastic statements intended to shore up his rattled nationalist base. On December 26th on a visit to a military-intelligence base he declared: "We are continuing the war and are intensifying the fighting in the southern Gaza Strip and other places. We will fight to the end."

Yet his generals are quietly planning to scale down the campaign, while Mr Netanyahu's emissaries have been in Washington and Cairo to discuss details of a possible truce and how to hand Gaza over to a new authority. Last week his national security adviser, writing in a Saudi-owned website based in London, called for "a moderate Palestinian governing body that enjoys broad support and legitimacy" to take control of Gaza.

America is worried that the war in Gaza is unsettling the wider Middle East. Hizbullah's rocket-attacks on Israel's northern border have increased. American forces in Iraq have been under fire from Iranian-backed militias. On December 24th an Iranian general was killed in Syria, probably in an Israeli air raid. The Houthi militia is still [threatening international shipping](#) from its bases in Yemen. President Joe Biden is said to be losing patience with Mr Netanyahu's contradictory statements.

The shape of the war may soon shift. But its end—and any restoration of regional stability—are not in sight.

8 January (NYT)

[Opinion | What Will Happen to Gaza's People? - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

GUEST ESSAY

What Will Happen to Gaza's People?

Jan. 7, 2024



Credit...Jack Guez/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

By Peter Beinart

Mr. Beinart is a journalist and commentator who writes frequently about American foreign policy.

Conventional wisdom has generally held that Israel's government lacks a strategy for the Gaza Strip beyond toppling Hamas.

"Israel has no plan for Gaza after war ends, experts warn," the BBC [reported](#) in October. In November The Washington Post [observed](#) that "Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has come under criticism for not offering a clear plan for what happens in Gaza if Israel succeeds in its goal of deposing Hamas." A [headline](#) in Foreign Affairs in December lamented "Israel's Muddled Strategy in Gaza."

But there are signs that some members of the Israeli government do indeed have a strategy, or at least a preference, for what happens next. It's implicit in the kind of war Israel has waged, which has made Gaza largely unlivable. And a growing number of Israeli officials are saying it out loud: They don't want to force just Hamas out of Gaza. They want many of Gaza's people to leave, too.

The calls for population transfers started long before Gaza was reduced to the ruins that it is today. Six days after Hamas's massacre of Israelis on Oct. 7, the Intelligence Ministry [proposed](#) permanently relocating Gazans to the Sinai region of Egypt. On Nov. 14, Finance Minister Bezael Smotrich [said](#) he supported "the voluntary emigration of Gaza Arabs to countries around the world." Five days later, Intelligence Minister Gila Gamliel [endorsed](#) "the voluntary resettlement of Palestinians in Gaza, for humanitarian reasons, outside of the Strip."

The Israel Hayom newspaper [reported](#) on Nov. 30 that Mr. Netanyahu had asked Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, one of his closest confidants, to develop a plan to "thin" the population in Gaza "to a minimum" by prying open Egypt's doors and opening up sea routes to other countries. Mr. Netanyahu also [reportedly](#) urged President Biden and the leaders of Britain and France to push Egypt to admit hundreds of thousands of Gazan refugees.

At times, Israeli officials have downplayed or denied these reports. Mr. Netanyahu's office called the Intelligence Ministry's transfer plan a mere "[concept paper](#)" and Israel's embassy in Washington [clarified](#) that the intelligence minister was speaking only for herself. Other influential government ministers — like Defense

Minister Yoav Gallant and Benny Gantz, a Netanyahu rival and former chief of staff of the Israeli military who joined the government after Oct. 7 — oppose moving Gaza’s population outside the Strip, [according to Israel Hayom](#). Mr. Gallant, it emerged last week, has floated a proposal that would have Palestinians unconnected to Hamas or the Palestinian Authority administering the territory, with other countries overseeing reconstruction.

But in recent days the talk of Palestinian departures from Gaza has grown louder. At a meeting of his Likud party on Dec. 25, Mr. Netanyahu was urged by a legislator [to put into place a team to facilitate the “voluntary” departure of Palestinians from Gaza](#). The prime minister reportedly replied that the government was “working on” finding countries willing to take them.

Similar comments from Israel’s [national security minister](#) followed, with The Times of Israel [asserting](#) on Wednesday that voluntary resettlement from Gaza is gradually becoming “a key official policy of the government.”

Some might dismiss this talk of population transfer as wartime bluster. But on the ground, it is already well underway: Gaza is becoming uninhabitable. According to the United Nations, an estimated [85 percent](#) of Gaza’s people are now displaced. Even if they could return to their homes, many would have little to go back to since, according to an analysis by The Wall Street Journal, nearly [70 percent](#) of Gaza’s housing is damaged or destroyed.

More than 22,000 Gazans have been killed in the conflict so far, according to the Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry, and many more are in acute danger. According to the Gaza director of affairs for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, [40 percent](#) of the Strip’s residents are at risk of famine. Given the collapse of Gaza’s sanitation and medical systems, as much as a quarter of Gaza’s people could die within the year, mostly from disease or lack of access to medical care, according to [a recent estimate](#) by Prof. Devi Sridhar, chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh.

If the fighting in Gaza ends soon, this cataclysm could ease. But in late December, Mr. Netanyahu [suggested](#) that Israel’s war in Gaza would “last for many more months,” albeit with [fewer troops](#). Defense Minister Gallant has [said](#) it could take years. And as long as hostilities in Gaza continue, Israel will not allow most of Gaza’s displaced to go back to their homes for safety’s sake, the Israeli journalist Nadav Eyal recently [reported](#). They may not return for “at least a year,” he suggested.

The humanitarian catastrophe, in other words, is likely to persist. And the longer it does, the more pressure Egypt will feel to alleviate it by letting Gaza’s residents in. Israeli officials would most likely continue to depict such a migration as voluntary, despite having created the conditions that precipitated it.

So far, both [Egypt’s president](#), Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, and the [Biden administration](#) have said they adamantly oppose relocating Gaza’s people. The U.S. State Department last week [said](#) the Israeli government has repeatedly told American officials that resettlement outside Gaza is not its official policy.

But [some members of Israel’s government](#) reportedly believe that Egypt — which owes creditors a whopping [\\$28 billion in debt payments next year](#) — is vulnerable to pressure. And U.S. politics could always change: Asked last month what should happen to Gaza’s Palestinians, the Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley [replied](#), “They should go to pro-Hamas countries.”

There’s a chilling historical backdrop to all this. Palestinians in Gaza know that if they leave, Israel is unlikely to let them to return. They know this because most of them are descendants of the expulsion and flight that occurred around Israel’s founding in 1948, which Palestinians call the nakba. They live in Gaza because Israel didn’t let their families return to the places that then became part of Israel. Hundreds of thousands more Palestinians were [displaced](#) when Israel conquered the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967. It didn’t let many of those refugees return either.

Israel’s leaders rarely express regret for these mass displacements. Sometimes, they even invoke them as precedent. Addressing Palestinians on Facebook after three Israelis were murdered in the West Bank in 2017, Tzachi Hanegbi, Israel’s current national security adviser, [warned](#), “This is how a ‘nakba’ begins. Just like this. Remember ’48. Remember ’67.”

He ended his post with the words, “You’ve been warned!”

The world has been warned too.

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8 January (The Jerusalem Post)

[Israel-Hamas war: Palestinian Authority calls for Gaza unification - Israel News - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](https://www.jpost.com)

Palestinian Authority calls for terror organization unification to rule Gaza after war

The question of who will rule the Gaza Strip when Israel defeats Hamas has been a widely discussed topic and has led to much uncertainty and debate.

By [JERUSALEM POST STAFF](#)

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PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY Chairman Mahmoud Abbas. The PA and Abbas have repeatedly shown that they are not interested in peace or prosperity for the Palestinians. (photo credit: MOHAMAD TOROKMAN/REUTERS)

The Palestinian Authority's Fatah leaders claimed they are confident that once Israel defeats Hamas's infrastructure, these leaders will unite with the Hamas and Islamic Jihad terror organizations to rule the Gaza Strip, according to a Sunday Palestinian Media Watch report.

The question of who will rule the Gaza Strip when Israel defeats Hamas is a widely discussed topic that [has led to much uncertainty and debate](#).

In a call for unity between Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, Fatah Central Committee Secretary Jibril Rajoub stated on December 17, "We stand before a great turning point... The time has come for us [Fatah and Hamas] to reach a compromise."

"We view political Islam, and foremost among it the Hamas Movement, as part of the fabric of our struggle and our political and social fabric. We must preserve our achievements, we are a liberation project, and we are all potential Martyrs," Rajoub continued.

In addition to Rajoub's call to unity, Fatah official Muhammad Al-Hourani added, "We believe Hamas is taking action for the freedom of the land. Therefore we, Hamas, and all the Palestinian factions must think deeply and seriously about realizing the unity of the Palestinian arena under the flag of the PLO."



Jibril Rajoub (credit: MARC ISRAEL SELLEM)

Israel's plans for after the war

In contrast to the PA's Fatah leaders, the IDF has stated that there will be [no chance of unification between terrorist organizations](#) once Israel defeats Hamas.

The role of the PA is planned to be minimized once Hamas no longer has a hold over Gaza. However, this does not mean that the IDF intends to hold control over the area.

“Hamas will not rule Gaza,” said Defense Minister Yoav Gallant in a press briefing last week. However, he added that Israel would not hold a civilian governorship over Gaza instead of the terrorist organizations.

Instead, the plan is to create a transitional stage that would allow the US, European allies, and Arab allies, such as the Saudis, Egypt, the UAE, and others, to assist in the change of governance in the Gaza Strip.

Netanyahu has avoided public debates on these issues and has mostly affirmed that there will be no involvement by the PA.

Yonah Jeremy Bob and Tovah Lazaroff contributed to this report

Editorial: Egyptian efforts for Palestine

Thursday 4 Jan 2024

Egypt has played a central role in the effort to end the ongoing Israeli war on Gaza, now extending into its fourth month.

Other key players include the United States and Qatar, but the fact that Egypt is the only country that borders Gaza and its historical involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict has added to its responsibility to help in every possible way to end a nightmare that has lasted over 90 days.

While it is difficult to comprehend or even state, the heartbreaking reality of over 22,000 Palestinians killed — some 70 per cent of them children — and another 60,000 injured exposes the hypocrisy of any talk of a civilised world granting equal rights to all human beings. Thousands more are feared to be buried under the rubble, with no means available to the local authorities to remove and bury them. Moreover, with Israel using starvation as a weapon in its revenge war — in itself this amounts to a war crime — there are serious fears of widespread famine and disease due to the lack of basic needs and the destruction of nearly 80 per cent of Gaza's buildings.

In this framework, Egypt reportedly presented initial proposals to Israel, Hamas and other concerned parties with the final aim of reaching a permanent ceasefire in Gaza to end Israel's military occupation there. Considering that this goal seems far-fetched at this stage, noting the public statements of Israeli officials who continue to be driven by revenge rather than reasonable thinking following the Hamas-led attack on 7 October, the initial Egyptian proposals suggested moving in three stages, each leading to the other and kick-started at the same time.

Building on the short, one-week truce at the end of November which led to the exchange of prisoners between Israel and Hamas, the initial stage in the Egyptian proposal calls for a similar but longer truce that would allow the exchange of a second batch of prisoners and the entry of much needed humanitarian aid to Gaza, as stated in the recently approved United Nations Security Council resolution.

While the resolution did not call for an immediate ceasefire, it demands lengthy humanitarian pauses. Yet, all parties involved recognise that, without a fully respected ceasefire, any talk of increasing or speeding up humanitarian aid to Gaza remains wishful thinking. United Nations organisations working in Gaza, along with other humanitarian groups, all stressed that they cannot distribute or move aid while Israel continues to bombard Gaza by air, sea, and land.

Hamas and other Palestinian armed resistance groups, such as the Islamic Jihad, have stressed that they will no longer accept short-term pauses in fighting, insisting that they will not release any Israeli prisoners until a permanent ceasefire is implemented. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has continued to say that the war will go on for months, and his right-wing, extremist government says it will never allow Hamas any future role in Gaza.

Considering such a wide gap in the stands of the two sides, Egypt's hope is that a short-term truce will develop into a permanent ceasefire, and move further to revive long-stalled peace negotiations with the aim of creating an independent Palestinian state.

Egypt suggested immediately starting a national dialogue among Palestinian factions to reach an agreement on a new government whose principal responsibility would be to help in providing the much-needed humanitarian aid to Gaza and launch the predictably long process of rebuilding the Strip where nearly 2.5 million live.

Egypt, along with other Arab countries, as well as the United States, insist on keeping the two-state solution alive, and will not tolerate a re-occupation of Gaza or the total separation between the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza that make up a future Palestinian state.

In this respect, Egypt has confirmed that it would not take part in determining the structure or composition of any future Palestinian government, and that this decision would be left to Palestinians alone. This had been the stated Egyptian policy long before the Israeli war started three months ago, and in many rounds of reconciliation talks which Cairo hosted among key Palestinian factions topped with Fatah, Hamas, and the Islamic Jihad.

Once a longer, temporary ceasefire is reached in which more Palestinian and Israeli prisoners are exchanged, starting with non-combatants, and a new national unity Palestinian government is formed, then it will be possible to move into the third and final stage of the Egyptian proposal. That difficult third stage would require reaching agreement on a permanent ceasefire, ending Israel's military presence in Gaza and agreeing on the terms for the exchange of remaining Israeli army officers and soldiers captured by Hamas in return for all Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli prisons before and after 7 October.

The current extremist government in Israel is likely to continue airing illusory goals such as the total destruction of Hamas in an attempt to safeguard its own existence while facing growing public anger for failing to protect Israelis on 7 October and humiliating the Israeli army by involving it in an endless war in which it has suffered heavy losses.

Yet the entire world is fed up with the daily massacres committed by Israel against Palestinian civilians. However, those feelings of anger and disapproval should translate into backing Egyptian efforts and proposals to reach a final and permanent, just settlement of the Palestinian cause, instead of living in a perpetual state of war which will be the case if Israel's current extremist, racist strategy in dealing with the rights of the Palestinian people does not change.

8 January (NZZ)

[Im Ukraine-Krieg entscheidet Opferbereitschaft, wer am Schluss die Oberhand hat \(nzz.ch\)](https://www.nzz.ch)

Kann man von einem Menschen heute noch verlangen, dass er für sein Heimatland in den Krieg zieht?

Der Kreml hat die zentrale Verwundbarkeit der Ukraine ausgemacht: die Opferbereitschaft der Gesellschaft. Sie wird entscheiden, wer am Schluss die Oberhand hat in diesem Krieg.

[Can one still demand from a person today that they go to war for their homeland?

The Kremlin has identified the central vulnerability of Ukraine: the society's readiness to sacrifice. It will determine who ultimately prevails in this war.]

Herfried Münkler

08.01.2024, 05.30 Uhr 6 min



Das Beispiel der Ukraine zeigt: Postheroische Gesellschaften können sich wieder heroisieren. Bild eines ukrainischen Soldaten. Dominic Nahr / NZZ

Es gab Zeiten, da zogen die jungen Männer fraglos in den Krieg. Diese Bereitschaft wurde mit der Vorherrschaft eines allumfassenden Nationalismus oder unter Verweis auf eine starke patriotische Grundhaltung erklärt. Am Anfang steht dann die von Lazare Carnot auf dem Höhepunkt der Französischen Revolution organisierte Levée en masse. Die Mobilisierung der gesamten französischen Gesellschaft gegen die von aussen eindringenden Feinde, die das Vaterland, so die Behauptung, unterwerfen und die in der Revolution erkämpfte Freiheit wieder in die Knechtung des Volkes zurückverwandeln würden.

In der Marseillaise ist die Einheit von Patriotismus und Freiheitswillen, Massenmobilisierung und Todesbereitschaft bis heute präsent geblieben, etwa wenn bei Fussballspielen vor Spielbeginn die Zuschauer den Text der Hymne mitsingen. Aber meinen die Singenden das wirklich ernst – «zu den Waffen, Bürger! / Formt eure Schlachtreihen, / Marschieren wir, marschieren wir!» –, oder handelt es sich um blosses Lippenbekenntnis?

Vor ein paar Jahren noch war das eine akademische Frage. Seit Beginn des russischen Angriffskriegs gegen die Ukraine ist es zu einer politischen geworden. Spätestens seit dem Scheitern des russischen Vorhabens, die Ukraine durch eine von Freiwilligen und Söldnern unterstützte Berufarmee niederzuwerfen. Das ist am erbitterten Widerstand der Ukrainer gescheitert.

Wer hat mehr Heroisierungspotenzial?

Mit dem Übergang zu einem lange währenden Abnutzungskrieg und der Mobilisierung immer neuer Alterskohorten stellt sich die Frage nach Opferbereitschaft und Heroisierungspotenzialen beider Seiten. Daran wird sich entscheiden, wer am Schluss die Oberhand behalten beziehungsweise wer zu welchen Bedingungen

in Waffenstillstandsgespräche eintreten wird. Am südöstlichen Rand Europas herrschen Verhältnisse, wie man sie aus dem Ersten Weltkrieg kennt, von denen man indes annahm, man habe sie endgültig hinter sich gelassen.

Auch damals gingen die kriegsbeteiligten Mächte zunächst davon aus, dass es ein kurzer Krieg sein werde, beziehungsweise sie verfolgten Strategien, die auf eine schnelle Niederwerfung des Gegners abzielten. Die Deutschen mit dem Schlieffenplan, der eine Umfassung und Zerschlagung der französischen Streitkräfte im Grossraum Paris vorsah. Die Franzosen mit dem Plan XVII, der auf einen Vorstoss über Lothringen ins Rhein-Ruhr-Gebiet setzte, um durch die Ausschaltung der deutschen Schwerindustrie den Sieg zu erringen. Die Russen nach Ausschaltung der Flankenbedrohung aus Ostpreussen durch einen direkten Vorstoss auf Berlin, um durch dessen Eroberung den Krieg siegreich zu beenden. Die Donaumonarchie durch die Niederwerfung Serbiens, um den «Grund des Krieges» auszuschalten und dann in schnellen Operationen in Galizien den Russen so schwere Verluste zuzufügen, dass man in St. Petersburg die Lust am Krieg verlor.

Bekanntlich sind alle vier Offensivpläne gescheitert. Im Spätherbst 1914 war klar, dass man sich in einem Krieg befand, der nach den Imperativen der Ermattungsstrategie geführt wurde – und das hiess, dass man sehr viel mehr Männer mobilisieren musste als zunächst vorgesehen. Grossbritannien war zu einem solchen Krieg noch am ehesten fähig, nicht zuletzt aus geostrategischen Gründen. Es schnitt durch eine Seeblockade Deutschland vom globalen Handel ab, um ihm die Fähigkeit zur Kriegführung zu nehmen. Aber auch die Wirtschaftsblockade zeigte erst im Winter 1916/17 die erwartete Wirkung und war weniger beim Militär als bei der Zivilbevölkerung zu spüren.

Russland scheint im Vorteil

Betrachtet man den Verlauf des Ersten Weltkriegs als eine Art «Skript» für den Fortgang des Kriegs in der Ukraine, so ist ziemlich klar, dass nicht strategische Kreativität und taktisches Geschick über dessen Ausgang entscheiden werden, sondern Material und Durchhaltewillen. Dabei scheint Russland im Vorteil zu sein, nachdem die westlichen Wirtschaftssanktionen nicht die erwartete Wirkung gezeitigt haben. Russland bringt seine schnell hochgefahrte Waffenproduktion und sein gegenüber der Ukraine dreimal so grosses Potenzial an jungen Männern als kriegsentscheidende Faktoren ins Spiel. Der Krieg ist zu einem Abgleich der materiellen Durchhaltefähigkeit und des kollektiven Durchhaltewillens geworden. Dabei kann dahingestellt bleiben, ob die Kampfhandlungen am Verhandlungstisch oder an den Fronten enden werden.

Bei der Materialfrage ist der Westen der Ukraine mit Waffen- und Munitionslieferungen zu Hilfe gekommen, wengleich langsam und zögerlich. Doch beim Rückgriff auf Soldaten, bei dem Ersatz von Verwundeten und Gefallenen an der Front sowie der Aufrechterhaltung des Kampfwillens und der Durchhaltebereitschaft in der Gesellschaft ist die Ukraine auf sich allein gestellt. Das hat der Kreml als deren zentrale Verwundbarkeit ausgemacht: durch die Ermattungsgefechte an diversen Frontabschnitten und durch Angriffe auf die zivile Infrastruktur, die den Selbstbehauptungswillen der Bevölkerung brechen sollen.

Auch hier ein vergleichender Blick auf den Ersten Weltkrieg: Ab 1917 nämlich machte sich in den Armeen der kriegführenden Länder eine gewisse Kriegsmüdigkeit bemerkbar, die ihren Niederschlag in Meutereien und Kampfstreiks fand. Bei den Franzosen in der Weigerung ganzer Regimenter, nach den furchtbaren Verlusten der gescheiterten Nivelle-Offensive erneut anzugreifen. Bei den Italienern in der kampflösen Kapitulation ganzer Bataillone nach dem deutsch-österreichischen Durchbruch an der Isonzo-Front und bei den Russen ab dem Sommer 1917 in der Auflösung der zarischen Armee in Form von Massendesertion. Bei den Deutschen dauerte es bis zum Herbst 1918, als sich erstmals ganze Kompanien den Engländern ergaben. Von da an war klar, dass Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn den Krieg verloren hatten, zumal auch an der «Heimatfront» die Bereitschaft, einen nicht zu gewinnenden Krieg weiter durchzuhalten, kataklysmisch dahinschwand. Es ist unübersehbar, dass der Kreml auf einen solchen Ausgang des Ukraine-Kriegs setzt.

Sind Demokratien gegenüber autoritären Regimen im Nachteil?

Dabei sind nicht die zögerlichen Waffenlieferungen des Westens das Hauptproblem der Ukraine, wengleich sie in diesem Jahr mit einer Verschiebung der politischen Gewichte in den USA an Bedeutung gewinnen könnten, sondern die Aufrechterhaltung des Durchhaltewillens in der Gesellschaft und die Mobilisierung junger Männer für den Einsatz an der Front. Das erklärt die überzogenen Erfolgsaussichten der ukrainischen Führung

hinsichtlich des Verlaufs der Offensive im Sommer und Herbst 2023. Und es erklärt ebenso die Besorgnis der Kiewer Regierung, dass bei der jetzt erfolgenden Mobilisierung neuer Jahrgänge sich viele junge Männer dem Militärdienst entziehen würden.

Damit steht die Frage im Raum: Wie viel Druck, wie viel Zwang darf eine Regierung, die Mitglied der EU werden will, ausüben? Oder zugespitzt: Befinden sich demokratische Rechtsstaaten und solche, die es werden wollen, gegenüber autoritären Regimen im Nachteil, weil sie auf liberale Verweigerungsrechte keine Rücksicht nehmen müssen?

Dass postheroische Gesellschaften sich wieder heroisieren können, zeigt das Beispiel der Ukraine im Verlauf der letzten zwei Jahre. Solange dies freiwillig und aus der Gesellschaft heraus erfolgt, steht dies nicht im Widerspruch zur liberalen Demokratie. Solches war in der Ukraine möglich, weil das Land der Angegriffene ist und die Menschen für dessen politische Selbstbestimmung genauso wie für ihre persönliche Freiheit kämpfen. Und weil durch die russischen Greuelthaten, etwa die von Butscha, sowie die Terrorattacken auf zivile Ziele eine Solidarität entstanden ist, wie sie zuvor unvorstellbar war.

Kritischer Punkt

Es gibt jedoch einen doppelten Kipppunkt, der einerseits aus der Dauer und Intensität des Leidens und andererseits aus einer regierungsamtlich erzwungenen Bereitschaft zum Fronteinsatz von immer mehr jungen Männer resultierte.

Letzteres würde die Anzahl der Ukrainer, die im Westen um Asyl ersuchen, schnell in die Höhe gehen lassen. Entsprechend würde die Bereitschaft der Europäer zur Unterstützung der Ukraine sinken. Ohnehin ist klar, dass die deutsche Regierung keinen Ukrainer im wehrpflichtigen Alter, der sich in Deutschland aufhält, an die Ukraine überstellen wird – ebenso wenig wie sie das mit Russen tut, die sich dem dortigen Militärdienst entzogen haben. Dass man politisch auf der Seite der Ukraine steht, spielt dabei keine Rolle.

Die Ukraine wird nicht umhinkommen, einen Ersatzdienst für all diejenigen zu ermöglichen, die wehrpflichtig sind, aber nicht an die Front wollen. Ein solcher Ersatzdienst läuft darauf hinaus, dass sie nicht gezwungen sind, bei Kampfhandlungen andere zu töten, aber sie entgehen infolge ihres Dienstes bei Rettungs- und Hilfsdiensten nicht dem Risiko, ihrerseits getötet zu werden. Dieses Risiko auf sich zu nehmen, ist der Preis, der für die Verteidigung von Freiheit und Selbstbestimmung zu entrichten ist.

Das Schicksal der Trittbrettfahrer

Der Zumutung dieser Gefahr sind die Ukrainer, die sich in der EU aufhalten, nicht ausgesetzt. Auch sie werden für den Fall, dass die Ukraine ihre Freiheit erfolgreich verteidigen kann und sie in ihr Herkunftsland zurückkehren, in den Genuss dieser Freiheit kommen, zu deren Verteidigung sie nicht beigetragen haben. Sie sind dann die Trittbrettfahrer dessen, was andere erbracht haben, und mit diesem Manko werden sie leben müssen. Es ist zu erwarten, dass dies auch mit gesellschaftlichen Nachteilen verbunden ist, und die Betroffenen werden abwägen müssen, für welches von beiden Risiken sie sich entscheiden.

Damit ist die Verbindung von Freiheit und Vaterland, die in der Levée en masse zentral war, aufgelöst und mit der liberalen Demokratie vereinbar. Es geht wesentlich um die Freiheit. Es ist, wenn man so will, eine «Wette mit der Geschichte», die seitens der liberalen Demokratie eingegangen wird: dass die ihr eigenen Freiheitsversprechen attraktiver sind als die bedingungslose Risikovermeidung in Konstellationen einer existenziellen Bedrohung. Der Ausgang dieser Wette ist offen.

Herfried Münkler ist emeritierter Professor für Theorie der Politik der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

8 January (NZZ)

[Europa braucht eine Atombombe \(nzz.ch\)](https://www.nzz.ch)

Braucht Europa jetzt eine Atombombe?

Kehren die Amerikaner Europa den Rücken, stehen wir allein Wladimir Putin und dem russischen Atomarsenal gegenüber. Der Ruf nach dem Aufbau einer europäischen Atomstreitmacht wird deshalb nun laut.

[Does Europe need a nuclear bomb now? I

f the Americans turn their backs on Europe, we are left alone facing Vladimir Putin and the Russian nuclear arsenal. The call for the establishment of a European nuclear force is therefore getting louder.]

Markus Bernath

06.01.2024, 21.45 Uhr 5 min



Hans-Jörg Walter

Für Wladimir Putin ist es der Winter der tausend Raketen. Kinschal, Kaliber, Iskander – Hyperschallwaffen, Marschflugkörper, Kurzstreckenraketen, dazu Dutzende von Drohnen. Alles schickte der russische Präsident zu Beginn dieser Woche Richtung Kiew und Charkiw, die beiden grössten Städte der Ukraine.

Es war der zweite massive Luftangriff innerhalb weniger Tage. Verhandlungen über einen Waffenstillstand nach bald drei Jahren Krieg? Fehlanzeige. Putin will den Sieg, und er will ihn zu seinen Bedingungen.

Im Westen korrigieren sich die Militärexperten. Die russischen Raketenarsenale seien nicht erschöpft, heisst es jetzt. Im Gegenteil. Russland produziere mittlerweile an die 100 Raketen jeden Monat. Was, wenn er gewinnt? Wenn Putin am Ende die Ukraine bezwingt und nach Polen greift, nach der Moldau, Estland, Litauen und Lettland?

Dann braucht Europa die Atombombe. Der deutsche Historiker Herfried Münkler sagte das [in einem Interview zu Beginn des neuen Jahres](#), [Frankreichs ehemaliger Armeechef Jacques Lanxade](#), [sein deutscher Kollege Klaus Naumann](#) sowie [eine Reihe von Sicherheitsexperten](#) in Europa und in den USA äusserten sich zuvor ähnlich.

«Die europäische Atombombe wäre ein entscheidender Schritt hin zu einer strategischen Autonomie und zu einer eigenen Abschreckungskraft», erklärte Münkler in dem Interview mit der «Welt». Die EU wäre sicherer vor Putin. Aber stimmt das auch?

Das Arsenal der Briten und Franzosen

Atomwaffen europäischer Staaten gibt es ja bereits. Grossbritannien und Frankreich sind seit den 1950er und 1960er Jahren Nuklearmächte mit einem Arsenal an Atombomben. Es war ihr Beitrag zur Abschreckung im Kalten Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion. Etwa 225 Gefechtsköpfe hat das eine Land noch heute, 290 das andere – nicht einmal ein Zehntel des russischen Arsenals. Die strategischen Atomraketen sind auf vier britische und vier französische U-Boote verteilt, Frankreich hat zudem Bomber, die mit Nuklearwaffen bestückt werden können.

Warum also noch europäische Atombomben? Noch dazu, wo Frankreichs Präsident Emmanuel Macron den anderen EU-Staaten, insbesondere Deutschland, immer wieder eine Teilhabe an den Nuklearwaffen angeboten hat?

Die Antwort ist typisch europäisch: Die Deutschen wollen grundsätzlich nichts von Atomwaffen hören; auf den eigenen Besitz haben sie in internationalen Verträgen ohnehin verzichtet. Die Polen vor allem wollen lieber amerikanische Atomraketen im Land. Die Franzosen schliesslich meinen es nicht ganz so ernst mit der Teilhabe. [An gemeinsamen Übungen mit französischen Atomstreitkräften sollen sich die Europäer beteiligen und «strategische Kultur» lernen, sagte Macron.](#) Doch über die Atomwaffen und ihren Einsatz entscheidet natürlich der französische Präsident.



Die französische Armee testete im November 2023 erfolgreich eine neue ballistische, mit einem Atomsprengkopf bestückbare Rakete. Die M 51.3 soll eine Reichweite bis zu 10 000 Kilometer haben. DGA /Französisches Verteidigungsministerium

Trumps Rückkehr und der China-Faktor

Doch um die Frage der Atombombe kommen die Europäer heute nicht herum. Wird Donald Trump im November gewählt und kehrt ins Weisse Haus zurück, dann mag er dieses Mal wirklich Ernst machen mit einer Abkehr von Europa. Mehrfach soll er mit einem Austritt der USA aus der Nato gedroht haben. Er sehe keinen Sinn in dieser Allianz, wo die Europäer auf Kosten der Amerikaner lebten, grummelte Trump in Gesprächen mit Mitarbeitern.

Der Nuklearschirm, den die USA seit dem Kalten Krieg über Westeuropa aufgespannt haben, könnte dann abgezogen werden. Ebenso wie die rund 100 taktischen Atomsprengköpfe, die noch in fünf Nato-Staaten gelagert werden. Die Europäer stünden allein Putins Atomarsenal gegenüber.

Das Szenario einer Abkehr des Trump-Amerika von Europa wird noch plausibler mit Blick auf China und Taiwan. Kommt es wegen der Inselrepublik zum militärischen Konflikt mit China, müssen die USA abwägen – Pazifik oder Europa und die Ukraine? Zwei Kriege könnten die USA nicht führen, sagte Trumps früherer Verteidigungsminister James Mattis. Die Entscheidung der Amerikaner ist dann klar: Sollen die Europäer doch selbst für ihre Verteidigung sorgen. Das Geld dafür haben sie ja.

Militärisch nutzlos, psychologisch wirkungsvoll

Doch was ist die Atombombe militärisch tatsächlich wert? Würde sie Putin wirklich davon abhalten, weitere europäische Staaten zu bedrohen oder gar anzugreifen? An der Bombe scheiden sich seit je die Geister: unmoralisch wegen ihrer auf die Zivilbevölkerung keine Rücksicht nehmenden, ungeheuren Zerstörungskraft; aus ebendiesem Grund aber auch nutzlos für die Armeen. Wer einen nuklearen Schlag ausführt, muss selbst mit Vernichtung durch einen Gegenschlag rechnen. Niemand gewinnt, alle verlieren.

Aber ganz so klar ist es dann doch nicht. Die Bombe ist eine wirkungsvolle psychologische Waffe. Sie setzt den Gegner unter Druck. Der russische Präsident drohte vor allem im ersten Kriegsjahr mehr oder minder offen mit dem Einsatz von Nuklearwaffen gegen die Ukraine. Er konnte dies tun, weil die Ukraine keine Atombomben mehr besitzt. Geschehen ist es nicht. Bisher. Eine Garantie, dass Putin nicht doch taktische Atomwaffen an der Front einsetzt oder am Ende eine ukrainische Stadt auslöscht, gibt es nicht.

Ähnlich verhält es sich mit der Bedrohung der Nato- und EU-Staaten durch Russland. Erwägen die USA einen Rückzug aus Europa, beginnen Putins Generäle zu kalkulieren. Wäre ein Atomkrieg auf dem Kontinent nun gewinnbar, das britische und französische Nukleararsenal überwindbar? Oder wichtiger noch: Können wir die Europäer glauben machen, dass wir bereit sind, Atomwaffen einzusetzen? Denn was zählt, ist schon die Furcht.

Ein Atomkoffer, der wandert

Überlegungen zum Aufbau einer europäischen Atomstreitmacht gibt es. Briten, Franzosen und Deutsche könnten innerhalb der Nato einen europäischen Atomschirm aufbauen mit einem Kommandostab, der vom stellvertretenden Oberbefehlshaber für Nato-Operationen, einem Europäer, geführt wird. Deutschland würde keine eigenen Nuklearwaffen haben, aber Piloten und Kampffjets stellen, die Raketen mit atomaren Sprengköpfen tragen könnten.

Ein solches Arrangement würde wohl einigen europäischen Nato-Staaten nicht passen, weil sie sich in einer so existenziellen Frage übergangen fühlen. Die nukleare Planungsgruppe der Nato (NPG) böte sich als Alternative an. Ihr gehören alle Nato-Staaten an, allerdings nicht Frankreich, das bisher auf die Unabhängigkeit seiner Atomstreitmacht pochte. Selbst wenn sich die Franzosen der NPG anschließen, scheint es schwierig, dass 28 europäische Nato-Staaten einen Konsens über den Einsatz von Atomwaffen finden.

Der Historiker Münkler stellt sich eine andere Konstruktion für eine europäische Abschreckungsmacht vor. Sie geht von der EU aus und lässt die Briten aussen vor.

Münkler schlägt vor, dass Frankreich, Deutschland und Polen – das «Weimarer Dreieck» – sowie zwei südeuropäische Staaten – Spanien und Italien – in gemeinsamer Entscheidungsgewalt über Atomwaffen verfügen: «Der Koffer mit dem roten Knopf zirkuliert zwischen den genannten Staaten.»

Besser eine Bombe als keine

Eine europäische Atomstreitmacht würde wohl einen Rüstungswettlauf mit Russland auslösen. Putin, der bereits taktische Atomwaffen nach Weissrussland, näher an die EU- und Nato-Grenzen, gebracht hat, könnte neue Mittelstreckenraketen auf Europas Städte richten. Vor allem in der deutschen Gesellschaft würde dies unguete Erinnerungen an die Aufrüstung der 1980er Jahre wecken.

Aber diese verschärfte die wirtschaftlichen Probleme der Sowjetunion und führte am Ende zu Abrüstungsvereinbarungen. Das ist auch eine Perspektive für die Europäer heute. Mit Putins Nachfolgern könnten sie vielleicht zu einer Verständigung über eine neue Sicherheitsarchitektur in Europa nach dem Krieg in der Ukraine gelangen.

Bis dahin aber gilt eine unangenehme Tatsache: Es ist besser, eine Atombombe zu haben als keine. Die Europäer werden ihre konventionellen Truppen zweifellos aufrüsten und sich auch mit Abwehrsystemen – dem vom deutschen Kanzler Olaf Scholz lancierten European Sky Shield – gegen russische Raketen wappnen.

Doch ohne die USA und ohne eigene Atomstreitkräfte sind sie erpressbar. Wladimir Putin und seine Kreml-Riege würden dies selbstverständlich ausnützen. Die Ukrainer können davon erzählen.

8 January (Le Figaro)

[Nicolas Baverez : «Le naufrage du Brexit» \(lefigaro.fr\)](#)

Nicolas Baverez : «Le naufrage du Brexit»

Par [Nicolas Baverez](#)

Publié il y a 1 heure



Nicolas Baverez. François Bouchon / LE FIGARO

CHRONIQUE - Huit ans après le référendum et trois ans après son entrée en application, le Brexit a plongé le Royaume-Uni dans une crise sans équivalent depuis les années 1970.

Au Royaume-Uni, [les élections législatives qui se dérouleront à l'automne 2024](#) se présentent comme la chronique d'une défaite annoncée pour les conservateurs, devancés de quelque 20 points dans les sondages par les travaillistes. [Rishi Sunak](#) a ramené la décence mais non le leadership au 10 Downing Street. Aux abois face à [Keir Starmer](#), il cherche vainement son salut [dans le retour de David Cameron au gouvernement](#) et dans une volte-face sur son plan de transition climatique dans l'espoir de se réconcilier avec la classe moyenne.

Les Britanniques s'apprêtent à sanctionner les Tories moins pour quatorze années de pouvoir erratique qui ont usé cinq premiers ministres que pour le résultat [du Brexit](#), qui a plongé le pays dans une crise sans équivalent depuis les années 1970, avant les réformes de Margaret Thatcher. Huit ans après le référendum et trois ans après son entrée en application, le Brexit se traduit par un naufrage qui ne peut plus être masqué par [la pandémie de Covid](#) ou la [guerre d'Ukraine](#). Les Britanniques en ont pris la mesure, qui se prononcent à 65 % pour un nouveau référendum et qui ne sont plus que 22 % à soutenir le Brexit, quand 54 % le jugent comme une mauvaise idée.

Une perte totale de contrôle de leur destin par les Britanniques

La campagne des élections législatives ne portera pas sur le Brexit mais sur ses conséquences : l'annihilation de la croissance ; la déliquescence des services publics ; l'explosion des prix et la paupérisation de la population. Dans les faits, il n'a pas entraîné une reprise mais une perte totale de contrôle de leur destin par les Britanniques.

Le Brexit a tout d'abord éradiqué la croissance, désormais inférieure à celle de la zone euro, alors qu'elle était systématiquement supérieure depuis les années 1990. L'activité ne progressera que de 0,5 % en 2023 et 2024 ; elle a été réduite de 5,5 points et le commerce de 7 points depuis 2016. La stagflation est désormais bien installée. Les ménages sont étranglés par l'inflation qui atteint 7 % contre 2,8 % dans la zone euro, avec une spirale de hausse entre les prix et les salaires. La banque d'Angleterre a augmenté quatorze fois ses taux pour les porter à 5,25 % (contre 4 % dans la zone euro), ce qui a laminé le pouvoir d'achat des consommateurs, provoqué un effondrement du marché immobilier et euthanasié l'investissement.

La pénurie de main-d'œuvre dans les secteurs de l'agriculture, de la construction, de la santé, des transports et des services va de pair avec la montée du chômage

Jadis pôle d'excellence, la finance devient un point faible. Les capitaux et les investisseurs fuient. La City perdra à terme 35.000 à 40.000 emplois au profit de l'Union. Simultanément, la pression des marchés ne se relâche pas, depuis le krach provoqué par l'expérience aussi courte que calamiteuse de Liz Truss de planifier une baisse massive et non financée des impôts pour les plus riches. La dette publique a dépassé 100 % du PIB en 2023 et son service a explosé pour atteindre 4,2 % du PIB en raison de son indexation sur les prix à hauteur d'un quart. Et Birmingham, deuxième ville du pays, a fait faillite.

La pénurie de main-d'œuvre dans les secteurs de l'agriculture, de la construction, de la santé, des transports et des services, provoquée par le départ de plus de 1 million de travailleurs européens, va de pair avec la montée du chômage de 3,5 % à 4,2 % de la population active. Le pays compte désormais 14,5 millions de pauvres tandis que le pouvoir d'achat recule fortement. D'où une sévère crise sociale qui entraîne la multiplication des grèves dans les secteurs de la santé, de l'éducation, des transports routiers et ferroviaires, de la poste ou de la recherche.

L'échec est aussi cinglant dans [le domaine de l'immigration](#). Le départ forcé des Européens a été plus que compensé par l'arrivée d'immigrés non européens. Le solde des entrées et des sorties a battu un record en 2022, avec une hausse de la population immigrée de 606.000 personnes. Il faut y ajouter l'immigration illégale, qui a elle aussi explosé, avec 45.774 traversées de la Manche en 2022.

«Le Royaume-Uni a désespérément besoin de l'Union européenne»

Sur le plan politique, le Royaume-Uni reste menacé d'implosion par la revendication d'indépendance de l'Écosse, qui est indissociable de sa volonté de rejoindre rapidement l'Union. En Irlande du Nord, la crise ouverte autour du protocole conclu avec l'Union européenne, a abouti, pour la première fois, à la victoire du Sinn Féin en mai 2022, qui ouvre à terme la voie à une réunification de l'île.

Le Brexit donne raison à Charles Péguy qui soulignait que « le triomphe des démagogues est passager, mais leurs ruines sont éternelles ». Voté au terme d'une campagne dominée par les mensonges, il a placé le Royaume-Uni dans une complète impasse. Le projet d'une Global Britain coupée du continent européen constitue un contresens économique, géopolitique et historique, au moment où la mondialisation se reconfigure autour de blocs régionaux. Mais aucun dirigeant ne pourra assumer le risque d'un nouveau référendum sur le retour dans l'Union avant vingt ou trente ans, et ce d'autant que le Royaume-Uni ne retrouvera pas les privilèges qui lui avaient été consentis, notamment le rabais de moitié de sa contribution au budget.

Le Royaume-Uni a désespérément besoin de l'Union pour retrouver le chemin de la croissance, condition de la stabilisation de la classe moyenne et de la paix civile. Mais l'Europe a aussi besoin du Royaume-Uni pour faire face à la montée des tensions géopolitiques. De part et d'autre de la Manche, il est donc temps de renoncer aux mirages de la radicalité pour emprunter la seule voie raisonnable qui s'offre, celle du réalisme et du pragmatisme.

8 January (Le Monde)

https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2024/01/04/la-france-ne-pourra-jamais-rivaliser-avec-les-pays-a-bas-salaires-du-vieux-continent_6209007_3232.html

« La France ne pourra jamais rivaliser avec les pays à bas salaires du Vieux Continent »

[Chronique](#) de [Elsa Conesa](#)

Le constructeur chinois de voitures électriques BYD a choisi la Hongrie plutôt que la France pour implanter sa première usine en Europe, malgré les efforts du gouvernement, observe Elsa Conesa, journaliste au « Monde », dans sa chronique.

Publié le 04 janvier 2024 à 07h00 Temps de Lecture 2 min.

« Build your dreams » (« construisez vos rêves »), promet le constructeur chinois BYD. Ceux de la France, qui espérait voir BYD édifier sur son territoire sa première usine européenne de production de voitures électriques, se sont envolés le 22 décembre 2023 : c'est en Hongrie que BYD a annoncé implanter ladite usine. Comme l'Allemagne ou l'Espagne, la France n'avait pourtant pas ménagé ses efforts pour attirer le mastodonte chinois, qui dispute désormais à Tesla sa place de leader mondial dans ce secteur. Le ministre de l'économie, Bruno Le Maire, s'était rendu en Chine durant l'été 2023 pour convaincre le patron de l'entreprise. Y parvenir aurait été un triomphe pour un gouvernement qui ambitionne de construire 2 millions de voitures électriques en 2030, et qui a fait de la réindustrialisation la boussole de sa politique économique.

L'épisode illustre toute la difficulté de l'exercice. Pour restaurer l'attractivité du pays, Emmanuel Macron a tout misé sur la politique de l'offre depuis 2017 : près de 30 milliards d'euros de baisses d'impôts pour les entreprises, allègements de charges et discours business friendly. Subventions et normes sont venues compléter la panoplie, depuis le Covid-19, pour affronter la Chine et les Etats-Unis, qui assument désormais une politique ouvertement protectionniste. L'enjeu n'est pas seulement économique, Emmanuel Macron et Bruno Le Maire le savent bien : la désindustrialisation fabrique du populisme à grande échelle.

Mais la politique de l'offre atteint ici ses limites. Les premiers rivaux de la France ne sont pas au bout du monde, mais au sein même de l'Union européenne (UE). Ce qui différencie vraiment la Hongrie, c'est son coût du travail. Le salaire minimum y est le plus faible de l'UE, après la Bulgarie. A 579 euros brut par mois, il est trois fois moins élevé qu'en France (1 709 euros) et deux fois moins qu'en Espagne (1 167 euros). Un avantage compétitif d'une ampleur telle que les pouvoirs publics français peuvent difficilement lutter à coups de crédits d'impôt et d'allègements de charges.

Options peu nombreuses

Malgré tous ses efforts pour alléger le coût du travail depuis dix ans, la France ne pourra jamais rivaliser avec les pays à bas salaires du Vieux Continent – hier le Portugal, la République tchèque ou la Slovaquie, aujourd'hui la Hongrie, demain peut-être la Serbie, l'Albanie, l'Ukraine... Certes, à grand renfort de subventions, elle a attiré quelques usines de batteries dans le nord du pays, mais celles-ci, très automatisées, emploient en réalité peu de main-d'œuvre.

Les options qui s'offrent aux pouvoirs publics sont peu nombreuses. « Pousser les industriels à automatiser davantage leurs usines pour ne plus dépendre du coût de la main-d'œuvre », propose sans détour Eric Kirstetter, associé chez Roland Berger. Entièrement robotisées, les usines n'emploieraient plus que des salariés très qualifiés en petit nombre, chargés de les entretenir et de les faire tourner. La France redeviendrait le pays de production et d'exportation qu'elle aspire à être, et l'Etat y gagnerait des recettes fiscales, fait valoir le consultant : « L'enjeu, c'est de faire deux fois plus d'usines avec deux fois moins de personnel par usine. »

L'optimum économique n'est toutefois pas forcément l'optimum social, et encore moins l'optimum politique. Est-ce à dire que le combat est perdu ? Pas complètement. Reste la voie normative et la « réciprocité », qui tend

à remplacer les bons vieux droits de douane. Instaurer une taxe carbone aux frontières, restreindre le bonus écologique aux seuls véhicules produits sur le sol européen, menacer de poursuites pour concurrence déloyale... Cela a un fort effet incitatif lorsqu'il s'agit de localiser une usine, reconnaissent, à regret, les industriels. Ce sont d'ailleurs les barrières aux frontières européennes, existantes ou projetées, qui ont poussé BYD, après d'autres, à bâtir une usine en Europe plutôt qu'au Maghreb. Reste à savoir si la France et l'Europe peuvent réellement être souveraines ensemble.

8 January (Le Monde)

https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2024/01/07/defense-l-industrie-francaise-menacee-par-de-nouveaux-concurrents_6209539_3234.html

Défense : l'industrie française menacée par de nouveaux concurrents

La Corée du Sud, la Turquie et Israël sont de redoutables compétiteurs pour le complexe militaro-industriel tricolore, qui a quelques faiblesses malgré ses atouts et son rang de troisième exportateur mondial d'armes.

Par [Jean-Michel Bezat](#)

Publié hier à 16h17, modifié à 00h44



Le Rafale F4, sur la base aérienne de la marine française de Landivisiau (Finistère), le 19 octobre 2023. FRED TANNEAU / AFP

La France arbore fièrement la réussite de ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler la base industrielle et technologique de défense (BITD) : 4 000 entreprises travaillant pour les armées, dont 450 sont jugées stratégiques et 600 exportent dans le sillage des géants Airbus, Dassault Aviation, Nexter, Naval Group, MBDA, Thales ou Safran.

Née dans les années 1960 de l'ambition gaulliste d'indépendance, elle produit presque tous les équipements militaires, évitant aux forces terrestres, navales et aériennes de les acheter « sur étagère » aux Américains et aux autres Européens.

Cette ambition a une faiblesse, inhérente au statut de puissance moyenne de la France : ses armées offrant un débouché limité, la BITD doit exporter pour survivre. Et le Rafale pèse lourd avec ses moteurs Safran, son électronique Thales et ses missiles MBDA : en 2022, les quatre-vingts avions de combat de Dassault vendus aux Emirats arabes unis ont représenté les deux tiers des 27 milliards d'euros d'exportations du pays sur ce marché, en le portant à la troisième place mondiale en 2022, derrière les Etats-Unis et la Russie.

« *La France est monoproduit. Sans le Rafale, elle serait marginalisée* », note Marc Chassillan, ingénieur de l'armement et consultant défense. En recul en Europe, elle est aussi de plus en plus dépendante des pays du Moyen-Orient. Elle peine à vendre frégates et sous-marins sur un marché très concurrentiel. Ses industriels ont abandonné l'équipement du fantassin et ne produisent plus de chars Leclerc, un échec à l'export. Les véhicules blindés Jaguar et Griffon, plutôt conçus pour des conflits asymétriques (Afghanistan, Sahel...), n'ont trouvé preneur qu'en Belgique grâce à une étroite coopération militaire entre Paris et Bruxelles. Si le canon Caesar est très demandé, Nexter ne peut répondre à toutes les demandes.

Une « offre pléthorique »

Dans l'armement terrestre, « *l'offre mondiale est devenue pléthorique* », rappelle M. Chassillan. Des exportateurs de second rang pointent le bout du canon (Emirats arabes unis, Brésil, Afrique du Sud, Egypte...),

mais les poids lourds historiques du marché de la défense s'inquiètent de concurrents plus redoutables : la Corée du Sud, la Turquie et Israël. « [Ces acteurs] *bénéficient d'une montée en gamme de leurs produits et d'un contrôle export désinhibé* », souligne le rapport 2023 du gouvernement au Parlement sur les exportations d'armes, alors que « *la concurrence intra-européenne ne faiblit pas* ».

Quand la Pologne a commandé à la Corée du Sud 1 000 chars K2, 500 obusiers K9, des centaines de missiles et cinquante avions FA-50, en 2022, les industriels du Vieux Continent ont été surpris, sans pouvoir riposter. Ni l'allemand Krauss-Maffei Wegmann ni l'américain General Dynamics n'étaient capables de livrer autant de chars, respectivement Leopard 2 et Abrams. Pas plus que Nexter des Caesar ou Airbus des dizaines d'avions Eurofighter. Dans une Europe qui avait écarté durant trente ans le scénario d'un conflit de haute intensité, l'outil industriel s'est atrophié.

L'industriel sud-coréen Hanwha rappelle, lui, que son pays est « *prêt pour la guerre* » depuis l'armistice de 1953 avec la Corée du Nord, soixante-dix ans de guerre froide où il a pu développer une industrie d'armement au service de son armée de conscription, avant de partir à la conquête des marchés étrangers avec un puissant soutien de l'Etat. Séoul fournit des matériels aux standards de l'OTAN à des prix compétitifs.

Quand on peut avoir deux K2 pour le prix d'un Leopard 2, le choix est vite fait, résume M. Chassillan. A la 31^e place des exportateurs en 2000, la Corée du Sud occupait la 9^e en 2022, selon le Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, et elle vise la 4^e en 2027.

« *Cette ambition exportatrice est partagée par la Turquie [12^e exportateur mondial en 2022], constate Léo Péria-Peigné, chercheur à l'Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI), qui prépare un ouvrage sur la géopolitique de l'armement. La constitution d'une BITD est un enjeu de souveraineté stratégique pour Ankara aussi. Le pays produit également beaucoup pour son armée de masse. L'exportation lui garantit de la rentabilité, et il veut aussi mordre sur le marché européen, comme la Corée du Sud.* »

Une « razzia exceptionnelle de contrats »

Israël et sa BITD high-tech bénéficient aussi du réarmement planétaire. « *Elle a fait une razzia exceptionnelle de contrats en 2023 et va gagner plusieurs places au classement mondial* », dont elle occupait la 10^e place en 2022, calcule M. Chassillan.

L'Etat hébreu vend notamment son obusier de 155 mm Atmos, des tourelles téléopérées, des missiles antichars, des systèmes antiaériens (vendus pour équiper le « bouclier » allemand) ou de protection active des blindés.

L'Hexagone conserve des points forts : missiles, satellites d'observation... Thales, qui vient de se renforcer par le rachat de l'américain Imperva, reste une référence dans les activités cyber, et surtout les radars. Les nouveaux entrants n'ont pas non plus atteint le niveau des Américains et des Européens dans la motorisation des avions de combat. Mais la France accuse un énorme retard pour les drones, dont Dassault et l'état-major se sont longtemps désintéressés, alors que la Turquie en offre une gamme complète.

La délégation générale de l'armement du ministère des armées admet aussi que la France a raté les « offset », ces compensations en production locale et en transferts de technologies. Elle a longtemps privilégié l'emploi sur le territoire national et rechigné à transférer des savoirs aux clients étrangers, alors que ces concessions étaient devenues un passage obligé pour décrocher de gros contrats.

Varsovie a vu dans l'accord avec Séoul « *l'aboutissement d'une coopération construite pendant de nombreuses années* » par deux pays inquiets d'un repli du parapluie protecteur américain. « *C'est une opération gagnant-gagnant*, souligne Renaud Bellais, codirecteur de l'Observatoire de la défense de la Fondation Jean Jaurès. *La Pologne veut des livraisons rapides et une production locale ; la Corée du Sud peut prélever sur ses énormes stocks d'armement et internationalise son industrie.* »

Calendrier de livraison

La France a fait évoluer sa doctrine depuis plusieurs années. A l'instar des *Foreign Military Sales* (« ventes militaires à l'étranger ») des Américains, « *une nouvelle logique de partenariat stratégique d'Etat à Etat se met en place* », avec des dimensions à la fois militaire, diplomatique et économique, souligne M. Péria-Peigné en citant la Grèce, l'Inde et les Emirats arabes unis. Elle doit permettre de structurer une offre de long terme pour vendre plusieurs types d'armements au même pays (avions, hélicoptères, frégates, satellites...), tout en se maintenant à la pointe des technologies. « *La France restera dans le peloton de tête avec une nouvelle gamme d'équipements* », juge le chercheur de l'IFRI.

La guerre russo-ukrainienne a fait apparaître une nouvelle contrainte, de plus en plus forte : le calendrier de livraison et la disponibilité des matériels. « *Ils tendent à devenir des critères centraux* » dans la négociation des contrats, répète le ministre des armées, Sébastien Lecornu, aux industriels.

Car le risque de marginalisation est réel. Sur les 100 milliards d'euros d'achats d'armement des pays de l'Union européenne conclus entre le début du conflit en Ukraine et l'été 2023, 78 % l'ont été à des industriels non européens, les Américains en raflant 63 %, a calculé Jean-Pierre Maulny, directeur adjoint de l'Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques ; dans les 22 % restant aux Européens, Paris n'en a décroché que 12 %, soit 2,5 milliards d'euros.

8 January (The Guardian)

[Twitter changed my life for good. But the platform I loved no longer exists](#) | [Helene von Bismarck](#) | [The Guardian](#)

Twitter changed my life for good. But the platform I loved no longer exists

[Helene von Bismarck](#)

It gave me friends, fun and new horizons – but the dark side of social media was a threat to democracy long before Elon Musk

Mon 8 Jan 2024 08.00 CET



‘Over the years, some of the people I met on Twitter turned into genuine friends.’ Photograph: Omar Marques/Sopa Images/Shutterstock

Last year was the year when Twitter, now known as X, broke irreparably. In 2023 engagement fell off a cliff, [advertisers withdrew](#) and long-term influencers stopped – or greatly reduced – posting. What was a busy global public forum now resembles an aggressive wasteland filled with hate and rumour. On 18 December, the [European Commission opened infringement proceedings](#) against X for allegedly breaking EU law on disinformation. It is high time there was a broader discussion about the challenges social media poses to liberal democracy. But to do that, we need to understand why it can be so appealing. The battle for balance and truth may be lost on X, but it continues elsewhere.

I used Twitter very heavily for several years, and know that social media is not necessarily trivial. Long before I started to comment myself, I enjoyed it as a treasure trove of information. By following authors, experts, journalists, lawyers, politicians, officials and institutions around the world whose work was relevant to mine, or about whom I was simply curious, I could curate my own, transnational newspaper. As a researcher, Twitter saved me vast amounts of time, as long as I made sure to triple-check my sources and never rely solely on the information provided on the platform itself. As a writer it forced me to be concise and persuasive. When you have only 140, and later, 280 characters, every syllable counts.

When I started actively tweeting myself in 2017, I had practically no followers. The initial lack of audience was actually a good thing. When you have nobody to impress, you might as well say exactly what you think. You can also experiment. So I wrote about the subjects I concentrated on professionally, UK history and politics, but also about the books I had read for fun, about art or music I love, about places where I had lived or travelled to and films I had watched. I tried to explain the foreign policy of my home country, Germany, and increasingly commented more generally on international affairs and geopolitics.

The response was overwhelming. Five years after starting to post my own thoughts, my follower count reached 40,000. It is entirely possible that half of them were bots, but it still provided me with a surreal, global reach. Twitter was no longer just my public diary, it had turned into the witty office chat I had never had, the glorious dinner party full of wise and fascinating people I longed to attend. There were many like me, and together we watched and debated as the UK parliament tore itself apart over Brexit, as the pandemic stopped the world, as armed Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol, British and American troops withdrew hastily from a desperate Afghanistan, and Putin’s Russia started to bomb Ukraine. We were each on our own, we disagreed, fought and sometimes fell out, but bizarrely, it somehow felt as if we were all in it together.

The most rewarding interactions I had online happened when I asked my followers a question, often related to my research of UK history and politics. Do you remember what you were doing on the day the Falklands war started? If you are a member of the armed forces, why did you join up? Which history books did you read in school and at university? Do you feel British, or rather English, Scottish or Welsh? All of these questions elicited hundreds of responses, many of them sent privately by people who weren't inclined or allowed to put their personal experiences online. These anecdotes introduced me to my readers' point of view, pointed my research in new directions, and reminded me why I was writing in the first place.

All that attention had a downside. The dark aspects of social media were always there, only a few clicks away. There were men who genuinely scared me. There was a bit of outright abuse, although it never got anywhere as bad as what colleagues of mine from minority backgrounds experienced. I learned to instantly delete a message or email after the first rude or inappropriate word, instead of reading it to the end. What I found more difficult to deal with were the trolls who were smart enough to make me feel horrible about myself without using vocabulary that would have made me instantly block them. On a weekly basis, someone would tell me they were disappointed in me, that I was naive, arrogant, unimaginative, entitled, misguided, badly informed, a fool. I did not react, but yes, they got to me, and I often wondered if they were right.

Nobody is entirely immune to the narcissism that social media encourages. It takes time and research, as well as intellectual and emotional discipline, to introduce nuance and factual information into a conversation. Balanced analysis is hard; snark and outrage take a lot less effort. Everybody enjoys being praised and nobody likes being corrected in public, with the result that there is a real risk that even the most seasoned analysts or journalists start worrying more about their own reputation or "brand" than about the issues they are writing about.

When everyone is more concerned with what they stand for, as opposed to with what they know, meaningful conversation becomes impossible. There is no more analysis, only judgment. Every heavy social-media user turns into a mini-embassy, and a binary worldview sets in, as can now be observed in the online reactions to the war between Israel and Hamas. This trend towards aggressive over-simplification and emotionalisation started long before Elon Musk took over Twitter, although things have become infinitely worse since then.

It is wrong to assume that what people experience on social media is somehow distinct from their "real life" and therefore ultimately unimportant. What happens online changes what you read, how you feel, what you do and who you see. That can be wonderful or deeply unpleasant, even dangerous, depending on the circumstances. In my case, the overall impact of social media on my life was overwhelmingly positive.

As my follower count grew, so did my network of contacts. This benefitted my career as a writer and broadcaster. More importantly, it gave me some completely unexpected insight and experiences that widened my horizons and genuinely enriched my life. Like the time when an officer in the British army and his wife invited me to his regimental dinner. It was a fascinating evening full of traditions that to me seemed slightly bizarre and great fun. Or the extremely educational three-day trip to Latvia I was invited on in reaction to a request for reading tips on the history of the Baltic states.

An Anglican bishop showed me around the House of Lords in Westminster, and took me into the chamber to watch a debate. A diplomat's wife sent me books for my children. A schoolteacher invited me to speak to her pupils. Over the years, some of the people I met on Twitter turned into genuine friends that I regularly see, speak to, trust and rely on, and whom I would have probably never come across otherwise. These friendships alone made it worthwhile.

It is because I knew it so well that I can say with absolute certainty that the platform I benefited from so much no longer exists. And even if it did, I no longer have the time or energy to use it in the intense way I once did. But I do understand its power and I know that the larger issue confronting us all is not limited to one powerful man, or his huge, broken platform. [Social media](#) can greatly enrich democratic discourse, but it also has the potential to destroy it.

Helene von Bismarck is a Hamburg-based historian specialising in UK-German relations

8 January (The Economist)

[Social media's online diarists have a long lineage \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

The art of over-sharing

Social media's online diarists have a long lineage

Who are personal journals written for?



image: carrie walker/youtube

Jan 4th 2024

The tales embrace the mundane and the seismic, from being dumped by a boyfriend before the school prom to the sudden death of a parent. The tone ranges from cheesy to heartbreaking. The storytellers are “journal influencers”, mostly young women reading their teenage diaries to audiences online.

Some videos are mingled with other content, merging pre-teen dreams with make-up tips; others are simple shrines to past selves. One influencer, Carrie Walker (pictured), draws 1.2m views for a half-hour read on YouTube; the shorter content on TikTok's #diarytok tag has reached 54m. And sharing secrets presents commercial opportunity: selling notebooks and pens on Amazon; auctioning copies of diaries on eBay.

Many people think about writing a diary, especially at New Year. Some start. Some even keep it up. But why write, and for whom? Whether a novice facing a blank page or a seasoned scribbler with years of good meals and gossip in irregular notebooks, almost any diarist has asked themselves that question.

Sally Bayley of the University of Oxford, author of “The Private Life of the Diary”, regards sharing on social media as the antithesis of diary-keeping. The journal is “an attempt to be honest with yourself”. It is “an internal territory, which you are mapping onto the page”, inseparable from privacy. Even Sylvia Plath, a “theatrical individual”, Dr Bayley notes, wrote a diary in order to “generate a voice in private”.

Yet diaries have also long been shared, if more discreetly than on TikTok. Keeping a journal rose in popularity in the 19th century, especially among women. According to Cynthia Huff, an academic specialist in Victorian culture, diary-sharing then was “extremely common”.

Diaries were read aloud, sent to friends or left open for visitors to peruse. “That distinction between public and private really doesn't hold at all,” says Professor Huff. Some diaries served practical uses, sharing advice on self-improvement, pregnancy or childbirth. British women in the colonies often sent diaries back home. They were “creating an extended family through these diaries” and fostering an ocean-spanning sense of Englishness.

Many journal videos also create a sense of community. They share stories of isolation: of suffering homophobia, struggles with body image or early romantic obsessions. They poke fun at the distorted expectations of youth and the disappointments of adulthood, with the ear of sympathetic strangers.

Some diary-sharers go further. At *Queer Diary*, a series of events across Britain begun in 2020 by Beth Watson, a performer, LGBTQ adults read their old diaries to a live audience. The drama, confusion and mayhem of teenage life are performed to a sympathetic crowd. The celebration, Ms Watson says, is as important as the reflection.

The symbiosis of secrecy and celebration was perhaps best understood by Anaïs Nin, a 20th-century French-born American whose diary was an unapologetic exercise in self-creation. “I am in my Journal, and in my Journal only, nowhere else. Nothing shows on the outside. Perhaps I do not exist except as a fantastic character in this story.”

Nin’s mix of fantasy and truth included an illegal abortion, extramarital affairs and, most notoriously, an incestuous relationship with her father. Her assertions of confidentiality—“you won’t say anything, will you”; “only my Journal knows it” —treat the reader as the sole listener.

And yet, of course, Nin published her journal. Its scandalous content won her fame that her fiction had not. Her confessional texts penetrated the thin veil between public and private. The diaries are a masterclass in broadcast secrecy, a megaphoned whisper.

“We write to taste life twice,” Nin wrote, “in the moment and in retrospection.” She spent her last years reading her diaries to worshipping crowds. Like today’s influencers, she knew that retrospection tastes much sweeter in company.

8 January (The Guardian)

[Libraries for the future: Europe's new wave of 'meeting places for the mind' | Libraries | The Guardian](#)

Libraries for the future: Europe's new wave of 'meeting places for the mind'

From Ghent's De Krook to Helsinki's Oodi, recent civic constructions have shared a vision of the library as a living room for the modern city

[Jon Henley](#), Europe correspondent

Mon 8 Jan 2024 06.00 CET



Outside the futuristic glass-and-metal tiers of [De Krook](#), Ghent's city library, stands a statue: four giant, brightly painted figures leaning tightly in towards each other, their heads all but touching – as if telling each other something.

“And that's really what it's about,” said service and communications coordinator Els Van Rompay. “This is more than a library, though books are its core. It's also a place to learn, connect, develop, collaborate. Or just to be. A meeting place for our minds.”

De Krook is not alone. All also built in the past seven or eight years, Helsinki's Oodi central library, Dokk1 in Denmark's Aarhus, and Deichman Bjørvika in Oslo share much the same vision of the library: in effect a living room for the 21st-century city.

Walk through the front doors of De Krook – named after the bend in the Scheldt river on which it sits, linking the medieval city centre of Belgium's third biggest city with its university quarter – and you join more than 4,000 others who also do so every day.

They range in age from primary school pupils on a class visit to the children's lending library on the lower ground floor, with cosy reading boxes to curl up in and multilingual digital storytelling machines, to pensioners coming for an internet lesson.



De Krook, Ghent's city library. Photograph: Arterra/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

“I love it,” said Eline, 63. “I come once a week, to read the papers, borrow a book, go to a talk.” Luc, recently retired, said the building’s uncompromising modernity had been off-putting at first, “but now I like it, a lot. And it’s something we have together.”

Baris, 20, was revising for his end-of-term university exams at one of the building’s 1,000 workspaces. “It’s a cool place,” he said. “A mix of quiet and busy areas, you can work or hang out.” Effie, 43, liked the cakes and the third-floor views of the old town.

Since it opened in March 2017, replacing an array of semi-derelict, mostly industrial buildings, De Krook, designed by a team of Catalan and Belgian architects, has been hailed as a “connection point”, a “landmark” and a “cultural catalyst” by critics.

Crucially, however, it was greeted rapturously by locals, Van Rompay said. “We put out a bit of a symbolic call to ‘help us move the books’ from the old library, and just so many showed up,” she said. “The opening weekend, we got 20,000 visitors.”



Book displays at De Krook. Photograph: Arterra/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

Inside, no two floors are the same. Vast windows, high atria and wide staircases scattered with cushions create a sense of a “city within the city”; a bright cafe-restaurant sits next to an expansive newspaper and magazine reading space.

Downstairs is a “makers’ room” with laser cutters, 3D printers, sewing machines and soldering equipment. There’s a fully equipped, always-busy student radio studio, and advice centres to help with legal questions and adult education choices.

At the DigiPoint on the second floor, a city hall staffer and a rota of volunteers are on hand to guide – usually more elderly – library users through the digital maze: filling in online forms, booking a dentist’s appointment, extending a library loan online.

A language hub offers materials in English, French, Arabic and Turkish, with a focus on learning Dutch: Ghent’s 260,000 inhabitants (plus 60,000 students) are increasingly diverse and half the city’s younger children do not speak Dutch at home.

Meeting rooms on every floor host lectures, talks and conferences. There have been slam poetry readings on the stairs and piano concerts in the lobby. Membership is free, and comes with unlimited wifi and two hours of computing time a day.

Community involvement is not an empty term, said De Krook’s information officer, Bart Vanlerberghe. The library’s partners are the city and region, but also Ghent university and Imec, a leading Flemish nano- and digital technology R&D lab.

Both help run a series of innovative projects driven by citizens and facilitated by the library. [A programme called Comon](#) aims to devise technological solutions to local people’s concrete problems, as identified in public meetings at the library.

The first focus was on “understandable healthcare”: citizens brainstormed fixes; students worked on testable prototypes; researchers developed products that worked (such as a smartwatch to measure and record pain). The next will look at mobility.

For all its newfound task as “knowledge navigator and facilitator” in an increasingly complex and connected world, the library’s traditional role has also benefited from its new home: library book loans, far from declining, have risen by almost 10%.

“It’s kind of like the still centre,” said library coordinator Ingrid Verdonck. “A place to breathe, really. As well as to connect.” The city’s 14 interconnected local libraries share the same vision, said Yves Rousseau in the Ledeborg branch.

“It’s really about building a real relationship with our users and communities – finding out what they want, and providing it,” he said. One demand was out-of-hours access, which Rousseau’s branch should start offering in 2024, using an app and QR code.

Throughout its development and initial opening phase, De Krook’s management worked in consultation with the team at one of Europe’s new library pioneers, [Dokk1](#) in Aarhus, Denmark’s second city, which opened two years earlier, in 2015.



Aarhus’s Dokk1 sits on the waterfront of Denmark’s second city. Photograph: Allard Schager/Alamy

A similarly award-winning, futuristic and transparent building, Dokk1 – on the port waterfront – is part of a larger complex including a multimedia centre and the city’s citizens’ services department, plus northern Europe’s largest automated car park.

Drawing more than 1 million users a year, and designed after extensive focus groups with the city’s residents, the new library, like De Krook, hosts lectures, conferences and concerts as well as all the activities of a cutting edge, 21st-century library.

Hailed as “an encounter between two fine Danish traditions: the cultural ambition to open up all branches of knowledge to every generation and social class, and a sense of functional and beautiful design,” Dokk1 is also home to some startling art.

Hanging above the central staircase is a huge bronze tubular bell that weighs 3 tonnes and is connected to the maternity ward of Aarhus university hospital, where parents can push a button to ring it when their newborn is delivered.



A staircase in Helsinki's Oodi library. Photograph: Markku Ulander/AFP/Getty Images

Helsinki's [Oodi](#) ("Ode") opened 18 months after De Krook, on the centenary of Finland's independence in December 2018. The new library hit 1 million visitors in just four months, and is expected to reach 10 million early in 2024.

A spectacular building built clad in 160km of Finnish spruce and featuring living trees on its top floor, Oodi – also home to music and video production studios, a cinema, workshops and a "nerd loft" – aims to welcome everyone.

"Business [people], families with babies, students, homeless people – all fit within the same walls, and we strive to provide suitable services for everyone," said the library's director, Anna-Maria Soininvaara.

Its recipe, she added, was "valuing collaboration, listening to others, increasing your own understanding – and offering something for everyone that's worth leaving the house for."



Deichman Bjørvika, the main public library in Oslo. Photograph: Berit Roald/Press Association Images

The latest addition to Europe's growing list of "libraries of the new era" opened in 2020, on Oslo's waterfront near the city's opera house.

The five-storey [Deichman Bjørvika](#) library has a cafe, restaurant, media workshops, auditorium, recording studios, a mini cinema, lounges and gaming zones. "Norway's biggest bookshelf," its then director, Knut Skansen, said, "is truly a library for the future."

8 January (Le Figaro)

[«Vivre au quotidien à proximité d'un point de deal» : l'étonnant spectacle soutenu par la ville de Grenoble \(lefigaro.fr\)](#)

«Vivre au quotidien à proximité d'un point de deal» : l'étonnant spectacle soutenu par la ville de Grenoble

Par J.D.

Publié il y a 1 heure, mis à jour il y a 1 heure



La représentation se tiendra à Grenoble le 9 janvier prochain en présence du maire de Grenoble, Éric Piolle. rh2010 / stock.adobe.com

«Copains d'en bas» est le titre de cette représentation théâtrale qui vise à promouvoir «la fameuse mixité sociale».

À Grenoble, les habitants du quartier de Berriat ont vu fleurir cette semaine des affiches bariolées sur les murs de leurs immeubles, faisant la promotion d'une pièce de théâtre soutenue par la commune de l'Isère et portant sur la [mixité sociale](#).

«Les copains d'en bas : comment vivre au quotidien à proximité d'un point de deal ?», indique [le bandeau ajouté par la ville de Grenoble](#) sous l'affiche de cette représentation interactive d'un nouveau genre, créée en 2018 et portée par la Compagnie Artiflette (basée à Bordeaux). Un spectacle qui vient retracer l'histoire de Ben et Charlotte, un couple de trentenaires, qui ont décidé d'aller habiter dans une cité HLM pour vivre «la fameuse mixité sociale».

«Quotidien rythmé par des dealers»

Au fil des 1 heure 20 de représentation et du temps d'échange qui s'ensuit, les spectateurs peuvent suivre Ben et Charlotte dans leur rencontre avec Assia, la «voisine marocaine qui leur apporte des couscous fumants», Keny, «une maman malgache pleine de rêves», Bachir, «l'épicier d'en face qui leur fait crédit» ou encore les jeunes «Casquette et Barbichette» qui s'installent dans leur cage d'escalier.

Ce spectacle, qui vise à «dessiner une vérité autre que celle souvent entendue dans les médias», selon le magazine municipal de la ville de Grenoble, fait, selon le site, la chronique «d'un quotidien rythmé par les dealers dans la cage d'escalier». La représentation se tiendra à Grenoble le 9 janvier prochain en présence du maire de Grenoble, Éric Piolle.

Le spectacle, qui indique dans son dossier de presse avoir reçu «une aide à la création» par la Communauté de Communes Le Grésivaudan, est organisé dans le cadre de l'appel à projet de la MILDECA (Mission interministérielle de lutte contre les drogues et les conduites addictives) en 2019, dont la ville de Grenoble avait été lauréate.

L'objectif de [cet appel à projet](#), doté de plus d'un million d'euros, était de «sélectionner et d'accompagner des initiatives innovantes et ambitieuses de prévention des conduites à risques conduits à l'échelle d'un territoire». Il s'agissait notamment, indique encore le site de la MIDELCA, de «renforcer l'information de tous» pour «changer les représentations ou idées reçues associées aux produits psychoactifs» et provoquer ainsi une «prise de conscience citoyenne». Par ailleurs, les initiatives présentées par les collectivités devaient également viser à «intervenir spécifiquement en faveur des jeunes» pour réduire les comportements à risque, qu'il s'agisse de consommer ou de participer à des trafics de stupéfiants. La ville de Grenoble, ainsi que 13 autres villes avaient été lauréates de cet appel.

«Une gauche qui marche main dans la main avec les dealers»

Une promotion qui n'a pas manqué de faire réagir sur les réseaux sociaux, alors que certains pointent du doigt une «gauche qui marche main dans la main avec les dealers» sur X (ex-Twitter). «L'argent public doit être utilisé pour combattre les dealers qui pourrissent notre vie», déplore de son côté le syndicat étudiant UNI Grenoble sur le réseau social, «pas pour nous apprendre à vivre avec».

«Comment peut-on mettre fin aux clichés» et au «racisme décomplexé» s'indigne une utilisatrice de X, quand «on parle de copains d'en bas»? Un autre ironise : «Comment vivre au quotidien les rackets et les violences avec compassion et bienveillance?»

8 January (Le Figaro)

[«Dans le monde anglo-saxon, ces voix qui s'élèvent pour contrer le wokisme» \(lefigaro.fr\)](https://www.lefigaro.fr)

«Dans le monde anglo-saxon, ces voix qui s'élèvent pour contrer le wokisme»

Par [E.H](#)

Publié il y a 1 heure



Sylvie Perez. *Fabien Clairefond*

TRIBUNE - *En finir avec le wokisme.* En Grande Bretagne et aux États-Unis, l'objectif est partagé par des universitaires, des politiques et des citoyens ordinaires. C'est aussi le titre du livre de Sylvie Perez : un récit éclairant sur ceux qui résistent face à un adversaire tentaculaire, salue la professeur de littérature à la Sorbonne.

Le récent livre de Sylvie Perez, *En finir avec le wokisme*, analyse avec brio la contre-offensive conduite dans les pays anglo-saxons pour faire barrage à [un phénomène qui a pris l'ampleur d'un tsunami](#). Comme la France subit la vague avec quelques années de décalage, la lecture en est vivement recommandée à nos concitoyens qui souhaiteraient s'en inspirer. En effet, la riposte est souvent [le fait d'individus isolés](#), qui ont créé des associations, des sites internet, des podcasts qui permettent une salutaire prise de conscience et obtiennent parfois des résultats concrets, notamment sur le plan juridique et politique.

Ces résistants héroïques sont des universitaires licenciés pour crime de pensée (Jordan Peterson, [Kathleen Stock](#)), des féministes (Julie Bindel) engagées contre la régression des droits féminins provoquée par la présence de « femmes à pénis » dans les prisons pour femmes et les compétitions sportives, des Noirs aussi, lassés de la condescendance du néo-antiracisme (Jason Riley, John McWhorter) ou encore des transsexuels qui refusent de mentir sur la réalité biologique (Debbie Hayton). Certains politiques ont pris conscience du problème, de Barack Obama à Rishi Sunak et à Dave Rubin, dont la vidéo « Why I Left the Left » a été vue plus de 16 millions de fois.

«L'antiracisme» et la théorie du genre

La description de cette lutte contre un adversaire tentaculaire nous permet de prendre la mesure du délire woke. Aux États-Unis, on éduque à l'« antiracisme » et à la théorie du genre dès la naissance, grâce à des albums adaptés (*Antiracist Baby*, d'Ibram X. Kendi), et, à l'école maternelle, on apprend à parler de « personnes à vulve » et de « personnes à pénis » pour éviter les termes offensants « femme » et « homme ». Deux Américaines, Regina Jackson et Saira Rao, organisent des dîners chez de riches bourgeoises qui paient 400 euros pour expier leur racisme inconscient. Sur les campus, enseignants et étudiants sont invités à ne pas sortir sans leur badge « My pronouns are she/her », ou « xe/xem/xyr », ou encore « fluid ». Un journal peut titrer : « Un trans-homme accouche après utilisation d'un don de sperme féminin ». La Grande-Bretagne propose des «

zones de liberté d'expression » (free speech zones), contradiction dans les termes, et plusieurs personnes ont subi la mort sociale pour avoir dit que les femmes existaient...

Devant ces délires, la tentation est grande de s'écrier, tel Astérix chez les Bretons : « Ils sont fous, ces Anglais ! » Mais notre Planning familial n'a pas voulu être en reste : « Au Planning, on sait que les hommes aussi peuvent être enceints » - comme Obélix ? Finie, la fierté du village gaulois de résister encore et toujours à l'envahisseur ; désormais, la mondialisation signifie aussi la mondialisation de la bêtise. L'autoaffirmation de genre réclamée par les militants est consacrée par la loi du 16 novembre 2018 (autorisant à changer de sexe à l'état civil sur simple déclaration), et l'incitation à la transition sociale dès l'enfance, au mépris du principe de précaution le plus élémentaire, avalisée par la circulaire Blanquer de novembre 2021. L'idéologie de la diversité et de la fluidité est la meilleure alliée du néolibéralisme : elle arase les cultures qui constituent autant d'obstacles à la circulation des marchandises et ouvre au marché de juteux débouchés, que ce soit dans le « business » de la diversité, auquel les entreprises américaines consacrent chaque année 8 milliards de dollars, ou dans l'industrie de la chirurgie sexuelle, dont le chiffre d'affaires est évalué à 5 milliards d'ici 2030.

Évidemment, le risque de mettre en l'air, à tort, la vie d'un homme me navre, et il peut y avoir des dommages collatéraux. Mais le bienfait du mouvement est tellement important!

Sandra Muller, après avoir faussement accusé un homme pour lancer son hashtag #BalanceTonPorc

On frémit devant le sectarisme de ce mouvement. Le recours à l'intimidation et au harcèlement est proportionnel à l'absurdité des propositions auxquelles il s'agit de convertir les récalcitrants : le « compelle intrare » (« fais-les entrer de force »), citation biblique jadis brandie pour justifier les conversions forcées, est repris mutatis mutandis par les activistes. Par un renversement ironique, les lois interdisant les thérapies de conversion adoptées sous l'influence des militants (telle celle du 31 janvier 2022 en France) prévoient de sanctionner les psychologues qui prennent en charge le mal-être des adolescents au lieu de les diriger d'emblée vers un traitement hormonal, puis chirurgical ; elles permettent de porter plainte contre les associations, telle la Petite Sirène, qui offrent une information objective aux familles. Et la fin justifiant les moyens, [Sandra Muller](#), après avoir faussement accusé un homme pour lancer son hashtag #BalanceTonPorc, déclara : « Évidemment, le risque de mettre en l'air, à tort, la vie d'un homme me navre, et il peut y avoir des dommages collatéraux. Mais le bienfait du mouvement est tellement important ! »

Les victimes de cette idéologie sont légion, qui ont perdu leur emploi pour avoir prononcé un mot interdit, avoir vanté la méritocratie à l'école ou la compétence dans l'entreprise, ou, pire encore, avoir osé douter de l'utilité des séminaires de rééducation « diversité et inclusion » - y compris des femmes, des Noirs, des homo et des transsexuels, populations prétendument défendues par cette idéologie. En effet, la course à la pureté n'a jamais de fin et le mouvement woke ne cesse de se fragmenter, comme en témoigne le récent acronyme LGBTQIAAPPO2S (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Ally, Asexual, Pansexual, Polyamory, Omnisexual, and Two-Spirit). Si vous ignorez le sens de « bispirituel », rassurez-vous, c'est la même chose que « pan-autochtone ». La pulvérisation menace de l'emporter sur la convergence des luttes, dès l'instant où l'individualisme postmoderne répand l'idée que chacun ne peut être représenté que par lui-même, nous interdisant désormais de dire avec Montaigne : « Chaque homme porte la forme entière de l'humaine condition. » Le postmodernisme est résolument un antihumanisme.

On sort de cette lecture revigoré d'avoir partagé le combat de ces hommes et de ces femmes de bonne volonté qui se battent au péril de leur carrière, de leur réputation et de leur sécurité. Comme le dit l'un d'eux : « C'est David contre Goliath, mais David gagne à la fin. »

Sylvie Perez, « En finir avec le wokisme. Chronique de la contre-offensive anglo-saxonne », Paris, Cerf, 2023, 366 p., 24,50 €.

8 January (Le Figaro)

[Iran: une femme fouettée pour «atteinte aux mœurs publiques» \(lefigaro.fr\)](https://www.lefigaro.fr)

Iran: une femme fouettée pour «atteinte aux mœurs publiques»

L'avocat de la condamnée, Maziar Tatati, a déclaré que sa cliente avait été arrêtée en avril «pour avoir publié une photo sans porter le voile sur les réseaux sociaux».

Par Le Figaro avec AFP

Publié hier à 14:39, mis à jour hier à 16:06

Une Iranienne a reçu 74 coups de fouet pour [«atteinte aux mœurs publiques»](#) et a été condamnée à payer une amende pour non-port du voile musulman, a déclaré l'Autorité judiciaire.

Depuis la Révolution islamique de 1979, le port du voile est obligatoire en Iran pour toutes les femmes, même étrangères, qui doivent dissimuler leurs cheveux dans les lieux publics.

La condamnée avait publié une photo d'elle sans voile

«La condamnée, Roya Heshmati, a encouragé la permissivité (en sortant) de manière ignoble dans des endroits très fréquentés de Téhéran», a déclaré samedi soir l'organe de presse de la justice Mizan Online. «Sa peine de 74 coups de fouet a été exécutée conformément à la loi et à la charia» et «pour atteinte aux mœurs publiques», a ajouté Mizan Online.



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...

« Il a commencé à me fouetter les épaules, le dos, les hanches, les cuisses, les jambes, je n'ai plus compté le nombre de coups, je chuchotais : au nom de la femme au nom de la liberté...» Récit glaçant de [#RoyaHeshmati](#) de 74 coups de fouets qu'elle a reçu pour avoir refusé le voile obligatoire.

[Translate post](#)



L'avocat de la condamnée, Maziar Tatati, a déclaré au journal réformiste Shargh que sa cliente avait été arrêtée en avril «pour avoir publié une photo sans porter le voile sur les réseaux sociaux». Ces derniers mois, de plus en plus de femmes sont apparues sans voile dans les lieux publics, notamment après le mouvement de contestation déclenché par la mort en détention en septembre 2022 de Mahsa Amini, arrêtée pour infraction au strict code vestimentaire.

Me Tatati a ajouté que Mme Heshamti avait été également condamnée à une amende «pour non-port du voile musulman en public». Face à des actes de désobéissance de la part des femmes sur le port du voile, les autorités ont tenté de durcir le ton, en annonçant davantage de contrôles, notamment à l'aide de caméras, et en arrêtant des actrices posant sans hijab sur les réseaux sociaux.

En septembre, le Parlement a voté en faveur d'un projet de loi qui durcirait les sanctions à l'encontre des personnes qui enfreignent le code vestimentaire.