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# The New York Times

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## Amazon rejects the clear route

Bill de Blasio

### OPINION

The first word I had that Amazon was about to scrap an agreement to bring 25,000 new jobs to New York City came an hour before it broke in the news on Thursday.

The call was brief and there was little explanation for the company's reversal.

Just days before, I had counseled a senior Amazon executive about how they could win over some of their critics. Meet with organized labor. Start hiring public housing residents. Invest in infrastructure and other community needs. Show you care about fairness and creating opportunity for the working people of Long Island City.

There was a clear path forward. Put simply: If you don't like a small but

**The company could have answered New Yorkers' concerns. Instead, it bolted.**

vocal group of New Yorkers questioning your company's intentions or integrity, prove them wrong.

Instead, Amazon proved them right. Just two hours after a meeting with residents and community leaders to move

the project forward, the company abruptly canceled it all.

I am a lifelong progressive who sees the problem of growing income and wealth inequality. The agreement we struck with Amazon back in November was a solid foundation. It would have created: at least 25,000 new jobs, including for unionized construction and service workers; partnerships with public colleges; and \$27 billion in new tax revenue to fuel priorities from transit to affordable housing — a nine-fold return on the taxes the city and state were prepared to forgo to win the headquarters.

The retail giant's expansion in New York encountered opposition in no small part because of growing frustration with corporate America. For decades, wealth and power have concentrated at the very top. There's no greater example of this than Amazon's chief executive, Jeff Bezos — the richest man in the world.

The lesson here is that corporations can't ignore rising anger over economic inequality anymore. We see that anger roiling Silicon Valley, in the rocks hurled at buses carrying tech workers from San Francisco and Oakland to office parks in the suburbs. We see it in the protests that erupted at Davos last month over the growing monopoly of corporate power.

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*The New York Times publishes opinion from a wide range of perspectives in hopes of promoting constructive debate about consequential questions.*



PHOTOGRAPHS BY TYLER HICKS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Saleh Raken's lower leg was blown off by a mine in Baida, Yemen. "I am bored," he said. "No one plays with me." Mines have killed hundreds of civilians and wounded thousands.

## Yemen's hidden menace

NEHIM, YEMEN

### A million land mines block Saudi-led forces and could be a danger for decades

BY DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK

Desperate to break through enemy lines, the Saudi-backed forces fighting in Yemen are sending untrained soldiers to clear minefields, sometimes using only their bayonets.

"I removed two, and the third one exploded," said Sultan Hamad, a 39-year-old Yemeni soldier who lost a leg clearing mines on the front line near Marib, an ancient city in central Yemen. He was among more than a half-dozen soldiers waiting at a clinic in Marib to be fitted with prosthetic limbs.

Nearly four years after Saudi Arabia plunged into Yemen's civil war, Saudi and Yemeni commanders say that hundreds of thousands of unmarked land mines planted by their opponents, the Houthis, have emerged as perhaps the enemy's most formidable defense.

The hidden explosives, the commanders say, have helped keep the conflict close to a standstill despite the superior air power and other resources of the Saudi-led coalition.



Saudi-backed Yemeni soldiers showed off what they said were land mines disguised as small boulders that had been planted by the Houthis, their opponents in a civil war.

The mines have also killed as many as 920 civilians and wounded thousands, according to mine removal experts. Rights groups and other monitors say the minefields will leave Yemen riddled with buried explosives that could kill or maim unsuspecting civilians for decades — as they have in Afghanistan, Co-

lombia and Cambodia — before the devices can all be removed.

"The scale of the problem is exceptionally large, and the impact is horrendous," said Loren Persi Vicentic of Landmine Monitor, an independent group. "Most of the casualties we see reported are civilians."

A Western mine-removal company hired by the Saudis estimates that the Houthis have laid more than a million mines, more than one for every 30 Yemenis and a concentration as high as that in any other country since World War II.

Crouching behind a low stone wall over the edge of a ridge in the district of Nehim on a recent overcast afternoon, Brig. Gen. Mohsen al-Khabi could almost make out the distant lights of Sanaa, the Houthi-controlled capital, just 23 miles away.

But those 23 miles might as well be 500, he said. The Houthis had planted so many land mines among the winding roads and scattered settlements of the valley, the advance of his Yemeni forces had all but ground to halt, stuck for three years in virtually the same position.

"The problem is the enemy's inhumane weapons, the land mines and improvised explosives," he said.

The Geneva Conventions prohibit the use of hidden mines and antipersonnel mines.

The Houthis, who control much of northern Yemen, did not respond to questions for this article. Despite the civilian casualties, Houthi officials have said that they use only antitank mines and only on battlefields, not mines triggered by human footsteps or in civilian areas.

"This is a war, so what do you expect

YEMEN, PAGE 4

## Moving time for Wall St. banks in London

With their subsidiaries  
spread out in Europe,  
no one city will dominate

BY AMIE TSANG  
AND MATTHEW GOLDSTEIN

In Paris, an empty Art Deco post office is on its way to becoming Bank of America's headquarters for its European brokerage arm. Where telegraph operators once tapped out messages, hundreds of traders and sales people will be working by spring.

In Frankfurt, the European hub of another American bank, Morgan Stanley, will double its staff of 200. Germany's financial center, which attracted financial firms with offices in London with a "Fall in love with Frankfurt" video, is welcoming investment bankers from Goldman Sachs and Citigroup.

The financial landscape of Europe is changing, as banks shift employees and hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of assets from London to new subsidiaries across the bloc in time for Britain's divorce from the European Union, a process known as Brexit, scheduled for March 29.

Banks are tweaking contracts with "Brexit clauses" to protect themselves if the separation is chaotic. Lawyers are checking regulations, jurisdiction by jurisdiction, to gird themselves for possible future contractual disputes.

Cities across the Continent have been vying for pieces of an industry that represents about 7 percent of Britain's gross domestic product and more than a million jobs in the country.

Dublin, Frankfurt, Luxembourg and Paris will be the first to secure fresh business, as financial services companies gauge how profitable London remains. In the next months, these cities, along with Madrid and Milan, will find more traders, compliance teams, human resource managers and technology workers in their midst. Amsterdam will become home to more European markets.

One big Brexit beneficiary is Dublin, where Bank of America, Citigroup and the British bank Barclays are expanding their ranks. "Dublin is our headquarters for our European bank now, full stop," said Anne M. Finucane, vice chairwoman of Bank of America, which employs more than 800 people there.

"There isn't a return. That bridge has been pulled up," Ms. Finucane told the European Financial Forum last week. "From a trading perspective, likewise Paris would be the European trading arm."

Since January, there have been nearly daily revelations about what Britain stands to lose after leaving the European Union. Britain's Office for National Statistics showed last week that growth last year had been the weakest since 2009, and gross domestic product had grown at a rate of 0.2 percent in the last

BANKS, PAGE 7



BRYAN DENTON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**Changing face of Goa** The nude hippies who made the Indian enclave famous are being replaced by yuppies from the country's middle class. **PAGE 3**

## Rolexes and gastro pubs: Welcome to Pyongyang

FROM THE MAGAZINE

### Black market has brought a degree of modernity and consumerism — for some

BY TRAVIS JEPPESEN

One night in Pyongyang, around 9 p.m., my North Korean minder, S., and I pulled into the empty parking lot of the Chongryu Restaurant on the quiet banks of the Potong River. It was the spring of 2017, and though I didn't know it at the time, I was among the last Americans to visit North Korea before a travel ban took effect. It was my fifth trip in five years to the country, whose supposed impenetrability to American visitors had led me to visit as often as possible.

This was the second time that S., who

was 26, had been assigned to look after me in less than a year. I had learned that young couples often met for night strolls along this stretch of the Potong. "Are we here for a date?" I joked.

S. laughed. "Yeah, sure," she said. "We have a date tonight with Comrade K.!"

K. — I refer to several key people in this article by their first initials to protect them and their relatives from reprisal — was the director of the state-owned travel company that arranged my visit. He had offered to take me out for a drink at his favorite gastro pub, in east Pyongyang near the Juche Tower, a 560-foot candle with a cherry-red flame kept constantly lit throughout the night. (The tower was built in 1982 on the orders of Kim Jong-il as a 70th-birthday present to his father, the North Korean founding leader Kim Il-sung.)

In Pyongyang, a city that requires drivers to hold a special permit to be out past 11 at night, 9 p.m. felt decidedly late.

NORTH KOREA, PAGE 2

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PAGE TWO

Adventures in North Korean capitalism

*NORTH KOREA, FROM PAGE 1*  
In addition to S. and I, there was our required second guide, P., as well as our driver.

Usually, the tour guides are tasked with looking after large groups, but with all the bad publicity — North Korea's relations with the West were at their worst, with missile launches and the imprisonment of an American college student — tourism numbers, already low, had been plummeting.

For the next two weeks, I would be the sole foreigner in their charge.

Across the otherwise vacant parking lot, about a dozen figures were shuttling between the back of an open truck and the river, removing what appeared to be solar panels and carrying them to float upon the placid waters.

I had begun to notice solar panels on apartment balconies throughout the city — a convenient solution to the coun-

**The average worker earns 80 times as much in North Korea's informal economy as in an official job.**

try's electricity shortages for those who can afford it — and knew that placing them in water was a way to cool them off. But owing to the great quantity here, it almost seemed as if the panels were being set afloat as a display, as if they were merchandise for sale.

As I wondered what exactly I was seeing, P. shrieked out to her fellow Koreans: “Jangmadang! Jangmadang!”

Usually translated as “market grounds,” “jangmadang” is the word for the unofficial markets that emerged during the Arduous March, which is the regime's official name for the famine that blighted the country throughout the middle and late 1990s. These were illegal markets that sprang up amid the collapse of the public food-distribution system that all North Koreans had relied on for their monthly rations. During the later years of Kim Jong-il's reign, the government began to grudgingly accept their existence and took steps toward regulating them. Under Kim Jong-un, the restrictions against this form of private enterprise have been all but lifted, and jangmadang has transcended the cramped market stalls of its birth to refer to the vast array of legal, illegal and semi-legal markets that exist for all sorts of goods. Among recent defectors and expatriate residents, it is said that now, as long as you have money, you can buy anything you want in North Korea.

The rise of the jangmadang lies at the root of the country's recent economic development. They might not be permitted to speak about it with outsiders, but North Koreans are no longer shy about flaunting their consumption habits, as anyone who has witnessed the displays on the streets of Pyongyang can attest. Montblanc watches, Ray-Ban sunglasses and Burberry couture hardly fit the stereotype of a half-starved populace cut off from the outside world. And while extreme poverty continues to afflict large swaths of the population, North Korean society no longer conforms to a simplistic picture of haves and have-nots. While a rising upper-middle class is most apparent in Pyongyang, a nouveau-riche strata has been observed in other parts of the country, such as the port city of Chongjin and in many places along the border with China, where licit and illicit trade continues to flourish.

A figure approached the parking lot on foot, a 37-year-old man sporting a Dolce & Gabbana flannel shirt and a pair of neon Nikes. Were it not for the red pin bearing the smiling faces of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il installed dutifully over the heart — a pin that all North Korean adults are required to wear in public — he could, I realized, easily be mistaken for one of his compatriots from South Korea.

“Comrade K. is here,” S. announced. “Finally.”

**THE ARDUOUS MARCH** had many causes, but probably the main one was the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. During the decades following the Korean War, the Soviets provided North Korea with regime-sustaining aid, such as selling oil at artificially deflated prices in exchange for shoddily made North Korean goods. Between 1990 and 1994, annual trade between North Korea and Russia



ILLUSTRATIONS BY SALLY DEIG

plummeted to \$140 million from \$2.56 billion, according to one estimate. In the following years, with flooding exacerbating the crisis, North Korea would experience a devastating famine that killed anywhere from 600,000 to more than a million people. People began turning away from the official, centrally planned economy. Markets sprang up all over the country, selling food, cigarettes, household goods and even illegal foreign media.

Today, there are more than 400 sanctioned markets in the country, representing about 600,000 vendors. After the currency reform wiped out the wealth and savings of a number of merchants, the preferred currencies in business became the United States dollar and the Chinese renminbi. According to one survey, some 90 percent of all household expenditures are said to take

place in these markets. Among close observers, there is a growing consensus that the economy has been undergoing a quiet revolution. The South Korean economist Byung-Yeon Kim was among the first to offer hard data about what this transformation looks like in his 2017 book, “Unveiling the North Korean Economy.” The average worker earns 80 times as much in North Korea's informal economy, Kim reports, as in an official job — a shift that is hard to reconcile with the state's self-image as a socialist paradise. A worker in a managerial position at a state-owned company can, these days, engage in practically any profit-making endeavor he or she wants. These activities are “approved” by an official in one of the government ministries, essentially a business partner who takes kickbacks and who in turn pays kickbacks to one of his superi-

ors, in a line that extends all the way up to the ruling family and their associates. Some journalists covering North Korea have compared the regime to a mafia protection racket.

As our car crossed the bridge across the wide Taedong River into east Pyongyang, we stopped at a red light in front of a long building with a swerving rooftop. “This is the Ryugyong Health Complex, right?” I asked Comrade K. in the front seat.

“Yes, yes,” he nodded. “But what about the one across the street?” I pointed to a newer building with a shiny facade of blue-mirrored windows. “Is that also the Ryugyong? Or does it have a different name?”

K. turned to face me. “You've been there?” he asked incredulously. It is not a normal stop on the tours his company operates. In fact, he wasn't aware that

foreigners were allowed to visit. Indeed I had been there, on an earlier visit arranged by one of Comrade K.'s competitors. The amenities of the new health club were impressive. On the ground floor, a shop sold luxury goods: tailored suits, silk ties, fine leather wallets, glittering Rolex watches. Contrary to the notion that such sites are merely stage sets to impress foreign visitors, the two dozen customers in the men's locker room that day appeared genuinely startled by the appearance of me and the other male foreigner in my group. The health club included a traditional Korean sauna far more luxurious than any I had visited in Seoul.

K. nodded pensively. “That is ... an extension of the Ryugyong Health Complex.” He chose his words carefully. “But the main building here with the sloping roof and indoor skating rink ... have you

been there, as well? That one is for ordinary people.”

I had begun to hear this term “ordinary people” with increasing frequency on my last two visits. Usually deployed with a twinge of derogation, it clearly connoted the working poor, farmers and laborers, people lacking the savvy and connections that might help them make it big in the gray-market world of the jangmadang or the managerial gentry of the state-owned enterprises.

We pulled into a parking lot. A staircase between shops led up to our destination, Comrade K.'s favorite gastro pub, Taedonggang Beer Bar. It's all polished wood, brass and chrome fixtures, tastefully dim lighting and bartenders in tuxedos. The reasonably robust crowd consisted of North Korean urban professionals, their ties and Mao collars loosened after a long day at work. The local name for these people is “donju,” or money masters. These nouveau riche represent an increasingly sizable segment of Pyongyang, on a tier just below the elites. They are not likely to be working in market stalls but collecting rent from them, as well as engaging in other jangmadang economic activity while nominally employed in the official sector.

**AFTER KIM JONG-UN** became the nation's ruler in 2011, the central policy of his government was the “byungjin,” the simultaneous development of the economy and the military with its nuclear weapons. This was in many ways a continuation of his father's military-first policy. But in April of last year, Kim announced that his byungjin policy was officially dead. The development of nuclear weapons was complete and had been “victorious.” Kim went on to declare that the nation's sole focus, moving forward, would be the development of the economy, while engaging in a diplomatic process to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. Besides his brief meeting in Singapore with President Trump, Kim has met three times with the South Korean president, Moon Jae-in. Moon has stated, repeatedly, that he believes Kim's intentions to be sincere.

It is notoriously difficult to know what the regime wants, but the upbeat interpretation is that Kim wants to open up North Korea. For the economy to grow meaningfully, the North Koreans would need the United States and the United Nations to lift economic sanctions. Hawkish North Korea watchers believe the United States is being suckered into lifting sanctions in exchange for nothing.

Can the monolithic North Korean political system survive the disruptive force that a market economy poses? The key to the equation might be the donju, who have made themselves an integral part of a complex financial system. Andrei Lankov, a Russian-born North Korean-studies scholar, believes that the donju fear that the collapse of the North Korean government and subsequent reunification of the Korean Peninsula would mean having to compete with the economic behemoth of South Korea, leaving Northerners with second-class status, or worse. In this situation, the donju can hardly be thought of as a dissident class; they just want the state to lay off them so that they can get rich.

After a round of beers, Comrade K. apologized and said he had to cut the night short. He had to leave the next morning on a business trip to Nampo. Before we got up to leave, he presented me with an expensive lighter and a green carton of cigarettes. “This is the new trend brand here in Pyongyang,” he said with a smile, then, lowering his voice: “The brand that the elites smoke.”

At the cash register I tried to pay, but Comrade K. waved his hand, removed a thick wad of \$50 bills from the breast pocket of his Dolce & Gabbana shirt, peeled one off and slapped it down. The hostess's fingers danced across her pocket calculator, and she returned his change in a combination of dollars and a few thousand worth of won notes featuring Kim Il-sung's smiling face. With a scowl, Comrade K. pocketed the dollars, slid the won across the table back to the hostess and sauntered out to the parking lot, where our driver was waiting.

*Adapted from an article that originally appeared in The New York Times Magazine.*

Author who spoke for a generation of immigrants

**ANDREA LEVY**  
1956-2019

BY ALEX MARSHALL

**LONDON** Andrea Levy, a prizewinning author whose novels chronicled the experience of Jamaican immigrants in Britain, died Thursday night. She was 62.

Her death, from cancer, was confirmed in a statement by Headline, her publisher. It did not say where she had died.

Ms. Levy, whose books included “Small Island” and “The Long Song,” was seen by many as the voice of tens of thousands of people who migrated to Britain from its former colonies in the West Indies after World War II to help

rebuild the country, only to encounter racism.

Her father, Winston Levy, was one of the more than 490 people aboard the passenger liner Empire Windrush when it arrived in Britain in 1948 from Jamaica. The immigrants came to be known as the Windrush generation.

But Ms. Levy's books spoke to a far larger audience than just those of West Indian ancestry in Britain. Uzodinma Iweala, reviewing Ms. Levy's “Fruit of the Lemon” for The New York Times in 2007, said the novel “illuminates the general situation facing all children of postcolonial immigrants across the West, from the banlieues of France to the Islamic neighborhoods of New York to the Hispanic ghettos of Los Angeles.”

Andrea Levy was born in London in 1956 to Jamaican parents of mixed descent.



ALASTAIR GRANT/ASSOCIATED PRESS  
**Andrea Levy in 2005. She chronicled the experience of Jamaicans in Britain.**

She grew up in public housing near the Highbury stadium that used to house the London soccer club Arsenal.

“The racism I encountered was rarely violent or extreme,” she wrote of her

childhood in “Six Stories and an Essay,” “but it was insidious and ever-present and it had a profound effect on me.”

“I hated myself,” she added. “I was ashamed of my family, and embarrassed that they came from the Caribbean.” She said she had tried to act as British as possible.

Ms. Levy studied textile design and became a costume assistant, working at the BBC, among other places. But in her 20s she had a “rude awakening” to the issues of race while working for a sex-education project, she wrote.

She recalled attending a racism-awareness course, in which participants were asked to gather by race. She instinctively walked toward the group of white people, only to be beckoned to the other side of the room. The questions over identity “sent me to bed for a week,” she wrote.

Ms. Levy started writing in her 30s, after taking a creative-writing class, but publishers were not really sure what to do with her at first, she told The Guardian in 1999. “They were worried that I'd be read only by black people,” she said.

The rejections spurred her on, she said, adding, “It's grist to my mill.”

She published her first novel, “Every Light in the House Burnin’,” in 1994, but her biggest success came in 2004 with “Small Island,” the story of a Jamaican couple of the Windrush generation and the problems they experience once they move to Britain.

“Levy portrayed with often heart-breaking wit the hardships faced by her parents' generation,” the author Fernanda Eberstadt wrote in The Times. “It's easy to understand why she has become something of a celebrity in Britain.”

“Small Island” won the Orange Prize for fiction, now known as the Women's Prize for Fiction, and the Whitbread Award, now known as the Costa Award, for the book of the year. Ms. Levy was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2010 for “The Long Song,” her last novel.

Ms. Levy's books attracted renewed attention in Britain recently as a result of a scandal involving members of the Windrush generation. Many longtime legal residents of Britain with Caribbean ancestry lost their jobs, were denied medical care and were even detained and threatened with deportation because they could not prove that they had lived in the country since before 1973. The uproar over their treatment was an embarrassment for the British government.

Ms. Levy is survived by her husband, Bill Mayblin, a graphic designer.



# World

## Goa’s hippies give way to India’s yuppies

GOA, INDIA

New middle class flocks to enclave, bringing a more conservative attitude

BY MARIA ABI-HABIB

Elisabeth Rammacher, a German who prefers to be called Yogini, wanted to show her employees what Goa used to look like in its hippie days. The only trouble was, she couldn't find a picture of herself with clothes on.

When hippies traveled overland from Europe to India decades ago, Goa, a state in the southwestern part of the country, was often the final stop on the trail, welcoming to its beaches Westerners who wanted to drop out in a place where living was cheap, drugs were plentiful and swimming nude was the norm.

“Goans’ attitude and openness allowed the hippie culture to thrive,” said Ms. Rammacher, 58, who first came in the 1980s and now owns the popular Villa Blanche cafe.

But most of the original countercultural community is now gone. It has fallen victim to age, a higher cost of living and the demise of the hippie trail in the late 1970s, as wars closed the route.

The final blow came, remnants of the community say, when the government started cracking down a decade ago on the informal businesses that the hippies had set up to support themselves.

Today, Goa's renegade lifestyle attracts an entirely new type of traveler: young Indians flocking here not to find themselves, as the hippies once did, but to celebrate their bachelorette parties or dance atop bars.

As India's economy booms and builds a middle class that barely existed two decades ago, Goa has been transformed from a laid-back enclave for bohemian Westerners to a mass tourist destination for Indians.

“Goa is not Goa,” said David D’Souza, the owner of Tito's, which started as a beach hut restaurant built by his father in 1971 and is now a throbbing open-air nightclub. “It's India now.”

Tito's shares a street crammed with similar clubs, like Bollywood Discothèque and Cocktails and Dreams. A stroll through the neighborhood is an assault on the eyes and ears, with neon signs glaring and drug pushers sometimes shouting to sell their merchandise, trying to be heard over a cacophony of electronic music bearing down from all directions.

“Lots of Indian youngsters have made bucketloads of money, and they just want to blow it,” Mr. D’Souza said. “It’s a lot more yuppie now.”

The concept of vacation is relatively new for many Indians, a product of the economic liberalization and subsequent boom over the last three decades.

In a country of 1.3 billion, if just 1 per-



Above, tourists in the Anjuna market in Goa, India. Many of the hippies who made the enclave famous are gone, driven away by a higher cost of living and a government crackdown on the informal businesses that allowed their community to thrive. Below, an Indian tourist riding a mechanical bull at a night market in Goa.



cent of the population joins the middle class, that means 13 million more people with the ability to take vacations. The United Nations estimates India will produce 50 million outbound tourists by 2022, compared with eight million a dec-

ade ago. Although India's economy has averaged about 7 percent growth every year for the last 18 years, the typical middle-income Indian family still earns much less than its Western counterpart.

This has directed the tourism inter-

nally, to places like Goa. Annually, tourists outnumber Goa's population of 1.5 million by five times.

Jagdeep Singh, 35, from the northern city of Chandigarh, recently chatted with his brother-in-law on Goa's main strip of beach, which was dotted with trash, umbrellas stamped with beer logos and hawkers selling beads and scarves.

Both men were wearing matching black-and-white Mickey Mouse T-shirts that complemented their black turbans. They watched 18 of their family members play in the waves, half wearing the Mickey Mouse T-shirts, the rest sporting Captain America ones.

“My parents weren't from this kind of culture,” Mr. Singh said. “If they came here, they would be in full dress and would be uncomfortable because people are in bathing suits and drinking.”

He credits the growth of India's private sector for affording him vacations like this.

His father, a government employee, earned a meager salary.

“My family never went on vacation when I was a little boy,” he said. “My son

Goans mock the northern Indian tourists who wear jeans to swim in the sea and take photos of women in bikinis.

is 2 years old, and this is his second time in Goa. He's seen more of India than my parents.”

A little farther down the coast, a group of Indian men on a company retreat wore matching straw hats, chugging Budweiser beers and throwing the empty bottles toward the sea.

Nearby, a family from Gujarat, a state in northern India, hopped on a banana boat, the girls in long-sleeve dresses.

Although tourism has been good for the local economy, not everyone is happy about the heaving crowds.

Most visitors come from the north of India, where conservative mores reign. Goans scoff at their demand for “pure veg” food — observant Hindus avoid meat — and many mock their wearing of jeans to swim in the sea. They also chastise visitors for taking photos of women in bikinis.

## A Thai rapper takes on the junta and goes viral

PROFILE

BANGKOK

BY HANNAH BEECH

The rhymes came to Nutthapong Srimueng before dawn, when Bangkok is as still as it can be and the night jasmine overpowers the Thai capital with its perfume.

*The country whose capital is turned into a killing field  
Whose charter is written and erased by the army's boots  
The country that points a gun at your throat  
Where you must choose to eat the truth or bullets*

A largely nocturnal individual, Mr. Nutthapong, 30, had worked on a few bars of a rap song, “What My Country Has Got,” for months. Then he abandoned the project.

But the rule of Thailand's military junta had stretched past the four-year mark. Restrictions on free speech showed little sign of abating. Elections, frequently promised, never materialized.

In late October, a group of musicians called Rap Against Dictatorship, led by Mr. Nutthapong, released “What My Country's Got.” Within a week, the music video had collected 20 million views online — in a country of 70 million people with a general aversion to dissent born of prison sentences meted out to those who oppose the government.

“Thais have been taught that politics are disconnected from their lives, but I want people to know they have rights to elections and democracy,” said Mr. Nutthapong, who raps under the name Liberate P, the P standing for “the people.” “I wanted this song to bring out our voices, but I never expected it to have such a big impact,” he added. “It shows that even grass-roots people are tired and want change.”

In 2014, a military group, the National Council for Peace and Order, led Thailand's 12th successful coup since absolute monarchy was abolished in 1932.

After repeated delays, Prayuth Chan-ocha, the coup leader and now the country's prime minister, set elections for March 24, but efforts to kneecap the political opposition have left little hope of free and fair polls.

A country best known internationally for its golden beaches and temples has instead made headlines for the junta's political prohibitions — arresting people for reading George Orwell's dystopian novel “1984” in public, for example, or flashing the defiant, three-fingered salute from the “Hunger Games” films and books.

Hundreds of Thais have been sent to “attitude adjustment” camps. A computer crimes act and a sedition law have been used to imprison activists, human rights groups say.

As more and more Thais listened to “What My Country's Got,” the government responded with its own rap song, “Thailand 4.0.”

“There are lots of talented Thais if we work together,” went one lyric that accompanied a video in which a bespectacled girl built a robot. To date, the video has been viewed 4.6 million times, compared with 56 million for “What My Country's Got.”

Mr. Prayuth, who has written several syrupy songs of his own, including “Fight for the Nation,” blasted Rap Against Dictatorship's harder-edged effort.

“Anyone who shows appreciation for the song must accept responsibility for what happens to the country in the future,” he told the local news media. Talk of a criminal investigation ensued, and Mr. Nutthapong worried about arrest.

But Mr. Prayuth is running for prime minister in next month's polls, and detaining the rapper behind a viral video is not a winning campaign strategy.

Still, distaste for the song lingers in pro-military circles.

On Facebook, Suthep Thaugsuban, a veteran politician who supports the junta, wrote that the rappers “were born Thai, but they express themselves in such a disgusting, abominable way and think to destroy their own homeland.”

Mr. Nutthapong puts things differ-



Nutthapong Srimueng, right, and two other members of Rap Against Dictatorship in Bangkok in November.

ently. “I love Thailand,” he said. “I want a country that I can be proud of.”

Mr. Nutthapong grew up in Chanthaburi, a province in eastern Thailand known for its durian, a stinky and spiky fruit. Thai pop, with its bubble-gum sweetness, was not for him.

Following in his father's footsteps, Mr. Nutthapong studied architecture in college in Bangkok. Eleven years later, he's still not quite done with his thesis.

Even if his fine-boned features and strategically tousled hair seem more suited for a performer in a boy band, Mr. Nutthapong began dredging up some of Thailand's darkest history in his rhymes. His audience has followed. In just the past week, a half million more people viewed Rap Against Dictatorship's video.

In one of his earlier rap songs, “Oc(t)ygen,” Mr. Nutthapong mined a turbulent period in the 1970s, when dozens of Thai protesters, many of them college students, were massacred by security forces and right-wing mobs.

*You have guns and power but you don't have the right to take away lives*

Those killings were memorialized in a Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph from 1976 of a lifeless student dangling from a tree as a man swings at the corpse with a folded chair. This episode, like other bloody crackdowns on dissent over the decades, is missing from Thai schoolbooks. “They want us to forget everything,” Mr. Nutthapong said.

In the video for “What My Country's

Got,” shot in black and white, the lynching at Thammasat University in Bangkok is re-enacted, a man heaving a chair at a hanging dummy as a mob cheers him on. Mr. Nutthapong, rage rippling across his face, enters the frame.

*The country that makes fake promises like loading bullets  
Creates a regime and orders us to love it*

In 2006, after a break of 15 years, the military again left the barracks to topple Thaksin Shinawatra, a brash billionaire who had threatened traditional power bases. Mr. Thaksin is now in self-exile after a corruption-linked conviction but parties aligned with him have prevailed

Goa, India's smallest state, was a Portuguese colony until 1961, when Indian troops annexed it.

Last year, Goa's state minister for planning called north Indian tourists the “scum of the earth.”

Goans describe their own lifestyle as “susegad,” from the Portuguese “sossegado,” a term conveying the chilled-out contentment that comes with living here.

Residents and long-term visitors are worried the influx from the north could change Goa's tolerant culture.

“Goa was a place to let your hair down, to be who you want to be,” said Stafford Braganza, 45, whose is from Goa, but who lives and works in Mumbai as the head of makeup and technique at L'Oréal, the cosmetics company.

Mr. Braganza, who is gay, was sunbathing on the beach with two friends, all wearing red Speedo-like bathing suits, their chiseled chests welcoming the sun.

Even though India's Supreme Court decriminalized homosexuality last year, Mr. Braganza said the presence of northern Indian tourists made him feel less free and no longer quite so “susegad.”

“Goans have a special culture of acceptance,” Mr. Braganza said. “But lots of Indians are coming from everywhere now, bringing their social customs from their conservative cities. And there's a lot of them.”

He acknowledged there could be a false sense of nostalgia for the hippie days, which weren't without tension.

Because hippies would go swimming nude — illegal in India — Mr. Braganza's mother forbade him from going to the beach when he was growing up.

Ms. Rammacher, the cafe owner, agreed that the Western hippies could sometimes go too far.

“We probably overstepped our bounds,” she said.

When the Anjuna market was a hippie bazaar, bartering, not money, ruled. But the hippie merchant community was mostly wiped out when the government started to regulate businesses a decade ago, expecting taxes to be paid and business licenses to be purchased.

Today, there are tensions between the Goan merchants and those who have come from across India to capitalize on the tourist rush. The newer stalls sell things like cashmere, unthinkable attire in Goa's year-round heat but common in northern India.

Remnants of the hippie market can be found, but vendors concede that their days are most likely numbered.

“The pirate days are over,” said Michelle Antonio, 53, a Brazilian-Italian merchant selling handicrafts, and a resident of Goa for some 25 years.

“Yes, there's been a clampdown,” he said, but he wasn't bitter and was instead grateful for his long run here.

“In our own countries, we aren't so welcoming to foreigners,” he added. “We never would have let people live ‘susegad’ for this long.”

in every election this century. When security forces cleared the streets of protesters loyal to Mr. Thaksin, scores were killed.

“It's the same loop over and over,” Mr. Nutthapong said, of Thailand's brand of democracy interruptus: elections followed by coups, interspersed with bloodletting on the streets.

“The only bargaining power the people have is democracy, but everything looks like it's in the dark and there's no way out,” he added.

Next month's election, which is circumscribed by a military-drafted constitution that keeps much of the power in the army's hands, brings him little hope. “With the upcoming election, it was unfair from the beginning,” he said. “People are in servitude.”

But just because younger Thais are disenchanted with the current state of politics doesn't mean that they will be placated by air-conditioned malls and the latest in selfie technology.

“I grew up in a province that is full of fruits and good soil,” Mr. Nutthapong said. “Sweet things are not enough. We need freedom.”

Despite threats of detention, college students have led rallies against the junta. A 40-year-old heir to an auto parts business has started his own political party.

For millions of others, listening to a rap anthem of dissent is their outlet, even as the junta last week suspended a TV station linked to Mr. Thaksin from broadcasting, saying it incited conflict in society and threatened national security. “Do they think we can be shut up forever?” Mr. Nutthapong asked. “Do they have that low an opinion of Thai people?”

As Thailand's political parties restarted their rusty machinery in preparation for an election neither free nor fair, Mr. Nutthapong was working again in the dark hours, recording a new Rap Against Dictatorship song, “Capitalism,” which he described as a meditation on income inequality and human rights.

Ryn Jirenuwat contributed reporting.



WORLD

# Spain’s far-right sees a breakout moment

EL EJIDO, SPAIN

With new elections called, a regional party hopes to step onto a bigger stage

BY RAPHAEL MINDER

Wedge**d** between the mountains and the Mediterranean Sea, Almeria Province in southern Spain was once a setting for the spaghetti westerns that turned Clint Eastwood into a star.

These days, shimmering miles of plastic greenhouses stretch to the horizon, incubating the tomatoes, peppers and other produce that have transformed this once-impoverished region into a farming hub.

But the most important seed growing along Spain’s southern coast may be that of Vox, Spain’s first far-right party since the end of the Franco dictatorship in 1975.

With Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez’s decision on Friday to call for new elections, Vox, which got its election breakthrough here in El Ejido, will now have a chance to test its appeal on the national stage. Its entry will break a taboo for Spain, which until now has resisted the pull of far-right nationalism that is alive in much of Europe.

In regional elections last December in Andalusia, where Almeria is located, Vox won 11 percent of the vote.

In El Ejido, a municipality of about 90,000, it came out on top with almost 30 percent.

What animates Vox, its supporters say, is an urge to reclaim and defend Spanish nationalism in the face of perceived threats to the country’s integrity.

For Vox, that includes migration, though this region depends heavily on seasonal labor, and the independence drive in Catalonia, which is seen as an attempt by the affluent northeastern region to turn its back on poorer southern Spaniards.

“Illegal migration is a problem for the whole of Spain,” said Juan Francisco Rojas, the president of Vox in Almería, where about 14,000 migrants arrived from Africa last year as the populist government in Italy tightened its borders, forcing migrants to find another way to cross the Mediterranean.

As for Catalan secessionism, he said, “Anything that affects one part of our territory also impacts the rest of Spain, which is why Vox wants to guarantee nobody can threaten our unity.”

While much of the country favors a hard line toward Catalonia, Spain has been relatively tolerant on migration.

Just how far Vox’s message will carry beyond the coastal south, then, is unclear. But the party’s emergence in a country with a long chapter of dictatorship under Francisco Franco has unsettled many.

Santiago Abascal, the founder of Vox, has found like-minded company in Europe. He joined the French nationalist Marine Le Pen on her presidential campaign in 2017. Vox has also sought advice from Stephen K. Bannon, the former chief strategist of President Trump.

In fact, the party wants to follow Mr. Trump’s example and erect walls around two Spanish enclaves in North Africa, to block migrants.



Clockwise from top: A Moroccan migrant, right, working in a greenhouse in El Ejido, Spain, where the far-right party Vox found success in regional elections in December; Pepe Moreno said he may switch his support to Vox over concerns about corruption and migration; and Javier Adolfo Iglesias, a teacher, said Vox’s popularity isn’t based on xenophobia.

“If you look at Trump in America or Bolsonaro in Brazil, you see that people now want politicians who are tough enough to do what they promise,” said Juan Carlos Perez Carreño, the owner of a fleet of refrigerated trucks that transport produce picked in the greenhouses, referring to Jair Bolsonaro, the right-wing leader of Brazil.

“The problem with those who say horrible things about Vox is that they preach democracy, but only when their

favorite candidates get elected,” he added.

Vox has not officially taken up the Fascist symbols often used by much smaller groups in Spain, which have become more visible as the Catalonia dispute has simmered.

Instead, Vox has promised to abolish a 2007 “law of historical memory,” which calls for the removal of Francoist symbols from public places.

The party considers itself a defender

of Catholic values and says it would close mosques suspected of radical preaching.

So far, Spain’s established conservative parties, far from shunning Vox, have indicated they will form partnerships with it if they need to.

After Andalusia’s election, Vox helped form a regional right-wing coalition government — a role of kingmaker that it could repeat at a national level in Spain’s fractured politics.

This month, when tens of thousands of right-wing protesters gathered in Madrid to demand the replacement of Mr. Sánchez, a Socialist, the Vox founder, Mr. Abascal, occupied the front row alongside the leaders of the Popular Party and Ciudadanos.

In fact, Mr. Abascal is hoping to take votes away from the conservative Popular Party, which he abandoned in 2013 to form Vox.

Andalusia showcased the decline of

# Hidden menace in Yemen’s war: A million land mines

**YEMEN, FROM PAGE 1**  
us to do?” Brig. Gen. Yahia al-Sarie, a Houthi officer, told The Associated Press in December. “Receive the other side with flowers?”

During a trip to Yemen last month arranged by the Saudi-led coalition, The New York Times examined scores of defused land mines and interviewed doctors, soldiers and victims about them.

Saudi Arabia may be eager to call attention to the Houthi mines to counterbalance allegations that the kingdom and its principal ally, the United Arab Emirates, have committed war crimes by conducting airstrikes that have killed thousands of civilians and imposing a partial blockade that has threatened Yemen with famine. Some of their airstrikes have dropped cluster munitions, which can pose a long-term threat similar to that of land mines.

**“If we focused on demining, we would never advance.”**

But all or almost all of the land mines and other explosive devices buried in Yemen appear to have been planted by the Houthis, independent monitors say. Mining is a tactic typically employed by a military force defending territory or retreating from it, as the Houthis have been doing since the Saudi-led intervention began.

The Saudis also say the mines provide new evidence of Houthi ties to the kingdom’s regional rival, Iran.

Over the last four years, the Saudis have recovered several Houthi missile parts that Saudi and Western officials say came from Iran.

Now an independent group, Conflict Armament Research, has concluded that certain components of mines or similar victim-triggered bombs made by the Houthis also “originate in Iran.” The group’s report was financed in part

by the United Arab Emirates but also by Western governments and the European Union.

Markings on many of the older mines recovered by the Saudi-backed forces indicate that they were manufactured in Russia or Eastern Europe. The Houthis, an armed movement based in northern Yemen, may have obtained those from the stockpiles of the former government in Sanaa, which the Houthis captured at the end of 2014.

But the Houthis also appear to have established factories to mass produce thousands of their own pie-shaped land mines, each with its own Arabic serial number, according to Conflict Armament Research and other experts. Mine removal teams have dubbed the locally made mines “Yemeni large,” at about 11 pounds, and “Yemeni small,” about 9 pounds.

On a visit to the district of Hairan, in the desert of northern Yemen, Saudi-backed Yemeni soldiers showed off what they said were Houthi land mines, some disguised as small boulders with hidden infrared motion detectors. Nearby was a heaping pile of what the soldiers said was more than 4,000 mines of the pie-shaped Yemeni variety that had been recovered over the previous two months.

The Houthis were “carpeting the ground” with them, said Deif Ahmed Abdullah Saleh, a Yemeni army officer.

Saudi military officers said that the Houthis have also planted land mines in Saudi Arabia, which may raise questions about the effectiveness of the kingdom’s border security.

The Houthis, said Brig. Gen. Faisal bin Yahia Hakami, the Saudi officer in charge of the border area around Jazan, “sneak inside the border of Saudi Arabia, they plant land mines and they run away.”

He said there were “a lot, a lot of military casualties inside the border.”

Last month, a Houthi mine blew up a



Land mines collected in Yemen, where the explosives have helped keep the country’s civil war close to a standoff.

family car in Jazan Province, killing a 10-year-old child, according to a Saudi military spokesman and Saudi news reports. Officials told the Saudi news agency that heavy rainfall had carried the mine across the border from Yemen.

At a clinic in Marib, soldiers were lined up awaiting rudimentary artificial limbs to replace missing feet or legs — each essentially a plastic mold to fit over a stump and a steel rod extending from the mold to the ground.

Muhammad Shumaila, a 32-year-old

soldier from the southern province of Baida, had lost both feet.

“We don’t have time to defuse the land mines,” he said. “We just clear a path. If we focused on demining, we would never advance.”

Yemeni officers said their forces often had no better way to clear mines than prodding them with bayonets.

“This is due to lack of capabilities,” said Zeid al-Harissi, a Yemeni Army officer. His forces lack modern mine detectors as well as people trained to use

them, he said, adding, “Primitive methods are easy and fast to learn.”

Dr. Muhammad Abdo al-Qubati, who runs the facility, said that 90 percent of the limb-replacement patients were hit by land mines. He said the clinic had made more than 900 artificial limbs for more than 600 people over the previous year and a half.

“The mines are our problem, the reason for the miserable situation we are suffering,” he said.

Afif Jameel, a soldier from Taiz, a city

mainstream parties, left and right, as the election ousted the Socialists from power for the first time in four decades.

Pepe Moreno, 67, who has turned his home into a museum for his collection of vintage automobiles, said he had always voted for the Popular Party, but considered switching to Vox, mainly over concerns about corruption. But migration was also on his mind.

“I’m fine with letting some migrants in,” he said, “but not with an open-door policy that means nobody even knows who gets into Spain.”

Elsewhere, at the Fuente Nueva secondary school, Javier Adolfo Iglesias, a teacher, started his class by arguing that “xenophobia cannot be the reason for Vox, because I’ve never seen it in my classroom, nor in my local bar.”

Still, when his 15 students were asked whether they would vote for Vox, five raised their hands, prompting a debate about the lack of integration among adolescents of different backgrounds.

**Vox supporters say they want to reclaim Spanish nationalism.**

Many migrants live apart, next door to the greenhouses, in smaller towns like Las Norias de Dazas, which has been “taken over by the Moors,” remarked Fernando Fuentes, a bar owner.

“I’ve got the last truly Spanish establishment,” along his street, claimed Mr. Fuentes, who keeps a Franco-era flag hanging in the back room and spoke with some patrons about how migrants bring infectious diseases.

In the early mornings, migrants gather at roundabouts to seek day-labor on farms. Ibrahim Hantar, 30, picks tomatoes and lives in a makeshift shelter with four other migrants from Morocco.

They share two mattresses and a set of dirty blankets, and cooked two pieces of chicken for their dinner on a portable gas stove.

Mr. Hantar said his problem was that local farmers wanted him to pay about 3,000 euros to help him get work documentation.

“I’ve got no problem with Spanish people, but if you don’t pay them, you get no papers,” he said.

El Ejido witnessed a rare episode of racial violence in Spain, in 2000, when residents attacked migrants whom they blamed in a series of murders, leading Spanish riot police to intervene.

But no such confrontation has occurred recently, according to officials, though the migrant population has grown.

“Thanks probably to Catalonia, Vox has managed to tap into a moment of nationalist exaltation in which the most vulnerable also always become scapegoats,” said Juan Miralles, the president of Almeria Acoge, a nongovernmental organization that helps migrants.

In the absence of solid official statistics, Mr. Miralles said far-right factions had used social media to spread false figures about rising crime and disease.

Sitting with other members of the Muslim community over a couscous dinner in a mosque, Issam Mehdaj, who distributes water to households, sounded unworried about Vox’s emergence.

“Whatever Vox or any other party says,” he shrugged, “people need us to come and work here.”

in southwest Yemen, who said his age was about 21 or 22, said he was pitching a tent in captured territory when a land mine took off both his legs below the knees.

A boy named Saleh Raken, who gave his age as 10, had been running with two playmates near his home in Baida, he said, when a land mine blew off his lower leg.

Saleh, who is unable to read, entertains himself by playing games on his brother’s cellphone, when it has enough battery power.

“I am bored,” he said, with a gap-toothed smile. “No one plays with me.”

Children like Saleh need new artificial limbs every six months to accommodate their growth, the doctor said.

Saudi Arabia says it will spend \$40 million on a program to teach Yemeni civilians state-of-the-art mine removal practices and to begin extracting mines from residential areas around Yemen.

The project’s manager, Ousama Algo-saibi, said the project is a partnership with the British company Dynasafe, which had brought in experienced specialists from around the world. They had trained about 420 Yemenis, and the expatriates and Yemenis are now working in 32 teams around the country, including in Houthi-controlled areas.

“We do not take sides,” Mr. Algo-saibi said.

Over seven months, he said, the teams have cleared about 41,000 mines, out of the estimated total of more than a million.

Many of their expatriate experts have moved from one conflict zone to another together for more than 15 years. In one group of veteran deminers working near Marib — from Bosnia, Kosovo, Croatia and two from South Africa — two had lost limbs in previous conflicts.

Last month, material they were transporting exploded. All five were killed.

*Saeed al-Batati contributed reporting.*



# Republicans in bind over president’s end run

WASHINGTON

Emergency decree forces choice: Follow Trump or defend role of Congress

BY CARL HULSE  
AND GLENN THRUSH

Senator Shelley Moore Capito, Republican of West Virginia, spent two weeks hammering out a deal on United States government spending and border security with colleagues from both parties, reassured by a sense that Congress was finally asserting itself as a civil, stabilizing force.

The feeling did not last. On Friday, President Trump mounted one of the most serious executive branch challenges to congressional authority in decades, circumventing lawmakers with an emergency declaration. It would allow him to unilaterally divert billions of dollars to a wall on the border with Mexico and presented his Republican allies on Capitol Hill, who labored on a legislative compromise, with the excruciating choice of either defending their institution or bowing to his whims.

The president’s move left Senate Republicans sharply divided, and it remains to be seen whether they will act collectively to try to stop Mr. Trump or how far into uncharted territory they are willing to follow a headstrong president operating with no road map beyond his own demands.

“With him you always have to expect the unexpected,” said Ms. Capito, speaking on the phone from her kitchen in Charleston, W.Va., exhausted from a week of late-night talks at the Capitol.

The Republican resistance to Mr. Trump’s emergency declaration was much more pronounced in the Senate than in the House, where most Republicans — in the minority but more closely aligned with Mr. Trump — embraced it.

After threatening to kill the spending compromise needed to keep the government open, Mr. Trump chose to declare a national emergency to pry loose additional funding for his wall project. It was a divisive step that Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky and the majority leader, Ms. Capito and most other Republicans in the Senate had forcefully urged him not to take, because



ERIN SCHAFF FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Senators Susan Collins of Maine and Lamar Alexander of Tennessee opposed President Trump’s decision to declare an emergency.

it could be a precedent that they feared future Democratic presidents would use against them.

The decision left Mr. McConnell, a professed guardian of the Senate’s prerogatives and power, joining with Mr. Trump in supporting an executive branch end run greater than any of the incursions into the legislative process he often accused President Obama of pursuing. Fellow senators said Mr. McConnell, a former member of the Appropriations Committee, was unhappy with the declaration but saw it as the only way to pass the spending bill.

Some top Republicans, led by Mr. McConnell, pivoted quickly to say they supported the president’s action because it was the only option left to him after Congress failed to meet his demands for wall funding. Mr. McConnell has even begun offering the president strategic

advice on how best to push his plan, aides said.

But Mr. McConnell is also warning Mr. Trump of the damage it could inflict on the party heading into the 2020 elections. Other Republicans portrayed it as a gross violation of the constitutional separation of powers, a blatant disregard by the president for Congress’s fundamental role in determining how federal dollars are spent.

“He is usurping congressional authority,” Senator Susan Collins of Maine, a veteran member of the Appropriations Committee, said in an interview. “If the president can reallocate for his purposes billions of dollars in federal funding that Congress has approved for specific purposes and have been signed into law, that has the potential to render the appropriations process meaningless.” Several other Senate Republicans

publicly and privately joined Ms. Collins in describing the move as a flagrant breach of congressional jurisdiction and a dangerous precedent. Their numbers raised the clear possibility that enough Republican defectors could join with Senate Democrats to provide a majority to disapprove of the president’s decision should the opportunity arise.

Four Republicans might be enough to join with Senate Democrats and pass legislation rebuking the president, and leadership aides put the number of potential defectors as high as 10. But the unrest seemed well short of the sort of partywide revolt necessary to override a veto by Mr. Trump of any legislative attempt to prevent his declaration of an emergency, leaving a legal challenge as the only recourse.

“I would not vote for disapproval,” said Senator Richard C. Shelby, Republi-

## Giving up on asylum in U.S.

TIJUANA, MEXICO

Facing Trump’s deterrents, more migrants are staying in Mexico or going home

BY JOSE A. DEL REAL,  
CAITLIN DICKERSON  
AND MIRIAM JORDAN

Pushed beyond their limits by prolonged waits in dangerous and squalid conditions in parts of northern Mexico, thousands of migrants who arrived in caravans and who had been waiting to seek asylum in the United States appear to have given up, Mexican officials have said, dealing President Trump an apparent win after a humbling week for his immigration agenda.

About 6,000 asylum seekers who had traveled en masse in a caravan that originated in Honduras, many of them in defiance of Mr. Trump’s demands that they turn around, arrived in northern Mexico in late November. Since then, more than 1,000 have accepted an offer to be returned home by the Mexican government, the officials said. Another 1,000 have decided to stay in Mexico, accepting work permits that were offered to them last fall, at the height of international consternation over how to deal with the growing presence of migrant caravans.

Mr. Trump resorted on Friday to declaring a national emergency after he failed to secure funding from Congress for a border wall that he said would block migrants from entering the United States. But the data from Mexican officials suggested that harsh policies he has introduced to crack down on asylum seekers may already be achieving some of their intended effects.



EMILY KASK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Natali, one of many Honduran migrants who has reconsidered seeking asylum in the United States. For now, she likes living in the Mexican border city of Tijuana.

Added last week to new policies that are bearing down on asylum seekers — which include tight limits on the number of people who can apply for the status each day and a heightened standard of proof to qualify — was the extension of a rule that certain asylum seekers must wait in Mexico for the full duration of their legal cases, which can take years. The requirement originally applied only to adults, but the United States Department of Homeland Security expanded it to include families with children as well.

On Thursday, the American Civil Liberties Union and two other groups sued the administration on behalf of 11 asylum seekers who were required to wait in Mexico, claiming that the policy, which was introduced last month at the San Ysidro port of entry, near San Diego, violates United States and international laws. The lawsuit was filed in federal court in the Northern District of California on behalf of migrants from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador who feared for their lives in Mexico, according to the complaint.

Among those who have been dissuaded from trying to enter the United States, at least for now, is Natali, 32, who asked to be identified only by her first name because she feared for her safety. Speaking from her modest apartment atop a steep hill in the Mexican border city of Tijuana, she explained that she and her husband had fled their home in El Progreso, Honduras, after she witnessed a murder carried out by a local criminal gang. Soon afterward, she began to receive threats in the mail warning her to keep quiet.

Once in Mexico, they heard about the increasingly long odds of receiving asylum in the United States and feared more than anything that officials there would return them to their home country. Rather than crossing the border, they decided to seek humanitarian visas

to remain in Mexico legally for at least one year and have slowly begun to build a life.

Natali still thinks she might ask for asylum in the United States but is realistic about her chances. “I like Tijuana,” she said. “It’s a very pretty city, and there’s a lot of work.” More than anything, she fears the United States would deport her back to Honduras.

Mexican officials said the data on people who have deferred or given up their quest for asylum in the United States reinforced an idea that is often raised by Mr. Trump: that many caravan members are not truly desperate for protection.

“What happened is that many people came on an adventure, trying their luck,” said Cesar Palencia, Tijuana’s chief of migrant services. “When they realized that it was hard to cross and the conditions in Mexico were also difficult, among many factors, they decided to return home.”

The caravan that began in Honduras ballooned in size as it swept through impoverished villages, drawing a swarm of national media attention and an eclectic mix of participants. Many came from poverty, lacking education and resources, and said they were unfamiliar with the laws that would determine who would be granted legal status in the United States and who would not.

Immigrant advocates said that hype and false promises had attracted a group that was somewhat unrepresentative of typical asylum seekers. But they pointed to the roughly 4,000 members who had successfully entered the United States and had at least requested protected status to argue that most had legitimate claims.

Michelle Brané, the director of migrant rights and justice at the Women’s Refugee Commission, warned that while Mr. Trump’s tough policies may discourage the undeserving, they might also endanger people who need protection.

“It may look like it’s working in the short term,” Ms. Brané said. “But I don’t think it’s a long-term solution. It’s driving people further into the shadows and that’s exactly the opposite of what we want.”

When they arrived in Mexico, many of the caravan members had been living in squalor, sleeping in tents or lean-tos inside the Benito Juárez sports complex. A downturn devastated the grounds, and those who remained fled to a new expansive shelter called Barretal on the outskirts of Tijuana. Once packed with 2,500 people, that location also recently closed because it had shrunk to fewer than 200.

“It is not the same as when we had Barretal and Benito Juárez,” said Esme Flores, an immigrant-rights advocate at the San Diego office of the American Civil Liberties Union. “It really feels that the population has moved on.”



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# Business



Opponents of Amazon rallied in New York. Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo fumed that some Democrats had put “the state’s economic future” at risk in their opposition to Amazon.

## An old debate is revived

Clash over Amazon goes to the heart of questions on the Democratic agenda

BY PATRICIA COHEN

The political opposition that prompted Amazon to walk away from building a corporate headquarters in New York featured a touchstone of the progressives’ economic agenda: ending tax policies that they say unfairly reward and pamper the wealthy.

But it also exposed a political vulnerability, leaving unclear what alternative strategy they are offering to encourage growth and create the thousands of jobs that Amazon promised to bring to the city.

The clash has consequences far beyond New York, going to the heart of a national debate that is likely to dominate the 2020 presidential race: What is the best way to spread prosperity?

As Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo fumed on Thursday — the same day Amazon announced it was abandoning its plans — that some of his fellow Democrats had put “the state’s economic future” at risk, others inside and outside the party saw the scuttled project as evidence that the left doesn’t understand how to generate growth. In a tweet, Lloyd Blankfein, senior chairman of Goldman Sachs, lashed out at progressive Democrats, labeling them as both “anti-progress” and “anti-Democratic.”

Those views feed into a powerful, long-held narrative popularized by Ronald Reagan that Democratic policymakers have — as then-Senator Barack Obama put it in 2006 — become “more obsessed with slicing the economic pie than with growing the pie.”

For Republicans, Amazon’s retreat is an opportunity to revive beloved barbs and brand Democrats as “job killers” who are all too eager to “tax and spend.” Lower taxes for investors and business owners, they argue, is what encourages entrepreneurs to create jobs and spread the wealth.

For progressives, defeating a plan that handed tax incentives to a trillion-dollar tech titan is part of a broader effort to discredit what they see as bank-

rupt economic policies. They argue that workers and the government — two players that have been relegated to the background — should be treated as important engines of growth.

Many objections raised in New York by critics like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the freshman congresswoman whose district borders the neighborhood where Amazon had planned to put its headquarters, align with economic critiques offered by Democratic presidential contenders. Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, for example, have frequently railed against the outsize power of corporations and lopsided tax cuts and incentives that favor the wealthy.

**For Republicans, Amazon’s retreat is an opportunity to brand Democrats as “job killers” who are eager to “tax and spend.”**

Ms. Warren called the state subsidies in the Amazon deal “taxpayer bribes,” while Mr. Sanders said, “This is what the rigged economy is all about.” New York was offering nearly \$3 billion in subsidies to Amazon.

At the same time, presidential hopefuls have supported policies that bolster workers and the middle class, like an increased minimum wage and rules that ensure overtime pay, as well as substantial public investment. Democrats on the left are also floating proposals like free college, a federal job guarantee, a plan to retool the country’s energy use and higher taxes on the wealthy.

The groundwork for these ideas was prepared in recent years by a network of liberal economists, thinkers and activists at research organizations and universities interested in developing a set of policies to displace supply-side economics and trickle-down theory.

“The interaction between market and collective action is what leads to our prosperity,” said Joseph Stiglitz, an economist who was awarded a Nobel and is coming out with a book about expanding the economy in the 21st century. Advances in science and technology, for example, rest on basic research

that was first funded by the government and then brought to the market by the private sector.

Mr. Stiglitz argues that this is the kind of alternative explanation of how growth occurs that the Democratic Party needs to offer more vocally. Increased competition, lower taxes on the wealthy and laissez-faire financial regulation, he maintains, have failed to deliver on their promise to supercharge the economy and broadly lift incomes.

Nick Hanauer, a Seattle venture capitalist who was an early investor in Amazon and is now a progressive activist and writer, argues that trickle-down theory should be replaced with what he and Eric Liu, a former adviser in Bill Clinton’s administration, call “middle-out economics.”

“I believe capitalism is the greatest social technology ever created for generating wealth and prosperity,” he said, “but we’ve confused what’s good for the narrow-short-term interest of a few capitalists for what’s good for capitalism.”

The notion that tax cuts for the rich are what cause economic growth and create a thriving middle class is “both wrong and backwards,” Mr. Hanauer said. “The thriving middle class is the cause of economic growth.”

The ideas that are capturing attention, particularly in the run-up to the 2020 election, focus more directly on the fortunes of workers and give the government a much more central role in spurring economic growth and distributing wealth. The approach reaches back to the era of Franklin D. Roosevelt for inspiration. The major effort to alter the course of climate change was purposely named the “Green New Deal” — after Roosevelt’s signature policy — precisely for that reason. Several versions of the program exist, but the one introduced by Representative Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts includes “a job guarantee program to assure a living wage job to every person who wants one.”

During the recession’s grimmest months, President Obama pushed to fast-track a multibillion-dollar stimulus package — the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 — aimed at creating jobs and spending money on transportation, technology and energy

projects. Although the plan was smaller than several left-leaning Democrats wanted, it rested on a shared assumption that cranking up public investment would get the economy moving and put people back to work.

How such policies will play out at a time when the unemployment rate has settled in at a low 4 percent will be a source of tension among the party’s various factions. In the past, Democrats have pushed such stimulants during periods of economic weakness. And specific proposals offered by progressives, whether free college or a wealth tax, cause some Democrats to blanch.

Nonetheless, many Democrats acknowledge that political and business leaders have tended to focus too narrowly on the winners of pro-growth policies like free trade without paying sufficient attention to losers like laid-off factory workers. It’s a theme that President Trump successfully pushed on the campaign trail in 2016.

“You organize the economy so workers have more power that allows them to get fair wages and safe living standards” so they’re not outgunned by corporate power, said Jacob Leibenluft, who led Hillary Clinton’s economic policy team in her presidential campaign and is now executive vice president for policy at the Center for American Progress, a liberal research institute.

Democratic centrists and self-described pragmatists now also widely subscribe to critiques of the dominant economic policies of the last couple of decades — particularly that tax policy has not produced vigorous growth. A consensus has also taken shape that the government needs to play a larger role in the economy, raising taxes, investing in public institutions and, to some degree, redistributing income.

For many Democrats, the shift to a more activist role is overdue. Yet it also comes at a time when the public’s trust in government has dropped to historic lows, according to a December 2017 report from the Pew Research Center.

Only 18 percent of Americans said they trust the federal government to do the right thing “just about always” or “most of the time.”

Peter Eavis contributed reporting.

## Tech boom to survive rejection of Amazon

Drawn by the diversity of New York, companies keep work forces growing

BY BEN CASSELMAN, KARL RUSSELL AND KEITH COLLINS

Amazon may be pulling the plug on its New York campus, but the city’s tech boom is likely to endure.

Long before Amazon announced that New York had won a share of its second-headquarters sweepstakes, tech was a rising force in the local economy. Google, which already has thousands of workers in New York, plans to double its work force in the city and build a \$1 billion campus in Manhattan. Facebook, Apple, Uber and other companies are also expanding their presences, as is a rising generation of homegrown companies.

Even Amazon itself said Thursday, when it withdrew its headquarters proposal, that it planned to keep adding to its New York work force.

“Every part of the city is feeling the impact of the technology boom,” said William C. Rudin, a developer and the chairman of the Real Estate Board of New York. “The geography of where these companies are, it’s not just Midtown South or Meatpacking. It’s downtown, it’s Midtown East, it’s going to Brooklyn, it’s going to Queens.”

In terms of raw economic power, Wall Street still dominates. Its workers earn more than \$400,000 a year on average, close to three times as much as tech workers.

As a result, the finance sector accounts for a huge share of city and state tax revenue, and wields disproportionate political power.

Mayors dating to David Dinkins in the early 1990s have sought to make the city less vulnerable to the booms and busts of finance. Those efforts accelerated after the 2008 financial crisis, which wiped out thousands of jobs on Wall Street. Tech’s rapid expansion came at an auspicious time, helping the city rebound much faster than many experts had predicted.

“There was a wide consensus that New York City needed to diversify its economy to add balance beyond Wall Street,” said Jonathan Bowles, executive director of the Center for an Urban Future, a New York-focused think tank. “I really think that tech has finally allowed New York to do that.”

New York has never been a one-industry town. Even at its height in the early 2000s, Wall Street accounted for little more than 5 percent of the city’s jobs and 20 percent of its total pay. New York is a center of media, advertising and fashion. And for the accounting, consulting and law firms that serve those industries — as well as for the real estate moguls who build their office towers and condominiums.

New York’s economic diversity is part

of what drew tech companies to New York in the first place. When Google and other West Coast giants set up outposts here in the mid-2000s, they were mostly hiring advertising sales representatives and marketing managers, not hard-core coders.

Gradually, however, New York began to become a force for tech talent. Media and finance companies were trying to become more digitally savvy and needed programmers. Universities — encouraged by successive administrations in City Hall — created and expanded programs to give students digital skills.

As a share of the population, New York still has far fewer programmers, software developers and similar workers than Silicon Valley and Seattle. In raw numbers, however, the New York area has more such professionals than any other urban area.

But as Amazon’s pullback in New York shows, the technology industry also has yet to fully integrate itself into New York’s power structure.

And while New York has a growing start-up scene, few major tech companies are based here.

**New York has never been a one-industry town.**

“New York’s cachet, New York’s strength, is as a global headquarters city,” said Kathryn Wylde, the partnership’s president and chief executive. “And if the C.E.O.s of the industry leaders are not here, we can’t continue to lead the world as a commercial center. We won’t have the magnetism.”

Not everyone, of course, is pushing for tech to play a larger role in New York. Amazon’s plans were scuttled by a powerful backlash from unions, neighborhood groups and elected officials. Some of that opposition was fueled by the multibillion-dollar incentive package the city and state offered to lure Amazon. But critics also worried that the flood of well-heeled tech workers would drive up already sky-high rents.

Dan J. Wang, a professor at Columbia Business School, said those concerns were particularly acute because of the size and concentration of Amazon’s planned campus, which he likened to the “company towns” of the early 20th century.

“There is the possibility of displacement of existing businesses and of the exacerbation of inequality that already exists in New York,” Mr. Wang said.

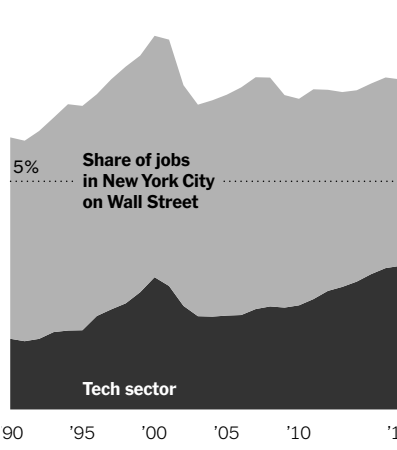
Other companies, such as Google, have been more subtle, building up presences in neighborhoods without taking over.

That might explain why, before the furor over Amazon, tech’s rise had managed to stay largely beneath the radar.

“Tech has become a huge and crucial part of the New York City economy,” Mr. Bowles said. “I’m not sure that most New Yorkers know that right now.”

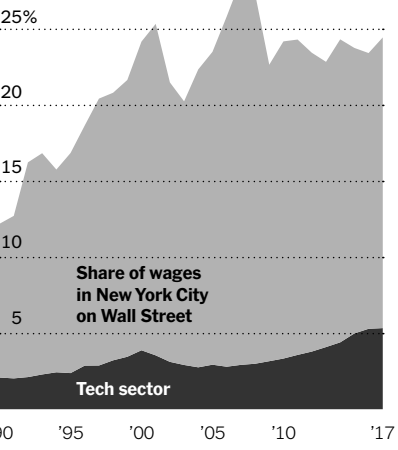
### Tech’s economic influence in New York City

The rise of the tech sector is helping to offset a gradual decline in jobs on Wall Street.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Finance on Wall Street still dominates the tech sector in total pay.



THE NEW YORK TIMES

## The instant, custom, connected future of health care

BY JANET MORRISSEY

When Jeff Dachis suddenly and unexpectedly learned he had Type 1 diabetes at the age of 46 in September 2013, he was stunned. After all, he ran marathons, followed a healthy diet and had never had an inkling of any medical troubles during previous annual physicals.

“I went to the doctor, got about six minutes with a nurse practitioner, an insulin pen, a prescription and a pat on the back, and I was out the door,” Mr. Dachis said. “I was terrified. I had no idea what this condition was about or how to address it.”

Feeling confused and scared, he decided to leverage his expertise in digital marketing, technology and big data analytics to create a company, One Drop, that helps diabetics understand and manage their disease.

The One Drop system combines sensors, an app and a Bluetooth glucose meter to track and monitor blood-glucose levels, food, exercise and medication. It uses artificial intelligence to predict blood-glucose level over the next 24 hours and suggests ways to control fluctuations, such as walking or exercising to offset high sugar levels, or eating a candy bar to raise low glucose levels. Users can also text a diabetes coach with questions in real time.

With 30 million Americans living with diabetes, Mr. Dachis said he knew the potential market for his technology was big. More than a million people have downloaded the app to date, he said.

One Drop is among a surging number of companies that are using “internet of things,” or IoT, technology to create new treatments in the health care sector.

“Advances like robotics, nanotechnology, genetic engineering, 3-D printing, artificial intelligence and IoT are fueling an exciting era within health care innovation,” said Jeff Becker, a senior analyst and health care information technology expert at Forrester, a market research company. “Many of these efforts

**Advances in A.I., 3-D printing and “smart” pharmaceuticals are “fueling an exciting era.”**

will undoubtedly fall flat, but some could end up as transformative as the X-ray itself.”

And consumers are paying attention. Nearly 80 percent of consumers surveyed in the United States said technology is important to managing their health, according to a 2019 report by Accenture.

The latest tech-related medical treatment advances run the gamut from implants that help paralyzed people walk to smart pills that detect when patients fail to take their medication.

Spinal cord research took a major step forward when a 29-year-old man, who had been paralyzed from the chest down since a snowmobile accident in 2013, was able to walk the distance of a football field with the help of a rolling

walker. The milestone, which was published in Nature Medicine last fall, came after a team of researchers at the Mayo Clinic implanted an epidural electrical stimulator device into the man’s lower spine and gave him six months of intensive physical therapy.

“This is a revolutionary breakthrough,” said Kendall Lee, a neurosurgeon and director of neural engineering laboratories at the Mayo Clinic. He said the device had so far been successfully implanted in two people.

While the implant isn’t a cure, it offers hope to millions of paralyzed people around the world. But Dr. Lee was careful to note that the technology is still some time away from being publicly available.

“We were able to do the study under the F.D.A.’s investigational device exemption,” Dr. Lee said, referring to the United States Food and Drug Administration. “This is not something for the general population yet.”

At least three different research

groups — Mayo Clinic, the University of Louisville and the University of California, Los Angeles — are now aggressively expanding their trials to include more patients.

Then there’s the smart pill. The World Health Organization estimated that 50 percent of people with chronic diseases in developed countries fail to take their medicines as prescribed, whether from forgetfulness, concern about side effects or other reasons.

This noncompliance costs the health care system in the United States from \$100 billion to \$290 billion a year from emergency room visits, hospital stays and other costs related to worsening medical conditions, according to the Network for Excellence in Health Innovation.

AdhereTech built a smart pill bottle that alerts patients when it’s time to take a medication and sends an automated text or phone message if they miss a dose in real time. But it tracks only the use and contents of the bottle, so there’s

no definitive way to detect whether a person has actually swallowed the pill.

The pharmaceutical maker Otsuka goes a step further: It worked with Proteus Digital Health to create a digital smart pill for Otsuka’s Abilify medication, which is used to treat schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression. The Abilify MyCite pill, which will be rolled out in the next few months, is embedded with a sensor that’s activated by stomach acids. The sensor is tracked by a patch worn on the person’s stomach, which then sends the information to a smartphone app, where the patient and doctor can track when the medication was taken — and even send notifications if it hasn’t been.

But the technology goes far beyond pill-taking reminders, said Andrew Thompson, co-founder, president and chief executive of Proteus Digital Health. The sensor patch also tracks physical activity, heart rate, rest patterns and other metrics, which will help

MEDICINE, PAGE 7





Jered Chinnoch, who damaged his spinal cord in 2013, walked with assistance after a team at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., implanted an electrical device in his spine.

# The future of health care

**MEDICINE, FROM PAGE 6**

doctors and patients know whether a medication is working and the right dose has been prescribed.

The Abilify MyCite pill won't be cheap: It will cost \$1,650 a month, significantly more than the \$30-to-\$40-a-month cost of a generic version of the Abilify pill. However, most patients would take the digital pill for only two to three months — just enough time to collect data on pill-taking adherence, dosage and health impact to revise a treatment plan, Andrew Wright, Otsuka's vice president of Digital Medicine, said.

Efforts are now underway for both Proteus and Otsuka to add the technology to pills for other chronic conditions. Mr. Thompson believes it's the future.

"Years from now your grandchildren or your children will be incredulous that you put things into your body and didn't know if they were real or fake, the right dose or the wrong dose, in-date or out-of-date," Mr. Thompson said. "So yes, eventually this will be in every drug everywhere."

In the world of prosthetics, scientists have found a way for tetraplegics — those paralyzed from the neck down — to feel touch by electrically stimulating parts of the brain. Paralysis can mean the loss of both control and feeling in affected areas, and while prosthetics can return motor function, sensing requires treatment of the nervous system.

Initially, the challenge seemed daunting, considering the brain contains 100 billion neurons, and matching up the neurons that control sensory nerves with the prosthetic hands and arms was



Jeff Dachis, the founder of One Drop, which uses sensors, an app and a Bluetooth glucose meter to track a person's blood-glucose levels, diet, exercise and medication.

tough, said Sliman Bensmaia, an associate professor in the department of organismal biology and anatomy at the University of Chicago, who was part of the research team. But after surgically placing an electrode implant in the brain, the team was able to electrically stimulate the portions of the brain that controlled sensation, allowing the patient to feel the size, shape and texture of objects and to tell when a finger was touched.

Plans are now in the works to expand human trials at the University of Pittsburgh, Johns Hopkins University and the University of Chicago. The biggest

challenge now? Making the brain implant wireless and upgrading it so that it doesn't wear out after five years.

"You can't be having brain surgery every few years," Dr. Bensmaia said. "We need an array of implant technology that lasts a lifetime."

Dr. Bensmaia said the brain implant technology could someday have far-reaching applications, such as improving memory or retrieving information faster.

Another hot area: the use of 3-D printers to create patient-specific medical devices, like knee joints and spinal implants. The printers make it faster, easi-

er and cheaper to make customized medical devices based on a patient's M.R.I. and C.T. scans.

"They can be made in one-fifth to one-tenth" of the time that traditional custom-made devices are made, said Scott Hollister, a professor in the department of biomedical engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology and Emory University. And 3-D-printed devices often fit far better, cause fewer complications and require a shorter recovery period than off-the-shelf joint replacements that come in sizes small, medium and large.

At least 80 3-D-printed devices have received F.D.A. approval as of 2016, though their use has largely been confined to academic and research hospitals.

While many of these breakthrough technologies have shown promise in clinical trials, experts caution there's no guarantee they'll ever make it to market.

Mr. Becker, the Forrester analyst, cited the disastrous example of Theranos, which made false claims for years that it had a revolutionary blood-testing technology that required only a small amount of blood. The company raised more than \$700 million, was valued at \$9 billion at its peak in 2014, and made its founder Elizabeth Holmes a billionaire, before collapsing after scientists and regulators discovered the technology didn't work.

"Theranos is the pockmark of health care I.T.," Mr. Becker said.

But sometimes it's not malicious — it's just promising science that doesn't pan out.

# Buying art? Is it love or money?

## Wealth Matters

PAUL SULLIVAN

The value of a Picasso or a Ferrari typically rises in a strong economy, as do shares in a consumer staple like Procter & Gamble.

But when the economy sours, those shares may be easier than the other possessions to shed. As wealthy collectors pull back on extravagances, investors could get stuck holding assets they might have to unload at a loss.

Collecting fine art is as much about beauty and desirability as it is about the investment value. Given the strength of the art market over the past few years, many collectors may not be prepared if the economy slows and the appetite for art cools.

Roy Sebag, a hedge fund analyst turned entrepreneur, has a collection that includes a drawing by Pablo Picasso and works by 17th-century Dutch masters. He said he took an objective view of his collection's value: looking at both the art's intrinsic value — how an artist's work has appreciated — and its social currency.

"It's subjective," but it still allows for analysis on historical pricing, said Mr. Sebag, founder of Goldmoney, a site for buying and selling precious metals, and co-founder of Mené, a jewelry line. "It isn't a coincidence that Picasso is viewed by every high-net-worth individual as an asset they want to own." There are supposedly 5,000 works by Picasso, he said, a stock large enough to build a network of interested parties.

By his analysis, avoiding emerging artists and buying works of a well-known artist like Picasso, despite having to pay millions of dollars to do so, is like buying a hedge against recession. "We know trends change quickly," he said.

Such beliefs could be tested in the next few years.

In 2018, works by the 100 top-selling artists, as measured by the market research firm Artprice, rose 4.3 percent in value, but the art market as a whole lost 1.9 percent. The company explained that buyers were becoming more demanding.

"While happy to pay big money for rare and high-quality works with irreplaceable provenance, they often 'pass' on other works," its report said.

In 2008, the art market was not immune to huge swings in value. Sales of postwar and contemporary art fell by more than two-thirds from 2008 to 2009, according to data collected by Athena Art Finance, which lends against art portfolios. It took until 2012 for sales to surpass pre-recession levels.

To guard against an art collection's plummeting in value, dealers advise prudence and, not surprisingly, connoisseurship.

If there is a lesson to be drawn from the recession, it is that buyers become more discerning in both the artists they favor and the price they will pay, said B.J. Topol, co-president of Topol Childs Art Advisory, which works on behalf of wealthy clients.

"There's a reshuffling in a recession," she said. "The trendy artist of the time, people aren't looking at him. People want to make sure they're buying a known commodity and not taking risk."

Ms. Topol said she saw signs of a slowdown in the art market at the Art Basel international art fair in Miami Beach in December. Art wasn't being snapped up in the first few minutes.

Instead, buyers had a chance to digest what they were seeing and negotiate on price.

Regardless of the climate, she advises not to buy on trends, yet she stops short of the adage to buy what you love. That could be financially disastrous.

"If you combine your passion with an informed decision," she said, "you'll have something you love every day and maybe it goes up one day."

Other collectors amass idiosyncratic collections whose value is greater together than apart. Peeling off several pieces in a downturn could depress the value of the collection as a whole, said Jean Pigozzi, a venture capitalist and art collector.

"I'm not at all like all the other hedge fund collectors," said Mr. Pigozzi, who has amassed a significant collection of contemporary African art. "I've never collected thinking what I collect would be a good investment."

He said most of his pieces were not worth more than \$100,000. Compare that with a work by Jean-Michel Basquiat, among the best-selling contemporary artists today. Mr. Pigozzi paid \$1,000 for an artwork by Basquiat in 1982 and sold it last year for \$3.2 million.

What he has is a unique collection that is often included in museum shows and sought after by auction houses. In its totality, it offers a window into sub-Saharan art of the past 30 years.

But Mr. Pigozzi knows selling it would be difficult without breaking it apart. Instead, he hopes to create a museum for it.

Approaching art as a pure investment can be difficult, because values of an artist's work can change substantially in ways not associated with typical capital markets investing.

The value of works by Wilfredo Lam, for instance, has doubled or even tripled in the last decade because of a reappraisal of his place in art history, said Isabelle Bscher, the third-generation owner of Galerie Gmurzynska, which has represented artists including Yves Klein, Joan Miró and Picasso.

Lam, who died in 1982, was Cuban by birth and grouped with other Latin American artists at auctions, which drew a specific collector.

But he was later seen as a modern artist, because he was a friend of Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning and other midcentury artists. As his artworks moved to more popular auctions, their value has doubled or tripled in a decade, Ms. Bscher said.

A similar shift happened with Picasso about 15 years ago, she said. Collectors did not want to buy his work created after 1965, when the artist was in his 80s and seen as past his prime. At the time, the artworks were inexpensive, but they have since risen in value.

Her advice: "If you buy the period of an artist that is not in fashion, you can make a great investment."

In distressed markets, social concerns may keep some people from working with auction houses. They can try private sales to sell something quietly.

But Ms. Topol said that even then, discerning collectors were going to drive a hard bargain.

If that happens, she said, dealers and auction houses can step in to help. But her advice echoes that of others: Don't sell art in a downturn unless other sources of liquidity have dried up.

Mr. Sebag said that the art he owned had increased in value far more than other investments he had made, but that he would sell it only if he ceased to enjoy it.

"I think art is something you purchase without an exit strategy," Mr. Sebag said. "My idea of liquidity is in other investments."

**If the economy sours, wealthy investors could be stuck with their assets.**

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# It's moving time for banks

**BANKS, FROM PAGE 1**

quarter. Brexit uncertainty was blamed, in part.

Many financial companies are redeploying staff members by the dozens — not the hundreds — because they are waiting to see whether the end is a messy breakup or a phased-in withdrawal, said David Pascoe, senior vice president for Europe at Cartus, a relocation company that moves 162,000 people a year.

So far, banks from the United States have relocated fewer than 1,000 employees from London. But the number could grow to 5,000 as the March deadline approaches, said banking officials and analysts.

"We're seeing such a diverse range of cities because banks are saying they're not going to be caught out again by having all their operations in one city," Mr. Pascoe said. "They don't want one country upsetting their operations again."

Few expect London, a dominant player in cross-border lending and foreign-exchange trading, to lose its might overnight. But international banks will no longer view London as their best gateway in or out of Europe.

The fragmentation of the industry will weigh on companies and Europe's wider economy. The cost of building and running operations in different locations could filter through to clients, making financial services more expensive. Bank of America alone has spent \$400 million moving assets and workers to Dublin and Paris, it said last week.

The effects could be worse in Britain if the economy deteriorates significantly and borrowing becomes more expensive. The country is staring down Brexit but also trying to end austerity measures that have been in place for over a decade, a big challenge.

In a worst-case scenario, the Bank of England calculated in November that Brexit could shrink the economy by 8 percent and send house prices plunging by 30 percent.

British banks could suffer if a souring economy led to nonpayment and defaults on mortgages, according to Standard & Poor's.



Mark Carney, the governor of the Bank of England. In a worst-case scenario, the central bank calculated in November that Brexit could shrink the economy by 8 percent.

Mark Carney, the governor of the Bank of England, said this month that the "fog" of Brexit and its uncertainty were "weighing more heavily on activity, predominantly through lower business investment and tighter financial conditions."

What is certain is that London is poised to lose some ability to move money around easily between its neighbors.

"Passporting," which allows companies in one European member state to offer their services across the entire bloc, will no longer be available to Britain after Brexit. This has prompted banks to open subsidiaries and offices in well-positioned European Union capitals.

Lenders have spent hours writing through lending agreements to mitigate the loss of passporting rights. Countries including France, Germany and Italy have legislation in the works to give banks some leeway if their transfer arrangements are not completed in time, a sort of "mopping up exercise to make sure nothing falls between the gaps," said Susanne Whitehead, a lawyer spe-

cializing in corporate lending at Hogan Lovells in London.

There are also forecasts that the entire European Union will suffer. By 2030, the new barriers between the British and European Union markets could shave some 60 billion euros, or \$68 billion, a year from financial firms' productivity, according to an estimate by PricewaterhouseCoopers.

"From the perspective of the banks, it is layering on another cost of doing business," Barney Reynolds, a financial services attorney in London with Shearman & Sterling, said of Brexit.

Bank executives in the United States have appeared unruffled when asked about their Brexit plans. They have characterized the political brinkmanship and stuttering negotiations as inconsequential to their operations. Most began planning for a no-deal exit soon after the 2016 referendum that set Brexit in motion, according to advisory firms consulting with the banks.

In January, Morgan Stanley's chief executive, James Gorman, said in an analyst call that he hardly worried about Brexit: "That's not in my top 200 issues

today," Morgan Stanley's new German-based securities trading subsidiary won provisional approval from credit rating agencies last year, along with several other banks.

Still, it may be a different story if the economic fallout is severe.

"The real risk is the macroeconomic risk rather than a regulatory risk," said David Pinto-Duschinsky, who works in London for Promontory Financial Group, a consulting firm. "If there is no deal, it will be large shock to the economy."

Big global banks are expected to be resilient. But volatile markets and weaker economic activity could eat away at earnings, said Moody's, the credit ratings agency.

The potential fallout has some banks inserting clauses into new contracts to guard against a no-deal exit. Such clauses are intended to secure a process for handling unforeseen events related to Brexit, said Jennifer J. Kafcas, a finance lawyer in London at McGuireWoods.

Some borrowers have asked for clauses in their loan agreements to prevent banks from wiggling out of commitments by claiming that Brexit created a "material adverse change" in conditions, said Ms. Whitehead of Hogan Lovells. Banks have also been careful with framing the language of such clauses: they want to retain the right to recover loans further down the line.

"If that borrower loses access to markets or its supply costs rocket, the banks would not want to see that their carve-out stops them taking action," Ms. Whitehead said. "Knowing that Brexit is on the horizon, they would've thought about what impact it would have on their business going forward. But nobody has a crystal ball."

The European Union has readied legislation, in the case of a no-deal Brexit, for transactions like derivatives clearing. Many banks in London have protectively asked their clients to sign over derivatives contracts to new jurisdictions.

Britain and Switzerland have also signed a deal to recognize each other's insurance regulations.

# The truth is worth it.

The New York Times



# Opinion

## Australia’s disastrous new normal

We are a land of proudly resilient people. But in an age of climate change, we can’t just hike up our Stubbies and move on.

**Kim Mahood**

**WAMBOIN, AUSTRALIA** This is what climate change looks like, Australia style: A viral video, released in early January, of two middle-aged men, one a local farmer, standing knee deep in the stagnant shallows of an outback river, cradling the corpses of two enormous fish.

The river is the Darling, just south of the Menindee Lakes in northwest New South Wales, and the fish are Murray cod, native, iconic and endangered. Given their size, these two could be more than half a century old. Behind the men, who are close to weeping, thousands more fish drift belly-up, asphyxiated in a cold snap that killed the blue-green algae blooming along the river and deprived the water of oxygen. Unprecedented summer temperatures and low water levels produced the algal bloom, which can itself be an indication of a waterway under stress.

In their impassioned accusations against the government authorities

**Australians require a different skill-set and ethos.**

tasked with managing the river, neither man mentions climate change. What they do say is that the deliberate emptying of the Menindee Lakes twice in the past four years — in a

period of extended drought and rising temperatures — has broken the resilience of the river. Cut from outback New South Wales, still in the grip of a multi-year drought, to the rains in North Queensland. Instead of dead fish, the images are of drowned cattle, hundreds of animals trapped by the brown tides of rising floodwaters as the monsoonal rainfall that has devastated the coastal city of Townsville in recent weeks moves inland, drowning stock, ruining crops and isolating homesteads.

There is nothing unusual about floods in north Queensland. Every summer, somewhere in the tropical north, a cyclone generates enough rain to inundate the low-lying suburbs of coastal towns, decimate banana crops and wash topsoil and fertilizers onto the Great Barrier Reef. (The reef is undergoing mass coral bleaching because of warming seawater.) Laconic residents are interviewed every wet season standing in the debris of their cyclone-battered homes, clad in Stubbies (shapeless gabardine shorts that expose bum-cracks and, on a bad day, drooping genitals), drinking stubbies (small brown bottles of beer), making understated comments about the danger and the damage: “Yeah, it got a bit windy there for a while. Reckon me roof’s being recycled in Fiji by now . . .”

The difference this year is that there hasn’t been a cyclone. This is just rain — endless rain, filling dams far beyond their capacity, swelling rivers, drowning two young men who allegedly fled the scene of a looting. The extent of the livestock losses won’t be known until the floodwaters recede, but gut-wrenching photographs of cattle bogged so deep in mud they appear to be made from the stuff, blood leaking from bullet holes in the skulls of the animals that had to be put down, are an indication of the horrors to come.

While North Queensland floods, Tasmania burns. The prehistoric forests of the southwest wilderness, usually too damp to sustain extensive fires, have been ignited by lightning strikes. High temperatures, warming seas and lack of rain have made the forests vulnerable. Burning in terrain too rugged to access by road, the fires have been impossible to control. Recent rain has alleviated the situation, and the area has even experi-



SALLY DENG

enced its first snow of the year, but the fires continue to smolder, ready to flare again when the weather dries. Unlike the fire-dependent forests of the Australian mainland, which have evolved from millennia of Indigenous burning practices, the old-growth Tasmanian forests do not regenerate after fire. Separated from the continental land mass around 12,000 years ago, the small pendant island that hangs off the southeast corner of the continent shares its vegetation with the Gondwanan rem-

nants of New Zealand and South America. The burned tracts of ancient forest are gone for good.

Australia is no stranger to fire, floods and drought. For anyone who has grown up outside the southern cities, extreme weather events are a part of life. Droughts that last for five or six or even 10 years are common; cyclonic rains regularly bring floods to the northern part of the continent; every summer sees the inhabitants of the southern and coastal forests on bushfire alert.

But this level of extreme weather is new, and likely to be a new norm.

We have moved into a new age of climate volatility. According to the 2018 State of the Climate Report, compiled by the Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, Southern Hemisphere oceans are absorbing most of the extra heat generated by global warming. Sea surface temperatures in the Australian region have risen around one degree

Celsius since 1910, with eight of the 10 warmest years on record occurring since 2005. The starkest evidence is the rate of warming in the seas around Tasmania, which is occurring at more than twice the global average. Records reveal an equivalent one-degree rise in land temperatures, accompanied by a steady shift in rainfall patterns, with rainfall increasing in northern Australia, while the south becomes more prone to drought. Prolonged periods of high

*MAHOOD, PAGE 10*

## Munich or a requiem for the West

It’s no longer worth pretending Trump is not in the authoritarian camp. The shock has passed. European powers are thinking again.



Roger Cohen

**MUNICH** If the Munich Security Conference had a soul it was embodied in Senator John McCain, always an invigorating presence here and always a fierce advocate of the trans-Atlantic alliance. He’s gone now and so is the idea of inevitable liberal democratic convergence, replaced by great power competition in the age of the strong-man.

The meeting comes hard on the heels of a strange gathering in Warsaw — yes, Warsaw — convened by the United States and devoted to “Peace and Security in the Middle East.” It might better have been called “Pipe Dreams on the Vistula” or “Trump’s America Bashes Europe.”

At the Warsaw conference, Vice President Mike Pence lashed out at

Germany, France and Britain for trying “to break American sanctions” against Iran. He seemed as incensed by Europe’s malign behavior as by Iran’s — a curious case of the United States aiding Vladimir Putin’s divisive agenda in Europe. The truth is that the Trump Administration broke the Iran nuclear agreement, undermining America’s word, whose value has declined around the world as sharply as Iran’s rial currency over the last 18 months.

Germany, France and Britain believe in the evidence that the nuclear agreement is working, with the Islamic Republic in compliance. The accord was never supposed to transform Iran overnight or sprinkle fairy dust on the Middle East. It was meant to keep Iran from going nuclear. It’s doing that.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, on a hapless mission to shape Trump’s caprices into policy, declared, “You can’t achieve peace and stability in the Middle East without confronting Iran.” He has this upside down. Peace and stability in the Middle East are impossible without Iran.

The Islamic Republic is too big and too influential to shut out. It’s not going anywhere. To say this is not to advocate appeasement. Iran, 40 years after its

revolution, is beset by internal contradictions and is predatory abroad. It is to recognize that, as with Europe’s successful Ostpolitik during the Cold War, engagement with a rival power may be the best way to change that power and defuse confrontation. Behind the nuclear deal lay this conviction. It is inscribed in postwar Germany’s DNA.

German-American relations are now at a low point. Multilateralism was not just a policy for postwar Germany. It was a core belief. In the construction of a rules-based world order anchored by international organizations, including the European Union and NATO, lay the assurance that history could not repeat itself.

Trump has never encountered a multilateralism he does not loathe. The world, for his administration, is a place where rivals “compete for advantage.” The president is for muscular unilateralism in a Hobbesian world — except he hasn’t heard of Hobbes. Global community is pie in the sky; Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, a lost cause.

The relationship anchoring the world that the Munich Security Conference sought to buttress has been drained of meaning. This is why Wolfgang Ischinger, the former German ambassa-

dor to the United States, wrote in his welcoming remarks of “a reshuffling of core pieces of the international order” and a “leadership vacuum.” Who carries aloft the flag of liberalism and its values with anything resembling the autocratic convictions of the new strongmen — Vladimir Putin in Russia, Xi Jinping in China, Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, and Donald Trump in the United States?

It’s no longer worth pretending that Trump is not in the authoritarian camp. The shock has passed. Europeans have internalized the shift. The best they can offer as liberty’s beacon in America’s stead is Emmanuel Macron, the French president, and Merkel. He is being yellow-vested, and she is in her twilight years.

If there is a particular foreboding hanging over this conference, it lies in the fact that the sonderweg, or (loosely) wayward path, of Trump’s America has occurred just as Europe splinters. Brexit is weeks away. Spain has just called yet another election. In France and Germany and Spain, the major political parties are losing power or disintegrating, challenged by nationalist xenophobes, leaving a fragmented political topography.

Instability is inevitable. Trump favors such fragmentation because he believes it will leave weaker European powers more susceptible to his winner-takes-all bullying. Europeans have no illusions about this. The old order has frayed to the point of dissolution. It was based on the conviction that words have meaning. For Trump, they do not, as his declaration of a “national emergency” on the southern border with Mexico underscores. Without meaning, no law, no treaty, is worth the paper it’s written on. This is the real danger confronting the West.

During the Warsaw theater, Roxana Saberi of CBS News confronted Pompeo on the hypocrisy of the United States denouncing human rights abuses in Iran while embracing Saudi Arabia’s Mohammed bin Salman, who, in the assessment of the C.I.A., ordered the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, the Washington Post columnist. Pompeo lost it, twice calling Saberi’s legitimate inquiry “a ridiculous question.”

European powers see such braggadocio for what it is. They are contemplating the world without its postwar American anchor. Cometh the emergency-declaring strongman. He’s pitched camp in Washington, no less.







OPINION

What is death?

Sandeep Jauhar  
Contributing Writer

How should we define the death of a person? Philosophers and physicians have long pondered this question, yet we still don't have a satisfactory answer. For much of human history, death was synonymous with the cessation of the heartbeat. However, there are patients in hospitals whose hearts are still beating but who appear to be less than fully alive. Are they dead?

Fifty years ago, a Harvard committee tried to bring a modern perspective to this question. The chairman, Henry Beecher, a renowned bioethicist, was motivated by the conundrum of "hopelessly unconscious" patients being kept alive by mechanical ventilation and other newly developed medical technologies. Such patients were "increasing in numbers over the land," he wrote.

Dr. Beecher's committee, in a report titled "A Definition of Irreversible Coma," defined a new state of death — brain death — in which patients were unconscious, unresponsive to pain and unable to breathe on their own, and had no basic reflexes (pupils unreactive to light, no gag reflex and so on). These were conditions suggesting a brain stem that was irreversibly damaged. Such patients, the committee asserted, were in fact dead and could be declared so by a physician. Additional tests, such as a flat brain-wave scan or an an-

giogram showing no cerebral blood flow, could be used to confirm the diagnosis but were not necessary.

The Harvard committee's concept of brain death was eventually accepted by states across the country. Today, patients in the United States and many other countries can be declared dead either because their hearts have stopped or because their brains have ceased to function, even if blood is still circulating.

In the years after the Harvard report was published, doctors relied on the concept of brain death to withdraw life

support from neurologically devastated patients, curtailing futile care. Just as important, brain-dead patients were declared deceased before their blood had stopped circulating, thus minimizing

injury to other vital organs, allowing them to be transplanted. Some physicians believe that facilitating organ transplantation was the Harvard committee's true aim in redefining death.

"There is great need for the tissues and organs of the hopelessly comatose in order to restore to health those who are still salvageable," the committee wrote in an early draft of its report — though this sentence did not appear in the final version. In the years just before the report's publication, doctors had performed the first liver, lung and heart transplants. The number of available

organs, then as now, was small, however, and there was a great desire to expand the pool. In the main, this goal was achieved. After the Harvard committee issued its report, the number of transplanted organs drastically increased, and thousands of patients waiting on organ transplant lists were saved. Today, brain-dead individuals supply most of the transplanted organs in the United States. Because of the opioid epidemic, those numbers have increased. Deaths from opioid overdose now account for about 13 percent of the nation's organ donors, up from 1 percent two decades ago. But the concept of brain death was controversial from the start. Many people, including many Native Americans, evangelical Protestants and Orthodox Jews, rejected the concept of brain death for religious or cultural reasons. Even apart from such considerations, a determination of brain death can seem implausible in the face of a healthy body: Some patients who have been declared brain-dead whose life support has not been withdrawn have "survived" with intact organ function for months, even years. These patients often don't look "dead." They may have warm skin and a normal complexion and may continue to grow, menstruate, even gestate children. Families still come up to me in the intensive care unit and say: "His heart is beating, Doctor. How can he be dead?"

Because of improvements in technology, organs designated for transplantation today can be nourished and remain viable for longer periods, so it is less critical to remove organs before the heart stops beating. As a result, more organs, especially in Europe, are being removed and transplanted after the more traditional declaration of death: the stoppage of blood circulation. Death in these cases is declared the old-fashioned way, after the heart stops beating, typically after withdrawal of life support. As technology continues to advance, we may even be able to return to the original definition of death, should we want to.

All of which serves as a reminder that our definition of death is man-made. In the spectrum between alive and dead, we set the threshold, and we can do so in response to biological, ethical and even practical considerations. Death is not a binary state or a simple biological fact but a complex social choice.

**SANDEEP JAUHAR** is a cardiologist and the author of "Heart: A History."



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The Vatican's gay overlords

BRUNI, FROM PAGE 9

quently and has written several highly regarded books about the Roman Catholic hierarchy. "One of the problems is that Catholic bishops have never allowed any kind of research in this area. They don't want to know how many gay priests there are." Independent studies put the percentage of gay men among Catholic priests in the United States at 15 percent to 60 percent.

In a telephone interview on Thursday, Martel stressed that the 80 percent isn't his estimate but that of a former priest at the Vatican whom he quotes by name in the book. But he presents that quotation without sufficient skepticism and, in his own words, writes, "It's a big majority."

He says that "In the Closet of the Vatican" is informed by about 1,500 interviews over four years and the contributions of scores of researchers and other assistants. I covered the Vatican for The Times for nearly two years, and the book has a richness of detail that's persuasive. It's going to be widely discussed and hotly debated.

It depicts different sexual subcultures, including clandestine meetings between Vatican officials and young heterosexual Muslim men in Rome who work as prostitutes. It names names, and while many belong to Vatican officials and other priests who are dead or whose sexual identities have come under public scrutiny before, Martel also lavishes considerable energy on the suggestion that Francis' predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, and other towering figures in the church are gay.

Perhaps the most vivid of the double lives under Martel's gaze is that of Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo of Colombia, who died a little over a decade ago. According to the book, he prowled the ranks of seminarians and young priests for men to seduce and routinely hired male prostitutes, sometimes beating them up after sex. All

the while he promoted the church's teaching that all gay men are "objectively disordered" and embraced its ban on priests who are believed to have "deep-seated homosexual tendencies," whether they act on them or not.

Part of my concern about the book is the timing of its release, which coincides precisely with an unprecedented meeting at the Vatican about sexual abuse in the church. For the first time, the pope has summoned the presidents of every Catholic bishops conference around the world to discuss this topic alone. But the book "is also bound to shift attention away from child abuse and onto gay priests in general, once again falsely conflating in people's minds homosexuality and pedophilia," said the Rev. James Martin, a best-

**Some priests are trying, psychologically and emotionally, to survive.**

selling Jesuit author, in a recent tweet. He's right.

The book doesn't equate them, and in fact makes the different, important point that the church's culture of secrecy — a culture created in

part by gay priests' need to conceal who they are — works against the exposure of molesters who are guilty of crimes.

As David Clohessy, a longtime advocate for survivors of sexual abuse by priests, said to me on the phone last week: "Many priests have a huge disincentive to report sexual misdeeds by colleagues. They know they're vulnerable to being blackballed. It's celibacy and the secretive, rigid, ancient all-male hierarchy that contributes to the cover-up and, therefore, more abuse." Abuse has no sexual orientation, a fact made clear by many cases of priests having sex with girls and adult women, including nuns, whose victimization by priests was publicly acknowledged by Pope Francis for the first time early this month. But that's a crucial subtlety that's

too easily lost in the thicket of exclamation points in "In the Closet of the Vatican." And more people will read the racy headlines about the book than read the book itself. What they may take away is this: Catholic priests are twisted characters. And gay men are creatures of stealth and agents of deception who band together in eccentric societies with odd rituals.

I asked Martel what his aim was. "I'm a journalist," he said. "My only goal is to write stories. I'm not a Catholic. I don't have any motive of revenge. My concern is not that the church will be better or worse. I'm outside of the church."

I asked him if he worried about homophobes weaponizing the book. If they read it correctly, he answered, they'll realize that rooting out gays would mean ridding the church of some of their heroes, who inveigh against homosexuality as a way of denying and camouflaging who they really are. The cardinals most accepting of gays, he said, are those who are probably straight.

All else aside, the book speaks to the enormous and seemingly growing tension between a church that frequently vilifies and marginalizes gay men and a priesthood dense with them. "This fact hangs in the air as a giant, unsustainable paradox," wrote Andrew Sullivan, who is Catholic and gay, in an excellent cover story for New York magazine last month. It explains why so many gay men entered the priesthood, especially decades ago: They didn't feel safe or comfortable in a society that ostracized them. Their sense of being outsiders gave them a more spiritual bent and greater desire to help others in need.

They weren't pulling off some elaborate ruse or looking for the clerical equivalent of a bathhouse.

They were trying, psychologically and emotionally, to survive. Many still are, and I fear that "In the Closet of the Vatican" won't help.

A route Amazon rejected

DE BLASIO, FROM PAGE 1

Amazon's capricious decision to take its ball and go home, in the face of protest, won't diminish that anger.

The city and state were holding up our end. And more important, a sizable majority of New Yorkers were on board. Support for the new headquarters was strongest in communities of color and among working people who too often haven't gotten the economic opportunity they deserved. A project that could've opened a path to the middle class for thousands of families was scuttled by a few very powerful people sitting in a boardroom in Seattle.

In the end, Amazon seemed unwilling to bend or even to talk in earnest with the community about ways to shape their project. They didn't want to be in a city where they had to engage critics at all.

And it's a pattern. When Seattle's City Council passed a tax on big employers to fund the battle against homelessness, the company threatened to stop major expansion plans, putting 7,000 jobs at risk. The tax was rescinded.

Economic power — the kind that allows you to dangle 50,000 jobs and billions in revenue over every metropolitan area in the country — is being steadily concentrated into fewer and fewer hands.

For a generation, working people have gotten more and more productive, have worked longer and longer hours, and haven't gotten their fair share in return. C.E.O.s are reaping the benefits of that work, while the people actually responsible for it are keeping less and less.

This is no accident. The same day Amazon announced its decision to halt its second headquarters, it was reported that the company would pay no federal income tax on the billions in profits it made last year. That's the galling, especially at a time

when millions of working-class and middle-class Americans are finding that they are getting smaller tax returns this year thanks to President Trump's tax plan, which has hugely benefited the wealthy.

As the mayor of the nation's largest city, a place that's both a progressive beacon and the very symbol of capitalism, I share the frustration about corporate America.

So do many of my fellow mayors across the country. We know the game is rigged. But we still find ourselves fighting one another in the race to secure opportunity for our residents as corporations force us into all-against-all competitions.

Amazon's HQ2 bidding war exemplified that injustice. It's time to end that economic warfare with a national solution that prevents corporations from pitting cities against one another.

Some companies get it. Salesforce founder and chief executive Marc Benioff threw his weight behind a new corporate tax in San Francisco to fund

services for the homeless. In January, Microsoft pledged \$500 million to combat the affordable housing crisis in Seattle.

Amazon's path in New York would have been far smoother had it recognized our residents' fears of economic insecurity and displacement — and spoken to them directly.

We just witnessed another example of what the concentration of power in the hands of huge corporations leaves in its wake. Let's change the rules before the next corporation tries to divide and conquer.

**BILL DE BLASIO** is mayor of New York City.

Australia's new normal

MAHOOD, FROM PAGE 8

temperatures are much more frequent, and bushfire seasons are longer.

Throughout Australia's modern history, we have been proud of our capacity to respond to disaster and endure adversity. Natural catastrophes bring out the best in us. They provide a theater for acts of courage, selflessness and human fellowship that ordinary life does not. But I worry that the flip side of this capacity for resilience is inertia in the face of doomsday warnings. To make radical changes in the expectation of an unknown future requires a different skill-set and a different ethos.

Although many Australians share deep concerns about climate change, just as many have been apathetic or resistant to the need for action. There are signs that things are changing. In a factoid-saturated, opinion-polluted media environment, the emotion and outrage of hard-bitten outback farmers, a breed more commonly associated with skepticism and understatement, has an authenticity that no amount of scientific evidence or talking heads can project. Not inclined toward rhetoric and panic, Australian farmers are now on the front line of climate change. Once convinced that the time for action has arrived, there is no group better equipped to mobilize and make things happen, and there's a groundswell of protest at the lack of leadership from government.

It remains to be seen, when the floodwaters recede and the drowned cattle are counted, when the rotting corpses of decades-old fish leak back into the muddy sludge of the river, when the charred skeletons of thousand-year-old trees punctuate the remains of an ice age forest, whether Australians will finally decide to take this seriously.

**KIM MAHOOD** is the author of "Craft for a Dry Lake" and "Position Doubtful: Mapping Landscapes and Memory."



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Understanding the world.

**The truth is worth it.**



# Sports

## From a church, bibles of sports statistics

PHILADELPHIA

A math Ph.D. candidate needed a distraction, and a top reference site was born

BY JAMES WAGNER

While writing a sermon in September, Cheryl Pyrch, the pastor of Summit Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, needed an assist. On the topic of greatness and Jesus Christ, she wanted to open with recollections of greats in other spheres.

She didn't have to look very far for a source.

Having encountered Wilt Chamberlain in passing almost 40 years ago, she decided he was the great she wanted to highlight. And details of his career — four Most Valuable Player Awards, seven N.B.A. scoring titles — were close at hand, literally and figuratively through Sports Reference, a monolith of sports data websites that just happens to rent space from the church.

"I didn't know all this in 1980," Pyrch told the congregation as she described Chamberlain's awards during the Sunday service. "I got it yesterday from a Sports Reference website."

The ubiquitous Sports Reference family of websites — Baseball-Reference.com, Basketball-Reference.com, Pro-Football-Reference.com, Hockey-Reference.com, and so on — are some of the most popular sports almanacs on the internet.

They draw users of all kinds, from people casually searching for a trivia answer to owners of professional teams. Aided by an overhaul of its mobile website, Sports Reference's founder and president, Sean Forman, said the group of sites drew one billion page views last year, a record for the company.

Sports Reference, however, does not have the gleaming offices or huge staff of a digital titan. It has 11 full-time employees and is headquartered on the third floor of a building at Summit Presbyterian, behind the 100-year-old main church and above the gymnasium, which is often used as a day care center.

"Walking through it to come in and out, sometimes you're going through 3-year-olds tossing balls," said Mike Kania, 38, who eight years ago became one of the company's first employees. "I worked for AOL for a long time where we had a badge to scan at the front door, people there and a front desk. It's a lot different from that."

It is, in fact, a point of pride among Sports Reference employees that the sites have grown from humble beginnings into oft-used resources. Until late last year, Forman, 47, was cleaning the office and taking out the trash. (He has since hired the church's janitor to take over those duties.)

They are among the most popular sports-related sites. Basketball-Reference trails only NBA.com, and Pro-Football-Reference is second to NFL.com, according to SimilarWeb. Nearly two decades after Forman created Baseball-



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MAKELA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Sean Forman founded the Sports Reference statistics sites, which generated a billion page views last year. Below, Forman, right, with Mike Lynch, the sites' "managing stathead."

**The Sports Reference sites are not just for casual fans. They are also used by professional team managers and player agents.**

Reference, it ranks third among baseball sites, behind MLB.com and MLB-TradeRumors.com. (Baseball-Reference, however, is the top draw in Forman's stable.)

The sites are not just for casual fans. J.J. Redick, the Philadelphia 76ers guard, pays for an advertising-free Basketball-Reference subscription. John Henry, the principal owner of the Boston Red Sox and Liverpool F.C., uses Baseball-Reference's Play Index to manage statistical searches. Scott Boras, the well-known baseball agent, donated \$100 to the company during its infancy because he had relied on the site's data while negotiating a contract for Andruw Jones, Forman said.

"I use it daily," said Thad Levine, the Minnesota Twins general manager, although his team, like many others, generates its own advanced and proprietary data.

"We went so far as to hire one of their back-end programmers," added Levine, referring to Hans Van Slooten, who oversaw Baseball-Reference until June, when the Twins hired him for their front office.

The sites are still expanding and developing. Forman said he envisioned Basketball-Reference eventually surpassing Baseball-Reference in traffic as a result of the data revolution in the N.B.A. And over the summer, Sports Reference began another major undertaking: a soccer website, FBref.com, which the company hopes will be as comprehensive as its other sites. In a twist from its current offerings, the company is planning to make the soccer site bilingual, with English and Spanish versions.

The sites are painstakingly tweaked for updates and corrections. Some errors are reported through the dozens of emails the company receives daily. One came from the mother of Casey Fossum, a former major league pitcher. She wrote to say that her son's birth date was wrong. It was corrected.

Other requests reveal the reach of Sports Reference.



A pitching coach sent an email asking that his Italian league statistics be added to his page so that his players would stop teasing him about being a bad pitcher. A woman wrote in to say that she was dating a person who claimed to

be a former N.F.L. player but that she could not find him on Pro-Football-Reference. She wanted to know if that was because of an oversight or a lie.

"I tried to let her down as gently as possible," said Mike Lynch, 37, whose of-

## Can't shoot like Curry? Dunking like Jordan is back

A class of gifted athletes returns college basketball to above-the-rim thrills

BY MARC TRACY

Fans tuning in to the recent marquee matchup between Duke and Virginia waited less than two minutes before getting what they had come for. On an early Virginia possession, Duke's Zion Williamson, the impossible freshman who moves with a guard's agility while weighing 280 pounds, recovered a loose ball and hammered down a two-handed dunk with Old Testament fury.

Williamson is expected to be the top pick in this year's N.B.A. draft and has been this season's signature player — a quality so inseparable from his ferocious slams that a rare missed dunk last week against Boston College became a highlight in its own right.

The only other player who has come close to capturing the collective imagination as Williamson is Murray State's Ja Morant, a 6-foot-3 sophomore who has played his way from virtual anonymity to likely top-five draft position on a diet of Jordan-esque leaping, flying slams.

That Williamson and Morant are this season's college basketball folk heroes is in one sense entirely logical. Dunks are popular, they dunk well, therefore they are popular.

Yet in the context of recent history and current basketball trends, they are outliers as stars because they are relatively poor shooters from long distance.

Neither player can efficiently utilize the 3-pointer, which has cemented itself as the most treasured tool in the modern offensive game. Williamson has made less than 30 percent of the 48 3-pointers he has attempted. Morant is at 32.7 percent, below the Division I average of 34.3 percent.

Williamson's attitude toward the 3-



GRANT HALVERSON/GETTY IMAGES

Zion Williamson, a Duke freshman, is a supreme dunker. He is expected to be the top pick in this year's N.B.A. draft

pointer may be best summarized, not by any of his own shots, but by his sensational block of De'Andre Hunter's ill-fated attempt late in Saturday's game, an 81-71 Duke victory.

Their proficiency in dunking over long-distance shooting signals how special they are, of course, but also might herald a market correction in which basketball's most reliable shot is back in.

In recent seasons, the defining play-

ers — the ones who made the biggest impacts and summed up the college basketball zeitgeist — have overwhelmingly been sharpshooters. Think of Oklahoma's Trae Young and Buddy Hield, Kansas' Frank Mason III, Indiana's Yogi Ferrell, Purdue's Caleb Swanigan and Duke's Grayson Allen. The last 7-footer to be named player of the year, Wisconsin's Frank Kaminsky, was not a high-volume shooter of 3s, but he made 41.6

percent of his attempts in his Wooden Award-winning season. Villanova won a title at the buzzer when Kris Jenkins hit a 3.

Yet this season's watch list for the Wooden Award for the most outstanding college player includes Williamson and Morant, along with other poor-shooting yet exciting non-big men like Duke's R.J. Barrett and Tennessee's Grant Williams. Marquette's Markus Howard

has received comparatively little attention as this year's exemplary high-volume, high-accuracy distance shooter.

The ESPN analyst Jay Bilas said dunks were emerging as more crucial to offenses because so-called midrange shots — 2-point attempts that are not from close in near the basket — have been so devalued by analytics. Get to the rim. Get fouled. Or take a 3. Those are the modern basketball credos.

Bilas said it was possible that, after several years in which the 3-pointer has predominated in top offenses, coaches have improved at devising defenses to stymie perimeter shooting — in that way placing a premium on wing players who excel at close range. But mainly Williamson and Morant stand out because they are standouts.

"We're seeing more dunks because there are more spectacular athletes out there," he said.

"A lot of guys can dunk, but he dunks on the way up," he added of Williamson. "His head is literally at or over the rim every time."

Recent seasons' emphasis on the 3 was easy to understand if you looked to the N.B.A.'s discovery of the 3-pointer's efficiency. The Golden State Warriors emerged as a dynasty thanks in part to their high-volume 3-point shooting, and even they have been surpassed by teams like the Houston Rockets that attempt 3s in record numbers while confining their other shots to the restricted area under the basket.

Meanwhile, the trey picked up a cachet that had previously been reserved only for the jam. Players who sank one from deep mimicked bow-and-arrow shots toward their benches, igniting their teammates; Stephen Curry, Hield and Young became the players youngsters aspired to play like.

And to be sure, 3-pointers have not gone away. This season they account for nearly a third of the points scored in Division I, according to KenPom.com, the highest proportion ever and part of a

ficial title with the company is managing stathead. "I said something like, 'If he was cut in training camp, we wouldn't necessarily have a record of him playing in a regular season game.'"

Sports Reference started with Baseball-Reference in 2000, when Forman, looking to avoid work on his doctoral dissertation on applied mathematical and computational sciences at the University of Iowa, began building a website from the CD-ROM that accompanied the printed Total Baseball encyclopedias. He hoped to make historical data more accessible.

Forman, who has contributed to The New York Times's baseball coverage in the past, expanded his endeavor by creating Sports Reference in 2004. Three years later he formalized loose affiliations with Pro-Football-Reference (founded by Doug Drinen in 2000) and Basketball-Reference (founded by Justin Kubatko in 2004). Kubatko left Sports Reference in 2013 because of what he called "creative differences."

In 2007, Forman still fit the stats nerd stereotype, working out of the basement of his home and staying up until 1 a.m. updating or improving the website. The year before, he had left his full-time job of six years — professor of mathematics and computer science at St. Joseph's University — because it was too hard to juggle both. He also needed a better place to work.

So Forman turned to his church, which had space to rent.

Sports Reference's seven websites are usually updated automatically, mostly from official feeds of statistics that the company pays for. Some data, such as roster transactions or salary information, is input manually, and there are always bugs to fix.

Once you get beyond the basics, however, the information on the sites runs the gamut of sources.

They include a collection of old college media guides acquired from a single collector and a professor in Britain who supplies statistics of independent baseball leagues.

The sites also add some things just for fun, such as Oddibe McDowell's page listing his utility bills from 2011 and part of 2012, in reference to a series of articles by Deadspin.

Sports Reference's goal is to become more comprehensive, even as sports leagues increasingly privatize their data. Eventually, the company hopes to charge for advanced features and to become less dependent on advertising, which currently generates 95 percent of the sites' revenue. As of now, the only advanced tool that requires a paid subscription is Baseball-Reference's Play Index.

That the little company in her church has become so important, with leading sports websites, earned a laugh from Pyrch. She had been to the sites once or twice, including the time she did sermon research.

"I think that both myself and most of the congregation would not realize what kind of a powerhouse Sports Reference is," she said. "I don't really know a lot about numbers or computers, but one billion is a lot."

steady upward trajectory. Teams are making 34.3 percent of attempts, which is just a few fractions of a percent off the past couple years' heights.

What have plummeted are, as Bilas suggested, midrange attempts. According to Ken Pomeroy, KenPom.com's proprietor, midrange shots — defined as 2-point attempts beyond a couple feet from the basket — account for barely a quarter of total field goal attempts this season. That figure was 33 percent as recently as the 2012-13 season.

"The 15- to 20-footers are becoming extinct," Pomeroy said in an interview.

With players setting up farther from the basket, the dunk opportunity has opened perhaps more than ever before. And into that breach have stepped an uncommonly talented crop of dunkers.

**"A lot of guys can dunk, but he dunks on the way up. His head is literally at or over the rim every time."**

"This is the best dunking college basketball has seen in a while," said Chuck Millan, a dunk coach involved not only with high schoolers but with the N.B.A.'s dunk contest, which will be staged Saturday night.

Millan highlighted lesser known players with sensational abilities, including Connecticut's Kwintin Williams, Florida Gulf Coast's Troy Baxter and Arkansas-Little Rock's Rayjon Tucker — "a freak of nature," as Millan put it.

As for Williamson and Morant, Millan said that, as with chocolate and vanilla, a comparison comes down to personal preference — although he may ultimately fall on Team Zion.

"With Ja, it's the dunks in traffic, because he's little, and the body contact he takes," Millan said. "Zion, being 6-8, 280, seeing him be just so agile and almost ballerina-like, being such a huge dude — it's more impressive."







# Culture

## Never too busy for another role

Always in demand, Isabelle Huppert still finds time for Off Broadway

BY ELISABETH VINCENTELLI

Isabelle Huppert has five films coming out in 2019. The French actress is so notoriously busy that, when playing an exaggerated version of herself in an episode of the Netflix comedy “Call My Agent!” last year, she was depicted shooting two major films at once (and doctoring the script for one of them) while squeezing in an artsy Korean flick on the side and preparing to play Hamlet onstage.

The portrayal is gently satirical. But only just.

“I love what I do,” Ms. Huppert said in an interview, when asked why she keeps such a busy schedule. “It’s a great privilege in life, to love what you do.”

The actress, whose American profile got a big boost from an Oscar nomination for her 2016 no-holds-barred performance in “Elle,” is taking a brief break from film to star in “The Mother,” a play by Florian Zeller that begins performances on Wednesday at the Atlantic Theater Company off Broadway. (During the run, she will also have another movie release: Neil Jordan’s demented psycho-thriller “Greta,” in theaters March 1.)

The American theater producer Jeffrey Richards approached her with the project by Mr. Zeller — whose “The Father” was on Broadway in 2016 — and she immediately signed on.

**“The amazing thing about Isabelle is that she can think abstractly. This is very rare in the theater today, where actors are thinking psychologically.”**

“I thought the part was great,” Ms. Huppert said after a rehearsal. “It’s based on a theme that’s simultaneously specific and universal, that of a depressive woman who has a hard time dealing with her husband’s and her children’s absence. Sometimes she reminds me of Blanche in ‘A Streetcar Named Desire’ because she lives between reality and fantasy and dream.”

Anne, the titular mother, is opaque and elusive. Is she mad? Is she hopped up on too many pills? The character, and the play, do not provide answers. But Ms. Huppert, who has an uncanny gift for portraying women on the edge, should make the mystery compelling.

It’s hard to believe that, with more than 120 films on her résumé, she has had much free time, but since the early 1970s, Ms. Huppert, now 65, has also had a thriving stage career. She has appeared in classics by Shakespeare and Ibsen, as well as in drastically experimental, reworked classics like “A Streetcar,” Krzysztof Warlikowski’s spin on Tennessee Williams. She has done contemporary hits — she was in the original Parisian cast of Yasmina Reza’s Tony Award-winning “God of Carnage” — and contemporary tests of endurance, like Sarah Kane’s “4:48 Psychosis,” a grueling play in which Ms. Huppert remained nearly motionless for 105 minutes.

She clearly enjoys a challenge. Of working with the exacting director Robert Wilson on shows like “Orlando” and “Quartet,” for instance, she noted that “the more constraining it is, the more you find your space and your freedom. I require constraint — I don’t suffer from it at all. I welcome it with great pleasure.”



CELESTE SLOMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



CHRISTOPHE BRACHET



GLUY FERRANDS/SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

## ‘All About Eve’ sucked dry

THEATER REVIEW  
LONDON

Ivo van Hove revises the Oscar-winning movie from 1950 for the stage

BY BEN BRANTLEY

Has a vampire had its way with “All About Eve”? The anemic spectacle now sleepwalking across the stage of the Noël Coward Theater here shares a title, characters and much of its dialogue with Joseph L. Mankiewicz’s Oscar-winning 1950 film about the glamorous narcissists who inhabit the dark and glittering world of Broadway.

Yet as adapted and directed by the international auteur Ivo van Hove, what was originally a crackling, high-gloss satire now feels like a horror movie without a pulse. The shades of lurid red that saturate the sets and costumes for this production, which opened last week with Gillian Anderson as its enervated star, suggest nothing so much as the fast-drying lifeblood of an exsanguinated masterpiece.

The Belgian-born Mr. van Hove, perhaps the most unlikely artist ever to become a hot Broadway director, is

famed for his onstage vivisections of classic films. The results have embraced the very good (“Opening Night”), the bad (“Obsession”) and the mesmerizingly ugly (“The Damned”). (His current New York hit, “Network,” falls somewhere in between.) But they could usually be relied upon to throb with unsettling and exciting energy.

Yet his “Eve” is always on the edge of slipping into a coma, taking its audience with it. The most entertaining backstage drama to come out of Hollywood — starring Bette Davis as the volcanic stage star Margo Channing — Mankiewicz’s film is dear to theater-loving moviegoers, who commit to memory its poisoned bon mots.

The best-known: “Fasten your seatbelts. It’s going to be a bumpy night.” As spoken by Davis’s Margo, as a warning to guests foolish enough to attend a party she’s giving, those words had the exhilarating crack of bullwhip.

Uttered by Ms. Anderson in the same role, the lines slide off her tongue like clotted, bilious spittle. It seems fitting that shortly thereafter we see her (via a stalking video camera, which takes us backstage and into bathrooms) vomiting into a toilet bowl, with a subsequent close-up of its contents.

Mr. van Hove is once again daring to tell it like it is, right? After all, this is



JAN VERSWEYVELD

Julian Ovenden and Gillian Anderson, in the Bette Davis role, in “All About Eve.”

how real people behave when they’ve drunk to excess. And Margo, who is about 50 (not 40, as in the film), probably can’t hold her liquor as she once did.

But the glory of the Mankiewicz movie is its immaculate artifice. A

savvy celebration of a mythic urban sophistication, it is basically the sum of its epigrams and perfectly groomed star turns. It has about as much of a bona fide heart as its title character, Eve Harrington (Lily James, of “Downton Abbey,” in the Anne Baxter role), a

fox in lamb’s clothing who schemes to take Margo’s place in the bedroom and on the marquee.

The movie’s enameled veneer is what holds it together, and once you strip that away, the whole sparkly edifice crumbles, leaving . . . well, all Mr. van Hove seems to have found is a vacuum. The big tragic emotions that he elicited so brilliantly in his Broadway revivals of Arthur Miller’s “A View From the Bridge” and “The Crucible” simply aren’t here to be mined.

**What was a crackling, high-gloss satire now feels like a horror movie without a pulse, always on the edge of slipping into a coma.**

So Mr. van Hove has grabbed hard at the film’s most melancholy element, Margo’s vanity about getting older, which becomes an all-out terror of mortality. When Ms. Anderson stares into her makeup mirror — the solar center of Jan Versweyvel’s mutable set — her face, as replicated on a giant screen, ages into crumbly decrepitude. Margo responds, understandably, by doing an impression of Munch’s “The Scream.”

This isn’t funny, nor is it meant to be. The music heard throughout, by the

Left, Isabelle Huppert this month in New York. Below left, last year in “Call My Agent!” on Netflix, and right, in 2016 in “Elle,” which earned her an Oscar nod.

“The Mother,” which is directed by Trip Cullman and also stars Chris Noth as her husband, is only the third time Ms. Huppert has done theater in English, after Schiller’s “Mary Stuart” in London in 1996 and a kinetic, hysterically pitched staging of “The Maids” opposite Cate Blanchett at the Lincoln Center Festival in New York in 2014.

“When you don’t master a language as well, and English isn’t my mother tongue, it’s obviously more difficult,” Ms. Huppert said, seemingly unfazed.

The irony is that, like “The Maids,” “The Mother” was originally written in French. Ms. Huppert has not read the original, nor did she see the premiere in Paris in 2012. She jumped straight into Christopher Hampton’s English translation.

“There is a phrasing, a rhythm to this language that you must respect,” she said of the play. “I try to remain vigilant about that, and that my partners do as well. There are pauses, there are beats — it’s like music, and it’s very important to respect that in a very precise manner.” At the same time, Ms. Huppert knows a certain looseness is key when working on a project.

“The very first time we met,” Mr. Cullman, the director, recalled, “I asked her many questions about her process, how she’d like to explore her character. She simply said, ‘I’m free.’”

“I make a suggestion or she has an idea, and we try it,” he added. “And it’s an all-in experience: ‘O.K., I’m going to dump a bottle of pills on the floor and I’m going to crawl around and just consume 30 pills in 30 seconds and then I’m going to writhe like a cat.’ It feels like there’s an immediate ability on her part to just liberate herself from the constraints of a psychological and naturalistic portrait, to just evoke dream logic in her performance.”

In her downtime, away from film and theater, Ms. Huppert likes to . . . end up in theaters. She said she loved Sam Gold’s divisive Broadway revival of “The Glass Menagerie” with Sally Field in 2017, and since arriving in New York for “The Mother,” she has seen “Blue Ridge” (“Marin Ireland is great, really extraordinary”); “Choir Boy” (“It’s not quite a musical, it’s an adventurous, modern way to renew the genre”); and “True West” (“Very good”). Next on her list was “Network,” by Ivo van Hove, who is scheduled to direct her in “The Glass Menagerie” at the Odéon Theater in Paris in 2020.

Ms. Huppert was even game for “Rent: Live” at a watch party with her fellow cast members and friends of Mr. Cullman’s.

Then it was back to the rehearsal room to try to make sense of Anne in “The Mother.” Or not: Ms. Huppert has little patience for putting her characters on the analyst’s couch. “The amazing thing about Isabelle,” Mr. Wilson said in an email, “is that she can think abstractly. This is very rare in the theater today, where actors are thinking psychologically, naturalistically.”

She and Mr. Wilson will reunite after “The Mother” concludes for “Mary Said What She Said,” a new monologue by Darryl Pinckney that will open in May in Paris. The show will tour Europe, “then it’s ‘The Glass Menagerie’ with Ivo van Hove,” Ms. Huppert said.

“Wait, when am I doing ‘The Glass Menagerie’?” she said after a pause. “I’m not quite sure. I need to save some time to make films. I don’t know.”

She laughed. “I’m having a little ‘Call My Agent!’ moment.”

gifted PJ Harvey, is ever so somber, inspired by Liszt’s “Liebestraume.” And while most of the film’s wittier lines are retained, they land with the thud of frivolous jokes at a funeral.

Ms. James’s Eve is so fiendishly feverish and tremulous from the get-go, you can’t believe everyone doesn’t run for cover. Playing Margo’s best friend, Karen (the Celeste Holm part), Monica Dolan gives a raw emotional performance more suitable to Mr. van Hove’s intense stage production of “Scenes From a Marriage.”

As the viperish, all-powerful theater critic Addison DeWitt (embodied to acidic perfection in the film by George Sanders), Stanley Townsend is so melodramatically satanic he might as well be carrying a pitchfork. The other cast members just seem to saying their lines and hoping for the best.

Ms. Anderson, a perennially witty and adventurous actress, was a smashing Blanche in Benedict Andrews’ deconstructed “A Streetcar Named Desire.” Her Margo, with her languid speech and wilting posture, suggests Blanche in that play’s final scenes, already defeated and depleted.

At her ill-fated party, Margo asks the hired pianist (Philip Voyzey) to keep playing a lugubrious lullaby she calls “Sandman.” All she wants, it would seem, is to sleep. Can you blame her?



# Life under an expanding umbrella

The path of Gerard Way: comics, rock 'n' roll star, television and domesticity

BY GEORGE GENE GUSTINES

The adopted siblings of “The Umbrella Academy,” which debuted Friday on Netflix, are not your typical super-heroes.

They have offbeat superpowers — the Rumor can cause things to happen just by saying them aloud — and they were raised by an emotionally distant father, an android mother and a kind, talking chimpanzee.

Most of this is revealed in flash-backs: The series picks up when the team, which fractured under the weight of its crime-fighting responsibilities, reunites after the mysterious death of its adoptive father, Sir Reginald Hargreeves (Colm Feore). Across 10 episodes, viewers learn whether the family members can sufficiently get past their shared baggage to prevent an apocalypse foreseen by their time-traveling brother.

Readers of the comic book, written by Gerard Way and drawn by Gabriel Bá, may feel they have a head start, but this is only somewhat true. The series, the cast of which includes Tom Hopper, Ellen Page and Robert Sheehan as members of the gifted but quarrelsome clan, will include moments not yet covered in the comic, which began in 2007. (It won an Eisner award in 2008 for best finite series.)

“I wrote this 20-page document that explains kind of everybody and how their powers work and where the story’s heading,” said Way, who, like Bá, is an executive producer on the show.

Despite the success of the “Umbrella Academy” comic, Way is perhaps best known as the former singer of the theatrical rock band My Chemical Romance — he recorded a cover of “Hazy Shade of Winter” for the show. In a recent interview, Way discussed both versions of “The Umbrella Academy,” the comic books that have influenced him and Liza Minnelli. These are edited excerpts from the conversation.

**How did the “Umbrella Academy” comic originally come about?**

My initial inspiration was a few different things. I had been such a fan of the Marvel Silver Age, and I grew up reading Chris Claremont’s “X-Men.” Marvel characters had a lot of issues and problems, but I wanted to give them deeper, more complex problems. I was also reading “Hellboy” by Mike Mignola, and to me that was a post-modern horror comic. There was nothing like that for superheroes. I usually try to make things that I wish existed.

**When did you sense that it was connecting with readers?**

It connected really early. The first issue came out, and I think a lot of people expected it to be pretty bad. I came from a rock band. Not a lot of people knew my history of having written a comic at 15, going to the School of Visual Arts for cartooning and illustration, studying comics for many years, then interning at DC Comics. A lot of people just expected some sort of vanity project. I don’t fault them for that.

**Is it weird to have someone else steering “The Umbrella Academy” now, at least on TV?**

I never felt like I lost control so much as I relinquished a bit of control. At the beginning, I was asked how closely I wanted to work with a showrunner, if I wanted to be on set every day. I was



ADAM AMENGUAL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



SIMONE JOYNER/GETTY IMAGES

really focused on the book and creating the mythology that the show would pull from. I also started an imprint with DC Comics, so I had quite a lot of things going on. When I go in on something, I go all in. I would have been sleeping on the set. I didn’t think it was the right time for me to dive into TV that way. That may change in the future. But at that stage, I kind of relinquished control to Steve Blackman [the showrunner] and all the people making the show. I never felt

like we were not heard.

**The TV family is much more diverse than in the comic. Did you have an influence on that?**

I did, and the greatest change is that the casting was so much more inclusive and diverse than the source material. I thought that was a massive improvement. It was something we all talked about really early on. We have this really great opportunity because these kids are adopted from all over



CHRISTOS KALOHORIDIS/NETFLIX

Gerard Way, top and left. Way, the former singer for the band My Chemical Romance, is also a comic book writer, whose “Umbrella Academy” books, like the one at top right, have been adapted for a Netflix series, above.

the world, and they could really be from anywhere.

**Why didn’t you take that approach in the comic?**

I wasn’t a very good listener. I spent a lot of years just shouting and being onstage and being in control of things. I didn’t understand other people’s stories, and what I learned to do over the years is kind of shut my mouth and listen to people of different ethnicities and take a look at their struggles.

Diversity is something we’re addressing in the “Umbrella Academy” comic. It’s something Gabriel and I actively work on.

**How involved were you with the music choices in the show?**

I didn’t have a lot of say in the soundtrack. Steve has a very distinct vision of the songs he wants in the show. He actually writes the songs in the script. So I didn’t get to weigh in much on music, though I am a fan of Queen,



GABRIEL BÀ

obviously, and I really like that Tiffany song. I tend to skew toward things that are maybe a little more underground or things that maybe people haven’t heard before.

**You’ve shifted from music and performing to writing comics to giving notes on a TV show. Do the different skills inform one another?**

I’ve always considered myself a visual thinker. I’ve always seen “Umbrella Academy” as a comic, but in my head I saw it play out like a film. But all these jobs feed into each other, and I learn from all of them. It’s interesting to give notes on screenplays and TV and apply that to the notes you give yourself on the comic, and vice versa.

**What comic creators have influenced you? Grant Morrison was in one of your videos.**

He was gracious enough to play the villain in the story of the last My Chemical Romance record, “The True Lives of the Fabulous Killjoys.” I’m dear friends with Grant. I consider him to be not only a friend but a mentor. The biggest thing I borrow from what he does is, when you read a Grant Morrison comic, per page you get more ideas than sometimes in a whole issue or graphic novel. One of the best pieces of advice he ever gave me is “Don’t save up your ideas, just use them all because you’ll just come up with more.” I’ve kind of always stuck with that. And his wild imagination has inspired me to kind of try and tap into my own imagination.

**What’s the biggest obstacle for your various creative pursuits?**

It’s the time to get there. That’s the biggest obstacle. My family is also important to me, and one of the really big positives of getting to write comics is I’ve been able to spend a lot of time with them and watch Bandit [his daughter] grow, and be there for her as a father. That made me shy away from touring. But I’m really focused on comics because I’m home. Hopefully, I’ll have the time to finish the series out properly.

**This is off topic, but I have to ask: How did you end up working with Liza Minnelli on the “Black Parade” album?**

I love Liza Minnelli. “Black Parade” was very theatrical, and we had this song “Mama,” and I said, “You know, it would be really great in this one part to get Liza.” Rob Cavallo, the producer, made a couple of calls, and she said she would love to do it. We recorded that remotely — we were in Los Angeles, at Capitol, and she was in New York with a different engineer. It was really cool. The first time I got to speak to her was through the mixing board.

# The spell of Tennessee Williams and his lover

## BOOK REVIEW

**Leading Men**  
By Christopher Castellani. 358 pp. Viking. \$27.

BY DWIGHT GARNER

In his 1956 book, “In the Winter of Cities,” Tennessee Williams printed a small and exquisite poem titled “Little Horse,” a tribute to his lover Frank Merlo. This poem ends:

*Mignon he is or mignonette  
avec les yeux plus grands que lui.  
My name for him is Little Horse.  
I wish he had a name for me.*

Williams and Merlo were together from roughly 1947 to 1963, a stretch during which the playwright composed some of the American theater’s enduring classics, including “Cat on a Hot Tin Roof,” “Suddenly Last Summer” and “The Rose Tattoo.”

Merlo was a working-class New Jersey boy from an Italian family and a charming young war hero. When they met, Tennessee Williams was already Tennessee Williams, flush from the success of “A Streetcar Named Desire,” voluble and lit as if by klieg lights.

Not long into their relationship, Williams wrote in a letter to a friend: “Have I ever told you that I like Italians? They are the last of the beautiful young comedians of the world.”

Williams and Merlo’s years together are the subject of Christopher Castellani’s blazing new novel, “Leading Men.” Writing fiction is to no small degree a confidence game, and “Leading Men” casts a spell right from the start.

“Truman was throwing a party in Portofino,” the first sentence reads, “and Frank wanted to go.” This is Italy, 1953. You know Truman’s last name without being told. What you’ve yet to learn is how reliably tender and evocative Castellani’s onrushing prose can be.

His first achievement in “Leading Men” is to create a world, one inhabited largely by young, charming gay men, that seems to be composed almost entirely of late nights and last cigarettes and picnics on good blankets and linen suits with the trousers rolled to the knees. This writer’s scenes glitter, and they have a strong sexual pulse.

At the end of one party, in writing that has some of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s opaline poise, Castellani observes: “Then, slowly, as the ashes fluttered away and the eggy firework smell wore off and the yachts cut their radios, couple by couple staggered back up the steep narrow inclines, men in each other’s arms, men with women, packs of friends, their songs and shouts and laughter bouncing off the stone in hollow echoes.”

His second achievement is to pry this milieu open and pour a series of



TENNESSEE WILLIAMS COLLECTION, RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Tennessee Williams, left, and Frank Merlo were together from roughly 1947 to 1963.

intricate themes into it — not merely the nature of fidelity and of the artistic impulse but also the manifold variety of estrangements and humiliations that come with being the lover of a much more famous and talented man.

Williams and Merlo drift aimlessly around Europe. Williams writes intensely (he had a fierce work ethic) and enjoys himself nearly as much.

Merlo is Williams’s factotum and aide-de-camp. He makes the reservations and buys the tickets; he mends

Williams’s socks, plumps the pillows and goes on late-night pill runs. “It was a job in itself keeping track of who he was angry with, and who was jealous of him, whose parties he was looking forward to and whose they’d have to make up some excuse to get out of.”

Merlo had a sense of humor about his position. In life, as in this novel, when asked what he did, he replied: “I sleep with Mr. Williams.” Theirs was, for many years, a great love, one that Castellani describes as a “one-night

stand that lasted 15 years — or 16, or 14, depending on who told the story.”

In John Lahr’s agile 2014 biography, “Tennessee Williams: Mad Pilgrimage of the Flesh,” Lahr notes that Merlo’s other fundamental task was to tend to Williams through his “hysterical outbursts, his paranoia, his hypochondria.”

“Leading Men” is largely told from the perspective of 10 years after its opening scene, when Merlo is dying from lung cancer in Manhattan and hoping Williams will visit.

The book wraps a second, slightly less successful story around this first one. It’s about a fictional actress named Anja Blomgren whom Williams and Merlo meet in 1953. She goes on to become a Garbo-like film legend, adopting the name Anja Bloom. More centrally, in terms of this novel’s plot, she comes to possess the only copy of a short, final, previously unknown Williams play, which he had sent to her before his death. A young man wants to have it produced.

Castellani hews closely to the facts of Williams and Merlo’s time together without being pinned down by those facts. There is nothing dutiful about the reimagining of their lives. This book is a kind of poem in praise of pleasure, and the pleasures are sometimes stern. Its author knows a great deal about life; better, he knows how to express what he knows.

This novel’s furniture is spare but

well placed. There are just enough pivotal scenes (one involves a pack of feral boys and the apparent rape of two women) that each leaves room for overlapping echoes to rebound.

Williams and Merlo were not monogamous. Williams once called crab lice his “occupational disease.” Merlo cheated, too, sometimes in revenge. He grew distant and moody over time.

Men like Merlo were often scorned, even by other gay men. (Truman Capote once asked the poet James Merrill’s lover, the writer and artist David Jackson, “Tell me, David, how much do you get a throw?”)

The love Merlo and others felt for the great men in their lives was not recognized by society. Among this book’s characters is the writer John Horne Burns (1916-1953). Burns’s unanticipated death in this novel leaves his longtime male lover with this painful realization: “His name would never appear beside Jack’s anywhere but private letters and the backs of photographs.”

“Leading Men” has a few dead nodes in it, and the subplot, involving the reclusive actress and a production of Williams’s final play, generates fewer sparks than does the account of Williams and Merlo’s dazzled propinquity.

But this is an alert, serious, sweeping novel. To hold it in your hands is like holding, to crib a line from Castellani, a front-row opera ticket.



TRAVEL

A tour of 70’s New York, in cinematic steps

‘If Beale Street Could Talk’ finds pieces that remain of a city that is largely lost

BY JOHN L. DORMAN

If you ask even a longtime New Yorker for directions to Minetta Lane, you will most likely be met with a blank stare.

The quaint one-way street, nestled in the heart of Manhattan’s Greenwich Village between Sixth Avenue and Macdougall Street, is only a few blocks from the wonderfully frenetic Washington Square Park, but it remains largely unknown. Still, it feels timeless.

For Barry Jenkins, director of the film “If Beale Street Could Talk,” which was adapted from the 1974 James Baldwin novel and tells the story of love and injustice in 1970s New York, largely in the African-American cultural mecca of Harlem and what was then a more rough-and-tumble Greenwich Village, capturing the New York City of yesteryear was paramount.

“I knew this was going to be an intimate film,” Mr. Jenkins said in a recent interview. “This is a period piece about New York. It’s James Baldwin’s sometimes acrimonious love letter to New York, but a love letter nonetheless.”

New York has, of course, changed dramatically since the 1970s. Local institutions like B. Altman and Horn & Hardart are no longer part of the landscape. Entire neighborhoods have become denser and more vertical. However, on foot, remnants of the past still stick out, providing a sensory overload that is distinctly New York.

While many of the rough spots in Greenwich Village have been smoothed out over the years, many scenes in the film were still shot there, and other neighborhoods — within walking distance or an easy subway ride away — were able to stand in.

Throughout the city, narrow streets, urban parks and restaurants that have seen better days give a sense of the time and place that the novel and the movie sought to convey. To visually reflect the richness of Baldwin’s prose, Mr. Jenkins worked closely with the film’s production designer, Mark Friedberg, and Samson Jacobson, the locations manager, both native New Yorkers. “I leaned on those guys to not only try and find what places are organically part of the world of our characters, but also are New York, in all caps,” Mr. Jenkins said.

In the film, a pivotal scene between main characters Tish (KiKi Layne) and Fonny (Stephan James) at the intersection of Minetta Lane and Minetta Street, reflected such a sentiment and revealed New York as a place of promise, despite the many obstacles that both characters would soon face.

“The Minetta scene was interesting because it was pouring rain,” Mr. Jenkins said. “This wasn’t our intention in the script, but on the day of filming these two young black actors who are unfamiliar to many people were just walking down the block on the night of essentially their first love and the skies have opened. It’s so picturesque, like 1950s Hollywood Americana.”

If you visit Greenwich Village now, you’ll see a mishmash of boutiques and local restaurants, especially on the side streets like Charles Street and Greenwich Avenue, roads that don’t adhere to the uniform Manhattan street grid. Longtime music haunts like Village Vanguard and the Bitter End remain.

In the novel, Greenwich Village is richly narrated in Tish’s voice, who observes not only the layout of Washing-



PHOTOGRAPHS BY TATUM MANGUS/ANNA PURNA PICTURES

In “If Beale Street Could Talk,” a pivotal scene between the main characters Tish (KiKi Layne) and Fonny (Stephan James) was filmed at the intersection of Minetta Lane and Minetta Street in Greenwich Village.

ton Square Park, but the eclectic people who have defined its existence.

*“We passed Minetta Tavern, crossed Minetta Lane, passed the newspaper stand on the next corner, and crossed diagonally into the park, which seemed to huddle in the shadow of the heavy new buildings of N.Y.U. and the high new apartment buildings on the east and the north. We passed the men who had been playing chess in the lamplight for generations, and people walking their dogs, and young men with bright hair and very tight pants, who looked quickly at Fonny and resignedly at me. We sat down on the stone edge of the dry fountain, facing the arch.”*

Fonny tells Tish that he used to occasionally sleep in the park. Filming for the Washington Square Park scenes actually took place at Stuyvesant Square Park near the Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village development on the East Side of Manhattan.

Washington Square Park, with its 1892 triumphal arch, remains a magnet for chess players and social activism. Its large size allows it to thrive as a universal meeting place of sorts, while Stuyvesant Square Park, located between East 15th and East 17th Streets and bisected by Second Avenue, is a much smaller park. “Washington Square Park doesn’t look at all like their Washington Square Park,” Mr. Friedberg said. “It looks like Versailles right now compared to the Washington

Square Park that Fonny slept in. We ended up shooting in Stuyvesant park, which was also nice, but had the old benches and wrought iron.”

Tish, who was employed in a department store, worked tirelessly through her pregnancy. Bergdorf Goodman, the luxury retailer on Fifth Avenue and 57th Street, allowed scenes to be filmed in their store, but with a caveat.

“They were really cool about us shooting there, but we had to get there when they closed and be out of there before they opened,” Mr. Friedberg said.

After a lot of prodding, Mr. Friedberg was able to film in El Quijote, the Spanish restaurant at the Hotel Chelsea which operated for 88 years before it closed last year. (There are tentative plans for the restaurant, at 226 West 23rd Street in the Chelsea neighborhood, to reopen after a renovation.) In the film, El Quijote stood in for El Faro, a long-gone Spanish restaurant that was located at the corner of Greenwich and Horatio streets in Greenwich Village.

Fonny has a basement apartment on Bank Street in the West Village, which was extensively designed by Mr. Friedberg on a sound stage to resemble an older apartment, complete with a bathtub in the kitchen. In the novel, Tish is accosted at a market on Bleeker Street by a deranged man, which resulted in Fonny defending her and subsequently being framed for rape by a racist police officer; the filming for those dramatic scenes was completed on location in the Bronx.

On Arthur Avenue, the “Little Italy” of the Bronx, located south of Fordham Road, a few minutes from the Fordham Road station (B and D lines) and the Fordham Metro North station, excellent pizzerias, delis and bakeries remain a way of life. It is a perfect stand-in for 1960s-era Greenwich Village. “The area still has the last bit of its Italian commercial culture,” Mr. Friedberg said. “Also, like Greenwich Village, the streets don’t perfectly line up in that area.”

From 1958 to 1961, Baldwin himself lived in an apartment at 81 Horatio Street in Greenwich Village. However, he was born and raised in Harlem, the cultural nexus of the novel and the film. (From Greenwich Village, Harlem is an easy ride uptown on the New York City subway, with express service on the A and No. 2 and 3 lines and the 125th Street stations serving as gateways to the heart of the neighborhood.)

Tish and Fonny first meet as children in Harlem. On film, we see them as adults, walking in Riverside Park, with the Hudson River and the sounds of the Henry Hudson Parkway in the distance. When Tish finds out that she is pregnant and is comforted by her mother, Sharon Rivers (Regina King), her family invites Fonny’s family to their apartment to tell them the news about the impending baby. The apartment scenes were filmed on location in Harlem, in a townhouse near St. Nicholas Park, which runs alongside St. Nicholas Avenue from West 128th to West 141st Streets.

When Daniel Carty (Brian Tyree Henry) runs into Fonny on Lenox Avenue near 123rd Street, it feels like a family reunion of sorts; it goes back to the theme of Harlem as this unifying force for African-Americans. They were in a neighborhood filled with brownstones and grand avenues that also produced Baldwin and was at the heart of the Harlem Renaissance. While Harlem experienced a high level of urban decay in

the 1970s, which Baldwin details, it still is seen as a force more positive than not throughout the film.

Reflecting on some of the most memorable film locations in the city, Mr. Jenkins homed in on the Showmans Jazz Club on 125th Street near Convent Ave-

nue in Harlem, which featured a scene with Joseph Rivers (Colman Domingo) and Frank Hunt (Michael Beach), two fathers sitting at a bar, trying to figure out how to save Fonny from jail. The bar impressed Mr. Jenkins during the film preproduction, and made it into the film.

“Showmans is a place where I would go to unwind if I lived in the neighborhood,” he said. “It’s one of my favorite Harlem locations because it’s still there. The essence and spirit of your work really comes alive when you can get a lot of the city into a film.”

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Barry Jenkins, above center, and Ms. Layne at Bergdorf Goodman, which allowed limited filming. Top, Mr. James with Regina King on St. Nicholas Avenue in Harlem.



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## ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

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**GROWTH REBOUND**  
CLEARER SKIES FORESEEN AS  
RESULT OF POLICY SUPPORT **P3**



**LOST IN TIME AND SPACE**  
TOOLS THAT OUTLIVED THEIR  
USEFULNESS ON DISPLAY **P4**

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February 18, 2019

# Sharp drop in birth rate appears on the horizon

After a rise in births following adoption of the two-child policy three years ago, number fell sharply last year. **Wang Xiaodong** reports

Chen Yan of Liaocheng, Shandong province, a primary school teacher, is a proud and happy mother of two. She decided to have a second child when the second-child policy came into force in January 2016, and she gave birth to a boy that year.

"A lot of women of my age had a second child and did so soon after the one-child birth limit was lifted," she said.

But the number of births in Liaocheng fell sharply last year. From January to November the number fell 26 percent compared with the previous corresponding 11 months, with 23,179 fewer babies born. The number of children born to families that already had a child fell nearly 36 percent, the city's health commission said.

Such a fall in the birth rate lends credence to projections of a substantial

drop across the country.

A total of 15.23 million babies were born last year on the Chinese mainland, about 2 million fewer than in 2017, the National Bureau of Statistics said in late January. The total population reached 1.395 billion last year, 5.3 million more than in 2017.

China allowed all couples to have two children at the beginning of 2016, a relaxation of family planning policy

to ease problems such as a dwindling workforce and rapid aging of the population. Births that year rose 1.3 million to 17.86 million, the highest level since 2000, but the number of births fell more than 500,000 the next year, contrary to the expectations of many population experts.

Zhai Zhenwu, president of the China Population Association, said the number of births in China will continue to fall, largely due to



A caregiver holds a newborn baby in Shishi, Fujian province, in November.

SONG WEIWEI / XINHUA

the falling number of women of childbearing age, which is falling by more than 5 million a year, and a general unwillingness to have more children.

Before the universal second-child policy came into force the National Health Commission predicted the

country's population would peak at about 1.45 billion around 2030. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences said in early January that the time for the peak may in fact come as early as 2027.

SEE "BIRTHS" ON P2



A young user experiences a multi-functional, Bluetooth-enabled digital teacher at an intelligent life exposition in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. LI ZHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Brawny robots for brainy tots

BY CHENG YU

Fancy your child aged 6-12 building robots and programming them with self-written software using new-age tools and toys made by Chinese educational technology firms?

Well, if he or she has not done that yet, it could mean he or she may want to catch up with more than 5 million children around the world who have been using educational robots or intelligent hardware made by the Chinese startup Makeblock (2017 sales: 203 million yuan or \$29.6 million, 70 percent of which came from overseas).

Such startups are eyeing a potential multibillion-dollar global market for technology powered learning tools for children.

Makeblock said it has sold its robot kits in over 140 countries where more than 5 million children in more than 20,000 schools use them.

In France more than 6,000 primary and secondary schools are using Makeblock-based software and courses.

Industry sales last year are estimated to have reached \$80 million in China alone, almost 10.8

percent of the global total, according to a report from the Chinese educational technology firm JMDedu.

Such potential can be linked to Chinese children such as Chris Chen, 6, of Beijing, who can immerse themselves in cerebral tasks like robot-building and code-writing a whole afternoon.

Chris' mother Qin Liu, in her late 30s, an engineer with a Beijing internet company, said her son is still learning the English alphabet at the kindergarten, but can assemble Lego-like kits into a beetle, a cat and a frog in a jiffy.

Do-it-yourself or D.I.Y. block-building, or assembling stuff from kits comprising motors, wires, wheels, sensors and L.E.D. lights, is just the start.

Next is commanding the object, typically a robot, to perform or execute tasks — simple actions such as moving back and forth — through self-developed code, using related mobile apps.

The level of skill required for D.I.Y. assembly and coding varies according to the user's age, said Wang Jianjun, founder and chief executive of Makeblock.

Children like Chris, for example, only need to assemble less than 10 components and write one sentence of code to build a functional toy robot.

"Our business is to combine technology with education to teach children how to build robots and how to code," Wang said.

Qin said she would like to invest more time and energy in educating her son at an early age. These days early education cannot be considered complete without some training in skills that children will probably use eventually as adults, she said.

"For me, building a toy robot is more meaningful than playing with a toy car. A kid can thus learn to develop his or her logical thinking and design skills while playing."

Agreed an analyst with research consultancy iiMedia. "Educational robots are gaining traction" thanks to modern-minded parents such as Qin who spend liberally on educational technology tools.

According to a survey report from the Qianzhan Industry Research Institute, more young parents would like to pay for early-age education.

SEE "ROBOTS" ON P3

## Museums realizing which side their exhibits are buttered on

BY CHEN MEILING

Museums in China are increasingly exploiting the power of the intellectual property they own through merchandise.

Art, figurines, icons, replicas of jewelry, and various products printed with designs or images of ancient objects are all finding buyers in the souvenir market.

Zhao Xinhao, 31, is one such cultural consumer. Zhao, a government employee, paid 199 yuan (\$29) for a pair of earrings in the shape of *guzheng* (Chinese zither) strings. The earrings make her feel more Chinese, Zhao said.

Among her other favorites are a notebook with printed quotes of Emperor Yongzheng (1722-35) of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Chinese princess dolls, and adhesive tapes painted with images of the Palace Museum in Beijing.

Buying souvenirs with Chinese cultural elements has become something of a fashion. More and more museums are jumping on the bandwagon, using their collections to create goods that can meet market demand.

"Such products convey a sense of delicate design," Zhao said. "They are affordable and their quality isn't bad. New products are released every month. I just can't stop buying them."

Li Yuanyuan, 31, an entrepreneur in the cultural industry in Beijing, said her personal collection now includes the entire range of collectibles related to the Palace Museum. She spends more than 10,000 yuan on average a year on such goods.

Her favorites include limited-edition bags and necklaces with intricate patterns, which she wears to events overseas, so that "people can tell where I come from at first sight".

Guo Ying, 21, a collegian in Xianyang, Shaanxi province, said although she buys loads of animation products and games-related dolls or pillows, what gives her true joy are the adorable little objects she bought at various museums.



Taobao Experience Store, located outside the Shenwumen, the north gate of the Forbidden City, is full of creative products. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The Palace Museum, also known as the Forbidden City, houses 1.86 million cultural items. China's imperial palace from 1420 to 1911, the museum is popular among tourists, artists, architects, researchers and historians alike.

In recent years the museum has begun harnessing the potential for revenue from souvenirs. Sales of the museum's cultural and creative products grew from 600 million yuan in 2013 to 1 billion yuan in 2016. Merchandise revenue for 2018 is forecast to have reached about 1.5 billion yuan.

Liu Dongming, a marketing expert with Tencent's intelligent marketing division, said the museum's renown, coupled with its many visitors, has



**They are affordable and their quality isn't bad. New products are released every month. I just can't stop buying them."**

ZHAO XINHAO  
CULTURAL CONSUMER

laid a solid base for the merchandise business to boom.

In addition, the newly launched products are very creative and have utility value, he said.

In May 2016 the government published a document encouraging culture and relics-related institutions, such as museums, galleries, libraries, and memorial halls, to develop cultural and creative products, in an effort to integrate traditional culture into modern life and meet demand among consumers for cultural merchandise.

By the end of 2017 about 2,500 museums and other cultural institutions had produced such products, which included earphones in the shape of court beads, scarves decorated with famous paintings, and funny emojis such as a Chinese emperor holding a rose and a thick paper fan emblazoned with the words "I miss you too".

From January to October 2018, the number of netizens who searched for "museum" on Tmall and Taobao, China's major e-commerce platforms, rose 2.15 times from the same period in 2016. Among them, about 90 percent were looking for cultural and creative products, data from Tmall showed.

## Archaeologists dig deep on overseas projects

BY WANG KAIHAO

The Temple of Montu in Luxor, Egypt, has witnessed the ebb and flow of the Nile for more than 3,300 years.

Unlike the nearby Temple of Karnak, which attracts crowds of tourists, the monumental construction dedicated to worshipping Montu, the falcon-headed Egyptian god of war, has seen better days.

Many of the megaliths, the large stones used to build it, have collapsed and lie covered in weeds. The site has never been open to the public.

But for Wang Wei, a veteran

researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Archaeology, the Temple of Montu, built in the 14th century B.C., is a place full of hope.

Until Nov. 29 no archaeological research had been carried out at the temple for more than four decades. On that date a Sino-Egyptian joint archaeological excavation began there. It marked the start of a five-year project created through an intergovernmental agreement between the two countries. The excavation team is comprised of seven Chinese archaeologists and three from Egypt.

The work is scheduled to cover about 600 square yards by the end of this year. Technology such as 3D modeling is being used to represent the temple's facade. The process is meant to develop a mathematical representation of a three-dimensional surface of an object using specialized software.

However, drones, which have been widely used by archaeologists in China for field research, are prohibited in Egypt for safety reasons.

"This brings unexpected challenges for us, but it also encourages us to come up with creative ideas as alternatives," Wang said.

He said his first trip to Egypt "came so late". When he first arrived in the North African nation for an academic exchange in 2016, archaeologists from more than 20 countries were working on 206 projects. Wang was also looking at the possibility of archaeological cooperation between China and Egypt.

"We're late-starters, but there is huge potential in our studies," he said.

As well as excavation work, the Chinese team will partially renovate the temple, which will probably open to tourists at some stage.

SEE "PROJECTS" ON P4



Chinese archaeologists have worked at Copan, a site from the Maya civilization in Honduras, since 2015. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



# Births: Age will bring pressures

FROM PAGE 1

“The decreasing number of births and population is an irresistible trend,” said Yuan Xin, a population professor at Nankai University. “China’s fast transformation from a country with high fertility and death rates to one with low fertility and death rates will put it under heavy pressure and give it very little time to be prepared for problems such as a dwindling workforce and an aging population.”

In the 1960s the fertility rate, or the number of children a woman gives birth to during her lifetime on average, was about six, but had fallen to 1.6 just 40 years later, Yuan said. In many developed countries such a process took nearly a century, he said.

By the end of last year, on the Chinese mainland more than 249 million people were aged 60 or above, accounting for 17.9 percent of the total population, the National Bureau of Statistics said. In 2015 the population of the group was 222 million, accounting for 16.1 percent of the total population.

Wang Guangzhou, a researcher in population and labor economics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that as the population falls the number of seniors will rise sharply over the next few decades, as will its proportion of the population. Those aged 65 and above will account for 30 percent of the total population in China in the next 30 years, from the present level of about 10 percent, Wang said.

“Rapid population aging will put great pressure on the pension pool and the workforce, and family members will face unprecedented pressure to take care of elderly people. All of society should be prepared to meet the social challenges posed.”

With the number of people falling and the population aging, the number of those in the workforce, or those between 16 and 59 years old, in China will fall to about 700 million by 2050, from the current level of about 900 million, Zhai said.

“A workforce of 700 million is still a big number and is equivalent to the workforce of all the developed countries combined. So China will not be short of workers, and an increase in productivity will be able to sustain its economic growth.”

Yuan also said there is no need to worry about a slight drop in the country’s population and the workforce. In case of labor shortages, a solution is to delay the retiring age from 60 to 65, which will increase the workforce by 100 million, he said.

A country’s wealth depends on its health, a motto that the former World Health Organization director-general Margaret Chan Fung Fu-chun holds dear.

The Hong Kong-born physician said the key to China’s achievements over the past four decades lies in its government’s commitment to focusing on people’s needs while promoting growth.

“Prosperity for all is impossible without health for all. In the past 40 years China has always put the people’s health at the top of its policy agenda, working hard to improve the people’s health and fitness, and making universal health a primary goal of development.”

Chan became one of China’s most high-profile U.N. officeholders when she headed the W.H.O. for a decade from 2007.

Her lifetime career in health had begun 29 years earlier, in 1978, when China embarked on reform and opening-up.

“The year (1978) is important for me because it marked three meaningful things: my graduation from university, the beginning of China’s reform and opening-up and the recognition of China’s promotion of health for all from the W.H.O.,” she said.

After Chan obtained her medical degree from the University of Western Ontario in Canada, she joined the Hong Kong Department of Health as a medical officer in 1978.

As a public servant in Hong Kong under the British administration, Chan said she did not have many opportunities to travel to the Chinese mainland. But in an occasional meeting with Halfdan Mahler, then W.H.O. director-general, she noticed that China was undergoing an “extraordinary health movement” at that time.

“I remember Mahler had praised the mode of ‘barefoot doctors’ and said it was an attempt that can be promoted to more developing countries in the world.”

When the People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949 it had a weak medical and healthcare system because of low levels of economic and social development. Chinese people, mostly living in rural areas, lacked basic medical insurance and knowledge.

The country had only 3,670 medical and health institutions, 541,000 health workers and 85,000 beds in health institutions. The average life expectancy was 35 years.

In 1951 the government declared that “basic healthcare should be provided by health workers and epidemic prevention staff in villages”. The country later started a program to train villagers to provide basic medical care to fellow villagers, at home and at work. By the 1960s more than 200,000 village doctors had been trained across China.

The village doctors, known as “barefoot doctors” because many farmers worked barefoot in the rice paddies, promoted basic hygiene, preventive healthcare and family planning, and treated common illnesses in rural areas.

That inspired Mahler, and in 1978,



Margaret Chan Fung Fu-chun watches members of China’s international emergency medical team during an operation at Shanghai East Hospital. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

# Focus on health the right prescription

Former W.H.O. director-general lauds China’s commitment to medical services. **Pan Mengqi** reports

at a W.H.O. conference in what is now Kazakhstan, he proposed calling on local communities to help decide healthcare priorities, an emphasis on primary and preventive healthcare, and seeking to link medicine with trade, economics and other political and social areas.

“In 1978 the Chinese barefoot doctor approach for training locals in basic healthcare inspired the primary healthcare movement launched by the Declaration of Alma-Ata, which became the brand name for much of the W.H.O.’s work,” Chan said.

Since China adopted its reform

and opening-up policy in 1978 it has made tremendous achievements in the medical and healthcare sector, improving the health of one-fifth of the world’s population.

“It is no longer the ‘sick man of East Asia,’” Chan said. “China gradually developed into a healthy country and ‘a role model for developing countries,’ which is recognized by the W.H.O.”

The most remarkable development has been the wide coverage of medical insurance, she said.

China embarked on the biggest health system reform the world has ever seen in 2009, aiming to extend

medical services beyond the country’s prosperous urban centers.

At the start of the century, less than a third of China’s population had access to health insurance. Now nearly 100 percent do. A basic medical services network, covering both urban and rural areas, has been put in place, with 980,000 medical and health institutions at all levels, 11 million health workers, and 7 million beds at medical institutions.

Praising China for giving its huge population a safety net that protects people from being impoverished by the costs of healthcare, Chan said it was a



Chan talks to a local resident while visiting a community healthcare center in Shanghai on July 30, 2010. LIU YING / XINHUA

“China gradually developed into a healthy country and ‘a role model for developing countries,’ which is recognized by the W.H.O.”

MARGARET CHAN FUNG FU-CHUN  
FORMER WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION DIRECTOR



## News digest

### Systemic economic risk closely monitored

China will combine efforts to prevent and control systemic risks and serve the real economy this year, officials of the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission said. It said it will properly handle the relationship between risk prevention, growth stabilization and industrial restructuring. This year China will also regulate disorder in the financial markets, further contain financial business activities that violate laws and rules, mitigate shadow banking risks, and steadily make corrections in internet finance and online lending, the regulator said.

### Bold transport hub vision for Guangzhou

Traffic planners in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, have outlined a bold blueprint for the city’s transport development, saying the city will become a global transport hub by 2035. People will be able to fly from Guangzhou to most major cities in the world within 12 hours, with direct express links to cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the Guangzhou Comprehensive Transportation Hub Plan (2018-35) said. Local authorities will work to upgrade infrastructure development in aviation, as well as in railway and highway networks.

### Five G.M. products approved for import

China approved five more genetically modified products for import, bringing the total number of approved G.M. products to 31. The five products are two rapeseed varieties and two soybean varieties resistant to weed killers and a corn variety that is resistant to both pests and weed killers, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said. The G.M. plants can only be used as raw



## Culture rubs off

A local primary school student shows his rubbing of Chinese characters at Songdan Chinese Character Art Museum in Changsha, Hunan province, on Jan. 15. The museum provides activities such as guessing, spelling, grouping and carving Chinese characters to promote traditional culture. XU XING / FOR CHINA DAILY

materials for other products, such as edible oil and feed. Producers include Monsanto of the United States and BASF of Germany.

### Beijing to ease path for foreign talent

Beijing will make it easier for foreign talent to obtain housing and gain permanent residency

as a means of luring more top brains. The city will widen channels to bring in global talent and fuel the city’s efforts to establish a science and technology innovation center, according to a report delivered on Jan. 21 by Mayor Chen Jining to the second session of the 15th Beijing Municipal People’s Congress.

Chen said that the municipal government will work with multinationals to set up research and development centers, while encouraging universities and colleges to launch innovation centers and support young entrepreneurs.

### Rail freight volume grew 9.1% last year

The country’s rail freight volume, an indicator of broad economic activity, rose 9.1 percent year-on-year in China in 2018, China Railway Corp. said. Railways carried 4.02 billion metric tons of freight, 334 million tons more than the previous year, the company said. Of that total, State-operated railways carried 3.19 billion tons of cargo, up 9.3 percent or 272 million tons. Compared with highway freight, the increased rail freight could save 2.99 million tons of standard coal and reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by 7.36 million tons.

### Human skull age exceeds 10,000 years

A human skull found near China’s border with Mongolia and Russia is more than 10,000 years old, researchers said. A carbon-14 dating study on four skull samples, discovered in the Jalainur district of Manzhouli in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, confirmed that the oldest dated to about 10,113 years ago. The other three were found to be 7,400 years, 1,600 years and 1,000 years old, Wu Xiaohong of Peking University’s school of archaeology and museology said. “These findings prove that humans lived in the Jalainur area for 10,000 years,” Wu said. The study, which began in March, was conducted by researchers from Peking University and the archaeology school at Jilin University.

tremendous contribution to a fair and prosperous society.

The average life expectancy in China rose from 35 years in the 1940s to 76.5 years in 2016. The country is aiming for 77.3 by 2020 and 79 by 2030, according to its Healthy China 2030 blueprint released in 2016.

“These main health indicators of the Chinese are generally better than the average level of middle- and high-income countries, and China has achieved the U.N.’s Millennium Goals in this regard ahead of schedule,” Chan said.

The results are also gains from the pain of an epidemic outbreak 15 years ago, she said.

In 2003 severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, spread worldwide after first appearing in Guangdong province. It was carried to Hong Kong by an infected doctor, sparking a global outbreak that struck down more than 8,000 people and left more than 800 dead in 32 countries.

During the outbreak Chan, then Hong Kong’s director of health, became the face of the global response.

“In 2003, when China suffered from SARS, it had less experience in dealing with such a crisis,” she said.

“And for whatever reason, China was criticized by the world. But since 2003 China has improved and invested in its healthcare system and the information system in reporting to the W.H.O. and being very transparent. China is one of the best countries in terms of preventing and containing infectious diseases now.”

Learning a lesson from SARS, the Chinese government took comprehensive measures to improve public health services, and the prevention and control of serious diseases. It built the world’s largest real-time electronic disease surveillance system to monitor and prevent epidemic emergencies.

“In fact, the system not only deals with disease outbreaks but also has the capability to deal with other disasters like flooding, earthquake or chemical explosions. This is a model of immediate, transparent, and complete reporting of a country’s emergencies.”

In many ways, SARS was a game-changer, not only for the international community and its approach to epidemic diseases, but also for the positive impact it had on health in China and the era of openness and transparency it helped usher in.

After the crisis, Chan went on to be elected W.H.O. director-general, leading 194 member states facing everyday challenges from all kinds of disease.

A decade after SARS, another deadly epidemic, Ebola, swept across West Africa in 2014.

Chan said it was one of the most difficult moments for the W.H.O., which was criticized for being slow in the beginning but rapidly adjusted.

“This time China was a great helper,” she said.

Chan said that as a responsible, big country, China used its capacities and experience to help fight Ebola and, with its help, the W.H.O. was able to offer assistance and eventually help create the first Ebola vaccine.

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CHINAWATCH

BUSINESS | 3

# Economy expected to regain steam

Growth rebound likely via policies, experts say.  
**Zhou Lanxu and Xin Zhiming** report

China's economy grew 6.6 percent last year, compared with 6.8 percent in 2017, the National Bureau of Statistics said on Jan. 21.

Despite easing growth, economists said that as the government's policy settings take effect, growth is likely to stabilize and recover as early as the first quarter of the year.

The country's G.D.P. for its first time exceeded 90 trillion yuan (\$13.28 trillion) last year.

At the same time, China's economic structure has continued to optimize, as new growth drivers strengthened last year, the National Bureau of Statistics said.

Growth in the fourth quarter was 6.4 percent, compared with 6.7 percent in the first three quarters, said Ning Jizhe, head of the bureau.

"Overall, the economy performed within a reasonable range in 2018 after it exceeded the preset growth target of about 6.5 percent."

John Litwack, the World Bank's lead economist for China, said: "G.D.P. growth in 2018 was broadly in line with our expectations since the beginning of the year."

Liu Chunsheng, an associate professor of economics at the Central University of Finance and Economics in Beijing, said Chinese economic growth fell slightly last year partly because of domestic moves to cut debt and uncertainties created by the trade dispute with the United States.

"Deleveraging moves and other

restructuring policies, although necessary for long-term economic development, have led to short-term pain as they accelerated the knocking out of weaker players in the market."

However, economic structural upgrading, which is reflected by the rising contribution of services and consumption, in tandem with strong domestic consumption and sound performance in trade and foreign investment inflows, has supported the economy in achieving growth that is outstanding in the context of the world economy, Liu said.

Economists voiced confidence that the Chinese economy will grow in a stable manner.

"We still expect good performance from China's economy this year, although the pace of growth should be a bit slower," Litwack said.

Cheng Shi, chief economist at ICBC International, said economic structural upgrading, which leads to higher production efficiency, is shoring up the economy, which could start to rebound in the first quarter.

China is introducing a proactive fiscal policy and a supportive monetary policy, the effect of which will gradually unfold, Cheng said. "The Chinese economy is likely to stabilize and rebound in the first quarter of this year, beating market expectations."

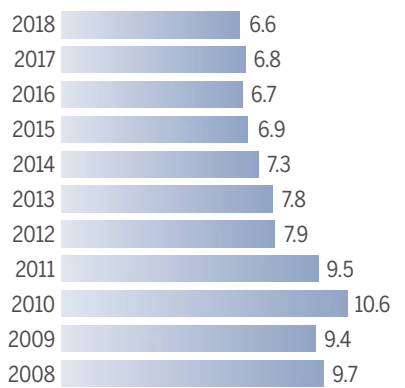
The country's tax reductions could offer a major boost to the economy this year, economists said.

A report from the Guanghua Management School at Peking University estimated the amount



Employees of Shaanxi Automobile and Equipment Co. Ltd. on an assembly line in Xi'an, Shaanxi province. YUAN JINGZHI / FOR CHINA DAILY

## China's annual GDP growth (year-on-year, %)



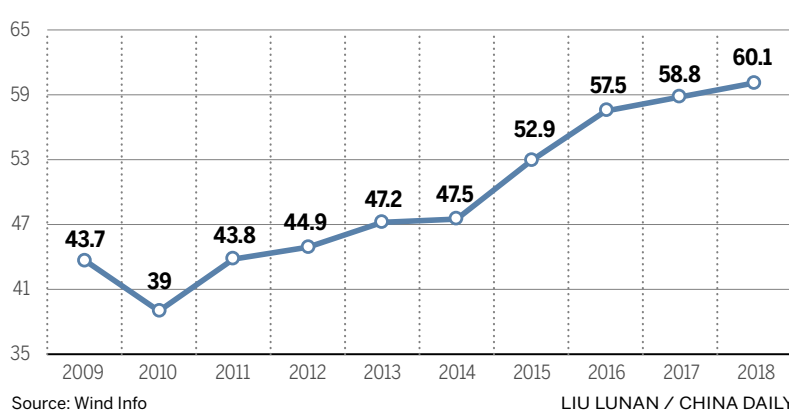
Source: National Bureau of Statistics  
CHINA DAILY

of cuts in taxes and fees could total 1.5 trillion yuan (\$220.8 billion) to 2 trillion yuan this year, and a reduction in value-added tax and corporate income tax may come soon.

"To ensure sustainable economic development, China should give priority to revitalizing the private sector and small enterprises, as they are the most efficient contributor

## Contribution of China's tertiary sector to economic growth

Unit: %



Source: Wind Info  
LIU LUNAN / CHINA DAILY

to employment and technological advances," said Yang Weiyong, an associate professor at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

The value added of the tertiary sector increased by 7.6 percent year-on-year to 46.96 trillion yuan (\$6.92 trillion) last year, accounting for 52.2 percent of the country's gross domestic

product, up by 0.3 percentage point from 2017. The growth rate of the value added of the tertiary sector was 1.8 percentage points higher than that of the secondary industry.

The role of consumption as a main driver of economic growth has further consolidated. Final consumption expenditure accounted for 76.2 percent of G.D.P. growth last year,



**Deleveraging moves and other restructuring policies, although necessary for long-term economic development, have led to short-term pain as they accelerated the knocking out of weaker players in the market."**

LIU CHUNSHENG  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS AT  
THE CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF FINANCE AND  
ECONOMICS IN BEIJING

rising by 18.6 percentage points year-on-year.

China has also firmly pushed ahead with green development. The country's energy consumption for every 10,000 yuan of its G.D.P. fell 3.1 percent last year, compared with 2017. Its structure of energy consumption has kept improving, with the proportion of clean energy in the total energy consumption increasing by about 1.3 percentage points from the previous year, the National Bureau of Statistics said.

"Despite the increasing pressure on growth deceleration at present, two major factors are consolidating the basis of Chinese economic growth," said Cheng, in a research note.

"On the one hand, the quality of the economy is steadily improving, as further promotion of economic structure optimization and the development of high-end manufacturing continuously improves production efficiency.

"On the other hand, a relatively loose fiscal policy is speeding up to take effect, which will underpin the economy and help relieve structural bottlenecks of the monetary policy."

Ning, commissioner of the National Bureau of Statistics, said China has ample room for macro policy support.

A new round of policies to stabilize the economy is likely to be carried out in multiple aspects this year, based on abundant room for internal policies and the demand to resist pressure from external factors, economists said.

*Jiang Xueqing contributed to this story.*

# Robots: Sales to more than triple in 3 years

FROM PAGE 1

Among parents surveyed, more than 41 percent said they would like to spend 6,000 yuan to 12,000 yuan a year on early-education products and services.

No wonder the value of global sales of educational robots is expected to reach \$11.1 billion by 2021 compared with about \$3 billion in 2018.

"The market is going to take off very soon," Wang said. "Companies marching into the field early will benefit. We will embrace the opportunity to become an industry leader."

His dash for early mover advantage comes from the realization that even technology companies such as Tencent Holdings Ltd. and the voice technology firm iFlytek Co. are competing with startups in the emerging segment.

With strengths in voice recognition technology, iFlytek, of Hefei, Anhui province, launched Alpha Egg, its latest educational robot, in September. Alpha Egg helps parents by accompanying their children.

Cheng Quping, 43, a father of two children, of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, paid 2,900 yuan for the intelligent small-sized robot.

The doll-like robot can talk, tell stories and even run after his children. When Cheng is away on business trips he can view and chat with his children through the robot.

"Such robots play a key role in accompanying children. Especially for us parents who are really busy with our work, it's very helpful," said Cheng.

So impressed is Cheng with the little robot that he and his wife have set up a retail store for the product.

The birth of their second child two years ago turned out to be a turning point. All the child-related tasks suddenly seem to have doubled for the parents.

"Now, when we help one child take a bath, the other baby sits quietly beside the robot and plays with it. What a relief!"

Guo Jia, founder and chief executive of Turing Robot, which mainly helps companies to develop robots, told a news outlet that compared with traditional robots, the latest products do much more than merely chat or answer simple questions.

When Turing Robot designs a robot it tries to ensure that the user can build some sort of relationship with the product. To illustrate this point, Guo has a dialogue with a robot.

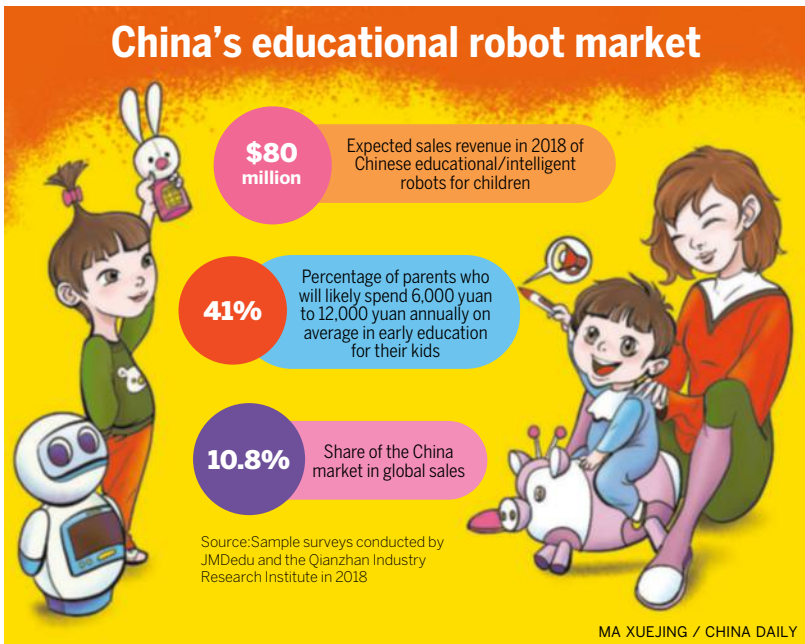
"Sing a song," Guo commanded. The intelligent, almost intuitive robot retorted: "How did you know that I was about to sing?"

This kind of conversation lifts the interactivity element to a whole new level, he said. New-age robots display "moods", thus endearing themselves to the users (children) and extending stickiness — or the overall time spent by children with the smart toys.

In addition to robots, wearable devices like kids digital wrist watches are popular among parents in China. International Data Corp. said there are at least 500 smart kids watch firms now in the country.

Hefei, Anhui province-based Ji Jing, 30, mother of Anchor Chang, 9, a second-grade student, bought a 700-yuan smart watch for him as he told her all his classmates wear similar intelligent watches, which do much more than display time.

"Unlike robots, smart watches are



A huge "Children's Programming" board is displayed above the door of a children's education store in Shanghai. WANG GANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

not expensive and they are worth their price," said Ji. Anchor mainly uses his watch to communicate with his classmates and parents using audio and text.

Ji said smart watches are safer than smartphones insofar as protecting children from addictive or harmful content is concerned.

Lyu Senlin, founder and chief researcher at the LearnEasy Times Online Education Research Institute, an industry research consultancy, said intelligent hardware such as educational robots has a long way to

go in China, in terms of application of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence.

"With the advance of technologies the intelligence level of such robots will be very high in some countries," he said. "For example, some robots can even blink their eyes."

Lyu predicted that educational robots and companion robots will still act as digital assistants for a long time to come, and it remains to be seen whether the emerging market will spawn some iconic brands.

# Secondhand exchange sites are taking off

BY OUYANG SHIJIA

For people who lack the time to bargain with prospective buyers over used items they want to sell, there is now an app.

Happy Sharing, or Xiangwushuo, is a sharing platform that uses a point system to help people to swap a wide variety of used items online free of charge. Based on this point system, users can trade all their used items lying around the house for items they need.

The more goods users give away, the more points, called Small Red Flower points, they earn, which they can then exchange for goods other members are giving away.

Sun Shuo, founder and chief executive of Happy Sharing, said the app now has more than 55 million users across the country, with more than 25 million monthly active users. Of the total users, about 70 percent are female.

"We are dedicated to delivering valuable items to people in need and thus enabling stronger connections between people," Sun said.

"The reality is Chinese people have tons of unnecessary items at home, which means the used items market has not yet been activated. In fact about 80 percent of our used daily necessities are sort of non-standard, and so it is really hard to decide on a suitable selling price."

So Sun introduced the Small Red Flower credit system to allow people to swap goods free of charge.

"The Small Red Flower points are similar to credit card points, which will help deliver goods to those who really need them. Compared with other secondhand trading platforms, our credit system will also help to reduce friction and improve efficiency."

Merchants have shown enthusiasm for the app because it offers a new channel to target consumers. Currently, more than 2,300 brands have sent new products as gifts to users on the app, including McDonald's, L'Oreal and Unilever.

Investors also seem to love the new model, betting big on this latest trend in the emerging circular economy. So far they have poured more than \$110 million into the company, including the latest round of funding in which \$65 million was invested, led by Sequoia Capital.

Happy Sharing said it wants to expand into far more business areas, aiming to generate more active users as well as creating new streams of revenue.

"The Small Red Flower points will connect to payments, accommodation, social networking, e-commerce and many more fields, becoming a new tool for brand marketing," Sun said.

The company unveiled the Small Red Flower Alliance in December in an effort to provide business clients with professional customer and loyalty management solutions.

The platform has also signed a deal with China CITIC Bank to provide tailor-made co-branded credit cards for Happy Sharing users, with which cardholders earn Small Red Flower points on each credit card transaction.

Happy Sharing is just one among a group of China's secondhand trading platforms eager to grasp this latest internet trend.

Xianyu, the flea market platform of thee-commerce company Alibaba, has also broadened the services it offers. It launched a premium products channel earlier in January that allows brand providers to sell unused products, and it said the huge market is worth more than 100 billion yuan (\$14.6 billion).

Xianyu's platform had generated over 100 billion yuan in gross merchandise value by the end of last year.

Today a growing number of Chinese are in the grip of a powerful consumption craze, generating a tremendous amount of unused items. A report from the China Center for Internet Economy Research said China's used goods market was worth 500 billion yuan in 2017, and its growth rate is expected to have remained steady at 30 percent last year.



**Building a toy robot is more meaningful than playing with a toy car. A kid can thus learn to develop his or her logical thinking and design skills while playing."**

QIN LIU  
MOTHER OF A CHILD, OF BEIJING





Song Zhenzhong (left), a collector of outmoded objects, displays his collection at an exhibition in Beijing in October. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

# Exhibition jogs country’s memory

Surrounded by obsolete objects, Song Zhenzhong, a small man in a red traditional jacket, excitedly explained how to operate the “antiques” to a group of primary school students.

That was in October, when Song held an exhibition of outdated objects at a library in the Dongcheng district of Beijing. Daily necessities marking changes in China, ranging from rice coupons to black-and-white televisions, were displayed to illustrate the advances that have been made over the past 40 years.

For older observers, the objects brought back memories, while the younger ones enjoyed an eye-opening glimpse of the past.

Song’s event was one of several he held last year to mark the 40th anniversary of the reform and opening-up policy.

The 55-year-old is a sixth-generation descendant of the Manchu Eight Banners, an administrative division of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) in Beijing.

His parents made a living by dipping strings of candied haws in sugar and selling them on the streets. Having learned the tricks of the trade, Song helped his parents in their work and excelled at peddling the candies.

He started collecting curios as a hobby when he was 13 and now owns four museums that hold items such as bronze mirrors and headwear dating from the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.) to the Qing. The exhibition in October, which centered on objects related to people’s daily lives, was one of more than 10 events he held last year to display his vast collection.

“It’s meaningless to deliver lectures via computers because it is not perceptual at all,” he said. “These outmoded objects, which appeared after the 1970s, are just a small part of my collection. As someone who grew up in a traditional Beijing alleyway, I want to make a contribution to traditional culture and leave something for my descendants.”

Display of outdated objects illustrates the progress made since reform and opening-up was adopted.

Zhao Yimeng reports



Tapes donated by a resident. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Food coupons. ZHAO YIMENG / CHINA DAILY

The internet has made it easy for collectors to obtain discarded former necessities.

In the days when China operated a planned economy, people used a variety of coupons to obtain everything from food to appliances.

Food coupons were among the first batch of negotiable securities issued by the government. From the 1950s to the ‘80s, a period of severe shortages, the coupons ensured that every family received its fair allocation of food.

Wang Yuxia, in his 60s, who grew up in Beijing, said: “My grandfather and I waited in line to buy rice coupons on the 24th of each month with the salary my mother got the same day. We had to allocate the rice carefully or we would not have enough to eat.

“The monthly supply was recorded in a notebook that showed the amount of rice and oil each family bought. Four of us ate 59 kilograms a month.”

The entries end in June 1993, she said.

As living standards improved — the per capita disposable income of urban residents rose to 28,228 yuan (\$4,158) in 2018 from 171 yuan in 1978 — rice coupons gradually disappeared from daily life.

“Cash replacing coupons as a form of payment was not a sudden change but a gradual process,” Wang said. “I remember using rice coupons and cash together to buy food. Now we buy goods via mobile payment. I can buy groceries without taking cash with me when I walk around after dinner. It’s far more convenient than using rice coupons.”

A recent report from the National Bureau of Statistics shows that China’s Engel coefficient, a measure of spending on food as a proportion of total household spending, fell to 28.4 percent in 2018, about 36 percentage points lower than in 1978, indicating the rise in living standards.

Four decades of reform and opening-up have brought higher living standards and

helped China to become the world’s second-largest economy.

The bureau said G.D.P. has risen from 370 billion yuan in 1978 to more than 90 trillion yuan in 2018.

In 2017 China accounted for 16 percent of the global economy, compared with 1.8 percent in 1978.

Li Yan, 45, a consultant in the field of information and communications technology in Beijing, was among the visitors at Song’s exhibition.

“Foreign products flowing into the country had a huge impact, boosting innovation, both in products and ideas,” she said.

Reflecting on the most impressive change for her in the past 40 years, Li plumped for the improvement in transport.

“In my school days we used student tickets when we took a bus to school, but they only arrived every 30 minutes in the morning. The infrequent, crowded buses made attending school very difficult.”

Over the past four decades transport payment systems have been upgraded from paper tickets to travel cards, and today smartphone apps provide convenience when using public transport.

Public vehicles have improved, too. In 2017 Beijing Public Transport owned and operated 26,363 public vehicles, compared with 3,315 in 1978. Moreover, 739 routes have been added to the 119 that operated in 1978.

Li said that when she first visited Europe 20 years ago, she was amazed by the advanced subway and high-speed rail networks.

“However, I recently returned from a business trip to Italy. My assistant asked me not to tease her about their subway systems. She was worried that people from China would find the networks old-fashioned because China’s rate of development is much faster.”

## Projects: Success on overseas sites

FROM PAGE 1

“We want to put the stones back to their original position, based on the inscriptions on them, and that takes expertise,” Wang said.

There are more than 10 established Egyptologists in China, but he is aware that the country is a newcomer to this work, he said. In the two years spent preparing for the excavation, several international symposiums were organized by his institution to update the team on the most recent achievements in the field worldwide.

A journalist from the United States once asked Wang, “Why does China want to have archaeologists working in Egypt?” He replied: “You (Westerners) have done work there for 200 years. Why can’t we? It’s a dialogue between two ancient civilizations.”

For Chinese scholars, such overseas projects will benefit their studies at home.

An academic program was started in 2002 to explore early-stage Chinese civilization — searching for its unique characteristics through comprehensive studies of archaeological sites nationwide.

“However, the more we discussed the topic, the more we felt that we lacked an in-depth understanding of other ancient civilizations,” Wang said. “The project in Egypt offers an opportunity for comparative studies.”

As a result, the Temple of Montu was chosen. It dates to the New Kingdom period of ancient Egypt, a contemporary of the Shang Dynasty (16th to 11th century B.C.) in China, during which the earliest-known written Chinese characters appeared and which had a complicated sacrificial and ceremonial system.

“I believe that there will be many achievements (in comparative studies), based on the abundant information we have on the Shang Dynasty,” Wang said.

Li Xinwei, Wang’s colleague at the Institute of Archaeology, has worked at Copan, an archaeological site from the Maya civilization (about 600 B.C.-A.D. 1546) in Honduras since 2015.



Jade objects unearthed at the Copan site in Honduras. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Working in tropical forests, he has had to frequently contend with humidity and poisonous snakes. But this failed to deter Li from exploring Copan, which had 16 Maya rulers at its peak from the fifth to ninth centuries.

Archaeological research at Copan began in the 1890s, but Li thinks that by joining recent efforts, the Chinese have provided fresh thinking.

“Even in some areas that have been studied many times we can discover something that has been neglected.”

Chinese methods emphasize studies of stratum, a layer of sedimentary rock or soil with consistent characteristics that distinguish it from others, and the development of architecture, Li said.

His team is working at a 3,600-square-yard courtyard that was home to a Mayan aristocrat.

Li said that in this ancient civilization it was believed that buildings had lives that needed to be reborn. Consequently, an old house would be demolished after being used for some time — even it was in good condition and was replaced by a new one.

“We cannot demolish the surviving construction to study the foundations, so we frequently dig tunnels under it as part of our work.”

Last year, as a result of this work underground, Li was able to piece together how houses had stood on the western side of the courtyard, matching his earlier findings of those on the northern side.

“It’s unprecedented to have such complete first-hand information on a single family residence in Copan.”

Last year Li also found some signs on the courtyard wall that indicated a passage leading to the underworld in Mayan mythology. In 2017 a similar discovery illustrated the death and reincarnation of a Mayan maize god through a wall relief, only previously known to be painted on pottery. Some newly unearthed articles for daily use may show that the courtyard owners had close links with the royal family.

As with Wang’s work in Egypt, Li said the Copan project has offered reference points for comparisons between the Mayan and Chinese civilizations, which have many similarities.

# A place where beauty takes root

BY EARLE GALE

When Kew Gardens reopened its Great Pagoda last year it was more than a return-to-form for the pagoda; it was an acknowledgment of the important influence of China on British horticulture.

The 10-story Chinese-style structure, built in 1761, is a star attraction at the botanical repository in southwest London, where more than 30,000 types of plants are protected and displayed and where 7 million floral samples are stored.

The pagoda had been a shadow of its former self ever since the 80 carved wooden dragons that originally adorned it rotted and were removed. Now, 230 years after their demise and thanks to a 5 million pound (\$6.4 million) investment, they have been recreated in a long-lasting and light synthetic material, and the building, which has pride of place in the World Heritage Site garden, has been repainted and restored in a makeover that should last another 100 years.

Since work finished in July, visitors to Kew, officially called the Royal Botanic Gardens, are again making a beeline for the pagoda. It was the idea of William Chambers, who lived in China between 1745 and 1747 and who returned to Britain greatly impressed by what he saw. When it was finished, the pagoda, which was funded by Princess Augusta, the mother of King George III, was said to be the most authentic Chinese-style structure in Europe. But it was not the first. Kew also boasted an imagining of

Confucius’ home, a Chinese-style garden, and a pen full of Chinese pheasants. And there were other China-inspired gardens and buildings elsewhere in Britain.

Chambers was an early supporter of the Chinese style of gardening, and a fierce critic of Capability Brown, the leading designer of English gardens at the time, who Chambers said was boring. Chambers wanted gardens to be full of surprises, like those he saw in China, and he urged Britons to adopt the Chinese techniques of concealment, asymmetry and naturalism.

Before Chambers, others had made similar observations. In fact, Chinese gardens had been gaining attention in Britain from when the Venetian merchant and traveler Marco Polo became the first European to describe them in the 1200s after visiting the summer palace of Kublai Khan in what is today Shangdu in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region. Polo also described the gardens of the imperial palace in what is now Beijing and talked of pavilions, lakes and a man-made hill covered with evergreen trees and green azurite stones.

Other early visitors to China had similar stories. Francis Xavier, a Jesuit priest who arrived in 1552, was inspired, as was another Jesuit, Matteo Ricci, who arrived in 1601.

The English statesman and essayist William Temple did not set foot in China personally but read extensively about its gardens and wrote in 1685 about the beauty without order found in Chinese traditional gardens. He coined the word Sharawadgi, essentially a lack of rigid



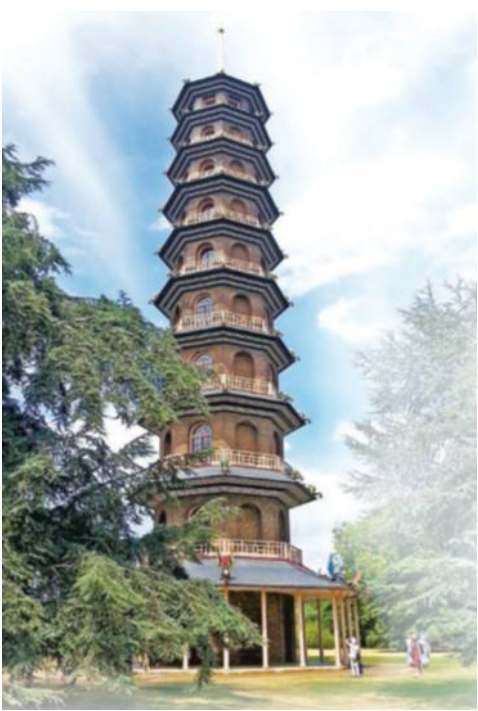
Above: Decorative dragons on display at Kew Gardens in London. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY  
Right: An artist’s depiction of the restored Great Pagoda at Kew Gardens.

lines, to describe the concept, and it caught on among English gardeners at the time.

In 1696 Louis Le Comte, mathematician to the king of France, published his memoirs after visiting China and described an exaggeration of nature, but not an attempt to defy it.

One of the first British attempts at mimicking these near-mythical Chinese gardens came in 1738 with the construction of a building and garden at Stowe House in the English county of Buckinghamshire. Lord Anson created gardens at Shugborough Hall in the county of Staffordshire in 1747 that included a Chinese-style house and bridge.

Jane Kilpatrick, an Oxford-educated freelance historian and garden writer, describes the early introduction of Chinese plants into Britain in two books, *Gifts from the Gardens of*



China: The Introduction of Traditional Chinese Garden Plants to Britain 1698-1862 and Fathers of Botany: The Discovery of Chinese Plants by European Missionaries.

Tony Kirkham, head of arboretum, gardens and horticulture services at Kew, said many of the 14,000 trees at the botanic gardens originated in China, including Britain’s first maidenhair tree, or ginkgo, which was planted at Kew in 1762 after it was sourced by Princess Augusta, the person who funded the pagoda.

“She wanted the best collection in Europe, and she got her way,” Kirkham said of the tree that still stands and is now 68 feet tall.