

# February 16, 2024

## 1. Economics – Never Ending Strikes at SNCF

Page 2 : Grève des contrôleurs à la SNCF : les raisons de la mobilisation, qui va fortement perturber le trafic ce week-end (Le Monde)

Page 4 : Grève multifactorielle : Cette crise du sens qui se cache derrière les revendications salariales à la SNCF (Atlantico, Interview)

Page 6 : «SNCF, la grève de la honte»: le coup de gueule d’Agnès Verdier-Molinié (Le Figaro, Guest Essay)

Page 8 : Grève SNCF : quand la « politique du chèque » déraile (Le Point, Opinion)

## 2. Europe - Nato - Nukes

Page 10 : Trump Is at Odds With NATO — and Reality (PAUL KRUGMAN, Columnist, NYT)

12 : Trump's threat: how should Europe defend itself? (Eurotopics)

Page 16 : Europe Wants to Stand on Its Own Militarily. Is It Too Little, Too Late? (NYT)

Page 18 : Jean-Pierre Robin: «Donald Trump oublie que les dépenses militaires des États-Unis sont financées par leurs alliés» (Le Figaro, Columnist)

Page 21 : New figures from IFW KIEL: Who supplies weapons to Ukraine and who does not (FAZ)

Page 23 : Pensions for GDR soldiers, child benefits for Bundeswehr members - how Germany achieves the two percent target (NZZ)

Page 26 : UK could contribute to nuclear shield if Trump wins, suggests German minister (The Guardian)

Page 28 : New debate about nuclear weapons: Trump's statements have awakened the primal fear of Europeans of being abandoned by America (NZZ)

## 3. Climate Change - Agriculture - Sustainability

Page 31: A shock to the system: A new answer to the biggest climate conundrum (The Economist, Leader)

Page 33 : The Guardian view on Europe’s rural revolt: sustainability is in farmers’ interests too (The Guardian, Editorial)

Page 35 : Farmers are in revolt and Europe’s climate policies are crumbling. Welcome to the age of ‘greenlash’ (The Guardian)

Page 37 : 2024, l’année où la température des océans se sera emballée ? (Atlantico, Interview)

Page 39 : What will Spain look like when it runs out of water? Barcelona is giving us a glimpse (The Guardian, Guest Essay)

## 4. Science and Media

Page 41 : Take the money and run? I tested X’s paid-promotion model, and it was woeful (The Guardian)

Page 43 : OpenAI Unveils A.I. That Instantly Generates Eye-Popping Videos (NYT)

## 5. Culture: Israeli Humour - American Language

Page 45 : On “A Wonderful Country”, Israelis joke their way through trauma (The Economist)

Page 47 : Where Did Our Strange Use of ‘Like’ Come From? (NYT, Opinion)

# 1. Economics – Never Ending Strikes at SNCF

## Le Monde

[https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2024/02/14 greve-des-contrôleurs-a-la-sncf-les-raisons-de-la-mobilisation\\_6216500\\_3234.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2024/02/14 greve-des-contrôleurs-a-la-sncf-les-raisons-de-la-mobilisation_6216500_3234.html)

### Grève des contrôleurs à la SNCF : les raisons de la mobilisation, qui va fortement perturber le trafic ce week-end

Un collectif de contrôleurs demande en vain l'ouverture de discussions sur leur fin de carrière et, surtout, sur la prise en compte des primes dans le calcul de leur retraite. La grève des 17 et 18 février s'annonce très suivie : plus de 70 % des contrôleurs auraient déposé un préavis, selon les syndicats.

Par [Sophie Fay](#)

Publié le 14 février 2024 à 13h32, modifié à 07h25

C'est une nouvelle « grève Facebook ». Les contrôleurs, comme en décembre 2022, se sont mobilisés sur les réseaux sociaux, toujours à l'initiative du Collectif national ASCT (agents du service commercial train), le CNA. Ce collectif rassemble 4 000 à 5 000 agents sur 8 000 contrôleurs. Ils ne dialoguent plus sur Facebook, mais plutôt sur des boucles WhatsApp ou Telegram. Le CNA n'ayant pas la possibilité de négocier avec l'entreprise SNCF Voyageurs, les syndicats CGT, SUD-Rail ont pris le relais, à la fois pour déposer le préavis de grève et pour engager les négociations avec la direction.

Une direction qui ne reconnaît pas le collectif et rechigne à lui parler en direct. Mais cette double médiation complique, une fois de plus, la sortie de crise. La grève aura donc bien lieu ce week end et sera très suivie : plus de 70 % des contrôleurs auraient déposé un préavis selon les organisations syndicales.

Joint par Le Monde, Olivier, l'un des contrôleurs à l'origine du collectif, qui ne souhaite pas donner son nom de famille conformément à la règle donnée par le groupe, revient sur les raisons de la grève. Selon lui, la direction ne répond pas aux revendications simples des contrôleurs. Il espère que les discussions avec les syndicats vont reprendre en mars et seront plus constructives, faute de quoi le CNA n'exclut pas de demander aux organisations syndicales de déposer un nouveau préavis de grève « pour un gros week end, en avril ».

#### Aménagement des fins de carrière

La direction de la SNCF a pourtant annoncé une accélération du recrutement des contrôleurs (200 de plus en 2024, après 653 recrutements en 2023). Et Jean-Pierre Farandou, après avoir reçu toutes les organisations syndicales, a annoncé une nouvelle prime de 400 euros (en plus de celle du même montant versée en décembre) à tous les salariés, ainsi que 1 200 euros d'intéressement. La direction a aussi débloqué la possibilité d'accorder 3 000 promotions supplémentaires qui permettent aux agents qui en bénéficieront de voir leur salaire augmenter de 60 à 80 euros net par mois. Le PDG a enfin annoncé cent recrutements supplémentaires à la police ferroviaire.

« Quel rapport avec ce que nous réclamons ? », s'interroge le porte-parole du CNA. A l'automne 2022, les contrôleurs se sont mobilisés pour une meilleure reconnaissance de leur métier et de ses contraintes. Il a fallu la grève de Noël pour que la direction concède 60 euros d'augmentation brute mensuelle, revoie la progression des carrières et une meilleure prise en compte des primes dans la rémunération en cas d'arrêt maladie. Mais elle s'était aussi engagée à ouvrir une négociation sur l'aménagement des fins de carrière des contrôleurs au second semestre 2023.

C'est cette discussion-là qui n'a jamais été ouverte et qui a provoqué la nouvelle mobilisation du collectif. Ce dernier a rencontré en septembre 2023 Alain Krakovitch, le directeur des TGV-Intercités. Olivier a eu l'occasion de rappeler la demande du CNA à Christophe Fanichet, le directeur de SNCF Voyageurs, lors d'un

voyage de ce dernier dans un train où il était chef de bord. Mais rien n'y a fait. Jean-Pierre Farandou aurait même, selon lui, demandé aux organisations syndicales de cesser le dialogue avec le CNA.

### **Pour un même statut de « roulant »**

« Nos dirigeants ne veulent rien entendre : nous sommes en grève parce qu'il n'y a pas de dialogue social. Nous avons alerté et déposé le préavis le 28 janvier », assure le contrôleur du CNA. Selon lui, « un contrôleur ne se plaint pas de son salaire mais du fait qu'il est composé à 40 % de primes, qui ne sont pas prises en compte dans le calcul de la retraite ». Pour Olivier, il peut monter à 3 500 euros net avec les primes, mais son salaire de base, celui qui compte pour la retraite, est de 2 400 euros brut, après vingt-sept ans d'ancienneté et « toujours des très bonnes notes ».

Longtemps, ces agents ont accepté la situation, en échange d'une retraite à 55 ans. Ce qui n'est plus le cas. Si l'âge de départ moyen des contrôleurs est de 60 ans actuellement, la plupart des agents en activité dans les trains partiront plus tard. « Je suis né en 1972 et partirai à 64 ans », explique Olivier.

Paul (le prénom qui figure sur son badge), chef de bord interrogé dans un TGV Nantes-Paris le 13 février, vingt-trois ans d'ancienneté, fait le même constat : « Quand on m'a recruté, on m'a dit "tu partiras à la retraite à 55 ans". Et maintenant, je ne sais même plus jusqu'à quel âge je vais travailler. » Il y a surtout « un trop gros écart entre nos rémunérations et nos pensions de retraite, alors que nous devons travailler neuf ans de plus », insiste Olivier. Un écart que les conducteurs de train sont parvenus à réduire. Les contrôleurs veulent donc le même statut de « roulant ». Sur ce point, le dialogue de sourds continue avec la direction : elle considère qu'ils ont déjà ce statut et qu'il n'y a rien à discuter.

## GRÈVE MULTIFACTORIELLE

# Cette crise du sens qui se cache derrière les revendications salariales à la SNCF

Les contrôleurs abusent de leur position pour prendre les Français en otage malgré les 15 milliards de subventions annuelles accordées à la SNCF. Mais la direction de l'entreprise peine aussi à comprendre les racines véritables de la crise.



À partir de ce vendredi 16 février, le trafic ferroviaire va être fortement perturbé au moins jusqu'au 18 février.

Loïk Le Floch-Prigent

**Atlantico : À partir de ce vendredi 16 février, le trafic ferroviaire va être fortement perturbé au moins jusqu'au 18 février. La précarité de l'emploi, un manque de reconnaissance et des salaires trop bas motivent cette grève des contrôleurs ferroviaires. Quelles sont les racines profondes du mouvement social qui frappe la SNCF ? Une simple revendication salariale, ou une perte de sens dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions ?**

**Loïk Le Floch-Prigent :** Il est clair que les premiers commentaires de la majorité des Français, c'est que cette grève en pleines vacances scolaires est insupportable, certains en imputent la responsabilité aux cheminots, d'autres à la direction de l'entreprise, mais il faut prendre du recul.

Si l'on interrogeait la population pour savoir ce qu'ils reprochent à la SNCF, ils répondraient probablement : les grèves, surtout en périodes de vacances, et celles-ci n'ont pas manqué puisque l'on compte lors de l'année 2023 de l'ordre de 37 jours de grève, y compris celles liées au dossier retraites. Mais cela ne date pas d'hier, il y a une culture « gréviste » dans le transport collectif en France avec des dépôts de « préavis de grève » locaux, régionaux ou nationaux effectivement irritants.

Une réforme de la SNCF c'est donc répondre en priorité à cette demande des Français : ne pas prendre en « otages » les voyageurs lors des désaccords entre salariés et direction. Il était donc du devoir de l'Etat présentant lors de la précédente législature un « réforme » de répondre à cette priorité : cela n'a pas été le cas, on a divisé l'entreprise en deux, on a célébré la concurrence et on a inventé un nouveau statut pour les nouveaux arrivants, faisant cohabiter les « anciens » et les « nouveaux » avec des disparités fortes et incomprises par les deux groupes. Ce dernier point a été, en particulier, mal vécu par les « contrôleurs » ou ACT ( agents commerciaux trains) c'est-à-dire les roulants devenus des garanties de sécurité dans les voitures au-delà du contrôle des billets assisté par le passage automatique dans les gares. Les slogans « à nous de vous faire préférer le train » et « vous avez voyagé dans le moyen de transport le plus écologique » étaient censés les motiver : il n'en a rien été. Le sujet comment éviter les mouvements de grève n'a pas été traité tandis que la fierté d'appartenir à une confrérie « cheminote »

qui fait la promotion du meilleur moyen de transport pour la nation cédait la place à la grogne des clients payant cher des trains qui avaient des difficultés pour arriver à l'heure pour des tas de raisons y compris un déficit croissant de bonne maintenance des trains et des voies !

Effectivement, les cheminots anciens et nouveaux ont perdu le sens de leur fonction, de celle du train comme de leur engagement, le « turn over » a cru dangereusement et la grogne était évidente.

Il eut donc fallu à la fois traiter de cette grève suicidaire, une mauvaise tradition, et du sens de la vie cheminote, on a préféré une réforme idéologique à celle du bon sens. Il n'est pas trop tard, il faut d'urgence réaliser le retour d'expérience de la réforme à défaut d'avoir envisagé une véritable étude d'impact lors de son acception. Il faut engager une vraie négociation sur les conditions d'un arrêt de ces grèves suicidaires en donnant un sens à la vie des cheminots, en les écoutant.

**Avant même l'ouverture de potentielles négociations, les syndicats ont opté pour la grève. Qu'est-ce que cela révèle du rapport de force entre la SNCF, l'État actionnaire et les syndicats qui exercent au sein de l'entreprise ?**

Les syndicats ont bien compris que l'étage « direction de l'entreprise » était un leurre et que leur avenir dépendait de l'Etat ! Maltraiter les clients c'est demander à l'Etat de les entendre. C'est inacceptable, mais il faut balayer devant sa porte, y a-t-il une autonomie de gestion du chef d'entreprise ou la « tutelle » exerce-t-elle le vrai pouvoir de négociation ? Qui va donner du sens à leur travail ? Le PDG ou le Président de la République ? La réforme aurait du prévoir le cas de figure actuel. Comment concilier le « droit de grève » sans altérer la vie des millions de voyageurs lors des vacances en particulier ? Les voies de négociations existent, mais il faut traiter du problème carrément, fièrement, sans avoir peur et préparer des projets de lois avec les cheminots pour régler définitivement comme cela a été le cas chez la plupart de nos voisins européens ! Les cheminots sont fiers de leurs trains, beaucoup ont honte aujourd'hui de l'image nationale et internationale qu'ils donnent et le montrent en faisant circuler la moitié des trains ! Il faut partir de ce constat : tous les cheminots aiment le train et voudraient que l'ensemble de la population confirme cette position.

**Est-ce que cette grève est le reflet de l'échec de la politique du gouvernement sur ce dossier ?**

C'est incontestable, la priorité, c'est trouver à travers la fierté cheminote un accord éventuellement ratifié par une loi pour rendre les formes de revendication acceptables pour la population. Une partie des français célèbrent la concurrence en théorie mais lorsque les retards et les grèves s'accumulent ils perdent le sens de l'humour !

**Comment éviter la résurgence de ce genre de mouvement récurrent ?**

On repart pour un tour de discussions et de négociations en disant aux cheminots : c'est une honte pour vous comme pour nous d'en arriver à ces grèves pendant les vacances on se doit pour la République, pour la France, de retrouver un fonctionnement acceptable pour tous les clients du train, il doit être régulier, attractif, et on se doit de trouver un accord pour ne plus prendre les Français en otages tout en faisant avancer les revendications des uns et des autres et en expliquant les blocages. Il est clair que l'endettement excessif du pays et les problèmes insolubles de financement des infrastructures n'arrangent rien, mais il faut avoir le courage de les expliquer à l'ensemble de la population et, en priorité, à la fraternité cheminote : ça passe ou ça casse, mais seule la franchise permettra de franchir les difficultés. « Vous ne croyez pas au Père Noël, nous non plus ! On ne peut pas donner ce que l'on n'a plus, mais travaillons ensemble pour que les Français et vous tous redeveniez fiers de notre train ».

[«SNCF, la grève de la honte»: le coup de gueule d'Agnès Verdier-Molinié \(lefigaro.fr\)](#)

## «SNCF, la grève de la honte»: le coup de gueule d'Agnès Verdier-Molinié

Par [Agnès Verdier-Molinié](#)

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Agnès Verdier-Molinié *Fabien Clairefond*

**TRIBUNE - Avec les grèves répétées au moment des vacances, les Français ne peuvent plus compter sur la SNCF pour leurs voyages, déplore la directrice de l'iFrap, qui rappelle tous les avantages déjà obtenus par les cheminots.**

*Directrice de la Fondation iFrap, Agnès Verdier-Molinié a publié « Où va notre argent ? » (L'Observatoire, 2023).*

Les Français ont vendu leur voiture car on leur a dit qu'avoir une voiture, ce n'était pas propre ; ils ne doivent plus prendre l'avion pour partir en vacances parce qu'on leur dit que ça pollue la planète. Alors ils ont réservé des billets de train pour partir en vacances et... les trains sont supprimés. Bienvenue en France ! Choisir le train c'est agir pour la planète, nous dit la SNCF. Les Français sont contents, ils ont payé leurs billets, l'État au sens large a encore versé plus de 20 milliards de subventions l'an dernier, mais ils ne partiront pas. Treize académies de France, en pleines vacances scolaires, sont concernées.

Dans les médias on leur dit qu'ils vont recevoir des SMS ou des e-mails, mais ils ne reçoivent rien. Ils découvrent l'annulation sur l'application. Au 3635, difficile de joindre un conseiller avant vingt minutes d'attente. On leur dit qu'ils seront remboursés automatiquement à 100 % mais il faut faire la démarche, et c'est loin d'être clair. La SNCF s'engage à faire des tarifs de - 50 % à ceux qui ont eu des trains annulés ?

Ce n'est pas encore valable pour ceux qui ont déjà d'autres billets à prendre. Donc on attendra. Combien de temps d'attente pour ces - 50 % ? Nul ne sait. Bref, être pieds et poings liés à la SNCF pour les longs trajets ne peut pas être une option pour le futur, n'en déplaise à ceux qui défendent la suppression des navettes aériennes en métropole et des trajets sur autoroute.

L'histoire se répète. Les 24 et 25 décembre 2022, 200.000 voyageurs avaient été privés de train car les contrôleurs demandaient l'augmentation de leur prime de travail. Cette prime avait été augmentée de 60 euros brut par mois et les contrôleurs avaient obtenu, en plus, un « accord sur la cessation progressive d'activité » afin de partir plus tôt à la retraite (ouvert à 57 ans pour les générations avant 1973, 59 ans et 5 mois en moyenne effective) et une augmentation de salaire automatique tous les 4 ans.

[«Les salaires sont déjà généreux»](#)

De nouveau, nous sommes otages d'une grève menée par les contrôleurs SNCF qui demandent une augmentation de 150 à 200 euros brut par mois de leurs salaires et sa prise en compte dans le calcul de leur

retraite. Le syndicat SUD-rail demande, lui, la revalorisation de la prime de travail de 500 euros brut par mois. Pourtant, Jean-Pierre Farandou, le patron de la SNCF, a souligné que les contrôleurs SNCF ont été augmentés de 20 % en moyenne sur les trois dernières années.

Et les salaires sont déjà généreux : le salaire avec primes d'un contrôleur en début de carrière est de 2900 euros brut (soit 2500 euros net environ) et de 4400 euros brut (soit 3500 euros net environ) en fin de carrière. Et si on ne connaît pas la retraite moyenne d'un contrôleur SNCF, on sait que les montants mensuels moyens bruts de droit direct étaient à la SNCF de 2115 euros en 2021 et que, cette année-là, les nouveaux retraités de droit direct touchaient 2385 euros par mois. Bien plus que la moyenne des pensions.

Des rémunérations et des pensions élevées aussi par rapport à l'étranger. Ainsi en Italie, d'après TF1, le salaire d'un contrôleur de train oscille entre 1560 et 2400 euros brut par mois. Notons surtout qu'une telle situation de blocage est impossible en Italie où le droit de grève dans les services publics essentiels est encadré depuis 2000 et où les transports doivent garantir un service complet de 6 heures par jour (et notamment sur les heures de pointe), un service de desserte des banlieues, des liaisons longue distance et un service pendant les vacances scolaires, les périodes d'élections et les fêtes (Noël, Pâques, etc.). Nous devrions en prendre de la graine.

[«Nous sommes en permanence à la merci»](#)

Le groupe centriste du Sénat vient de déposer une proposition de loi pour instaurer des périodes de 15 jours maximum (dans un seuil de 60 jours par an) où le gouvernement pourrait interdire les grèves dans les services publics et les transports afin d'éviter les situations de blocage pendant les vacances scolaires... ou les Jeux olympiques par exemple. Une loi qui permettrait notamment de mettre fin au chantage des grèves de Noël. Depuis 2002, 14 mois de décembre ont connu des grèves SNCF...

### **Une surreprésentation du secteur public et des transports rendue possible par un détournement presque systématique des règles et un recours abusif des préavis de grève illimités.**

*Agnès Verdier-Molinie*

Il est urgent de rationaliser le droit de grève dans les services et transports publics. Et d'allumer la lumière sur ce phénomène qui gâche la vie des « usagers ». Étrangement, il n'existe pas de données publiées sur les journées de grève, ni pour la fonction publique territoriale, ni pour la fonction publique hospitalière. En 2019, les agents de l'État regroupent 33,2 % des journées perdues pour fait de grève. Quand on y ajoute le secteur des transports, c'est encore pire : en 2019, l'État, la RATP et la SNCF se sont partagé 45 % des jours de grève du pays.

Une surreprésentation du secteur public et des transports rendue possible par un détournement presque systématique des règles et un recours abusif des préavis de grève illimités. Ces préavis de grève illimités permettent, pour les adhérents du syndicat qui les a déposés, de se mettre en grève quand ils le souhaitent et contournent ainsi l'obligation de présenter un préavis 5 jours avant toute grève, ce qui rend complètement caduque la loi de 2007 sur le service minimum. Nous sommes en permanence à la merci de la prochaine grève. Et, incontestablement, un chantage aux Jeux olympiques est en cours de préparation chez nos cheminots maison que ce soit à la SNCF ou à la RATP. Comment expliquer autrement le choix de la CGT-RATP de déposer un préavis de grève courant du 5 février... au 9 septembre, soit le lendemain de la cérémonie de clôture des Jeux paralympiques ?

Pourtant, des mesures exceptionnelles ont déjà été actées pour la période des Jeux pour le personnel du secteur. On évoque le rachat des RTT majoré de 25 % à 40 % pour la période et une indemnité de 50 euros brut (environ 30 euros net) versée aux agents de la SNCF actifs « par jour d'épreuves » olympiques. Sur 19 jours de JO, cela représente environ 570 euros net. À cela devrait s'ajouter une indemnité journalière de gardes d'enfants, le renforcement du comité d'entreprise (pour proposer plus de places en colonies de vacances) ou encore une indemnité de logement. Du côté de la RATP, les négociations sont encore en cours. Pas sûr que la SNCF et la RATP sachent nous faire préférer le train et les transports en commun quand chaque fois nous restons à quai.

[Grève SNCF : une mobilisation « incompréhensible » au vu des nombreuses concessions accordées aux cheminots \(lepoint.fr\)](#)

## Grève SNCF : quand la « politique du chèque » déraile

Le PDG de la SNCF a accordé de nombreuses concessions aux cheminots depuis 2019. Une politique généreuse qui n'aura pas suffi à éviter un nouveau mouvement social.

Par Sarah Dumeau

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Depuis son arrivée à la tête du groupe ferroviaire en 2019, Jean-Pierre Farandou, surnommé « le pacificateur », a en effet multiplié les concessions auprès des cheminots. © MEIGNEUX/SIPA

« Le dialogue social, il ne se fait pas, c'est d'ailleurs pour ça qu'il y a une grève. » Fabien Villedieu, délégué syndical SUD-Rail a tenté mercredi après-midi de perturber le point presse donné par les responsables de la [SNCF](#) avant [la grève des contrôleurs, qui débute ce jeudi soir](#). « Il va falloir nous sortir », a-t-il lancé d'un air de défi à Christophe Fanichet, le PDG de SNCF Voyageurs. Le syndicaliste a accepté finalement de quitter la pièce en entraînant avec lui le dirigeant afin d'échanger rapidement dans le couloir. Le ton est donné.

Après plusieurs années à répondre aux revendications des cheminots, Jean-Pierre Farandou n'a pas réussi à éviter une énième [grève en ce week-end de chassé-croisé des vacances d'hiver](#). Il a pourtant tout essayé, jure Christophe Fanichet, rappelant que le PDG du groupe public a reçu les syndicalistes jeudi 8 février, puis lundi 12 au soir pour une « réunion de la dernière chance ». Afin d'apaiser la grogne, il a proposé une nouvelle prime de 400 euros à l'ensemble des cheminots, qui leur sera versée en mars, une revalorisation de l'indemnité de logement dans les zones en tension et le recrutement de 1 100 agents supplémentaires, dont 200 contrôleurs.

### Une mobilisation « incompréhensible » pour le PDG de SNCF Voyageurs

Cela n'a pas suffi. La CGT et SUD-Rail ont maintenu leurs préavis de grève, tandis que la CFDT y a renoncé. Le mouvement s'annonce très suivi avec [trois contrôleurs sur quatre en grève](#), a annoncé Christophe Fanichet. Le PDG de SNCF Voyageurs, qui veut éviter de mettre de l'huile sur le feu, dénonce quand même une mobilisation « incompréhensible ». « On a augmenté les salaires de 17 % en moyenne sur trois ans (2022-2024). Les contrôleurs en particulier ont obtenu 500 euros de plus par mois », soit plus que l'inflation qui a atteint 13 % sur cette période, rappelle-t-il auprès du Point.

Depuis son arrivée à la tête du groupe ferroviaire en 2019, Jean-Pierre Farandou, surnommé « le pacificateur », a en effet multiplié les concessions auprès des cheminots. Pour éteindre une grève des contrôleurs à Noël en 2022, le PDG leur avait accordé une augmentation de 60 euros brut par mois, des promotions et il s'était engagé à équiper chaque TGV de deux chefs de bord.



Les syndicats SUD-Rail et la CGT estiment que ces accords tardent à être appliqués, ce que conteste la SNCF. Interrogé sur [RTL](#) mardi 13 février, Jean-Pierre Farandou a assuré que « l'accord des chefs de bord est largement respecté ». Le dispositif « deux agents par rame est en place à 87 %. Ce sera 92 % fin 2024 et 100 % en 2025 », a-t-il promis.

Didier Mathis, secrétaire général de l'Unsa Ferroviaire, le quatrième syndicat majoritaire qui n'a pas appelé à la grève, confirme que « la majorité des mesures ont été suivies ». « On ne fait pas de grève préventive, on va attendre la poursuite des négociations », explique le syndicaliste qui juge que le président Farandou est « à l'écoute ». « C'est un cheminot qui a fait quasiment toute sa carrière à la SNCF. Il a une très bonne maîtrise des conditions d'exercice des métiers de la SNCF ce qui facilite la compréhension et les échanges lors des négociations », estime le représentant de ce syndicat plus modéré, peu représenté chez les contrôleurs.

### **Éviter la contagion**

Cette fois, cet « infatigable du dialogue social » en aurait-il assez de signer des chèques ? [Les syndicats réclament des augmentations de 150 à 200 euros par mois](#). « C'est compliqué de dire oui à tout, c'est aussi le rôle d'un patron de dire ce qui est possible et ce qui ne l'est pas », a répondu le PDG sur RTL en appelant les cheminots à « bien réfléchir » et à « prendre la dimension des avancées qui ont été faites ». Entre 2021 et 2022, les charges salariales du groupe ont en effet augmenté d'un milliard pour atteindre 15,7 milliards d'euros. Sur la période, la SNCF a embauché 6 000 agents (sur 276 271 salariés), selon son dernier rapport financier. Le groupe ferroviaire, qui a dégagé des [bénéfices records en 2022](#), reste endetté à hauteur de 24,4 milliards d'euros et bénéficie du soutien de l'État, qui a repris 10 milliards de dette au début de l'année 2022.

En refusant pour l'instant de céder, Jean-Pierre Farandou, qui brigue un second mandat à la tête du groupe, le sien se terminant en avril, tente d'éviter la contagion aux autres corps de métiers. Les syndicats jouent aussi de ce bras de fer pour gagner des points auprès des cheminots, avec en ligne de mire les élections professionnelles, prévues fin mars-début avril. Les aiguilleurs ont déjà déposé un préavis pour les 23 et 24 février. À quelques mois des Jeux olympiques, les cheminots savent que la balle est dans leur camp.

## 2. Europe - Nato - Nukes

### The New York Times

[Opinion | Trump Is at Odds With NATO — and Reality - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

PAUL KRUGMAN

## Trump Is at Odds With NATO — and Reality

Feb. 15, 2024



Credit...Damon Winter/The New York Times

By [Paul Krugman](#)

### Opinion Columnist

Sign up for the Opinion Today newsletter Get expert analysis of the news and a guide to the big ideas shaping the world every weekday morning. Get it sent to your inbox.

There's been widespread attention on Donald Trump's asserting that he would [refuse to defend](#) NATO allies he considers "delinquent" and even saying he might encourage Russia to attack them. A lot of the conversations I've heard have focused on the policy implications — on what it would mean for America to abandon its treaty obligations and treat NATO as a protection racket.

These implications are important and alarming. But if you ask me, we haven't given enough attention to exactly what Trump said — and what it says about his grasp on reality.

Honestly, I'd love to spend this campaign talking only about policy; wonkery is my happy place. But since enough of the body politic seems to have decided to make this election season an exercise in amateur long-distance geriatric diagnosis, focusing on President Biden's age and appearance rather than his record, let's take a closer look at his opponent.

For Trump often gives the impression of living in his own reality. I'm not talking about the fact that he [lies a lot](#), although he does. My point, rather, is that he often seems unable to tell the difference between self-aggrandizing fantasies and things that actually happened.

So here's how Trump's repudiation of NATO went down: He didn't make a straightforward case, which would have been arguable, that we're spending too much on defense while our allies are spending too little. Instead, he told a [story](#): "One of the presidents of a big country stood up and said, 'Well, sir, if we don't pay and we're attacked by Russia, will you protect us?' I said, 'You didn't pay? You're delinquent? ... No, I would not protect you. In fact, I would encourage them to do whatever the hell they want.'"

To use the language of [intelligence assessments](#), it's highly unlikely that this conversation or anything like it actually happened.

But as CNN's Daniel Dale has [noted](#), Trump is very fond of telling stories about big, strong men with tears in their eyes coming up and calling him "sir." There's almost never any corroborating evidence, and it's a good bet that very few of these stories are accounts of actual conversations.

It is similarly highly unlikely that the likes of, let's say, Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel ever addressed Trump as "sir." It's also highly unlikely that any NATO leaders asked what would happen if their countries didn't "pay." European officials know, even if Trump doesn't, that NATO is an alliance, not a club that collects dues from its members.

By the way, while European nations have probably been spending too little on their own defense, many have risen to the challenge of Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Notably, Lithuania — which Trump singled out as fair game for Putin — has spent [six times as much](#) on Ukraine aid, measured as a share of G.D.P., as the United States has.

So what's going on here? Either Trump is telling an especially pointless lie or he's confused about past events.

It wouldn't be the first time. As I said, while we don't know for sure that Trump's many "sir" stories are figments of his imagination, we do know that, contrary to his claims, one source [said](#) there's no way that police officers and court employees were "crying" and apologizing to Trump at his Manhattan court arraignment last spring.

Let's be clear what's at stake here. Never mind the political analysis, the talk about public perceptions and how they may affect the 2024 horse race. What we should be focusing on is how the candidates' mental competence might affect their decision making.

It's notable that despite all the frenzy about Biden's age, I haven't seen many suggestions that he's made bad decisions because his judgment is impaired; it's almost all speculation about the future. Yes, he's made mistakes, although the two decisions that got the most criticism — withdrawing from Afghanistan and going big on spending — are actually looking justifiable in retrospect.

But these mistakes, if they were mistakes, were the kind any president, no matter how young and vigorous, could have made.

On the other hand, consider how Trump reacted to the Covid-19 pandemic. Republicans have been remarkably successful at pretending that the Trump administration ended before the pandemic came to dominate the scene. But it didn't; Covid killed [more than 77,000 Americans](#) in December 2020, Trump's last full month in office.

And as the pandemic spread, Trump responded, as The Washington Post [put it](#), with "denial, mismanagement and magical thinking." Basically, he was unwilling to acknowledge an inconvenient reality and continually minimized the danger while amplifying quack remedies. Remember all the times he said Covid would [disappear](#)? Remember the "[disinfectant](#)" press briefing? Remember [hydroxychloroquine](#)?

Oh, and in case you've forgotten, Trump still refuses to admit that he lost the 2020 election.

Unlike Biden's missteps, whatever you may think they have been, Trump's mishandling of Covid and election denial were uniquely Trumpian — the behavior of a man who doesn't like to accept reality when it isn't what he wants it to be.

And does anyone think he's improved on that front over the past three years?

**Paul Krugman has been an Opinion columnist since 2000 and is also a distinguished professor at the City University of New York Graduate Center. He won the 2008 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for his work on international trade and economic geography.**

[Trump's threat: how should Europe defend itself? | eurotopics.net](https://eurotopics.net)

15 February 2024

## Trump's threat: how should Europe defend itself?



A debate over European defence capabilities has broken out after Donald Trump [threatened](#) to only grant alliance protection to those Nato states that meet the agreed target of [two percent of GDP](#) for defence spending. Commentators discuss what should be done in the event that the US really does cease to guarantee the continent's security.

[EXPRESSEN \(SE\) / 15 February 2024](#)

Time is running out

Europe needs to boost its defence capacity as quickly as possible, warns Expressen:

“Deterrence is about credibility. Europe must build a credible defence that will survive even a Trump 2.0 in the White House. And this is urgent. Putin is a risk-taker and an opportunist, so the risk of war increases if the US signals that it is not going to honour its commitments. Last autumn several experts said that the Nato states had three years to build up their defences to deter Russia from attacking within six to ten years. Now this horizon seems to have shortened.”

[Linda Jerneck](#)

[□ Original article](#)

[HOSPODÁRSKE NOVINY \(SK\) / 14 February 2024](#)

Dust off the old plans

The possibility of Trump colluding with Putin could finally prompt Europe to stand on its own two feet regarding security policy, writes Hospodárske noviny:

“Europe has been struggling with the issue of collective security for years. Let's remember that the idea of building a common European army was already put forward [in 2015](#) by then EU commission president Jean-Claude Juncker. A few years before that the [strategic autonomy](#) of the EU was also under discussion. All of these intentions remained on paper. Perhaps Brussels is now dusting them off.”

[Ivan Szabó](#)

[□ Original article](#)

## [YENİ ŞAFAK \(TR\) / 14 February 2024](#)

The end of the US role as leader of the West

If Trump's statement were to be implemented Nato would be finished, comments Yeni Şafak:

“That Trump, who has always questioned the US's common defence concept, says he refuses to protect a Nato member state means the practical end of this military alliance. The loss of the deterrent effect of the collective defence concept, which is based on Article 5 of the Nato treaty, would not only mean the end of the alliance's guarantees, but also the end of the US's leading role within the Western alliance. For America, which is engaged in a global power struggle with Russia and China, it will be very difficult to fight this battle without unity within the Western alliance.”

[Kadir Üstün](#)

[□ Original article](#)

## [TAZ, DIE TAGESZEITUNG \(DE\) / 14 February 2024](#)

Not the time for nuclear fantasies

The taz considers the idea that Europe needs nuclear weapons to be misguided:

“Anyone ranting about a German or European bomb now is breaking the law and gambling away trust. Serious security politicians should not be jumping over Trump's stick or having doomsday fantasies - they should say what comes next. But those in charge are keeping quiet about this. Germany and the EU have no strategy for the increasingly hopeless war in Ukraine and no plan for dealing with the wavering superpower that is the US. That should worry us more than any of Donald Trump's election campaign slogans.”

[Eric Bonse](#)

[□ Original article](#)

## [LA VANGUARDIA \(ES\) / 14 February 2024](#)

Southern and Western Europe must show solidarity

La Vanguardia warns that Putin represents a real threat:

“This is not a Ken Follett or Frederick Forsyth novel. We are facing a real scenario with a main character, Vladimir Putin, who has nuclear weapons. ... After months of failures on the front line, Putin feels emboldened because he has resisted the Ukrainian counter-offensive and sees Donald Trump's victory as highly likely. ... The threat he poses is real. The citizens of Southern and Western Europe are not experiencing the same tension as their neighbours in the Baltic states, Poland or Finland, which border Russia or are very close to it. But a conflict with some of these countries would directly plunge us into a war via Nato.”

[Jordi Juan](#)

[□ Original article](#)

## [THE TIMES \(GB\) / 14 February 2024](#)

Finland got it right

Europe's countries should follow the example of [new Nato member](#) Finland, writes The Times:

“In terms of artillery and air power, Finland is well equipped for a small country. On manpower, conscription means that the Finns have a wartime strength of 280,000, with a further [870,000 reservists](#). All this in a country with a population of only 5.5 million. How did the Finns get this right? For a start, Finnish doctrine was not based on the wrongheaded assumption elsewhere in Europe 20 years ago that Russia after the Cold War was magically no longer a threat. ... The aim of all this preparation, as the Finns understand, is not to start a war but to build the industrial and military capacity to avert it.”

[Iain Martin](#)

[□ Original article](#)

[LES ECHOS \(FR\) / 13 February 2024](#)

Take over the Nato command

Les Echos says it's time to prepare for potential developments in the US:

“The Europeans, particularly the French, Germans and British, must take command of Nato, both financially and strategically. ... There is a growing risk that we will see Ukraine capitulate to Russia due to a lack of ammunition. ... It is vital that Kyiv should be in a strong position on the - hypothetical - day that Donald Trump comes to power. And it is essential that the countries of Eastern Europe believe in our collective defence. Otherwise, each one will seek individual protection from Donald Trump. Without an alliance and without Europe.”

[Lucie Robequain](#)

[□ Original article](#)

[RZECZPOSPOLITA \(PL\) / 13 February 2024](#)

No European defence without solidarity

Rzeczpospolita poses the crucial question:

“While it is self-evident that an American from New York would die for an American from Los Angeles, the dilemma of whether a Spaniard would do so for a Pole is far trickier. After all, this is the reason why Poland spent 3.9 percent of its GDP on defence last year while Spain only spent 1.26 percent. And as long as there is no sense of solidarity among all Europeans, it will be very difficult for our continent to defend itself.”

[Jędrzej Bielecki](#)

[□ Original article](#)

[15MIN \(LT\) / 14 February 2024](#)

Set priorities, use resources effectively

Political scientist Ramūnas Vilpišauskas is cautiously optimistic about Europe's defence ambitions vis-à-vis Russia:

“On the one hand, the threat assessment gives reason to hope that the Nato countries are on the same page regarding the Russian threat, and this should translate into additional investment in the European defence industry and defence measures. ... On the other hand, resources are limited. ... Let's not forget that even without the US, the other Nato members are far ahead of authoritarian Russia in terms of economic and financial resources and technology. The key is to agree on priorities and use these resources in a targeted and effective way to protect our well-being and way of life.”

[Ramūnas Vilpišauskas](#)

[□ Original article](#)

[ADEVĂRUL \(RO\) / 13 February 2024](#)

Germany's key military role

Adevărul asks whether the rapid rearmament of Europe, and in particular Germany, is the right response to Trump's threats:

“Yes, to the extent that the pressure from European generals warning that Ukraine will be completely dependent on supplies from the EU states grows. ... But can Germany become the largest arms producer in Europe? And do the defence and security of the countries on our continent depend on the production capacity of this country's military-industrial system? From a historical perspective, it's a delicate question. The answer must be weighed against the new realities of the world power market. If the Americans decide that they have spent enough on wars, how will Germany take over the leadership of the European military?”

[Cristian Unteanu](#)

[□ Original article](#)

[NAFTEMPORIKI \(GR\) / 13 February 2024](#)

Nuclear armament would be catastrophic

Naftemporiki is alarmed by reports that nuclear weapons are also under discussion in Germany:

“Unfortunately, the debate about arming the EU with nuclear weapons is not being conducted in some basement by a group of right-wing extremist, war-loving madmen. ... Yet Germany signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. ... A withdrawal by Germany from this obligation under international law would represent a significant escalation in the existing conflict with Russia. The belief that the doctrine of nuclear deterrence creates security is a myth. On the contrary: Europe's nuclear armament would bring us to the brink of nuclear war.”

[Jean-Pierre Robin: «Donald Trump oublie que les dépenses militaires des États-Unis sont financées par leurs alliés» \(lefigaro.fr\)](#)

## Jean-Pierre Robin: «Donald Trump oublie que les dépenses militaires des États-Unis sont financées par leurs alliés»

Par [Jean-Pierre Robin](#)

Publié le 14/02/2024 à 07:00, mis à jour hier à 11:22



Des soldats américains et leurs chars sur le camp militaire de Grafenwoehr (Allemagne). CHRISTOF STACHE/AFP

### **ANALYSE - Si Washington couvre 70% des budgets de l'Otan, ce sont en réalité les Européens qui permettent au Pentagone de dépenser autant.**

Les sommets de l'Otan, l'Organisation du traité de l'Atlantique Nord, ressemblent fort à des discussions de marchands de tapis à en croire Donald Trump. Relatant la semaine dernière ses souvenirs à la Maison-Blanche (2017-2020), lors d'un meeting électoral dans l'État de Caroline du Sud, le milliardaire n'a pas mâché ses mots: «*L'un des présidents d'un grand pays s'est levé et m'a dit: "eh bien Monsieur, si on ne paie pas et qu'on est attaqué par la Russie, est-ce que vous nous protégerez?" "Non, je ne vous protégerai pas. En fait, je les encouragerais à faire ce qu'ils veulent. Vous devez payer vos factures."*» De quoi donner des idées à Vladimir Poutine.

Ce n'est certes pas la première fois que Donald Trump reproche aux alliés des États-Unis l'insuffisance de leurs dépenses militaires. Mais de là à jeter par-dessus les moulins le fondement même de l'Otan, l'assistance mutuelle en cas d'attaque contre un membre de l'Alliance, voilà qui n'est pas banal. «*Affligeant et dangereux*» s'est empressé de commenter le président Joe Biden.

Les bons comptes font les bons amis, dira-t-on. Sans conteste, les États-Unis s'affichent comme la première puissance armée mondiale. Dans le dernier classement de l'Institut international de recherche pour la paix (Sipri) de Stockholm, ils ont dépensé 877 milliards de dollars en 2022, trois fois plus que la Chine (292 milliards). La Russie, l'Inde et l'Arabie saoudite arrivent loin derrière, avec moins de 90 milliards chacune, la France se hissant au huitième rang mondial (54 milliards de dollars), juste derrière l'Allemagne. À lui seul, l'Oncle Sam débourse plus pour s'armer que les neuf pays suivants réunis.

#### [L'incurie des Européens](#)

Au sein même de l'Otan, les efforts consentis par Washington couvrent 70 % des budgets de l'Alliance. Rapportés aux ressources économiques de chaque pays, les États-Unis sortent également du lot, consacrant 3,46 % de leur PIB aux dépenses militaires en 2022 ; seule la Grèce, en mauvais termes avec son



voisin turc, fait plus (3,56 %). Parmi les trente et un pays membres de l'Otan, ils ne sont que sept à respecter l'engagement mutuel de porter leur budget d'armement à 2 % du PIB selon le bilan 2022 de l'organisation, la France étant à 1,89 % et Allemagne à 1,49 % (avant que Berlin ne porte à 100 milliards d'euros son budget annuel).

Un tel tableau semble accréditer les critiques acerbes de Donald Trump stigmatisant auprès de son électorat l'incurie des Européens qui se reposeraient sur l'Amérique et son paratonnerre nucléaire. L'ex-président oublie une seule chose: ce sont en réalité les alliés des États-Unis qui financent les dépenses militaires de son pays. Non pas par des impôts, mais à travers des prêts plus ou moins contraints, en achetant massivement des Treasury Bonds (les obligations du Trésor américain) et, plus généralement, en faisant allégeance au dollar.

Au moment du déclenchement de la guerre en Ukraine, les trois quarts des Treasury Bonds souscrits à l'étranger étaient détenus par des États bénéficiant d'une protection militaire américaine, selon une étude de la Fed, la banque centrale de Washington. C'est le cas des pays de l'Otan dans leur ensemble, et plus particulièrement de l'Allemagne, mais également du Japon, de la Corée du Sud et de l'Arabie saoudite principalement. Tous ces pays ont souscrit des accords bilatéraux avec Washington remontant à la guerre froide.

### «Privilège exorbitant du dollar»

L'hégémonie du dollar dans le commerce mondial, dans la finance internationale privée et celle des États, est étroitement liée aux 830 bases militaires installées sur les cinq continents et aux onze porte-avions yankees qui sillonnent les océans. Il en allait de même pour la supériorité de la livre sterling au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle quand l'Empire britannique avait la maîtrise des mers. L'économie américaine doit beaucoup *«au privilège exorbitant du dollar»*, selon l'expression forgée dans les années 1960, par le général de Gaulle et son ministre des Finances Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, pour désigner la capacité de Washington à émettre des dollars ad libitum. Outre les 1000 milliards de dollars sous forme de billets verts en circulation hors des États-Unis (un crédit gratuit pour ces derniers), les 7000 milliards d'obligations américaines détenues à l'étranger (essentiellement par des banques centrales, celle du Japon en ayant 1050 milliards dans ses coffres) permettent à la population américaine de se financer à bon compte. Le professeur Barry Eichengreen, reprenant l'expression de «privilège exorbitant», a fait le calcul suivant: il suffirait que *«les pays dépendant des États-Unis réduisent leurs avoirs en dollars de 30 % pour que les taux américains à long terme montent de 80 points de base (0,8 %)»*.

La sécurité que l'Otan est censée procurer à l'Europe est tout sauf gratuite contrairement à ce que Donald Trump veut faire accroire à ses électeurs. Il y va de l'ordre économique libéral occidental, voire mondial, dont les États-Unis et leurs entreprises multinationales sont de très loin les premiers bénéficiaires. Le candidat républicain serait bien avisé de relire *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, dont la devise, «Un pour tous, tous pour un», est celle de l'Otan. La géopolitique est aussi un code d'honneur et pas seulement un calcul de boutiquier borné.

# The New York Times

[Europe Wants to Stand on Its Own Militarily. Is It Too Little, Too Late? - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com)

## Europe Wants to Stand on Its Own Militarily. Is It Too Little, Too Late?

Outraged by Donald J. Trump’s remarks about encouraging Russia to punish some NATO members, and downbeat about Ukraine’s military prospects, Europe faces growing anxiety over its own security.



Ukrainian soldiers from the 72nd Mechanized Brigade in Vuhledar in January. Credit... Tyler Hicks/The New York Times

By [Steven Erlanger](#) and [David E. Sanger](#)

Steven Erlanger and David Sanger, who reported from Berlin, have covered the American-European alliance for decades.

Feb. 14, 2024

As Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany broke ground for a new ammunition factory this week, he celebrated a move that should enable the country to restore its almost entirely depleted arsenal of artillery shells.

But despite his portrayal of the groundbreaking as another German response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which [began two years ago this month](#), it was also a reminder of how slow the European reaction has been. It will be a year before the new factory is able to produce 50,000 rounds annually, with hopes of doubling that in 2026.

That is too little and too late to help Ukraine at a moment of greatest need, and just as [Washington’s own aid package may be faltering](#). And it is arguably late for Europe as a whole, as leaders warn that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, should he succeed in taking and holding even part of Ukraine, may try to test NATO’s commitment to defend every inch of its territory in the coming years.

Those realities, and new doubts about Ukraine’s long-term strategy, will all play into debates among its allies this week, first among NATO defense ministers meeting in Brussels on Wednesday and Thursday, and then at the opening of the annual Munich Security Conference.

At [last year’s conference](#), there was talk of whether Ukraine was on the verge of a huge success and whether it could restore the borders that existed two years ago. This year, President Volodymyr Zelensky is expected to appear before the group for the first time since his country was invaded.

He will no doubt implore his Western supporters — especially Europe — for the artillery, the air defenses and the drones Ukraine needs just to maintain the current front lines in a brutal war of attrition.

This is not where the Western allies thought they would be as they gathered again in Munich. Ukraine’s much-anticipated “counteroffensive” failed to break through line after line of Russian trenches and mines, and constant surveillance by drones wiped out any hope of surprise attacks, Ukrainian generals said.

Instead, with Russia and its allies turning out huge amounts of shells, tanks and drones, Ukraine finds itself on the defensive, rationing its artillery shells and scrounging global arms markets for remaining stocks.

Even with the Senate's passage of a \$60 billion aid package for Ukraine on Tuesday, approval by the House is in doubt, and senior European defense officials say that their own arsenals have been depleted to such dangerously low levels that there is very little left to give.

Hanging over it all is the American presidential election, whose effects are being felt even now.

Former President Donald J. Trump's line on Saturday that he would tell the Russians to ["do whatever the hell they want"](#) to allies who don't spend enough on the military made headlines all over Europe. It was an unprecedented attack on the solidarity of the alliance, and it created shock waves among leaders.

At a joint news conference in Berlin with Poland's new prime minister, Donald Tusk, on Monday, Mr. Scholz said: "NATO's promise of protection applies unreservedly. All for one, one for all."

Mr. Scholz did not utter Mr. Trump's name, but said he was "absolutely sure" that NATO was vital to trans-Atlantic security. "We stick to it, the president of the United States sticks to it and I'm sure the American people will do so also," the German leader said hopefully.

"Let me be clear on this occasion," he said. "Any relativization of NATO's guarantee of assistance is irresponsible and dangerous and is solely in Russia's interests. Nobody is allowed to play or do deals with Europe's security. We will strengthen NATO for the security of Europe."

Mr. Tusk said that Mr. Trump's words were "a cold shower" and pointed out that Poland is spending 4 percent of its economic output on defense. "We in Europe should clearly expect our partners, including those on the other side of the ocean, to honor this principle."

On the social platform X, he was even more blunt. "Dear Republican Senators of America," Mr. Tusk wrote, "Ronald Reagan, who helped millions of us to win back our freedom and independence, must be turning in his grave today. Shame on you."

So the theme of this year's Munich conference — "lose-lose" — seems to sum up Europe's growing anxieties as it opens on Friday. European leaders worry about Mr. Trump's unpredictability, and his seeming willingness to strike deals with Mr. Putin without involving Ukraine or its neighbors.

But they also realize that even if Mr. Trump loses, the days when large aid and arms packages for Ukraine sail through Congress are likely over — and the era of an American ironclad security guarantee may be over, too.

That means that Europe, whose future commitments to Ukraine are already larger than Washington's, will likely have to spend far more on its own defenses and prepare for the possibility of a diminished American role in NATO.

But there is little prospect that Europe can replace the United States as a guarantor of security anytime soon — and not without sharply enhanced military spending beyond the NATO goal of 2 percent of economic output, which only 11 of the alliance's 31 members currently meet.

That deficiency is a source of Mr. Trump's critique. But Europeans suspect that his longstanding admiration for Mr. Putin, and his contempt for Ukraine, lie at the core.

On Wednesday, NATO announced that 18 countries will meet the 2 percent target this year.

Yet numbers tell only part of the story. Europe's ultimate defense is the American nuclear arsenal, including arms stored from Germany to Turkey, but it is meaningless if there are doubts that the United States would actually come to the aid of even the smallest or most vulnerable of NATO nations.

The NATO secretary-general, Jens Stoltenberg, seemed to be getting at the damage that was already done, saying on Sunday: "Any suggestion that allies will not defend each other undermines all of our security, including that of the U.S., and puts American and European soldiers at increased risk."

And at the moment, said Claudia Major, a defense expert at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Europe could not defend itself against Russia in a conventional conflict without the help of the United States.

To be really prepared to fight Russia, said Armin Papperger, the chief executive of the company building the ammunition factory, Europe would need 10 years to rebuild militaries that atrophied during the post-Cold War and whose arsenals were depleted in the rush to save Ukraine.

But even to be “fine,” he told the BBC, would require three or four years of enhanced military spending and production.

Estonia’s prime minister, Kaja Kallas — whom Russia has just declared a “wanted” criminal — said Mr. Trump’s remarks were “something to maybe wake up some of the allies who haven’t done that much.”

In fact, what Mr. Trump has accomplished is a speeding up of the discussion about what NATO would look like without the United States at its center.

Annalena Baerbock, Germany’s foreign minister, met near Paris on Monday with her Polish and French counterparts, Radoslaw Sikorski and Stéphane Séjourné, in a revival of what is sometimes called the “Weimar Triangle.”

In a [joint statement](#), the three captured the European mood well, saying that the meeting was taking place at a time of “ambiguity, unpredictability, uncertainty and instability.”

While creating more certainty and stability will require spending a lot more money, NATO is still debating whether to set a new and higher goal.

That makes a common European defense still something of an aspiration, said Daniel Fiott of the Brussels School of Governance. “Sentiment is not enough” for the Europeans, he said. “Otherwise they remain at the level of a think tank. Action, real action, please!”

**[Steven Erlanger](#) is the chief diplomatic correspondent in Europe and is based in Berlin. He has reported from over 120 countries, including Thailand, France, Israel, Germany and the former Soviet Union.**

[Neue Zahlen des IfW Kiel: Wer Waffen an die Ukraine liefert und wer nicht \(faz.net\)](#)

NEUE ZAHLEN DES IFW KIEL:

## Wer Waffen an die Ukraine liefert und wer nicht

Laut dem IfW Kiel sind es einige große Geber wie Deutschland, die den größten Anteil der Militärhilfen an Kiew stemmen, während viele andere Staaten „wenig oder gar nichts Neues“ zugesagt hätten.

**New figures from IFW KIEL: Who supplies weapons to Ukraine and who does not**

**According to the IfW Kiel, it is some major donors like Germany that provide the largest share of military aid to Kiev, while many other countries have "promised little or nothing new."**

VON [GREGOR GROSSE](#)

-AKTUALISIERT AM 16.02.2024-06:17



Ukrainische Soldaten arbeiten im Rahmen ihrer Ausbildung in Kletitz an der Panzerkanone eines Kampfpanzers vom Typ Leopard 1 A5 Bild: dpa

Die europäischen Militärhilfen an die Ukraine nehmen weiter zu. Allerdings vergrößert sich der Abstand zwischen den Unterstützerstaaten hinsichtlich zugesagter und konkret bereitgestellter Hilfspakete. Das geht aus den neuen Zahlen des Kieler [Instituts für Weltwirtschaft](#) (IfW) hervor. Der aktualisierte „Ukraine Support Tracker“ des IfW erfasst die staatlichen Regierungshilfen an die Ukraine bis zum 15. Januar 2024.

[Gregor Grosse](#)

Redakteur in der Politik.

Der Projektleiter für Daten, Pietro Bompreszi, sagte der F.A.Z., dass die Zahlen einen Trend bestätigten, den die Forscher schon länger beobachteten: „Die geleistete militärische Unterstützung zwischen den Ländern, insbesondere in Europa, geht immer weiter auseinander.“ Es gebe eine Kerngruppe europäischer Staaten, die die Militärhilfe an [Kiew](#) antreibe.

Laut IfW sind es weiterhin einige große Geber wie die nordischen Länder, Deutschland oder Großbritannien, die den überwiegenden Anteil der Militärhilfen stellen, während viele andere Staaten „wenig oder gar nichts Neues“ zugesagt oder geliefert hätten. Die neu zugesagten Militärhilfen zwischen dem 1. November 2023 und dem 15. Januar 2024 belaufen sich demzufolge auf insgesamt 9,8 Milliarden Euro. Im gleichen Zeitraum des vergangenen Jahres waren es noch 27 Milliarden Euro, wovon allerdings 21 Milliarden von den USA stammten.

Wann mit weiteren Hilfen aus Washington zu rechnen ist, ist offen. Der US-Senat hat zwar kürzlich neue Gelder für die [Ukraine](#) bewilligt, aber ob das Paket auch im republikanisch kontrollierten Repräsentantenhaus

angenommen wird, ist fraglich. Laut IfW haben die Vereinigten Staaten seit Februar 2022 rund 43 Milliarden Euro an Militärhilfen für Kiew bereitgestellt. Doch seit Ende 2023 seien die Zusagen und Lieferungen der USA an die Ukraine im Wesentlichen zum Stillstand gekommen. Die europäischen Staaten müssten ihre militärische Unterstützung in diesem Jahr verdoppeln, falls die amerikanischen Hilfen komplett ersetzt werden müssten, heißt es vom IfW.

### **Deutschland weiterhin größter europäischer Geber**

Der Leiter des „Ukraine Support Trackers“, Christoph Trebesch, teilte mit, dass die finanzielle Hilfe für Kiew mit dem kürzlich beschlossenen EU-Hilfspaket wohl bis auf Weiteres gesichert sei. Auf der militärischen Seite sei dies aber weit weniger klar. „Hier hat sich die Dynamik der EU verlangsamt.“ Laut IfW ist Deutschland nach wie vor der größte europäische Geber von Militärhilfen mit Zusagen in Höhe von 17,7 Milliarden Euro seit Kriegsbeginn. 9,4 Milliarden Euro davon seien bereits für spezifische Militärpakete bereitgestellt worden.

Grundsätzlich gebe es unter den Unterstützern einen großen Unterschied zwischen der zugesagten und der tatsächlich bereitgestellten militärischen Hilfe. Anders als bei den früheren Erhebungen des IfW, bei denen nur die staatlichen „Zusagen“ erfasst wurden, soll der neue Tracker auch konkret „zugewiesene“ Waffenhilfen festhalten, deren Lieferung als sicher gelten könne.

### **Kritik aus Frankreich an den Kieler Zahlen**

Mit der neuen Messgröße reagiert das Institut wohl auch auf Kritik aus Frankreich, wo die Kieler Zahlen immer wieder in Zweifel gezogen wurden: Nach französischer Darstellung waren die eigenen Militärausgaben für Kiew weitaus höher als vom IfW angegeben. Auch im jüngsten Ranking schneidet Paris nicht besonders gut ab. Demzufolge hat Frankreich seit Kriegsbeginn lediglich 0,64 Milliarden Euro an bilateralen Militärhilfen zugesagt. Auch Italien und Spanien liegen mit 0,67 respektive 0,33 Milliarden Euro weit abgeschlagen hinter den großen Gebern. Bei Dänemark etwa hält das IfW insgesamt 8,4 Milliarden Euro an Zusagen fest; das Land sei gemessen am Bruttoinlandsprodukt einer der größten militärischen Unterstützer.

Frankreich kritisierte allerdings auch, dass die absoluten Zahlen wenig aussagekräftig seien, es komme auf die Effizienz der gelieferten Waffen im Gefecht an. Französische Politiker verwiesen unter anderem auf bereits übergebene Marschflugkörper größerer Reichweite, die etwa Deutschland bislang noch nicht geliefert hat.

Tatsächlich ist der Vergleich zwischen Staaten nicht einfach. Ein großes Problem sei die unterschiedliche Transparenz bei den Waffenlieferungen, sagt Projektleiter Bompreszi. „Einige Länder geben etwa aus Gründen der nationalen Sicherheit weitaus weniger preis als andere.“ Auch Frankreich gehöre zu den Ländern, die bislang nur wenig über ihre Waffenlieferungen an Kiew öffentlich machten. „Das macht es für uns natürlich etwas schwieriger.“

Dazu kommen laut Bompreszi unterschiedliche Auffassungen über die Kosten von abgegebenem Material: wenn Staaten beispielsweise ältere Panzer an Kiew lieferten, aber die Wiederbeschaffungskosten von neuen Panzern angäben. Die Kosten für das neue Modell seien in diesem Fall zehn- bis zu 20-mal höher als die des eigentlich gelieferten. „Dieser Wert interessiert uns aber nicht“, sagt Bompreszi, „wir konzentrieren uns auf die tatsächlichen Ausgaben.“

[Mogelpackung Zwei-Prozent-Ziel: Wie Deutschland die Nato-Vorgabe erfüllt \(nzz.ch\)](https://www.nzz.ch)

## Pensionen für DDR-Soldaten, Kindergeld für Bundeswehrangehörige – wie Deutschland das Zwei-Prozent-Ziel erfüllt

Erstmals seit mehr als drei Jahrzehnten kann die Bundesrepublik verkünden, zwei Prozent ihres Bruttoinlandsprodukts für die Verteidigung auszugeben. Damit erfüllt sie eine seit langem bestehende Nato-Vorgabe. Doch die Berechnung wirft Fragen auf.

According to the IfW Kiel, it is some major donors like Germany that provide the largest share of military aid to Kiev, while many other countries have "promised little or nothing new."

For the first time in more than three decades, the Federal Republic can announce that it is spending two percent of its gross domestic product on defense. This fulfills a long-standing NATO requirement. However, the calculation raises questions.

Marco Seliger, Berlin

14.02.2024, 16.56 Uhr 5 min



Soldaten der Bundeswehr am Reichstagsgebäude in Berlin, dem Sitz des Bundestags. Omer Messinger / Getty

Es war im September vor zehn Jahren in Wales, als die Nato-Staaten sich zum Handeln gezwungen sahen. Der russische Präsident Wladimir Putin hatte die Krim annektiert und führte Krieg im Donbass gegen die Ukraine. An dem Treffen der Allianz auf den britischen Inseln herrschte Einvernehmen darüber, dass die Einsatzfähigkeit der Bündnistruppen und die Verteidigungsausgaben erhöht werden müssten. Dabei geriet vor allem die zweitgrösste Volkswirtschaft unter den Nato-Staaten unter Druck. Deutschland sollte endlich einen Beitrag leisten, der seiner ökonomischen Stärke entsprach.

Die damalige Regierung unter Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel hatte sich bis zum [Gipfel in Wales](#) trotz dem russischen Angriff auf die Ukraine nicht eindeutig dazu bekannt, die vor allem von den Amerikanern und anderen Staaten geforderten Mindestausgaben für Verteidigung in Höhe von zwei Prozent des Bruttoinlandsprodukts (BIP) mitzutragen. Das lag nicht zuletzt an Merkels Partner in der grossen Koalition, den [Sozialdemokraten](#). Teile der Partei hielten noch immer an der Beschwichtigungspolitik gegenüber dem Kreml fest. Merkel aber wollte, dass die SPD die Gipfelbeschlüsse mitträgt.

Der damalige Aussenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier von der SPD galt als Repräsentant des «Appeasement» gegenüber Russland. Bevor Merkel der Abschlusserklärung zustimmte, wollte sie explizit die Bestätigung Steinmeiers und schickte ihren Sicherheitsberater Christoph Heusgen, das Ja des Aussenministers einzuholen. Er habe ihn in den Wandelgängen des Konferenzentrums erwischte und auf das Zwei-Prozent-Ziel

angesprochen, berichtete Heusgen später. Steinmeier habe kurz gezögert, «um dann – wenig enthusiastisch – eine positive Antwort zu geben».

## **Die grosse deutsche Zwei-Prozent-Heuchelei**

In der Nachbetrachtung dürfte das der Moment gewesen sein, in dem die grosse deutsche Zwei-Prozent-Heuchelei begann. Weder die von Merkel geführte Union noch die Sozialdemokraten machten in den Folgejahren ernsthafte Anstalten, die Zusagen von Wales zu erfüllen. Aus ihrer Sicht war schliesslich noch genug Zeit. Die Staaten hatten sich verpflichtet, spätestens 2024 die Zwei-Prozent-Marke zu erreichen.

Christlichdemokraten und Christlichsoziale verwiesen dabei gern auf die Sozialdemokraten, die sich in den jährlichen Haushaltsverhandlungen weigerten, die notwendigen Steigerungsraten durchzusetzen. Doch auch die Union gab das Geld lieber für den Sozialstaat, für die Flüchtlingsfinanzierung und – später – für [Corona-Hilfen](#) aus. Dabei war allen Seiten klar, dass sich die seit Jahrzehnten vernachlässigte Bundeswehr in einem desaströsen Zustand befand und nicht verteidigungsfähig war.

Das änderte sich auch dann nicht grundsätzlich, als der damalige US-Präsident Barack Obama bei einem Besuch Deutschlands im April 2016 die Bundeskanzlerin mit der Frage überraschte, ob sie bereit sei, 1000 Soldaten an die Ostgrenze der Nato zu verlegen. Ein «Stolperdraht», eine erste Verteidigungslinie gegen einen möglichen russischen Angriff, das sollten diese Truppen aus der Sicht von Obama sein. Nach kurzer Rücksprache mit Volker Wierer, dem damaligen obersten Soldaten und Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr, sagte Merkel noch am selben Tag zu.

## **Die Sozialdemokraten blockieren**

Doch es musste ein weiteres Jahr vergehen, ehe eine signifikante Veränderung eintrat. Wieder war es das Ergebnis einer Nato-Tagung, das die Deutschen zwang, sich zu bewegen. Verteidigungsministerin Ursula von der Leyen von den Christlichdemokraten hatte bei einem Treffen in Brüssel zugesagt, bis 2031 drei Divisionen des Heeres sowie starke See- und Luftstreitkräfte voll ausgerüstet und einsatzbereit dem Bündnis zur Verteidigung gegen einen Angriff zur Verfügung zu stellen. Von der Leyens Militärplaner hatten ausgerechnet, dass dies mindestens 130 Milliarden Euro kosten würde.

Fortan sollte der deutsche Wehretat wieder steigen, allerdings nur in kleinen Schritten. Signifikante Erhöhungen waren mit den Sozialdemokraten noch immer nicht zu machen. Das blieb selbst dann so, als Donald Trump ins Weisse Haus einzog und an seinem ersten Nato-Gipfel im Mai 2017 in Brüssel heftige Kritik an den Staaten übte, deren Verteidigungsausgaben nicht das Zwei-Prozent-Ziel erfüllten.

Diese Vorwürfe wiederholte er während seiner vierjährigen Amtszeit mehrfach. Sie sorgten in Berlin immer wieder für heftige politische Debatten. Als Trump nun aber am vergangenen Wochenende drohte, im Fall seiner erneuten Präsidentschaft säumige Zahler nicht mehr verteidigen zu wollen, reagierte die Bundesregierung mit einem eindringlichen Appell zum Zusammenhalt im Nato-Bündnis. Das Zwei-Prozent-Thema aber spielte in der deutschen Reaktion keine Rolle mehr.

## **Etwa 82 Milliarden Euro für Verteidigung?**

Der Grund hierfür ist, dass Deutschland aus der Sicht der Bundesregierung das Nato-Ziel nunmehr erfüllt. So hat sie es gerade nach Brüssel gemeldet – das erste Mal seit mehr als drei Jahrzehnten. Der Wert soll nahezu exakt bei zwei Prozent liegen. Wie hoch er in absoluten Zahlen ist, bleibt unklar.

Im vergangenen Jahr lag das deutsche Bruttoinlandprodukt bei etwa 4121 Milliarden Euro. Damals hätte die Regierung also zirka 82 Milliarden Euro für Verteidigung ausgeben müssen, um die Nato-Vorgabe zu erfüllen. Da für dieses Jahr nur ein geringes Wachstum erwartet wird, dürfte das BIP in absoluten Zahlen ähnlich ausfallen.

Nach wie vor liegt der reguläre (steuerfinanzierte) Verteidigungshaushalt bei gut 52 Milliarden Euro. Daraus finanziert die Bundeswehr vor allem ihre Personal- und Betriebsausgaben. Den grössten Teil der Kosten für neue Waffen und Munition entnimmt sie indes einem Parallelhaushalt, dem schuldenfinanzierten 100-



Milliarden-Sondervermögen. Die Ausgaben hierfür sind in diesem Jahr mit knapp 20 Milliarden Euro veranschlagt. Das macht in Summe etwa 72 Milliarden Euro.

Interessant ist, wie sich der restliche Betrag zusammensetzt, der rund 10 Milliarden Euro ausmachen dürfte. Nach Angaben der oppositionellen Union rechnet die Bundesregierung die Zinsen für das kreditfinanzierte Sondervermögen sowie Ausgaben für Entwicklungshilfe und für Kriseninterventionsmittel des Auswärtigen Amts mit ein. Sogar die Pensionen für frühere Soldaten der Nationalen Volksarmee der DDR (NVA) sowie das Kindergeld für Bundeswehrbeschäftigte würden berücksichtigt. Die gesamte Auflistung der einzelnen Posten, aus denen sich die zwei Prozent errechnen, wolle die Bundesregierung trotz mehrfacher Aufforderung aber nicht offenlegen, heisst es in der Union.

Fraglich ist, inwiefern Pensionsausgaben für NVA-Soldaten die Verteidigungsfähigkeit Deutschlands erhöhen. Allerdings bemühen andere Nato-Staaten Tricksereien ähnlicher Art. Auch sie rechnen etwa Ausgaben für die Entwicklungshilfe oder für Pensionen mit ein. Nur dass es sich dabei häufig um Länder handelt, die das Zwei-Prozent-Ziel nicht gerade so, sondern weit übererfüllen.

## UK could contribute to nuclear shield if Trump wins, suggests German minister

Comments draw Britain into debate about European security without US providing bulk of Nato's nuclear deterrent

[Patrick Wintour](#) Diplomatic editor

Thu 15 Feb 2024 06.00 CET



The nuclear submarine HMS Vanguard. The push for common European nuclear weapons has been described as an ‘extremely dangerous escalation’. Photograph: PA

The UK could contribute to a new European nuclear shield if [Donald Trump](#) becomes US president again, a senior German minister has suggested, drawing British politicians into the debate about how Europe's security could be bolstered in the event of the Republican frontrunner winning in November.

Questions over a European nuclear deterrence have intensified after Trump's remarks on Saturday that he would not defend any Nato member that failed to spend 2% of its gross domestic product on defence – and would even encourage Russia to continue attacking.

European leaders have interpreted the comments as a warning that the alliance's largely US nuclear shield can no longer be taken for granted if Trump returns to the White House. On Tuesday, Christian Lindner, the German finance minister and the leader of the Free Democratic party, called on politicians to consider an alternative model that could include British and French nuclear weapons.

In [an article](#) for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, he wrote: “The strategic nuclear forces of France and Great Britain are already making a contribution to the security of our alliance. The French president, Emmanuel Macron, has made various offers of cooperation. We should understand Donald Trump's recent statements as a call to further rethink this element of European security under the umbrella of Nato.

“The question is: under what political and financial conditions would Paris and London be prepared to maintain or expand their own strategic capabilities for collective security? And vice versa, what contribution are we willing to make? When it comes to peace and freedom in Europe, we must not shy away from these difficult questions.”

The central issue in the nuclear debate is less whether Britain or [France](#) would put their nuclear weapons at the disposal of the EU, but whether the two countries could agree to put them at the service of a deterrence strategy for Nato's European alliance area.

Although France keeps its nuclear deterrent outside the Nato command structure, [Macron has offered](#) to cooperate with Europe on nuclear defence. In 2020, he called for a "strategic dialogue" on "the role of France's nuclear deterrent in [Europe's] collective security". Germany [never took up](#) that offer.

Manfred Weber, the German conservative who heads the centre-right European People's party (EPP) grouping in the European parliament, has thrown his weight behind the debate. He said he did not rule out a European nuclear umbrella and called for "a new chapter" to be opened with London.

"Macron has already made a vague offer to talk about the importance of the French nuclear forces for Europe," Weber said. "Now that Donald Trump is openly questioning the role of the USA as a protective power would be the right moment for this. The same applies to the British, with whom we should finally start a new chapter of cooperation after Brexit."

Speaking this week, Donald Tusk, the Polish prime minister, said Macron's offer of a possible Europeanisation of nuclear weapons to create a common security system should be taken "really seriously".

The issue is likely to become a theme of the European elections in June, with [Katarina Barley](#), the top candidate for Germany's Social Democratic party, also appearing to back the idea. Trump's recent statements meant the US guarantee could "no longer be relied upon", [she told](#) the Tagesspiegel.

Not everyone is in favour, however. The German defence minister, Boris Pistorius, also from the SPD, has called for calm, noting for starters that Trump has yet to win the Republican nomination. "I can only warn against starting such a discussion with such carelessness just because Donald Trump, who is not even a presidential candidate, makes such statements," Pistorius said.

Another SPD politician, Ralf Stegner, described the push for common European nuclear weapons as an "extremely dangerous escalation". He told the Tagesspiegel: "There is no need for a European nuclear power – it would be the opposite of European security."

The UK has said its nuclear weapons would be available for use at the request of Nato's supreme allied commander Europe, the alliance's most senior uniformed officer, and that they would only be used "in extreme circumstances of self-defence including the defence of our [Nato](#) allies".

This offer, however, was made in the context of a US nuclear presence in Europe.

The Labour party has promised to intensify defence cooperation with Europe, including a commitment by the shadow defence secretary, John Healey, to reach an agreement with Germany within the [first six months](#) of taking office. But this modest pledge had nothing to do with the sharing of Britain's nuclear deterrent.

## Neue Diskussion um Atomwaffen: Trumps Äusserungen haben die Urangst der Europäer geweckt, von Amerika im Stich gelassen zu werden

Seit längerem geht es um die Frage, wie Europa seine nukleare Abschreckung sicherstellt. Doch schnelle Antworten sind kaum möglich.

**New debate about nuclear weapons: Trump's statements have awakened the primal fear of Europeans of being abandoned by America.**

**For some time now, the question of how Europe ensures its nuclear deterrence has been discussed. However, quick answers are hardly possible.**

Marco Seliger, Berlin

15.02.2024, 16.51 Uhr 4 min



Detonation des Nuklearsprengsatzes Ivy Mike während der Operation Ivy auf den Marshallinseln 1951. Bettmann Archive

Fast drei Jahrzehnte lang schienen Atomwaffen wie aus der Zeit gefallen. Doch sie waren nur eine verdrängte Wirklichkeit. Das zeigt die Diskussion über eine atomare Bewaffnung Europas, die nun aufgekommen ist, seitdem eine Wiederwahl Donald Trumps zum amerikanischen Präsidenten eine reale Möglichkeit geworden ist. Die zahlreichen öffentlichen Äusserungen dazu vermitteln den Eindruck, dass es bei der Antwort auf die Frage «Neue Atomwaffen für Europa?» nur um ein Ja oder Nein gehe. Was bisher kaum thematisiert wurde, sind die technischen Entwicklungen der vergangenen 20 Jahre. Ihre Kenntnis aber ist zwingende Voraussetzung für eine fundierte Debatte.

Seit Jahren lässt sich in mehreren Weltregionen wieder eine nukleare Aufrüstung beobachten. Schon im Jahr 2011 hatten US-Geheimdienste auf Satellitenbildern verdächtige Raketensysteme auf russischem Boden identifiziert. Es handelte sich dabei um Abschussrampen für nuklear bestückbare Raketen mittlerer Reichweite, die auf Lastwagen installiert und damit bodengestützt sind.

Solche Waffen verbot damals der [INF-Vertrag](#), ein Abkommen, das die USA und die Sowjetunion 1987 geschlossen hatten. Darin verpflichteten sich beide Staaten, alle landgestützten Flugkörper mit einer Reichweite von 500 bis 5500 Kilometern zu vernichten. Russland stritt nach der Entdeckung durch die Amerikaner den Besitz der neuen Raketen ab. Die USA zogen sich daraufhin aus dem INF-Vertrag zurück.

Im Sommer 2018 informierte das Verteidigungsministerium in Berlin die Sicherheitsexperten der Bundestagsparteien über [russische Hyperschallwaffen](#), die mit mehrfacher Schallgeschwindigkeit in bis zu 100 Kilometern Höhe am Rand der Atmosphäre navigierten. Hyperschallgleiter haben keinen eigenen Antrieb, sondern werden von einer ballistischen Rakete in die Höhe gebracht. Sobald das Raketentriebwerk ausgebrannt

ist, macht sich der Gleiter selbständig und rast mit mehrfacher Schallgeschwindigkeit ins Ziel. Durch seine indirekte Flugbahn ist er für herkömmliche Raketenabwehrsysteme sehr schwer zu bekämpfen. Das sei die russische Antwort auf den amerikanischen Raketenabwehrschild, sagte Präsident Wladimir Putin Anfang 2019.

### **Risiko eines Nuklearkriegs war nie verschwunden**

Im August 2019 setzten die USA und Russland den INF-Vertrag ausser Kraft. Doch auch mit diesem Abkommen war das Risiko eines Nuklearkriegs auf europäischem Boden nie verschwunden. Dafür haben der technologische Fortschritt im Waffenbau und die Entwicklung von luft- und seegestützten [Mittelstreckenwaffen und Marschflugkörpern](#) gesorgt. Mittelstreckenraketen fliegen auf einer ballistischen Bahn, haben einen Raketenantrieb und reichen bis zu 5500 Kilometer weit. Marschflugkörper fliegen wie ein Flugzeug im Tiefflug, verfügen über einen Düsenantrieb, kommen aber nicht so weit wie Mittelstreckenraketen.

Schon lange haben die USA, Russland und andere Staaten Mittelstreckenraketen auf Schiffen und U-Booten stationiert. Von dort können sie, auch mit einem Nuklearsprengkopf ausgerüstet, verschossen werden. Die Entwicklung atomar bestückter Marschflugkörper wird seit einigen Jahren ebenfalls vorangetrieben. Alle Nuklearmächte haben im vergangenen Jahrzehnt begonnen, ihre Arsenale zu modernisieren. Künstliche Intelligenz dürfte die Atomwaffentechnik künftig noch weiter revolutionieren.

Die technologischen Entwicklungen der vergangenen zwei Jahrzehnte sind es, die den Nuklearwaffenexperten James Davis «vor einer tagespolitisch getriebenen, nicht fundierten Debatte» über Atomwaffen in Europa warnen lassen. Davis, gebürtiger Amerikaner und Politikwissenschaftler an der Universität St. Gallen, sagt, es sei jetzt eine seriöse Diskussion innerhalb der Nato erforderlich, wie das Bündnis künftig seine nukleare Abschreckung gestalten wolle. Dazu müssten neben den USA auch Frankreich und Grossbritannien als weitere Nuklearwaffenstaaten mit einbezogen werden. «Wir sollten eine solche Diskussion keinesfalls an den Amerikanern vorbei führen», sagt Davis.

### **Warnungen vor einer Spaltung der Nato**

Diese Auffassung teilen zahlreiche deutsche Politiker, etwa der Aussenexperte der Christlichdemokraten, Roderich Kiesewetter. Eine solche Debatte würde die USA aus Europa treiben, meinte er warnend. Sein Parteikollege Johann Wadephul sagte, die Diskussion um eine europäische nukleare Abschreckung erfolge im völlig luftleeren Raum. Es fehle derzeit jede politische, strategische, technische und finanzielle Grundlage für ein solches Ziel.

Zuvor hatte auch Verteidigungsminister Boris Pistorius von den Sozialdemokraten in der Debatte um den atomaren Schutzschild der USA zur Zurückhaltung aufgerufen. Er könne nur davor warnen, mit dieser Leichtfertigkeit eine Diskussion vom Zaun zu brechen, nur weil der frühere US-Präsident Trump mit seinen Äusserungen zur Nato Zweifel am Beistandswillen der USA ausgelöst habe. Nato-Generalsekretär Jens Stoltenberg warnte gar davor, das Abschreckungssystem der Allianz infrage zu stellen und damit die Abschreckungsfähigkeit der Nato zu untergraben.

Derweil liess der Vorsitzende der Liberalen, Christian Lindner, in einem Gastbeitrag für die «Frankfurter Allgemeine» erkennen, dass er gern das Angebot des französischen Präsidenten Emmanuel Macron diskutiert wüsste. Macron hatte angeboten, mit Deutschland bei der nuklearen Abschreckung zu kooperieren. Dieses Angebot hat er auch auf andere europäische Staaten erweitert.

### **«Gemeinsamer Koffer mit rotem Knopf»**

In einer Rede in Stockholm Ende Januar sagte Macron, «unsere vitalen Interessen sind heute weitgehend europäisch», Frankreich habe bei der nuklearen Abschreckung eine «spezielle Verantwortung». Bereits Ende vergangenen Jahres hatte der Politikwissenschaftler Herfried Münkler Europa zu einer atomaren Aufrüstung geraten, um besser vor Kriegen und Erpressungsversuchen geschützt zu sein. «Wir brauchen einen gemeinsamen Koffer mit roten Knopf», sagte er.

Der Politikwissenschaftler Davis sagt, durch die Äusserungen Trumps sei die «Uranst der Europäer», im Fall des Falles von Amerika im Stich gelassen zu werden, wieder aktiviert worden. Deshalb sei es dringend

erforderlich, dass die Nato jetzt drängende Fragen der nuklearen Abschreckung diskutiere. Haben die Russen die Hürden für den Einsatz von Nuklearwaffen gesenkt? Wie denken die Chinesen über den Einsatz von Atomwaffen? Dies seien nur zwei Aspekte, über die sich Nordamerikaner und Europäer Gedanken machen und Schlussfolgerungen ziehen müssten.

Gemeinsam mit der Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz und dem Center for International Security der Hertie School hat Davis jetzt die Gründung der European Nuclear Study Group angekündigt, die zu Fragen der nuklearen Sicherheit in Europa forscht. Ziel der Studiengruppe sei es, für Europa und seine transatlantischen Partner relevante Veränderungen in der nuklearen Ordnung zu identifizieren, heisst es. Darüber wird auch an der am Freitag beginnenden 60. Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz diskutiert. Die gegenwärtige Nuklearwaffen-Debatte dürfte daher nur der Beginn einer neuen politischen Auseinandersetzung in Europa dazu sein.

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A shock to the system

## A new answer to the biggest climate conundrum

Will electrification of industry live up to its promise?



image: ricardo tomás

Feb 15th 2024

One of the more robust reasons for [hope about the future of the climate](#) comes from two simple facts and a delightful kicker. The facts are that electricity is a wonderfully versatile way of powering all sorts of things, and that lots of technologies can now generate it without emitting greenhouse gases. The kicker is that one of these technologies, [solar power](#), is both very cheap and getting cheaper.

This suggests a simple strategy. Make the grid emissions-free and do everything you can with electricity. The obstacles to the first part of this nostrum—which include restricted access to capital in poor countries, constrained grid capacity and a lack of storage to offset fluctuating supply—are no less daunting for their familiarity. But they are increasingly the target of policy and investment. Last year, for example, the world spent more on new stationary electricity-storage capacity than it did on constructing nuclear-power stations.

To get the most out of all these efforts, though, electricity needs to become even more versatile. One of the key challenges is providing heat to [industry](#). If you want to dry, cure, melt, smelt, set, distil, reform or otherwise change the state of something, as [industrial processing](#) so often does, heat tends to be involved. In 2016 providing such “process heat” produced almost seven gigatonnes of carbon-dioxide emissions, roughly 20% of all those from fossil fuels.

The fact that electricity does not have much of a record of providing heat has led to the idea that these emissions are “hard to abate”. This is taken to mean that sorting them out needs new kinds of infrastructure. Carbon dioxide produced at the plant where the fuel is burned could be pumped into an underground repository, a process called carbon capture and storage (ccs); natural gas could be replaced by hydrogen. In the meantime, natural gas would continue to be used as a “bridge fuel” to a future both greener but also, alas, far off.

This presumption is now coming under attack. Innovative entrepreneurs and imaginative incumbents are finding ways to turn electricity into useful forms of heat, from scaled-up heat pumps of the sort used in some houses to space-age containers filled with white-hot molten tin and graphite plumbing.

These technologies offer advantages in and of themselves. Heat from renewable or nuclear sources is safe from volatile fossil-fuel prices. In general, heat pumps are a lot more energy-efficient than combustion. Systems that store heat for later use, sometimes called “thermal batteries”, can be charged up when electricity is cheap, which is good both for owners and grid operators who increasingly want demand that can be managed.

The biggest advantage, though, is that when industries use clean electricity they slash their carbon-dioxide emissions. If the world is to keep global warming well below 2°C, as it very much should, that sort of slashing is mandatory.

Unfortunately, this advantage reaches a company’s balance-sheet only when industries come under some sort of carbon-pricing scheme. Such schemes have tended to concentrate on electricity generation. One reason for this is that, unlike electricity-generating companies, industrial producers compete in global markets. If their goods carry a charge for the carbon emitted in making them, these producers will be at a disadvantage to their untaxed competitors.

The obvious solution is a system of tariffs that level the playing-field: what is called a carbon border-adjustment mechanism. Such measures risk being captured by incumbents and becoming a channel for protectionism. But that risk is worth taking. If carbon prices are to cover more of the global economy, sorting out these trade effects will become necessary. In addition, well-designed adjustment mechanisms provide an incentive for industries outside the pricing system to decarbonise.

Pricing carbon emissions from industrial heat would help a phalanx of innovative technologies whose benefits to society are currently unrewarded. It would be bad news for the natural-gas suppliers that dominate the provision of heat. The effect on decarbonisation by way of ccs, either at the plants where heat is used or at the facilities which turn natural gas and steam into hydrogen, is harder to predict.

### **Worth a plug**

Progress on ccs has been uninspiring, to put it mildly. Widely discussed for decades it is still, in operational terms, a rarity. It has not seen the sort of innovative ferment that electrification is exhibiting. Many climate advocates see it as an excuse for inaction that locks in fossil fuels as the default option.

ccs may, for all that, have a vital role to play, and sincere proponents of its potential should welcome the spur to innovation that increased uptake of electrical options will provide. It seems highly likely that some applications and some forms of industrial cluster will be best served by ccs or hydrogen. Competition is the best way to find out which. ■



# The Guardian view on Europe's rural revolt: sustainability is in farmers' interests too

## [Editorial](#)

The current wave of protests endangers environmental progress. But imaginative politics can get the green deal back on track

Wed 14 Feb 2024 19.30 CET



Polish farmers take part in a blockade at the Ukraine border this week in protest against the EU green deal. Photograph: Anadolu/Getty Images

Another day, another tractor blockade. Earlier this week, all economic activity at the Belgian port of [Antwerp](#) ground to a halt as hundreds of farmers prevented access to freight. In Spain, tractors blocked motorways near Seville and Granada, and in Catalonia. As a rolling wave of rural discontent has made itself felt across Europe since the start of the year, only four EU member states have remained unaffected.

Numerically, farmers [account](#) for only 4% of Europe's working population. But as Europe's political leaders are belatedly coming to realise, the burgeoning crisis has outsize implications. A perfect storm of factors – including rising energy costs, competition from lightly regulated foreign imports and supermarket profit-gouging – have driven angry farmers off the land and on to the streets of capitals. But in disputes that touch on some of the faultlines of contemporary culture wars, there is a growing danger that the EU's green deal takes the rap for a crisis incubated elsewhere.

Ahead of European elections in which they aspire to make major gains, radical right parties such as AfD in Germany and Marine Le Pen's National Rally are using opposition to environmental reforms as a recruiting agent and campaign theme. In Brussels, and in national capitals, a degree of green backtracking is already under way. As the momentum of the farmers' protests grows, the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, last week [shelved](#) plans to reduce the use of pesticides and softened targets on cutting non-CO2 emissions.

[Announcing](#) those concessions, Ms Von der Leyen was right to say that in the context of the multiple challenges they face, farmers "deserve to be listened to". Too often in the recent past that has not been the case. In the Netherlands, a politically tin-eared plan to reduce nitrogen emissions by summarily closing thousands of farms led to a rebellion that helped topple the government. It also, indirectly, gave an opening to the nationalist demagogue, Geert Wilders, who surfed the anti-elite, insurgent mood to [win](#) the subsequent election.

But damaging tactical retreats on green issues are hardly the way forward. Instead, a persuasive strategic vision of the future of European agriculture is urgently required – one with sustainable farming as its centrepiece, but

which also tackles the injustices that have fuelled discontent. As most farmers recognise, environmental adaptation is a necessity in a landscape increasingly to be [shaped](#) by drought, floods and heatwaves. However, the common agricultural policy, which funnels subsidies to large-scale industrial farms and away from struggling small and medium-sized producers, also needs to be reformed.

Similarly, the pursuit of free-trade ambitions – such as those driving current talks between the EU and Latin America – should not be allowed to expose Europe’s farmers to competition with producers who are not subject to the same environmental regulations. And more generous resources should be deployed, at state or EU level, to help beleaguered farms cope with the triple whammy of rising costs, squeezed margins and the green transition.

Last month, as the rumble of tractors began to be heard from Paris to Berlin, the European Commission coincidentally [launched](#) a new “dialogue” on the future of EU agriculture. A central theme will be the provision of proper support for rural communities. If the vital goals of the green deal are to be protected, the talk will need to swiftly translate into action.

[Farmers are in revolt and Europe's climate policies are crumbling. Welcome to the age of 'greenlash' | Paul Taylor | The Guardian](#)

## Farmers are in revolt and Europe's climate policies are crumbling. Welcome to the age of 'greenlash'

[Paul Taylor](#)

Brussels is ditching green measures as EU leaders panic over rural protests, upcoming elections and the threat of the far right

Fri 16 Feb 2024 08.00 CET



A farmers' protest in Brussels, Belgium, 1 February 2024. Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

Ursula von der Leyen [surrendered to angry farmers](#) last week faster than you could shake a pitchfork or dump a tractor-load of manure outside the European parliament. The European Commission president, expected to announce her [candidacy for a second term](#) heading the EU executive next week, told lawmakers that the commission was withdrawing a bill to halve the use of chemical pesticides by 2030 and would hold more consultations instead.

The proposed measure was a key plank in the commission's [European Green Deal](#) and its [Farm to Fork strategy](#), intended to make the EU carbon-neutral by 2050, make agriculture more environmentally friendly and preserve biodiversity.

Von der Leyen's sudden U-turn on one of her signature policies was not just an attempt to defuse a spreading continent-wide rural revolt over rising fuel costs, burdensome environmental regulations, retailers' price squeezes and cheap imports. It was also a sign of growing panic among the EU's mainstream parties over the seemingly inexorable rise of far-right nationalists ahead of the June elections.

Von der Leyen, a former German defence minister, is vying to lead the centre-right European People's party's campaign for the elections even though she is [not herself seeking](#) a European parliament seat. Her coronation at a party congress on 6-7 March as the EPP's [Spitzenkandidaten](#) (lead candidate) to run the commission from 2024 to 2029 is a formality, since there is no other contender. But she has had to water down her green policies to placate a party so spooked by the "greenlash" against net zero legislation that it is rushing to reposition itself as the voice of gradual adaptation at a pace that citizens can accept and afford.

EU leaders tried to take another contentious issue off the table by agreeing in December on a [long-stalled migration pact](#) that includes stricter external border controls, faster procedures for processing asylum seekers and expelling those whose applications are rejected, and sharing the burden of the refugee crisis among EU countries. But populists such as the Hungarian prime minister, Viktor Orbán, continue to rail against being

forced to choose between admitting unwanted migrants and paying for other countries to take them in under the new system.

I have seen unpublished opinion polling conducted for the European parliament in January that showed Eurosceptic, sovereigntist or populist parties have taken the lead in eight of the 27 EU members, and are in second place in four more. Moreover, the countries where the [far right is polling most strongly](#) include those with the most seats in the legislature – Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Romania and the Netherlands.

This is getting scary, and events such as the farmers' furore are playing into the hands of populists such as France's Marine Le Pen, Germany's Alice Weidel and Dutch far-right leader Geert Wilders, who thrive on grassroots grumbling against the metropolitan elites.

“The (pesticides) proposal has become a symbol of polarisation,” [von der Leyen](#) admitted to parliament in Strasbourg. “To move forward, more dialogue and a different approach is needed.” She may have been slamming the stable gate after the horse has bolted.

Farmers have traditionally voted for mainstream conservative and Christian Democratic parties, while the socialists and social democrats had their bastions in industrial urban areas. Remember former president Jacques Chirac, the Gaullist farmers' friend, jovially slapping the hindquarters of cows in his southwestern Corrèze constituency or at the annual Paris agricultural fair. Nowadays, those voters are more likely to vote for Le Pen's National Rally, recent polls suggest.

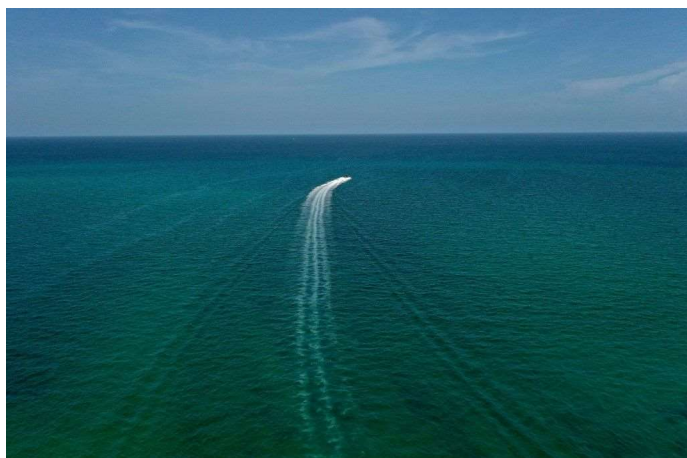
In France, the centre-right Republicans, Chirac's heirs, are polling at barely 8%, while the National Rally stands above 30% in latest surveys, and anti-Islam ideologue Éric Zemmour's even further right Reconquest! bags another 6-8%. Le Pen's list is led by the charismatic 28-year-old Jordan Bardella, already an MEP and party president, while Zemmour's is topped by Le Pen's niece, Marion Maréchal, 34, a favourite of US far-right political strategist [Steve Bannon](#).

In the Netherlands, farmer discontent over curbs on nitrogen emissions led to the sudden rise of the [Farmer-Citizen Movement](#), a party that came from nowhere to win the most votes in regional elections last March. Many of those protest voters have since switched to Wilders' Freedom party, which topped the poll in a general election in November and has gained more ground since then.

Appeasing rural revolt may stop farmers blockading motorways or burning bales of hay outside government offices, but it is unlikely to herd them back towards the mainstream centre-right, given the depth of their discontent.

ATLANTICO GREEN

## 2024, l'année où la température des océans se sera emballée ?



Un bateau au large de l'océan Atlantique à Miami, en Floride.

Le niveau de 21,1°C en moyenne dans les eaux de surface a été atteint en janvier 2024. Que révèle cette donnée sur l'état des océans ?

[François Gervais](#)

Atlantico : La moyenne de la température mondiale de la surface des océans a [connu un nouveau record avec 21,10°C](#), le 31 janvier 2024. Que nous disent ces chiffres sur l'état des océans ? Est-ce inquiétant au regard du réchauffement climatique ?

François Gervais : Le record est à nuancer car les quelque 3000 balises Argo qui mesurent température et salinité sur une profondeur de 2000 mètres ont commencé à être déployées sur les océans il y a une vingtaine d'années seulement. La surface des océans chauffés par le soleil est plus élevée que dans les grandes profondeurs. Avant le déploiement des balises, les mesures de température des océans n'étaient pas fiables au centième de degré près. Le soleil connaît actuellement un paroxysme de taches solaires qui correspondent au maximum du cycle 25. Le plus ancien thermomètre du monde, Central England, mesure une température croissante depuis 365 ans. Il a commencé les mesures lors du minimum de Maunder, phénomène justement lié à une absence de taches solaires, attestée grâce à l'invention de la lunette de Galilée. Ce minimum correspond à une période plus froide historiquement documentée avec en particulier maladies et mauvaises récoltes.

Comment expliquer ces records et ces anomalies de température des océans ? Quelles sont les causes principales ? Le phénomène El Niño ou le changement de carburant des bateaux pourraient-ils avoir un impact ? Y a-t-il eu des canicules marines ? La température des océans s'est-elle vraiment emballée ?

Evoquer une « canicule » par 21°C prête à sourire. Les piscines municipales couvertes sont chauffées presque dix degrés de plus. A 21°C, il y aurait moins d'amateurs. Lorsque le Secrétaire Général des Nations Unies stigmatise une « ère de l'ébullition », il faudrait lui rappeler que l'eau ne bout pas à 21°C. Un phénomène El Niño devenu rapidement intense a démarré en juillet 2023. Il s'agit d'un affaiblissement momentané et aléatoire des alizés qui soufflent d'est en ouest à l'équateur dans l'océan Pacifique. Compte-tenu de leurs capacités calorifiques respectives, comme l'eau chauffe l'air environ 3500 fois plus que l'air ne peut chauffer l'eau, le retour d'eau de surface plus chaude lorsque les alizés sont affaiblis a un impact sur la météo mondiale, avec un « pic » de température atmosphérique effectivement mesuré depuis six mois et qui n'est pas encore redescendu à la valeur antérieure. Le réchauffement de l'eau de part et d'autre de l'équateur sous les tropiques influe évidemment aussi sur la température moyenne des océans. En plus du maximum du cycle solaire et de El Niño, il est vraisemblable qu'une éruption volcanique sous-marine a pu jouer un rôle complémentaire. Puisque les

océans couvrent 70 % de la superficie de la planète, il y a davantage de volcans sous l'eau que sur les terres émergées. Leur rôle sur la température de l'eau est insuffisamment documenté. Toutefois, l'éruption du volcan sous-marin Hunga Tonga a été la plus puissante de ces trente dernières années. En plus de chauffer l'eau, elle a expulsé dans la haute atmosphère de colossales quantités de vapeur d'eau, de loin le principal gaz dit à effet de serre. Il est possible que l'impact continue à être effectif. Enfin, en filtrant partiellement la lumière solaire, les aérosols ont tendance à refroidir la Terre. La lutte contre la pollution de l'air en diminuant les aérosols, par exemple ceux émis par la combustion du fuel lourd, peut ainsi contribuer au réchauffement de la Terre mais vraisemblablement beaucoup moins que l'augmentation de l'effet d'îlot de chaleur urbain lié à une population mondiale qui a doublé en moins de 50 ans et qui est principalement logée dans les villes.

Quelles sont les principales conséquences du réchauffement de la température moyenne des océans sur la biodiversité et la capacité du milieu marin à stocker le CO<sub>2</sub> ? Les modèles de prédiction sont-ils alarmants pour l'avenir des océans ?

Aux dires des spécialistes, les océans sont les parties de la Terre où la biodiversité reste la moins bien connue avec vraisemblablement davantage d'espèces inconnues que d'espèces connues. Par ailleurs, la solubilité du CO<sub>2</sub> dans l'eau diminue effectivement lorsque la température augmente. Après chaque phénomène El Niño intense, on observe ainsi une bouffée de CO<sub>2</sub> relâchée par les océans qui en contiennent 60 fois plus que l'air. Mais ne représentant que de l'ordre de 0,2 % de la masse totale de dioxyde de carbone présent dans l'atmosphère, le phénomène lié à une phase El Niño intense qui peut se produire tous les dix ans, aura un impact restant minime. Quant aux modèles de prédictions climatiques repris par le Groupe d'expert intergouvernemental sur l'évolution du climat (GIEC), les projections montrent des écarts pouvant atteindre 500 % d'un modèle à l'autre. Des différences aussi considérables témoignent de l'absence de consensus scientifique. En revanche, une fluctuation de température des océans est effectivement observée. Elle peut se comprendre comme due à l'addition de plusieurs causes naturelles momentanées. Conclure à un emballement est prématuré.

[What will Spain look like when it runs out of water? Barcelona is giving us a glimpse | María Ramírez | The Guardian](#)

## What will Spain look like when it runs out of water? Barcelona is giving us a glimpse

[María Ramírez](#)

Angry farmers, worried tourism workers and unprepared politicians – Catalonia is on the frontline of a drought-stricken future

Thu 15 Feb 2024 08.00 CET



Walking through Barcelona these days, you can't miss the signs and billboards picturing a red plastic bucket and the message "Water doesn't fall from the sky" ([l'aigua no cau del cel](#) in Catalan). The ads are part of a [campaign](#) to get people to save water. Since the beginning of February, Barcelona and 200 other towns in Catalonia have been [in an official drought emergency](#). That means more than 6 million people in the region live with restrictions. Daily water usage per inhabitant is limited. Parks are unwatered, fountains are dry and showers at swimming pools and beaches are closed. Farmers can't irrigate most of their crops and must halve their water usage for livestock or face fines.

It's not just Catalonia. The European Drought Observatory's [map of current droughts](#) in Europe shows the entire Spanish Mediterranean coast in bad shape, with red areas indicating an alert similar to those in north Africa and Sicily. Catalonia may be going through [the worst drought](#) on record for the area, but the southern region of Andalucía has faced continuous drought [since 2016](#). Last year, Spain's droughts ranked among the 10 most costly climate disasters in the world, according to a [report by Christian Aid](#).

[Europe is warming at twice](#) the rate of other continents. For Spain, this is not an abstract threat: climate disruption has already changed people's lives. Soaring temperatures force people to limit time spent outdoors to avoid heatstroke, an already fatal threat for workers in city streets and farms. Hotels are filling swimming pools [with seawater](#) and wondering what the next season will bring. Farmers are [throwing out entire fruit crops](#) so they can use precious water to at least save their trees. Olive oil production [is crippled](#) by severe heatwaves. Almond growers fear early flowering caused by [the warmest January on record](#) as it could ruin production again.

Uncertainty about crop production, prices and water supplies explains part of the unease of those [farmers blocking roads and protesting](#) in the streets of Spanish cities, after the recent example of their counterparts in France, Belgium and Germany. Beyond the current water shortages, they complain about a range of burdens, from onerous paperwork to unfair competition from countries outside the EU with lower environmental and health standards to tough requirements for funding. Paradoxically, protests are also about measures intended to

reduce the impact of agriculture on the environment, and break a vicious cycle that ultimately worsens conditions for farmers too.

It's easy to see how these tensions could be exploited by populist parties, particularly on the far right. Mainstream politicians are accused of focusing too often on partisan politicking and power struggles related to their own survival.

As Catalonia was declaring the drought emergency, it was striking, for example, to watch how the Spanish government and most politicians [were embroiled](#) in protracted parliamentary discussions on an amnesty law for those who organised an unofficial independence referendum in Catalonia in 2017. It's easy to understand why ordinary citizens could feel there are more pressing issues.



The dry riverbed of the Ter in northern Catalonia, Spain, 6 February 2024. Photograph: Jordi Boixareu/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

It's not accurate to caricature all farmers as victims or far-right stooges and to suggest they have no agency. Their unease is real – and it presents an opportunity that unscrupulous leaders can exploit.

Issues such as the climate crisis and tensions between big cities and depopulating Spanish regions are becoming more politicised. Sandra León, a professor of political science and director of the [Carlos III-Juan March Institute](#), tells me that monitoring public attitudes over time, her research team has noticed a growing backlash against climate policies, particularly among men. At the same time, León says, the climate crisis and urban-rural tensions are issues that are not yet “completely crystallised” in Spain. If people have not yet formed very firm opinions on them, that surely leaves room for both partisan exploitation and fostering understanding.

The far-right party Vox and other populists could certainly capture these debates, León argues, but there are also grounds for hope that “spaces for understanding” can emerge as these issues are still not as polarised as others. This will require a lot of effort, though, first from mainstream politicians, including those in the opposition who are tempted to play the climate denialism card.

Adaptation to the climate crisis is already happening in [Spain](#), as there is no other choice. But much of it is improvised and tends to take place only when the worst has already happened.

Political leaders need to make sure that those most vulnerable to climate uncertainty, and who may have grievances about measures supposedly passed to help them, are prioritised. In many parts of Spain, water may not fall from the sky. But we can be sure that solutions won't fall from the sky either, no matter how many demagogic politicians say so.

**María Ramírez is a journalist and deputy managing editor of [elDiario.es](#), a news outlet in Spain**



## 4. Science and Media



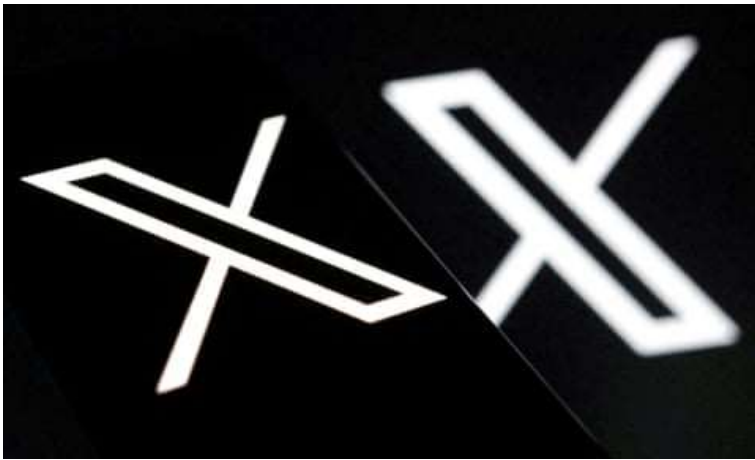
[Take the money and run? I tested X's paid-promotion model, and it was woeful](#) | [Gene Marks](#) | [The Guardian](#)

### Take the money and run? I tested X's paid-promotion model, and it was woeful

Granted, a \$50 investment wasn't going to draw in millions of clicks, but I expected more than just a few bots to show interest

[Gene Marks](#)

Thu 15 Feb 2024 18.41 CET



'Ad fraud' cost businesses \$61bn in 2022, and is expected to grow to more than \$100bn over the next few years. Photograph: Dado Ruvic/Reuters

I run a small business. My company sells customer relationship management (CRM) software to other businesses. I'm always in search of leads and will try just about anything to find new clients that we can help. To that end, I recently wrote a book about CRM and created a landing page on my website where people – clients and prospects – can download it. How to promote my new book? Why not [X](#)?

I know the X community – and [its famous CEO](#) – may not be everyone's cup of tea. But I've been a longtime active user and I'm sure there are many other Xers who would enjoy reading my book. So I decided to conduct an experiment and [create a post](#) with a link to my book's landing page and promote it on the social platform. Not a big promotion. Just 50 bucks over five days. A pittance. But, for me, what happened is a cautionary tale.

By the end of the promotion, X informed me that my post received about 29,000 views and about 230 "engagements" (likes, comments, etc). Interesting, but not very important. I was looking for leads, remember? When I set up the campaign I specifically told X that my goal was clicks to my book's landing page. And, according to X, it delivered: almost 350 "clicks".

To me, 350 "clicks" means that users saw my post, were interested in my book and clicked through to my landing page to download it. Exciting, right? Three hundred and fifty leads would be amazing. Even half that amount would be fantastic. I was excited. But not for long. Unfortunately, there was a bit of a discrepancy. During that same period, according to [Google](#) Analytics, my landing page received fewer than 10 views. And how many of those views came from X? Zero.

I asked a few social media "experts" I know about this anomaly and they all offered similar responses: bots. You know, those non-human software robots that proliferate everywhere. Few, if any, of those clicks were actually human, they said.

Who's actually auditing this data? How do I ever find out if any real people clicked? Is anyone independently verifying these numbers? I don't know these answers. No one does.

Maybe I'm a glutton for punishment, but I've been down this road before. I've tried advertising on Facebook, Google and YouTube with equally underwhelming results. These services routinely take their advertisers' money and deliver little in return. It's why "ad fraud" reportedly cost businesses more than [\\$61bn in 2022](#) and is expected to grow to more than [\\$100bn](#) over the next few years.

This doesn't mean that a business can't successfully advertise online. Many do. How? I'm not sure but I'm thinking it's a combination of luck, perseverance and – spoiler alert – spending lots and lots of cash. Sure, I only dropped \$50 but do you really think it would have been very different if I dropped \$500, \$5,000? I suspect that if I were forking over millions of dollars to X, [Facebook](#) or Google, the wizards behind the curtain would pay special attention to helping me draw clicks from users who possess actual beating hearts and working lungs. My "luck" would certainly improve.

But, sadly, that's not the case. The world of online advertising is not a world for small business owners like me. I certainly don't have the resources to attract the attention of the powers that be. I'll always be outspent and outsmarted by the big brands. This is the lesson I've learned. Not bad for \$50.

## OpenAI Unveils A.I. That Instantly Generates Eye-Popping Videos

The start-up is sharing the new technology, called Sora, with a small group of early testers as it tries to understand the potential dangers.



This video's A.I. prompt: "Several giant woolly mammoths approach treading through a snowy meadow, their long woolly fur lightly blows in the wind as they walk, snow covered trees and dramatic snow capped mountains in the distance, mid afternoon light with wispy clouds and a sun high in the distance creates a warm glow, the low camera view is stunning capturing the large furry mammal with beautiful photography, depth of field."CreditCredit... Video by OpenAI

By [Cade Metz](#), Reporting from San Francisco

Feb. 15, 2024

In April, a New York start-up called Runway AI unveiled technology that let people generate videos, like a cow at a birthday party or a dog chatting on a smartphone, simply by [typing a sentence into a box](#) on a computer screen.

The four-second videos were blurry, choppy, distorted and disturbing. But they were a clear sign that artificial intelligence technologies would generate increasingly convincing videos in the months and years to come.

Just 10 months later, the San Francisco start-up OpenAI has unveiled a similar system that creates videos that look as if they were lifted from a Hollywood movie. A demonstration included short videos — created in minutes — of woolly mammoths trotting through a snowy meadow, a monster gazing at a melting candle and a Tokyo street scene seemingly shot by a camera swooping across the city.

OpenAI, the company behind the [ChatGPT chatbot](#) and [the still-image generator DALL-E](#), is among the many companies racing to improve this kind of instant video generator, including start-ups like Runway and tech giants like Google and Meta, the owner of Facebook and Instagram. The technology could speed the work of seasoned moviemakers, while replacing less experienced digital artists entirely.



This video's A.I. prompt: "Beautiful, snowy Tokyo city is bustling. The camera moves through the bustling city street, following several people enjoying the beautiful snowy weather and shopping at nearby stalls. Gorgeous sakura petals are flying through the wind along with snowflakes."CreditCredit...Video by OpenAI

It could also become a quick and inexpensive way of creating online disinformation, making it even harder to tell what's real on the internet.

"I am absolutely terrified that this kind of thing will sway a narrowly contested election," said Oren Etzioni, a professor at the University of Washington who specializes in artificial intelligence. He is also the founder of True Media, a nonprofit working to identify disinformation online in political campaigns.

OpenAI calls its new system Sora, after the Japanese word for sky. The team behind the technology, including the researchers Tim Brooks and Bill Peebles, chose the name because it "evokes the idea of limitless creative potential."

In an interview, they also said the company was not yet releasing Sora to the public because it was still working to understand the system's dangers. Instead, OpenAI is sharing the technology with a small group of academics and other outside researchers who will "red team" it, a term for looking for ways it can be misused.

"The intention here is to give a preview of what is on the horizon, so that people can see the capabilities of this technology — and we can get feedback," Dr. Brooks said.

OpenAI is already tagging videos produced by the system with [watermarks that identify them as being generated by A.I.](#) But the company acknowledges that these can be removed. They can also be difficult to spot. (The New York Times added "Generated by A.I." watermarks to the videos with this story.)

The system is an example of generative A.I., which can instantly create text, images and sounds. Like other generative A.I. technologies, OpenAI's system learns by analyzing digital data — in this case, videos and captions describing what those videos contain.

OpenAI declined to say how many videos the system learned from or where they came from, except to say the training included both publicly available videos and videos that were licensed from copyright holders. The company says little about the data used to train its technologies, most likely because it wants to maintain an advantage over competitors — and has been sued multiple times for using copyrighted material.

(The New York Times [sued](#) OpenAI and its partner, Microsoft, in December, claiming copyright infringement of news content related to A.I. systems.)

Sora generates videos in response to short descriptions, like "a gorgeously rendered papercraft world of a coral reef, rife with colorful fish and sea creatures." Though the videos can be impressive, they are not always perfect and may include strange and illogical images. The system, for example, recently generated a video of someone eating a cookie — but the cookie never got any smaller.

DALL-E, Midjourney and other still-image generators have improved so quickly over the past few years that they are now producing images nearly indistinguishable from photographs. This has made it harder to identify disinformation online, and many digital artists are complaining that it has made it harder for them to find work.

"We all laughed in 2022 when Midjourney first came out and said, 'Oh, that's cute,'" said Reid Southen, a movie concept artist in Michigan. "Now people are losing their jobs to Midjourney."

**[Cade Metz](#) writes about artificial intelligence, driverless cars, robotics, virtual reality and other emerging areas of technology. [More about Cade Metz](#)**

[On “A Wonderful Country”, Israelis joke their way through trauma \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Laughing to tears

## On “A Wonderful Country”, Israelis joke their way through trauma

Nothing appears off limits on the incisive comedy show, except for Gazans’ pain



image: erez nehederet

Feb 15th 2024

The comedy sketch opens at “Columbia Untisemity News, where everyone is welcome—lgbtqh,” says a university student with pink hair and face piercings. She explains that the “h” stands for “ Hamas”. Another student, who wears a chequered keffiyeh scarf and studies “queer post-colonial astrology”, chimes in enthusiastically. “Yeah, I totally simp Hamas, it’s so trending right now.” They decide to video chat with a Hamas militant, expressing concern for his well-being while he berates them: “We will throw you from the roof, you homosexual dirt.” The students are delighted. “Did you hear? They want to throw me a rooftop party!”

The satire recently aired on Israel’s irreverent television show, “Eretz Nehederet” (“A Wonderful Country”). Though sometimes compared to America’s “Saturday Night Live”, the humour in “A Wonderful Country” is more biting. “Life in Israel is much more extreme,” Muli Segev, the producer, says. “It’s actually life or death. The satire must be sharp, even brutal.”

Now in its 21st season—it had its premiere in 2003—“A Wonderful Country” is one of the most influential shows in Israel, watched by around 30% of Israelis who own television sets. The sketches often skewer Israeli politicians and public figures. But since the [outbreak of war](#) the show has also looked outward, lampooning a supposed pro-Palestinian bias among liberals [in the West](#).

One recent sketch lambasts the bbc’s coverage of the war. Announcing Israel’s bombing of a hospital in Gaza, a news anchor urges her producer to increase the number of casualties displayed on screen (“More, more!”). She turns to correspondent “Harry Whiteguilt”, who says he is reporting from the “illegal colony of Tel Aviv” and describes Hamas as “the most credible not-terrorist organisation in the world”, a swipe at the bbc’s reluctance to refer to Hamas as “terrorists”. It turns out Hamas is to blame for the hospital strike. “But it’s still Israel’s fault,” Mr Whiteguilt insists.

The show posts sketches in both Hebrew and English on its social-media platforms, where they can reach viewers outside Israel. Lately, the English-language sketches have gone viral. The clips reflect “how a lot of Israelis feel” and are “a way for them to explain their side” to a global audience, says Shayna Weiss, senior associate director of the Schusterman Centre for Israel Studies at Brandeis University.

The comedy show is especially popular among American Jews. A few Jewish-American celebrities, including Brett Gelman, an actor on the show “Stranger Things”, have made guest appearances. According to Ms Weiss, “This war is obviously not being fought just on the battlefield. It’s also being fought on social media.” But the show has a blind spot. Mocking college students is easy; acknowledging the suffering of Palestinians is proving rather harder. “A Wonderful Country” has not touched on the death and destruction Israel has caused in Gaza, which is no laughing matter.

After [October 7th](#), the day 1,200 people in Israel were tortured and murdered by Hamas militants, the show temporarily changed its name to “Eretz Nilhemet” (“A Fighting Country”). But despite the nationalist bent, the Hebrew sketches often lampoon [Binyamin Netanyahu](#), the prime minister, and the Israeli government. (They are far more critical of Israeli leadership than those aired in English.)

One sketch urged female soldiers in the Israel Defence Force to wear fake moustaches to be taken seriously—playing with the idea that a refusal to heed warnings from some of them contributed to Israel’s [intelligence oversights](#). In another sketch Mr Netanyahu is visited by the ghost of Golda Meir, a former Israeli prime minister, who thanks him for making her look better. “Finally, after 50 years, my failures aren’t the biggest in history,” she says, puffing a cigarette. (Meir’s government was blamed for not being prepared for the Yom Kippur war in 1973.) “Most of us don’t like the government at all,” explains Mr Segev. But still, everyone on the show believes Hamas has to be defeated to keep Israelis safe: “We’re on Israel’s side.” ■

OPINION

## Where Did Our Strange Use of ‘Like’ Come From?

Feb. 15, 2024



Credit...Pablo Delcan

By [John McWhorter](#)

Opinion Writer

You’re reading the John McWhorter newsletter, for Times subscribers only. A Columbia University linguist explores how race and language shape our politics and culture. Get it in your inbox.

Some months ago, one of my readers sent me an invaluable cache of recordings of family members during therapy sessions in the 1960s. They are ordinary, seemingly educated, white Northeasterners ranging from their late 20s to late middle age speaking casually. And what stands out today, 60 years later, is how often they pause briefly when they talk. Their speech sounds almost herky-jerky to the modern ear.

The reason their speech sounds somewhat odd in that way is that today people like those on the recording would fill those many of those pauses with “like.”

It’s not, as sometimes assumed, that people used to talk formally, or “like books,” any more than they do now. Casual speech, always and everywhere in any language, is all about short sentences, often unfinished, often with occasional hesitations. But only in the late 1970s did “like” take its confident perch in American English.

The question is why. The answer is not the Frank Zappa’s cute 1982 ditty “Valley Girl” featuring his teenage daughter, Moon. For one thing, a single song doesn’t change the way people talk every day. For another, that song only leads to the question of why Moon was using “like” that way, given that it wasn’t just her personal quirk — she was part of what we now call a “thing.”

Some people think this usage of “like” reflects some kind of epidemic of uncertainty among young people. But the casual “like” has now been entrenched long enough that many of its users are graying at the temples and then some. How unconfident are these near-sexagenarians?

The modern “like” is actually a symptom of something more general about how languages change over time. Language, like nature, abhors a vacuum. All languages have a tendency to seep into corners of meaning and get explicit about them, instead of simply leaving them to context. Language likes to get picky.

The subjunctive in Romance languages is picky about the hypothetical, for instance. “She arrives” in Spanish is “Ella llega,” but to say “I hope she arrives,” you have to change the ending and say “Espero que ella llegue.” English largely leaves that nuance of uncertainty to context; Spanish wants it spelled out.

A still more extravagant example: In the Kwaio language of the Solomon Islands, the word for “we” is different depending on whether you mean yourself and the person you’re talking to or yourself and someone else. There are also different words for “we” if you are talking about yourself and three people including whom you are talking to, or three people not including whom you are talking to, or more than three people. Kwaio can leave an English speaker with we-ness envy.

English has its hang-ups of this kind too. One is how to express the future, which is much more complex than just using “will.” “I will buy you some socks” is, if you think about it, a rather odd thing to say. It sounds a bit like something you concede reluctantly after having resisted: “OK ... I will buy you some socks.” More typically we choose from several other options. “I’m going to buy you some socks” is the more likely “vanilla” version of the sentence. “I’ll buy you some socks,” with the contraction, sounds like you are solving a problem. “Tomorrow I buy you some socks” sounds festive, like an initiation rite or a quinceañera. By contrast, “Tomorrow I’m buying you some socks” sounds a little like a threat.

English is also oddly explicit about, of all things, restraint. We speak with a tacit impulse to keep the drama level moderate, to avoid stridency. One way of doing this is to use the hesitations I referred to in that 1960s recording: You pause before saying something that raises the temperature a bit, reflects an opinion that might arouse, pushes the envelope. But one might also spell out the hesitation more overtly, and this where the casual “like” comes in. It quietly implies that what’s coming up is “like” itself rather than just itself, which lowers the temperature, keeps the burner on medium rather than high.

“Like”—as well as “sort of,” which has become a “like” for more formal settings, with “kind of” often filling in as a variant of both—is a subtle thing. To learn to use it idiomatically as a foreigner is as tricky as learning how those variations of the English future tense really work. There is even a masterful academic [book](#) on the subject. But most of the ways the casual “like” is used are ultimately variations on that quest for lowering the temperature. Here, for example, is a word-for-word transcription of an American undergraduate speaking casually in the 2020s, recorded for non-linguistic purposes. In writing, it looks shaggy, but in real life, the person sounded perfectly fluent and even intelligent:

In terms of like, figuring out how to do that exactly, like what to like, um, look for specifically, especially because like, they’re, you know, like, in the workplace setting like, your job is to follow the guidelines so, like, you know, kind of figuring out how to learn like what, how the conflicts are playing out ....

The “likes” in that quote don’t occur just anywhere, but before something new, something with a bit of impact: the task of figuring something out, the issue that this is a workplace setting rather than your house, the challenge of following new rules, the drama of conflicts. One could certainly express all of this without the use of “like” and “you know” and “kind of,” but the result would be a little crisp for casual conversation, perhaps a tad Boy Scout or [Leslie Knope-ish](#).

The temptation is strong to link the emergence of “like” to something about being American sometime around the Carter administration. We might propose that we are more polite than in the old days, keeping it mellow with “like” instead of just laying it out directly. But why would that be? The 1970s, after all, were supposedly about the “Me Generation,” which presumably would have encouraged a certain boldness in speech. And anything else we might tie it to—more weed after the 1960s?—would have to explain both why it held on long past that era and why it happened in other Anglophone lands with cultures different from ours.

Instead, the casual “like” is probably just a tic that happened to catch on, unconnected to anything personal or cultural, like the Romance subjunctive, the Kwaio pronouns or the future in our own language. After all, French speakers are not professionally hypothetical. Kwaio speakers have no reason to obsess over precisely who is included in a reference to “we.” English speakers have no spiritual need for a way of referring to the future with a hint of menace.



In other words, the casual “like” is just business as usual with the evolution of language — and that evolution often confounds. Back in the 1990s, for example, I asked a man close to 100 years old whether there was anything he’d noticed about the way young people talked back in the 1920s. His answer: “People said ‘you know’ too much!”

**John McWhorter ([@JohnHMcWhorter](#)) is an associate professor of linguistics at Columbia University. He is the author of “[Nine Nasty Words](#): English in the Gutter: Then, Now and Forever” and, most recently, “[Woke Racism](#): How a New Religion Has Betrayed Black America.”**

February 15, 2024

### **1. Middle East**

Page 2 : If Israel invades, hell looms in Rafah (The Economist)

Page 4 : Palestinian President Abbas Urges Hamas to Accept a Hostage Deal to Prevent Another 'Catastrophe' (Haaretz)

Page 5 : Gazan journalist says Hamas uses civilians as human shields (Jerusalem Post)

Page 7 : Celebrating Hamas, Targeting Jews: In Erdogan's Turkey, the Gaza War Sets a Dangerous Mood (Haaretz, Analysis)

Page 10 : A message to Joe Biden: a Palestinian state must be based on these three pillars (The Guardian, Guest Essay)

### **2. Politics – Elections in Pakistan and Indonesia**

Page 12 : File under F for “fiasco”: Pakistan’s voters tell the generals where to put it (The Economist)

Page 14 : Change of guard: Five reasons why Indonesia’s election matters (The Economist)

### **3. Climate Change - Energy**

Page 17 : « L’Europe doit investir 1 520 milliards d’euros par an pour atteindre l’objectif “net zéro” en 2050 » (Le Monde, Collective Guest Essay)

Page 19: Southern dynamo/ How the Mediterranean could become a green-energy powerhouse (The Economist)

Page 21 : Les difficultés de l’EPR menacent-elles le nouveau nucléaire français? (Le Figaro)

Page 23 : Green protectionism will slow the energy transition (The Economist)

### **4. Culture - Gen Z**

Page 25 : What Gen-Z graduates want from their employers: More flexibility, more security—and more money (The Economist)

Page 29: Jodie Foster says generation Z can be ‘really annoying’ to work with (The Guardian, Interview)

Page 31 : Don’t blame “quiet quitting” on Gen-Z (The Economist)

Page 33 : Generation Z: One eats vegan, doesn't drink alcohol, exercises – and now one even goes to bed before sunset (NZZ)

Page 35 : From bone smashing to chin extensions: how ‘looksmaxxing’ is reshaping young men’s faces (The Guardian)

Page 39 : For Gen Z, an Age-Old Question: Who Pays for Dates? (NYT)

Page 34 : Selling your sole: Why young consumers love Birkenstocks (The Economist)

# 1. Middle East

The  
Economist

[If Israel invades, hell looms in Rafah \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

## If Israel invades, hell looms in Rafah

Binyamin Netanyahu wants to attack now. His generals don't



image: afp

Feb 13th 2024|jerusalem

Even as ceasefire talks accelerate in the Middle East, the threat is building of a new and devastating level of violence. On February 13th representatives of America, Egypt, Israel and Qatar met in Cairo to try to secure a six-week ceasefire in Gaza and a release of hostages by Hamas. Simultaneously fears have been building for days of a massive Israeli army invasion of Rafah, Gaza's southernmost city that is hemmed along the border with Egypt, where 1m or more Palestinians are located. Any expansion of the fighting will have devastating consequences for civilians, detonate Israel's relationship with Egypt and exhaust American patience. Yet Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, says it may be necessary in order to achieve "total victory". Which impulse—the push for a ceasefire or the push to escalate—will win out?

Mr Netanyahu's emphasis on Rafah is in part an attempt to boost his standing by promising Israelis a decisive result in the war. On February 12th the embattled prime minister was given brief relief after commandos rescued two hostages from the Al-Shabura neighbourhood in Rafah (diversionary Israeli bombardments killed 74 Palestinians). "Only continued military pressure... will bring about the relief of all our hostages," he said afterwards. Yet the focus on Rafah is not just about Mr Netanyahu's self-preservation. Within the Israeli security establishment there is an acknowledgment of the benefits of taking on Hamas there, in its last stronghold, and of gaining control of the border by Egypt, the main channel for arms smuggling.

In the assessment of security officials, Hamas is on the back foot. The movement's leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, is the subject of a manhunt in Khan Younis and is understood to be increasingly incapable of communicating with his men. The group has been trying to re-establish its presence in Gaza city, in the north, by putting uniformed police on the streets and paying the salaries of civil servants. Yet Israeli intelligence officials believe Hamas leaders are anxious that they are losing control over the population. More than 10,000 Hamas members are believed to have been killed and thousands more wounded or captured. The Israel Defence Forces (idf) says around 18 of Hamas's 24 battalions have been "dismantled". The remaining fighters are in "guerrilla mode" and no longer capable of effectively ruling Gaza.

Attacking Rafah would squeeze Hamas further and yet the toll could be huge. The generals know that there may be no effective way of moving civilians out of harm's way. In the previous stages of the war, Israel urged

residents of Gaza city and Khan Younis to move south, away from the war zone. Now it would have to get those who had fled to Rafah to move again, this time to the shrinking “safe areas”—makeshift tent-cities on the coast. Neighbouring Egypt is desperate to avoid the war spilling into its territory. It is refusing to allow many refugees to leave Gaza and has warned Israel a war in the border area could have “dire consequences”. Egyptian officials have threatened to suspend a peace treaty signed with Israel in 1979 if desperate Palestinians surge into Egypt, according to the Wall Street Journal.

The prospect of high civilian casualties has Israel’s allies anxious. On February 12th President Joe Biden said that “a major military operation in Rafah should not proceed without a credible plan for ensuring the safety and support of more than 1m people sheltering there”. David Cameron, Britain’s foreign secretary, also called for restraint. “It is impossible to see how you can fight a war amongst these people [in Rafah],” he said. “There’s nowhere for them to go.” In all nearly 29,000 people have been killed in the Gaza Strip since Hamas attacked Israel on October 7th.

Whether Israel now goes ahead and attacks Rafah depends on two factors. One is whether Mr Netanyahu can rally domestic momentum for a new front in the war. This is by no means assured. The operation he is touting would be large and include entire brigades that would probably remain there for weeks. The idf has yet to start mustering troops for a manoeuvre of this scale. Instead the generals have been pulling troops out of Gaza and demobilising many of the 300,000 reservists called up on October 7th. The economic costs of the conflict are mounting. On February 9th Moody’s, a credit-rating agency, downgraded Israel from a1 to a2. It warned a prolonged war could “weaken executive and legislative institutions”.

Mr Netanyahu’s popularity continues to plummet in the polls, with his rival in the war cabinet, Benny Gantz, outstripping him both in personal ratings and voting intentions. If elections were held now, Mr Gantz’s centrist National Unity party would receive more than twice the votes of Mr Netanyahu’s Likud. While Mr Netanyahu’s predicament gives him an incentive to gamble on redemption by escalating in Rafah, the generals and the pragmatic wing of the war cabinet, led by Mr Gantz, prefer to pursue a deal to free more hostages. For them Rafah can come later.

Whether such a deal might happen depends on the talks in Cairo, and on Hamas. Israel has flatly rejected its demands for a full ceasefire and permanent withdrawal of Israeli troops in Gaza before any exchange of hostages for Palestinian prisoners. But the return of Israeli officials to Cairo on February 13th for further negotiations reflects the Israeli assessment that Hamas’s demand is just an opening gambit and that a deal can be reached on a temporary truce. Israeli officials believe that Hamas’s need to regroup and provide the population with some desperately needed respite before the holy month of Ramadan, which is expected to start on March 10th, could force it to show more flexibility on hostage negotiations. To avoid hell in Rafah, one side needs to blink first. ■

## Palestinian President Abbas Urges Hamas to Accept a Hostage Deal to Prevent Another 'Catastrophe'

The Palestinian Authority president called for a deal to be reached as quickly as possible to 'prevent the Palestinian people's suffering' and said the Gaza war's implications are 'a more serious threat than the 1948 Nakba'



Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas with the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Al Thani, in Doha on Monday. Credit: AFP

[Jack Khoury](#)

Feb 14, 2024 5:29 pm IST

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called on Wednesday for Hamas to speedily reach an agreement to exchange hostages for prisoners with Israel to spare the Palestinian people further "catastrophe," the official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported.

According to Abbas, anyone who disrupts the potential hostage deal bears responsibility because the Palestinians "have reached an intolerable situation."

Abbas added that the war in Gaza is a "catastrophe with devastating consequences no less dangerous than the [Nakba](#) of 1948."

The Palestinian president called on Israel to refrain from attacking the southern Gaza city of [Rafah](#) and urged the United States and Arab countries to bring about the completion of a new hostage deal as quickly as possible.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas met on Monday in Doha with the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Al Thani, to discuss post-war Gaza. The two discussed the situation in the Gaza Strip and the day after the war, with Abbas asking Al Thani to "stop the aggression against our people."

Abbas came to Doha at the invitation of Al Thani, according to Palestinian sources, who added that Qatar sees an opportunity to push for a government which will be accepted by all Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip – including Hamas – that will be equipped to govern the enclave following the war.

Mossad head [David Barnea](#) and an Israeli delegation participated on Tuesday in a summit of intelligence chiefs in Egypt, despite reservations about the process among Israel's political leadership.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu allowed the delegation's departure under heavy [pressure](#) from the Americans, even though [Hamas' response](#) to the cease-fire [framework agreement](#) formulated by intelligence chiefs in [Paris](#) in January was defined by members of the Israeli war cabinet as a "non-starter."

A delegation led by Hamas leader [Yahya Sinwar](#)'s deputy, Khalil al-Hayya, also traveled to Cairo Tuesday to meet with the head of Egypt's intelligence directorate, Abbas Kamel.

[Gazan journalist says Hamas uses civilians as human shields - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](https://www.jpost.com)

## Gazan journalist says Hamas uses civilians as human shields

Saftawi says it's the first time in a decade that he's been able to speak on this publicly.

By [JERUSALEM POST STAFF](#)

FEBRUARY 15, 2024 05:56



IDF soldiers clear a tunnel in the Gaza Strip(photo credit: IDF SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT)

Gaza-based journalist Jihad Saftawi said on Tuesday that the Hamas terrorist organization indeed [uses civilians as human shields](#) in the war against Israel.

"Hamas terrorists used my family and hundreds of our neighbors as [human shields](#). Hamas continues to hold the people of Gaza captive," Saftawi posted on X. "There should be no reconstruction of my family's home while a stockpile of weapons lies underneath.

"Goals rather than causes are what is behind Hamas's masterminds' wars. The case for removing Hamas is not to fuel escalation but to prevent it, which is why they should never be allowed to retake control of Gaza," he continued to say. Saftawi then admitted that it was the first time in more than 10 years that he's "been able to speak about this publicly," stating that it's "a cry for realignment for our Palestinian society as well as an appeal to the international community."

In a piece he wrote for Time magazine, the Palestinian journalist began by saying that the terrorist organization "built tunnels beneath my family's home in Gaza. Now it lies in ruin." He also states that it's been seven years since he escaped Gaza, and later fled to the United States.

Saftawi added that Gaza has been "dominated by terrorist chaos" since Hamas's takeover of the Strip, stating that the terrorist organization "has continued to normalize violence and militarization in every aspect of public and private life in Gaza."

### **How Hamas commandeers homes for terrorism**

The journalist described how, while his family's home was under construction, masked men built [an underground structure](#) under the home, telling him that the structure would remain sealed unless there was an Israeli ground invasion. Then the room would be used to store weapons.

"In the years since my family or their neighbors heard sounds or movements from time to time," wrote Saftawi. "They wondered sometimes if there really were tunnels, if they were active. My family was too afraid to speak about this with anyone, so it was our secret. It felt shameful even though we knew we were deeply opposed to whatever Hamas had done on the other side of that cement slab."

Saftawi's family evacuated south shortly after October 7 and since then his house and neighborhood have been turned into ruins.

"I may never know if the house was destroyed by Israeli strikes or fighting between Hamas and Israel. But the result is the same. Our home, and far too many in our community, were flattened alongside priceless history and memories," wrote the journalist.

"This is the legacy of Hamas. They began destroying my family home in 2013 when they built tunnels beneath it. They continued to threaten our safety for a decade—we always knew we might have to vacate at a moment's notice. We always feared violence. Gazans deserve a true Palestinian government, which supports its citizens' interests, not terrorists carrying out their own plans. Hamas is not fighting Israel. They're destroying Gaza," concluded Saftawi.

## Celebrating Hamas, Targeting Jews: In Erdogan's Turkey, the Gaza War Sets a Dangerous Mood

Since the Oct. 7 massacre, Turkey has seen a series of anti-Israel protests and incidents that sometimes defy logic, but are clearly inspired by the messaging of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan



Demonstrators setting fire to a makeshift Israeli flag during a protest in solidarity with Palestinians, in Istanbul last week. Credit: Dilara Senkaya/Reuters

[Simon A. Waldman](#)

Istanbul

Feb 11, 2024

ISTANBUL – Toward the end of 2023, Turkey was rocked by a diplomatic scandal.

The son of Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud [managed to flee Turkey](#) after killing a motorcyclist in a road accident. When Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc was asked about Ankara's position, his response was – and I quote, not paraphrase – ["The agenda is Palestine."](#)

This is indicative. Ever since the dreadful [Oct. 7 Hamas massacre](#) of over 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians, the position of Ankara and some Turkish citizens has been Gaza first, even to the detriment of their own priorities.

A few examples to illustrate the point. Toward the end of October, Turkish President [Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#) ordered [three days of national mourning](#) for the Palestinians killed [in Israel's bombardment of the Hamas-run Gaza Strip](#). Two months later, [12 Turkish soldiers were killed](#) in an ongoing, underreported conflict between Turkey and Kurdish forces in Syria and Iraq. However, no days of national mourning were announced for the fallen Turkish citizens.





Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan following a meeting with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban in Budapest last December. Credit: Denes Erdos/AP

The United States, Canada, Britain, European Union, Australia, New Zealand and Japan have designated [Hamas](#) a terrorist group. However, Erdogan publicly insisted that despite October's ghoulish Hamas atrocities that included [rape](#) and [systematic massacre](#), Hamas are actually [noble freedom fighters](#). In recent years, Ankara has allowed some of the terrorist group's top echelons to [conspire from Istanbul](#) and, according to some reports, Hamas leaders watched the massacre in southern Israel take place [while in Turkey](#), raising eyebrows in Western capitals.

The week after the Oct. 7 attack, [Erdogan personally spoke on the phone](#) with Hamas' sponsors in Tehran to have a strategic discussion with hard-line Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. Two weeks later, demonstrators in Turkey marched outside of Turkey's NATO bases and [even tried to storm one](#) that houses U.S. forces. This despite NATO membership being the cornerstone of Turkish military power.

Sagiv Jehezkel, an Israeli soccer player for top-flight Turkish club Antalyaspor, earned his team a much-needed point by scoring the equalizing goal against rival Trabzonspor last month. Celebrating, he showed a tiny inscription written on a band around his wrist [paying tribute to the Israeli hostages](#) languishing in Gaza. In response, the club terminated his contract. This despite him being the team's second highest scorer this season. The international reputation of the Turkish league has also suffered in the process – especially after [the player was detained by authorities](#) and then summarily deported to Israel.

Back in October, the U.S.-based Starbucks corporation [had a dispute with the coffee chain's workers' union](#) about their social media posts on the Israel-Hamas war. Since then, cappuccino drinkers and iced-latte guzzlers at non-unionized Starbucks chains in Turkey have been [pelted with rocks](#) or greeted by protests. One gunman [even fired on a branch in southern Turkey](#). Yet in Turkey, the Starbucks chain is owned by a Qatari state corporation as well as Turkish subcontractors.

In the last months, there have been signs on shops barring entry to Jews; leading newspapers alleging a global Jewish conspiracy; articles purporting Jewish blood libels; and a group that decided to protest nefarious Jewish plots and conspiracies outside a synagogue in Izmir that had already been defaced.

Similarly, McDonald's was branded a Zionist-supporting entity because the home of the Big Mac has branches in the Little Satan. One Turkish protester went as far as [to unleash a squadron of mice](#) onto a branch last November. But in Turkey, Mickey Dee's is owned by the Vienna-based Boheme Investment, which itself is owned by a Qatari national. Without Qatari investment, Turkey's international strategic position would be vulnerable and its economy would shake.

It is the same story at Burger King, which [has faced a number of attacks](#) despite being part of the portfolio of Turkish-owned TAB Gida, which runs a number of Turkish-based fast-food chained outlets.

In an incident not unlike a scene from Chris Morris' cult British comedy "[Four Lions](#)," an armed Turkish assailant [stormed into a Procter & Gamble factory](#) near Istanbul earlier this month, taking seven workers hostage. All the captives were Muslim and Turkish. Luckily, they escaped unharmed when the man was captured by the authorities while reportedly taking a toilet break. How the perpetrator thought that taking captive Turks would help the hungry and displaced in Gaza is anyone's guess. Regardless, Procter & Gamble has not considered closing its center in Tel Aviv. If anything, the consumer goods giant must now invest in greater security precautions in Turkey.

A man standing over a photograph of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the words "Baby killer" during a proPalestinian protest in Istanbul last month. Credit: Francisco Seco/AP

Turkey's local Jewish population has been targeted too. There have been [signs on shops](#) barring entry to Jews; leading newspapers [alleging a global Jewish conspiracy](#); articles purporting [Jewish blood libels](#); and one group of protesters considered it a good idea to protest nefarious Jewish plots and conspiracies [outside a synagogue in Izmir](#) that had already [been defaced](#). In Istanbul, a group of doctors came dressed with bloodied handprints on their white scrubs [to demonstrate outside](#) a Jewish community-owned hospital, even though the facility's patients are overwhelmingly Muslim.

Qatar's close ties with Hamas and Iran are just about tolerated because of its utility. However, the West doesn't need two Qatars.

There are many reasons for Turkey's tailspin over Gaza. Some Turks are angry at the intensity of Israel's bombardment and the large civilian death toll. Turkey's far left has [for decades](#) seen Israel and Zionism as an imperialist project. However, as noted by Brookings Institution Visiting Fellow [Asli Aydintasbas](#), much of the present rage is also a directly result of Erdogan's influence. The president, who has been at the helm of Turkish politics for over 20 years, [has long held antisemitic views](#), plus aspirations for Turkey to occupy center stage regionally. He believes, in the words of Aydintasbas, "in the legitimacy of Hamas as a viable Palestinian actor, which is a natural outcome of his ideological affinity for the Muslim Brotherhood" Sunni Islamist organization.

Regardless, the situation in Turkey is dangerous. Last month, Islamic State gunmen [burst into a Catholic church](#) in Istanbul during mass and opened fire, killing one man and causing worshippers to duck for cover behind pews. As luck would have it (believers might call it a miracle), the terrorists' automatic weapons jammed, preventing them from murdering more people.

According [to informed reports](#), the [Islamic State](#) has ordered that Jewish and Christian sites in Turkey be targeted. The last thing Turkey needs is a repeat of the dark days between 2013 and 2017, when multi-casualty terror attacks by ISIS and the Kurdistan Workers' Party were the norm. Meanwhile, continued talk of Hamas as freedom fighters [is bound to anger](#) Turkey's traditional allies in the West.

Qatar's close ties with Hamas and Iran are [just about tolerated](#) because of its utility. However, the West doesn't need two Qatars or for Turkey, a country that is institutionally bound with the West through NATO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Council of Europe and its ties to the EU, to use the language of jihad.

If calm heads don't prevail in Ankara soon, it is likely that Turkey will make international headlines for all the wrong reasons.

**Dr. Simon A. Waldman is a visiting lecturer and tutor at King's College London and the co-author of 'The New Turkey and its Discontents' (Hurst/OUP, 2017).**

# A message to Joe Biden: a Palestinian state must be based on these three pillars

[HA Hellyer](#)

Territory cannot be acquired by force, the far right in Israel must be shunned, and there must be genuine reform of the Palestinian National Council

Wed 14 Feb 2024 16.00 CET



A view from Rafah after Israeli bombardments over Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, 13 February. Photograph: Said Khatib/AFP/Getty Images

The foreign secretary, David Cameron, recently surprised observers by raising the possibility of the UK [recognising a Palestinian state](#) before the end of a peace process with Israel. The US has also said it [could recognise](#) a Palestinian state after the war in Gaza and is reportedly [drawing up policy options](#) along these lines. These seem like remarkable developments amid the carnage of the Israeli assault on Gaza. But do they constitute a breakthrough that could lead to a positive outcome in the Middle East, or will they result in the formalisation of the Israeli occupation? The devil is in the detail.

The Israeli occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem (as well as the Golan Heights and Sinai) [began in 1967](#), and was followed by the UN security council [resolution 242](#), which spelled out the way forward. For decades, the resolution, underpinned by a singular principle, served as the basis for negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours. The principle was simple: a pre-condition of peace would be Israel withdrawing from the territories it occupied in 1967. The resolution was supported by the US, and subsequent resolutions have all backed that same recognition that the acquisition of territory by military force is illegitimate in today's world. It's a pillar of the international order and is supposed to distinguish us from the great power politics of the pre-second world war era.

If the current trend towards recognising a Palestinian state is based on the same principle, then it would be consistent with other moves made in that direction, most notably the [Arab peace initiative](#) of 2002 – whereby Arab political normalisation with Israel would be forthcoming, but only under the conditions established by the security council's resolution 242. All members of the Arab League accepted that initiative, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation – including Iran – [affirmed support](#) for it too, multiple times. Up until now, Israel has rejected that initiative. But if the Palestinian state that the US and the UK intend to recognise is based on that same framework, then it could be a way forward.

But there is another alternative, which appears far more likely. There hasn't been any mention of resolution 242 by Israel or the US for many years, and the [discourse](#) we see promoted by President Biden does not indicate

support for a Palestinian state based on any current definition of statehood. Rather, what Biden appears to be suggesting is some kind of statelet, similar to apartheid South Africa's bantustans, or Russia's client states in eastern Ukraine. In other words, not a state at all.

Resolution 242, in that regard, is tremendously significant, both in terms of its presence – and its absence. First, without a focus on it, the world would be hard-pressed to condemn other acquisitions of territory by war, including, most recently, Russia's invasion and occupation of Ukrainian lands in the east and Crimea. Indeed, Russia would have a stronger case (though it would still be incredibly weak).

Second, if current Israeli designs on Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem are to be taken as any guidance at all, then such a statelet would be territorially incontinent to say the least, and its sustainability extremely dubious. Moreover, if such a Palestinian statelet were instituted, it would not be viewed by Palestinians and the surrounding region (as well as the international community) as a fulfilment of international legal obligations by Israel, nor as a recognition of Palestinian aspirations for statehood. Rather, it would be seen as a legitimisation of occupation under the fig leaf of some kind of symbolic structure of recognition. If Israel and its allies are looking for support within the region, then they cannot legitimise the occupation.

There is a way forward, based on three indispensable pillars. The first pillar is, quite simply, "242 in 2024". The UN security council resolution must remain a bedrock not only for addressing the Palestinian question, but for maintaining a crucial principle of the international order: the rejection of force as a way to gain territory. The international community watches what the west pushes for in Israel and Palestine, and contrasts it with what the west pushes for in Russia and Ukraine. We cannot allow inconsistency to be the rule of the day.

The second pillar, which could lead from the 8 February meeting in Riyadh [between Arab foreign ministers](#), is a genuine reform of the Palestinian National Council, the Palestine Liberation Organization's legislative body; to make it more accountable, more democratic and more representative, so that the territories can be run in a way that befits their people.

And, finally, there needs to be a recognition that the Israeli far-right, represented in its government, must be rejected. We cannot acquiesce, in London, in Washington, or anywhere, to the normalisation of these political forces. We cannot force the Israeli people to vote one way or another, but we can and should ensure our own behaviour reflects our values. It is incumbent upon the west to marginalise and isolate the Israeli political forces that ultimately undermine the safety of Israel's own people, as well as global interests in the region.

**HA Hellyer is a senior associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace**

## 2. Politics – Elections in Pakistan and Indonesia

The  
Economist

[Pakistan's voters tell the generals where to put it \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

File under F for “fiasco”

### Pakistan's voters tell the generals where to put it

Imran Khan's candidates won the most seats despite heavy-handed attempts to hobble them

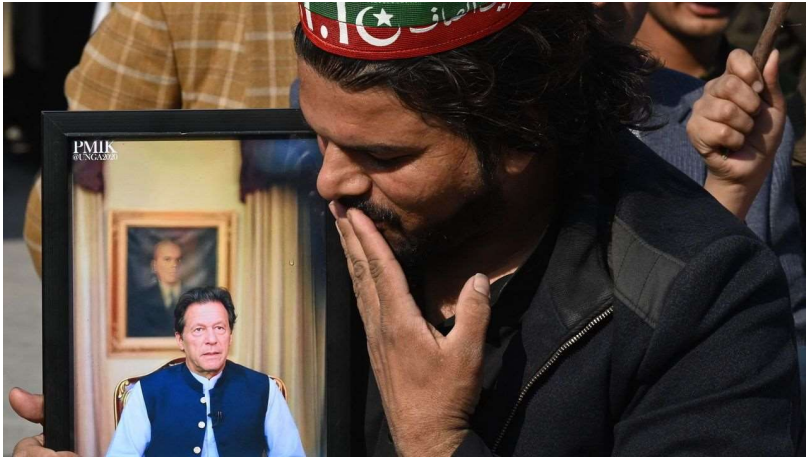


image: getty images

Feb 12th 2024|islamabad

The delay was unusual even by the standards of Pakistan's messy politics. Late on February 11th, nearly three days after a legal deadline, the country's election commission at last released provisional results of general elections held on February 8th. No party obtained a majority, but the vote nonetheless produced a clear winner: Imran Khan, the imprisoned former prime minister who was barred from standing and whose party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (pti), was subject to a de facto ban.

Voters disregarded the hints to shun Mr Khan, casting their ballots for Mr Khan's candidates anyway. Members of the pti, standing as independents, bagged 92 of 264 parliamentary seats. The Pakistan Muslim League (pml-n) of Nawaz Sharif, Mr Khan's chief rival and a three-time former prime minister, was widely expected to win. It limped in second with 75 seats.

Despite winning the largest number of seats, the pti will not be able to form a government, having ruled out a coalition with any of the other parties. Instead, Mr Sharif has staked a claim to power. Shehbaz Sharif, his younger brother and the president of the pml-n, has begun talks with the Pakistan Peoples Party, which won 54 seats, and several other smaller parties to form a government of national unity. He appears to be backed in his efforts by the army chief, who praised the “free and unhindered” election. pml-n has also approached winning candidates loyal to Mr Khan to switch sides. At least one has already jumped.

Mr Khan's party claims to have evidence that it would have won a majority of seats if the election had not been rigged by its rivals and the army. Mr Sharif's party denies the allegations. “How can they claim rigging when they are the single largest party in the National Assembly?” says Khawaja Asif, a pml-n leader in Sialkot. Yet signs of tampering are plentiful. The election commission, which had been instrumental in obstructing Mr Khan and the pti in the run-up to the election, blamed the days-long delay in releasing results on unspecified “internet issues”. Over the weekend it initially barred returning officers from certifying results in multiple constituencies and ordered a repeat of the vote in dozens of polling stations after reports of snatched and destroyed ballot papers (it later reversed course, in keeping with its pre-election stance). In at least 24 constituencies, 13 of

which were won by pml-n, the number of rejected ballots was higher than the margin of victory, opening the door to legal challenges.

The dubious electoral process was preceded by a systematic campaign, orchestrated by the army, against Mr Khan and the pti. It was stripped of its electoral symbol, a cricket bat, in effect dissolving the party. The Supreme Court sealed the deal by overturning a successful challenge to this in a lower court. Many pti leaders were imprisoned or disqualified. Those who stood as independents were prevented from campaigning openly. A week before the election, Mr Khan, already in prison on a separate charge, was sentenced to three long prison terms in quick succession on counts of corruption, disclosing state secrets and getting married illegally. On election day, a shutdown of mobile phone and data networks hampered voters' ability to find and access polling stations.

The result is a rebuke to Pakistan's army, which has effectively ruled the country through a loyal caretaker government for the past few months and had pulled out all the stops to force Mr Khan and the pti into political irrelevance. It may eventually prove a turning point in the generals' ability to influence Pakistan's politics. Yet the immediate consequence will be a prolonged period of political instability as the lack of a clear majority for any party combined with credible allegations of widespread rigging will make it difficult for any government, when one is eventually formed, to enjoy legitimacy.

Blatant rigging in some instances could be reversed by legal challenges, allowing pti to edge closer to the pml-n before parliament is set to convene at the latest on February 29th. Yet the pti will probably remain confined to the opposition benches. Mr Sharif looks set to cobble together a coalition similar to one that governed the country for 16 months after Mr Khan was ousted in a vote of no confidence in April 2022. Pakistanis voted for a change in the old way of doing politics. They look likely to get more of the same. ■

[Five reasons why Indonesia's election matters \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Change of guard

## Five reasons why Indonesia's election matters

The vote on February 14th is more important than the world realises

Feb 9th 2024

Indonesia has all the right ingredients to make it one of the most influential countries in Asia. But Joko Widodo, the president, has stuck to its long tradition of foreign-policy non-alignment and inward-looking policies. On February 14th the world's third-biggest democracy will vote for a new leader. The favourite is [Prabowo Subianto](#), an ex-general with an appalling human-rights record. The two other candidates, Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo, both former governors, are trailing Mr Prabowo [in the polls](#). Four charts and a map illustrate the country's huge potential.

### Size of Indonesia over Eurasia

1



image: the economist

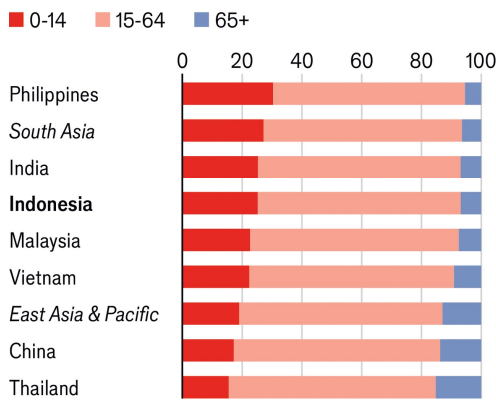
First consider Indonesia's sheer size. When a map of the sprawling archipelago is superimposed on one of Eurasia it stretches from Ireland all the way to Turkmenistan. The population is spread across thousands of islands, some teeming with people, farms and factories. Its challenging geography has encouraged a [digital services boom](#). Jakarta, the capital, has become one of South-East Asia's most successful incubators of new technology companies. Nearly four-fifths of Indonesians own smartphones—connecting the country [as never before](#).

Jokowi, as the president is known, has also constructed scores of airports, ports and dams and hundreds of kilometres of toll roads, earning him the nickname of builder-in-chief. His biggest project has been the planned relocation of the capital to East Kalimantan in eastern Borneo. The [controversial \\$32bn project](#) will now fall to his successor.

## Population

2

By age group, 2022, %



Source: World Bank

image: the economist

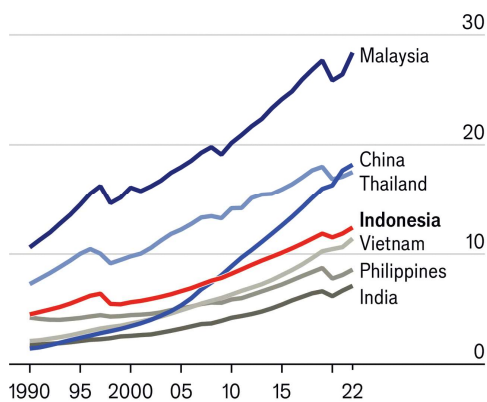
Indonesia's demography is an important potential asset. It is the world's fourth-most populous country, with 276m people, making it a gigantic consumer market. And it is young: 25% of the population is under 15 and only 7% are over 65.

Indonesia's 200m eligible voters have nurtured the young democracy. Political debates in the run-up to this year's election have been watched by roughly 100m people and campaign rallies have become a bit more focused on the issues and less on [pomp and fanfare](#). Turnout this year is expected to be high. But a win for Mr Prabowo [could jeopardise](#) the country's democratic progress.

## GDP per person

3

\$'000 at PPP\*, 2017 prices



\*Purchasing-power parity

Source: World Bank

image: the economist

Though Jokowi has not brought the 7% annual economic growth that he promised, Indonesia has been one of the world's best-performing economies in recent years. It is the sixth-biggest emerging market by GDP, and its GDP per person exceeds India's and Vietnam's when adjusted for purchasing power. If Indonesia stays on this path for the next decade, it could become one of the world's ten biggest economies.

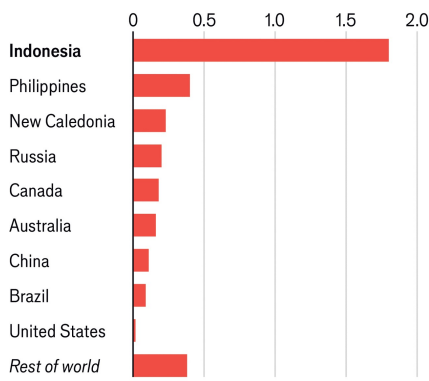
But big challenges remain for Jokowi's successor. For one thing, growth has been patchy. Jakarta's GDP per person rose to around \$19,000 in 2022. In central Java, a nearby province, it was below \$3,000. Some far-flung islands are even poorer. And once an economy has reached Indonesia's current level of development, growth at the pace Jokowi and his followers have promised becomes much harder.



## Nickel production

4

2023 estimate, tonnes m



Source: US Geological Survey

image: the economist

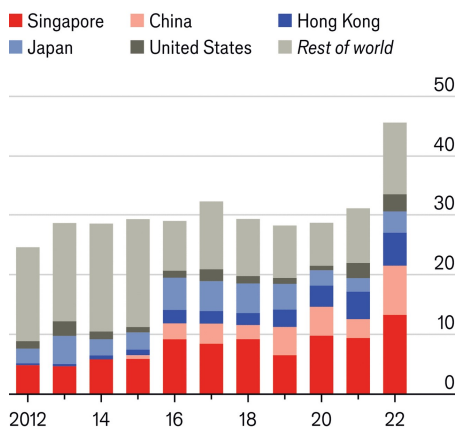
The backbone of Indonesia's economy is commodities, some of which are in global demand owing to the energy transition. Its production of nickel, used in electric-vehicle batteries, dwarfs that of the rest of the world. [Analysis by The Economist](#) suggests that by 2030 Indonesia could be the world's fourth-largest producer of green commodities, behind Australia, Chile and Mongolia.

The government has banned exports of some of these minerals, pushing multinational firms to build refineries locally (a policy known as "downstreaming"). Indonesia aims to make electric-car batteries with a total capacity of 140GWh in 2030—almost as much as global production in 2020. (The advancement of alternative battery types, that do not contain nickel, [could dent its progress.](#))

## Foreign direct investment

5

Inflows into Indonesia, \$bn



Source: BPS-Statistics Indonesia

image: the economist

Indonesia's mix of location, size and resources make it a key theatre in superpower rivalries. Investments have poured in from both America and China, though the Chinese have invested significantly more.

The next president faces two difficulties. First, if Sino-American tensions escalate, tariffs or sanctions might hit Chinese firms that Indonesia depends on. Second, downstreaming may be working for nickel, but could backfire in other sectors. Indonesia's solar-power industry, for example, has been hampered by government regulations. Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam, which place fewer restrictions on outside investors, are more attractive destinations for firms looking to move their supply chains away from China.

Whoever moves into Indonesia's presidential palace will help determine whether the country lives up to its huge potential. ■

### 3. Climate Change - Energy

## Le Monde

[https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2024/02/14/l-europe-doit-investir-1-520-milliards-d-euros-par-an-pour-atteindre-l-objectif-net-zero-en-2050\\_6216454\\_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2024/02/14/l-europe-doit-investir-1-520-milliards-d-euros-par-an-pour-atteindre-l-objectif-net-zero-en-2050_6216454_3232.html)

« L'Europe doit investir 1 520 milliards d'euros par an pour atteindre l'objectif "net zéro" en 2050 »

**Tribune**

[Thibaud Voïta, chercheur associé à l'Institut français des relations internationales \(IFRI\) et membre de l'Institut](#)

Nicolas Dufêne, Guillaume Kerlero de Rosbo et Thibaud Voïta, chercheurs à l'Institut Rousseau, plaident, dans une tribune au « Monde », en faveur d'un investissement massif de l'Europe pour décarboner son économie et rattraper les Etats-Unis et la Chine

**Publié hier à 07h00**

En 2007, les produits intérieurs bruts (PIB) des Etats-Unis et de l'Union européenne (UE) étaient presque similaires ; en 2024, le PIB américain est près de 80 % supérieur à celui de l'UE. Après une décennie d'austérité contre-productive, l'Europe a raté le virage des nouvelles technologies. La Chine s'est imposée dans les domaines des batteries, de l'éolien, du solaire et des transports terrestres électriques, et nous voici encore placés au pied du mur par les plans de relance gigantesques de nos partenaires et concurrents.

Alors que l'Europe parle de ralentir son action climatique, l'administration Biden a lancé en 2022 l'Inflation Reduction Act, qui doit mobiliser plus de 500 milliards de dollars de soutien aux industries décarbonées. L'Inde a lancé le Production Linked Incentive et la Chine fait bénéficier ses industries de subventions distribuées par les différents niveaux gouvernementaux, agissant sur le levier tant budgétaire que monétaire.

Pendant ce temps, la proposition de réforme des règles budgétaires [actuellement en négociation entre le Parlement européen et les Etats membres](#) promet de rétablir des contraintes budgétaires en totale opposition avec l'un des objectifs phares de l'actuelle Commission, à savoir la réalisation du Green Deal, lui-même constitué d'un amas de financements incertains dont une partie substantielle existe déjà. C'est pourquoi le débat sur le financement de l'objectif de neutralité carbone de l'Europe, sans même parler de la préservation de la biodiversité, est essentiel.

#### **Moderniser deux secteurs : l'agriculture et l'industrie**

Pour se relancer, l'Europe doit s'appuyer sur ce qu'elle sait faire et qui bénéficiera à ses populations et au reste du monde : la décarbonation de son économie. Elle doit aussi assurer son indépendance énergétique, réduisant ainsi l'inflation importée qui provoque une dangereuse et inutile hausse des taux d'intérêt de la Banque centrale européenne (BCE) aux dépens des investissements nécessaires à la reconstruction écologique.

Pour éviter ce déclassement programmé, l'Europe doit investir massivement dans son avenir. Tout juste publiée, l'étude [« Road to Net Zero »](#) de l'Institut Rousseau évalue à 40 000 milliards d'euros les investissements nécessaires d'ici à 2050, soit 1 520 milliards d'euros par an. Les trois quarts de ces montants sont déjà disponibles et doivent être désinvestis des activités néfastes pour être redirigés vers la transition, par exemple des véhicules à moteur thermique vers les transports en commun et les véhicules électriques.

L'investissement supplémentaire à mobiliser est de 360 milliards d'euros par an, soit 2,3 % du PIB de l'Europe des Vingt-Sept. Ces investissements doivent permettre une transformation en profondeur de l'UE, grâce à des politiques reposant notamment sur la sobriété, l'efficacité énergétique et les renouvelables. Décarboner l'Europe signifie ainsi accélérer la modernisation de deux secteurs-clés et en crise : l'agriculture et l'industrie.

## **Le coût de l'inaction plus élevé que celui de l'action**

Parmi les mesures préconisées par le rapport, on trouve la réduction de la taille des cheptels et l'adaptation des pratiques d'élevage, la conversion des cultures à l'agroécologie en aidant financièrement les agriculteurs, ou encore la promotion de la sobriété pour réduire la consommation (et donc la production) de biens, l'amélioration de l'efficacité énergétique, la décarbonation du bouquet énergétique industriel.

Décarboner signifie aussi lutter contre la précarité énergétique, par exemple en réduisant les coûts liés aux transports et à la consommation des bâtiments. Le rapport propose plus de 70 mesures de politiques publiques chiffrées, nécessaires pour atteindre nos objectifs climatiques. Tous ces investissements auront un effet positif sur nos budgets, le coût de l'inaction étant bien plus élevé que celui de l'action.

Il est temps de se doter des moyens financiers nécessaires et de la conviction intellectuelle que la réaffirmation de l'Europe dans le monde passera par un grand plan d'investissement dans la transition bas carbone, alignant enfin nos discours et nos actes. Sur ces 360 milliards d'euros annuels supplémentaires requis, 260 devront être investis par la puissance publique.

## **Un moment de vérité pour la démocratie européenne**

En effet, de nombreuses actions à réaliser ne sont pas rentables, comme la protection des puits de carbone, ou insuffisamment rentables, comme la rénovation énergétique des logements des ménages modestes, ce qui signifie que le marché demeure aveugle et impuissant à agir sur ces besoins. La réorientation de l'épargne ne pourra pas non plus y répondre, en raison du déficit de rendement de ces investissements pourtant indispensables.

A court terme, les Etats vont devoir s'endetter pour dégager les marges de manœuvre nécessaires. Or cela n'est pas compatible avec le rétablissement de règles budgétaires prônant une nouvelle forme d'austérité. L'Europe a pourtant su se mobiliser quand il le fallait et lorsque des éléments vitaux étaient en jeu : les dépenses liées au Covid-19 ont représenté 338 milliards d'euros par an, le « quantitative easing » de la BCE a représenté une création monétaire de plus de 6 000 milliards d'euros depuis 2015.

La crise climatique fait partie de ces problématiques vitales pour l'avenir de l'Europe, pour protéger notre environnement et réduire les émissions de gaz à effet de serre, mais aussi pour nous positionner sans attendre comme un modèle de développement durable, profitable et soutenable. L'heure des choix est venue, et ceux-ci doivent être sans équivoque, si nous voulons réussir, à vingt-sept, à garantir aux générations suivantes un avenir en atteignant la neutralité carbone. C'est notre rendez-vous avec l'histoire, et un moment de vérité pour la démocratie européenne.

[How the Mediterranean could become a green-energy powerhouse \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Southern dynamo

## How the Mediterranean could become a green-energy powerhouse

And what could hold it back

Dec 12th 2023

Ask Europeans about their most promising source of domestic green energy and many would point to the [North Sea](#). More than 15 gigawatts (gw) of offshore-wind farms have been installed, a number supposed to grow to at least 300gw by 2050. But another promising source is opening up farther south. Governments in Europe want the Mediterranean, with its ample sunshine, to turn itself quickly into a [green-hydrogen hotbed](#).

The solar and wind maps below show the vast potential of the region. Spain, for example, basks in a daily average of 4.6 kilowatt-hours of sunlight per square metre and Morocco in 5.6kwh, double what Germany can expect. In parts of northern Africa both sun and wind are abundant, forming a rare sweet spot that could power electrolyzers, the machines that use electricity to split water into oxygen and hydrogen. “There are only ten such locations around the world,” explains Benedikt Ortmann, who runs the solar business of BayWa, a German energy-and-construction company.

### Sweet spots

Solar irradiation,  
kWh per square metre per day, 2023



Source: Global Solar Atlas

Mean wind speed, 100m above ground/sea level  
Metres per second, 2023

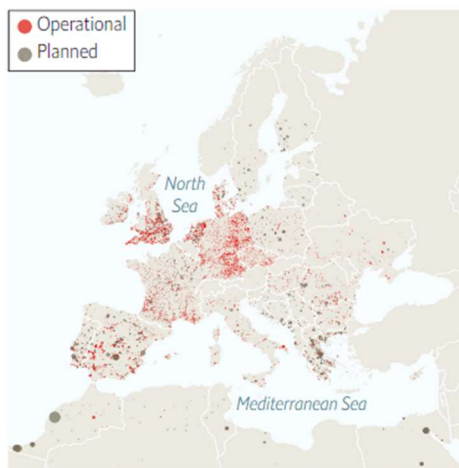


If plans for Europe’s southern powerhouse go well they will give the continent access to plenty of cheap renewable energy and allow it to clean up its carbon-spewing heavy industry. But the development of renewable-energy projects in the region lags behind that in the north.

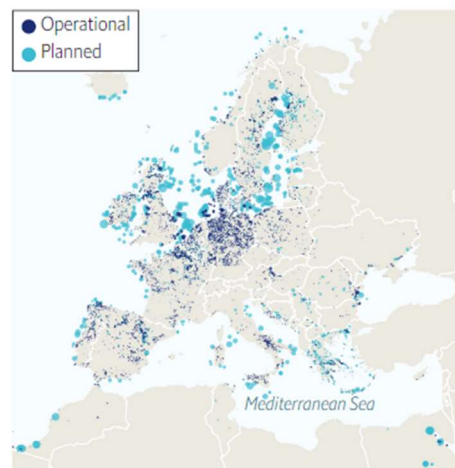
## Northern bias

Renewable projects, November 2023, circle size=project capacity

### Solar



### Onshore and offshore wind



Source: Rystad Energy

Solar and wind plants in Germany, for example, currently have capacity for around 35,000 more megawatts of energy production than Spain could generate. Across the North Sea more than 3,700 new solar and wind projects are in development, according to Rystad Energy, a consultancy. Only 346 are earmarked for the Mediterranean. In northern Africa, the most promising site for new projects, political and regulatory instability increases risks and the cost of capital, which deters developers from investing in new projects.

Even if more projects did spring up across the Med, a new hydrogen economy is still a way off. Among many other things, new hydrogen pipelines have to be built or old, natural-gas ones repurposed, a market for hydrogen would have to be created, and financing for hydrogen projects secured. It will still take a few years before the Med is known as much for its electrolyzers and hydrogen as for its beaches and parties. ■

[Les difficultés de l'EPR menacent-elles le nouveau nucléaire français? \(lefigaro.fr\)](https://www.lefigaro.fr)

## Les difficultés de l'EPR menacent-elles le nouveau nucléaire français?

Par [Elsa Bembaron](#)

Publié le 13/02/2024 à 18:23, mis à jour le 13/02/2024 à 21:13



Le bâtiment du réacteur de la centrale nucléaire de Flamanville 3, avec un réacteur à eau pressurisé de type EPR. *Sébastien SORIANO/Le Figaro*

### **DÉCRYPTAGE - L'EPR de Flamanville s'apprête à entrer en fonction, avec douze ans de retard.**

Peut-on croire le [calendrier du nouveau nucléaire français](#)? Le compte à rebours a été enclenché en février 2022 par le président de la République lors du discours de Belfort, qui a fixé à 2035 la date de mise en service d'un réacteur nucléaire de type EPR 2. Le premier d'une série de six, voire de quatorze. La question se pose alors que des retards de dix ans et plus et des surcoûts se sont accumulés sur les différents chantiers lancés auparavant: Olkiluoto en Finlande, Hinkley Point au Royaume-Uni ou encore Flamanville 3 en France.

2024-2035: onze ans nous séparent de l'échéance. Une gageure, alors que le premier béton n'a pas encore été coulé, que le modèle de financement n'est pas arrêté, pas plus que le coût du programme nouveau nucléaire. Initialement estimé à 52 milliards d'euros, il pourrait être substantiellement révisé à la hausse pour s'établir autour de 62 milliards. Il faut prendre en compte les effets de l'inflation et de la hausse des matières premières. EDF «travaille avec ses fournisseurs à un plan de compétitivité ainsi qu'à l'optimisation des coûts et du *planning*», a expliqué au Sénat, le 8 février, Xavier Ursat, directeur exécutif groupe en charge de la direction ingénierie et projets nouveau nucléaire d'EDF.

### **Des jumeaux numériques**

La réussite de Penly, premier nouveau réacteur devant entrer en service, est d'autant plus cruciale qu'il sera une tête de série. Un deuxième sera construit en parallèle sur le même site normand, puis deux autres paires à Gravelines (Nord) et au Bugey (Ain). Il s'agit de bénéficier de l'effet de série pour mieux maîtriser la conduite des opérations, et surtout baisser le coût. Lorsque deux réacteurs sont construits sur le même modèle, le deuxième est 20 % à 30 % moins cher. Mais avant de bénéficier de l'effet de série, cher aux acteurs du secteur, encore faut-il réussir la tête.

«Il a fallu dix-huit ans pour l'EPR de Flamanville. Douze ans seulement devraient être nécessaires à l'achèvement de celui de Hinkley Point C, au Royaume-Uni», illustre Joël Barre, délégué interministériel au nouveau nucléaire, confiant en la capacité d'EDF à continuer à améliorer sa performance. Il mise aussi sur « le retour d'expérience de ces chantiers » pour tenir les délais. Un atout, même si, selon un consultant, dans ce

contexte, «il est étonnant qu'EDF ait choisi Eiffage pour la réalisation du génie civil des deux premiers EPR 2 et non Bouygues, comme pour les autres EPR européens».

## **La moindre petite évolution a des conséquences en cascade, avec des répercussions parfois insoupçonnées**

*Un intervenant du chantier britannique*

Autre leçon du passé, EDF a remanié son comité exécutif pour accélérer les prises de décision. Les règles de la commande publique devraient en outre être modifiées pour le nucléaire, avec un allongement de la durée des accords-cadres. De premières commandes ont été passées aux fournisseurs. Framatome a commencé à fabriquer certaines pièces. Tout est mis en œuvre pour permettre à la filière de monter en charge, de réaliser les investissements et les embauches (100.000 en dix ans) nécessaires à sa relance. EDF s'appuie désormais sur des jumeaux numériques pour préparer et mener la conduite du chantier. «*La numérisation facilite aussi le partage des informations entre EDF et les entreprises qui sont appelées à intervenir*», explique au Figaro Xavier Ursat. Surtout, plus question d'effectuer des changements pendant la construction, comme à Hinkley Point ou Flamanville 3, où ces modifications ont coûté si cher, comme l'a souligné le rapport de Jean-Martin Folz. «*La moindre petite évolution a des conséquences en cascade, avec des répercussions parfois insoupçonnées*», résume un intervenant du chantier britannique. «*Ce qui a péché, dans l'EPR, c'est d'avoir lancé la construction sans que les études détaillées soient achevées*», résume Bernard Doroszczuk, président de l'Autorité de sûreté nucléaire.

## **Exigences renforcées**

Pour éviter cela, la construction de l'EPR 2 de Penly ne commencera que lorsque EDF aura arrêté un plan très détaillé de l'ensemble, le «detailed design». «*Nous sommes à la fin du "basic design" et nous entrons dans le "detailed design", qui va jusqu'à décrire les installations dans les moindres détails*», explique Xavier Ursat. La leçon a été retenue, les précautions sont prises. Mais encore faut-il qu'elles soient appliquées. «*Dans ce monde d'ingénieurs, il est très difficile de s'en tenir aux plans quand des améliorations substantielles peuvent être apportées*», grince un intervenant.

EDF met en avant un autre élément: «*La conception des centrales a été simplifiée*», insiste Xavier Ursat. Alors que Flamanville 3 est doté d'une double enceinte, chaque EPR 2 n'en aura qu'une seule, avec le même niveau de performance pour protéger toutes les installations: le réacteur, le contrôle commande... «*La résistance de cette enceinte aux agressions externes est très élevée dans un monde incertain*», ajoute-t-il. Depuis le début des années 2000, les exigences en matière de sûreté nucléaire et de sécurité ont été renforcées. De nouveaux équipements sont apparus, comme les diesels d'ultime secours. Ces données sont intégrées dès le départ aux EPR 2. L'intérieur aussi est simplifié. Les cloisons sont symétriques d'un étage à l'autre, ce qui est une réelle amélioration, affirment les spécialistes. Plus question, comme c'est le cas à Flamanville 3, de permettre les interventions lorsque le réacteur fonctionne: cette interdiction simplifie la conception et la construction des prochains EPR. EDF travaille à réduire le nombre de modèles d'équipements utilisés, notamment pour les milliers de pompes et de vannes. «*Imaginez monter un meuble en kit. C'est plus simple quand toutes les vis sont les mêmes*», illustre Xavier Ursat. Cela permet en outre aux sous-traitants en charge de la fabrication de ces éléments d'acquiescer de l'expérience et de gagner en efficacité. La standardisation des petits éléments est une des conditions nécessaires à la tenue des plannings.

«*Nous sommes bien en ligne avec ce qui avait été dit en 2022, à savoir un démarrage de Penly (le premier des EPR 2, NDLR) entre 2035 et 2037*», assure Xavier Ursat. À ceci près qu'au gouvernement nombreux sont ceux qui préfèrent ne retenir que 2035, et oublier 2037... La tenue du calendrier du nouveau nucléaire n'est pas le seul défi auquel EDF, et avec lui le pays tout entier, est confronté. Le renouvellement des réacteurs existants s'avère crucial. L'ampleur du chantier se résume en une phrase. Cinquante-quatre réacteurs ont été mis en service en quinze ans dans les années 1980 et 1990. Inéluctablement, à terme, 54 seront fermés en quinze ans, même si leur durée de vie est prolongée au-delà de 60 ans. Les énergies renouvelables seules ne suffiront pas à leur remplacement. «*Il faut du nucléaire et des renouvelables, les deux font la paire!*», insiste Roland Lescure, ministre de l'Industrie et de l'Énergie. Les renouvelables sont plus rapides à construire, le nucléaire apporte la puissance et la modularité.

[Green protectionism will slow the energy transition \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

## Green protectionism will slow the energy transition

Expanding renewable-power capacity is becoming ever harder



image: irfan khan/la times/polaris/eyevine

Dec 7th 2023

If the world is to decarbonise, then more clean energy is needed, fast. Nearly everyone at the un's annual climate summit, which is being held in Dubai, seems to agree with the sentiment: delegates from 118 countries have pledged to raise global renewable-energy capacity to 11,000 gigawatts (gw) by 2030, up from 3,400gw last year. But the task of adding roughly 1,000gw every year—almost as much as the entire generating capacity of America—looks increasingly daunting.

Despite record investment in renewables in the first half of the year, the industry is [under strain](#). Wind-turbine supply chains have struggled as manufacturers rushed out bigger and more powerful models. Last month Siemens Energy was rescued by a loan guarantee from the German government. Rising costs, caused partly by higher interest rates, have led developers to abandon once-profitable projects. Five offshore-wind developments have been cancelled in America this year.

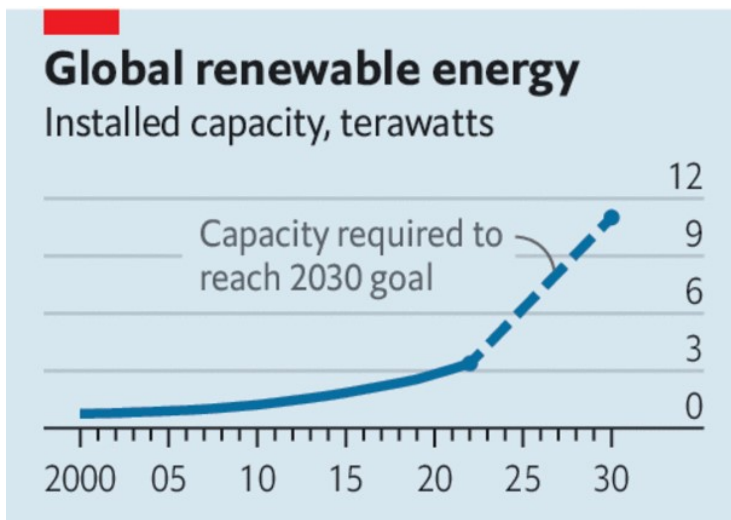


image: the economist

There is a bigger problem, too. At a meagre 6%, the average return on capital for solar and wind developers will not entice the \$8trn or so of investment needed over the rest of this decade to honour the 11,000gw pledge. One



obstacle is slow approval, which delays projects for years and can needlessly tie up capital, lowering returns. In September, in a bid to speed up permits, the European Parliament designated the development of renewables to be of “overriding public interest”. Yet such diktats have not worked in the past; European Union rules already require permitting to take no longer than two years, a limit that member states often breach. Reforms to federal permitting have been proposed in America, but will do little to ease delays at the state or local level. Better to streamline approvals across all tiers of government.

Another obstacle is that, not counting China, too little development is happening in the global south, even though the demand for electricity there is surging. Investors want a premium when putting money to work in emerging markets. One fix is to blend in government funding that takes on some of the risk. That is the idea behind the Just Energy Transition Partnerships, which Western governments have set up over the past two years, and the \$30bn climate fund announced by the United Arab Emirates on December 1st. Yet the sums involved remain too small, and earlier deals have been beset by backsliding and delays.

A last obstacle is protectionism, which raises costs and threatens shortages. Solar panels are already more than twice as expensive in America as elsewhere, mostly owing to anti-dumping duties on Chinese suppliers. From June 2024, those duties will also apply to some South-East Asian suppliers deemed to be redirecting Chinese products. [The Inflation Reduction Act](#) incentivises the use of pricier homemade components even though their makers will struggle to supply enough of them.

America is not alone. Europe is in the midst of negotiating the Net Zero Industry Act, which currently would seek to favour domestic producers in public auctions. The European Commission is considering investigating Chinese turbine-makers, which it sees as a threat to local industry because their wares are much cheaper. India, too, plans to tighten local-content rules for solar projects.

Rather than micromanaging production, governments should unleash investment, by acting boldly to strip back permitting rules and ease the risk of projects in the global south. They also need to face up to the fact that protectionism frustrates their climate goals. It leads to lower returns, higher prices for power and more broken promises over decarbonisation. ■

## 4. Culture - Gen Z

The  
Economist

[What Gen-Z graduates want from their employers \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

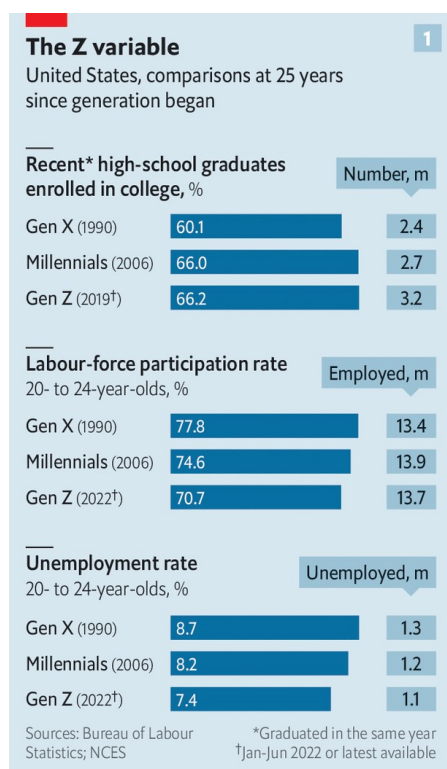
What Gen-Z graduates want from their employers

### More flexibility, more security—and more money



Jul 21st 2022

Generation z is different. As a whole, Americans born between the late 1990s and early 2000s are less likely to have work or look for it: their labour-force-participation rate is 71%, compared with 75% for millennials (born between 1980 and the late 1990s) and 78% for Generation x (born in the decade or so to 1980) when each came of age. As a result, they make up a smaller share of the workforce. On the other hand, they are better educated: 66% of American Gen-zs have at least some college (see chart 1). The trend is similar in other rich countries. With graduation ceremonies behind them, the latest batch of diploma-holders are entering the job market. What they want from employers is also not quite the same as in generations past. And as the economy sours following a pandemic jobs boom, those wants are in flux.



The Economist

Start with their broad preferences. Although Gen-z recruits felt more lonely and isolated than their older colleagues at the start of the pandemic, the ability to work remotely has unearthed new possibilities. The benefits go beyond working in your pyjamas. Many are taking calls from beach chairs and hammocks in [more exotic locales](#) or fleeing big cities in search for cheaper or larger homes.

In Microsoft's latest Work Trend Index, which polled more than 30,000 workers in 31 countries in January and February, more than half of Gen-z hybrid workers said they were relocating thanks to remote work, compared with 38% of people overall. The option to work remotely is increasingly non-negotiable. Workers aged 18 to 34 are nearly 60% more willing to quit than their older peers if the choice is taken away, according to research by McKinsey, a consultancy. They are also more likely to engage with job listings that mention flexibility.

This has big implications. Industries with jobs that cannot be done from home are falling out of favour with recent graduates. A study by ManpowerGroup, a recruitment company, suggests an inverse relationship between talent shortages and flexible working policies. The sectors which are either less able to offer remote work or have been slower to embrace it—including construction, finance, hospitality and manufacturing—have faced some of the biggest skills gaps for all types of job. The same is almost certainly true for their university-educated workers.

That in turn has accelerated a pre-existing trend of young recruits trading Wall Street for Silicon Valley. Ever since thousands of banking jobs were axed—and the industry's reputation tarnished—in the wake of the financial crisis of 2007-09, big tech has looked more attractive to graduates than big banks have. In Britain, the number of young people studying computer science rose by almost 50% between 2011 and 2020, to over 30,000. More than 31,000 took up an engineering course in 2020, up by 21% from 2011.

Now technology bosses are more willing than their opposite numbers in finance to let employees work from home (or anywhere else). Bank ceos such as Jamie Dimon of JPMorgan Chase or James Gorman of Morgan Stanley have urged employees back to the office. By contrast, Mark Zuckerberg has allowed workers at Meta, his social-media giant, to work from anywhere if their role allows it even after the firm reopened its American offices in March.

## Job-hopping

2

United States, top employers  
of business graduates

● Consulting/accounting ● Banking  
● Tech ● Media ● Sportswear

Rank	2008	2021
1	● Ernst & Young	● Google
2	● Google	● Apple
3	● PwC	● Tesla
4	● Deloitte	● JPMorgan Chase
5	● Goldman Sachs	● Walt Disney
6	● KPMG	● Amazon
7	● Walt Disney	● Nike
8	● JPMorgan Chase	● Netflix
9	● Apple	● Goldman Sachs
10	● Merrill Lynch	● Spotify

Source: Universum

The Economist

Annual rankings of employer desirability by Universum, a graduate-staffing consultancy, bear this out. In 2008 the list of best employers as graded by American graduates was dominated by big banks and the Big Four consulting firms (Deloitte, ey, kpmg and pwc). By 2021 seven of the ten highest spots were occupied by tech and media giants (see chart 2).

There are signs that Gen-zs' love affair with tech may be losing some of its ardour. After a decade of frantic hiring, tech is suddenly looking like a less secure early-career bet for the ambitious graduate. Having taken a battering from nervy investors this year, companies such as Alphabet, Meta, Microsoft and Uber have slowed hiring. Twitter has revoked recently made job offers. Netflix has laid off hundreds of workers. So have newer tech darlings such as Coinbase and Robinhood. Elon Musk, Tesla's chief executive, has announced a hiring freeze and cuts of about a tenth of the electric-car maker's staff. More than 28,000 workers in America's tech sector have lost their jobs so far in 2022, according to Crunchbase, a data provider. Those graduates who do choose tech are likelier to pick an established firm over a sexy startup with hazier prospects.

### Experimenting with drugs

Some graduates may instead opt for other high-tech sectors that seem less vulnerable to economic swings. Drugmakers at the forefront of the covid-19-vaccine rollout are finding particular favour. AstraZeneca and Pfizer, each of which has produced an effective jab, shot up in the rankings of Britain's most attractive employers last year. AstraZeneca doubled its intake of high-school and university graduates in 2021. The war in Ukraine, meanwhile, may boost the appeal of armsmakers—shunned by some millennials and Gen-xers as irredeemably unethical but now able to portray themselves as producers of the “arsenal of democracy”.

Graduates' sharpening focus on job security also boosts the appeal of the public sector, notes Dan Hawes, co-founder of Graduate Recruitment Bureau, a British firm. In Britain, applications for government jobs rose by nearly a third at the start of the pandemic. In March there were an estimated 67,000 more public-sector employees in the country than a year earlier. Around 1.4m Chinese vied for just over 31,000 government positions by sitting the notoriously tough national civil-service exam in November 2021, up by more than 40% compared with the previous year.

If graduates keep gravitating towards safe government jobs, that will leave a smaller talent pool for private employers to fish in. Despite signs of a slowing economy, labour markets remain tight. Many older professionals quit their jobs during the pandemic. Others retired early.

Britain's labour force has lost more than 250,000 people since covid-19 first struck. America has 3.3m fewer people working. The latest official figures there show 11.3m job openings but only 6m unemployed Americans. It will take at least four years for the American labour market to return to its pre-pandemic employment rates, according to the oecd, a club of mostly rich countries.

How far will companies go to entice younger workers—and keep them happy? For the time being the short answer seems to be: quite far. To burnish its flexible-working credentials Citigroup, a bank, has opened a new hub in the Spanish coastal city of Málaga, luring over 3,000 applicants for just 30 analyst roles. In addition to providing gourmet meals, round-the-clock massages and nap pods, Google recently hired Lizzo, a pop star, to perform for staff.

The best thing firms can do to attract young talent is to cough up more money. According to Universum, some earlier Gen-z hobby horses such as an employer's commitment to diversity and inclusion or corporate social responsibility have edged down the list of American graduates' priorities. A competitive base salary and high future earnings have edged up. Banks such as JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs and Citigroup, and management consultancies including McKinsey and bcg have bumped first-year analysts' annual pay up to \$100,000. Law firms have been raising their starting salaries. bp, a British energy giant, offers recent graduates sign-on bonuses of as much as £5,000 (\$6,000) and discounts on cars. Money isn't everything. But it's something. ■

## Jodie Foster says generation Z can be ‘really annoying’ to work with

This article is more than 1 month old

In a Guardian interview, the actor also shares her admiration for Bella Ramsey and says she has challenged her son’s behaviour towards women

Sat 6 Jan 2024 08.00 CET



Jodie Foster said helping young female actors navigate the often difficult waters she had already sailed was important to her. Photograph: Richard Shotwell/Invision/AP

Jodie Foster says she sometimes finds generation Z “really annoying” but she hopes she can help budding stars find their own path to help them “learn how to relax”.

In [an interview with the Guardian](#), the actor admitted she had found the attitudes to work she had encountered difficult to understand.

“They’re really annoying, especially in the workplace,” Foster joked. “They’re like: ‘Nah, I’m not feeling it today, I’m gonna come in at 10.30am.’ Or in emails, I’ll tell them: this is all grammatically incorrect, did you not check your spelling? And they’re like: ‘Why would I do that, isn’t that kind of limiting?’”

Foster has arguably earned the right to tell it how she sees it. By the time she was nominated for an Oscar for her depiction of a victim of child sexual abuse in Martin Scorsese’s 1976 film *Taxi Driver* at the age of 14, she had made more movies than the director had.

After making films for more than five decades, helping young female actors navigate the often difficult waters she had already sailed was important to her, she said.

Asked what she thought young people in the industry needed to hear, Foster said: “They need to learn how to relax, how to not think about it so much, how to come up with something that’s theirs. I can help them find that, which is so much more fun than being, with all the pressure behind it, the protagonist of the story.”

In the interview, she revealed she had made a particular effort to get in touch with Bella Ramsey, the 20-year-old non-binary actor who starred in *The Last of Us* and played the role of the young noblewoman Lyanna Mormont in *Game of Thrones*.

At Foster’s request, the pair met at the Elle magazine [Women](#) in Hollywood celebration in November. “I reached out to Bella, because we’d never met, and said: ‘I want you to introduce me at this thing,’ which is a wonderful event about actors and people in the movies, but is also very much a fashion thing. Which means it’s determining who represents us.”

Foster said the event's organisers were "very proud of themselves because they've got every ethnicity, and I'm like: yeah, but all the attendees are still wearing heels and eyelashes".

She said Ramsey was a good example of an actor emerging in a new "vector of authenticity". "Bella, who gave the best speech, was wearing the most perfect suit, beautifully tailored, and a middle parting and no makeup."

Foster revealed how she had also challenged pervading gender stereotypes in her own family. Talking about raising her children, whom she had with her former partner Cydney Bernard, and now raises with her wife, Alexandra Hedison, she said: "There was a moment with my older one when he was in high school, when, because he was raised by two women – three women – it was like he was trying to figure out what it was to be a boy.

"And he watched television and came to the conclusion: oh, I just need to be an asshole. I understand. I need to be shitty to women and act like I'm a fucker.

"And I was like: 'No. That's not what it is to be a man! That's what our culture has been selling you for all this time.'"

[Don't blame "quiet quitting" on Gen-Z \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

## Don't blame "quiet quitting" on Gen-Z

A global index of workplace attitudes suggests that it is more widespread

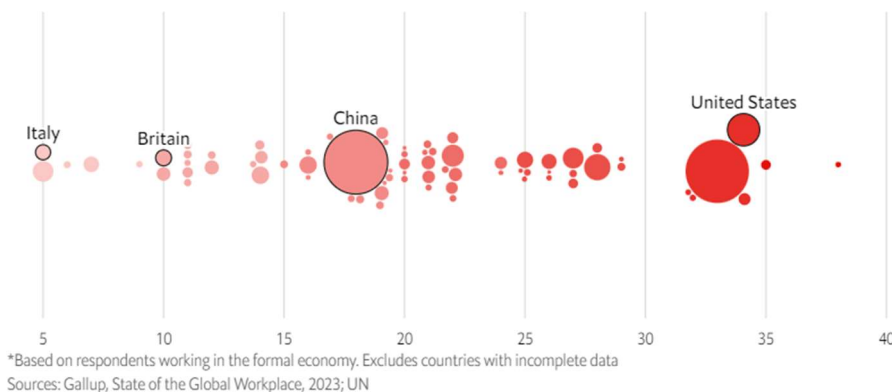
Oct 6th 2023

It started with a TikTok video. Last year a [17-second clip](#) that promoted doing the absolute minimum at work sparked a "#quietquitting" frenzy. The term is deceptive as well as hard to pin down: so-called quiet quitters seek to improve their work-life balance not by leaving their jobs, but merely by not going above and beyond their duty to their employers. Perhaps because chatter about quiet quitting took off on TikTok, it is often associated with Gen-Z—people born after 1996. But doing as little as possible at work is scarcely new (it may sound familiar to "work-to-rule" popularised by trade unions in the 20th century). And it's not confined to the youngest workers.

Our charts below contain data from Gallup's annual survey on workplace engagement across 143 countries, broken down by age and gender. We have filtered out countries where the data were missing or incomplete, reducing the number to 73. The results suggest that remarkably few people, just about anywhere, are happily engaged with their work.

### Employee of the month

Workers who feel engaged at work\*, %  
Circle size=population, 2021



Gallup asked respondents 12 questions to gauge their engagement with their jobs, including whether they feel their job is important and whether their colleagues are committed to doing quality work. The polling company then sorted respondents into three categories, depending on their combination of answers. Those who appeared most engaged were classed as "thriving", meaning they are involved and enthusiastic about their work and workplace. At the other end of the spectrum is "loud quitting", where people may be resentful and voice their unhappiness at work. "Quiet quitting" falls in between. These employees are thought to be putting in the time, but not much else.

The average of the 73 countries in our filtered version showed that 20% were thriving and 15% were loud quitters. The remaining 65% were quietly dragging their feet. Among big economies, America and India had the highest share of thrivers, though that was only around one-third. In Italy and Japan just 5% were thriving, the lowest shares in the sample.



## Checked-out Index

Workers who feel engaged at work\*, %

Ranked least to most engaged	Men	Women	Older 40 years and over	Younger 15- to 39-year-olds
^	◇	◇	◇	◇
1 Italy	4	5	4	7
2 Japan	5	5	6	4
3 Hong Kong	6	7	8	4
4 France	8	7	8	7
5 Lebanon	8	11	8	10
6 Spain	10	9	10	10
7 Britain	8	12	10	10
8 Taiwan	10	11	10	12
9 Belgium	12	11	13	9
10 Ireland	10	12	11	11

Care needs to be taken before reading too much into international differences: some of the variation is likely due to differences in the way people in different countries interpret the questions. What does seem fairly clear, though, is that there was little correlation between attitudes to work and age. In our index, just 21% of those aged 40 and over were thriving, little higher than the 19% of respondents aged 15-39. Mongolia had the highest share of happy workers aged 15-39—at 36%—though only around half of the country works in the formal economy. North Macedonia was a close second—at 35%—compared with less than a quarter of those aged 40 and over. (Perhaps the country's high youth unemployment helps to explain why: the young may consider themselves lucky to be in work.) Globally, women were slightly more likely than men to be engaged at work, by 21% to 19%.

The survey casts doubt on the notion that Gen-Z is especially workshy. It might also suggest there is a lot of untapped potential in the global workforce: more engaged workers might be more productive ones. But many Europeans, who the survey says are less eager than Americans, are also [more productive](#) by the hour. Doing their jobs adequately seems to be good enough. ■

[Schlafverhalten Gen Z: Junge Leute gehen immer früher ins Bett \(nzz.ch\)](https://www.nzz.ch)

## Generation Z: Man ernährt sich vegan, trinkt keinen Alkohol, treibt Sport – und jetzt geht man auch noch vor Sonnenuntergang ins Bett

Junge Leute schlafen im Schnitt 9 Stunden und 28 Minuten. Um 21 Uhr ist Lichterlöschen. Der Schlaf ist zum Fetisch eines gesunden Lebensstils geworden.

[Generation Z: People eat vegan, don't drink alcohol, exercise – and now they even go to bed before sunset.

Young people sleep on average 9 hours and 28 minutes. Lights go out at 9 p.m. Sleep has become the fetish of a healthy lifestyle.]

Birgit Schmid

14.02.2024, 05.30 Uhr 3 min



Gute Nacht – und sei es noch taghell. Tatiana Magoyan / Getty

Eine hedonistische Jugend sieht anders aus. In früheren Generationen bedeutete Jungsein, die Nächte durchzufeiern. Die 18- bis 30-Jährigen brechen mit der Tradition. Die Generation, von der es pauschal heisst, sie sei leistungsschwach, faul und auf das gute Leben aus, geht immer früher ins Bett.

Unter ihnen sind Berufstätige, Studentinnen, Tagträumer. Sie halten es unter der Woche mit der frühen Bettzeit, aber auch am Wochenende. Das «Saturday Night Fever», wie die Bee Gees sich 1977 auf eine lange Partynacht einschworen, ist ein fernes Echo.

Das heisst aber nicht, dass Leute in den Zwanzigern ganz aufs Ausgehen und Feiern verzichten. Sondern sie verlegen es einfach auf den Nachmittag. Für ein Nachtessen auswärts wird auch einmal auf 17 Uhr im Restaurant reserviert. Online-Reservierungsportale bestätigen die Verhaltensänderung. Das schreibt das «Wall Street Journal». Nach 18 Uhr nehmen die Reservierungen ab.

### Beliebte Day-Partys

Auch Day-Partys sind in den vergangenen Jahren beliebt geworden: Sie beginnen zum Beispiel um 14 Uhr und enden um 2 Uhr morgens. Nicht nur die Techno-Generation Ü 50 weiss zu schätzen, dass sie noch aufs letzte Tram kann und nicht bis Mitte nächster Woche braucht, um sich zu erholen. Sondern auch ihre Kinder sehen den Vorteil und stehen am Sonntag um 10 Uhr bereits wieder auf der Yogamatte.

Auf Tiktok wird das Schlafen unter dem Hashtag #earlybedtimeroutine zelebriert: Junge Frauen kuscheln sich unter die Decke, der Beruhigungstee dampft auf dem Nachttisch, die Augenbinde liegt parat. Sie bewerben die Schlafroutine damit, dass diese sie gesünder, schöner, leistungsfähiger mache.

Die amerikanische Immobilienplattform Rent-Cafe liefert die Zahlen dazu. Sie hat untersucht, wie verschiedene Altersgruppen ihre Zeit einteilen. Die 20-Jährigen gaben an, durchschnittlich 9 Stunden und 28 Minuten zu schlafen. 2010 lag die Dauer noch unter 9 Stunden.

Zum Vergleich: Erwachsene Schweizerinnen und Schweizer schlafen in der Regel 7 Stunden pro Nacht. Je älter die Leute zudem werden, desto weniger Schlaf brauchen sie.

### **Tiefer Schlaf, langes Leben**

Die Bedeutung, die die frühe Bettzeit erhalten hat, hat mit der obsessiven Beschäftigung mit einem gesunden Lifestyle zu tun. Man ernährt sich vegan, trinkt keinen Alkohol, treibt Sport und geht früh zu Bett. Bei den Ratschlägen für ein längeres Leben fehlt ein guter Schlaf nie.

Auch Ältere achten heute darauf. Doch die Generation Z ist so gesundheitsbewusst wie keine Generation vor ihr. Dazu passt, dass sie als angepasst gilt. Entgegen den abschätzigen Urteilen über sie lebt sie hier die Ideale der Leistungsgesellschaft vor.

Und so wird nun auch der Schlaf zum Fetisch. Mit Schlaf-Trackern wie der Smart-Watch misst man den eigenen Schlaf und lässt die Daten auswerten, um das Dasein im Ruhezustand zu verbessern. Sogar Hightech-Betten überwachen nachts ihre Insassen. Eine Analyse des Bettenherstellers Sleep Number von mehr als zwei Millionen Kunden ergab: Die 18- bis 34-Jährigen gingen im Durchschnitt um 22 Uhr ins Bett.

Dem «Wall Street Journal» erzählten junge Leute, wie sie das Gefühl, etwas zu verpassen, nach und nach ablegten. Indem sie den nächtlichen Verlockungen widerstünden, sparten sie erst noch Geld. Es wird ein Paar zitiert, welches es als Zumutung empfindet, wenn Freunde es um acht zum Nachtessen einladen. Sie lehnen solche Einladungen ab.

Denn um 20 Uhr 30 löschen sie das Licht. Die neue Bettgewohnheit haben sie seit der Pandemie beibehalten. Auch dies ein Grund: Das Home-Office hat häuslicher gemacht.

Es sei denn, man macht den Tag zur Nacht. Eine Bar in New York begann die Silvesterparty zeitig. Was man sonst um Mitternacht tut, fand hier um 20 Uhr statt: Die Feiernenden zählten den Countdown ins neue Jahr. «Dann können alle um elf im Bett sein», sagte die Barbetreiberin. So leben sie 2024 immerhin vier Stunden länger.

[From bone smashing to chin extensions: how 'looksmaxxing' is reshaping young men's faces](#) | [Body image](#) | [The Guardian](#)

## From bone smashing to chin extensions: how 'looksmaxxing' is reshaping young men's faces

Chiselled jaws, pouty lips, hunter eyes: everything is up for grabs in the quest to increase 'sexual market value'. But how did this extreme cosmetic craze become mainstream?

[Simon Usborne](#)

Thu 15 Feb 2024 06.00 CET



Illustration: Paddy Mills at Synergy/The Guardian

For James, it started with muscles. He was about 16 and had become self-conscious about his physique, fearing that he wasn't buff enough to attract girls. He found his way to a bodybuilding forum and began to work out. He can't remember when it happened, but at some point trolls began to infiltrate the forum. They were visitors from another online community with a different focus.

"Their general vibe was quite mean," says James, who prefers not to use his real name. "They'd take images people had posted of their impressive physiques and be like: 'You guys forgot to work out your faces!'"

Despite the meanness, curiosity pushed James over to the forums, which were largely focused on facial aesthetics. He discovered a new world in which mainly young men and teenage boys scoured pictures of each other for perceived flaws and purported fixes.

The forums hummed with brutal judgment and offered James a compelling new outlet for his insecurities. "I was learning about problems I hadn't even noticed," he says. "I had a short face and a short chin, my nose was too wide, my eyes were too far apart, my hairline was too high ... You don't see a lot of these things until someone else points them out and then you can't stop seeing them."

James had become hooked on looksmaxxing, an online community of people seeking to enhance their faces. He began to learn a strange code that members used to compare their characteristics: IPDs (interpupillary distance, the gap between the eyes); canthal tilt (the angles of the eyes); mewing (a tongue exercise that supposedly improves the shape of the jaw). "The ultimate goal is to improve your SMV," says James. Sexual market value, that is.



Kareem Shami, who promotes non-surgical softmaxxing, in 2020 (left) and 2023.

Looksmaxxing has existed for at least a decade, but has exploded in recent months from obscure forums and [Reddit](#) pages into mainstream social media – and TikTok in particular. Impossibly chiselled jaws, pouty lips and cheekbones as high as the Egyptian pyramids are prized, along with “hunter” eyes (those angled slightly downwards towards the nose – a positive canthal tilt).

Looksmaxxing influencers have gained huge followings, while algorithms promote videos watched by millions. Models such as Jordan Barrett and Francisco Lachowski have become pin-ups. The trend has prompted bewilderment among parents and teachers and concern that young people are finding yet more reasons to feel bad about themselves.

It’s not clear how far mainstream looksmaxxing has moved away from its roots in online [“incel” \(involuntarily celibate\) communities](#). In these spaces, men blame women and feminism for their romantic failings; they retreat into a world in which they pursue their own masculine ideals, ideally acquiring ripped bodies and – in the case of the looksmaxxers – strong jaws and hunter eyes.

I was deemed an outcast and it triggered something in me

### **Kareem Shami**

“The vast majority of the groups that we work with are now aware of looksmaxxing,” says Mike Nicholson, a former teacher who runs a workshop programme in schools called Progressive Masculinity. He is talking to me the day after a report by researchers at University College London and the University of Kent found that TikTok algorithms [amplify misogynistic content](#), helping to normalise it in playgrounds. (In response, TikTok said it removed misogynistic content, which it prohibits, and questioned the report’s methodology.)

“We come at this from a very sympathetic point of view,” Nicholson adds. “But the world that these young men and boys are inhabiting is one that is trying to increase their anxieties and potentially lead them down this path that, if you’re not careful, can lead to ‘incel’ ideologies.”

James, who is in his 20s and works in finance in the UK, started on the forums in about 2015, when they were still niche. He began “softmaxxing” – tweaks such as hair styling, skincare remedies, diets and exercise regimes. But as the sites threw up an ever harsher mirror, he began seeking more extreme fixes, known as “hardmaxxing”.

He went under the knife in 2022 to smooth his nose. Last year, he had Botox in his forehead, threaded his eyebrows and got his teeth whitened and straightened. He is considering chin surgery, which he says would add thousands to the £10,000 he estimates he has spent on his face. “The size of the chin is quite a dimorphic trait, like a signal of masculinity,” he says. “I’m looking to vertically extend mine by a few millimetres.”

James says he stays out of the more toxic corners of the looksmaxxing forums. If anything, he thinks the new wave on [TikTok](#) has excluded much of the misogyny, but he says the potential remains for such content to stoke insecurity: “Some of these flaws aren’t fixable at all ... for a lot of teenagers out there, it can definitely be bad for their mental health.”

One of the biggest names in TikTok looksmaxxing is Kareem Shami, a 22-year-old student in San Diego, California. He goes by the username syrianpsycho and has more than 1.5 million followers. His profile picture is Patrick Bateman, the fictional serial killer played by Christian Bale in the film adaptation of *American Psycho*.

Shami grew up in Syria until his family was uprooted by war in 2012 and resettled in Beirut. He says he was picked on at school. “I was the only Syrian and was quite white-looking, despite being Arab,” he says. “I was deemed an outcast and it triggered something in me.” Acne also dented his confidence. Shami, who moved to the US to go to university, began trying to improve his look. He hit the gym, treated his spots and restyled his hair and clothes, documenting some of what he was doing on TikTok, where he offered advice.

Shami says he wasn’t even aware of looksmaxxing until 2022, when he posted a fast-cut progress video showing how his appearance had altered between the ages of 17 and 20. It’s striking how poised and polished

he has become, although he accepts that boys' faces can change radically in those years. Either way, the video blew up; it has been viewed 15m times.

It also went viral in the looksmaxxing forums, fuelling a scepticism bordering on contempt among original members of the community for brash TikTok arrivistes. "I get daily hate," says Shami, who says he rejects looksmaxxing's "incel" tradition and that Bateman, an "incel" pin-up, inspired him only to improve his looks. "Of course no one actually wants to be like that character." He says he relates to Bateman's loneliness.

Shami says older adults don't get looksmaxxing. There has been much hand-wringing in the media over "bone smashing", for example, an extreme technique that involves taking a hammer to your face to promote more "manly" regrowth when the bones repair, but little evidence that anyone is actually doing it. "The majority of the posts that you see about looksmaxxing are not serious," he says, adding that he promotes only softmaxxing.

But James's journey shows that vulnerable kids can take this stuff seriously. The biggest buzzword is mewing, which Shami espouses. A teenager looking a bit tense in the jaw area may well be holding their tongue firmly against the roof of their mouth in an attempt to strengthen their jaw muscles.



'I'm considered the antichrist in orthodontics' ... Mike Mews.

In a bizarre clash of cultures, mewing is named after an orthodontist from Kent who is well into his 90s. Since the late 1970s, John Mew (and later his son, Mike Mew) has promoted orthotropics, his [controversial alternative](#) to braces and tooth extractions. The Mews say that their tongue exercises, childhood palate-expanding devices and dietary changes can improve the aesthetics of the face, as well as overall health.

Rejected by the orthodontics profession, the Mews began to market their techniques on YouTube, gaining the attention of the burgeoning looksmaxxing community and turning them into unlikely rebel heroes. They are the subjects of [Open Wide](#), a Netflix documentary released in the US last month. (It has not been scheduled for release in the UK.)

Promoted by looksmaxxers as a face hack, mewing has gone mainstream, with more than 1bn mentions on TikTok. "Sometimes I stop young people and ask them if they know about mewing and it's now 100%," says Mike Mew from his clinic in Croydon. Now that looksmaxxing has gone mainstream, he is scrambling to regain control of his name and take a cut of a potentially lucrative pie. In November, he launched a training app for his "facial development techniques".

Pessimism has hindered me. It's easy to think that women will always be chasing something better or richer

## James

But other orthodontists are concerned about the craze. "We worry that people are using a technique that is unproven, unmonitored, unsupervised and based on misleading claims," says Matthew Clover, the director of clinical practice at the British Orthodontic Society. In January, the American Association of Orthodontists [said that](#) "scientific evidence supporting mewing's jawline-sculpting claims is as thin as dental floss".

Mike Mew claims he is the victim of a wider vendetta: "I'm considered the antichrist in orthodontics." He is in the middle of [a misconduct hearing](#) at the General Dental Council into his treatment of an unnamed child. The council argues there was "no adequate objective evidence" for his treatment, which included the use of a palate expander and head and neck gear.

Mew says he has not misled patients. “You’ve got to be able to put out ideas and say: ‘This is what I believe and this is the premise upon which I’m treating you,’” he says.

The Mews see their work as a crusade to restore our jaws in particular, which they argue have weakened and regressed in the industrial age, causing a range of problems from crooked teeth to breathing trouble. But does Mike Mew worry that by piling into a trend that is more obsessed with looks than health, he risks spreading insecurity? When I ask him this in an email, he doesn’t reply.

James says he never got on with mewing. He is not alone in seeking harder fixes. Cosmetic face surgeons have reported fielding more inquiries from young men. “We’re definitely noticing this,” says Mehmet Manisali, a maxillofacial surgeon based in Harley Street, central London, whose name I find in a looksmaxxing post on Reddit.



The maxillofacial surgeon Mehmet Manisali says he is fielding more inquiries from young men. Photograph: Ceylan Manisali

At least once a fortnight, Manisali performs chin surgery of the sort James is considering. He shows me gruesome pictures of the procedure, which involves exposing the chin bone inside the mouth, under the bottom front teeth, sawing off the end of it and repositioning it with a titanium plate. Bone grows back to fill the gap, which can push the chin down or forward by several millimetres.

Manisali charges about £10,000 for the procedure and says he vets patients over several meetings, often gently turning them down. “I have to decide if it’s somebody for whom a minor change might be a major confidence booster, versus somebody who’s got unrealistic expectations and it’s going to be the first step towards a disaster,” he says.

James says he doesn’t regret getting sucked into looksmaxxing. He thinks gaining knowledge and being enthusiastic about improving his appearance has improved his confidence. “But I’m also not deluded,” he says. “The other side of the sites is tied into women and relationships and is generally pessimistic. And I think that mentality has maybe hindered me, because it’s easy to think that women will always be chasing something better, richer ... and maybe they’re never going to be 100% satisfied with me.”

He spends less time on the forums or TikTok these days, but he still finds it hard not to obsess over his looks. He thinks he will get the chin surgery, perhaps later this year. “I’ve been thinking about it so long that I just want to kind of do it now,” he says. “And then that will be the last big thing. Then I’ll just be able to move on from all of this. That’s what I’m hoping, anyway.”

## For Gen Z, an Age-Old Question: Who Pays for Dates?

Young people tend to lean more liberal on a range of issues pertaining to relationship norms. But when it comes to dating, the idea that men should pay still prevails in heterosexual courtship.



Kent Barnhill and Zoe Miller at the Coupe in Washington, D.C., which was the site of their “first sit-down meal together when we started dating,” Ms. Miller said. Credit...Hailey Sadler for The New York Times

By [Santul Nerkar](#)

Santul Nerkar went on 11 dates while working on this story, paying for five and splitting six.

Published Feb. 10, 2024 Updated Feb. 13, 2024

During a recent dinner at a cozy bar in Upper Manhattan, I was confronted with an age-old question about gender norms. Over bowls of ramen and sips of gin cocktails, my date and I got into a debate: Who should pay for dates?

My date, a 27-year-old woman I matched with on Hinge, said gender equality didn’t mean men and women should pay the same when they went out. Women, she said, earn less than men in the workplace, spend more time getting ready for outings and pay more for reproductive care.

When the date ended, we split the bill. But our discussion was emblematic of a tension in modern dating. At work and on social media, where young people spend much of their personal time, they like to emphasize equity and equality. When it comes to romance and courtship, young people — specifically women and men in heterosexual relationships — seem to be following the same dating rules their parents and older generations grew up learning.

Contemporary research, popular culture and conversations I had with more than a dozen young Americans suggest that a longstanding norm still holds true: Men tend to foot the bill more than women do on dates. And there seems to be an expectation that they should.

### The ‘Paying for the First Date’ Dance

Some progressive defenders of the norm cite the persistent [gender wage gap](#), and the fact that women pay more for reproductive products and apparel than men and that they spend more time preparing for dates to comport with societal norms.

Kala Lundahl lives in New York City and works at a recruiting firm. She typically matches with people for dates through apps like Hinge, with the total cost of the date, usually over drinks, coming to around \$80. On the



first date, Ms. Lundahl, 24, always offers to split the check but expects the man to pay — and has encountered resistance when she offers to pay.

Ms. Lundahl said that if the date was going well, they might continue on to a second location, usually a cheaper place where she was more likely to pay. On a second date, she said, she would be more insistent on paying the entire check, or splitting it. Ms. Lundahl's reasoning comes from her belief that the person who did the asking out — usually the man — should pay for the date, and that the person who made more money — also usually the man — should cough up.

“A couple of guys get a little stiff when I offer to pay,” Ms. Lundahl said. “You can tell they're not comfortable with that idea.”



Kala Lundahl at the Campbell inside Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan. Credit...Casey Steffens for The New York Times

Scott Bowen, a 24-year-old accountant in Charlotte, N.C., said he always paid for drinks, meals and coffees on dates. Usually, that winds up being \$70 to \$100 per outing. The conversation over who pays usually lasts a split second — from the time the waiter sets down the check to when Mr. Bowen reaches over and says, “I'll grab that,” he said.

When Mr. Bowen was growing up, his parents made it clear to him that he should pay for dates when taking a woman out. He acknowledged that he wanted to see the status quo changed to be more of an even split, yet he said he was uncomfortable bringing up the subject at all during dates: Our conversation was one of the rare times he had spoken about the issue with another person.

In L.G.B.T.Q. relationships, who pays for dates has less to do with gender norms and more with [specific relationship dynamics](#).

Brendan Foley, a government worker in Washington, D.C., said that in his experience dating men, the check was usually split. When one person paid, it was often the older man, or the person who was understood to make more money. But the discussion of money during dates doesn't bother him.

“I think there are more honest and straightforward conversations than the dance in straight relationships,” Mr. Foley, 24, said.

### **The Persistent Tradition of Men Paying**

Shanhong Luo, a professor at Fayetteville State University, studies the factors behind attraction between romantic partners, including the norms that govern relationships. In [a paper](#) published in 2023 in *Psychological Reports*, a peer-reviewed journal, Dr. Luo and a team of researchers surveyed 552 heterosexual college students in Wilmington, N.C., and asked them whether they expected men or women to pay for dates — and whether they, as a man or a woman, typically paid more.

The researchers found that young men paid for all or most of the dates around 90 percent of the time, while women paid only about 2 percent (they split around 8 percent of the time). On subsequent dates, splitting the check was more common, though men still paid a majority of the time while women rarely did. Nearly 80

percent of men expected that they would pay on the first date, while just over half of women (55 percent) expected men to pay.

Surprisingly, views on gender norms didn't make much of a difference: On average, both men and women in the sample expected the man to pay, whether they had more traditional views of gender roles or more progressive ones.

"The findings strongly showed that the traditional pattern is still there," Dr. Luo said.

The persistent tradition of men paying for women might seem like a harmless artifact. But in a relationship, such acts don't exist in a vacuum.

Psychologists differentiate between two forms of sexism: "hostile sexism," defined by beliefs like women are inferior to men, and "benevolent sexism," defined by beliefs like it is men's duty to protect women. But the latter can give way to the former.

"The notion of chivalry is couched in very positive terms," said Campbell Leaper, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. "But over time, if people are stuck in these roles, that comes at a cost."

In a [2016 study](#), Dr. Leaper and his co-author, Alexa Paynter, surveyed undergraduate students in California, asking them how they rated a number of traditional courtship gestures, including men paying for dates. A majority of both young men and women said men should pay for dates, but for men, the association between that view and more hostile views toward women was particularly strong.

Dr. Leaper, who has been teaching a class on gender development for more than 30 years, said his students today were more liberal on a range of issues pertaining to gender identity, sexuality and norms governing relationships. But his students often defend the principle behind men paying for dates, or say they hadn't even thought how it was connected to sexism.

"That's kind of surprising to them, and something they haven't really thought about before," Dr. Leaper said.

Part of the reason the norm may persist in young people is that dates are inherently awkward, Dr. Luo said. Even for young people who may hold a steadfast commitment to financial independence — whether a man or a woman — the pressure of an age-old norm may kick in.

"Regardless of what you believe in, you'll do what the norm says you do," Dr. Luo said.

### **Easier as Relationships Deepen**

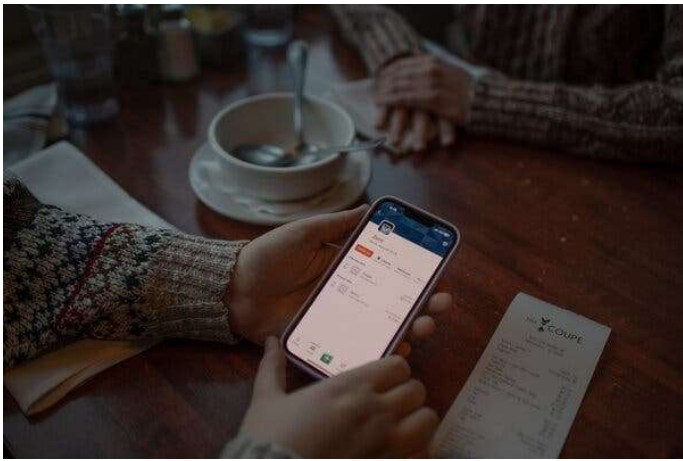
Kent Barnhill said he paid for around 80 percent of the dates he went on, usually with people he had met on dating apps. Mr. Barnhill, 27, identifies as a feminist and is politically progressive, but he said his upbringing in a wealthy, conservative household in South Florida had shaped his practice of insisting on paying for dates, particularly early on in relationships.

"On the first date, I always establish beforehand that I want to pay," said Mr. Barnhill, a data analyst in the Washington, D.C., public school system. "The fact I'm paying more does not bother me."

Zoe Miller, 23, on the other hand, grew up in a liberal household in Chapel Hill, N.C. One experience on a date in college shaped her insistence on splitting the bill. While her date was in the restroom, a waiter came by and asked Ms. Miller how the two wanted to pay. She said she wanted to split the bill, so the waiter came back with two checks. When Ms. Miller's date came back, he was furious. He wanted to pay for the date.

Now, she said, "I absolutely refuse not to split the check."

Ms. Miller and Mr. Barnhill started dating after meeting through a mutual friend. The couple recently enjoyed a meal at a fine dining Italian restaurant in the Mount Vernon neighborhood of Washington, and Mr. Barnhill had paid.



Ms. Miller and Mr. Barnhill have come up with a system for paying for dates in their relationship: They take turns and use the Splitwise app. Credit...Hailey Sadler for The New York Times

Ms. Miller initially found it hard to swallow when Mr. Barnhill would pay the entire check. But a combination of a difference in incomes — she has had fewer shifts at her job at a smoothie shop — and viewing the gesture as genuine, rather than an expression of power, warmed her to the idea. Since that outing, they've tried to split their dates, using the app Splitwise.

Once two people make it past the initial, awkward courtship, navigating the trickiness of date financing tends to be easier. When one person pays, man or woman, they find joy, likening the act of paying to gift-giving.

Andrew Tuchler and Miranda Zhang are a married couple in Los Angeles who met in college. Going out for expensive dates was not financially feasible for them, so they opted for what college couples often do: spending time over cafeteria meals and during club events.

Mr. Tuchler and Ms. Zhang, both 26, said the early experience of a relationship not defined by money had helped steel them for the challenges of talking about and spending money. The couple split their finances, but when it comes to dates, they alternate who pays.

Mr. Tuchler said he enjoyed it as an act of service — even taking the extra step to tell the waiter what she'll be having. Ms. Zhang said she appreciated the gesture, and enjoyed returning the favor.

**[Santul Nerkar](#) is a reporter covering business and sports.**

[Why young consumers love Birkenstocks \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Selling your sole

## Why young consumers love Birkenstocks

The ancient German sandal-maker goes public



Blingenstocksimage: getty images

Oct 12th 2023

In the blockbuster “Barbie” film, the Birkenstock is more than a shoe. It is a symbol of the real world not run by girls. It is introduced as a deliberately drab antithesis of Barbie’s perfect stiletto. By the film’s end the titular blonde is wearing the cork sandal—with the hallmark double-strap in her signature pink—as she walks into her new life, no longer a doll but a woman ready to put her best foot forward.

Barbie is not the only one swapping heels for contoured soles. So are real-life youngsters. Birkenstock’s revenues have doubled in the past three years, to \$1.4bn. Almost half of last year’s sales came courtesy of buyers in their 20s and 30s. Some of that is down to clever product placement—social-media mentions of Birkenstocks reached a record high in July around the time of the “Barbie” premiere. A lot more has to do with a post-pandemic fashion for all things casual and comfortable, especially among Millennials and Gen-Zs, which has boosted sales of other ungainly casual-chic footwear, such as furry Ugg boots or Croc sandals.

What is cool with the kids proved hot with some investors. On October 10th Birkenstock raised \$1.5bn in an initial public offering (ipo) on the New York Stock Exchange, valuing the firm at around \$9bn.

Although Birkenstocks are far from beautiful—German children forced to wear them to school in the 1980s bemoaned their ugliness—their maker has managed to turn itself into an aspirational brand. It has collaborated with Dior, a high-fashion brand controlled by lvmh, a French luxury behemoth, to make \$1,100 mules. It probably helped that L Catterton, a private-equity firm which bought a majority stake in 2021, is backed by lvmh. The family holding company of lvmh’s boss, Bernard Arnault, said it would buy up to \$325m-worth of Birkenstock shares in the ipo and nominate one of Mr Arnault’s sons to its board.

Perhaps owing to the influence of its luxury backers, Birkenstock has no plans to increase production capacity; ever since Johann Adam Birkenstock started making shoes in 1774, the company has insisted on maintaining almost all its production in Germany (only some of the cork soles are made in Portugal). Engineering scarcity by limiting output is a time-honoured strategy for high-end brands that peddle exclusivity. Their couture-pocketed customers tend to be insensitive to price rises.

Birkenstock has managed to push up prices a bit in the past few years, but revenue growth also came from increased shipments. It is unclear how much more expensive it can make its sandals without putting off its customers. Investors are already watching their step. Its share price slipped by 13% on its first day of trading. ■

14 February 2024

### **1. Europe, NATO and Donald Trump**

Page 2 : Trump Is Losing It (NYT, Opinion)

Page 5 : Joe Biden calls Trump's Nato remarks 'dumb', 'shameful' and 'dangerous' (The Guardian, Opinion)

Page 7 : Prepare for President Trump: Europe must hurry to defend itself against Russia—and Donald Trump (The Economist, Leader)

Page 10 : OTAN : l'électrochoc Trump (Le Monde, Editorial)

Page 11 : How Donald Trump's re-election would threaten NATO's Article 5 (The Economist)

Page 11 : «Otan: l'heure du réveil a sonné pour l'Europe» (Le Figaro, Editorial)

Page 12 : Europe and the US are drifting further apart – and Britain will be left to flounder (The Guardian, Columnist)

Page 15 : "Putin's Final Battle" (FAZ, Guest Essay)

Page 21 : NATO without USA? Trump's bluster and his looming comeback make the 'strategic autonomy' of the EU socially acceptable. (NZZ, Opinion)

### **2. Culture Wars – Islam and Islamophobia**

Page 23 : The culture war over the Gaza war (The Economist)

Page 27 : 78 % des musulmans considèrent que la laïcité française est islamophobe (Le Figaro)

Page 29 : Islamophobie et antisémitisme : « Quand l'Union européenne cède au "statistiquement correct" » (Le Figaro, Guest Essay)

Page 31 : Do Muslim Women Need Saving? (The Economist, Book Review)

### **3. Culture – Film and TV Reviews**

Page 32 : The New Look review – the rivalry between Coco Chanel and Christian Dior is absurd to the point of insult (The Guardian, Film Review)

Page 34 : You Might Not Like What Jon Stewart Has to Tell You (NYT, TV Review)

# 1. Europe, NATO and Donald Trump

14 February (NYT)

[Opinion | Trump Is Losing It - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

OPINION

JAMELLE BOUIE

## Trump Is Losing It

Feb. 13, 2024



Credit...Patrick T. Fallon/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

By [Janelle Bouie](#)

Opinion Columnist

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It is unclear whether Donald Trump has forgotten the precise nature of NATO or whether he ever fully grasped it in the first place.

What is clear, however, is that Trump — who ostensibly spent four years as president of the United States — has little clue about what NATO is or what NATO does. And when he spoke on the subject at a rally in South Carolina over the weekend, what he said was less a cogent discussion of foreign policy than it was gibberish — the kind of outrageous nonsense that flows without interruption from an empty and unreflective mind.

“One of the presidents of a big country stood up and said, ‘Well, sir, if we don’t pay, and we’re attacked by Russia, will you protect us?’” Trump said, recalling an implausible conversation with an unnamed, presumably European head of state. “‘You didn’t pay? You’re delinquent?’” Trump recounted responding. “‘No, I would not protect you. In fact, I would encourage them to do whatever the hell they want. You gotta pay. You gotta pay your bills.’”

The former president’s message was clear: If NATO members do not pay up, then he will leave them to the mercy of a continental aggressor who has already plunged one European country into death, destruction and devastation.

Except NATO isn’t a mafia protection racket. NATO, in case anyone needs to be reminded, is a mutual defense organization, formed by treaty in 1949 as tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union hardened into conflict. “The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all,” states Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

According to the terms of an agreement reached last year, member states will work to spend at least 2 percent of national G.D.P. on military investment.

But let's set this bit of fact-checking aside for a moment and look at the big picture.

It is not just that Trump is ignorant on this and other vital questions; it is that he is incoherent.

Consider his remarks at a recent gathering of the National Rifle Association in Harrisburg, Pa. "We have to win in November, or we're not going to have Pennsylvania. They'll change the name. They're going to change the name of Pennsylvania," Trump said.

Who, exactly, is going to change the name of Pennsylvania? And to what? I don't know. I doubt Trump does either.

Or consider the time, last November, when Trump confused China and North Korea, telling an audience of supporters in Florida that "Kim Jong Un leads 1.4 billion people, and there is no doubt about who the boss is. And they want me to say he's not an intelligent man."

There was also the time that Trump mistook Nikki Haley, his former ambassador to the United Nations, for Nancy Pelosi, the former speaker of the House.

"Nikki Haley, you know they, do you know they destroyed all of the information, all of the evidence, everything, deleted and destroyed all of it. All of it, because of lots of things like Nikki Haley is in charge of security. We offered her 10,000 people, soldiers, National Guard, whatever they want. They turned it down. They don't want to talk about that. These are very dishonest people," Trump said, repeating his false claim that Pelosi was responsible for the failure of Capitol security on Jan. 6.

If you would like, you can also try to make sense of the former president's recent attempt to describe a missile defense system:

"I will build an Iron Dome over our country, a state-of-the-art missile defense shield made in the U.S.A.," Trump said, before taking an unusual detour. "These are not muscle guys here, they're muscle guys up here, right," he continued, gesturing to his arms and his head to emphasize, I guess, that the people responsible for building such systems are capable and intelligent.

"And they calmly walk to us, and ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. They've only got 17 seconds to figure this whole thing out. Boom. OK. Missile launch. Whoosh. Boom," he added.

I assume Trump is describing the pressure of actually manning a missile defense system. Even so, one would think that a former president — currently vying to be the next president — would at least try to be a little more articulate.

But this gets to one of the oddest things about this election cycle so far. There is no shortage of coverage of President Biden's age, even if there's no evidence that his age has been an obstacle to his ability to perform his duties. Indeed, it is plainly true that Biden has been an unusually successful president in areas, like legislative negotiations, that require skill and mental acuity.

Coverage of Biden's age, in other words, has more to do with the vibes of an "elderly" president — he isn't as outwardly vigorous and robust as we would like — than it does with any particular issue with his performance.

In contrast to the obsessive coverage of Biden's age, there is comparatively little coverage of Trump's obvious deficiencies in that department. If we are going to use public comments as the measure of mental fitness, then the former president is clearly at a disadvantage.

Unfortunately for Biden, Trump benefits from something akin to the soft bigotry of low expectations. Because no one expected Trump, in the 2016 election, to speak and behave like a normal candidate, he was held to a lower effective standard than his rivals in both parties. Because no one expected him, during his presidency, to be orderly and responsible, his endless scandals were framed as business as usual. And because no one now

expects him to be a responsible political figure with a coherent vision for the country, it's as if no one blinks an eye when he rants and raves on the campaign trail.

It's not that there aren't legitimate reasons to be concerned about Biden's age. He is already the oldest person to serve in the Oval Office. The issue here is one of proportion and consequence. Biden may be unable to do the job at some point in the future; Trump, it seems to me, already is.

One of those is a lot more concerning than the other.

**Jamelle Bouie became a New York Times Opinion columnist in 2019. Before that he was the chief political correspondent for Slate magazine. He is based in Charlottesville, Va., and Washington. [@jbouie](#)**



14 February (The Guardian)

[Joe Biden calls Trump's Nato remarks 'dumb', 'shameful' and 'dangerous' | Joe Biden | The Guardian](#)

## Joe Biden calls Trump's Nato remarks 'dumb', 'shameful' and 'dangerous'

Biden decries Trump's comments on encouraging Russia to attack Nato allies as he gives speech to bolster support for Ukraine bill



■ Biden: Trump's Nato comments are 'dumb, shameful and un-American' - video

[Martin Pengelly](#) in Washington

Tue 13 Feb 2024 22.01 CET

Joe Biden has attacked Donald Trump's comments on the US pulling out of the Nato military alliance as "dumb", "shameful" and "dangerous" in a blistering speech attacking Republican opposition to legislation partly aimed at providing support for Ukraine in its stand against a Russian invasion.

Trump's remarks about encouraging [Russia](#) to attack Nato allies who did not contribute what Trump called their fair share of Nato funding have set off alarm bells across Europe among leaders who eye the prospect of a second Trump presidency with growing disquiet.

In a speech after the foreign aid bill – which also includes aid to Israel and Taiwan – passed the Senate, Biden urged reluctant [Republicans](#) to pass the legislation in the Republican-controlled House.

"Supporting this bill is standing up to Putin," Biden said. "Opposing it is playing into Putin's hands."

Biden then attacked Trump for his encouraging of Republicans in the House to refuse to support the bill and for his comments about [Russia](#) and Nato.

"Can you imagine a former president of the United States saying that? The whole world heard it," he said. "The worst thing is, he means it. No other president in our history has ever bowed down to a Russian dictator. Let me say this as clearly as I can: I never will.

"For God's sake it's dumb, it's shameful, it's dangerous. It's un-American. When America gives its word it means something, so when we make a commitment, we keep it. And [Nato](#) is a sacred commitment."

The passage of the bill through the House, however, looks far from assured despite the president's urging and its hard-won success in the Senate. Mike Johnson, the hard-right Republican House speaker, in effect rejected the aid package because it lacked border enforcement provisions.

"The mandate of national security supplemental legislation was to secure America's own border before sending additional foreign aid around the world," he said, adding: "In the absence of having received any single border policy change from the Senate, the House will have to continue to work its own will on these important matters. America deserves better than the Senate's status quo."

Many see such sentiments as richly ironic given it was Johnson and his House Republicans who – under pressure from Trump and his allies – [tanked an earlier version](#) of the aid legislation which included a bipartisan immigration deal intended to tackle the US-Mexico border crisis.

Conservatives had insisted recently that the foreign aid package must be tied to border security measures but with immigration poised to play a critical role in the November elections and Trump increasingly certain to be the Republican nominee, the party was suddenly scared of handing Biden a domestic policy victory by trying to solve the issue.

But the crises being tackled by the legislation are not just limited to the border, [Ukraine](#) and Russia – or just Republicans.

Biden also stressed the part of the package passed by the Senate that he said “provides Israel with what it needs to protect his people against the terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah and others, and it will provide life-saving humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people desperately need food, water and shelter. They need help.”

That was a message to Biden’s own party: three senators (two Democrats and the Democratic-aligned Bernie Sanders) also voted no on the bill, citing Biden’s staunch support for Israel’s military strikes in the Palestinian territories.

14 February (The Economist)

[Europe must hurry to defend itself against Russia—and Donald Trump \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com)

Prepare for President Trump

## Europe must hurry to defend itself against Russia—and Donald Trump

The ex-president's invitation to Vladimir Putin to attack American allies is an assault on NATO. Ultimately, that is bad for America



image: getty images

Feb 12th 2024

If Donald Trump is [returned to the White House](#), which version will it be? The one who [cajoled allies](#) to spend more on defence, reinforced NATO troops on the eastern flank and began to arm Ukraine; or the one who threatened to leave the alliance and embraced Vladimir Putin? To judge from his latest election-campaign outrage, he is likely to prove the wrecker of the Western alliance.

At a rally on February 10th Mr Trump, the near-certain Republican presidential nominee recounted how the leader of a “big country” once asked him whether America would defend an ally that was “delinquent” on its payments, presumably one that was not meeting the NATO target of [spending 2% of GDP on defence](#). “No, I would not protect you,” Mr. Trump replied. “In fact, I would encourage them to do whatever the hell they want. You gotta pay. You gotta pay your bills.”

These words are Mr Trump's most damaging assault yet on NATO, and should set alarms ringing across the defence alliance. It does not much matter whether he was indulging in hyperbole or recounting an old conversation. Exhorting Russia to attack any NATO country in any way is to weaken the sacred promise of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty: that an attack on one ally is an attack on all; and that an attack on even the smallest ally is, in effect, an attack on America. Compare Mr Trump's demeaning of allies with President Joe Biden's warning to Russia that America will defend “every inch” of NATO territory.

The message of deterrence has worked since NATO was founded in 1949. After the end of the cold war NATO enabled the extension of democracy and economic prosperity to the countries of the former Soviet bloc. In the past two years Article 5, and the deployment of NATO forces in eastern Europe, has kept allies safe even as Russia has savaged Ukraine. NATO has given members confidence to help Ukraine defend itself. The alliance continues to attract members, most recently Finland and, soon, Sweden. But cast any doubt on Article 5, and the alliance is worth little. As deterrence is eroded, the risk of a future war will grow accordingly.

### **The Don**

Mr Trump is scarcely the first president to complain of freeriding allies—and to do so has been justified. But he is turning a democratic alliance into a mobster's racket: no money, no American protection. Mr Trump claims his bluntness succeeded in getting allies to spend billions more on their defence. In 2017, his first year in office,

just four of 29 nato allies met the 2% target, according to nato figures. By 2020, his last, this had risen to nine. Mr Trump certainly helped to push the allies. The bigger impulse was the growing threat from Russia: defence spending started to rise in 2015, before Mr Trump's time, and continued well after it. In 2023, with Mr Biden in power, 11 out of 31 allies made the 2% target; a majority will probably reach it this year.

If elected, Mr Trump's second-term policies would depend in part on whom he appoints to leading positions. But his baleful influence is already being felt. Against the better judgment of most Republicans, Mr Trump's "America first" devotees have for months blocked passage of a bill to renew military and civilian aid to Ukraine. Recent legislation requiring Congress to approve an actual American withdrawal from nato would not be much of a restraint. Congress cannot stop a president from undermining nato by, say, withdrawing American troops from Europe or simply refusing to stand by Article 5 and defend allies under attack.

Mr Trump and his apologists in Congress boast that he prevented major wars on his watch because foes were scared of him. Speaking after Mr Trump's latest outburst, Senator Lindsey Graham said, "Russia didn't invade anybody when he was president." Senator Marco Rubio said, "I have zero concern, because he's been president before." By condoning his words, supposedly security-minded Republicans are only adding to the harm. With Russia pushing against embattled Ukrainian defenders and stepping up its military output, any weakening of nato will raise the risk of a broader conflict.

The idea that you can disregard Mr Trump's remarks on nato, because his actual intent might be different, is fatally complacent. Deterrence works when the commitment to collective defence is absolute and unambiguous. By sowing doubt, Mr Trump has invited Russia and other enemies to test the West's resolve. The Danish defence minister recently warned that Russia could probe nato members' commitment to Article 5 within three to five years. His counterpart in Britain said the country had to prepare for wars involving Russia, China, Iran or North Korea in the next five years.

Europeans must [act urgently](#) to confront twin threats: attack by Russia and abandonment by America. Rather than moan about Mr Trump, they should get on with meeting the 2% target. They should also revise the threshold: 3% of gdp is probably what is now required to meet nato's existing defence plans, and it would have to be higher without American help. America spent nearly 3.5% of gdp on defence last year. Europeans face a far greater threat.

Europeans will need to invest in everything from ammunition to all the other things that America provides at scale: transport and refuelling aircraft, air defences, command-and-control systems and intelligence platforms ranging from satellites to drones. Europeans must not just spend more, but must spend better. They should buy more kit jointly and integrate their defence industries. To nudge laggards, they should agree that senior positions cannot be held by candidates from countries that do not meet minimum standards.

This will serve three purposes: strengthen Europeans' ability to help Ukraine and defend themselves against Russia; prove that Europeans are sharing the burden and that the alliance is a good deal for America; and create a hedge against abandonment by Mr Trump. The European Union has improved its defence capabilities in recent years but is not an alternative provider of security. Better for Europeans to think how to take over the existing structure of nato if America leaves (while holding open the possibility that a post-Trump America might eventually seek to rejoin). One question would be whether to revise unanimity rules. Decision-making is hard enough with a benevolent American hegemon—witness the delays in admitting Finland and Sweden. It will be impossible in a shrunken alliance of small and medium-sized allies.

The most sensitive issue will be how Europe's two nuclear-weapons states, Britain and France, can provide greater deterrence for European allies in the absence of an American nuclear umbrella. They currently have only about 500 warheads between them, compared with more than 5,000 for America and nearly 6,000 for Russia. And the creation of a European-wide nuclear deterrent would involve deeply sensitive questions: France would doubtless see its vital interests at stake in an attack on Germany, but would it extend its assurance to eastern Europe? How long could Britain maintain its nuclear warheads and missiles, the latter drawn from a stockpile shared with America, if the occupant of the White House were to sever co-operation?

The undermining of nato is a threat to all America's alliances. As the post-war system begins to crumble, and America's leaders cast doubt on their country's role as a guarantor of security, its allies around the world will feel more vulnerable. Frightened countries may go their own way, rearming and perhaps even seeking to acquire their own nuclear weapons. Even if this is defensive, it will be seen as threatening by their foes. That is why Mr Trump's comments threaten to make the world a much more dangerous place, not least for America itself.

In spite of this, Mr Trump's words mean that Europe has no choice but to rearm, not least because Europe's weakness is itself a cause of instability. The best way to preserve the Western alliance—and to limit the damage should a hostile Mr Trump come to power—is to prepare for a more insecure era. Even then, be under no illusion that rearming can fully replace the loss of American power.■

14 February (Le Monde)

[https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2024/02/13/otan-l-electrochoc-trump\\_6216296\\_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2024/02/13/otan-l-electrochoc-trump_6216296_3232.html)

# OTAN : l'électrochoc Trump

## Éditorial

Trop longtemps les Européens se sont bercés d'illusions sur leur sécurité. Il leur revient, aujourd'hui, de faire face ensemble à la double dynamique destructrice Poutine-Trump.

Publié hier à 11h30

Ce n'était pas la première salve de Donald Trump contre l'Europe, ni contre l'Organisation du traité de l'Atlantique Nord (OTAN), mais l'énormité de son propos, lors d'un meeting électoral, samedi 10 février, en Caroline du Nord, a réveillé les Européens. Non seulement l'ex-président des Etats-Unis, candidat à un second mandat et pour l'heure favori dans les sondages, a affirmé que, sous son autorité, les Etats-Unis ne défendraient pas les Etats membres de l'OTAN qui ne paieraient pas assez pour leur défense, [mais il a en outre laissé entendre qu'il encouragerait la Russie à les attaquer](#).

La différence entre cette tirade et celles auxquelles M. Trump avait habitué les alliés de l'OTAN lorsqu'il était à la Maison Blanche est que, depuis bientôt deux ans, la guerre à grande échelle est de retour en Europe, avec, précisément, la Russie dans le rôle de l'agresseur. Plusieurs pays européens de l'OTAN, frontaliers de l'Ukraine, de la Biélorussie ou de la Russie, vivent chaque jour avec cette menace et la perçoivent comme existentielle.

Que Donald Trump se soit volontairement montré provocant ou non, qu'il ait mesuré la portée de ses déclarations ou non, que son message ait été destiné à flatter la fibre isolationniste de son électorat ou à affoler les Européens, peu importe. Ce qu'il faut retenir de ces déclarations, c'est que celui qui sera peut-être à la tête des Etats-Unis fin 2024 a semé le doute sur la validité de l'Alliance au moment où les Européens ont le plus besoin d'en être assurés. Or la fonction de dissuasion de l'Alliance atlantique s'effondre dès lors que l'adversaire peut douter qu'elle sera mise en œuvre.

## Menaces prises au sérieux

Il ne faut pas non plus prendre à la légère, même s'il peut paraître fantaisiste, l'appel du pied ainsi formulé à l'adresse de Moscou. Déjà, en 2018, au cours d'une rencontre au sommet avec Poutine à Helsinki, Donald Trump, alors président, avait affirmé qu'il apportait plus de crédit à ce que lui disait le président russe qu'à ses propres services de renseignement. Cette fois-ci, les propos de M. Trump coïncident avec les efforts déployés par les élus républicains au Congrès pour bloquer l'aide américaine à l'Ukraine et avec l'interview fleuve de M. Poutine réalisée à Moscou par un soutien du camp Trump, Tucker Carlson. Dans cet entretien, il a indiqué qu'il n'avait pas l'intention de s'en prendre « à la Lettonie ou à la Pologne », membres de l'OTAN – deux pays qui, incidemment, dépensent beaucoup pour leur défense. La convergence des positions de MM. Trump et Poutine dans cette séquence a de quoi inquiéter les alliés des Etats-Unis.

Les réactions alarmées de plusieurs dirigeants européens, lundi, aux propos de M. Trump montrent que ses menaces sont enfin prises au sérieux. Elles devraient en réalité tenir lieu d'électrochoc. Trop longtemps, y compris sous la présidence Trump (2017-2021), les Européens se sont bercés d'illusions à la fois sur la réalité de la menace russe et sur la priorité de la protection absolue des Etats-Unis au sein d'une Alliance conçue il y a bientôt soixante-quinze ans dans un contexte international totalement différent.

L'invasion de l'Ukraine par les forces russes, le 24 février 2022, a ouvert les yeux à l'Europe de l'Ouest. Tardivement, les Européens réalisent que le monde a changé et qu'ils doivent, ensemble et sans attendre l'élection présidentielle américaine de novembre, tirer les leçons de cette [double dynamique destructrice Trump-Poutine](#). Et, enfin, prendre leur sécurité en charge.

14 February (The Guardian)

14 February (Le Figaro)

«Otan: l'heure du réveil a sonné pour l'Europe» (lefigaro.fr)

## «Otan: l'heure du réveil a sonné pour l'Europe»

Par [Patrick Saint-Paul](#)

Publié le 12/02/2024 à 20:59, mis à jour le 12/02/2024 à 20:59



Patrick Saint-Paul. *Le Figaro*

### **L'ÉDITORIAL DU FIGARO - Il est urgent pour l'Europe d'être enfin à la hauteur de deux menaces sérieuses: une attaque russe et un abandon de l'allié américain.**

Leur maison brûle et les Européens continuent de dormir, rêvant d'un monde disparu. Lorsque Donald Trump a proféré ses menaces contre l'Otan en 2017, ils ont entrouvert un œil, mais le sursaut n'est pas venu. Tout comme il n'est pas venu avec la guerre en Ukraine. [L'Europe a augmenté ses capacités militaires](#), mais elle est encore très loin du compte. L'économie de guerre appelée de ses vœux par Emmanuel Macron et l'«[autonomie stratégique](#)» restent des mirages. Comme si elle n'avait rien appris de son histoire, l'UE reste dangereusement dépendante des États-Unis pour sa sécurité.

[Favori de la primaire](#), Trump n'est pas encore élu à la Maison-Blanche. Mais ses attaques contre l'Alliance sont les plus inquiétantes jamais lancées. Exhorter la Russie à s'en prendre à un pays de l'Otan fragilise la promesse de l'article 5 selon laquelle une agression contre un pays allié est une agression contre les États-Unis, et vice versa. Entre 1945 et 2022, l'Europe a connu la plus longue période de paix depuis l'Empire romain. Grâce à la protection américaine! Naïvement, elle en a profité pour se désinvestir de sa propre sécurité. Sur les 31 membres de l'Otan, seuls 11 atteignent la barre des 2 % du PIB en dépenses militaires. La France plafonne à 1,9 %... loin derrière les 3,5 % des États-Unis.

Au lieu de se plaindre d'un nouveau coup dur, il est urgent pour l'Europe d'être enfin à la hauteur de deux menaces sérieuses: une attaque russe et un abandon de l'allié américain. En dépit des difficultés budgétaires, la barre des 2 % paraît dérisoire au vu des enjeux. L'Europe doit dépenser plus, elle doit dépenser mieux pour se réarmer et organiser enfin sa défense collective si elle veut devenir une force crédible. Pour les Européens, le pire cauchemar serait un «deal» de Trump avec la Russie, sur le dos de l'Ukraine et de l'Europe, pour l'éloigner de la Chine et mieux contrer la menace principale. L'Amérique de Biden n'est pas beaucoup plus rassurante. Elle aussi se détournera un jour du Vieux Continent [pour affronter le défi chinois](#). L'heure du réveil a sonné pour l'Europe. L'entendra-t-elle?

14 February (The Guardian)

[Europe and the US are drifting further apart – and Britain will be left to flounder | Rafael Behr | The Guardian](#)

# Europe and the US are drifting further apart – and Britain will be left to flounder

[Rafael Behr](#)

For decades, UK foreign policy had two pillars: the EU and Washington. Who would be our allies in a Trump 2.0 world?

Wed 14 Feb 2024 07.00 CET



‘At a rally in South Carolina on Saturday, Donald Trump boasted that he would encourage Russia to ‘do whatever the hell they want’ to countries that weren’t, in his view, paying their Nato bills.’ Photograph: Julia Nihinson/AFP/Getty Images

Nine months is a long time to hold your breath. The identity of the next US president won’t be known until 6 November, but already the prospect of it being [Donald Trump](#) has America’s allies clenched in strategic suspense.

In European democracies, the fear is existential. For 75 years, their security has been guaranteed by the North Atlantic treaty, which Trump scorns as a bad deal for the US. At a rally over the weekend, the [former president boasted](#) of having encouraged Russia to “do whatever the hell they want” to countries that weren’t, in his view, paying their Nato bills.

If returned to the White House, Trump might not actually renege on US commitments of mutual assistance to countries that fear they are in Vladimir Putin’s firing line. But the former president doesn’t have to mean exactly what he says, or even win the election, for his words to have effect. Ambiguity undermines deterrence.

American unreliability will permeate every discussion when Nato defence ministers gather in Brussels this week.

The gripe that Europeans free-ride on America’s defence budget is an old refrain. Most Nato members accept it is also a fair one. Only a minority have met the commitment made in 2006 [to allocate 2% of GDP](#) for defence spending. But in the past, frustration at the asymmetry of contribution has been softened by historical allegiance and alignment of values. Even in terms of self-interested realpolitik, Washington could value the upkeep of European democracy, stability and prosperity as a Nato dividend.

Not Trump. He doesn’t do alliances, only transactions and threats. Mutual benefit is for wimps. The test of a good deal in Trumpworld is that the other party feels cheated. For that reason he despises the EU even more than Nato because it isn’t a US client. It has its own commercial heft as a continental trading bloc.

The ambition to spike Europe’s guns as an economic superpower is another thing Trump has in common with Putin. It is why they were both enthusiasts for Brexit.

US unreliability is already stalking the battlefield in Ukraine. [Vital aid has been held up](#) in Congress, which is partly the effect of Trump having a thumb on the military scales before he has even been formally nominated as



the Republican candidate. It looks like payout for a Kremlin bet that western finance and moral support for Kyiv will run out faster than Russian shells and conscript cannon fodder.

There is a faction of the US right that admires Putin on ideological grounds, as a scourge of degenerate liberalism. But mostly Republicans are just glad if the war goes badly for the side Joe Biden has backed, so they can cast his presidency as an era of US weakness and Trump as a restoration of strength.

The repugnant cynicism of that game will poison America's international relationships, even if Biden wins a second term. It is already clear that the old congressional consensus in favour of constitutional democracy and the rule of law has gone.

Seeing the writing on the wall, European leaders are talking with new urgency about what Emmanuel Macron calls "[strategic autonomy](#)". This used to be dismissed as an improbable flight of Gallic fancy. Now it frames the continent's agenda. The implications in terms of where the extra money for bigger defence budgets – even more than 2% of GDP – will come from, and what a consolidated continental defence capability actually involves, are only slowly seeping into domestic politics.

Those questions are coming to Britain, too. It is a conversation for which Westminster is hopelessly unprepared.

The proximity of a general election has narrowed horizons in what is at the best of times a myopic political culture. Foreign policy rarely impinges. Even when Brexit was the dominant issue, the focus was usually parochial – internecine Tory squabbles and nationalist mythomania, never a rational discussion of what it meant for the UK's alliances.

One sign that Rishi Sunak is sensitive to the magnitude of what might happen to the US in early November is that he is reported to be going off the idea of holding a UK ballot [at the same time](#). Trump winning while parliament was dissolved would exacerbate the shock and complicate Britain's response.

But Sunak won't be drawn on the deeper questions that should inform the response. David Cameron went so far as to describe Trump's trolling of Nato over the weekend as "[not a sensible approach](#)". That is, presumably, also the current prime minister's view.

Sunak brought his predecessor back into the cabinet so he could outsource foreign policy in an election year. His own diplomatic repertoire is thin. The main achievement has been stabilising EU relations via cordial and [realistic engagement with Ursula von der Leyen](#), European Commission president. Bilateral European relationships have been neglected.

Sunak still hasn't visited Berlin since moving into No 10, which comes across as a snub given the importance of protocol in German politics. He has been to Paris, prompting reports of a [budding bromance with Macron](#). But there is no substance to the partnership. The French president expected a high-level exchange of geopolitical analysis. His British counterpart wanted a quickie deal on stopping small boats crossing the Channel.

The obsession with maritime migration has been more fruitful as bonding material in relations with [Giorgia Meloni](#), the Italian prime minister with a pragmatic streak belying a far-right pedigree. It is [a revealing affinity for Sunak](#), putting him closer to the camp of European populists who will cheer a second Trump term than the liberals who flinch at the thought.

The preference is noted in Paris and Berlin. It is consistent with the tenor of Sunak's plans to legislate Britain out of its treaty obligations towards refugees.

The safety of Rwanda bill, under scrutiny in the House of Lords this week, repudiates less of the European convention on human rights than many Tories would like, but it is conceived in contempt for the court that adjudicates breaches of that convention. It implies that international law should melt under the heat of a government's impatience to deport unwanted foreigners. The spirit is Trumpian.

In other contexts, Sunak aspires to be a friend to Europe. His support for Ukraine is unwavering. He negotiated the [Windsor framework](#) for Northern Ireland in repudiation of Boris Johnson's vandalistic Brexit method. But

refraining from sabotage is the minimum requirement for functional relations. Good neighbourliness is a mood, not a policy concept. It doesn't answer the hard question of how Britain engages with a Europe that craves strategic autonomy.

For a generation, Britain's foreign policy had two pillars – the EU and the transatlantic alliance. London was the pivotal bridge between Washington and Brussels. Brexit blew up one side. Trump has wired the other side for detonation. That is a crisis of Britain's global orientation that should be central to debate in a general election campaign. But that would require political leaders who can admit the crisis exists. I'm not holding my breath.

**Rafael Behr is a Guardian columnist**

14 February (FAZ)

[Ukrainekrieg: Putins Endkampf und wie Europa Einfluss nehmen könnte \(faz.net\)](#)

## Putins Endkampf

Die US-Präsidentenwahl wird den Verlauf des Ukrainekriegs beeinflussen. Europa sollte aber nicht schicksalsergeben nach Washington schauen. Auch ohne Amerika hätte es die Kraft, Kiew zum Sieg zu verhelfen.

### “Putin's Final Battle”

The US presidential election will influence the course of the Ukraine war. However, Europe should not passively look to Washington. Even without America, it has the strength to help Kiev to victory. A Guest Essay

#### Ein Gastbeitrag

VON MARTIN SCHULZE WESSEL

-AKTUALISIERT AM 14.02.2024-06:46



Wladimir Putin posiert für ein Foto mit jungen Soldaten des russischen Militärs. Bild: AP

Viktor Orbán blockiert nicht länger die europäischen Finanzhilfen für die Ukraine. Das ist eine gute Nachricht vor allem für Kiew. Brüssel habe verhindert, dass die Ukraine zum Spielball der Launen Orbáns wird, kommentierte das ukrainische Nachrichtenportal [Ukrainska Pravda](#). Es ist aber auch eine gute Nachricht für die EU selbst, die sich gegen die systematisch betriebene Obstruktion aus Budapest durchgesetzt hat. Dabei geht es nicht nur um das Pokern um EU-Geld. Orbán zockt, aber er handelt zugleich aus illiberaler Überzeugung und Verbundenheit mit dem russischen Präsidenten [Wladimir Putin](#). Er ist ein Brückenkopf der russischen Politik innerhalb der EU.

Den auf geopolitischen Abwegen wandelnden Ungarn hätte die [EU](#) allerdings viel früher und mit geringerem Aufwand stoppen können, etwa als Orbán 2017 eine Kampagne ins Werk setzte, um die Central European University aus Budapest zu vertreiben. Dass die EU und speziell Deutschland in der Ära Merkel Orbán dabei gewähren ließ, sich an der universitären Freiheit, einem Grundprinzip Europas, zu vergehen, hat ihn ermutigt, seine politische Stellung zur faktischen Diktatur auszubauen.

Orbán's Schlag gegen die Universität, begleitet von einer antisemitischen Kampagne gegen den Universitätsmäzen [George Soros](#), war eine Etappe auf dem Weg zur Unterwerfung der ungarischen Gesellschaft durch den Regierungschef. Die Rechnung für ihre Gleichgültigkeit von damals zahlt die EU heute, wenn sie nur mit großer Kraftanstrengung den Kurs der ungarischen Regierung bei der Finanzhilfe für die Ukraine korrigieren kann.

## Das Menetekel von Minsk

Orbán's Obstruktion ist aber nur ein Puzzleteil einer großen geopolitischen Herausforderung, die die EU heute zu gewärtigen hat. Der Krieg, den Russland mit der Rückendeckung Chinas und mithilfe Irans und Nordkoreas gegen die Ukraine führt, ist – wie die ungarische Episode – auch eine Geschichte von verpassten Gelegenheiten des Westens, rechtzeitig einzuschreiten. Nach der Annexion der Krim und der russischen Militärunterstützung für die Separatisten in Donezk und Luhansk im Jahr 2014 geschah in der EU zunächst nichts. Erst Monate später verhängte man milde Sanktionen.

Die Bundesregierung genehmigte bekanntlich noch nach Annexion der Krim den Bau der Gaspipeline Nord Stream 2. Ihre Rhetorik enthielt dabei eine für den Kreml leicht zu dechiffrierende Kapitulation. Der Konflikt zwischen Russland und der Ukraine, so [Bundeskanzlerin Merkel](#), könne nicht militärisch entschieden werden. Damit war klar, dass Deutschland und die EU der Ukraine nicht mit Waffenlieferungen beistehen würden. Putin erhielt damit die strategische Freiheit, sich den Ort und die Zeit für einen neuerlichen Angriff auszusuchen. Der Ukraine wurde zwar die Zugehörigkeit zum Westen versichert, ohne dass die hehren Worte jedoch mit Fähigkeiten der EU unterlegt waren.

Der erste mächtropolitische Gehversuch von Berlin und Paris, die europäischen Angelegenheiten ohne die Amerikaner und aus eigener Kraft im Minsk-Format zu regeln, ist furchtbar gescheitert – was die Europäer aber nicht daran hindert, den der „europäischen strategischen Souveränität“ weiterhin unverdrossen im Mund zu führen. Nicht das Ziel der strategischen Souveränität ist falsch, wohl aber der Glaube, sie allein durch Ankündigungen erreichen zu können, ohne entschiedene systematische Anstrengungen.



Professor Dr. Martin Schulze Wessel lehrt Geschichte Ost- und Südosteuropas an der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. :Bild: privat

Das Menetekel von [Minsk](#) blieb unverstanden. Christoph Heusgen, der Chef der Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz, sprach vor Kurzem eindringlich über die Veränderung aller Parameter in der Zeitenwende, ja von der Rückkehr des Kalten Kriegs. Für den Weg aus dem Krieg zu einem Waffenstillstand fiel ihm aber nichts anderes ein als ein neues Minsk. Um zu einem Abschluss des Kriegs zu gelangen, müsse man sehen, wie man irgendwie zu einer Situation komme wie 2015. Putin müsse Selenskyj als Verhandlungspartner akzeptieren, und dieser müsse entscheiden, welchen Preis er bereit sei zu zahlen.

Aber das Modell Minsk, in dem die Europäer auf beide Konfliktparteien moderierend einwirken, ist bereits 2015 gescheitert. Zu meinen, es könne in der viel schwierigeren Situation von 2024 funktionieren, ist eine verstörende Illusion. Um zu dieser Einschätzung zu gelangen, muss man manches übersehen: Putin lehnt nicht nur Selenskyj als Verhandlungspartner ab, sondern negiert auch das Existenzrecht der Ukraine als unabhängiger Staat und eigenständige Nation.

### Mehr als Kriegsrhetorik

Heusgens Rückgriff auf das gescheiterte Modell von gestern erinnert an Trumps irrige Vorstellung, im Handumdrehen einen „Deal“ mit Putin machen zu können. In der deutschen Öffentlichkeit sind solche Illusionen attraktiv. Sie könnten dieses Jahr die wichtigste Scheidelinie bilden, entlang derer Wahlentscheidungen getroffen werden. Die AfD, Teile der Linken und das Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW) propagieren den Glauben, dass eine Rückkehr zu den alten Russlandbeziehungen möglich und erstrebenswert

wäre. Rechtsextreme und populistische Parteien fischen in einer Unsicherheit, die weit verbreitet ist und Wählerstimmen verspricht.

Man darf sich nicht täuschen über die Größe der russischen Herausforderung und die langfristigen Ziele der russischen Politik. Putins Drohung, die Ukraine als unabhängigen Staat zu beseitigen, ist mehr als Kriegsrhetorik. Sie geht zurück auf eine seit dem 18. Jahrhundert bestehende Tradition [Russlands](#), die Ukraine als integralen Teil des Zarenreichs und der großrussischen Nation zu verstehen. Wo Russland als Nation endet, wurde in der russischen Geschichte nie eindeutig geklärt.

Nach dem Krimkrieg, Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts, erblühte in Russland ein religiös aufgeladenes Schrifttum, in dem nationale und imperiale Kategorien verschwammen. Was russisch war, wurde in konzentrischen Kreisen begriffen: die ethnischen Russen im Zentrum, die orthodoxen Ostslawen wie Belarussen und Ukrainer im nächsten Kreis, und in einem weiteren Kreis wurde auch zu den West- und Südslawen eine Zugehörigkeit entworfen. Ein Axiom dieses Diskurses ist die Exzeptionalität Russlands, das sich nicht an westlichen Maßstäben messen lassen will.

Dieser Gedankenwelt ist Putin verhaftet, und er nutzt sie für seine Politik: Das ist spätestens seit seinem Essay „Über die historische Einheit von Russen und Ukrainern“ vom Juli 2021 klar. Putins Absicht ist die Annexion mindestens eines Teils der Ukraine sowie die hegemoniale Herrschaft über ihr gesamtes Territorium. Dieses Ziel verfolgt der langjährige Geheimagent mit langem Atem.

Nachdem im Februar 2022 sein Blitzkrieg gescheitert war, erläuterte er im Juni im Gespräch mit geladenen jungen Wissenschaftlerinnen und Unternehmern die Grundzüge seiner Politik. Ein Vorbild fand er in der Geschichte Peters I. Wie im Großen Nordischen Krieg, in dem der Zar zunächst empfindliche Rückschläge gegen Schweden erlitten habe, gehe es heute wieder um das „Erobern und Befestigen“ von Territorien.

Tatsächlich befestigte Russland seine Eroberungen am Asowschen Meer sowie im Donbass und stellte nach den Rückschlägen seine Wirtschaft auf Kriegsbedingungen um. Der Bezug auf Peter ist für Putin „usable past“ zur Rechtfertigung seiner Politik, er verweist aber auch den Zeithorizont von Putins Politik: Der Große Nordische Krieg wurde erst nach 21 Jahren von Russland siegreich beendet.

Dabei ist Putin nicht einmal vordringlich an Zugewinn von Territorium interessiert. Ihm geht es um die Zerstörung der westlichen Sicherheitsarchitektur. Er handelt dabei nicht als Einzelner, sondern in einem Diskurs, der auf den russischen Exzeptionalismus des 19. Jahrhunderts zurückgeht. Dessen prominentester Vertreter ist Aleksandr Dugin, der auch hierzulande in die Schlagzeilen geriet, als ein Autobombenanschlag verübt wurde, dem seine Tochter Darja zum Opfer fiel, vermutlich an seiner Stelle.

Ob der ultranationalistische Philosoph Putins Einflüsterer ist oder seine Ideen indirekt in die Politik einfließen, ist umstritten, aber für die Wirkung unerheblich. Sie geben der russischen Politik eine historische und geopolitische Rahmung, der russische Angriff auf die Ukraine erfährt so eine höchst fragwürdige Sinnstiftung.

### **Die Finnlandisierung von ganz Europa**

Dugin zufolge stehen sich der Osten und der Westen in einem „Endkampf“ gegenüber, den er als Konflikt zwischen der von Russland angeführten eurasischen Landmacht und der angloamerikanischen Seemacht versteht. In seinem Buch „Grundlagen der Geopolitik“ von 1997, das die russische Militärakademie als Lehrbuch verwendet und das auch sonst breit rezipiert wurde, propagierte Dugin eine Einfluss- und Obstruktionspolitik mit geheimdienstlichen Methoden. Ferner müsse Russland durch die strategische Nutzung von Gas und Öl gezielt Druck auf andere Staaten ausüben. Die „größte Aufgabe“ der Zukunft sei die „Finnlandisierung von ganz Europa“.

In seinem Zivilisationsdiskurs, der viele Anleihen macht bei [Carl Schmitt](#) und anderen konservativen und faschistischen Denkern des Westens, steht Russland als Träger einer „einzigartigen Zivilisation“ mit „universell all-menschlicher Bedeutung“, verbündet mit Iran, Japan und Deutschland als Subimperien, dem „Atlantizismus“ unversöhnlich gegenüber. Ihre messianische Rolle könnten die Russen nicht in einem Nationalstaat, sondern nur in einem Imperium spielen: „Die Ablehnung der Imperien-bildenden Funktion würde

das Ende des russischen Volkes als historische Realität, als zivilisatorisches Element bedeuten. Eine solche Ablehnung wäre gleichbedeutend mit nationalem Selbstmord“, so Dugin.

Dieser Zivilisationskampf zwischen Ost und West muss vor allem in der Ukraine ausgefochten werden. Zwar spielt sie aus Dugins Sicht „keine geopolitische Rolle“, hat „keine universelle Bedeutung, geographische Einzigartigkeit und ethnische Exklusivität“. Doch berge sie als unabhängiger Staat eine große Gefahr für ganz Eurasien: „Ohne das ukrainische Problem zu lösen ist es sinnlos, über kontinentale Politik zu sprechen.“

Dugin schlägt die Teilung der Ukraine vor, wobei die westlichen Regionen Galizien, Wolhynien und die Karpaten-Ukraine eine Föderation bilden könnten, die jedoch unter keinen Umständen unter die Kontrolle des atlantischen Westens fallen dürfe. Die anderen Teile der Ukraine wie auch Belarus betrachtet Dugin als integrale Teile Russlands.

### **Ein Drehbuch für die russische Ukrainepolitik**

Seit 1997 dienen Dugins geopolitische Phantasien als Drehbuch für die russische Ukrainepolitik. Bemerkenswert ist auch die Einordnung des prognostizierten russisch-ukrainischen Konflikts in einem globalen „Endkampf“. Die Schriften Dugins und anderer Ultrationalisten haben die russische Politik nicht in erster Linie dadurch beeinflusst, dass sie konkrete Ziele nannten. Entscheidend waren die begrifflichen Weichenstellungen, die der konkreten Politik vorgelagert sind. Dugin entwirft ein System von Antagonismen – von Ordnung und Chaos, von Eigen und Fremd – und bezeichnet so legitime Ziele von staatlicher Gewalt.

Auch Putin nimmt am russischen Zivilisationsdiskurs teil. Bereits im September 2013 hielt er vor dem Internationalen Diskussionsklub „Valdai“ in der Nähe von Nowgorod eine Rede, die im Westen relativ wenig beachtet wurde. Damals sprach Putin über die Geschichte der großen Mächte. Er lobte den Friedensschluss des Wiener Kongresses von 1815 und die Vereinbarungen der Konferenz von Jalta 1945, bekannte sich also unmissverständlich zur imperialen Politik von Einflussphären. Doch zudem reklamierte er beide Neuordnungen [Europas](#) für Russland, dessen Rolle er mit erheblichem Pathos verklärte: „Die Stärke Russlands, die Stärke des Siegers in diesen entscheidenden Momenten zeigte sich in Edelmut und Gerechtigkeit.“

In derselben Rede zeigte sich Putin angeekelt von dem, was er als den moralischen Verfall des Westens beschrieb: Die „euroatlantischen Länder“ hätten sich von ihren Wurzeln abgekehrt, gleichgeschlechtliche Partnerschaft würde gefördert und sogar Parteien zugelassen, die Pädophilie förderten. Die moralische Grundlage der westlichen Gesellschaften erodiere. Alles in allem entwarf Putin vor den versammelten nationalen und internationalen Politikfachleuten ein mythisches Bild von Glanz hier und Verfall dort.

Das Webmuster und die Versatzstücke des Vortrags entsprachen genau der geopolitischen Vorlage Dugins, wie auch die kompromisslos entgrenzte Feindrhetorik. So erklärte Putin, die vermeintlich erzwungene Assimilation der in der [Ukraine](#) lebenden Russen komme „der Anwendung von Massenvernichtungswaffen gegen uns“ gleich. Diese Formulierung legt nahe, dass Russland gegebenenfalls mit Nuklearwaffen antworten könnte. Dieser geopolitische Diskurs lädt ein zu Machtphantasien, radikalisiert Feindschaft und erzeugt einen dystopischen Zeithorizont, der zum Handeln drängt.

Die globale Rahmung des russisch-ukrainischen Kriegs geht jedoch nicht nur zurück auf geopolitische Diskurse. Russland knüpft heute an sowjetische Traditionen an, indem es sich als Vorkämpfer der Emanzipation des globalen Südens gegen die amerikanische Hegemonie inszeniert. Die koloniale Arroganz des Westens zu betonen verschafft Putin Sympathien in China, Indien und auf dem afrikanischen Kontinent.

Dabei war Russland selbst ein Kolonialreich und hat seine imperiale Rolle in vielen Ländern des östlichen Europas, des Südkaukasus und Zentralasiens nicht aufgegeben. Gegenwärtig interveniert Russland in einem weiten Bogen vom Nahen Osten und bis nach Westafrika. Paradoxerweise kann Russland jedoch davon zehren, auch als Imperium nicht Teil des Westens gewesen zu sein. Auch Russland war ein Objekt von westlichem Orientalismus, ein „subalternes Imperium“ (Wjatscheslaw Morozow). Die Tatsache, dass China an seiner Seite steht, ermutigt Putin in seiner globalen Deutung des russischen Angriffskriegs und gibt ihm vermeintliche Legitimation.

## Ein europäisches Afghanistan

Die Ideologisierung des russischen Angriffskriegs steht einem Waffenstillstand im Weg. Weshalb sollte Putin den Krieg beenden, für den er so viel riskiert hat? Weshalb seine öffentlich immer wieder bekräftigten Ziele aufgeben, die ihm Sympathien im globalen Süden verschaffen und weit über Annexionen in der Ukraine hinausgehen? Die Ukraine soll für den Westen zum europäischen Afghanistan werden und die Vereinigten Staaten als Papiertiger entlarven.

Es ist nicht auszuschließen, dass genau dies eintritt. Die Präsidentenwahl in den USA beeinflusst zweifellos den Verlauf des russisch-ukrainischen Kriegs. Aber es ist falsch, von Europa aus auf Washington zu schauen wie auf ein Schicksal. Selbst ohne die Amerikaner hätten die Europäer die Wirtschaftskraft, das russische Vordringen zu stoppen und der Ukraine zum Sieg zu verhelfen, das heißt, zur Rückeroberung ihrer Territorien. Erst wenn sich eine solche Entwicklung abzeichnete, würde Russland bereit sein, über einen Waffenstillstand zu verhandeln.

Das Problem der Europäer sind nicht die amerikanischen Präsidenten und der Kongress, es ist hausgemacht. Sie haben viel Zeit vergehen lassen, ohne die Ukraine effektiv zu unterstützen. Obwohl der Krieg primär die europäische und nicht die amerikanische Sicherheit bedroht, haben sie 2023 gerade einmal 300.000 Granaten an die Ukraine geliefert, einen Bruchteil der 2,3 Millionen Geschosse, die im Gefecht zum Einsatz kamen. Erst Ende 2023 hat man sich zu einer gemeinsamen europäischen Beschaffungsinitiative aufgerafft.

## Ein Signal, das Hoffnung macht

Verantwortungsvolle Politik muss mit Worst-Case-Szenarien rechnen. Gustav C. Gressel vom European Council on Foreign Relations hat für 2024 einen solchen Ausblick entworfen. Darin wird Trump republikanischer Präsidentschaftskandidat, und eine ukrainefeindliche Rhetorik beherrscht zunehmend den amerikanischen Diskurs. Die Republikaner im Kongress lassen Biden bei dem Versuch scheitern, die Lieferwege in die Ukraine offenzuhalten, während es den Europäern nicht gelingt, langfristige Verträge mit der Rüstungsindustrie abzuschließen, sodass sich deren Produktion nicht wesentlich erhöht.

Der Ukraine mangelt es folglich an Granaten und Raketen, um defensiv zu agieren. Einen russischen Durchbruch an der Front kann die ukrainische Armee nur durch Rückzug verhindern, ihre Fähigkeit schwindet, die eigenen Truppen rotieren zu lassen, Erschöpfung ist die Folge. Ohne Lieferung von amerikanischen Boden-Luft- und Luft-Luft-Raketen an die Ukraine ist Russland in der Lage, ukrainische Städte zu bombardieren und auch die im Aufbau befindliche einheimische Rüstungsindustrie zu treffen.

Die zunehmend düsteren Aussichten veranlassen zehn Millionen Ukrainer zur Flucht in die EU, dabei übersteigen die Kosten, die den Europäern durch die Aufnahme der Flüchtlinge entstehen, bei Weitem die Kosten für die militärische Unterstützung [Kiew](#). Ein Sieg Trumps über Biden in der Präsidentenwahl könnte schließlich direkte Effekte auf die europäischen Länder selbst haben, die den Krieg in der Ukraine verloren geben und in Erwartung eines Abzugs der Amerikaner aus Europa nur noch an die eigene Sicherheit denken.

So muss es nicht kommen. Die von der EU beschlossenen Finanzhilfen sind ein Signal, das Hoffnung macht. Aber keine der Voraussetzungen, die dem Worst-Case-Szenario zugrunde liegen, ist ganz unwahrscheinlich, und jede einzelne daraus abgeleitete Folgerung ist schlüssig. Das Ergebnis wäre eine „Finnlandisierung Europas“, die Dugin 1997 als Ziel der russischen Politik ausgegeben hat.

Es wäre daher fahrlässig, wenn die Europäer wie paralysiert auf den Ausgang der Präsidentenwahl im November schauen, denn Effekte aus dem Machtkampf zwischen Biden und Trump können sich schon vor dem Wahltag ergeben. Europäische Politik muss jetzt alle Hebel in Bewegung setzen, um die Ukraine durch Waffenlieferungen so umfassend wie möglich zu unterstützen.

chland ist seit dem Überfall Moskaus auf die Ukraine vor nunmehr fast zwei Jahren viel geschehen. Gemessen an der Größe des Problems ist es aber zu wenig. Viel Zeit ging verloren bei der Bestellung von Rüstungsgütern und speziell Munition. Warum gab es bislang keinen Rüstungsgipfel im Kanzleramt, der die Akteure aus Politik und Wirtschaft an einen Tisch bringt? Wann, wenn nicht jetzt, ist die Zeit gekommen, einen Nationalen Verteidigungsrat zu gründen? Es gibt für die Unterstützung der Ukraine keine „Wunderwaffe“, trotzdem fragt

man sich, weshalb sich die Bundesregierung beharrlich weigert, den Marschflugkörper Taurus an die Ukraine zu liefern.

Die Gründe, die dafür ins Feld geführt werden, sind erstaunlich sparsam und widersprüchlich. Mal war es der Hinweis auf die große Reichweite des Taurus, der es der Ukraine ermöglichen würde, mit westlichen Waffen auf russisches Territorium zu zielen (was die ukrainische Armee bislang vermieden hat), mal die Behauptung, die Eingabe der Zielkoordinaten könne nur durch Bundeswehrsoldaten erfolgen, was Deutschland zur Kriegspartei machte.

Nichts davon ist überzeugend. Taurus ist eine Waffe, die aufgrund ihrer Reichweite und Treffsicherheit besser als andere Lenkflugkörper in der Lage wäre, die russische Infrastruktur zu treffen. Das würde die Wege unterbrechen, auf denen Russland Munition und frische Truppen an die Front bringt, und damit die Wucht der russischen Aggression mindern. Welche Unterstützung könnte sinnvoller sein? Dass der Bundeskanzler sich dem Wunsch nach der Lieferung des Taurus verschließt, ohne dies plausibel zu begründen, nährt den Verdacht, dass die deutsche Politik bei dieser Frage mit einem Auge auf den Kreml schaut.

Fragen wirft auch der Redebeitrag des Bundeskanzlers in der Haushaltsdebatte auf. Er sparte nicht mit Bekenntnissen zur langfristigen Unterstützung der Ukraine, wiederholte aber auch, dass Deutschland ja schon der zweitgrößte Lieferant von Waffen für die Ukraine sei. Das ist etwas überheblich gegenüber den baltischen Staaten und Norwegen, die im Verhältnis zu ihrer Größe und Wirtschaftskraft sehr viel mehr leisten als Deutschland.

Der Satz vermittelt die Botschaft: Man kann uns nichts vorwerfen. Darum geht es aber nicht. Die Frage ist vielmehr, ob Deutschland und die anderen westlichen Staaten die große Herausforderung meistern. Was hilft es, die zweitgrößte Unterstützung geleistet zu haben, wenn es nicht reicht? Denkwürdig ist ein anderer Satz des Bundeskanzlers: Wenn die USA als Unterstützer der Ukraine ausfielen, dann sei Deutschland der größte Lieferant von Waffen für die Ukraine. Das aber sei unbedingt zu vermeiden, denn es sei Hybris, wenn Deutschland dies als Mittelmacht leisten wolle.

Natürlich muss Deutschland großes Interesse daran haben, dass die USA den Kreis der Unterstützerstaaten nicht verlässt. Aber selbst wenn das geschähe, wäre Deutschland nicht allein, sondern stünde im Kreis der europäischen Staaten, die im Verhältnis teilweise mehr leisten und die gemeinsam über die Wirtschaftskraft verfügen, die Ukraine bei der Abwehr des russischen Angriffs zu unterstützen.

Vergegenwärtigt man sich das Worst-Case-Szenario des Krieges und bedenkt, was auf dem Spiel steht, so müsste die Rhetorik ganz darauf gerichtet sein, eindringlich über die große Kraftanstrengung zu sprechen, die notwendig ist, um Russland zu stoppen. Vor deutscher Hybris zu warnen ist nie falsch, aber es ist in diesem Falle nicht die primäre Sorge.



14 February (NZZ)

[Trump macht die strategische Autonomie der EU salonfähig \(nzz.ch\)](https://www.nzz.ch)

KOMMENTAR

## Nato ohne USA? Trumps Gepolter und sein drohendes Comeback machen die «strategische Autonomie» der EU salonfähig

Europa kann sich nicht mehr auf den grossen Bruder Amerika verlassen. Was heisst das für seine Verteidigung?

[NATO without USA? Trump's bluster and his looming comeback make the 'strategic autonomy' of the EU socially acceptable.]

Europe can no longer rely on the big brother America. What does that mean for its defense?]

Andreas Ernst

13.02.2024, 16.53 Uhr 3 min



Donald Trump, republikanischer Präsidentschaftskandidat 2024. Evelyn Hockstein / Reuters

Wie viel braucht es, bis wir Europäer bereit sind, einen scharfen Blick in den Spiegel zu werfen? Viel, jedenfalls wenn es um die Verteidigung des Kontinents geht. Die Vorstellung, sie den Amerikanern zu überlassen, hat sich im letzten Jahrzehnt kaum bewegt – obwohl die Welt jetzt eine andere ist.

2018 am Nato-Gipfel in Brüssel half es wenig, dass Präsident Trump sagte, er werde «sein eigenes Ding machen», wenn die Europäer nicht mehr in ihre Verteidigung investierten. Die Regierungschefs verstanden das zwar als Austrittsdrohung, aber sie nahmen Trump nicht ernst.

Keine vier Jahre später überfiel Putin die Ukraine. Die Europäer bieten ihm seither zwar die Stirn, unterstützen das angegriffene Land mit Geld und Waffen und nehmen Flüchtlinge auf. Doch unterdessen sitzt Joe Biden im Weissen Haus, ein standfester Transatlantiker. So bleibt verteidigungspolitisch vieles beim Alten. Trotz der Rede von der «Zeitenwende».

In die Selbstverteidigung jedenfalls wird wenig investiert. Nur 11 der 31 Nato-Staaten geben heute die zugesicherten 2 Prozent des Inlandprodukts für die Verteidigung aus. Zwar wenden diese Staaten zusammen dreimal so viel Geld fürs Militär auf wie die Russen. Aber es wird falsch investiert: Von der gemeinsamen Rüstungsbeschaffung und der militärischen Aufgabenteilung – Voraussetzungen für die Verteidigungsfähigkeit – sind die Europäer so weit entfernt wie je.

### **Auf die USA wetten wird riskant**

Doch jetzt steht wieder Trump vor der Tür und poltert. Gefragt, ob er den Europäern bei einem Angriff der Russen beispringen würde, will er einem Spitzenpolitiker gesagt haben: «Ich würde euch nicht verteidigen. Ich würde sie sogar ermutigen, mit euch zu machen, was zum Teufel sie wollen. Ihr müsst endlich zahlen!» Mit dem letzten Satz jedenfalls hat er recht.

Eigentlich muss man ihm für seinen Ausfall sogar dankbar sein. Denn er macht klar: Es ist unvernünftig, sich in Zukunft einfach auf den grossen amerikanischen Bruder zu verlassen. Und das gilt, ob Trump der nächste Präsident wird oder nicht.

«Politico» macht dazu die richtige Rechnung: Es wäre verrückt, schreibt das Portal, wenn Europa seine Sicherheit in Zukunft alle vier Jahre in die Hände von 50 000 amerikanischen Wechselwählern legen würde. Die entscheiden nämlich, ob ein Isolationist oder ein Transatlantiker ins Weisse Haus einzieht. Europa muss also strategisch autonom werden.

Nur, schafft es das? Der politische Diskurs jedenfalls verändert sich. Bei dem Treffen des sogenannten Weimarer Dreiecks (Polen, Deutschland, Frankreich) am Wochenende war die Diagnose einhellig: Mit Putin im Kreml und Trump vor dem Weissen Haus muss die EU auch eine Verteidigungsunion werden. Nicht als Alternative zur Nato, aber als deren starkes europäisches Standbein. Die drei Länder sehen sich denn auch als Vorreiter der Verteidigung in der Union und als Klammer zwischen Ost und West.

### **Den strategischen Kompass neu richten**

Doch realpolitisch sind viele Herausforderungen ungelöst. Nur schon die drängendste Aufgabe: die Abwehr der Niederlage der Ukraine. In deren Notwendigkeit sind sich Paris und Berlin zwar grundsätzlich einig, aber der Beitrag der Franzosen ist beschämend klein.

Das Trio will auch die Rüstungspolitik koordinieren. Doch die grossen Projekte, das neue Kampfflugzeug, der neue Kampfpanzer, kommen nur schleppend voran. Immer wieder stehen nationale Wirtschaftsinteressen im Weg. Und auch die Frage, ob die EU Geld aufnehmen soll, um aufzurüsten, spaltet – wen wundert es – Franzosen und Deutsche.

Schliesslich ist eine strategische Autonomie Europas nur dann vollständig, wenn Europa über seinen eigenen Atomschirm verfügt. Doch davon ist es technologisch und politisch weit entfernt – und bleibt von Amerika abhängig. Und doch stimmt es: Der strategische Kompass muss schleunigst neu gerichtet werden. Das gilt für alle Europäer, also auch die Schweiz.

## 2. Culture Wars – Islam and Islamophobia

14 February (The Economist)

[The culture war over the Gaza war \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2023/10/28/the-culture-war-over-the-gaza-war)

Views of the Middle East

### The culture war over the Gaza war

The conflict is raging on streets and screens in the West



image: reuters

Oct 28th 2023

The imagery is enticing, the rhythm and rhyme are propulsive. “From the river to the sea,” runs the popular slogan, “Palestine will be free!” In recent days that couplet has resounded in squares from Toronto to Berlin. Wearing chequered keffiyeh scarves, Californian pupils declaimed it as they swept down school corridors. Activists projected the words onto a wall of a university in Washington, dc.

What do they mean? Superficially an idealistic vow of liberation, the decades-old expression also contains a threat: the river is the River Jordan, the sea is the Mediterranean and freedom, in this case, implies the destruction of the state of Israel. That is certainly the sense in which  [Hamas](#)  uses the phrase. The children chanting it at the base of Nelson’s column in London on October 21st, during a big pro-Palestinian march, may not have grasped the menace. But several marchers who were yelling the words, or bearing them on placards, seemed aware of it, clamming up defensively when asked to explain them.

“Anyone who’s paying attention knows exactly what that means,” says Jonathan Greenblatt of the Anti-Defamation League, an American anti-hate group which, like watchdogs in Britain and elsewhere, has documented a steep rise in antisemitic incidents since  [Hamas’s bloody raid](#)  on Israel on October 7th. (Islamophobic incidents have multiplied in several countries, too.) The ubiquity of this deceptively hardline mantra points up an important shift in Western attitudes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Three related forces are driving it: technology, demography and ideology.

The Western left once sympathised with Zionism. That changed markedly after the six-day war of 1967 and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Especially since the end of apartheid in South Africa, the  [Palestinian](#)  cause has been a talismanic issue for left-leaning Westerners. Why it acquired this status is a matter of debate. In some analyses, Israel serves as an avatar for American power, or for bygone colonial struggles. Jewish groups and others have wondered why the casualties in, say, Syria or Afghanistan—where the perpetrators as well as the victims are Muslim—stir less bien-pensant concern.

After a period in which the issue receded in prominence in Western diplomacy and headlines, Gaza’s plight is now inspiring protests and disputes as never before. A glut of open letters by artists and other luminaries have decried Israel’s bombardment and Western leaders’ acquiescence to it. (Counter-petitions mourn the atrocities

of October 7th and affirm Israel's right to self-defence.) Pro-Palestinian rallies have been held in many cities, including some where they were notionally banned.

The recriminations flow both ways. In Britain the bbc's reluctance to refer to Hamas as "terrorists" led to an outcry and a partial climbdown. Dave Chappelle, an American comedian, reportedly had a spat with punters at a gig in Boston after he lamented the crisis in Gaza. Some American students have been hounded for their stridently anti-Israel views; talks by Palestinian authors have been cancelled. Palestine Legal, which supports pro-Palestinian activists in America, says they are "facing a wave of McCarthyite backlash targeting their livelihoods and careers".

"Silence is violence", runs another popular protest slogan, a position taken by some on all sides. A range of institutions, from universities to unions, have been berated for the wording of their public statements, or for failing to issue one. Calls for peace have been likened to appeasement. And supporters of both Israel and the Palestinians make analogies with Ukraine to show the supposed hypocrisy of the opposing camp. Backers of the Palestinians see Gaza as the victim (like Ukraine) of invasion by a bullying neighbour. Pro-Israelis point to Hamas's incursion and liken its barbarity to Russian war crimes.

The polarised passions and viral slogans are in part a sharp manifestation of the echo-chamber effect of social media. Millions of people have watched footage of Hamas's depredations in horror. Many others are transfixed instead by images of Gaza's agony. In Germany, for instance, where a synagogue has been firebombed and Stars of David daubed on Jewish homes, some Islamists exist in "parallel societies", relying on digital and overseas news, says Felix Klein, the federal commissioner for antisemitism. So, he adds, do many on the far right, which commits most of the country's antisemitic crimes. (There, as in America, the two groups have made common cause online.)

Worse, the heart-rending clips and pictures sometimes come from the wrong country or the wrong war, or even from video games. Like the echo-chamber effect, online disinformation is a familiar problem that has seemed as acute as ever in the ongoing crisis.

The blast at the Ahli Arab hospital on October 17th was a supreme example of the reach and clout of falsehoods. Swiftly picked up by major news outfits, misleading reports contributed, in short order, to the cancelling of a summit between Arab leaders and President Joe Biden. Demand for disinformation, reckons Peter Pomerantsev of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, is an even bigger problem than supply. In wartime, "people are looking for reasons to confirm their biases," he says glumly. "It isn't about the facts."

Screen habits encourage another striking feature of reactions to the war: the "gamification" of news, whereby irony and taboo-busting are prized, even amid the gravest calamities. The paragliders on which some Hamas murderers flew to Israel were, for a few onlookers, irresistibly meme-worthy. Black Lives Matter Chicago briefly posted an image of a paraglider with the words, "I stand with Palestine." "From Chicago to Gaza," runs another of its messages, "from the river to the sea."

As for demography: immigration is one factor skewing the culture war in the West over the tragic one in the Middle East. Muslim populations in Western countries are both growing and changing in composition. In the past, notes Yunus Ulusoy of the Centre for Turkish Studies and Integration Research in Essen, the Muslim population in Germany was of predominantly Turkish origin. Now, he says, around 2.1m Muslims in the country have roots in Syria, Iraq and other places that are hostile to Israel. They brought their views of the conflict with them—shaped, says Mr Ulusoy, by a sense of solidarity with the ummah, or global Muslim community.

Awareness of Nazism and the Holocaust, which for decades coloured German attitudes to Israel and antisemitism, is waning. Some Muslims, says Professor Julia Bernstein of the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, think this awful past "is not our history", and that they are now the real victims of prejudice in Germany.

France, notes Dominique Moïsi, an eminent French commentator, is home to both the largest Muslim population in western Europe and the biggest Jewish one. It has a traumatic recent history of Islamist terrorism,

and a more distant one of collaboration with the Nazis, both of which tend to bolster support for Israel. But it also harbours contrary strains of anti-Americanism and guilt over French colonialism in the Arab world. The result, says Mr Moïsi, is a “conflict of memories” that plays out in politics and on the streets.

In America, the most influential depiction of Israel in popular culture is probably “Exodus”. A novel by Leon Uris published in 1958, it dramatises the birth of the state and became a film starring Paul Newman. (“As a piece of propaganda,” said David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, “Exodus” was “the greatest thing ever written” about the country.) Overall, Americans remain much more supportive of Israel than are Europeans. Polls conducted since October 7th show a hardening of support for it among Democrats in particular.

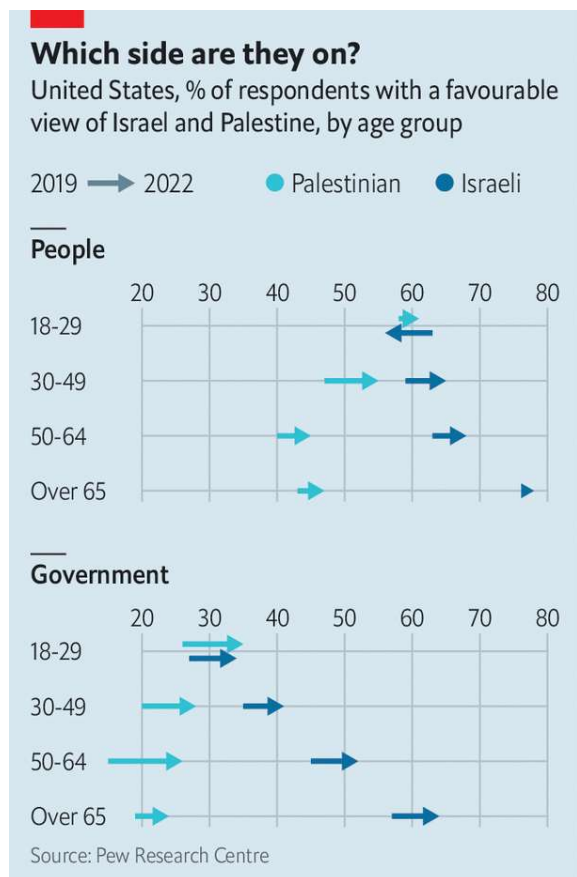


image: the economist

But there is an important demographic wrinkle. As Tim Malloy, a polling analyst at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut, says, younger Americans are much less inclined to back Israel than are their elders. They also think more favourably of the Palestinian people. According to surveys by Pew, this gap in sympathy between American generations is widening (see chart).

Many young voters do not have direct memories of the attacks of September 11th 2001, a calamity which shaped older Americans’ views of Islamist terrorists such as Hamas. Their diverging outlook also reflects the third force swaying Western attitudes: a binary ideology that emerged from American universities to win converts far and wide.

### Beyond good and evil

Seeing the world in Manichean terms can be comforting. It turns confounding issues into simple clashes of good and evil, conferring a halo of virtue on those who pick the right side. As Yascha Mounk, author of “The Identity Trap”, argues, the emerging ideology offers just this form of comfort, sorting the world into opposing categories—coloniser and colonised, oppressors and oppressed—often along racial lines. In essence it transposes the terms of American debates over race onto other places and problems. “The American brand of anti-colonialism”, quips Mr Mounk, “is astonishingly colonialist.”

In a polarised age, lots of people infer their opinions from their political allegiance rather than the other way round. This, thinks Mr Mounk, is part of the new ideology's appeal: it furnishes an all-purpose vocabulary to apply to any conflict. In this schema, the powerless can do no wrong, least of all to the powerful—and nobody can be both. Liberation movements of all kinds are linked, as communist insurgencies purported to be during the cold war. As flares in the colours of the Palestinian flag were set off at Piccadilly Circus, a protester in London holding a "Queers for Palestine" sign explained that "All the struggles are connected."

This philosophy is tailor-made for the posturing and character-limits of social-media posts, perhaps one reason it is gaining adherents. But it prohibits the balance and nuanced judgments that intractable real-world hostilities demand. In particular, because the Palestinians are cast as powerless, and Israel is classed as powerful, it follows that Israelis cannot qualify as victims. Never mind the exile of Mizrahi Jews from Arab countries to Israel. The Holocaust is ancient history.

The schema shows up glaringly in references to Hamas's crimes as a form of "resistance" or "decolonisation", and in the statement by some Harvard students that held Israel "entirely responsible" for the slaughter of its own citizens. Many Jews, in Israel and the diaspora, perceive a wider disregard for Israel's suffering—not just less sympathy than it received during, say, the Entebbe hostage crisis of 1976, but a void. If the issue is morally simple, meanwhile, for many Western activists the remedy is blunt and drastic: not the two-state solution of yore, but a Palestine that stretches "from the river to the sea".

In the left-leaning political elite, the picture is starkly different. Both Mr Biden and Sir Keir Starmer, leader of Britain's opposition Labour Party, have offered Israel staunch support. All the same, the escalation in some rank-and-file attitudes to the war may have a lasting fallout—both in the Middle East and in the West. Mr Biden, Sir Keir and other leaders have been lambasted by some in their parties for declining to call for a ceasefire. This disapproval—often motivated by natural compassion for Palestinian civilians rather than ideology—may cost them votes, Muslim and otherwise, in what may be tight elections next year. (Mr Biden may have weighed that risk against the potentially higher cost of supporting a ceasefire.)

That may not be the only form of political blowback. Plenty of liberal voters are dismayed by the responses of people with whom, in the past, they felt broadly aligned. Their coalition with more radical voters was already under pressure; for some liberals, the bedrock of common values that they thought underpinned it seems to have crumbled. If the debate over Gaza has been a symptom of polarisation in the West, it may yet prove to be a cause of realignment, too.

The consequences for Israel and the Middle East are unpredictable. At least in the short term, revulsion for Hamas seems to outweigh any qualms Americans might have had before the war over Israel's rightward lurch under Binyamin Netanyahu. Most Americans, including most Democrats, tell pollsters that supporting Israel is in American interests. How far and how long that remains the case depends on a series of unknowns—starting with the conduct and outcome of the ground invasion of Gaza, and the new dispensation that may follow. Developments in domestic politics will matter, including the fervour of the Republican embrace of isolationism.

From an Israeli point of view, though, the long-term trajectory of opinion in America is worrying. And in Europe, as the second world war recedes from living memory and the clout of Muslim voters grows, support for Israel may continue to soften, especially on the left.

Even as the disaster in Israel and Gaza unfolds, one of its morals is already clear. Amid the unchecked flow of images and ideas, Western public opinion and geopolitical conflicts are entangled in new and explosive ways. Culture wars and real wars are no longer separate struggle.

14 February (Le Figaro)

[78 % des musulmans considèrent que la laïcité française est islamophobe \(lefigaro.fr\)](https://www.lefigaro.fr)

# 78 % des musulmans considèrent que la laïcité française est islamophobe

Par [Paul Sugy](#)

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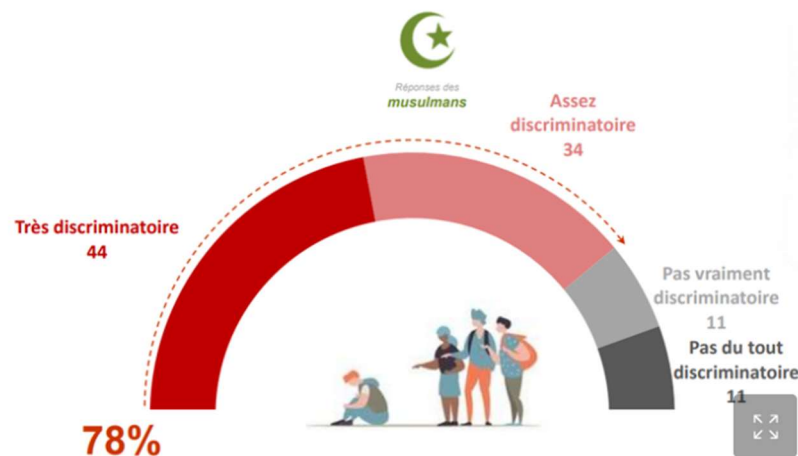
Un sondage IFOP révèle qu'une très large majorité de musulmans considère la laïcité comme discriminatoire pour les Français de confession musulmane.

À l'occasion de la [journée nationale de la laïcité](#) le 9 décembre 2023, [l'IFOP publie un sondage](#) commandé par [la chaîne laïque franco-arabe Elmaniya.tv](#), permettant de mieux cerner la place que les Français musulmans accordent aujourd'hui à la religion, le sens qu'ils donnent à la laïcité mais aussi leur point de vue sur l'actualité récente (interdiction des abayas à l'école, attentat d'Arras par un islamiste...) ayant mis au premier plan la question de l'islam dans la société. L'étude atteste qu'une écrasante majorité des Français de confession musulmane considère la laïcité, telle qu'elle est appliquée par les pouvoirs publics, comme discriminatoire.

En effet à la question : «la laïcité telle qu'elle est appliquée aujourd'hui par les pouvoirs publics est-elle discriminatoire envers les musulmans ?», 78 % des musulmans interrogés répondent oui : 34 % d'entre eux jugent la laïcité «assez discriminatoire», et 44 % d'entre eux, «très discriminatoire».

Q : Au regard de ce que vous en savez, diriez-vous qu'en France, la laïcité telle qu'elle est appliquée aujourd'hui par les pouvoirs publics est discriminatoire envers les musulmans ?

Base : musulmans âgés de 15 ans et plus



78 % des Français musulmans jugent la laïcité discriminatoire envers les musulmans. Sondage IFOP pour Elmaniya.tv

78 % des Français musulmans jugent la laïcité discriminatoire envers les musulmans. Sondage IFOP pour Elmaniya.tv

Une large majorité des musulmans souhaiterait un assouplissement de plusieurs règles : ainsi 75 % d'entre eux aimeraient [instaurer des jours fériés pour des fêtes religieuses non-chrétiennes](#) (comme l'Aïd-el-Kebir), 75 % également sont favorables à l'autorisation du port du voile ou de la kippa pour les athlètes pendant les JO, et 75 % encore souhaiteraient un financement public du culte et du clergé en France. En revanche, seuls 47 % des musulmans souhaitent l'autorisation du port du voile intégral (interdit dans l'espace public par une loi de 2011). Cette proportion grimpe à 66 % chez les musulmans de moins de 25 ans, signe d'un plus fort rejet des principes de laïcité chez les musulmans les plus jeunes.

## **72 % des musulmans désapprouvent l'interdiction de l'abaya**

Les musulmans sont nombreux à souhaiter également une plus grande liberté par rapport aux obligations scolaires. 54 % d'entre eux souhaitent que les jeunes filles aient le droit de ne pas assister aux cours de natation pour des raisons religieuses, et 50 % souhaitent que les élèves puissent même refuser d'assister à tous les cours qui «heurteraient leurs convictions religieuses». Cette proportion est plus faible chez les pratiquants occasionnels (45 %) que chez les pratiquants réguliers (66 %). Enfin, 72 % des musulmans désapprouvent [l'interdiction des qamis et des abayas à l'école](#).

L'importance de la religion dans les savoirs est perceptible aussi dans les réponses à cette question : «Lorsque la religion et la science s'opposent sur la question de la création du monde, d'après vous, est-ce le plus souvent la science ou la religion qui a raison ?». 76 % des musulmans optent pour la religion, contre seulement 22 % des croyants des autres religions.

Plus inquiétant encore, 16 % des Français de confession musulmane n'expriment pas de condamnation totale à l'endroit du terroriste d'Arras, [auteur du meurtre à l'arme blanche de Dominique Bernard](#). 5 % ne le condamnent pas du tout, et 11 % condamnent tout en partageant «certaines des motivations» du terroriste islamiste. À quoi s'ajoutent 6 % de musulmans qui se disent «indifférents». Cette proportion est plus significative encore chez les musulmans de plus de 15 ans, actuellement en scolarité : 31 % d'entre eux ne condamnent pas totalement le tueur d'Arras, et 7 % sont indifférents.

## **Place de l'islam dans les modes de vie**

Le dernier enseignement du sondage IFOP est également l'importance que les Français musulmans accordent à la religion pour conduire leurs choix de vie. 85 % des musulmans jugent que l'islam a une place importante [dans les choix alimentaires](#) (contre 19 % des Français d'autres religions seulement) ; 79 % estiment que l'islam est important dans la vie intime et personnelle, 63 % estiment qu'il est important aussi dans la façon de s'habiller.

Des résultats qui ont fait réagir la chercheuse du CNRS Florence Bergeaud-Blackler, auteur d'un livre consacré à l'influence de l'islam frériste en France. «La 'halalisation' des comportements est nettement visible (le fait de se demander dans chaque geste de sa vie quotidienne si son comportement est ou non conforme à la loi religieuse) dans ce sondage», [a-t-elle réagi](#). Ajoutant : «L'hégémonie du frérisme dans le champ religieux se voit à présent dans les sondages auprès des musulmans de France. Un demi-siècle de pression islamiste a porté ses fruits».



14 February (Le Figaro)

[Islamophobie et antisémitisme: «Quand l'Union européenne cède au “statistiquement correct”» \(lefigaro.fr\)](https://www.lefigaro.fr)

# Islamophobie et antisémitisme: «Quand l'Union européenne cède au “statistiquement correct”»

Par [Sami BIASONI](#)

Publié le 11/12/2023 à 15:13, mis à jour le 11/12/2023 à 21:55



«La lecture du rapport précité est à cet égard tout à fait instructive ; elle révèle la manière dont les institutions européennes structurent leurs récits.» *JeanLuc / stock.adobe.com*

## FIGAROVOX/TRIBUNE

**Dans un communiqué, la Commission européenne note «une augmentation alarmante des cas de discours et de crimes haineux», en renvoyant dos à dos la montée de l'antisémitisme et de l'islamophobie. Pour Sami BIASONI, cette étude révèle la manière biaisée dont les institutions européennes structurent leurs récits.**

*Sami BIASONI est docteur en philosophie de l'École normale supérieure et professeur chargé de cours à l'ESSEC. Il a dirigé en 2022 l'ouvrage collectif Malaise dans la langue française et a publié Le statistiquement correct aux Éditions du Cerf en septembre 2023.*

«L'Europe connaît une augmentation alarmante des cas de discours et de crimes haineux. Les communautés juive et musulmane sont particulièrement touchées». Cette affirmation émane de la Commission européenne. Elle est détaillée dans un récent communiqué officiel intitulé «*Pas de place pour la haine : une Europe unie contre ce fléau*». Nul ne saurait supporter le fait que l'Europe puisse être en proie à une résurgence de la haine communautaire, ce qui trahirait nos idéaux les plus fondamentaux.

Les termes employés sont non seulement graves et emphatiques, mais aussi peu nuancés puisqu'ils mêlent des populations historiquement confrontées à des violences différentes en magnitude comme en nature. C'est pourquoi il est légitime de questionner les fondements argumentatifs et statistiques qui justifieraient un traitement indifférencié des situations actuelles des populations juives et musulmanes du point de vue des manifestations de haine qu'elles subissent. La lecture du rapport précité est à cet égard tout à fait instructive ; elle révèle la manière dont les institutions européennes structurent leurs récits.

La communication dont il est question se présente sous la forme d'un rapport de 20 pages qui accumule les assertions alarmistes mais ne communique presque aucune source. Il faut se référer aux rares notes de bas de page pour obtenir quelques détails. On peut y lire, à l'appui de l'affirmation selon laquelle il y aurait une «*poussée*» des discours et crimes de haines, qu'une étude financée par le projet d'*Observatoire européen de la haine en ligne* établirait une hausse de 30 % du «*niveau de toxicité haineuse*» depuis le début de l'année 2023 : il s'agit d'un indicateur composite qui mêle l'insulte et la moquerie ; les références à l'extrême droite – l'apologie de l'extrême gauche ne semblant pas mesurée – et les incitations populistes ; les évocations des *incels* – ces jeunes hommes taxés de misogynie qui affichent des difficultés dans leurs relations avec les

femmes – et les critiques de l'écologie. La sélection partielle des catégories, l'opacité de l'indicateur retenu et le choix arbitraire de la valeur de référence rendent la conclusion très incertaine. Cela ne signifie pas nécessairement que le phénomène décrit soit inexistant, mais indique que les informations communiquées n'ont pas de valeur de vérité particulière.

**Il ne s'agit pas là encore d'études académiques de portée statistique mais de travaux émanant de la « société civile » et réalisés sans méthodologie scientifiquement rigoureuse.**

*Sami Biasoni*

Mais cela n'est pas le plus confondant. Pour étayer le fait qu'il s'agisse à la fois de menaces physiques et verbales, la communication se contente de préciser laconiquement : *« bien que les autorités publiques aient encore à établir des statistiques, de nombreux exemples ont été cités par la société civile ou par les médias »* ! Ce procédé relève de l'extrapolation, c'est-à-dire qu'il établit des vérités générales à partir d'événements particuliers. En effet, seuls quelques articles publiés par la presse grand public en Allemagne et en France et faisant état d'atteintes certes graves mais non systémiques sont cités à la cantonade. Cela ne renseigne nullement le lecteur, laissé seul face à ses doutes et condamné au flou de ses spéculations.

La comparaison des situations subies par les populations juive et musulmane n'est guère mieux fondée. S'il est indéniable que le conflit entre Israël et le Hamas a alimenté le ressentiment et la haine des partisans de chacun des camps au détriment de résidents européens majoritairement pacifiques, il paraît essentiel de caractériser avec finesse la réalité de ce que subissent les uns et les autres, en raison de leur histoire, de leur culture et de leur position sociale dissemblables. Pourtant, là encore, le rapport ne s'embarrasse pas de détails ; deux études de l'ONG Institut pour le Dialogue Stratégique (ISD) y sont confusément citées. Il ne s'agit pas là encore d'études académiques de portée statistique mais de travaux émanant de la « société civile » et réalisés sans méthodologie scientifiquement rigoureuse. Ces travaux ne sont pas nécessairement invalides pour autant, il importe de le préciser, mais ils ne sont que des illustrations, nullement des preuves.

Dans le cas qui nous occupe, le rapport révèle la relativité du traitement : on y compare des occurrences de propos qualifiés d'antisémites sur la plateforme Youtube autour de l'attentat du 7 octobre avec des observations de références sémantiques haineuses à l'endroit des musulmans sur la plateforme X. Pourtant l'ISD lui-même, dans une interview accordée à *CBS News* par l'un de ses experts publié le 5 novembre dernier, précise : *« bien qu'ils fussent publiés la même semaine, les résultats de ces analyses ne sont pas destinés à être comparés car elles émanent de plateformes différentes, et ont été établies à partir de méthodologie distinctes »* !

**Aborder ces sujets sensibles avec la légitimité officielle de nos grandes institutions oblige du point de vue de la rigueur argumentative. La défiance face à nos institutions se nourrit déjà trop de ces irresponsables légèretés de traitement.**

*Sami Biasoni*

L'imprécision statistique culmine au moment d'étayer l'assertion selon laquelle la population « musulmane » est particulièrement visée puisque la source citée est un rapport intitulé *« Être noir dans l'UE »* et donc nullement un rapport de portée générale. Par ailleurs, ce rapport précise – sans que cela ne soit nullement repris dans la communication de la Commission européenne – que les *« répondants [de l'étude] qui s'identifient en tant que chrétiens ont presque deux fois plus de chances que les musulmans de déposer une plainte ou de rapporter un incident lié à une discrimination à leur encontre »* (11 % contre 6 %). Il y est aussi indiqué que les hommes noirs de confession chrétienne ont pu être victimes *« de harcèlement raciste »* à 35 % contre 22 % pour les personnes de confession musulmanes. De tels résultats ont de quoi décontenancer, tant ils semblent en décalage avec les discours défendus par les institutions.

Il serait intellectuellement malhonnête de nier la persistance, voire la résurgence des phénomènes des haines « intercommunautaires » dont sont victimes les résidents européens de confession juive ou musulmane. Mais le traitement des situations dont il est question exige de la nuance, et ne saurait se contenter d'assertions qui relèveraient du statistiquement correct – c'est-à-dire qui flatteraient certaines idéologies bien-pensantes en caractérisant mal le réel. Aborder ces sujets sensibles avec la légitimité officielle de nos grandes institutions oblige du point de vue de la rigueur argumentative. La défiance face à nos institutions se nourrit déjà trop de ces irresponsables légèretés de traitement.

14 February (The Economist)

[What to read to understand anthropology \(economist.com\)](https://www.economist.com/anthropology/2023/04/21/what-to-read-to-understand-anthropology)

Anthropology

## What to read to understand anthropology



Apr 21st 2023

If you ask 100 anthropologists what they do you could easily get 101 different answers. The Greek roots of the word anthropology mean “human being” and “study”. Its central method of conducting fieldwork in communities is unlike those of other academic disciplines, including sociology, which draws on large data sets. Anthropologists spend years gathering their findings and their results are not replicable. As a result, the discipline’s cultural relevance has diminished in recent years, along with money for universities’ anthropology departments. Yet, as the anthropologist Eric Wolf declared in 1964, “anthropology is both the most scientific of the humanities and the most humanistic of the sciences.” As these books show, it still has much to tell us. In a time of polarisation and group-think anthropology’s insights, gained from close study of how people actually live, can be a corrective. Businesses and governments are calling more often on anthropologists to help them understand the complexities of the societies in which they operate. A resurgence is overdue.

**Do Muslim Women Need Saving?** By Lila Abu-Lughod. Harvard University Press; 336 pages; \$23 and £20.95

Muslim women do not need saving, contends Lila Abu-Lughod in a book that she wrote in response to the “war on terror”. Western countries used the oppression of women as one justification for invading Muslim ones. Ms Abu-Lughod’s work challenges what she views as the Islamophobic assumptions underlying that pretext. The women she encounters in her fieldwork in Egypt are devout and accept the norms of conservative Islam. When she tells Zaynab, who runs a small café in a village in southern Egypt, that she is trying to find out if Westerners are right to worry about the strictures that Islam imposes on women, Zaynab scoffs. Her real problem, she says, is the government. The police have just taken away her main waiter because he failed to treat them with deference. Her faith, she says, provides solace. Ms Abu-Lughod, a Palestinian-American, calls herself a “halfie”—a scholar who straddles two cultures. In this classic of feminist anthropology she argues that liberal Westerners refuse to acknowledge the validity of Muslim women’s expressions of faith. Their belief that Islam is the problem misconstrues the nature of the obstacles women face. Some readers will continue to feel that some Muslim women do need saving, if not from Islam then from the way some regimes use religion to subjugate them. In Iran women are protesting, and in some cases dying, to free themselves from norms imposed by a theocratic regime. But anyone who wants to understand the lives of women in Muslim countries will learn from Ms Abu-Lughod’s detailed and empathetic portraits of the women of southern Egypt.

[...]

### 3. Culture – Film and TV Reviews

14 February (The Guardian)

[The New Look review – the rivalry between Coco Chanel and Christian Dior is absurd to the point of insult | Television | The Guardian](#)

## The New Look review – the rivalry between Coco Chanel and Christian Dior is absurd to the point of insult

This simplistic, grandiose drama about French couture history treats the second world war as an inconvenience to fashion. Even Juliette Binoche and Ben Mendelsohn can't save it

[Lucy Mangan](#)

Wed 14 Feb 2024 06.00 CET



They're not all bad guys! ... Juliette Binoche and Claes Bang in The New Look. Photograph: Roger Do Minh/Apple

Apple TV+'s new drama series sets out its stall early. It opens with two captions. "During World War II," explains the first, "the Germans occupied Paris for four years, forcing the French to submit to Nazi authority and oppression." "This is the story," the second tells us, "of how creation helped return spirit and life to the world."

Simplistic, grandiose and absurd to the point of insult – welcome to the world of The New Look. This is the tale of the rivalry between designers Coco Chanel and Christian Dior that was formed in the crucible of a global conflict, which, not content with simply putting a spoke in the wheels of fashion's evolution and Coco's business in particular, also killed millions of Jews. But don't worry – you're not going to hear much about them. This is about the importance of art and beautifully dressed Gallic suffering (you're not going to hear much about Vichy France, either, and its very unstylish [deportation of 76,000 Jews to death camps](#)), so don your highest couture and on we go!

We open in 1955, as Coco Chanel (Juliette Binoche) is about to launch her first collection since she closed her boutique at the beginning of the war and is busy putting the boot into Christian Dior (Ben Mendelsohn) to the assembled press corps. We cut between that and the retrospective he is being honoured with at the Sorbonne at the same time. "Christian Dior ruined French couture and I'm coming back to save it!" she soundbites for them all.

At the retrospective, however, things take a turn. A student stands up and asks Dior how he feels about having made clothes for Nazis' wives throughout the war, while [Chanel](#) did the right thing and closed her atelier. He begins to explain and we are transported back to 1943, where it becomes clear that the truth is a little more complicated than snotty little youngsters might think.

Dior was indeed working for the house of Lucien Lelong (played by John Malkovich, whose accent makes you pray Binoche never had to share a set with him), and designing ballgowns for bad Germans and their wives and girlfriends. But! He gives the money he makes to his sister (Maisie Williams) who is highly active in the resistance! And lets members of it use his apartment! And the wives and girlfriends are often French and pass valuable information on to him during fittings and faked fashion disasters! So, you know, think on.

Meanwhile, Chanel ... Well, I don't know how much you know about her – courtesy of the many biographies of the woman, but she lived at the Ritz, which was then a Nazi headquarters, and, you know how it is – eventually you begin talking to the neighbours and finding out that they're not all bad guys! Next thing you know, one of them, Spatz (Claes Bang), is taking you out to dinner and springing Himmler on you as a surprise guest. Oh, and the main architect of the Holocaust also wants to make Berlin the couture capital of the world and what's a girl to do! From there it's just a hop, skip and a jump, in some gorgeous prewar shoes, to agreeing to use her connection to Winston Churchill to deliver a secret peace offer from the Third Reich behind Hitler's back. It's only polite that, in return, her new friends help her out by applying the Aryan laws to her former (Jewish) business partner, whom she feels has defrauded her, strip him of all he has and give it to her. It could happen to anyone.

Look, as a drama it's fine. Well-paced, lots of action, lovely to look at and really good central performances from Binoche – clearly relishing Chanel's acidity and wit – and Mendelsohn, treading a careful line between making [Dior](#) a gentle man almost overwhelmed by the world and a total drip. Though even he cannot save one scene, in which Dior attempts to bribe a man for information about his captured sister with bolts of fabric instead of cash, from descending into absolute bathos.

The script is far from couture. People says things such as: “For me, creation WAS survival” and “Say something honest for once in your life”, but Chanel has some snappy lines and there is enough energy to keep everything moving along.

It's just that, as a whole, The New Look doesn't amount to enough. You could see it as escapism, but that requires accommodation of the fact that the Holocaust is essentially written out of the story in favour of a rivalry over tulle. At a time when various high-profile institutions issued statements on Holocaust Memorial Day without mentioning Jewish victims, it's a drama that has landed at just the wrong time. The frocks are lovely though.

**The New Look is on Apple TV+**

14 February (NYT)

[Jon Stewart Returns to ‘The Daily Show’ Telling Jokes You Might Not Want to Hear - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

## You Might Not Like What Jon Stewart Has to Tell You

The comedian returned to “The Daily Show,” claiming the prerogative to tell his audience jokes they don’t want to hear.



Jon Stewart returned to the “Daily Show” desk on Monday. He will host the show on Monday nights through the election. Credit...Matt Wilson/Comedy Central

By [James Poniewozik](#)

Feb. 13, 2024

“Why am I back?” asked Jon Stewart, returning to “The Daily Show” chair as Monday night host after [leaving the program in 2015](#). It was a fair question.

He was there in part because Comedy Central ended a yearlong search [unable to pick](#) a full-time replacement for Trevor Noah. He was there because his Apple TV+ show “The Problem” [ended](#), after Apple discovered that when you hire a famous political comedian, he’ll want to talk about topics that upset people.

And he was there because his fans — including a studio audience that greeted him with a standing ovation — have spent eight years and change wondering what he would have said about all the hell that broke loose since [he left](#).

His timing was so sharp, his comic exasperation so familiar, you’d think he’d been away for a long weekend instead of more than two presidential terms. Now he was back to tell us that the two likely candidates for president are super, super old.

It was not exactly the most daring, outside-the-box topic. Stewart, who has [adopted](#) a [plant-based diet](#), apparently has a particular taste for low-hanging fruit.

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More interesting, however, was the implicit message his first new monologue built to. You may have spent years wishing that Stewart would come back to dunk on your antagonists, but he considers himself free — and maybe obligated — to joke about things you wish he wouldn’t.

Stewart’s opening segment riffed on last week’s [special counsel report](#) into classified documents that cast President Biden as an elderly man with a bad memory. (There were also correspondent bits and an interview with Zanny Minton Beddoes, the editor in chief of The Economist, but come on: We were there for [the desk monologue](#).)

He sent up the news conference in which the president defended his acuity while referring to Egypt as Mexico (“Geography buffs might have noticed...”); he ran a montage of Donald J. Trump’s memory lapses and mocked the Republican politician Kari Lake for saying that the 77-year-old “is not an old man” (“He is objectively an old man! He is not a tortoise!”); and he zinged a TikTok video that President Biden shot for the Super Bowl (“How do you go on TikTok and end up looking older?”).

Now, you could argue that, if you want proof that America is run by a gerontocracy clutching greedily to the seats of power, keeping a younger generation from moving up and advancing new voices and ideas, you should point your camera at the “Daily Show” desk. The episode, in fact, made several very funny versions of that joke. Jon Stewart will never let you beat him to deprecating himself.

More pointedly, you could argue that Stewart had retreated into “[bothsidesism](#),” the playing-safe tendency of political media to reach for equivalent critiques of two opponents rather than risk appearing biased by laying out their more important differences. “The Daily Show” beat you to this too, having the correspondent Jordan Klepper ask Stewart, “Did you save democracy yet with your ’90s brand of snark and both-siderism?”

Bothsidesism, false equivalence, pick your term, is still a real problem in the 2020s. But not every comparison is an equivalence. When Yeats [wrote](#) that the best lacked all conviction while the worst were full of passionate intensity, he was also willing to distinguish “best” from “worst.”

And Stewart’s age jokes, however easy, led to a substantive point very different from equivalence, and it’s worth quoting at length:

“Joe Biden isn’t Donald Trump. He hasn’t been indicted as many times, hasn’t had as many fraudulent businesses or been convicted in a civil trial for sexual assault or been ordered to pay defamation or had his charities disbanded or stiffed a [expletive] ton out of blue-collar tradesmen he hired — should we even get to the ‘grab the pussy’ stuff?”

“But the stakes of this election don’t make Donald Trump’s opponent less subject to scrutiny,” he went on. “If the barbarians are at the gate, you want Conan standing on the ramparts.”

People of all persuasions are free to watch “The Daily Show,” but Stewart knows who his audience is, and he was addressing the people who agree with him that Donald Trump is the barbarian in this scenario.

They, however, have developed different expectations since 2015. During Stewart’s years, some comedians dinged “The Daily Show” for relying on “[clapter](#),” the dutiful response to a joke that is more virtuous than funny. But since then late-night has become a clapter factory, especially over the Trump era, when sharing political takedowns became treated as an act of resistance.

In the George W. Bush era, Stewart stood out from late-night hosts like Jay Leno, who labored never to take political sides. Now he might stand out from people like his friend and colleague Stephen Colbert, whose audience [never has to doubt](#) which side he’s on. Late-night comedy audiences are increasingly used to being told what they want to hear, which is to say, what they believe other people need to hear.

Viewers accustomed to clapter may not find Stewart’s digs at President Biden much to laugh at. Even if they believe the age issue is a political problem, they may adopt the social-media stance that pointing it out “is [clap emoji] not [clap emoji] helping.”

But Stewart’s stance is not surprising if you’ve watched him over his years away from the Comedy Central chair. He appeared on Colbert’s return to the studio after its pandemic absence and [raised the lab-leak theory](#) of Covid, an uncomfortable subject for liberal-leaning viewers who associated it with former President Trump’s demagoguing. And while he has no love lost for Donald Trump — who [once tweeted](#) the Jewish Stewart’s birth name at him, saying, “He should be proud of his heritage!” — he also [pushed against](#) accusations that Trump supporters were universally racist.

If Stewart is an old-school American liberal (as opposed to “left” or “progressive”), he’s also vulnerable to the old-school critique of liberals: that he’s too broad-minded to take his own side in an argument. He seems uncomfortable with the idea of apocalyptic political stakes, as when Minton Beddoes worried about President

Biden being “the only person between us and the return of Donald Trump.” “You said that like ‘Voldemort,’” Stewart joked.

Of course, the nine months until the election is, as Stewart pointed out, a very, very long time. Presumably he can’t fill it all with “The candidates are so old that” jokes. In his first show, he established that he didn’t want to be captive to his most vehement viewers’ expectations of what he should say. We’ll see going forward if he’s willing to tell them what he really thinks, even at the risk that they might agree with him.

**[James Poniewozik](#) is the chief TV critic for The Times. He writes reviews and essays with an emphasis on television as it reflects a changing culture and politics.**