## Erdogan's great game

Soldiers, spies and Turkey's quest for power — FT SERIES, PAGE 3

## Wolf at the door

Why Xi's attack on Ma's empire is a defining moment — BIG READ, PAGE 15



# Time for a New Deal

Biden must look to Roosevelt to end economic insecurity — OPINION, PAGE 17

## **Alamo stand** Trump denies sparking riot

Donald Trump leaves the White House yesterday on his way to Alamo in Texas to view the wall being built along the US-Mexico border.

The trip is the US president's first public appearance since his supporters rioted on Capitol Hill last week, leading to the deaths of five people. Mr Trump denied any responsibility for the violence in Washington, saying his speech to the angry rally that spawned the Capitol mob "was totally appropriate".

The president did, however, condemn fresh moves to impeach him, describing them as a "continuation of the greatest witch hunt in the history of politics".

Reports page 2 Michael Moritz page 16 Janan Ganesh page 17



# Commerzbank warned BaFin of Wirecard money-laundering risk

◆ Watchdog alerted a year ago ◆ Merkel aide defends lobbying ◆ Lender eased ties with group

**OLAF STORBECK** — FRANKFURT **GUY CHAZAN** — BERLIN

Commerzbank warned Germany's financial watchdog about money laundering risks at Wirecard a year ago, underlining how fears over the payments group were already building months before it collapsed.

The warning to BaFin last January was based on Commerzbank's internal review into its own relationship with Wirecard, triggered by the Financial Times' reporting on alleged accounting manipulations at the group, according to three people familiar with the matter.

Revelations of the early warnings that BaFin had received came as one of Angela Merkel's closet aides yesterday defended the chancellery's lobbying for Wirecard, telling a parliamentary

inquiry that he had no knowledge of irregularities at the disgraced payments company at the time.

MPs questioned Lars-Hendrik Röller, Ms Merkel's senior economic adviser, over why he recommended that the German chancellor lobby for Wirecard during an official trip to China in September 2019, even after serious concerns had been raised over fraud at the payments processor.

Mr Röller, who yesterday admitted that the Wirecard scandal was "very bad for Germany as a financial centre", justified his lobbying efforts in 2019, saying that the payments group had been seeking to enter China's financial services sector, which "was 100 per cent in Ger-

many's interest" at that time. The conclusions of Commerzbank's review prompted Germany's secondbiggest bank to begin cutting ties with the group in the second half of 2019, people familiar with the matter said.

One of a consortium of lenders to Wirecard, Commerzbank lost €175m when the company failed in June in one of Europe's largest accounting frauds.

The bank's internal review and warning to BaFin "undermines the view" that the German government and Wirecard's business partners, such as Commerzbank, were "powerless with regard to Wirecard's criminal intent", said Fabio De Masi, an MP from the hard-left Die Linke party.

"If Commerzbank pulled out of its correspondent banking relationship with Wirecard Bank in September 2019, why didn't the lender also sever its



The payments group's failure in June last year, one of Europe's accounting frauds, cost Commerzbank

€175m in losses

credit relationship?" asked Mr De Masi. Commerzbank wanted to terminate its lending relationship with Wirecard following its review but the contract prevented an early exit from the consortium, according to people familiar with

The findings of Commerzbank's review were also at odds with the views of Heike Pauls, the bank's analyst who covered Wirecard and had recommended that investors buy the shares right up until the group collapsed.

Commerzbank said there was a separation between the work of its analysts and other parts of the bank. It declined to comment further on its Wirecard ties. BaFin confirmed to the FT that it had been briefed by Commerzbank on

money laundering risks at Wirecard.

#### **Briefing**

- ▶ BA faces £800m data hack group claim British Airways is facing British legal history's largest group claim over a data breach, and a potential total bill of £800m, after a 2018 incident that exposed data of more than 400,000 of its customers. - PAGE 5
- ▶ Berlin looks for tax accord with Biden Germany is to seek a deal with the incoming US administration on global rules for corporate taxation, as hopes rise in Berlin that a new era of multilateral co-operation can be ushered in. - PAGE 3
- ▶ Ford calls halt to making cars in Brazil

After more than a century Ford is to stop producing vehicles in Brazil, with the loss of up to 5,000 jobs, in an attempt to drag its South American businesses out of the red.— PAGE 7



- ▶ Mainland China jumps in on HK stocks Chinese cash is flooding into Hong Kong's ailing stock market, with holdings hitting an all-time high of \$235.7bn, showing mainland traders' heft as political turmoil hurts the city's hub status. - PAGE 8
- ▶ Tesla trails electric rivals in Europe BMW, Daimler and VW tripled sales of electric vehicles to 600,000 last year, the carmakers said, outpacing Tesla in Europe as they race to meet lower CO2 targets. - PAGE 7; EDITORIAL COMMENT, PAGE 16
- ▶ Las Vegas casino magnate Adelson dies Sheldon Adelson, the billionaire US casino magnate, founder of Las Vegas Sands, Republican donor and philanthropist, has passed away after a long illness, his wife announced. He was 87.- PAGE 6
- ▶ DHL soars on back of pandemic boom Logistics group DHL hailed an "exceptional year" as it posted record 2020 earnings that were 10 per cent higher than its internal forecasts on the back of a rise in online shopping amid the pandemic. - PAGE 7

#### Datawatch

Green shoots

Electricity from renewable sources (% of total gross consumption, 2019) 20 40 60 80 100 Iceland Austria

Denmarl Germany

terms of the consumption of Norway and Iceland are far peers, with all of those countries energy needs being met by green sources

Nordic countries

#### Bitcoin turbulence leaves largest investors queasy

Analysis ► PAGE 8

Austria	€3.90	Malta	€3.70
Bahrain	Din1.8	Morocco	Dh45
Belgium	€3.90	Netherlands	€3.90
Bulgaria	Lev7.50	Norway	NKr40
Croatia	Kn29	Oman	OR1.60
Cyprus	€3.70	Pakistan	Rupee350
Czech Rep	Kc105	Poland	ZI 20
Denmark	DKr38	Portugal	€3.70
Egypt	E£59	Qatar	QR15
Finland	€4.70	Romania	Ron17
France	€3.90	Russia	€5.00
Germany	€3.90	Serbia	NewD420
Gibraltar	£2.90	Slovak Rep	€3.70
Greece	€3.70	Slovenia	€3.70
Hungary	Ft1200	Spain	€3.70
India	Rup220	Sweden	SKr39
Italy	€3.70	Switzerland	SFr6.20
Lithuania	€4.30	Tunisia	Din7.50
Luxembourg	€3.90	Turkey	TL19
North Macedonia	Den220	UAE	Dh20.00

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# Modi's agriculture reform derailed as Supreme Court freezes liberalisation

STEPHANIE FINDLAY — NEW DELHI

Narendra Modi's drive to reform Indian agriculture was stalled yesterday when India's Supreme Court suspended three laws that have provoked farmers to blockade New Delhi.

The court's decision to put the laws on hold came a day after it said that it was "extremely disappointed" by how the prime minister's government had introduced the reforms and the manner in which it had conducted negotiations with farmers.

"We are going to suspend the implementation of the three farm laws until further orders," said Chief Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde.

Thousands of farmers, many of whom are from India's Sikh religious minority, have camped for more than a month on roads into the capital, clogging up the

13052.38 30989.5

13925.08

28164.34 28276.75

STOCK MARKETS

Nasdaq Composite

FTSEurofirst 300

Euro Stoxx 50

FTSE All-Share

FTSE 100

Xetra Dax

Hang Seng MSCI World \$

MSCI EM \$

MSCI ACWI \$

Nikkei

S&P 500

main entry points in protest at laws intended to deregulate agriculture and encourage private competition.

The farmers fear that the reforms will disrupt their business and strip them of state protections, leaving them vulnerable to powerful corporations. "We want a complete rollback of these laws," said Harinder Happy, a spokesman for the protesters. After suspending the laws, the

Supreme Court said that it would set up a committee to "amicably resolve" the stand-off. There was scepticism, however, that farmers would agree to cooperate because "the Supreme Court does not have the power to nullify the act, it can only do so on constitutional grounds", said Himanshu, an associate professor of economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi.

"I don't know whether the farmers'

unions will even engage with them," said Mr Himanshu. "They [the Modi government] are simply buying time."

Despite holding more than eight rounds of talks, the government has failed to defuse the stand-off. It maintains that the new laws will help modernise India's agricultural sector, which supports more than half the country's mostly rural population, and is in desperate need of reform.

It says the reforms will allow private trade outside state-regulated market yards and open up contract farming between producers and companies.

According to Narendra Singh Tomar, the agriculture minister, the legislation "will ultimately lead to a better life and enhancement of their incomes".

But farmers remain suspicious after the government pushed through the reforms without consultation.

A Nikkei Company

#### **World Markets**

			CURRENG	CIES					INTEREST RATES			
Jan 12	prev	%chg		Jan 12	prev		Jan 12	prev		price	yield	chg
3795.27	3799.61	-0.11	\$ per €	1.216	1.215	£ per \$	0.734	0.741	US Gov 10 yr	103.84	1.18	0.05
13052.38	13036.43	0.12	\$ per £	1.362	1.349	€per£	1.120	1.110	UK Gov 10 yr		0.35	0.04
30989.57	31008.69	-0.06	£ per €	0.893	0.901	¥per€	126.692	126.724	Ger Gov 10 yr		-0.47	0.03
1576.51	1575.94	0.04	¥ per \$	104.200	104.295	£ index	78.382	78.470	Jpn Gov 10 yr	118.38	0.03	0.00
3614.04	3620.62	-0.18	¥ per £	141.946	140.679	SFr per £	1.212	1.203	US Gov 30 yr	113.59	1.91	0.02
6754.11	6798.48	-0.65	SFr per €	1.081	1.083				Ger Gov 2 yr	105.29	-0.69	0.02
3815.70	3837.35	-0.56	€ per \$	0.823	0.823							
5650.97	5662.43	-0.20										
13925.06	13936.66	-0.08	СОММОВ	ITIES						price	prev	chg
28164.34	28139.03	0.09							Fed Funds Eff	0.09	0.09	0.00
28276.75	27908.22	1.32			Ja	ın 12	prev	%chg	US 3m Bills	0.08	0.08	0.00
2730.05	2753.31	-0.84	Oil WTI \$		5	3.03	52.25	1.49	Euro Libor 3m	-0.56	-0.57	0.01
1349.60	1353.53	-0.29	Oil Brent \$	3	5	6.54	55.66	1.58	UK 3m	0.03	0.03	0.00
658.48	663.59	-0.77	Gold \$		184	7.25	1862.90	-0.84	Prices are latest for edition	Data prov	ided by Morr	ningstar

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#### INTERNATIONAL

Islamist group

# Pompeo claims Iran hosts al-Qaeda 'new home base'

Analysts suspect secretary of state wants to dash Biden's Tehran deal hopes

KATRINA MANSON — WASHINGTON

US secretary of state Mike Pompeo has accused Iran of hosting al-Qaeda's "new operational headquarters" in an apparent move to derail attempts by Joe Biden's incoming administration to resume talks with Tehran on the nuclear deal.

Mr Pompeo cited newly declassified intelligence but did not provide evidence to back up his claims, which were immediately rejected by many experts

and Tehran. Although the US has accused the two of teaming up in the past, Mr Pompeo's claims go further than before. "Iran has allowed al-Qaeda to fundraise, to freely communicate with all kinds of members around the world, and to perform many other functions that were previously directed from Afghanistan or Pakistan," Mr Pompeo said, adding Iran was the jihadi group's "new home base".

Experts have long thought that some of the Islamist group's leadership fled to Iran following the US invasion of Afghanistan that followed the September 11 attacks in 2001, but differ over the extent of subsequent ties.

Al-Qaeda's jihadis and Iran's theo-

cratic leadership are on the extremes of Muslims' Sunni-Shia religious divide and the two are on opposing sides in some locations. Iran has long denied allegations it hosts al-Qaeda.

Mr Pompeo claimed Iran had agreed to expand support to the militants in 2015, the same year the Obama administration signed a deal with Iran, under which Tehran agreed to limit its nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief. "Everything changed in 2015," he said. The Trump administration pulled out of the accord in 2018 and has sought to destroy it. Analysts believe it wants to scupper Mr Biden's chances of negotiating an agreement with Iran that would lead to the US rejoining the deal.

Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's foreign minister, accused Mr Pompeo of "more warmongering lies" in a tweet. He added the terrorists who conducted the

#### 'Pompeo is massaging the facts to support his preferred policies'

Colin Clarke, terrorism expert

2001 attacks came from Mr Pompeo's "favourite" Middle East countries and not from Iran. The 19 al-Qaeda attackers were from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Lebanon and Egypt.

Colin Clarke, terrorism expert at The

Soufan Center, a global security research institution, dismissed the idea that Iran was the jihadi group's new headquarters and described Mr Pompeo's remarks as "disingenuous" and 'misleading".

Mr Clarke said Afghanistan and Pakistan remained the global hub for al-Qaeda which, he said, had allocated more resources towards Syria. "He is massaging the facts to support his preferred policies."

Ned Price, a former CIA counter-terrorism analyst who is a Biden transition official, has previously accused Mr Pompeo of "playing politics with intelligence" over his 2017 decision to declassify material that indicated Iran offered some training to al-Qaeda operatives in a deal that allegedly broke down after the jihadis violated the agreement.

Mr Pompeo also announced sanctions against some alleged al-Qaeda leaders and for the first time confirmed the death of Abu Muhammad al-Masri, al-Qaeda's number two, who he said died on August 7 last year. He gave no further

The New York Times reported in November that Israeli agents shot dead Masri in Tehran at the behest of the US over the summer.

Al-Qaeda did not announce his death and Iran denied the report.

Additional reporting by Najmeh Bozorgmehr in Tehran

#### Capitol rampage



# Trump warns of anger over impeachment push

**DEMETRI SEVASTOPULO** — WASHINGTON

Donald Trump warned that efforts by Democrats to impeach him for a second time were "causing tremendous anger" in the US and said he bore no responsibility for a violent attack on the Capitol by his supporters last week.

In his first unscripted remarks since the rampage in the capital, the US president described the move to impeach him as a "continuation of the greatest witch hunt in the history of politics".

"I think it's causing tremendous anger . . . and tremendous danger to our country," Mr Trump said yesterday as he prepared to fly to the US-Mexico border to tout his record on immigration. "We want no violence," the president added, as he defended a fiery speech he gave before last week's assault on the Capitol: "People thought what I said was totally appropriate."

The remarks came as the House of Representatives prepared to vote on a measure that would pave the way for his impeachment unless Mike Pence, his vice-president, removes him from office by invoking the 25th amendment.

Mr Pence is not expected to respond to the demand to invoke the amendment – which allows a president who is deemed unfit to be ejected from office setting the stage for the second impeachment of Mr Trump with just a week until Joe Biden is inaugurated as

Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic House Speaker, said the lower chamber of Congress would vote to impeach Mr Trump as early as today on a charge of "incitement of insurrection" over his culpability for the attack on the Capitol.

The FBI has warned of possible armed protests at state capitals, while officials in Washington stepped up security to prevent more violence at the inauguration on January 20. Mr Trump on Monday declared a state of emergency in the

Ahead of the inauguration, lawmakers are investigating why the Capitol was so easily breached last week. Tim Rvan, the Democratic congressman who chairs the House committee that oversees the Capitol police's \$516m annual budget, said two Capitol police officers had been suspended.

One of the two had allegedly taken the Democrats to remove the president. "selfies" with rioters, while a second was accused of putting on a Make America Great Again hat while apparently giving directions to the mob.

Mr Ryan said 10 to 15 officers were under investigation in relation to the

'We want no violence. People thought what I said was totally appropriate'

**Donald Trump** 

The attack has resulted in a rift between Mr Trump and Mr Pence, who did not speak after the rampage until a meeting on Monday, according to US media reports.

As Mr Pence took refuge during the assault, Mr Trump slammed him on Twitter for not preventing the Senate from certifying Mr Biden's victory.

While Mr Pence has privately expressed reservations about how Mr Trump handled the situation, he has shown no indication he will work with Several Republicans, including sena-

tors Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Pat Toomey from Pennsylvania, have called on Mr Trump to resign. But very few Republican senators have signalled that they would vote to convict Mr Trump if the Senate held a trial after his impeachment in the House.

Mr Trump has become increasingly isolated in his final days, with three cabinet secretaries and his deputy national security adviser resigning in the wake of the attack alongside a handful of administration staffers.

Twitter and Facebook have both blocked Mr Trump from using his accounts on their platforms, depriving him of his most valuable form of communication.

The Axios news website reported that Kevin McCarthy, the Republican House minority leader who has been a close ally, rejected claims by Mr Trump in a phone call that the attack on the Capitol was perpetrated by anti-fascist activists. Additional reporting by Aime Williams in Washington

See Opinion/Companies

Social media. Regulation

# Big Tech faces reform calls from left and right

Barring US president from using platforms arms critics on both sides in Congress

KIRAN STACEY — WASHINGTON HANNAH MURPHY — SAN FRANCISCO

In banning Donald Trump, Twitter and Facebook hoped to quell complaints from Democrats and others – that they have allowed the US president to use their platforms to sow misinformation and hate.

However, they have amplified a complaint long made by conservatives, which is that too much political influence is now wielded by a handful of private technology companies that decide who can and cannot reach their audiences.

The events of the past week have given ammunition to critics who want stricter regulation on both sides.

"The actions of the technology companies last week were legal, there is no question about that," said Jameel Jaffer, the executive director of the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University. "But they also underscore the immense power that some of these companies now have as gatekeepers to the public square."

Facebook and Twitter both barred Mr Trump after deciding his actions before and during last week's riot by his supporters in the US Capitol amounted to an incitement of violence.

But if the platforms hoped to stave off the threat of regulation from Democrats - who last week secured control of the Senate to add to the House of Representatives and the White House – they look to have been unsuccessful.

Richard Blumenthal, one of the Democratic senators who has sought to introduce stricter regulation on large technology companies, said the riot at the Capitol would "renew and focus the need for Congress to reform Big Tech's privileges and obligations".

Mr Blumenthal and his Senate colleagues want to revisit the legal protection granted at the birth of online communication. Under Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, internet platforms can publish and moderate content from third parties without being held legally liable for what they say. The companies call this part of the law the "twenty-six words

that created the internet". Critics say companies now possess such power over political speech that those legal protections should no longer apply.

Both Mr Trump and Joe Biden, the Democratic president-elect, have in the past called for the repeal of Section 230, and several members of Congress are working on bills that would limit when it applies. However, there is little agreement on what those limits should be.

Daphne Keller at the Program on Platform Regulation at Stanford University, said: "Democrats and Republicans both agree they want to change Section 230, but they both want to do it for different reasons. Democrats want platforms to take down more, but Republicans want them to take down less. The question is whether either side has the votes to be able to get something passed."

#### 'Democrats want platforms to take down more, but Republicans . . . to take down less'

Lindsey Graham, Republican senator from South Carolina, has proposed only allowing companies to enjoy immunity from libel law if they sign up to bestpractice guidelines that would be set independently. He is promoting a measure that would phase out Section 230 if a replacement is not agreed by 2023.

Brian Schatz, Democratic senator from Hawaii, and his Republican colleague, John Thune, from South Dakota, have proposed a law that would force companies to be more clear about how they and why they moderate content.

Both Facebook and Twitter say they would support some restrictions on Section 230, but have given no further detail. Lobbyists argue anything but the most minor of changes will make groups less likely to moderate content in an effort not to be classified as publishers.

Meanwhile, a similar debate is playing out outside the US. In the UK, Matt Hancock, the health secretary, argued the decision to ban Mr Trump "raises questions about [social media companies'] editorial judgments and the way that they're regulated". In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel called Twitter's move a "problematic" breach of the "fundamental right to free speech".

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#### Coronavirus rules

# Canadians infuriated by lockdown-defying politicians

JASON KIRBY — TORONTO

In his Christmas Eve video message, Rod Phillips, finance minister of Canada's largest province, sat next to a crackling fireplace and commiserated with the people of Ontario that they could not "be in person with as many family and friends as we'd like to".

In reality, Mr Phillips was on vacation at a luxury resort on the Caribbean island of St Barts. Despite rushing back after his trip was exposed, he resigned on New Year's Eve.

The daily tally of politicians and government officials who have flouted stayat-home recommendations about travel abroad over the holidays has sparked outrage in a country that places a premium on following rules and has a low tolerance for hypocrisy in public life.

Canada has weathered the Covid-19 crisis better than the US and much of Europe, and has been more prudent than most in securing vaccine doses.

But health officials are under pressure as cases rise in the populous eastern provinces of Ontario and Quebec, lockdowns tighten and Canada falls behind in its rollout of Covid-19 vaccines.

The seven-day average of daily new cases jumped to more than 10,000 on Friday, five times higher than at the peak of the first wave last May, while daily deaths averaged 176, the high reached during the first wave.

"People are very angry and frustrated at being told they can't sit in the backyard with friends or visit relatives while members of government are flying all over," said Lorian Hardcastle, professor of health and law at Calgary university.

Since Mr Phillips' resignation, almost two dozen politicians and senior officials at all levels of government have  $admitted \,to \,travelling \,outside \,Canada \,to$ take a holiday or visit sick relatives. Most have apologised. Two members of Justin Trudeau's Liberal government resigned from their roles after travelling to the US over the holidays.

In Alberta, six members of the provincial government and premier Jason Kenney's chief of staff resigned or were demoted for leaving the country, including Tracy Allard, the minister responsible for the province's vaccine rollout, who holidayed in Hawaii. Mr Trudeau said he was "disappointed", and his government would disqualify anyone returning to Canada from non-essential travel from the C\$1,000 (US\$784) Covid sickness benefit, meant to encourage workers who contract the virus to quar-

Across Canada, governments have been clamping down on movement as cases mount. Quebec imposed a fourweek curfew taking effect at the weekend, while Ontario extended

Ontario finance minister Rod Phillips had to resign after taking a festive break in the Caribbean



school closures to the end of the month. That has heightened tension over the

slow pace of the vaccine rollout. Canada has secured more shots per capita than any other country. It has orders with seven drugmakers for almost 400m doses, equal to 10 doses per person.

Canadian regulators were among the first to approve the BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, for which it has agreements to buy up to 116m doses. However, as of Friday only 0.7 doses had

third of the rate of the US and UK, according to Our World In Data. At the last count, half of the 545,000 doses distributed remained in storage. On Friday, Ontario premier Doug

been administered per 100 people, one-

Ford warned several regions were running low on vaccine supplies and that the whole province "will be out of Pfizer vaccines by the end of next week". Other provincial leaders have also

criticised the pace of distribution, but Mr Trudeau said quantities of both vaccines would "scale up" next month.

In the meantime, at least some older Canadian "snowbirds" who regularly travel to Florida for the winter are viewing that as a faster path to getting vaccinated. The US state is offering doses to all seniors aged over 65, including to non-citizens and non-residents, under relatively loose conditions.

"They're saying if I have to wait until summertime to get it here, wouldn't it be nicer to go down south, get both injections and be finished with everything by the end of January," Torontobased travel insurance broker Martin Firestone said. But that would mean defying the stay-at-home advice.

#### INTERNATIONAL

# Erdogan overtures to west clash with drive to make Turkey great again

FT series President's muscular foreign policy has left Ankara more isolated and angered Nato allies

LAURA PITEL — ANKARA

In Baku's Freedom Square last month, thousands of marching Azerbaijan soldiers in fur hats and braided coats celebrated their country's victory in the Caucasus - and the man who made it possible: Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Invited as guest of honour, the Turkish leader looked on as drones he supplied to Baku as it battled to regain lands lost to Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh were given a prominent place in the military parade. "Today is a day of victory and pride for all of us, for the whole Turkic world," said Mr Erdogan, surrounded by Turkish and Azeri flags.

His decision to throw his full weight behind Azerbaijan, even as western powers called for a ceasefire after a fresh outbreak of fighting last autumn, was the latest manifestation of his increasingly muscular foreign policy stance, characterised by uncompromising rhetoric and the ready use of hard power.

Over the past five years, Mr Erdogan has launched military incursions into Syria and northern Iraq, dispatched troops to Libya and engaged in naval stand-offs with Greece, interventions that have riled Nato allies, reignited old rivalries and generated new foes.

As Mr Erdogan has come to terms with the US election defeat of his friend Donald Trump and the need to lure back foreign capital to address mounting economic woes, he has said he would like to "turn a new page" with the west.

But it remains unclear whether Mr Erdogan is willing or able to compromise on the issues that plague Turkey's relations with the EU, the US and Middle Eastern states, or whether the newfound conciliatory language will soon give way to renewed acrimony.

"There are small things [that Turkey has done that could be considered an olive branch, but nothing substantial," said a European diplomat. "If you look at the issues where we fundamentally disagree, both sides have the view that the ball is in the court of the other. So it's very hard to go anywhere."

The 66-year-old president, whose Justice and Development party (AKP) swept to power in 2002, has long sought to cast himself as a visionary who will in the words of historian Soner Cagaptay - "make Turkey great again" both at home and abroad.

But a bloody attempted coup by rogue forces in 2016 marked a rupture in Turkey's dealings with the rest of the world, analysts say. It left Mr Erdogan even more suspicious of the west, pushed him closer to President Vladimir Putin of Russia, forced him to forge new political alliances at home and enabled him to take unprecedented control of the state.

In a speech three months after the failed putsch, Mr Erdogan said Turkey would no longer wait for problems or adversaries to "knock on our door". Instead, it would "go and find them wherever they make their home and

come down on them hard". Mr Erdogan at times plays to his reli-



**Troubled times:** Turkish soldiers look on as crowds in central Istanbul protest about a coup attempt in July 2016

militants

LIBYA

Tripoli

Weapons and training supplied to

government

Source: FT research

gious conservative base by casting himself as leader of the Muslim world but draws heavily on nationalist imagery and language. He likes to say his nation is undergoing a sahlanis — a "rising" or "rearing up" - on the world stage.

Diplomats and analysts warn the strategy carries great risks, both for the economy and relations with regional and global powers. While 10 years ago, the guiding principle of Turkish foreign policy was "zero problems with neighbours", Turkish analysts now joke that the new mantra is "zero neighbours without problems".

His foreign policy is described by critics as "neo-Ottoman", in reference to the empire that spanned southern Europe, western Asia and north Africa

**AZERBAIJAN** 

**QATAR** 

**AFGHANISTAN** 

Part of Nato-led

support mission

Frequent cross-

and many temporary bases

Training centre for Somali troops

standing army in Nato.
Ongoing operations

NORTHERN
CYPRUS

Supplied and drones and military

Ankara

MEDITERRANEAN

Warships deployed

in conflict over

Military base training

SYRIA

Controls parts

of north and

has troops in

since 1974

and preceded the modern republic. The approach has come at a cost. "I don't think Turkey has been this isolated in its history," said Sinem Adar, a researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs in Berlin. "There is an expanding front of countries confrontational toward Turkey."

The purge after the coup attempt allowed Mr Erdogan to take greater control of the military. He forged an alliance with the ultranationalist party MHP, adopting its hawkish rightwing outlook on national security, especially Kurdish separatism. "They have a similar idea, which is that Turkey must rise. It must increase its power," said Evren Balta, a professor of international relations at Ozyegin University in Istanbul.

The transition in 2018 to a presidential system weakened the role of the foreign ministry, traditionally the home of mandarins who saw Turkey's natural orientation as towards the west. Many are critical of what one former ambassador terms a reliance on "soldiers and spies" rather than diplomacy. The overseas adventurism has also had little pushback from political rivals.

Mr Erdogan, who most analysts believe wants to remain in power for as long as possible, has used foreign policy for domestic political gain, comparing the German government to the Nazis and advising French president Emmanuel Macron to seek "mental treatment". This attitude has not gone down well in European capitals. One EU diplomat accused Turkey's leader of acting like "a schoolyard bully".

Mr Erdogan's drive to make Turkey a regional power — reflected in a dramatic expansion of diplomatic ties with the



'[Erdogan, above, and rival party MHP] have a similar idea, which is that Turkey It must increase

its power'

Erdogan's great game This is the first part of a series looking at the Turkish president's geopolitical ambitions

ft.com/erdogan

nations.

Middle East, Africa and Latin America

in the mid-2000s through trade and aid

- quickly became fraught, and the

Still, Mr Erdogan has chalked up

some successes. Turkish support turned

the tide of the civil war in Libya. In

Nagorno-Karabakh, Ankara's backing

of Azerbaijan has exposed the limits of

Critics say that, for all the bombastic

rhetoric, Turkey's antagonistic foreign

relations harm its interests. Sinan

Ulgen, a former Turkish diplomat and

chairman of Istanbul think-tank Edam,

said: "The way I would judge the success

of foreign policy is whether it helps Tur-

key to better protect its national interest

and whether it helps Turkey to ensure

more sustainable economic growth. On

Since November, and with the elec-

tion of Joe Biden as US president, Mr

Erdogan has made overtures to the

west. In a video call on Saturday with

Ursula von der Leyen, president of the

European Commission, he said: "Tur-

He has long been a pragmatist willing

to make tough choices to hold on to

power. But some analysts suspect he will

be unwilling to make the compromises

required to improve relations with Nato

"I think the goal of having an inde-

pendent, strong foreign policy - whilst

staying within Nato — will remain," said

Alan Makovsky at the Center for Ameri-

can Progress, a think-tank. "Maybe he'll

temper the rhetoric but I don't think

Additional reporting by Michael Peel,

key's future is in Europe.'

allies, in particular the US.

those criteria, it's not a big success."

Russian influence in the Caucasus.

country's hopes of joining the EU faded.

The set of principles put forward by the OECD in October, and strongly backed by Germany, would revolutionise the taxation of multinational corporations and raise an estimated \$100bn in extra tax revenues around the world.

**OECD blueprint** 

Germany

sets sights

on corporate tax deal

Germany says it will seek a deal with

the incoming US administration on glo-

bal rules for corporate taxation, as

hopes rise in Berlin that the end of the

Donald Trump presidency will usher in

a new era of multilateral co-operation.

Olaf Scholz, finance minister, said the plan was to reach agreement by the

summer on a tax blueprint unveiled last

year by the OECD, the club of rich

with Biden

GUY CHAZAN — BERLIN

The OECD has sought consensus between more than 135 nations on the reforms, which it says would allow tax authorities to collect up to 4 per cent more corporate tax.

The goal of the project is to ensure that multinationals, including highly profitable US technology groups and European luxury goods companies, pay corporate taxes on profits where they do business, rather than where they register subsidiaries, while also introducing a global minimum rate of corporate tax to

avoid a race to the bottom. The plan has received strong support in Paris, Madrid, London and Rome, which argue that companies such as Apple, Facebook and Google profit enormously from the European market while making minimal contributions to national treasuries.

The question of whether to endorse the OECD blueprint will be one of the first tests of Joe Biden's incoming administration. US opposition had been one of the main reasons that progress on a political agreement had stalled.

The US backed the process but in June it suspended talks with European countries. It threatened to impose tariffs on countries that levied their own digital

The OECD approach has two pillars. It would allow countries to have some rights to tax profits made on the basis of sales in their jurisdiction. This would not just apply to US tech groups' overseas operations, but would also give the US, for example, the right to tax European luxury goods companies.

The second pillar is a global minimum corporate tax rate. This would aim to prevent countries from lowering corporate tax rates in an attempt to lure company headquarters.

France refused to wait for other states to endorse the OECD approach and last year pushed ahead with its own digital services tax. In November, the French tax authorities began to demand millions of euros from US companies in payment of the new tax for 2020.

Mr Scholz has opposed the go-it-alone approach and backed the OECD plans. He said last year a deal would not only strengthen national budgets and limit tax evasion, but also help businesses by reducing legal uncertainty. Additional reporting by Chris Giles

Inoculation

## EU Covid-19 vaccine chief defends procurement scheme

MICHAEL PEEL AND MEHREEN KHAN

The head of the EU's multibillion-euro coronavirus vaccine procurement scheme has denied the wrong products have been bought and that the programme risks falling apart as member states seek to secure their own

Sandra Gallina, who is leading the European Commission's programme to order more than 2bn doses of seven inoculations, said Brussels had built a portfolio that would yield sufficient quantities and timely delivery.

Her defence, in an appearance before MEPs on the European Parliament's environment and public health committee yesterday, is a riposte to critics, notably in Germany, who say the bloc has not purchased sufficient quantities of the leading vaccines approved by the European medical regulator, made by BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna.

"We bought as much as was offered," said Ms Gallina. "If I buy billions of doses [on paper] but they are not delivered, what's the use?"

Ms Gallina, who was brought in from the commission's trade division to head vaccine procurement when the scheme was set up over the summer, said deliv-

eries would grow steadily, and faster still in the second quarter. She said she hoped the Oxford/AstraZeneca jab would later this month become the third Covid-19 vaccine to be approved by the European medical regulator.

The commission last week announced a provisional deal to double its order of the BioNTech/Pfizer drug to 600m doses. "The numbers are there," Ms Gallina said of overall vaccine supplies. "The production is ramping up."

The slow rollout of immunisation in many EU countries, compared with countries such as the US and UK, has triggered a debate over who is to blame. The commission has pointed out that member states are responsible for their own vaccine distribution.

Ms Gallina told MEPs that, despite media reports, principally from Germany, Brussels was not aware of any EU countries signing "parallel contracts" for vaccines beyond the commission's own orders.

"These parallel contracts have been much rumoured. I haven't . . . seen one. And I don't think I will ever see one. It's something that in my view does not exist," Ms Gallina said. She added that the commission had "good intelligence" on what was going on in EU member states on vaccine procurement.

**Inquiry** 

SOMALIA

### Ireland to apologise over high levels of baby deaths in homes

ARTHUR BEESLEY — DUBLIN

Ireland's government will issue a state apology to tens of thousands of women and children who suffered harsh treatment in church and local authority homes for unmarried mothers after an inquiry found "appalling" levels of infant mortality in the institutions.

A report published yesterday cast light on some of the darkest aspects of the recent history of the Catholic Church in Ireland. The judge-led panel that examined the operation of the homes last century said 9,000 children died, a mortality rate of about 15 per cent.

Women were admitted to the homes because they failed to secure the support of their family and the father of their child after becoming pregnant, the inquiry found. The harsh treatment they received was "supported by, contributed to, and condoned by" institutions of the state and churches.

Micheál Martin, prime minister, will make an apology in parliament today. He said the inquiry exposed a "deeply children faced "shame and stigma"

misogynistic culture" over several decades in which unwed mothers and their through no fault of their own. There were about 56,000 unmarried

mothers and about 57,000 children in

the Church-run mother and baby homes and local authority county homes under investigation, with the greatest number of admissions in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Another 25,000 unmarried mothers and a larger number of children were in separate county homes that were not investigated. The homes run by mainly Catholic religious orders reflected the former dominance in Irish society of the once-powerful Church, whose influence has waned considerably after decades of scandal over clerical child abuse.

"The death rate among 'illegitimate' children was always considerably higher than that among 'legitimate' children, but it was higher still in mother and baby homes: in the years 1945-46, the death rate among infants in mother and baby homes was almost twice that of the national average for 'illegitimate' children," the report said.

"In the years before 1960 mother and baby homes did not save the lives of 'illegitimate' children; in fact, they appear to have significantly reduced their prospects of survival. There is no evidence of public concern being expressed about conditions . . . or about the appalling mortality among the children born in these homes even though many of the facts were in the public domain.'

**Pandemic impact** 

he'll temper the vision."

Simeon Kerr and Max Seddon

## US enjoys biggest emissions drop since second world war

MYLES MCCORMICK — NEW YORK

US greenhouse gas emissions fell in 2020 by the most in any year since the second world war as the coronavirus pandemic caused much of the economy to grind to a halt.

But they are expected to come roaring back when the economy recovers, providing a challenge to the incoming Biden administration.

Emissions were 10.3 per cent lower than the previous year across all sectors, far outstripping the fall in the wake of the global financial crisis, according to an analysis by researcher Rhodium Group.

It was the first year since the 1980s that the country pumped less than 5.5bn tonnes CO2 equivalent into the atmos-

The decline from the previous high levels was driven mainly by lower transport emissions - the single biggest source of greenhouse gases in the US which slumped 15 per cent as restrictions imposed to stop the spread of coronavirus kept aircraft grounded and cars off the roads.

Analysts warned, however, that the trend would not last.

"We wouldn't celebrate these results necessarily," said Kate Larsen, a director at Rhodium and one of the report's authors.

"Typically, a major recession like the one we experienced in 2009 - and are experiencing now - provides a real hit to economic activity and emissions. But then they largely get back on track for the type of growth that was anticipated."

Under President Donald Trump, the US rolled back swaths of environmental regulations.

But Joe Biden, who will be inaugurated as US president in a week's time, has vowed to make tackling climate change and reducing emissions a priority for his administration. His creation of the new roles of climate envoy and climate tsar underline that ambition.

Mr Biden campaigned on the most ambitious climate platform of any president in US history. He plans to rejoin the Paris climate accord, which Mr Trump left, on his first day in office and pledged a \$2tn green stimulus package aimed at cutting emissions.

As a result of last year's shock, the US is likely to exceed its 2020 targets under the Copenhagen accord to cut emissions by 17 per cent from 2005 levels, Rho-

dium found. But reducing them by 26-28 per cent by 2025, the target set by the Paris

agreement, remains a challenge.

#### INTERNATIONAL

Xinjiang camps

# UK to fine businesses over Uighur links

Threat of penalties for using supply chains tied to alleged forced labour

JASMINE CAMERON-CHILESHE — LONDON

British businesses that fail to ensure their supply chains are free of slave labour could face fines, Dominic Raab announced yesterday, as the foreign secretary criticised China over evidence of human rights abuses.

Addressing MPs in the House of Commons, Mr Raab said the UK had a "moral duty" to respond to "far-reaching" evidence of human rights abuses being perpetrated in Xinjiang, where the Chinese government has detained as many as 2m Uighur Muslims, according to the US state department, and sent many to factories as forced labour.

"Barbarism we had hoped lost to another era is being practised today, as we speak, in one of the leading members of the international community," Mr Raab said, in reference to China.

The foreign secretary said the measures would send a "clear message" that human rights violations were "unacceptable".

Beijing describes the facilities as

training centres to curb extremism and promote the acquisition of new skills.

Mr Raab added: "Our aim, put simply, is that no company that profits from forced labour in Xinjiang can do business in the UK and no UK business is involved in their supply chains."

Under the new rules, UK companies that do not meet their statutory obligations to publish annual modern slavery statements under the 2015 Modern Slavery Act could face financial penalties. Companies with an annual turnover of more than £36m are required by law to show their supply chains are free of slave labour.

The government will also produce "robust" guidance for UK businesses highlighting the risks of sourcing from Xinjiang and the difficulties of conducting effective due diligence within the

The government will also ensure public procurement rules exclude any suppliers found to have links to human rights violations, Mr Raab added, including a specific review of export controls relating to Xinjiang.

Some Tory backbenchers criticised the measures as not going far enough. Iain Duncan Smith, chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, asked why the government had decided not to use sanctions and target individual perpetrators of abuse. Mr Raab said he did not rule out targeting individuals and said the UK was working with its allies on gathering evidence.

Nus Ghani, a Tory MP pushing for legislation that would allow English courts to make a judgment on whether countries are conducting human rights abuses before future trade deals are signed, said the government should have gone further in condemning China. "The government's failure to call out these atrocities for what they are - genocide - is chilling."

oblige with the coronavirus rules "no

matter how unfair it is to us".

support in rural areas, has presided over

rapid economic growth, which slashed

poverty. His campaign has underlined

infrastructure works and a pledge to

turn Uganda - whose economy has

expanded tenfold since he took power, propped up by foreign donors and lend-

Critics say he has taken advantage of incumbency and a strong party

machinery to win successive elections,

securing 60.8 per cent of the vote in

'For the last 69 days I've

been arrested almost

shot at four times'

every day . . . I've been

2016. In 2017, Uganda's parliament

lifted the 75-year age limit for the presi-

dency, allowing him to stand again.

ture, Mr Wine, who was elected to par-

liament by a landslide in 2017, has inspired young people, particularly in

urban centres, with a message of stand-

ing against a gerontocratic ruling elite.

"Uganda is a young country, so it

might seem right now that the demo-

graphics are in his favour, that may also be another reason why he represents a

real threat," said Jackie Asiimwe, a

More than 75 per cent of Uganda's population is below the age of 30, with

the country having one of the highest

youth unemployment rates in sub-Sa-

haran Africa, at 13.3 per cent, according

With Mr Wine promising more jobs

and a return to the rule of law, Mr

Museveni's team has acknowledged his

sway with younger voters. "The only

people candidate Kyagulanyi was hav-

ing are the young people who he was

promising heaven even when he may be

delivering hell," Emmanuel Dombo,

spokesman for Mr Museveni's party,

In the run-up to the poll, Mr Wine has

Mr Wine's ragga music — a mix of rap

and reggae – often focused on politics.

Now he is calling on Uganda's almost

18m voters "to come out massively to

vote. We're going to vote against the

regime. It is going to be a protest vote."

been campaigning in a bulletproof vest.

told Uganda's NBS Television.

human rights lawyer.

to the World Bank.

Despite having a weaker party struc-

ers - into a middle-income country.

Mr Museveni, who still retains strong

BENJAMIN PARKIN — NEW DELHI

pressure on

central bank

**Consumer price index** 

data ease

**India inflation** 

India's pace of inflation slowed markedly in December, falling within the central bank's target for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic began last year.

The consumer price index recorded an annual growth rate of 4.6 per cent in the final month of 2020, down from 6.9 per cent in November, largely due to a slowdown in the increasing cost of everyday food staples such as onions and potatoes. The drop was larger than analysts surveyed by Reuters had expected.

The data came as a relief to the Reserve Bank of India, which is mandated to keep inflation below 6 per cent and had not cut its repo rate since May due to concerns about the sustained rise in prices.

This, combined with India's severe economic contraction, prompted concerns the country was becoming stuck in a cycle of stagflation. Retail inflation peaked in October at a multiyear high of 7.6 per cent.

"High inflation has been an inconvenient thorn in the side of the RBI," said Aurodeep Nandi, an economist at Nomura based in Mumbai. "To that extent, the correction in the inflation trajectory bodes well and offers it some breathing space. But inflationary pressures haven't evaporated."

India's gross domestic product is expected to shrink 7.7 per cent in the year to the end of March, according to government statisticians.

The combination of a contracting economy and rising inflation has piled pressure on low-income Indians, millions of whom lost work or wages during the pandemic and the resulting lockdown and struggled to afford basic foodstuffs such as vegetables and pulses.

The easing in the pace of vegetable price increases is partly due to the resolution of supply chain disruptions following the lockdown. India's food price index fell from 166 in November to 160.6 in December, according to the statistics

Prices for onions and potatoes arriving at the large Azadpur market in the Indian capital New Delhi fell sharply in December, according to an analysis by the Hindustan Times newspaper.

India was one of the countries hardest hit by coronavirus, recording the world's second-highest Covid-19 caseload at more than 10m. But new daily cases dropped sharply in the latter months of 2020, while the economy has

Consumer demand and business activity indicators have picked up, though the recovery remains in its early stages and tentative.

shown signs of improvement.

At its monetary policy meeting in December, the RBI cited the "adverse" outlook for inflation as an obstacle to further cuts, but said it would maintain an accommodative stance in the months to come. The RBI committee is due to meet again in early February.

"We think that the latest fall in inflation could be enough for the RBI to resume its rate-cutting cycle," said research firm Capital Economics in a

"The economy remains weak, even allowing for the recent rebound."

Africa. Poll campaign

# Uganda election leaves bitter taste for Wine

Music star takes on country's longstanding leader Museveni amid spiralling violence

ANDRES SCHIPANI — NAIROBI

Bobi Wine, the pop singer campaigning to be Uganda's president in tomorrow's election, has complained of constant harassment since he threw his hat in the electoral ring.

"For the last 69 days I've been arrested almost every day but detained only about 11 times. I've been shot at four times," he told the Financial Times as he campaigned in eastern Uganda.

"All this time it is my car that has been shot by live bullets deflating all the tyres. And one of the times the bullets shattered through my windscreen, I am only glad that I'm still alive."

At 38, Mr Wine, real name Robert Kyagulanyi, is the main challenger to President Yoweri Museveni. The 76 year-old former rebel fighter has been in power since 1986 when he overthrew Milton Obote, whose rule followed the brutal dictatorship of Idi Amin. Mr Wine styles himself the "ghetto president" after his tough upbringing in a Kampala slum.

Mr Museveni, initially hailed as part of a new generation of leaders on the African continent, is reluctant to give up power, said critics. Already, scores of people have been killed in violence ahead of the latest poll — and there are fears this vote could go down as the most violent in Uganda's history. Mr Wine said more than 100 people were gunned down by security forces in November. Mr Museveni said 54 died in "senseless riots".

"Democracy is on trial across east Africa," said Sarah Bireete, director of the Center for Constitutional Governance in Kampala. She cited John Magufuli's victory in Tanzania last year, which was disputed by the opposition, adding that Ugandan democracy could "completely take the back seat" when the results are announced this week. "This has been the most violent election in Uganda's history because Museveni's grip on power has been greatly challenged - especially by the young voters," she said.

EU electoral observers will not attend the vote after complaints their advice has been ignored. Ravina Shamdasani,



spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, has said her office was "deeply concerned by the deteriorating human rights situation".

On Monday, Facebook shut some Ugandan government accounts for



seeking to manipulate public debate ahead of the elections, drawing anger from Mr Museveni's retinue. "Shame on foreign forces that think they can aid and plant a puppet leadership on Uganda," his spokesman Don Wanyama wrote on Twitter. "You can take away our platforms, you won't take away Museveni votes.'

Late last month, electoral authorities suspended campaigning in several parts of the country citing coronavirus risks. Mr Wine, who last week urged the International Criminal Court to investigate human rights abuses in the run-up to the vote, was accused of breaking Covid restrictions, and slammed a Ugandan electoral commission for taking Mr Museveni's "orders".

Mr Museveni tweeted that electoral authorities "bundled us with those violating rules", stressing his willingness to Rap sheet: presidential candidate Bobi Wine, centre, is escorted by policemen during his arrest in Kalangala, central Uganda, in December. Left, one of the music star's supporters is detained in

Luuka district

**Latin America** 

# Penny-pinching president holds back Mexico's Covid stimulus

JUDE WEBBER — MEXICO CITY

Mexico's refusal to mitigate the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic by boosting public spending is set to leave it with the lowest budget deficit among Latin America's major economies this year - but that also means its recovery is lagging behind.

Mexico's populist president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, an unlikely fiscal conservative, is opposed to taking on additional debt. His stimulus plan is equivalent to just 1.1 per cent of gross domestic product, less than a quarter of the average in Latin America, according to the UN's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Mexico has spent an eighth of what the region's biggest economy, Brazil, has spent on pandemic help as a proportion of GDP, according to the commission's data. And most was in the form of loans to small businesses, not grants.

Mr López Obrador has continued to pay the social benefits that are a hallmark of his government, boosting his popularity even though Mexico has notched up the world's fourth-highest Covid-19 death toll.

He has also ploughed ahead with a handful of pet infrastructure projects and with aid for struggling state oil company Pemex. But he has resisted spending more in other areas.

The president justifies his pennypinching stance as a mixture of principle and necessity. He believes his government should avoid increasing public debt which, he fears, future generations would have to finance. He abhors state-

sued austerity policies in a bid to free up cash for his priority social and infrastructure projects. He says his crusade against profligacy and corruption has so far saved 1.5tn pesos (\$75bn).

healthier budget balance than other economies in the region, Joan Domene spending much on pandemic relief measures, Mexico will be very close to 2021."

That will hold down its debt levels. Mexico's general government gross debt-to-GDP ratio is forecast to remain steady year on year at 65.5 per cent in 2021, according to the IMF. In Brazil, the ratio is forecast to rise more than 1 percentage point, to 102.8 per cent.

But Mr López Obrador's fiscal

restraint is ill-timed, economists argue. The IMF and World Bank have for months been urging nations to borrow to tackle the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, despite the long-term problem of having to deal with higher public debt.

Mexico's economy was contracting even before Covid-19 struck and IMF estimates suggest it suffered the thirdbiggest contraction among Latin America's major economies in 2020.

new poll, 59 per cent felt the economy

Mexico lags behind on pandemic stimulus spending Fiscal stimulus as % of GDP Brazil Peru Chile Argentina Colombia Mexico Source: UN Economic Commission for Latin

was faring badly or very badly. Just 14 per cent said it was doing well.

Christopher Garman, at consultancy Eurasia Group, said policies hostile to private investors - Mexico has cancelled a partially-built airport and brewery and abruptly changed energy sector rules, for example – are also likely to hold back growth.

Even if Mexico hits its target of 4.6 per cent GDP growth in 2021 - well above the IMF's expectation of 3.5 per cent state revenues are under increasing strain and, with midterm elections due in June, Mr López Obrador will be unwilling to increase taxes.

Pemex remains a drain on state finances and Mexico has burnt through most of its budget stabilisation fund known as FEIP, a rainy-day savings pot.

Meanwhile, a bonanza the government had a few months ago been set to enjoy from the Bank of Mexico's surplus on its dollar reserves has not materialised. Analysts had believed it could total as much as \$25bn, but the recent recovery in the peso may erode it.

That leaves Mr López Obrador facing dwindling revenues, so he is unlikely to change his stance on Mexico's fiscal

As Mr Domene put it: "You only need money if you plan to spend."

**Diplomatic tensions** 

## Australia prevents China from buying local builder

JAMIE SMYTH — SYDNEY

Australia has blocked a A\$300m takeover offer by a Chinese state-owned company for a local building contractor in a move that reflects the intense diplomatic and trade tensions between Beijing and Canberra.

The decision to block China State Construction Engineering Company from acquiring Probuild on "national security" grounds is the first negative assessment made by Canberra since tough new foreign investment (Firb) rules came into force on January 1.

The regulations hand Canberra greater powers to review proposed investments in sensitive sectors by foreign bidders, scrutinise compliance with approval conditions set by government and order divestments.

Experts said the decision to block such a relatively small acquisition sent a clear signal to Chinese investors that approvals for mergers and acquisitions in Australia now faced significant hur-

"The Treasurer's rejection of the takeover bid for the South African-owned Probuild by China State Construction Engineering Corporation is a sign of tougher scrutiny of Chinese investment under the new Firb regulations, which now incorporate national security as a specific element in the screening process," said Hans Hendrischke, a professor of Chinese business and management at University of Sydney Business School.

Prof Hendrischke said CSCEC may have been blocked by Canberra owing to Washington's decision in August to put it on the list of "Communist Chinese military companies" and bar US investors from owning its shares. CSCEC is the world's largest construction company by revenue.

CSCEC did not respond to requests for comment.

Chinese investment into Australia has fallen dramatically since bilateral relations soured over Canberra's decision to bar Huawei from providing 5G equipment, its introduction of foreign interference laws and calls for an inquiry into the Covid-19 outbreak in Wuhan.

A joint report by University of Sydney Business school and KPMG found Chinese companies invested A\$3.4bn (\$2.6bn) in 2019, down 58 per cent from A\$8.2bn a year earlier.

funded bailouts which, he argues, have in the past turned private debts into a public responsibility. Since taking office in 2018, he has pur-

His stance leaves Mexico with a at Oxford Economics noted: "By not running primary surpluses in 2020 and

Mexicans themselves are gloomy. In a

# Companies & Markets

# BA braced for **UK's largest** data hack group claim

- 16,000 join security breach case
- ◆ Airline risks total bill of £800m

PHILIP GEORGIADIS AND KATE BEIOLEY

British Airways is facing the largest group claim over a data breach in UK legal history following a 2018 incident that exposed details of more than 400,000 of its customers.

More than 16,000 customers had joined the case ahead of a March deadline to sign up to the action, according to PGMBM, the lead solicitors in the group litigation case.

The update comes after BA indicated it was prepared to settle claims in a letter filed with the court last week and seen by the Financial Times.

The breach exposed the personal and financial data of more than 400,000 customers and led to a £20m fine from

#### The cyber attack in 2018 exposed the details of 400,000 customers and led to a £20m penalty

the UK's data protection regulator in October, down from an initial fine of

The lawyers said victims could each be compensated up to £2,000, based on previous court rulings, leaving BA facing a total bill of more than £800m if every victim came forward.

"We continue to vigorously defend the litigation in respect of the claims brought arising out of the 2018 cyber attack," BA said. "We do not recognise the damages figures put forward, and they have not appeared in the claims."

The Information Commissioner's Office said the attacker potentially accessed sensitive information of BA customers, including names, addresses, payment card numbers and CVV codes.

It pointed to measures the airline could have taken to reduce the risk,

such as the testing of its cyber-defences. It noted that BA had "considerably" improved its cyber security since.

Tom Goodhead, a partner at PGMBM, said BA had presided over a "monumental failure. We trust companies like British Airways with our personal information and they have a duty to all of their customers and the public at large to take every possible step to keep it safe".

The BA case is the first group lawsuit of its kind to be brought under data protection rules known as GDPR, introduced in 2018. It is the largest "opt-in" claim in relation to a UK data breach.

It comes after 9,000 Wm Morrison staff unsuccessfully sued the supermarket after payroll data was leaked in 2014 by a disgruntled staff member. Morrisons was found responsible by the Court of Appeal but overturned the decision at the UK's highest court in April last year.

Ian De Freitas, a partner at Farrer & Co, said the BA case was "the one everybody is watching . . . This is going to be a seminal case". It is likely to determine the future of similar claims, including an action against easyJet brought by customers after a cyber attack last year.

Group litigation orders are the most common vehicle for group claims in the UK and individuals must volunteer to join in order to be eligible for compensation, unlike US class-action lawsuits in which affected customers are automatically added. Such "opt-out" claims could become more common in the UK after a Court of Appeal ruling in 2019 that allowed consumer champion Richard Lloyd to bring a claim against Google on behalf of 4m Apple iPhone users. Google has since won permission to appeal against the ruling in the UK Supreme Court.

BA last month secured a government guarantee for a £2bn loan to help it prepare for a recovery in air travel as Covid-19 vaccines are rolled out.

## Game on Silver Lake and New Zealand Rugby hold talks over \$2bn deal with All Blacks



Runaway success: many rivals consider playing the All Blacks the ultimate rugby challenge - Darrien Pateman/AAP

SAMUEL AGINI, KAYE WIGGINS AND MURAD AHMED

US private equity firm Silver Lake is in talks over a \$2bn deal with New Zealand Rugby, the body that runs the All Blacks, setting up a battle for influence in one of the world's most popular sports.

Silver Lake is negotiating to take a 15 per cent stake in the commercial operations of the organisation that runs the New Zealand men's powerful rugby union team, according to peo-

ple briefed on the talks. The structure of the deal is not clear, but other recent arrangements have involved sports governing bodies setting up their broadcasting and sponsorship businesses as new entities for private equity firms to invest in. New Zealand Rugby's commercial rights could be valued at \$2bn, according to those with knowledge of

If the deal is completed, it will make Silver Lake a powerful rival investor in rugby union to CVC Capital Partners. Many national teams consider playing the All Blacks as rugby's greatest challenge, giving New Zealand Rugby considerable influence over the running of the sport worldwide.

Luxembourg-based CVC, which owns minority stakes in the English Premiership and Pro14 club competitions, has previously held talks with New Zealand Rugby over an investment, according to people familiar with those talks.

It is also in talks with the Six Nations over a €300m deal for Europe's top tournament.

The company hopes to use the influence that comes with its series of investments to put together media rights deals to offer broadcasters and to unify the commercial strategies of the groups that run the sport globally. One person close to CVC said the involvement of another big investor might help its goal of expanding the global market for the game.

Sky News first reported the talks between Silver Lake and New Zealand Rugby on Monday.

New Zealand Rugby, which made a net loss of NZ\$7.4m on revenues of NZ\$187.1m in 2019, said in its latest annual report that it was "working with existing and potential partners to ensure we have the funding and reach we need".

Jefferies, the investment bank, is advising New Zealand Rugby.

Silver Lake already owns stakes in some big sporting brands. In 2019, the owner of Manchester City in England's Premier League sold a \$500m stake to the firm, which had approached other top football clubs including Chelsea. Its other interests include Ultimate Fighting Championship, the mixed martial arts competition.

## Delivery rider sets himself on fire in Alibaba wages protest

YUAN YANG AND RYAN MCMORROW

A delivery rider who had worked for Alibaba set himself on fire in protest over unpaid wages, in the latest incident to highlight allegations of mistreatment of workers in China's booming takeaway sector.

Drivers were hailed as heroes for continuing to deliver food when much of the country was under lockdown at the height of the coronavirus crisis last year. The takeaway sector grew rapidly in 2020, with food delivery revenues at Meituan, the technology group, up 33 per cent year on year to Rmb20.7bn (\$3.2bn) in the third quarter.

But pay per order for the couriers has fallen in recent years, according to China Labour Bulletin, a Hong Kongbased workers' rights group.

Social media posts showed Liu Jin, a 45-year-old driver, setting himself on fire next to a Meituan delivery scooter in the eastern city of Taizhou. Videos shared showed people rushing towards the man to put out the fire with extinguishers. "I want my blood and sweat money back," Mr Liu said.

Mr Liu had been working for Ele.me, Alibaba's food delivery platform, but recently signed up to Meituan, according to two people with direct knowledge of the situation. Mr Liu entered a pay dispute with Ele.me's local partner in charge of drivers when he tried to resign, said one of the people. He then decided to set himself alight in protest.

Mr Liu faces more than Rmb1m of medical bills to treat extensive thirddegree burns, according to a crowdfunding page set up by his daughter.

"Sometimes, food delivery couriers are compelled to do 'multi-apping' to deliver for both Ele.me and Meituan to see if they would get more than sticking with one platform," said Jenny Chan, an assistant professor of sociology at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, who studies labour and automation.

Aidan Chau at China Labour Bulletin said a constant supply of drivers had strengthened tech groups. "That's why platforms can push up workers' labour intensity while reducing their pay."

The Taizhou local government did not respond to a request for comment. Meituan declined to comment.

Ele.me said: "We are saddened by the tragic event. The situation is currently under investigation."

Additional reporting by Nian Liu in Beijing

# Toyota's warning over green plans points to tensions in Japan Inc

# **INSIDE BUSINESS** Kana Inagaki

t is rare for a chief executive of Toyota or any big Japanese company to criticise the plans of government directly in public. So it was striking when Toyota boss Akio Toyoda issued a warning over Japan's green energy plan even before it was unveiled late last month.

"There is a risk that the automotive industry's business model could collapse," Mr Toyoda said as he warned against the government's plan for a rapid transition to electric vehicles without a drastic change in its energy

Speaking as head of the powerful Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association, Mr Toyoda laid out a thoroughly prepared set of estimates to back his criticism of a pillar policy of prime minister Yoshihide Suga's 2050 carbon-neutral goals.

Of the number crunching detailed by Mr Toyoda, one forecast stood out: if all the cars in Japan today were EVs, 10 additional nuclear plants or 20 coalpowered stations would be needed to avoid an electricity shortage during the peak summer period.

Mr Toyoda is certainly not the first to question the green credentials of EVs, especially in a country such as Japan where the heavy reliance on fossil fuels means electricity is partly generated by burning coal.

Toyota has also consistently argued that a longer-term fix for global warming should be a mix of hybrids, EVs and hydrogen-powered vehicles.

But the fact that a company as influential as Toyota and an early advocate of green technology felt the need to speak out, underlines a deeper tension within Japan Inc about the country's energy challenges.

With its decision to end the sale of new petrol-only vehicles by the mid-2030s, Japan is on the cusp of a green energy transition that holds the key to whether companies from Toyota to robot-maker Fanuc remain big global players. If the shift to renewable energy is successful, it could also herald a new wave of technological innovation that could lead to the reinvention of struggling conglomerates such as Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Toshiba. Businesses believe prime

But the consequences of failure minister Suga needs a would be bigger than when the country's consumer electronics giants lost their

crown to Apple and Samsung Electronics in the era of smartphones. With almost every leading economy from the EU, the UK and China committing to similar targets for zero emissions, the competition for green technology and investments is already intense.

more specific road map for

his goals while ensuring a

stable supply of electricity

As carbon footprint becomes a yardstick for quality, made-in-Japan products may be less acceptable for environment-conscious consumers unless the world's fifth-largest emitter of greenhouse gases moves fast to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels.

What motivated Mr Toyoda to speak out - and the foremost concern shared by the bosses of Sony, Ricoh and many

other Japanese companies – was the lack of clarity on the concrete steps Mr Suga will take to alter the country's energy mix.

The latest energy plan announced on Christmas Day calls for the use of renewables to increase from 18 per cent of electricity in 2019 to as much as 60 per cent by 2050, and up to 40 per cent generated from nuclear power and thermal power plants with carbon capture technology. The goals are ambitious and mark an important step for Japan that could potentially become a defining feature of the Suga administration, which has so far struggled to differentiate itself from that of former prime minister Shinzo Abe.

However, business has called for greater detail on the plans. And the country's record is not encouraging. After the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011, the government increased its reliance on coal instead of easing regulations hampering the use of renewable energy. A decade on, talk of resuming nuclear energy remains largely taboo, while discussion of a future without nuclear energy remains non-existent.

Some in business believe Mr Suga will need to present a more specific road map for his green energy goals while ensuring the stability of electricity sup-

For Toyota's part, the world's secondlargest carmaker still needs to prove how it will remain relevant in the electric car revolution. There is no question Japan is behind the transition with EVs and plug-in hybrids. But for companies such as Toyota and

Sony to have any chance of success in the green era, the government needs to provide more clarity, fast.

kana.inagaki@ft.com

See Editorial Comment

Legal Notices

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE CR-2020-00
BUSINESS AND PROPERTY COURTS OF ENGLAND AND WALES
INSOLVENCY AND COMPANIES LIST (ChD) CR-2020-004271 STRONGHOLD INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED (IN ADMINISTRATION)

(IN ADMINISTRATION)
AND
IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2006
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, by an order dated 16 December 2020 made in the High Court of Justice, Business and Property Courts of England and Wales in the matter of Stronghold Insurance Company Limited (In Administration) (the "Company") and the Companies Act 2006, a meeting of the General Scheme Creditors (as defined in the General Scheme inserinaliter mentioned) was ordered to be summoned for the purpose of considering and, if thought fit, approving a scheme of arrangement proposed to be made between the Company and its General Scheme Creditors pursuant to Part 26 of the Companies Act 2006 (the "General Scheme").
The General Scheme is proposed between the Companies Act 2006 (the "General Scheme").

Scheme Creditors pursuant to Part 26 of the Companies Act 2006 (the "General Scheme").

The General Scheme is proposed between the Company and its General Scheme Creditors. Ceneral Scheme Creditors comprise all creditors of the Company other than a creditor in respect of a Direct Scheme Claim or an Excluded Liability. For these purposes, a Direct Scheme Claim is a claim in respect of a contract or a policy of direct insurance, entered into by or on behalf of the Company or in relation to which the Company has assumed liability. Excluded Liabilities are, in summary, Administration Costs, Preferential Claims, Pre-Scheme Costs and Scheme Costs, as each such term is defined in the General Scheme. A copy of the General Scheme and a copy of the statement required to be furnished pursuant to section 897 of the Companies Act 2006 (the "General Explanatory Statement") are incorporated in the General Scheme Document (of which this notice forms a part). Voting and Proxy Forms for use at the General Scheme Document, including the General Scheme, General Explanatory Statement and Voting and Proxy Form are available at: <a href="https://www.strongholdinsco.co.uk">www.strongholdinsco.co.uk</a> and <a href="https://www.strongholdinsco.co.uk</a> and <a href="https://www.strongholdinsco.co.uk">www.strongholdinsco.co.uk</a> and <a href="https://www.strongholdinsco.co.uk</a> and <a href="https://www.stronghold.thml">www.stronghold.thml</a> The Court has ordered that the Company should convene one meeting of all General Scheme Meeting".

The General Scheme Meeting will be held virtually by video conference and telephone at 11.00 a.m. on 2 February 2021 or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter.

All General Scheme Creditors may attend the virtual General Scheme Meeting and may to ine either in nesson (by a duly attencied scheme meeting and may to ine either in nesson (by a duly attencied scheme.)

and telephone at 11.00 a.m. on 2 February 2021 of as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter.

All General Scheme Creditors may attend the virtual General Scheme Meeting and may join either in person (by a duly authorised representative) or by a proxy appointed by them. Each General Scheme Creditor wishing to attend and/or vote at the virtual General Scheme Meeting is requested to complete and submit a Voting and Proxy Form at Section IV of the General Scheme Document (the "Voting and Proxy Form"), so as to be received by the Company by no later than 5.00 p.m. (London time) on 1 February 2021 ("Voting Form Submission Deadline"). If a General Scheme Creditor intends to attend the virtual General Scheme Meeting, it should confirm the names and contact details of the attendees in the Voting and Proxy Form and those persons will be provided with the access details for the virtual General Scheme Meeting, and tendee who is not notified to the Company in advance of the virtual General Scheme Meeting may not be permitted entry to such meeting. The video conference and telephone line will be open from 10.45 am (London time). By the order, the High Court of Justice has appointed Dan Schwarzmann or failing him, Nigel Rackham, to act as chairman of the General Scheme Meeting and has directed the chairman to report the result of the General Scheme Meeting to the Court. The chairman of the General Scheme Meeting will address General Scheme Meeting will address General Scheme Meeting will address General Scheme Meeting to the General Scheme Meeting of the Court of the Scheme Meeting of the General Scheme Meeting

The General Scheme will then be subject to the subsequent sanction of the Court. If you have any questions regarding the General Scheme, please contact: Contact: John Baker Mobile: +447483326661 Email: uk\_stronghold@pwc.con

Clifford Chance LLP 10 Upper Bank Street, London E14 5JJ Solicitors to the Company

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#### Legal Notices

NOTICE OF THE DIRECT SCHEME MEETING
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE CR-2020-004278
BUSINESS AND PROPERTY COURTS OF ENGLAND AND WALES
INSOLVENCY AND COMPANIES LIST (CID)
STRONGHOLD INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED
(IN ADMINISTRATION)

AND
IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2006

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2006

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, by an order dated 16 December 2020 made in the High Court of Justice, Business and Property Courts of England and Wales in the matter of Stronghold Insurance Company Limited (In Administration) (the "Company") and the Companies Act 2006, a meeting of the Direct Scheme Creditors (as defined in the Direct Scheme hereinafter mentioned) was ordered to be summoned for the purpose of considering and, if thought fit, approving a scheme of arrangement proposed to be made between the Company and its Direct Scheme Creditors pursuant to Part 26 of the Companies Act 2006 (the "Direct Scheme").

The Direct Scheme is proposed between the Company and its Direct Scheme Creditors. Direct Scheme Creditors comprise creditors of the Company in respect of a Direct Scheme Claim; excluding an Excluded Liability, For these purposes, a Direct Scheme Claim is a claim in respect of a contract or a policy of direct insurance, entered into by or on behalf of the Company or in relation to which the Company has assumed liability. Excluded Liabilities are, in summary, Administration Costs, Preferential Claims, Pre-Scheme Costs and Scheme Costs, as each such term is defined in the Direct Schemes. Act 2006 (the "Direct Scheme and a copy of the statement required to be turnished pursuant to section 897 of the Companies Act 2006 (the "Direct Explanatory Statement") are incorporated in the Direct Scheme Document (of which this notice forms a part). Voting and Proxy Forms for use at the Direct Scheme meeting are also enclosed in the Direct Scheme Document. The Direct Scheme Document, including the Direct, Scheme, Direct Explanatory Statement and Voting and Proxy Form are available at: www.strongholdinsco.co.uk and www.pwc.co.uk/services/business-restructuring/administration/chlintli

www.strongholdinsco.co.uk and www.pwc.co.uk/services/business-restructuring/administrations/stronghold.html The Court has ordered that the Company should convene one meeting of all Direct Scheme Creditors to vote on the Direct Scheme

The Direct Scheme Meeting will be held virtually by video conference and telephone at 10.00 a.m. on 2 February 2021 or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter.

and telephone at 10.00 a.m. on 2 February 2021 or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter.

All Direct Scheme Creditors may attend the virtual Direct Scheme Meeting and may join either in person (by a duly authorised representative) or by a proxy appointed by them. Each Direct Scheme Creditor wishing to attend and/or vote at the virtual Direct Scheme Meeting must complete and return a Volting and Proxy Form"), so as to be received by the Company, by no later than 5.00 p.m. (London time) on 1 February 2021 (the "Volting Form Submission Deadline"). If a Direct Scheme Creditor intends to attend the virtual Direct Scheme Meeting, it should confirm the names and the contact details of the attendees in the Volting and Proxy Form and those persons will be provided with the access details for the virtual Direct Scheme Meeting, an attendee who is not notified to the Company in advance of the virtual Direct Scheme Meeting and the permitted entry to such meeting. The video conference and telephone line will be open from 9.45 am (London time). By the order, the High Court of Justice has appointed Dan Schwarzmann or failing him, Nigel Rackham, to act as chairman of the Direct Scheme Meeting and has directed the chairman to report the result of the Direct Scheme Meeting will address Direct Scheme Creditors generally on the Direct Scheme Meeting will address Direct Scheme Creditors generally on the Direct Scheme Meeting.

The Direct Scheme will then he subject to the subsequent sargetion of

The Direct Scheme will then be subject to the subsequent sanction of the Court.

If you have any questions regarding the Direct Scheme, please contact:

10 Upper Bank Street, London E14 5JJ Solicitors to the Compan

Travel & leisure

# Las Vegas casino tycoon Adelson dies at 87

Wealth of Trump backer and Netanyahu patron put at \$35bn by Forbes

SARA GERMANO AND ANDREW
EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON — NEW YORK
MEHUL SRIVASTAVA — TEL AVIV

Sheldon Adelson, the US casino magnate, Republican donor and philanthropist, has passed away after a long illness, his wife announced yesterday. He was 87.

Adelson was the founder of Las Vegas Sands and is credited with transforming Las Vegas and Macau as gaming and resort destinations. He leveraged his wealth to exert social and political influence on causes from Jewish affairs to fighting opioid addiction, bought regional newspapers in Nevada and Israel, and befriended world leaders.

Adelson was a confidant of Donald Trump and wielded power behind the scenes, including successfully urging the president to push for relocation of the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

Last week Adelson took medical leave from his role as chairman and chief executive of Las Vegas Sands for treatment of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Tributes to Adelson from politicians

and public figures credited him as an "American patriot", including former president George W Bush.

"Sheldon battled his way out of a tough Boston neighbourhood to build a successful enterprise that loyally employed tens of thousands — and entertained millions," Mr Bush said of Adelson, whom he called a friend.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he was heartbroken at the passing of his most generous political patron, whom he affectionately called "the redhead".

He said: "Sheldon was one of the greatest contributors in history to the

Jewish people, Zionism, settlements and the State of Israel."

Mr Trump said: "The world has lost a great man. His ingenuity, genius, and creativity earned him immense wealth, but his character and philanthropic generosity his great name."

Born in Boston to Lithuanian immigrants, Adelson went from selling news-

Sheldon Adelson leveraged his wealth to influence causes from Jewish affairs to fighting opioid addiction



papers to travelling the world in his own fleet of Boeing 747s. He earned his first millions creating the Comdex computer trade show in the 1970s, which led to his acquisition of the Venetian casino in Las Vegas. He expanded his casino and resort empire to Macau and Singapore.

Adelson's wealth, last estimated at \$35bn by Forbes, enabled him to become a political kingmaker and a generous philanthropist. He gave freely to organisations including the Birthright Israel programme and shared the use of his jets with injured US veterans and their families for holidays at his resorts.

Adelson and his wife Miriam were

among the deepest-pocketed and most reliable donors to Republican political candidates.

As the single largest Republican donor in the 2012 election cycle, Adelson's endorsement of Mr Trump for president early in the 2016 campaign helped accelerate the New York businessman's route to the White House.

Mitch McConnell, the Republican US Senate majority leader, credited Adelson for creating "countless" jobs as he "climbed from sleeping on tenement floors during the Great Depression as a young boy to literally towering over Las Vegas and beyond".

#### Political spending. Policy rethink

# US businesses hold back campaign cash

Wall Street and Big Tech among sectors reviewing or suspending donations

LAURA NOONAN AND ANDREW EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON — NEW YORK

Many of the biggest corporate donors on Wall Street and across the US are reviewing their political spending after last week's assault on the Capitol building, threatening to pull millions of dollars from lawmakers whose opposition to the presidential election result contributed to the unrest.

Banks such as JPMorgan Chase and Citigroup and technology groups Facebook and Microsoft were among those suspending all donations from their political action committees.

Others cut off funding only to the Republicans who voted against certifying Joe Biden's election victory, including AT&T, the largest public company donor to those lawmakers, along with Amazon, Dow and American Express.

Dow said it would suspend PAC contributions to politicians who disputed the election results for a full election cycle, affecting members of the House of Representatives for up to two years and senators for up to six years.

Hallmark, the greetings card business, asked two of those senators to return its contributions after giving \$7,000 to Josh Hawley and \$5,000 to Roger Marshall in the past two years. The senators' recent actions "do not reflect our company's values", it said.

In a memo to Amex employees, chief executive Stephen Squeri said attempts by some members of Congress "to subvert the presidential election process" did not align with the group's values.

The Amex PAC had backed the campaigns of 22 House Republicans who opposed the election certification.

Morgan Stanley was indefinitely halting contributions to elected officials who voted against certifying the election results, according to a person familiar with the bank's decision.

Craig Holman, a lobbyist for Public Citizen, a consumer advocacy group, said he had never seen such an array of groups simultaneously questioning political spending. "We're talking about millions of dollars of campaign contributions that are going to dry up."

The message to lawmakers was as important as the sums involved. "If you've got Wall Street saying 'you're too radical for us' . . . that's going to resonate."

Noting that several companies suspended donations to all candidates, Mr Holman described the approach as "safer [but] a little bit cowardly".

Microsoft, which has drawn opposition from some staff over its past spending, said its PAC would make no





Rightwing media in retreat over poll fraud theories Rightwing media outlets have been trying to address their role in covering claims that the presidential election was stolen from Donald Trump, after baseless accusations of mass voter fraud fuelled an attack on the US Capitol last week.

In recent months conservative pundits on networks ranging from Fox News and niche rivals such as Newsmax to talk radio stations have peddled inaccurate claims of election fraud that supported Mr Trump's mission to overturn the election results.

However, after a violent mob over-ran the US Capitol last week, some conservative media groups are backing away from the theory that Joe Biden only won the election due to mass voter fraud.

Cumulus Media, a large US radio broadcaster home to popular rightwing personalities such as Mark Levin, ordered its on-air hosts to stop suggesting that the election result was still in question.

"We need to help induce national calm NOW," Brian Philips, Cumulus vicepresident, wrote in an internal memo last week, according to a report in The Washington Post. Cumulus did not respond to requests for comment.

Cable channel Newsmax has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of a splintering among Republican supporters, many of whom subscribe to Trump's unsubstantiated claims that the

election was mired in fraud. Newsmax ratings soared in the days after the November election as an alternative to Fox News, after Trump loyalists raged at the Murdoch-owned network for calling the election in favour of Mr Riden

However, Chris Ruddy, Newsmax founder, denied his network had helped perpetuate false allegations about the election, saying Mr Biden was "the legitimate president".

"All our hosts have accepted the election results," Mr Ruddy told the Financial Times on Monday, adding that "there was never any need for Newsmax to take the steps Cumulus feels necessary". He said Newsmax as a network had declared Mr Biden the president-elect in December, after the electoral college votes were certified by the states.

But after weeks of cheerleading for Mr Trump and fuelling discontent over the election result, some Newsmax hosts are still struggling to inform their viewers that Mr Biden won a free and fair contest. Greg Kelly, a Newsmax host who has

attracted viewers by fighting against Mr Biden's win, as recently as Friday told his audience that the election was corrupt.

"I believe that [Biden] stole the thing with the help of Democrat operatives and the mainstream media," he said on his primetime show *Greg Kelly Reports*. "I have seen some of the evidence . . . there is just no way he got more votes than any presidential candidate in history."

However, at Fox, even Trump loyalists seemed to be wavering. Tucker Carlson (pictured below), who has repeatedly called the election "rigged" against Mr Trump, last week said the president "recklessly encouraged" a protest that "got out of hand".

In a segment on Thursday, Mr Carlson asked: "Is any single president, anyone, worth all of this time and attention?"

As the pro-Trump mob stormed the Capitol, CNN host Jake Tapper slammed the Murdoch family for their role in the rise of Trump. "If you're . . . the Murdochs, you have to ask yourself, what am I doing?" he said. "What have I unleashed?"

Fox News declined to comment.
Another Murdoch-owned news outlet has taken a different tack. The Wall Street Journal last week called on Mr Trump to resign in a seething editorial.

"[Mr Trump] has refused to accept

the basic bargain of democracy, which is to accept the result, win or lose," it wrote. "It is best for everyone, himself included, if he goes away quietly."

Anna Nicolaou in New York and Alex Barker in London

"the implications of last week's events" and would consult staff on future giving.
Citigroup stopped all political contri-

donations until after it had assessed

Citigroup stopped all political contributions for three months; JPMorgan Chase said it was pausing all PAC donations for six months; Goldman Sachs said it was suspending all political spending indefinitely.

Several bank insiders said the impact

of their actions would be minimal. "It really isn't the time of giving," said one, noting that the next congressional elections were not until November 2022.

The sums denoted through bank

The sums donated through bank PACs are typically in the hundreds of thousands or low millions of dollars.

In a staff note, Citi government affairs head Candi Wolff said the bank donated to just one of "the candidates who led the charge against the certification of the Electoral College", giving \$1,000 in 2019 to Mr Hawley's campaign.

"We want you to be assured that we will not support candidates who do not respect the rule of law."

Deutsche Bank, Donald Trump's longtime lender, had decided not to do further business with the outgoing president or his companies, a person familiar with the situation said, confirming reports in The New York Times.

The decision was taken before the Capitol attacks, which Deutsche's US chief executive Christiana Riley described as a "dark day for America and our democracy" in a LinkedIn post.

The moves reflect a rethink of political spending across corporate America. A straw poll of more than 30 chief executives by the Yale School of Management last week found unanimous support for reviewing political spending.

holds a bust of

Donald Trump

after storming

the Capitol last

week. Below,

Fox's Tucker

president

'recklessly

Carlson said the

encouraged' the

demonstration

Since then, companies including American Airlines, FedEx, Ford and Marriott have said their PACs would review or suspend contributions.

Bruce Freed, head of the Center for Political Accountability, said the wave of threats by groups to pull their contributions was unprecedented. "The risk has really caught up with them," he added.

But contributions through PACs represented a small portion of political spending by companies, whose payments through trade associations and tax-exempt funding organisations were not subject to the same disclosure requirements.

In sport, football coach Bill Belichick said he would not accept the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

"The tragic events of last week occurred and the decision has been made not to move forward with the award," he said in a statement which did not mention Mr Trump. He had "great reverence for our nation's values, freedom, and democracy".

Additional reporting by Sara Germano in New York

Technology

# Ex-employee of SoftBank mobile unit held

**KANA INAGAKI** — TOKYO

A former employee of SoftBank's mobile unit has been arrested on suspicion of stealing trade secrets before joining rival Rakuten as the ecommerce group was making a push to become Japan's fourth wireless carrier.

SoftBank Corp has accused the former employee of sharing confidential information about its 4G and 5G base station technology to help Rakuten's foray into telecoms.

In a statement, Yoshihisa Yamada, president of Rakuten's mobile unit, confirmed the employee had been arrested yesterday and said the company would fully co-operate with the police investigation.

But Rakuten Mobile said its own probe did not find the employee had

taken any 5G trade secrets. It added it had not used any of the information allegedly taken by the employee for its own business.

Competition between the two technology rivals has deepened following Rakuten's entry last year with its own mobile network and disruptive pricing.

The growing contest has put pressure on the earnings outlook for Japan's four carriers at a time when Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has also been repeatedly demanding they set lower mobile fees.

While cases alleging theft of trade secrets are not uncommon in Silicon Valley and China, such accusations between high-profile companies are unusual in Japan.

The case also underscores the vulnerability of businesses when it comes to security measures to prevent employees from leaking technology to rivals. In its allegations, SoftBank said the stolen trade secrets would allow Rakuten to build its mobile network faster and at lower cost.

"Our trade secrets are stored on Rakuten Mobile's corporate PC used by our former employee, and we believe there is a high possibility that Rakuten Mobile is using our trade secrets in some form," it said.

The company said it planned to file a lawsuit against Rakuten Mobile to prevent its rival from using its knowhow and was also considering seeking damages from the former employee.

SoftBank said it became aware of the alleged theft in February last year and has since tightened its security measures.

See Lex

#### Energy

# Wind sweeps coal from top of Texas power list

JUSTIN JACOBS

Wind power surged past coal in Texas's electricity mix for the first time in 2020, the latest sign of renewable energy's rising prominence in America's fossil fuel heartland.

Texas has been at the forefront of a surge in wind power construction across the US, pulling in tens of billions of dollars in capital investment over the past decade and rapidly expanding electricity generation from the fuel. Surging investment and job creation has helped the renewables sector win political backing in the state despite it being home to the country's oil and gas sector.

Wind turbines generated nearly a quarter of Texas's power in 2020, beating coal's roughly 18 per cent share of the market, making it the secondlargest source of generation in the state behind natural gas, according to data from the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (Ercot), the state's main grid operator. The low carbon boom in Texas, by far

the largest power producing state in the country with the second-largest population and a large base of oil refineries and petrochemical plants, looks set to gather pace from here.

Wind, solar and batteries combined make up about 95 per cent of new generation capacity that project developers have proposed connecting to the grid in the coming years, according to Ercot.

President-elect Joe Biden has promised to deploy tens of thousands of new wind turbines and millions of new solar panels as part of a plan to put the US on a path towards net zero emissions in the

electricity sector by 2035, a central pillar of his \$2tn climate platform. While wind toppling coal power in

Texas helps in Mr Biden's efforts to green the American power grid, the stronghold of natural gas as the leading fuel in the electricity sector — it accounted for more than 40 per cent of power generation — points to the difficulty the new president will have in achieving the net zero target in just 15 years.

Curt Morgan, the chief executive of Vistra Energy, a big Texas-based power producer, told the Financial Times last month that replacing fossil fuels with renewables by 2035 would be "prohibitively expensive".

Coal's share of Texas' power mix has fallen more than half from 40 per cent a decade ago.

# Automotive technology start-ups take a wild ride after Spac listings

The combination of electric mania and blank cheque businesses has proved a volatile one

ORTENCA ALIAJ AND SUJEET INDAP — NEW YORK MILES KRUPPA — SAN FRANCISCO

Automotive technology start-ups catapulted on to the US stock market via blank cheque companies have together amassed a market capitalisation approaching \$60bn, even though several are yet to book a dollar of revenue or make a product.

The electric vehicle sector proved fertile hunting ground last year for special purpose acquisition companies, which take businesses public by raising money from investors and then cutting deals.

After stock markets recovered from a March meltdown when the pandemic erupted, blue-chip mutual funds, private equity firms and retail investors ploughed money into Spacs, which often bought companies with grand ambitions but limited records.

With technology disrupting the automotive industry, investors have raced to secure exposure to potential winners — whether battery makers, manufacturers of other forms of power storage, or developers of the "lidar" sensors that some believe are key to the development of self-driving cars.

Yet according to a Financial Times analysis, the nine auto tech groups that

# With tech disrupting the industry, investors have raced to secure exposure to potential winners

listed via a Spac last year expected revenues of just \$139m between them for 2020. They include QuantumScape, a battery company backed by Bill Gates and Volkswagen; the hydrogen truck start-up Nikola; and the lidar company Luminar Technologies.

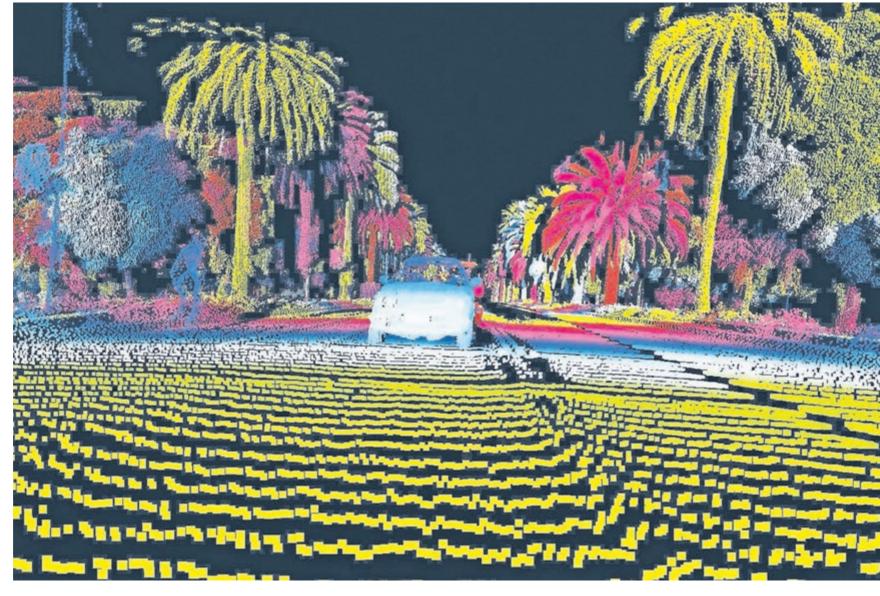
While the past 12 months proved a hot market for tech groups doing conventional IPOs, the Spac process, during which a vehicle merges with a target company, closely resembles an M&A deal. Bankers and lawyers say that gives companies far greater latitude in disclosing future financial projections than is allowed in traditional IPOs. The nine auto tech companies, for example, together predict their revenues will reach \$26bn by 2024.

Spacs often justify stratospheric projections by pointing to large "addressable markets" such as that for electric vehicles, where even a tiny market share can be lucrative and make valuations based on predictions of future revenues appear cheap.

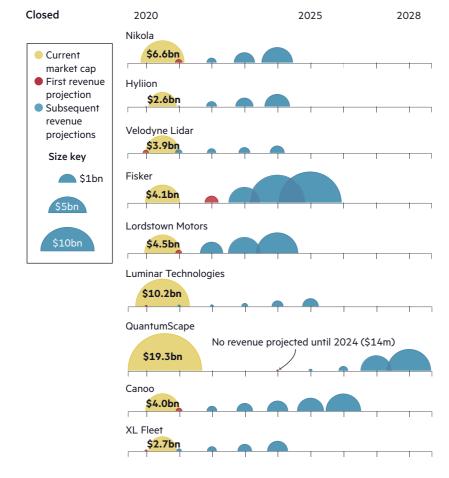
"There is a regulatory arbitrage between the Spac model and traditional IPOs," said Gary Posternack, head of global M&A at Barclays. "In the marketing process around Spac combinations, there is an ability to discuss projections or forward guidance, whereas in regular-way IPOs, companies can't provide that information. The regulators may ultimately try to narrow this gap, but for now the difference is creating real opportunities," he added.

The money pouring into the sector — and not just via blank cheque vehicles — is a bet that electric vehicles will eventually become ubiquitous. The market research firm IDTechEx estimates EVs will constitute up to 80 per cent of the global market by 2040, while heavy-weights such as Volkswagen and General Motors are investing billions of dollars to develop their own models.

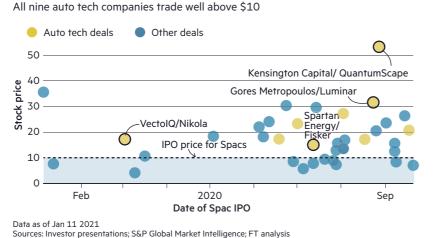
But even if EVs do become dominant, it will not happen overnight. And as the talismanic performance of the electric vehicle pioneer Tesla — now with a market value of almost \$800bn — helps underpin the investment mania for car



#### Car tech groups have high market value but little revenue



Most Spac deals of 2020 trade above \$10 IPO price



tech groups, venture capitalists who specialise in backing risky start-ups warn of the potential dangers. "If you project that your first revenue is in 2025 and you have to build out a model based on a product you haven't built yet, I think that's really hard," said Arjun Sethi, partner at Tribe Capital, a venture capital firm based in San Francisco.

QuantumScape's short history as a public company underlines the volatility investors face. Riding a wave of demand, its shares peaked at \$131 in late December, a thirteen-fold increase on the \$10 at which Spacs typically list.

Spun out from Stanford University, QuantumScape released data that it said showed advances in solid-state battery technology, which could help improve the driving range of electric vehicles. The market capitalisation of the company, which does not expect any revenues until 2024 and any profits for three years after that, last year briefly eclipsed that of Ford and Fiat Chrysler.

However, the stock has since plunged 60 per cent from its peak. Quantum-Scape did not respond to a request for comment.

Luminar Technologies is another Spac with a brief but striking life as a public company. Shares in the group, which develops laser-based imaging sensors, or lidars, that can be used for autonomous driving, have almost doubled since listing in December.

Founded by 25-year-old engineer Austin Russell, the Silicon Valley company has signed a production agreement with Volvo due to begin in 2022, setting it apart from competitors. But its roughly \$10bn valuation dwarfs the market for automotive lidar, which Northland Securities analyst Gus Richard estimates will be worth \$2.5bn in 2025. Luminar declined to comment.

One senior Wall Street lawyer who has worked on numerous Spac deals said the enthusiasm of retail investors had been a key feature of the mania for the cartech sector.

"If the trading strategy is 'I'm going to buy across the spectrum, because there Leading light: shares in Luminar Technologies, which develops laserbased imaging sensors, or lidars, have almost doubled since listing last month

will be winners and I know there will be losers' then that's not a crazy investment strategy," the Spac adviser said. "But not all the electric vehicle companies will survive. They just can't, there's too many of them."

Retail investors were among those caught out by the crisis that engulfed Nikola, a US electric truck start-up and early beneficiary of the investment craze. After peaking in June, Nikola shares tumbled in September after shortseller Hindenburg Research alleged that the company was an "intricate fraud". Its founder Trevor Milton, who stepped down in September, has denied any wrongdoing.

Despite the turbulence, shares in all nine of the auto tech companies that used Spacs to go public last year trade well above \$10, with a median price above \$20. Indeed, shares in almost three-quarters of the 37 completed Spac deals last year are trading above \$10. More than a third are trading above \$20.

Nor is there any sign that the wave of interest has peaked. Lucid Motors, a Californian electric vehicle group controlled by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund that has yet to deliver a single model, is in talks to merge with one of the Spacs launched by former Citigroup investment banker Michael Klein, according to people with direct knowledge of the matter.

But some caution that the combination of the mania for auto tech and Spacs is likely to remain a combustible one this year. "It's not sustainable because at some point things are going to normalise and investors are now buying these things blindly," said a senior equity sales bank executive.

Additional reporting by Arash Massoudi in London

See Editorial Comment

#### **Automobiles**

## Tesla falls behind in Europe as VW and rivals gain EV lead

JOE MILLER — FRANKFURT

BMW, Daimler and Volkswagen tripled their sales of electrified vehicles to almost 600,000 last year, the companies said, outpacing Tesla in Europe as they raced to meet new CO2 reduction targets.

Of the 5.3m cars delivered by the VW brand last year, 212,000 were either solely battery-powered, or hybrids, a 158 per cent increase on 2019.

Of those, 159,000 were sold in Europe, where carmakers faced the threat of hundreds of millions of euros in fines from Brussels if they failed to bring down fleet-wide emissions.

The VW marque alone sold 117,000 purely electric vehicles on the continent, while Tesla's deliveries to the region totalled 96,000 in 2020, according to data compiled by auto analyst Matthias Schmidt.

BMW Group, which owns the Mini and Rolls-Royce brands, said that of the 2.3m cars it sold worldwide in 2020, almost 193,000 were electrified, an increase of almost 32 per cent over 2019.

In Europe, BMW's battery-powered or hybrid vehicles accounted for 15 per cent of total sales, helping the Munich-

#### '[Berlin] adding an extra turbo boost to electric vehicle demand appears to have done the trick'

based company reach its EU-mandated targets for the year.

Rival Daimler said last week that it had also achieved its CO2 goals, as it more than tripled sales of Mercedes electric and hybrid cars, which accounted for 160,000 of its 2.2m sales in 2020. The company also sold 27,000 electric Smart cars in the period.

Volkswagen Group, whose brands include Audi, Porsche and Seat, has yet to confirm whether it fell short of EU targets, but executives said last month that the company was close to compliance, thanks in part to a late surge in

sales of its flagship electric car, the ID.3.

The model, which only came on the market in September after software glitches caused delays to production, was VW's most popular emissions-free

car, with 56,500 units sold in 2020.

"2020 was a turning point for Volkswagen and marked a breakthrough in electric mobility," said Ralf Brandstätter, chief executive of the VW

Sales of electric cars in Germany were helped by Berlin's decision in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis to double the subsidies for the purchase of emissions-free vehicles, with customers able to get up to €9,000 off the retail price.

In December, for the first time ever,

the market share of electric and hybrid cars in the country outpaced that of diesel engines, according to data from the Federal Motor Transport Authority.

Germans bought twice as many electrified cars as the next largest European market, France, according to Mr Schmidt, accounting for every fourth battery or hybrid vehicle sold in western Europe. "The German government, adding an extra turbo boost to domestic electric vehicle demand, up until now appears to have done the trick," the Berlin-based analyst said, adding that leasing prices for battery and hybrid cars had also hit record-low levels.

Overall, worldwide sales of the VW brand fell 15 per cent in 2020, and more than 23 per cent in western Europe. Mercedes and BMW sales fell more than 7 per cent in the pandemic-ridden year.

#### Automobiles

# Ford to halt vehicle manufacturing in Brazil

CLAIRE BUSHEY — CHICAGO

Ford is to stop manufacturing vehicles in Brazil this year with the loss of up to 5,000 jobs, in an attempt to drag its South American operations back into the black.

The US carmaker has been producing vehicles in Brazil for more than a century but its operations there have been a cash drain since the country's economic downturn in 2013.

"In Brazil, and South America more

broadly, the market simply doesn't and isn't going to support our cost structure in the region," Ford said late on Monday. Workers will immediately stop mak-

Workers will immediately stop making vehicles at Ford plants in Camaçari and Taubaté. A third plant in Horizonte will halt work by the end of the year.

As a result, the company would no

longer sell the EcoSport SUV, the Ka subcompact car or the T4 off-road vehicle in Brazil, it said.

Ford South America's losses shrank to \$386m in the first nine months of 2020, from \$527m for the same period in 2019, but executives said the improvement was not enough.

Lyle Watters, president of the division and Ford's international markets group, said in a memo to employees that the devaluation of regional currencies had "increased industrial costs beyond recoverable levels, and the global pandemic has further amplified issues, leading to even higher idle capacity and lower vehicle demand in South America, particularly in Brazil".

Overall vehicle sales in Brazil dropped to 2.1m units in 2020 — down 26 per cent from 2019 — with a recovery to

2019 levels not expected for another three years. Meanwhile, production shrank by nearly a third in 2020. The country's car industry only used 40 per cent of its production capacity last year.

Mr Watters said Ford was working with unions to "mitigate the effect" on the 5,000 workers at the three plants.

The move in Brazil is the latest step in an \$11bn restructuring effort launched in 2018, through which it is attempting to reach a margin of 8 per cent on earnings before interest and tax.

In North America, the company has stopped making cars, with the exception of the Mustang, in favour of pickups and sport utility vehicles. In Europe last year it cut 12,000 jobs. And less than two weeks ago, it scuttled plans for a joint venture with Indian carmaker Mahindra, in a rethink of its priorities.

#### Support services

## DHL profits hit record as online retail booms

JOE MILLER — FRANKFURT

The Deutsche Post DHL group hailed an "exceptional year" as it posted record earnings for 2020 on the back of a boom in online shopping during the pandemic.

In an ad hoc release yesterday, the German logistics company said operating profits had reached €4.84bn for the year, surpassing its most optimistic internal forecasts by about 10 per cent.

A surge in ecommerce sales helped the group's international shipping and courier division, DHL Express, reach €2.75bn in pre-tax profits, up 35 per cent on 2019.

Of that, the unit made more than €1bn in the last quarter of the year, which includes the US Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays and shopping

events such as Black Friday. "Our strategy and business model have proven resilient — even in turbulent times for the global economy," said Deutsche Post DHL chief executive Frank Appel, who added that the company was focused on distributing vaccines around the world.

The business also increased guidance for 2021, saying the group would exceed the underlying €5.4bn in pre-tax profits it made last year, before special items.

"The group has historically guided conservatively and to indicate this 12 days into the year is a very good sign,"

said Bernstein analyst Daniel Roeska.

"We expect tightness in airfreight supply to lead to pricing and volume tailwinds in the Express business, and would be looking for further strong per-

would be looking for further strong performance through the year," he added. Rival UPS has yet to release annual results, but its operating profit rose about 10 per cent in the last reported quarter, while that of FedEx soared more than 120 per cent in the three months to the end of November.

At the height of the pandemic last year, Deutsche Post DHL, which employs more than half a million people worldwide, paid a bonus of €300 to each staff member. The company has also been on a hiring spree, with 10,000 workers added in October.

Separately yesterday, DHL Express said it had ordered an extra eight 777 cargo planes from Boeing, the world's largest twin-engined aircraft. It already operates one of the largest freight fleets in the world, with more than 260 dedi-

cated aircraft making 600 flights a day.

Deutsche Post DHL will release its annual results in full on March 9.

Crypto. Volatility surge

# Bitcoin's trading jolts unnerve traditional money managers



Bout of turbulence raises fresh doubt on whether mainstream investors will join speculators

A strong jolt of volatility in cryptocurrencies has dulled hopes that large pension funds and traditional investors will pile into bitcoin anytime soon as a pick-up in institutional interest remains dominated by speculators.

Bitcoin, the most actively traded cryptocurrency, has endured its worst bout of tumult since the global market ructions in March.

At one point on Monday, it traded \$10,000 below the peak of almost \$42,000 it reached just days earlier before recovering to roughly \$35,000.

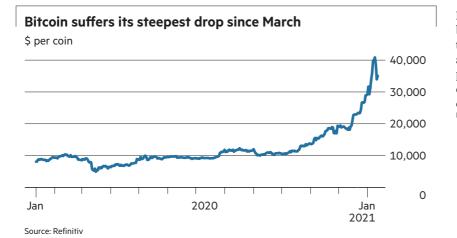
The ructions come after a banner year in which bitcoin was among the world's top-performing assets. The digital currency's dazzling run prompted concerns about a potential bubble brewing but also piqued the interest of hedge funds and private investors.

The steady drip of big names helped to amplify the fervour. Storm clouds are beginning to gather, however. Bank of America strategists last week asked in a note to clients whether bitcoin is "the mother of all bubbles".

Cryptocurrency data provider Skew said options markets where traders can bet on or hedge against price fluctuations were sending signals last seen in March last year when the exchange rate collapsed to below \$4,000.

Expectations about near-term price moves are also at extremes, suggesting daily exchange rate swings of 10 per

cent, Skew data showed. "In our view, given their high volatility and the size of their past drawdowns,



cryptocurrencies might be attractive to speculative investors but they are neither a suitable alternative to safe haven assets nor do they necessarily contribute to portfolio diversification," strategists at UBS Asset Management said yesterday.

Despite the change in narrative, which has seen bitcoin vying to be become a challenger to gold in investors' portfolios just a couple of years after being untouchable by serious allocators due to fraud and reputational dangers, it is largely hedge funds and family offices that have dipped into the market.

"We have seen a lot of hedge funds engaging with crypto, both on the macro and the quant side," said Kaspar Hense, a fund manager at BlueBay Asset Management. "But while there has been a significant allocation from the private side, institutional appetite is still lacking."

New investors reasoned that bitcoin could provide protection against inflation, which some economists expect will rise as major central banks engage in aggressive stimulus programmes.

Proponents have also said they see bitcoin as a useful tool for portfolio

diversification on the expectation that it will not move in tandem with other financial assets. However, this thesis has been hotly debated.

Nikolaos Panigirtzoglou, an analyst at

JPMorgan, said for example that bitcoin is "not a hedge for equity investments" because the price of stocks and the cryptocurrency tend to move together in the same direction. The acute of volatility also remains a

key concern for large, conservative investors who would struggle to justify adding an asset that regularly notches-up daily moves of above 10 per cent.

Mr Hense said these features were unlikely to make bitcoin a must for pension funds.

"We don't think the institutional side will engage meaningfully with cryptocurrencies," he added.

Still, returns from bitcoin beat other asset classes last year as big names such as Paul Tudor Jones revealed their

Hedge funds focused on cryptocurrencies generated returns of 194 per cent in 2020, according to data provider Eurekahedge. In December alone,

Bitcoin is mined by computers that use large amounts of power for complex calculations

crypto hedge funds returned twice as much as traditional funds included in the main Eurekahedge index did in the whole of 2020.

Chris Zuehlke, a partner at DRW and global head of the company's cryptotrading arm Cumberland said that, in the last five months of 2020, demand from bitcoin purchasers outstripped new supply by almost three times.

Bitcoin is "mined" by programmes that use large amounts of computing power to perform increasingly complex calculations but the overall number of coins that will ultimately be available is

profile investors remain bullish.

Anthony Scaramucci, former White House press secretary and founder of SkyBridge Capital, called this week's decline in bitcoin's price a great buying opportunity for those who had missed out on previous gains.

"If you had [fear of missing out] on the ride to \$41,000, this is a great dip buying opportunity", he tweeted on Monday, a few days after announcing the launch of a specialist bitcoin fund.

Other recent crypto-converts are growing cautious.

of Guggenheim Partners, which announced that it would invest hundreds of millions into bitcoin in November, said on Monday that the price looked "vulnerable to a set back" and that it was "time to take some money off the table."

"For investors seeking to protect against potential downside and improve the risk-reward profile of their portfolios, we recommend options, gold, longduration Treasuries, and hedge funds," UBS Asset Management strategists

Despite the recent tumult, some high-

Scott Minerd, chief investment officer



## **Mainland** Chinese pile into battered **HK stocks**

**HUDSON LOCKETT** — HONG KONG

Chinese money is pouring into Hong Kong's beaten-down stock market, highlighting the growing sway of mainland traders as political turmoil threatens to undermine the city's status as a global finance hub.

Mainland Chinese investors' holdings of Hong Kong-listed stocks bought through market link-ups with Shanghai and Shenzhen climbed to an all-time high of \$235.7bn yesterday, according to Financial Times calculations based on Bloomberg data.

On Monday, mainland purchases of Hong Kong shares via the Stock Connect schemes hit a daily record of \$2.5bn. That flurry of purchases arrived on the heels of Trump administration sanctions targeting top Chinese tech groups, many of which are listed in Hong Kong.

The figures reflect mainland investors' growing role in Hong Kong's stock market as Beijing seeks to more closely incorporate the city, which has been racked by political chaos, into China's financial system.

Credit Suisse estimates that these investors hold about 8.5 per cent of Hong Kong's free float market capitalisation and account for more than 20 per cent of daily turnover.

"The turnover in terms of [Stock] Connect, it's enormous," said Louis Tse,

#### 'After the demonstrations and Covid, people are taking the view prices are probably at their bottom'

managing director at Hong Kong-based brokerage Wealthy Securities. Part of the appeal of Hong Kong stocks, he added, could be that they "look very cheap, and with a reasonable return".

On Monday, mainland Chinese investors made \$500m in net purchases of shares in both tech group Tencent and state-owned telecoms company China Mobile.

China Mobile, along with its state-run peers China Unicom and China Telecom, was on Friday forced to delist from the New York Stock Exchange following an executive order from the White House. All three have jumped more than 12 per cent in Hong Kong this week.

The Hang Seng index, which fell 3.4 per cent last year, has badly lagged both international and mainland Chinese benchmarks as Hong Kong's economy has been hammered by the virus.

A sweeping national security law imposed by Beijing in June has raised concerns over Hong Kong's future as a global financial centre. More than half of net inflows from mainland Chinese buyers came after the security law was introduced, data shows.

"After all the demonstrations and Covid hitting the market there, people here are taking the view that prices are probably at their bottom and that presents a buying opportunity," said a director at one Shanghai-based brokerage. "It's the kind of trade you do if you think Hong Kong in the long term is going to do well."

**Commodities** 

## Japan fears blackouts as LNG shortage pushes electricity price to record high

**ROBIN HARDING AND LEO LEWIS** — TOKYO

Japanese electricity prices have soared to all-time highs as a cold snap coincides with tight supplies of liquefied natural gas to raise fears of blackouts in parts of the country.

Power companies begged their customers to leave the heating on but turn off their other appliances as the electricity system hit 99 per cent of its maximum capacity in western parts of the country vesterday.

The spike in energy prices comes just two months before the tenth anniversary of the Fukushima disaster - the aftermath of which pushed Japan to rethink its energy mix away from nuclear power - and two months after it announced an ambitious plan to become carbon neutral by 2050.

Intraday prices on the Japan Electric Power Exchange hit a record high of ¥246.8 per kilowatt hour in the spot market yesterday afternoon, compared with an average of ¥7.6kW/h last January and ¥15.1kW/h last month.

Warnings of potential blackouts come with just three of Japan's 33 nuclear reactors in operation, leading experts to predict the crisis could add urgency to the government's restart of the atomic energy programme.  $A\,week\,of\,severe\,weather\,has\,dumped$ 

more than 1m of snow on parts of the country and prompted many households, which are working from home because of Covid-19, to turn up heating.

"With the continued extreme cold the electricity supply is tight, so while carrying on as normal with the heating on, for example, you could turn off the light



Severe weather during the past week has blanketed much of Japan in snow

in the other room," said energy minister Hiroshi Kajiyama.

With only limited domestic energy supplies, Japan has long been one of the top importers of LNG, relying on cargoes of the super-chilled fuel to meet demand for heating, manufacturing and electricity generation.

But it is facing increased competition as more countries use LNG to cut reliance on heavily polluting coal, while supplies have been tighter than expected this winter. Though most of Japan's LNG shipments are secured under long-term contracts, the spot market for cargoes - where traders and utilities can source extra shipments – has soared to an all-time high.

Tightness in LNG markets is also having an effect in Europe, where UK gas prices hit a two-year high yesterday of 75 pence per therm, up more than 10 per cent on the day.

"This is evidence of the increased seasonality and volatility resulting from LNG increasingly being used alongside the growth in renewables for power burn to flatten the curve of greenhouse gas emissions," said Richard Holtum, head of LNG and gas for Trafigura.

#### Asset management

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## Billionaire investor Bacon rides stormy year to rack up bumper gains

LAURENCE FLETCHER

Billionaire investor Louis Bacon chalked up one of the biggest profits of his long trading career during 2020's market turmoil, helped by a decision to return money to outside investors that cleared the way for riskier bets.

The veteran fund manager's firm, Moore Capital, which now manages money primarily for Mr Bacon and other employees, gained more than 70 per cent last year, said people familiar with its performance, after profiting

March's coronavirus-driven slump and its aftermath. Moore's gains equated to several billion dollars, one person said.

Moore, which cited a "challenging business model" when it told investors in late 2019 it was closing its flagship hedge funds to external money, has been helped by a newfound ability to take more risk and tolerate more volatility in its performance, said one of the people.

Big institutional investors, which have come to dominate the hedge fund industry's client base since the financial

crisis, provide huge amounts of inflows but tend to be more risk-averse and have often tried to constrain traders' bets. Such constraints can cap losses but also limit gains.

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Moore's 2020 returns would have ranked it as one of the world's topperforming hedge funds, in what has turned into the industry's best year since the aftermath of the financial

#### Moore's 2020 returns would have ranked it as one of the world's topperforming hedge funds

crisis. Moore declined to comment. Mr Bacon's performance echoes that of Michael Platt's BlueCrest Capital, which in late 2015 said it would convert into a family office to manage money primarily for Mr Platt and other staff.

Mr Platt said at the time that his bets had been constrained by institutional investors and that returning external money would allow him to take more risk. His firm went on to record gains of about 50 per cent or more in 2016, 2017

and 2019. Mr Bacon began his career in the 1980s and is known for making large profits during bouts of market volatility, such as the 1990 crash in Japanese stocks, and Black Wednesday in 1992, when the UK pound was forced out of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism.

The manager said in 2019 that returning outside money would allow him "more personal time for a large family, philanthropic pursuits and to continue to develop a number of sports oriented properties - all with the flexibility to 'stay in the picture' or not as things develop".

However, the huge levels of market volatility experienced last year meant that he has been very involved in Moore's trading.

Mr Bacon bought US government bonds in February, shortly before they soared to record highs as the Federal Reserve slashed interest rates and investors fled to haven assets.

Moore was later also able to profit from bets on equity and company debt likely to do well out of the crisis while betting against those likely to suffer, one of the people said.

#### The day in the markets

#### What you need to know

Treasury sell-off continues with yield on 10-year note at March high
 Brent crude climbs to a 10-month peak of above \$56 a barrel
 Chinese stocks leap to highest level since 2008

Equities wavered yesterday as investors weighed the worsening pandemic against the prospect of more fiscal stimulus in the world's largest economy.

Wall Street's benchmark S&P 500 was down 0.2 per cent by lunchtime in New York while the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite slipped 0.1 per cent.

Stocks had a mixed session in Europe. The region-wide Stoxx Europe 600 edged up 0.1 per cent while Frankfurt's Xetra Dax dipped 0.1 per cent and London's FTSE 100 fell 0.7 per cent.

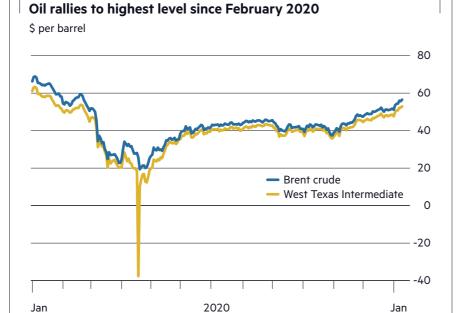
The performance of energy and financials stocks — which fared particularly badly in 2020 — were rare bright spots on both sides of the Atlantic, boosted by expectations that the sectors would benefit from more fiscal support and an economic rebound.

Juliette Cohen, a strategist at CPR Asset Management, said equities were "taking a breath" following strong gains at the start of the year.

She did not anticipate a correction, as equities would be supported by further fiscal stimulus in the US — which would encourage the sector rotation from growth stocks such as tech to value

sectors including energy and financials.

Salman Baig, multi-asset investment manager at Unigestion, said this week's pullback in stocks also amounted to "a bit of consolidation" and profit-taking.



Expectations for more fiscal stimulus from Joe Biden's incoming US administration has led to a sell-off in core government debt this year.

Source: Refinitiv

The yield on the 10-year US Treasury, which broke 1 per cent last week for the first time since March, rose a further 4 basis points to 1.18 per cent yesterday.

Saudi Arabia's pledge last week to cut oil output, alongside hopes of fuel demand rebounding, helped to send Brent crude to a 10-month high of \$56.75 a barrel. But significant rises for the global benchmark from here would be less likely, warned traders.

"In our view, the market now should stabilise if anything, rather than boost prices," said Bjornar Tonhaugen at Rystad Energy. "Returning restrictions and concerns over increasing infections are curbing road fuel demand globally and in Europe in particular."

2021

In Asia, China's CSI 300 index jumped 2.9 per cent to its highest since 2008.

The gains followed a pullback on Monday as exchanges moved to adhere to new rules banning investment in companies with alleged links to China's military. Camilla Hodgson, Leke Oso Alabi and David Sheppard

#### Markets update

		0			*3	
	US	Eurozone	Japan	UK	China	Brazil
Stocks	S&P 500	Eurofirst 300	Nikkei 225	FTSE100	Shanghai Comp	Bovespa
Level	3795.27	1576.51	28164.34	6754.11	3608.34	124195.82
% change on day	-0.11	0.04	0.09	-0.65	2.18	0.76
Currency	\$ index (DXY)	\$ per €	Yen per \$	\$ per £	Rmb per \$	Real per \$
Level	90.452	1.216	104.200	1.362	6.467	5.437
% change on day	-0.014	0.082	-0.091	0.964	-0.125	-1.225
Govt. bonds	10-year Treasury	10-year Bund	10-year JGB	10-year Gilt	10-year bond	10-year bond
Yield	1.184	-0.469	0.032	0.351	3.146	7.135
Basis point change on day	5.390	2.800	-0.220	4.400	-6.300	-30.500
World index, Commods	FTSE All-World	Oil - Brent	Oil - WTI	Gold	Silver	Metals (LMEX)
Level	433.78	56.54	53.03	1847.25	25.02	3455.60
% change on day	0.01	1.76	1.67	-0.84	-6.10	-2.51

#### Main equity markets





Yesterday's close apart from: Currencies = 16:00 GMT; S&P, Bovespa, All World, Oil = 17:00 GMT; Gold, Silver = London pm fix. Bond data supplied by Tullett Preboi



#### Biggest movers

	Occidental Petroleum	12.55
	Apache	9.66
Ups	Marathon Oil	8.51
_	Devon Energy	8.29
	Halliburton	7.83
	Perkinelmer	-4.21
SI	Boston Scientific	-4.08
Downs	Realty ome	-3.94
ŏ	Southern (the)	-3.82
	Eli Lilly & Co	-3.44

Eurozone	
Thyssenkrupp	6.6
B. Sabadell	4.8
Danske Bank	4.2
Natixis	3.7
Kbc	3.6
Iberdrola	-3.3
Edenred	-3.0
Telecom Italia	-3.0
Edn	- <b>7</b> O

UK	
Int Consolidated Airlines S.a.	3.30
Johnson Matthey	3.25
Intercontinental Hotels	2.89
Whitbread	2.25
Glencore	2.16
Fresnillo	-4.16
Experian	-3.67
Hikma Pharmaceuticals	-3.58
Croda Int	-3.02
Pockitt Ponckicor	7.02

All data provided by Morningstar unless otherwise noted.

#### Wall Street

**General Motors** rallied after the carmaker launched BrightDrop, its entry into the electric delivery vehicle sector.

The group's electric light commercial vehicle, the EV600, is scheduled to be on roads by late 2021 and is projected to have a range of up to 250 miles on a full charge.

Abercrombie & Fitch rose after reporting a sales decline that was less severe than expected.

The clothing retailer said net sales for the fourth quarter, which included the holiday period, retreated within a 5-7 per cent range compared with the 5-10 per cent slide that had been previously forecast.

**FuboTV** soared on news that the live streaming platform was planning to buy sports betting and interactive gaming company Vigtory.

"FuboTV intends to leverage Vigtory's sportsbook platform and digital gaming assets . . . to develop a frictionless betting experience for Fubo's customers," said the group. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Plus Therapeutics climbed after revealing it had entered into an agreement with Piramal Pharma Solutions related to the "development, manufacture, and supply" of its RNL-Liposome Intermediate drug, a treatment for a rare cancer. Ray Douglas

#### Eurozone

Novozymes

News of a contract win helped send **Mota-Engil** higher.

The Portuguese construction group rallied after announcing that it had signed a \$1.82bn deal to build a railway line in Nigeria.

The contract with the transport ministry will include the procurement, construction and financing of a line that will connect the north-west city of Kano with Niger's Maradi.

**Neinor Homes**, the Spanish housing developer, climbed after agreeing to a merger with peer **Quabit Inmobiliaria**.

Neinor's board unanimously approved the deal in which Quabit shareholders would receive a 7 per cent stake in Neinor.

"The operational, financial and tax synergies from the transaction could potentially drive stronger cash flows and enable [Neinor] to scale up over the next five years," said Ami Galla, analyst at Citi. Quabit also rose.

**Zur Rose** rallied after Bank of America initiated coverage on the Swiss online pharmacy chain with a "buy" rating and target price of SFr500.

"We think Zur Rose is one of the most compelling online equity stories in Europe," said BofA, which expects the launch of ZR's e-prescriptions business in Germany to unlock a large growth opportunity. Ray Douglas

#### London

-2.93

Kingfisher climbed after the home improvement chain said it "continued to experience strong demand across its markets" with quarterly like-for-like sales to January up 17 per cent.

The group, which owns B&Q in the UK and Castorama in France, expected full-year pre-tax profits to be at the top end of consensus forecasts.

"Kingfisher has been on a roll since the first lockdown," said AJ Bell. "One could see a situation where demand remains robust for much of the year, particularly if the pace of the vaccine rollout is slower than currently expected."

But the broker said: "However, come 2022, it is fair to say that Kingfisher will face some very tough comparative

**Gamesys** climbed following a positive trading update for the operator of online casino and bingo-led games.

It said that, after a strong fourthquarter performance, it was "confident" that full-year revenue and earnings would be at or above the upper end of market expectations.

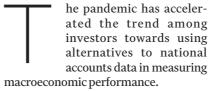
Another forecast of higher annual profits helped to lift **Robert Walters**.

The recruiter said profit for the full year was likely to be ahead of market estimates, despite reporting a 24 per cent fall in fourth-quarter net fees year on year. Ray Douglas

## Investors are right to look beyond headline GDP data

### James Sweeney

### Markets Insight



Body temperatures, foot traffic, internet trends and stimulus cheque arrivals represent a small sample of the data that have been critical in assessing real-time economic activity.

These measures have told a more precise story of the 2020 economy than national account measures such as gross domestic product or inflation.

The limitations of national accounts data has been a hot topic in recent years, even though it has long been known that they involve serious measurement problems and are only crudely related to concepts such as living standards and the cost of living. The pandemic might mark the point at which the prestige and influence of GDP-based measures in public discourse have finally peaked.

It is worth considering measurement and misuse issues separately. The headline national accounts figure — nominal GDP — is a useful, clearly defined and well-measured statistic. However, there is much that it does not cover, including at-home production and free goods that comprise many now-ubiquitous internet services. Nominal GDP equals real GDP plus inflation, and it is in this apportioning into parts where serious problems mount.

Basically, if inflation is wrong, real growth is too. In the 1990s, the Boskin Commission found that US inflation was upwardly biased, suggesting real GDP was growing faster than official numbers showed. In a 1996 meeting of the US Federal Reserve policy committee, Alan Greenspan said that "price stability"

meant to him 0 per cent inflation, while his colleague Janet Yellen suggested that, given known mismeasurement issues, 2 per cent was a better target.

Since then, growth in nominal GDP, real GDP, working-age population, business investment, and prices have weakened versus older trends in the US and many other economies.

But while the decline in nominal GDP reflects a true, measurable decline, our certitude on the change in measures lower in the national accounts hierarchy is less. The large revisions that have occurred for national accounts-based US consumer inflation further under-

#### Last year's GDP data will hardly inform future generations about economic life in 2020

score the tenuousness of our real-time inflation knowledge.

To rectify the problems with these measures, there are efforts on alternatives such as disease-based price indices, happiness measures, the "billion prices" project to track data from retailers around the world on a daily basis, and activity trackers sourced from satellites. There are also attempts to "correct" the traditional measures with ad hoc adjustments or by switching emphases to less well-known variants.

The possibility of mismeasurement in national accounts is well known but the misuse of those data is more consequential. By "misuse" we mean the casual assertion that these statistics represent everyday concepts of living standards and the cost of living. This error is clear-

est when we examine long-term GDP estimates, and ask whether it is plausible that living standards were changing in the steady, linear way that long-term real per capita GDP charts suggest.

According to historian Jürgen Osterhammel: "That an ever-increasing share of all work came to be performed indoors was a great novelty of the 19th century."

Measured farm or factory output per worker cannot capture the change when a worker whose forefathers picked crops became permanently engaged in sheltered indoor employment.

Similarly, we sometimes encounter claims of jumping real wages and even "rising living standards" after the 14th-century plague. Historical accounts of life after 1348 in western Europe do not, however, paint such a rosy picture of life in that period. Last year's GDP data will hardly inform future generations about economic life in 2020.

Current policy debates over further pandemic relief reflect the divide between those who focus on granular details revealed by new data approaches and those who focus on headline national accounts measures.

For example, should additional fiscal stimulus measures target overall GDP or should it target households or businesses that are suffering most for no fault of their own?

The broadening use of contemporary "narrow" data is offering rich perspectives of economic life. Alternative indicators have enabled excellent real-time analysis during the pandemic. This has helped to guide policy decisions and minimise the macroeconomic damage.

James Sweeney is chief economist at Credit Suisse

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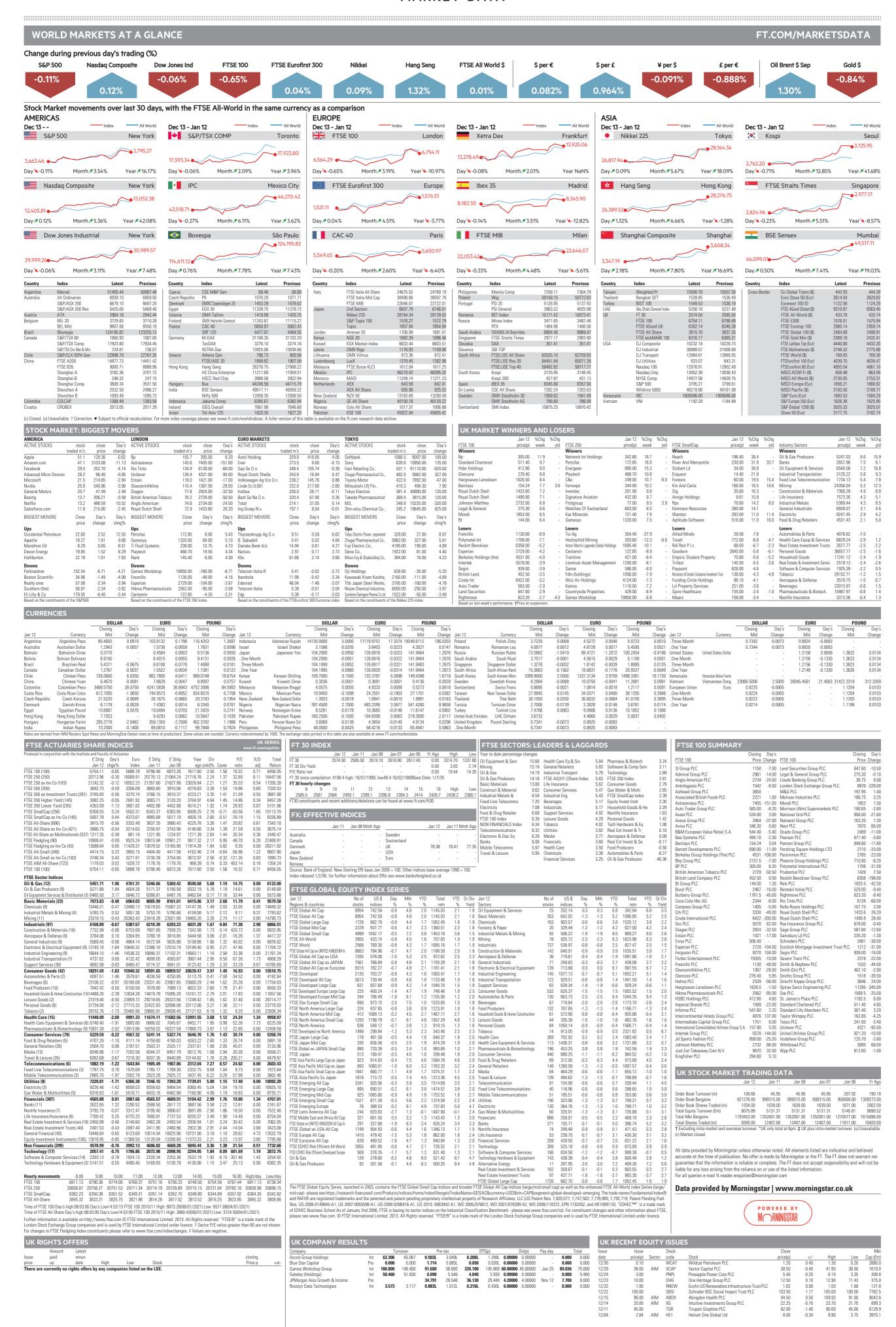
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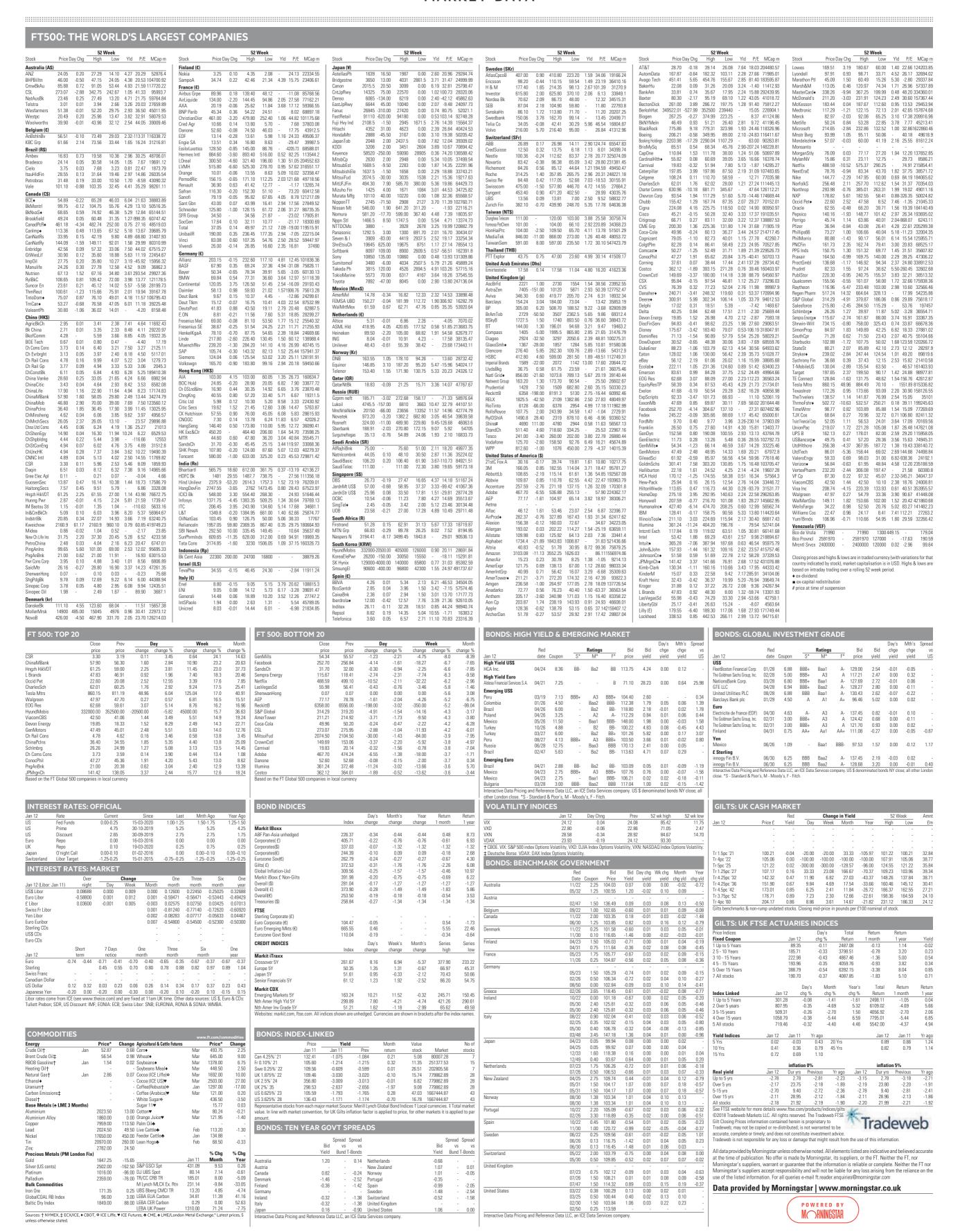
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#### MARKET DATA



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#### MARKET DATA





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Bridge Fund	£ 2 2663	-	_n n23n	1 /

FCA Recognised				
Aberdeen Standard Capital C	Offshore Strat	egy	Fund Lir	nited
Bridge Fund	£ 2.2663	-	-0.0230	1.41
Global Equity Fund	£ 3.2627	-	-0.0216	0.87
Global Fixed Interest Fund	£ 0.9829	-	-0.0028	4.19
Income Fund	£ 0.6581	-	-0.0066	2.86
Sterling Fixed Interest Fund	£ 0.9175	-	-0.0043	2.87
UK Equity Fund	£ 2.0350	-	-0.0208	2.14



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LAPIS GBL F OWD 50 DIV.YLD-Na-D £ 101.22	-



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#### Slater Investments

Bid Offer D+/- Yield Fund

Rubrics Global Fixed Income UCITS Fund \$ 180.94 - -0.29 0.00 Data Provided by



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UK Equity Fund	£ 2.0350	-	-0.0208	2.14	
Sterling Fixed Interest Fund	£ 0.91/5	-	-0.0043	2.87	

FCA Recognised				
Ashmore SICAV Emerging Market Debt Fund	\$ 91.93	-	-0.42	4.5
Ashmore SICAV Emerging Market Frontier Equity Fund	\$171.77	-	1.24	1.4
Ashmore SICAV Emerging Market Total Return Fund	\$ 81.46	-	-0.61	3.9
Ashmore SICAV Global Small Cap Equity Fund	\$215.27	-	-2.59	0.0
EM Active Equity Fund Acc USD	\$173.15	-	-0.81	0.0
EM Equity Fund Acc USD	\$156.70	-	-1.17	0.0
EM Mkts Corp.Debt USD F	\$ 91.83	-	-0.21	5.3
EM Mkts Loc.Ccy Bd USD F	\$ 78.27	-	-0.95	4.3
FM Short Duration Fund Acc USD	\$ 119 81	_	-0.31	0.0

Dragon Capital www.dragoncapital.com					
Fund information:info@dragoncap	ita	l.com			
Other International Funds					
Vietnam Equity (UCITS) Fund A USD	\$	27.99	-	0.21	0.00

Other International Fund	S				
Emerging Mkts NAV	£	7.21	-	-0.16	0.00

Other International Funds	Other International Funds	FCA Recognised
Vietnam Equity (UCITS) Fund A USD \$ 27.99 - 0.21 0.00	Emerging Mkts NAV £ 7.210.16 0.00	New Capital UCITS Funds
		New Capital China Equity Fund \$314.543.44 0.00
		New Capital Dynamic European Equity Fund € 133.720.55 0.00
		New Capital Dynamic UK Equity Fund £ 120.251.25 0.00
		New Capital Global Alpha Fund £ 118.470.25 0.00
		New Capital Global Equity Conviction Fund \$ 214.801.89 0.00
		New Capital Global Value Credit Fund \$ 161.280.20 0.00
		New Capital Japan Equity Fund ¥1713.73 - 26.80 0.00
Ennismore Smaller Cos Plc (IRL)	HPB Assurance Ltd	New Capital US Growth Fund \$ 447.686.05 0.00
5 Kensington Church St, London W8 4LD 020 7368 4220	Anglo Intl House, Bank Hill, Douglas, Isle of Man, IM1 4LN 01638 563490	New Capital US Small Cap Growth Fund \$ 241.96 - 0.62 0.00
FCA Recognised	International Insurances	New Capital Wealthy Nations Bond Fund \$ 155.470.27 0.00
Ennismore European Smlr Cos NAV £ 136.380.11 0.00	Holiday Property Bond Ser 1 £ 0.480.01 0.00	
Ennismore European Smlr Cos NAV € 151.40 - 0.02 0.00	Holiday Property Bond Ser 2 £ 0.62 - 0.00 0.00	

New Capital UCITS Fund PLC

Leconfield House, Curzon Str. www.newcapitalfunds.com

Automation & Artificial Intelligence CL I USD Acc	\$	18.45	18.45	-0.09	0.0
Asian Financials I USD	\$	473.59	473.59	1.41	0.0
Biotechnology I USD	\$	40.15	40.15	0.10	0.0
Emerging Market Stars I USD Acc	\$	16.03	-	0.02	0.0
European Ex UK Inc EUR Acc	€	11.74	11.74	-0.03	0.
Financial Opps I USD	\$	14.26	-	-0.01	1.5
GEM Income I USD	\$	14.05	-	0.00	0.
Global Convertible I USD	\$	17.58	17.58	-0.11	0.
Global Insurance I GBP	£	7.28	-	0.01	0.
Global Technology I USD	\$	90.06	-	-0.41	0.
Healthcare Blue Chip Fund I USD Acc	\$	16.73	16.73	0.05	0.
Healthcare Opps I USD	\$	67.13	-	-0.26	0.
Income Opportunities B2 I GBP Acc	£	2.41	2.41	0.00	0.
Japan Value I JPY	¥	115.40	115.40	0.20	0.
North American I USD	\$	31.93	31.93	-0.16	0.
UK Val Opp I GBP Acc	£	12.31	12.31	-0.09	0.0

Slater Growth	685.96 685.96 0.0	7 0.0
Slater Income A Inc	133.28 133.28 -0.2	6 5.2
Slater Recovery	322.49 322.49 -1.4	0.0
Slater Artorius	289.69 289.69 3.7	9 0.0

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Absolute Return Bond B GBP Acc 1159.35

High Yield Global Bond A GBP Inc 516.56 -High Yield Global Bond B GBP Inc 1106.55 -

Global Equity Income B GBP Inc 1455.44 lobal Equity Market Neutral Fund - B Acc GBP £ 12.63

Global Sustainable Equity B Acc GBP £ 30.03 -

Inv Grd Gbl Bond A Inc GBH 625.79 -

Global Sustainable Equity C Acc GBP £ 30.46

Short Dated High Yld Bd B Acc GBP £ 11.08 Short Dated High Yld Bd C Acc GBP (Hdg) £ 11.18 -

Strategic Global Bond A GBP Inc 1325.13

FCA Recognised

			(LUX)
\$ 7032.54	7032.54	346.10	0.00
\$ 6570.73	6570.73	169.26	0.00
€ 1499.74	1499.74	7.57	0.00
€ 1260.87	1260.87	13.09	0.00
\$ 1320.72	-	26.80	0.00
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Other International	Funds							
NAV	€ 541.45	-	5.74	0.00				

Intrinsic Value Invest					(IRL)
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IVI European Fund EUR	€	24.51	-	-0.16	0.00
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Polar Capital LLP Regulated			(CYM)	Stonehage Fleming Investment Management Ltd ( www.stonehagefleming.com/gbi
European Forager A EUR	€ 193.23	-	7.99 0.00	enquiries@stonehagefleming.com Regulated

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0.00	enquiries@stonehagefleming.com
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Buving price: Also called offer price. The price at which units in a unit trust are bought by investors. Includes manager's initial charge.

underlying investments. The buying and selling price for shares of an OEIC and units of a single priced unit trust are the same.

Treatment of manager's periodic capital charge:
The letter C denotes that the trust deducts all or part of the manager's/operator's periodic charge from capital, contact the manager/operator for full details of the effect of this course of action.

**Exit Charges:** The letter E denotes that an exit charge may be made when you sell units, contact the manager/operator for full details.

Time: Some funds give information about the timing of price quotes. The time shown alongside the fund manager 's/operator's name is the valuation point for their unit trusts/OEICs, unless another time is indicated by the symbol alongside the individual unit trusts/OEIC and the symbol alongside the individual unit trusts/OEICs and the symbol alongside the symbol alongside

The symbols are as follows: ≈ 0001 to 1100 hours; ↓
1101 to 1400 hours; ▲ 1401 to 1700 hours; ▶ 1701 to
midnight. Daily dealing prices are set on the basis of
the valuation point, a short period of time may elapse
before prices become available. Historic pricing: The
letter H denotes that the managers/operators will
normally deal on the price set at the most recent
valuation. The prices shown are the latest available
before publication and may not be the current dealing
levels hearies of an intervening nortfolio revaluation.

levels because of an intervening portfolio revaluation or a switch to a forward pricing basis. The

managers/operators must deal at a forward price on

request, and may move to forward pricing at any time. Forward pricing: The letter F denotes that that

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price on Fridays.



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Equinox Russian Opportunities Fund Limited	\$190.42	-	5.57	0.00

Euronova Asset Management UK LLP (CYM)

€ 36.52

0.36 0.00

Smaller Cos Cls Two Shares

Smaller Cos Cls Three Shares € 18.41

Smaller Cos Cls Four Shares € 23.69

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www.janushenderson.com							
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OGM Oasis Crescent Global Inves	tm	ent Fund	ds (U)	() ICVC	(UK)
OBM Clasis Clescent Biobal Short Term Income Fund USD Class A Shares (Dist)	\$	0.99	-	0.00	1.95
OGM Clasis Crescent Global Equity Fund USD Class A Shares (Dist)	\$	35.88	-	-0.02	0.24
OGM Casis Crescent Variable Fund GBP Class A Shares (Dist)	£	9.65	-	-0.05	0.00

OSM Clasis Clessent Global Low Equity Fund USD Class D Shares Dist \$ 12.68 -

OBM Dasis Cessert Gibbal Propert Equity Fund USD Class A Shares Disd \$ 7.85 -

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-0.05	0.00	Enquiries - 0207 493 1331				
0.00	2 59	Regulated				
-0.01	0.80	Prusik Asian Equity Income B Dist	\$ 182.83	-	1.78	4.25
	0.32	Prusik Asia Emerging Opportunities Fund A Acc	\$ 198.78	-	0.35	0.00
		Prusik Asia Fund U Dist.	£ 254.13	-	1.40	0.00
-0.11	1.10					

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Toscafund Asset Manag	jeme	ent LL	P		(UK)
www.toscafund.com					
Authorised Funds					
Aptus Global Financials B Acc	£	3.97	-	-0.02	4.19
Antus Global Financials B Inc.	t	2 73	-	-0.01	5.37

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Algebris Investments

Algebris Financial Credit R EUR € 164.09

Algebris Financial Credit Rd EUR € 109.21

Algebris Financial Income I EUR € 158.27

Algebris Financial Income R EUR € 146.51

Algebris Financial Equity B EUR € 115.88

Algebris IG Financial Credit B EUR € 111.26

Algebris IG Financial Credit R EUR € 110.39 Algebris Global Credit Opportunities I EUR € 130.40
Algebris Global Credit Opportunities R EUR € 128.36

Algebris Global Credit Opportunities Rd EUR € 128.36

Algebris Core Italy I EUR

Algebris Core Italy R EUR

Algebris Financial Income Rd EUR € 96.03 -

	High Income	£ 0.8803	-	-0.0038	3.7
<b>—</b> — 1 — 1	Sterling Bond	£1.6258	-	-0.0082	2.0
	Brooks Macdonald Internation	al Multi Stra	tegy	Fund Li	mite
	Cautious Balanced Strategy	£1.3666	-	-0.0027	0.0
INVESTMENTS	Growth Strategy	£2.0164	-	-0.0060	0.0
INVESTMENTS	High Growth Strategy	£2.7878	-	-0.0053	0.0
	US\$ Growth Strategy	\$1.9518	-	-0.0071	0.0
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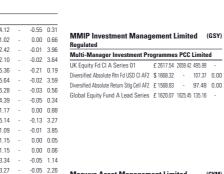
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Diversified Income 2 Units GBP Inc. £ 1.49 1.49 -0.01 0.7	Fidelity Global High Vield Fund V-ACC-GRP £ 15.64
Diversified Income 3 Units GBP Inc. £ 1.50 1.50 -0.01 0.7	Eidolity Japan Eurod W/ ACC CDD £ 5.20 0.02 0.5
Diversified income 3 office day file 12 1.30 1.30 0.01 0.7	Fidelity Japan Smaller Companies Fund W-ACC-GBP £ 4.390.05 0.3
	Fidelity Select 50 Balanced Fund PI-ACC-GBP £ 1.17 - 0.00 0.8
	Fidelity Special Situations Fund W-ACC-GBP £ 35.140.13 3.2
	Short Dated Corporate Bond Fund Y ACC GBP £ 11.090.01 3.8
	Fidelity Sustainable Water & Waste W Acc £ 1.15 - 0.00 0.0
	Fidelity Sustainable Water & Waste W Inc £ 1.15 - 0.00 0.0
	Fidelity UK Growth Fund W-ACC-GBP £ 3.340.05 1.1-
CG Asset Management Limited (IRI	Fidelity UK Select Fund W-ACC-GBP £ 3.270.05 2.2
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RAM Systematic European Eq € 481.68 481.68 -2.76

RAM Systematic Global Eq Sustainable Alpha \$ 103.30 103.30 0.88

RAM Systematic Long/Short European Eq € 132.02 132.02 -0.08

RAM Systematic US Sustainable Eq \$363.27 363.27 0.42 RAM Tactical Global Bond Total Return € 155 94 155 94 -0.22

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Regulated

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Pegasus Fund Ltd A-1 GBP	£	43.14	-	6.53	0.

Toscafund Asset Management LLP

Tosca Mid Cap GBP

Tosca Opportunity B USD

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Troian Investment Funds						
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Trojan Ethical O Acc	118.96	-	-0.93	0.10		



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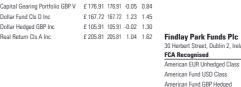
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0 100.10	0.00	FCA Recognised			
			CG Portfolio Fund Plc		_
			Absolute Return Cls M Inc	£ 132.58 132.58 -0.17 1.3	34
			Capital Gearing Portfolio GBP P	£ 36376.38 36376.38 -10.23 0.8	84
			Capital Gearing Portfolio GBP V	£ 176.91 176.91 -0.05 0.8	84
			Dollar Fund Cls D Inc	£ 167.72 167.72 1.23 1.4	45
			Dollar Hedged GBP Inc	£ 105.91 105.91 -0.02 1.3	30
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Chartered Asset Management Pte Ltd

Dodge & Cox Worldwide Funds

Raffles-Asia Investment Company \$ 1.53 1.53 0.08 2.06

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EUR Accumulating Share Class € 34.60 - 0.23 0.00 GBP Distributing Class (H) £ 13.39 - 0.01 0.95





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MAI - Buy & Lease (Australia) A\$ 102.95 - -0.80 0.00 Milltrust Global Emerging Markets Fund - Class A \$ 119.25 - 0.79 0.00

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LF Ruffer Equity & General C Acc	497.96	-	4.88	0.1			
LF Ruffer Equity & General C Inc	455.41	-	4.46	0.1			
LF Ruffer Equity & General O Acc	485.57	-	4.74	0.0			
LF Ruffer Equity & General O Inc	449.56	-	4.39	0.0			
LF Ruffer Gold C Acc	324.57	-	19.61	0.0			
LF Ruffer Gold C Inc	196.44	-	11.87	0.0			
LF Ruffer Gold O Acc	316.38	-	19.10	0.0			
LF Ruffer Japanese C Inc	171.85	-	0.22	0.0			
LF Ruffer Japanese C Acc	369.28	-	0.47	0.0			
LF Ruffer Pacific & Emerging Markets C Acc	406.76	-	6.61	0.7			
LF Ruffer Pacific & Emerging Markets C Inc	110.85	-	1.80	0.7			
LF Ruffer Pacific & Emerging Markets O Acc	396.26	-	6.42	0.4			
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Memnon European Fund - Class U2 GBP	£ 203.24	-	-1.22	0.0

Other International Funds					
Arisaig Asia Consumer Fund Class A (Ex-Alcohol) shares	\$	132.42	-	-0.58	0.00
Arisaig Asia Consumer Fund Limited	\$	132.31	-	-0.60	0.00
Arisaig Global Emerging Markets Consumer Fund	\$	17.67	-	-0.02	0.00
Arisaig Global Emerging Markets Consumer UCITS	€	12.85	-	-0.01	-
Arisaig Global Emerging Markets Consumer UCITS STG	£	14.50	-	-0.10	-
Arisaig Latin America Consumer Fund	\$	26.07	-	-0.18	0.00

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		GBP Distributing Share class	£	21.80	-	-0.03	0.94			
		EUR Accumulating Share Class	€	32.16	-	0.05	0.00			
		GBP Distributing Class (H)	£	12.64	-	-0.05	0.47			
		Dodge & Cox Worldwide Fun	ds p	lc-U.S.	Stoc	k Fund				
		USD Accumulating Share Class	\$	32.43	-	0.03	0.00			
		GBP Accumulating Share Class	£	37.31	-	0.15	0.00			

Website: www.foord.com - Email	in	fo@foor	d.cor	n	
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Foord International Fund   R	\$	47.19	-	-0.39	-
Foord Global Equity Fund (Lux)   R	\$	18.08	-	-0.17	-
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Foord Global Equity Fund (Sing)   B	\$	22.11	-	-0.20	0.00
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Franklin Emg Mkts Debt Opp SGD S\$	20.75	-	0.03	4.36
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Regulated				
Milltrust Alaska Brazil SP A	\$ 72.96	-	-2.13	-
Milltrust Laurium Africa SP A	\$ 96.09	-	-0.66	-
Milltrust Marcellus India Fund	\$125.24	-	-0.09	-
Milltrust Singular ASEAN SP Founders	\$161.57	-	1.28	-
Milltrust SPARX Korea Equity SP A	\$170.30	-	-2.03	-
Milltrust VTB Russia Fund SP	\$128.69	-	-0.02	-
Milltrust Xingtai China SP A	\$ 145.76	-	1.81	-

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latinum All Star Fund - A	\$	139.89	-	-	-	LF Ruffer Pacific & Emerging Markets O Acc	396.26	-	6.42	0.49
latinum Global Growth UCITS Fund	\$	13.53	-	0.10	0.00	LF Ruffer Total Return C Acc	513.65	-	7.27	0.82
stinum Essential Resources UOTS Fund SICAV USD Class E	\$	8.61	-	-0.05	0.00	LF Ruffer Total Return C Inc	332.40	-	4.70	0.83
latinum Global Dividend UCITS Fund	\$	56.27	-	0.15	0.00	LF Ruffer Total Return O Acc	500.82	-	7.07	0.82
						LF Ruffer Total Return O Inc	323.91	-	4.57	0.83





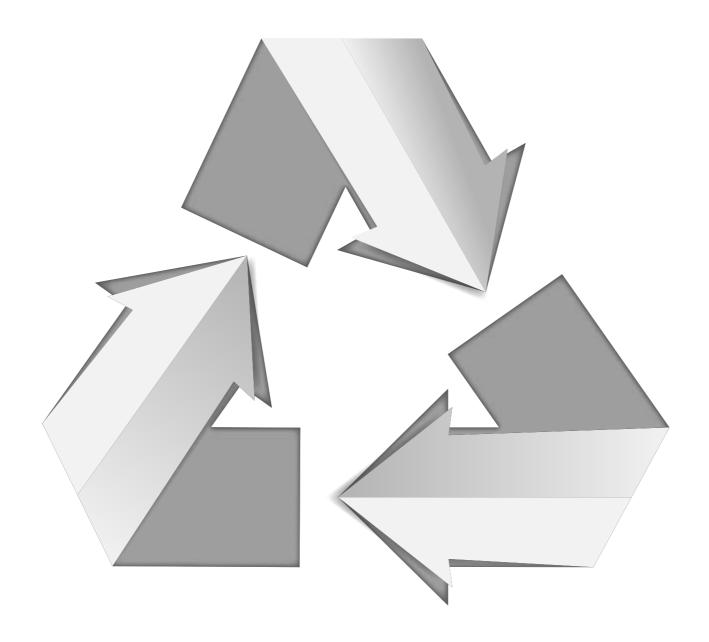
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FINANCIAL TIMES Wednesday 13 January 2021

#### **ARTS**

# An epiphany with Emin

A former detractor has written a powerful and incisive tribute to one of the bravest female artists of our time. By Jan Dalley

he past, in Tracey Emin's work, is not a distant memory. It's right here, right now. As Jonathan Jones writes in his recent short monograph on the British artist: "She recaptures the past still bloody, and slams it on to canvas with a scream." His brief book – hardly more than an essay, though richly accompanied by reproductions that make it an education in itself — is devoted to explaining what that scream consists of.

Jones, art critic for The Guardian and known for his acid opinions, has often torn Emin's work to shreds. When she rose to celebrity on the tide of the Young British Artists of the late 1980s, Jones was among the first and loudest to slam what he saw as the easy sensationalism of a time when, as he writes here, "fame was inversely related to anything that resembled old-fashioned art-making."

Then came his epiphany. Three years ago, Emin invited her ferocious detractor to visit her studio in the south of France. It wasn't the luxurious invitation it sounds, for a man - as he confessed in a newspaper article about the visit — with a plethora of phobias. Scared of heights (they reached her mountain home in a helicopter taxi). Also of snakes (there were plenty). Also of swimming in the sea (bobbing in the blue Mediterranean, Emin informed him she'd lured him there to drown him for giving her such horrible reviews).

Yet during the visit, his view of her work made an abrupt volte face. Once, as he wrote, "the infamy of 'My Bed' [the notorious unmade bed installation of 1998] seemed to be eclipsing what I saw then as more serious contemporary art. Now I think 'My Bed' is one of the most enduring and poetic works of our time."

Jones became Emin's greatest cham-

pion. In this latest of several monographs, he proclaims that: "Her art is serious because it focuses relentlessly on one person's joy and anguish."

Yet although unashamedly the work of an admirer, Jones's book makes a persuasive objective case, investigating Emin's art and its development with all his considerable acuity and skill. His short text's chapters cover her early life and work in her hometown of Margate in Kent, her Expressionist heroes and student work (he shows us some

#### Jones places 'My Bed' firmly in the great art historical tradition of the female nude

rarely seen early watercolours), the "readymades", the embroidered blankets, the neon pieces, and finally (best) the nudes.

In fact Emin's nudes are the real subject here. He places "My Bed" firmly in the great art historical tradition of the female nude: Emin's empty scrumpled bed, littered around with the slummy detritus of a life (overflowing ashtray, used tissues and condoms, a vodka bottle, discarded tights) is not so much a readymade installation, he asserts, as "a plinth that lacks its nude". As "forensic evidence - traces of the woman whose bed this was", he sees a modern-day version of Manet's Olympia, just risen from those scuzzy sheets.

Discussing Emin's parallels with Expressionism – the movement in art devoted to investing external objects with the artist's interior states of mind -Jones lists Emin's heroes as Egon Schiele, the German artist whose



portrayals of naked women are savage, remorselessly unsentimentalised, and Edvard Munch. Her own nudes — often apparently rushed, sketchy, furiously scribbled – are frequently as brutal as Schiele's: abstracted, exploded, missing limbs and often the head, expressing inner pain and turmoil as a great sea of blood red or a ferocious scumble of black, a dissolution of personality in the chaos of sex and its joys and miseries. They are a world away from, for instance, the calm odalisques of Matisse – an artist, Jones says, she regards as "a decorator".

Jones doesn't locate Emin in any tradition of nudes by female artists - but that's because there isn't such a tradition. Or not much of one, until recently. The famous male gaze for which the nude in art came into existence has no place in the un-airbrushed self-examination of a female artist.

So rather than placing her in the

tradition of the male-made nude, we could think of the hundreds of often highly explicit paintings, drawings and photographs Emin has made around her own body as one great act of self-portraiture. Jones never uses this term: he talks eloquently of her honesty and her remorseless self-exposure (betrayal, rape, abortion), the rawness of her portrayal of sexuality, pain and violence all of it true. But he doesn't comment on the titles she gives the works, and their insistence on the self-referential.

These works are not about everywoman, or the female condition; they are about her. It's not "Bed" but "My Bed"; in almost every work, there's a first-person pronoun. In the neons, it's as if the titles stand alone, shorn of their works and reduced to the proclamation of self writ large and bright: "Every part of me is bleeding", "I want my time with you". The titles plead, cajole, demand ("Kiss me, kiss me"); they reach out to a





Clockwise, from left: Tracey Emin in her studio in the South of France; Emin's 'My Bed' (1998); 'I want my time with you' (2007)

viewer ("Dreamt of you", "The memory of your touch"); they speak of need, misery, anger, self-abasement (a nude on all fours is entitled "I am the animal you want me to be").

Emin can be funny, too - though it's humour tinged with sadness. A photograph of 2000 called "I've got it all" has her sitting on a floor showered with coins, clutching a great wad of banknotes between her bare splayed legs: a joke about her success and wealth, but in the end a pathetic image. And more recent self-portraiture has real pathos: "Insomnia Room" (2019) is a gallery-sized installation of giant blow-ups of selfies taken lying in bed — of her face only, for once. As Jones describes it, "She studies, and forces us to study, every incipient wrinkle and blemish as she lies awake at night, sleepless, scrutinising herself."

Jones has written a powerful and incisive tribute to one of the bravest female artists we have. Or perhaps of all time. "Not many people could live in public to this degree," he writes. "Yet she seems most herself when projecting her inner life outwards."

'Tracey Emin (Art File)' by Jonathan Jones is published by Laurence King

**FT NEWS BRIEFING** 

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# How can players help save the planet?

**GAMING** Tom Faber

y Sims family never used to care much about the environment. They would leave the television on all day and heat the outdoor pool right through winter. Nobody was judging them. Yet since I got The Sims 4: Eco Lifestyle expansion pack, my pixelated characters have gone full eco-warrior: recycling feverishly, building wind turbines and collecting dew for the water in their morning showers. They have also adopted a hipster range of eco-adjacent hobbies: upcycling clothes, making candles and brewing kombucha. It's a typically goofy approach to sustainable living from The Sims, but there's a timely message here. When it comes to saving the planet, we all have a role to play.

Games have flirted with environmentalism over the years. In 1990, a decade before Will Wright made the first Sims game, he incorporated global warming into SimEarth, threatening players' planets with rising temperatures that could melt ice caps and cause oceans to boil away. The next year, in the first Civilisation, rising pollution levels could turn plains into deserts, a concept revisited in 2018's Gathering Storm expansion for Civilisation VI. A recent add-on for Minecraft introduced carbon dioxide to the game, which rises to dangerous levels if you smelt ore, but diminishes when you plant trees. Several new games set for release this year also tackle environmental themes: We Are the Caretakers tasks players with protecting huge animals in its Afrofuturist world, while Endling casts you as a mother fox protecting her cubs from threats such as climate change and pollution.

There are also games that prioritise environmental messaging over the fun of their gameplay. These include Plasticity, an elegant platformer where you traverse a world drowning under plastic waste, and the work of Earth Games, a studio which releases educational projects with laboured titles such as Soot Out at the O C Corral, in which you attempt to catch falling soot particles before they contaminate the snow.

Civilisation simulator *Eco* offers an online world where every player's action affects the in-game environment. It has been credited with helping young players grapple with the real effects of climate change, which are often tricky of the need for more meaningful envito conceptualise.

While environmental themes stretch back into gaming history, it is only

recently that the real-world gaming industry has begun interrogating its sustainability practices. Each stage of a console's life cycle, from manufacture to distribution to use, incurs its own environmental cost. The plastics and metals used to make hardware come with their own carbon footprints - an investigation by The Verge calculated that production of the PlayStation 4 resulted in more carbon emissions than all of Jamaica in a year.

Consoles are transported through an international delivery network with its own fuel costs. When they're settled under our televisions, US gaming hardware uses an estimated 34 terawatthours of energy per year, the equivalent

US gaming hardware uses the equivalent of 5m cars, or the annual energy use of Denmark

of 5m cars or the annual energy use of Denmark, according to a study in the Computer Games Journal. Finally, at the end of their lives, obsolete consoles often end up in landfills as "e-waste", the global sum of which produced in 2019 was 53m tonnes according to the Global E-Waste Monitor — heavier than the combined weight of all the adults

While certain industry changes have had a positive environmental impact in recent years, such as the replacement of physical game disks by digital downloads and the rise in virtual meetings and events following the pandemic, many of the big companies are aware

ronmental action. The Playing for the Planet Initiative, founded in 2019 as part of the UN Environment Programme, now includes 29 member companies which have pledged to diminish the environmental impact of

Big hitters such as Microsoft and Sony have set ambitious targets — Microsoft intends to be carbon negative by 2030, and Sony plans to "achieve a zero environmental footprint" by 2050 - while mobile games companies such as Rovio and SYBO have added "green nudges" to their games Angry Birds and Subway Surfers, features which encourage players to engage with sustainability.

Some of these pledges seem like little more than lip service to environmentalism, riding on the positive PR associated with "green companies", but it's still better than the major companies which have not joined the initiative, including Take-Two Interactive, Electronic Arts, Activision Blizzard and Nintendo.

Ultimately, environmental action needs to come as part of a communal movement: individual gamers as part of a 2bn-strong group, and games companies as part of the wider consumer electronics industry. Over the past year, Covid-19 has drawn attention away from the climate crisis, but this remains the existential threat of our lifetimes.

Without dramatic action, it's easy to imagine a future where children can only appreciate the beauty of our natural world in video games — they wander through digital versions of the forests which have all burnt down, or hike across glaciers that have long since melted. With their stunning environments and thrill of exploration, games have always had a unique power to instil wonder in players about the world around us. They underscore how much we have to lose.



'Plasticity' depicts a world drowning in plastic waste

#### FT BIG READ. CHINA ECONOMY

The crackdown on Alibaba and Ant Group amounts to an unprecedented squeeze on a ubiquitous ecommerce empire. It reflects a distrust of powerful private enterprises and a desire to rein in Jack Ma. By Tom Mitchell, Yuan Yang and Ryan McMorrow

our years ago, when Ant Group's premier money market fund was racing to a peak of more than \$260bn worth of assets under management, many of China's state-owned banks and their regulators started to get agitated. In a series of calls and meetings with Jack Ma, Ant's founder, bank executives and regulatory officials demanded that its Yu'E Bao fund be reined in.

"Yu'E Bao was pulling a lot of money from the banks," says one person familiar with the discussions. "The banks were worried about the impact on liquidity and wanted Ant to take measures to minimise the impact. The conversations were pretty tense."

In the end, Mr Ma had to back down and Yu'E Bao imposed caps on how much people could deposit. Between March and December of 2018, its funds under management fell by a third to \$168bn and stood at \$183bn last September.

The showdown would prove to be a prelude to the much bigger confrontation that now pits the Chinese Communist party and President Xi Jinping against not just Ant but also Alibaba, the ecommerce group founded by Mr Ma.

The stand-off, which has sparked rampant speculation about Mr Ma's whereabouts, could become a defining moment for the future of private business in Mr Xi's China.

On December 24, China's market regulator announced it was launching an antitrust probe into Alibaba and sent investigators to its headquarters in the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou, Mr Ma's hometown. The announcement came just two weeks after the party's politburo said it would target monopoly businesses to prevent the "disorderly expansion of capital".

The move on Alibaba also came two months after financial regulators dramatically cancelled Ant's planned \$37bn initial public offering, which would have been the world's largest.

Taken together, the measures amount to an unprecedented squeeze on a business empire whose ubiquitous services are central to the functioning of China's pioneering online economy. Ant says Alipay, its payment app, is regularly used by 700m people – half of China's total population - and 80m merchants, processing payments worth Rmb118tn (\$18.2tn) in the group's last financial

Alibaba's shares have fallen by almost 30 per cent since the regulatory showdown began in late October, putting a big dent in the net worth of Mr Ma, who has not been seen in public since then. Over the same period his fortune has declined from \$62bn to \$49bn, according to Bloomberg data. The Hurun China Rich List estimated that Mr Ma had been the country's richest man as recently as October 20 but would now rank fourth, his top slot taken by a bottled water tycoon, Zhong Shanshan.

The results of the showdown will say a lot about the sort of economy that China is developing. If Ant and Alibaba are crippled by regulators - or its founder is personally targeted by investigators - it will go down as a landmark moment in the party's fickle relationship with China's private sector even though Mr Ma is, ironically, a party member

Since Deng Xiaoping launched the "reform and opening" era 40 years ago, the party has become ever more dependent on private sector companies for economic growth, job creation and tax revenues. But the party's fixation with control, especially since Mr Xi came to power almost a decade ago, also triggers periodic crackdowns on the sector and prominent entrepreneurs.

Yet there is another potential outcome that would indicate a less fraught relationship between the party-state and business. The investigations into Ant and Alibaba could lead to the sort of settlements that are not dissimilar to those pursued in the US and EU against large finance and technology groups. That would leave Mr Ma's two flagship companies humbled but still formidable and highly profitable national champions. Even then, a strong political message would have been sent.

"Chinese internet magnates can still enjoy thriving businesses and enormous fortunes if they are able to convince the top leadership of their loyalty," says Chen Long at Plenum, a Beijing-based consultancy. "The top leadership wants to ensure that neither Ma nor anyone else ever crosses the red line of trying to exert personal influence over government policies again - at least not publicly. The government will support them on the condition that they serve the national interest first."

#### **Fintech revolution**

Mr Ma has not appeared in public since October 24, when he gave a high-profile speech critical of the same state-owned banks he clashed with over Yu'E Bao's



# The future of private business

'Everyone is asking me if Jack Ma's in danger, but he's doing fine. He responds [to messages and calls] quickly and seems like he's in good spirits'

rapid growth, as well as regulators who he said often sacrifice innovation on the altar of stability. According to people involved in the listing, the speech angered Mr Xi, who made the final decision to halt the Ant IPO.

"To innovate without taking risks is to strangle innovation," Mr Ma said. "There is no such thing as riskless innovation in the world. Very often, an attempt to minimise risk to zero is the biggest risk itself."

He was speaking at the same forum where Wang Qishan, Mr Xi's powerful vice-president and former anti-corruption tsar, had earlier emphasised the paramount importance of financial system stability. "Efforts should be made to prevent and lower financial risks ... security always ranks first," Mr Wang said. "While new financial technologies have improved efficiency and brought convenience, financial risks have been heightened."

In an unprecedented public rebuke of Ant two months later, on December 26 China's central bank criticised Ant for being too cavalier about financial risk and taking advantage of regulatory



'Chinese internet magnates can still enjoy thriving businesses enormous fortunes if

and they are able to convince the leadership of their loyalty'

loopholes. But as frustrated as regulators are with Ant, they cannot ignore the beneficial effects of the financial revolution it has led in China.

"Ant Group," People's Bank of China vice-governor Pan Gongsheng admitted in his otherwise critical comments, "has played an innovative role in developing financial technology and improving the efficiency and inclusiveness of financial services". The central bank, he added in a nod to jittery entrepreneurs, was also "unshakeable" in its commitment to "protect property rights and promote entrepreneurship".

Mr Ma has long enjoyed support from officials in a range of State Council ministries, as well as the lead financial regulators, who appreciate the contributions of Ant, Alibaba and their rivals, all of whom have transformed China's economy and made its online services sector a global leader. When his status as a party member was first confirmed only two years ago, it was in the context of an award he was receiving from the party's Central Committee for "making China a leading player in the international ecommerce industry, internet finance and cloud computing".

Alibaba and Ant's ecommerce and online payment services were even more critical at the height of China's successful battle to contain coronavirus, providing essential services to the hundreds of millions of people caught in draconian lockdowns.

"There are different lines of thought within the regulators," Mr Chen says. "Until Jack Ma's speech the pro-growth people had the upper hand. But Xi thought the speech was too much and a second [risk-averse] group took the lead. If his speech hadn't happened, everything would have been fine.

Disappearing acts are unusual for Mr Ma, who also missed the November finale of his African reality TV show -Africa's Business Heroes. He routinely gives flamboyant musical performances at Alibaba events and hobnobs with heads of state and government leaders.

As China's most successful private entrepreneur, Mr Ma enjoys unique status in China – and overseas. His fluent English has made him a huge celebrity on the international conference circuit, with a star quality unmatched by any of his private or state-sector peers.

When Mr Xi hosted the G20 leaders summit in Hangzhou in 2016, some of his guests also visited Mr Ma - something that irked the Chinese president, according to one diplomat involved and other people familiar with the matter. Mr Ma's VIP callers included Indonesian president Joko Widodo, Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau and the then Italian premier, Matteo Renzi. Foreign leaders were offered limited time slots and the Chinese foreign ministry was mostly cut out of the process.

Over the past week rumours about Mr Ma's whereabouts have abounded on China's carefully monitored social media channels, while domestic media outlets have received strict instructions from censors about the stories they can and cannot run on Ant and Alibaba's regulatory troubles.

Many of Mr Ma's friends and colleagues strongly dispute suggestions that he is personally in any sort of legal jeopardy, let alone on the run. "He is in China and not travelling because of Covid, not anything else. He's lying low," says one friend of Mr Ma.

Another friend who communicates with Mr Ma regularly adds: "Everyone is asking me if he's in danger, but he's doing fine. He responds [to messages and calls] quickly and seems like he's in good spirits. Discussions with regulators are still very much in process so he just has to stay quiet until they are resolved."

#### Leadership missteps

Friends add that while Mr Ma may now regret the consequences of his October 24 speech, he meant what he said and still believes passionately in what he

sees as Ant's mission to transform the provision of financial services in the world's second-largest economy.

Yu'E Bao, which translates as "account balance treasure", was started in 2013 and allowed anyone in China, from restaurant staff to the urban yuppies they serve, to deposit as little as Rmb1 (\$0.15) in a money-market fund and earn more interest than they could in a Chinese savings deposit account. Just four years later it became the world's largest money market fund, surpassing JPMorgan's US government money market fund.

The fund's success was a dramatic demonstration of Ant's potential. But it was also a threat to one of China's most powerful vested interest groups — state banks and the officials who regulate them. The central bank was also concerned. In its annual financial stability report published in late 2018, the PBoC said it would "strengthen regulation of systematically important money market funds", without mentioning Yu'E Bao by name.

"When a taxi driver can deposit one renminbi in a money-market fund and get interest, that's a big breakthrough," says a former Alibaba executive. "Jack feels what Ant is doing is good for society."

Mr Ma's companies have rebounded strongly from regulatory disputes before, although Ant and Alibaba never faced scrutiny as intense as they now do. Ant's run-in with banks and regulators over Yu'E Bao, for example, did little to hinder its overall business or influence. Ant's credit business grew so large that it now facilitates about one-tenth of all of China's non-mortgage consumer loans.

The group also aligned its interests with those of powerful investors. Ant's first fundraising in 2015 brought in a slew of well-connected shareholders, all of whom were set to be rewarded handsomely in the IPO. The Chinese government's social security fund and a group of state-owned insurers held stakes in Ant valued at, respectively, Rmb48bn and Rmb45bn at the IPO price.

Shares belonging to an investment vehicle put together by Boyu Capital, whose executives have included the grandson of former Chinese president Jiang Zemin, were valued at Rmb15bn.

Even China Central Television, the Above: Jack Ma country's state broadcaster, held Ant may have to put many Ant shares worth Rmb3bn. businesses into a

"Financial regulators have been very concerned about Ant's growing power and ability to push back against any attempts to bring it under control," says one Chinese government adviser. "Previous attempts to bring Ant under more control were not really working because it was so big and so powerful. There is now clearly a very dramatic shift."

Bill Deng, a former Ant executive and co-founder of XTransfer, a cross-border payments platform, says Mr Ma may have become too confident.

"For a long time, regulators let Ant expand and I think [management] became a bit too complacent," he says. "If there are hundreds of people praising you, you can get overly optimistic. Financial deleveraging policies have been a trend for several years now and the government is extremely careful when it comes to finance."

The cancellation of Ant's IPO triggered a

cascade of official and state media criti-

Authorities see the holding company

model as a way to rein in large financial

conglomerates while increasing their

transparency. They also want Ant to

share its vast trove of consumer data

with the central bank – something it

Having to wait for a smaller return

than they almost locked in a few months

ago will be disappointing for Ant's inves-

tors, but there are worse alternatives.

"The Chinese government does not

want to kill Ant, but to make sure it

grows in a healthy way," says Mr Deng.

"Ant can surpass its current obstacles. If

they have patience, they will be able to

has refused to do before.

#### Healthy growth

cism of the fintech group. Regulators >\$260bn have also made clear they want the group to shift many of its businesses including payments, lending, insurance management of and wealth management — into a new, Group's premier more tightly regulated holding vehicle. money market fund, This will increase Ant's capital requireat its 2018 peak ments and lower its valuation.

\$183bn Value of Yu'E Bao's AUM in Q3 2020

Assets under

Yu'E Bao, Ant

new, more

tightly regulated

holding vehicle.

Below: late last

month central

governor Pan

criticised Ant

for being too

cavalier about

financial risk

advantage of

and taking

regulatory

loopholes

Gongsheng

bank vice-

after caps were imposed on individual deposits \$18.2tn

Value of payments processed on Alipay, Ant's payment app (left), in the group's last financial year

~30% Fall in Alibaba's shares since the regulatory showdown began in late October

rise again." As for the antitrust investigation into Alibaba, a manageable outcome for the group would include an end to exclusivity arrangements that restrict merchants from selling on rival platforms. Alibaba could also potentially face a large fine - the maximum allowed would be 10 per cent of its previous year's revenues — if it is deemed to have violated China's anti-monopoly law. "Debates about exclusivity have been going on for years, it's a competitive market," says the former Alibaba execu-

tive. "I don't think Alibaba is going to get broken up. It's just that the methods by which they fight for the market are going to be more regulated."

Additional reporting by Sherry Fei Ju and





# FINANCIAL TIMES

'Without fear and without favour'

WEDNESDAY 13 JANUARY 2021

# The electric car future is finally taking off

Norway's EV success offers policy lessons for other nations

There have been many false dawns for the electric car. France and the UK were among the pioneers of electric vehicles in the late 19th century, with well-heeled customers using them for short trips around cities. By the early 1900s, however, the discovery of abundant oil reserves and larger road networks had helped to undermine the case for electric in favour of petrol.

Today, more than a century later, polluting diesel and petrol cars still dominate sales globally but there are encouraging signs that 2021 could prove the start of a lasting electric future. Norway, a nation whose wealth is based on fossil fuels, last year became the first country in the world where the sale of electric cars overtook those powered by petrol, diesel and hybrid engines. Electric vehicles made up just over 54 per cent of all new cars sold in the country in 2020, a global record, and up from a mere 1 per cent of the overall market a decade ago. It still has some way to go but Norway looks on course to meet a government target, set in 2016, of banning sales of all internal combustion engine vehicles by 2025.

As policymakers look to rebuild their economies after the coronavirus pandemic, Norway's success in promoting the uptake of EVs provides an important lesson in how targeted policies can help to change consumer behaviour and spur private-sector investment. Early and generous government support as far back as 1990 in the form of a temporary exemption from the country's vehicle purchase tax proved an important first step.

Since then other initiatives, including lower road taxes and the removal of charges for toll roads and public ferries, have helped to spur the uptake of EVs. Crucially, while an extensive charging infrastructure was begun with government money, it kickstarted subsequent private sector investment.

Norway's fossil fuel heritage may have helped to cushion the loss of tax revenues but the country's success offers a road map for others in how to promote a green industrial revolution. Britain's Boris Johnson last year vowed to end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030 as part of a 10point green plan. The target is laudable but only achievable if accompanied by an improvement of the existing charging infrastructure for EVs. Britain's motor industry body last September pointed out that for customer demand to keep pace with the growth in the number of zero emission capable car models available, at least 2.8m new public charging points would need to be built by 2035 - an investment worth £16.7bn.

Ultimately, the goal must be for EVs to become commercial in their own right. A key tipping point will come when they cost as much to produce as conventional vehicles. Mass production and competition will help, and the interest of Apple, the maker of the iPhone, in entering the industry possibly through a tie-up with Hyundai, is an indication that both are on their way. Norway has begun to eliminate some of the previous fringe benefits of owning an electric car such as free parking, charging and no tolls. The next critical question will be when to phase back in taxes for EVs. A key challenge for the industry will be how to produce cheaper and more efficient

For now, the optimism contained in forecasts that global EV sales will grow 50 per cent or more this year appears well-founded. At the same time, the remarkable stock market run of Tesla, which has made Elon Musk the world's richest man, shows that investors are betting electric cars are here to stay, irrespective of which company ultimately inherits the electric future.

# Covid exposes the UK's threadbare safety net

Government is always playing catch-up in support for the most needy

To many Britons Marcus Rashford, the Manchester United striker, will for ever be associated with the impact of the pandemic on the UK's most vulnerable citizens. The footballer's campaign to ensure deprived children continue to receive state-financed meals during school lockdowns has repeatedly shamed Boris Johnson's Conservative government into belated action. The latest scandal he has drawn attention to – photos of food packages that seem to fall short of their supposed value and inadequate to feed children - highlights one of the government's main failures through the pandemic: an apparent ignorance of how the poorest live and constant need to play catch-up when the reality is pointed out.

Even before the pandemic the UK provided less support for those out of work than comparable countries. After a year of joblessness, Britons receive an average of 17 per cent of their pre-unemployment income compared to 59 per cent in Germany, 54 per cent in Spain or 34 per cent in New Zealand, according to statistics from the OECD. The long wait for benefit payments to arrive was already driving destitution. Those who receive universal credit for the first time have to wait five weeks or more for their first payment. This forces many claimants into rent arrears or to rely on food banks.

Now the pandemic has exposed many more to the threadbare nature of Britain's welfare state, often for the first time. The number of people on universal credit, a welfare scheme that consolidated different benefits aimed at the low paid, has more than doubled from 2.7m in November 2019 to 5.8m a year later. Many of these new claimants will never have anticipated relying on the welfare system. They include the estimated 3m not covered by other government support schemes, among them many company owner-directors.

There is both a public health and a human justification for a more comprehensive social safety net. Two psychologists argued in the British Medical Journal recently that compliance with lockdown measures remained relatively high with the exception of selfisolation. The writers suggest this demonstrates the importance of support: those who cannot go outside still need to obtain food. The poorest are less likely to have excess funds they can invest in stockpiles, be able to afford the communications technology needed to find help, or have other networks to rely on.

While wealthier workers have often been able to save during the pandemic, living costs for the most deprived have increased. The Resolution Foundation, a think-tank, says three factors have increased the cost of living for those on low incomes, particularly parents. First are the extra expenses from having children at home, including the costs associated with home schooling. Second, food has become more expensive as shops have reduced their ranges and ended promotions. Finally, the need to cut back on social mixing and the closure of free services means there is less support available.

If the government wants to get ahead of the problem and stop offering open goals to Mr Rashford, it could start by pledging now, even before the annual Budget, to maintain the £20 a week uplift in universal credit scheduled to end in March. Replacing free meal deliveries universally with vouchers, or even cash, would ensure the full value reached parents. It was right to extend for six weeks a ban on evictions that was set to expire in February, but it should be lengthened. For a government that has pledged to help the "left behind", those on universal credit or relying on free meals have a clear case to be first in line for more support.

# Letters

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## Britain's reputation is at stake as host of COP26 climate summit

The appointment of Alok Sharma, former business secretary, as full-time chair of the Glasgow climate change talks in November is welcome (Report, January 9), but the government needs to back him up with a first-rate secretariat and top level and sustained diplomatic support from the foreign secretary and the prime minister.

The evidence so far is that the government underestimates how high profile the Glasgow Conference of the Parties (COP) is likely to be, whether success or failure.

Not only is climate change a key priority of the new Biden

administration — with John Kerry as its knowledgeable, committed and cabinet-level envoy — but we have just emerged from a year that has underscored its urgency for many other participants.

Copernicus, the EU monitoring centre, has just reported last year as the joint hottest on record (with 2016 which was artificially boosted by El Niño). The six hottest years in human history have occurred since 2014.

There was a 38C temperature recorded in Russia's Arctic Circle. There were big wildfires in Australia, Siberia and the US west coast. Summer Arctic ice cover was the second lowest on record. There was a record number -30 — of Atlantic hurricanes. There was record flooding in the Sahel — the whole belt south of the Sahara from Senegal to Sudan — and in Indonesia.

We are at a key juncture if we are to stop the irreparable damage of global warming beyond 2C.

Yet the fall in the costs of renewable energy, and the increasing development of other low carbon technologies in transport, buildings and agriculture, show that we can succeed if there is a strong international will backed by

appropriate incentives and regulation.

The coronavirus crisis and Brexit

fallout are understandably front of stage, but it is a definition of good government that it should be able to handle several problems at once. The Glasgow COP needs to show more ambition on climate targets, more monitoring and more detailed national plans

A failure at the Glasgow COP would damage global sustainability — and the UK's reputation.

Chris Huhne

Former UK Energy and Climate Change Secretary 2010-12, London EC1, UK

# Demand for clean energy is spur for change at Shell

Your article "Will Shell case accelerate the shift to green energy?" (The Big Read, January 12) argues that Shell "can still continue to expand its fossil fuel businesses while meeting its 'net zero' emissions goal". That is neither practically possible, nor true to our intent.

Shell's intent is visible in the way the company is already, and enthusiastically, moving into low and zero-carbon energy while lowering our net carbon footprint. Shell knows it must do so today if it is to be a successful business in the future. That is the spur for change: the fact Shell's customers are increasingly demanding cleaner energy.

And that is the basis for the company's business decisions, rather than the legal action described in the article. In the online comment threads, many of your readers recognise the legal case in The Netherlands as a noisy distraction.

They highlight the futility of targeting a single company, or even a single sector, to address a societal and system-wide issue like climate change. Even so, a company like Shell has a role to play in tackling climate change. We will address our own emissions and work with customers to help them reduce theirs. It is by working together that the world can reach the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Executive Vice-President, Strategy & Postfolio, Shell

Portfolio, Shell The Hague, The Netherlands

# The magic carbon capture number is 10 megatonnes

Regarding your article on carbon capture and storage (January 11) the key number is in the 2020 Spending Review, where it is stated a range of government measures will support "capturing up to 10 megatonnes of

carbon dioxide a year by 2030".

If UK politicians, civil servants and industry can work together and actually deliver then it will clearly make a significant difference in 2030 and, more crucially, allow further rapid expansion to a game-changing 100-plus megatonnes a year by 2050.

Academics can help too. We are engaging with regulators and industry to ensure that capturing 95 per cent or more of the carbon dioxide from a power plant or other source, as required to deliver net zero, can become the norm for CCS in the UK.

Jon Gibbins

Director, UK CCS Research Centre, Professor of CCS, University of Sheffield Sheffield, South Yorkshire, UK



# Trump's fundraisers must share some of the blame

Confessing his "Faustian bargain" with Donald Trump (Report, January 9) the mea culpa of Dan Eberhart, chief executive of a Denver-based drilling services company, was touching: "I'm done. I don't want my mom to think I'm involved in all this." He was referring to the civil war re-enactment on the Capitol, but his mother may ponder the fact that his fundraising primed the pump for this outrage.

The president's condoning of violence did not begin on January 6 — as any Charlottesville resident knows.

The problem is that such mortgaging of the soul, once done, is difficult to reverse, as Dr Faustus discovered. **David C Speedie**Charlottesville, VA, US

#### American Proud Boys never did Latin at school

Cicero characterised the Roman mob as: *indocti* (uneducated), *stulti* (stupid) and *insipientes* (foolish). If the far-right Proud Boys (Report, January 8) had taken Latin in school, the errors of their ways might have been revealed. One wonders.

Jeremiah J Sullivan Seattle, WA, US

#### The Mussolini parallel

Watching the turmoil in Washington (FT Weekend, January 9) I was reminded of an infamous line of Benito Mussolini. On the eve of his accession to power in 1922 he declared "I could have turned these dark and squalid halls into a camp for my troops". He was referring to the Italian parliament. We know what followed.

Francesco Aloisi de Larderel Rome, Italy

# Jack Ma, Beijing and the basic law of banking

Framing his Bund Summit speech last October as a moment of madness may be a path to rehabilitation for Jack Ma, suggests Leo Lewis (Opinion, January 9). But would it not be wiser to encourage China's president Xi Jinping to reconsider and ponder the opening lines of that speech when Mr Ma said his suggestions may be "immature, incorrect, or laughable"? He went on: "Just give them a listen. If they make no sense, forget about them."

Far from laughable, the suggestions were valuable for financial regulators and practitioners alike. In Mr Ma's opinion financial supervisors, from Basel to Beijing, focus too narrowly on risk. Pleading for a forward-looking oversight that enables new techniques in finance, he observed that "the competition of the future is a competition of regulatory skills".

Mr Ma's words hold particular credibility when he says that China has acquired the technological capabilities and big data that should prompt its financial institutions to shed the tendency to function like pawn shops. This reminds me of the first rule of banking which says that credit should be based on a borrower's repayment capabilities, not on the value of the collateral on offer. Surely, this is another "basic law" that China would be well advised to respect.

Erik Famaey

Antwerp, Belgium

# Pandemic impact boosts case for a debt jubilee

As I digest the daily deluge of death and debt caused by this pandemic, I cannot stop to wonder how our children should ever be expected to bear the brunt of its economic impact.

Just as the UK has been pioneering with Covid vaccines, and green energy targets, should it not be pioneering dealing with its excessive and relentless debt issuance by agreeing that at least some, if not all, of the debt issued as a result of Covid be cancelled as your columnist debates (Opinion, January 5)?

How on earth can our children and small and medium sized businesses across the country be expected to repay the billions lent through this pandemic? Drastic times need drastic measures and having now completed Brexit (much to my own despair) surely one advantage could be to decide ourselves, as a sovereign nation, how to deal with this debt burden? Claudine Horgan

Director, CJ Horgan & Co London SW1, UK

# Ascribing City job losses to Brexit is a tricky task

In an otherwise excellent article on the effects of Brexit on the City, Patrick Jenkins (Opinion, January 11) commented that "a similar argument [that the loss of business as a result of Brexit has been minimal] has been made about the broader loss of City jobs to the EU as a result of Brexit — estimated at fewer than 10,000 compared with earlier forecasts of up to 75,000".

The article contained a helpful link to comments by Bank of England deputy governor Sam Woods in November 2017 when referring to the 65,000-75,000 job loss estimate in a report by Oliver Wyman (for TheCityUK). "I would say in terms of a long-term possibility among one of many scenarios, I regard that in the plausible range of scenarios . . . You could reasonably think of a day-one movement of perhaps around 10,000," Mr Woods is quoted as saying.

The Oliver Wyman study was about the long-term effects, not what would happen on the day Britain left the single market.

Mr Woods was spot on in what he said. It would be more accurate to say in future that the earlier estimates of job losses have proved accurate in respect of the short term and still look reasonable in respect of the longer term.

**Sir Mark Boleat**Political Leader, City of London
Corporation, 2012-17
London HA6, UK

# This is pushing social distancing a bit too far

I thoroughly appreciate Simon Kuper's articles, but I am a bit concerned ("The office", FT Weekend, January 2) about the effect confinement is having on him, when he writes: "When I want to talk to someone, I decide who it is."

What about serendipity, mystery and the brief, unexpected encounter? Social distancing pushed just too far? **Denise Larking Coste** *Paris, France* 

# Fossil fuels investment and Italy's verse epic

Alfonso Gonzàlez ("Hell hath no fury like a feedstock scorned", Letters, January 9) may rest assured that the Church of England has it right. The greatest authority on Hell is Dante and he shows the *Inferno* not to be scorchingly hot but bitterly cold. No need for coal, oil or, even, the sun. **Ben Hopkinson** 

Warkworth, Northumberland, UK

# Business has to set aside self-interest to battle extremism

#### Michael Moritz

s events unfold in Washington, I have been thinking about my grandfather who, just over a century ago, fought for the German army at Verdun. That battle, the bloodiest of the first world war, lasted about as long as the US presidential election campaign and was fought to a stalemate even though it cost 750,000 casualties.

The unexploded shells lying just beneath the surface of this patch of France still claim lives and much of the area on which the armies fought are too poisoned to be farmed or occupied.

But it is the political environments created by the 1914-18 conflict, and by the 2020 election campaign, that warn of greater dangers today.

When, at the end of first world war, my grandfather returned to his job as a magistrate in Munich, he hoped that life would return to normal.

Yet, after living through the Spanish

flu pandemic, the messy creation of the

Weimar Republic, the ruinous hyperin-

flation there and the Depression, he

discovered that the demons unleashed between 1914 and 1918 had only gained in strength.

As a Jew he lost his job in 1933, was imprisoned in Dachau and later, after the borders in Europe had been closed and he had been denied entry to the US, was shipped to the Piaski ghetto and murdered.

In today's US, following certification of the election result, it is tempting to think that peace will break out, and support for extreme views will dissipate. But here, too, there may be no easy return to normal.

If Donald Trump had collected about 43,000 more votes out of 160m — in the right states — the chances are that he would be starting his second term next week. If 25,000 votes had gone the other way in the Georgia Senate run-offs, his party would have retained blocking powers over the legislative agenda. And the 147 US lawmakers who cast votes objecting to the election result promise more ugly times ahead.

So, now, it's up to all of us in the world of business to play our part and make sure the extremism of both left and right in America is seen for what it is: a menace to our future together.

We are all culpable. Some of us were ineffective with our warnings. Some provided support to forces of darkness. But all of us are guilty of not listening

closely enough to the arguments of our opponents.

Almost five years ago, I tried, in vain, to highlight for the business community Mr Trump's past as a conman, bully, racist, failed entrepreneur and authoritarian. I also wrote about the differences between him and the people who start Silicon Valley companies, noting: "They are not nationalists who stir up dark memories of purges, pogroms, the 1930s, Latin-American strongmen or central African dictators."

#### We are all culpable. Some were ineffective with their warnings. Some supported the forces of darkness

Many businesspeople scoffed at this portrait of Mr Trump — preferring to support him because they liked many of his policies.

Their arguments always reminded me of the Prussian military leaders and German business magnates who thought they could control the dark tendencies of an army corporal turned political strongman in the 1920s. They did not understand what could happen when the principal communication channels are commandeered, the press

denounced, the judiciary belittled, and laws undermined.

Thank goodness Mr Trump has not yet had the managerial self-discipline to turn the Proud Boys into brown-shirted militias.

During the past four years, it has been

more expeditious for many business leaders to act like "Collabos" — as the French dubbed their countrymen who colluded with the Germans in the second world war.

Let's hope that events in the US last week persuade them to have a change of heart. They may find it useful to remember that in 1923 Adolf Hitler led a failed coup and was briefly imprisoned, and subsequently manipulated his growing popularity to seize supreme power 10 years later.

The past four years have demonstrated there are times when it is best to set self-interest aside. Given the choice between appealing polices and a dark character, and objectionable policies and a respectable character, it is always safer to pick the latter.

All I hear now, as impeachment looms again, are echoes of a childhood growing up in Britain and the refrain of my parents, both refugees from Nazi Germany: "If it did happen, it can happen. If it did happen there, it can happen here."

The writer is a partner at Sequoia Capital

# Opinion

# Why the Republican party will be hard to rescue





t was a Republican, vice-president Mike Pence, who most exercised the crowd in the US Capitol last week. It was another, Senator Lindsey Graham, who found

himself encircled and jeered in a local airport. Neither man's unctuous service to Donald Trump over four years counted for much once they chose to uphold his presidential election loss of last November. For that lapse in purity they will now be hounded, to quote one marcher, "forever".

A feature of extremism is the relish with which it attacks its own side. The doubter and the schismatic incur more wrath than the outright non-believer. And so mainstream Republicans are in for a vicious and open-ended struggle with the wilder edges of their own movement. If only the Grand Old Party were at stake, the nation could leave them to it. But no democracy can prosper long without two responsible parties. It is of existential import to the US (and to the world it helps to anchor) that Republican moderates prevail.

How tragic, then, that they probably won't. Their first problem is the depth and age of the internal rot. Republicans have to undo decades of flirtation with paranoid elements, not just five years' worth. Whether we date it to the congressional midterm election of 1994, or Barry Goldwater's White House bid in 1964, or the McCarthyite 1950s, the party has not policed its right flank for a long time. The Republican portrayal of government as inherently malign is hardly new. Nor is the cheapness with which the American Revolution is invoked (both Richard Nixon and the former congressional leader Newt Gingrich did it). The impugning of opponents' legitimacy did not commence with president-elect Joe

Few Republicans who connived at this style of politics expected it to morph out

Biden's this winter.

of control. But nor should they pretend it is a recent aberration, and that includes the otherwise-vindicated Never Trumpers.

The rich genre of commentary on whether there will be Trumpism after Mr Trump tends to gloss over the Trumpism before Mr Trump.

As well as this weight of history, Republican moderates are up against

Moderates have to undo decades of flirtation with paranoid elements, not just five years' worth

the structural vagaries of US politics. The system's counter-majoritarian features allow the party to remain competitive and powerful without appealing far outside its base. Having won the popular vote just once since 1988, Republicans have held the White House as often as not in that time. Wyoming's 600,000 people cancel out California's 40m in the Senate. Nothing here is improper.

The constitution was never meant to privilege raw tonnage of votes. But it does mean Republicans do not face the same incentive — moderate or perish that keeps parties honest in some other democracies. To get anywhere, reformminded Republicans must petition their colleagues' consciences, not their interests. Even to write that sentence is to sigh at the hopelessness of the errand.

Even if they did incur an electoral cost, strident conservatives have a lavish safety net beneath them. What distinguishes the US right from, say, the French or Australian kind, is that it is an industry, not just a political proposition. A candidate might repel the broad mass of voters and still find lucrative work in cable news or the book circuit.

Having flunked the 2008 election as a proto-populist running mate, Sarah Palin wrote memoirs that outsold Stephen King. No other democracy has a large enough media market to sustain anything quite like this ecosystem. Even outgoing congressional members are incentivised to stay on good terms with the angry base.

At every turn, then, the Republicans

who wish to temper this wayward party encounter trouble. And they have tried before. There was a spurt of interest in change just over a decade ago. Grand New Party, authored by Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam, sketched a new manifesto. The then Indiana governor Mitch Daniels stood out as a plausible messenger. What ensued instead was the Tea Party and, in time, Mr Trump.

The circumstances for renewal are even less promising now. It seems that few Republican senators will vote to convict the president if the House of Representatives impeaches him this week. Mr Pence is unlikely to trigger the 25th amendment. In an act of unsurpassable crassness, a former Trump aide is bemoaning the loss of socialmedia followers. Those who wish to save the party of Lincoln and Eisenhower from this kind of thing must confront the logic of path-dependence. It is possible for an institution to be too compromised, for too long, to feasibly salvage. If only the implications could be confined to the party, or even to the US.

janan.ganesh@ft.com

# Biden should make structural changes now





hen the Democrats won Georgia's two Senate seats last week, US president-elect Joe Biden greeted the victory which brings his party control of Congress — with a statement that voters "want action on the crises we face and they want it right now". It was undoubtedly a conscious echo of Franklin D Roosevelt's 1933 inauguration speech, when the New Deal presi-

dent vowed "action – and action now". Roosevelt, as Mr Biden will, took office amid a deep economic crisis. So did Barack Obama, whom Mr Biden served as vice-president. Both predecessors acted to end the economic downturn. But only one fundamentally reshaped the way the US economy

Beyond recovery policies, FDR used his crisis to roll out big structural changes in very little time. These reordered economic relations, were politically sticky and were hard to reverse once in place: deposit insurance, mortgage reinsurance and social security. The federal minimum wage followed in his second term. The programmes imparted long-term economic security to those they covered, even though several were unconscionably designed to exclude black Americans.

In contrast, the Obama-Biden administration's only transformative policy was health reform. Even that was partial, giving 20m Americans health insurance in 2016 but leaving 27m without it. When the pandemic hit, the US economy worked no better for many than it had last time Mr Biden entered the White House.

The most historic part of his task now is the same as Roosevelt's. It is to end, for this and future generations, the endemic economic insecurity that has made too many Americans give up on liberal democratic norms. To succeed, he must, like FDR, use the first few months of his presidency for a big push - not just on immediate rescue operations but on structural policies that have staying power and fundamentally restructure the economy.

He has already committed to one such shift. A \$15 an hour federal minimum wage will be politically difficult to overturn. If properly enforced and strengthened with an automatic adjustment linked to average wages, it will also banish poverty-pay work from the US for good. The consequences are incalculable. But more is needed to end economic insecurity.

The most immediate way of doing this is to put money in people's hands. This is why Democrats and Republicans have agreed twice in the past year to send direct payments to Americans. Mr Biden and his congressional allies seem



set to boost the last \$600 cheque to \$2,000. Yet, satisfying as it may be to deliver a quick cash gift to voters, it does not create structural change.

Economic precarity was deeply rooted in the US before this crisis. Infamously, four in 10 people did not have \$400 in liquid savings for minor emergencies. Such insecurity is not solved by a single direct payment. Instead, Mr Biden should ask Congress to introduce modest but regular unconditional payments to citizens - say \$120 a month to start, about the same each year as the contemplated one-off top-up, with the same taper for higher earners. It could be paid as a refundable tax credit, a universal basic income in all but name.

What about taxes? There is no need to raise them today. But eventually such a

The president-elect's task is to end, for this and future generations, endemic economic insecurity

permanent payout programme, plus the infrastructure and social spending Mr Biden has signalled is coming, will need to be funded. It is tempting for the new administration to undo Donald Trump's 2017 tax cuts. But an alternative with more staying power is new taxes.

There is no better time to justify the sort of multimillionaire wealth tax advocated by Senators Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders – at least on a temporary basis. Polls suggest it is a popular idea, even among Republicans. If the choice is between a wealth tax and higher income taxes, many of the rich will prefer the former.

Carbon taxes can also gain broad support, if redistributed as additional direct payments to citizens. "Carbon dividends" already enjoy some bipartisan support, including from Republican elder statesmen. Once in place, it would be a brave politician who tried to take households' monthly carbon dividend cheque away from them.

Two more promises Mr Biden has made can also permanently reshape the economy: completing health coverage of the uninsured and cracking down on corruption, money laundering and financial secrecy. Corruption and kleptocracy are the companion of antidemocratic politics and poor economic governance everywhere. Congress is beginning to realise this, as the new bipartisan ban on anonymous shell companies shows.

Some will say such policies must wait until the current economic emergency has been addressed. But the longer the wait, the bigger the risk that Mr Biden's razor-thin majority will shrink, or that such measures will repel Republicans currently seeking political redemption. It is a rare moment of opportunity for Mr Biden to push through big changes. It will not last.

That is why, in the spirit of FDR's "bold experimentation", his administration should treat long-term transformation with as much urgency as short-term rescue. If it does so, Mr Biden will be remembered more for the former than the latter.

martin.sandbu@ft.com

# Get ready for self-driving banks

#### Brian **Brooks**

n 1961, Popular Science magazine envisioned self-driving cars. The reality arrived sooner than anyone anticipated, and before safety regulators could adapt. Most automotive laws - on speed limits, giving signals, drink-driving - had been designed to protect against dangerous drivers, not dangerous cars. Autonomous vehicles brought new risks that legacy rules never considered. As one headline on the Wired website put it: "Who's Regu-

Banking is heading down the same road. And it's being driven by the technology behind decentralised finance, or DeFi. But just as the original rules of the road protected us from other drivers, so our current bank regulations exist mainly to prevent human failings.

lating Self-Driving Cars? Often, No One".

At the US Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, we require every bank to

have officers responsible for its safety such as a chief risk officer and a chief audit executive. We limit how much banks can lend to their directors. We even make some bank employees take a certain amount of vacation so others can sit at their desks and identify potential fraud. We call it bank regulation, but we're really regulating bankers.

DeFi turns all this on its head. It leverages blockchain technology to deliver services with no human intermediation. One example is creating money markets with algorithmically derived interest rates based on supply and demand rates that traditional banks set by committee. Other DeFi projects include decentralised exchanges that allow users to trade without brokers, and protocols for lending that do not involve loan officers or credit committees. Although these "self-driving banks" are new, they are not small. They are likely to be mainstream before self-driving cars start to fly.

However, self-driving banks present the same challenges and opportunities as autonomous vehicles. On the opportunity side, they can allow savers to stop shopping around for the best interest rates by having algorithms do this for them. They can also end discrimination against certain borrowers by having software make credit decisions. They could even eliminate the risk of fraud or corruption by no longer being run by humans at all.

Self-driving banks also present new risks, though. If technology accelerates withdrawal of depositors' funds, just as

Could regulators properly examine a lender that exists only as software? Yes, we can

high-frequency trading can accelerate equity sell-offs, that could increase liquidity risks compared with traditional banks. Asset volatility could be a concern for similar reasons. And the management of loan collateral could be more difficult if humans are not involved in valuations.

There is also a risk that, in the absence

of federal regulatory clarity, US states rush to fill the void and create a patchwork of inconsistent rules that impede the orderly development of a national market. This is exactly what happened with self-driving cars.

Federal regulators must therefore determine what a regulatory scheme for self-driving banks should look like. Could they ensure fair treatment of customers by such a bank? Sure. Most bias and compliance issues are failures of software. Not the software you code, but the kind hard-wired into human brains. Bias can creep also into the rules of algorithms, but it is easier to root out.

Could regulators properly examine a bank that exists only as software? Yes, we can. It may be easier than supervising banks today. Our examiners could be retrained to read the algorithms that make deposit pricing or credit decisions and work out whether they comply with legal requirements.

Could regulators ensure self-driving banks properly serve their communities? Absolutely. Their greater efficiency would free significant amounts of capital that is lost to operating costs today or slowed by decisions dependent on human grey matter. Of course, algorithmic banks would change the nature of employment in the financial sector – with far fewer bank tellers and more coders. But creating better compensated and value-added jobs may prove a societal benefit in the long run.

Could the OCC even grant a national bank charter to open-source software that manages deposit-taking, lending, or payments, if it doesn't have officers or directors? Not yet. Under current law, drawn up on the assumptions of the early 20th century, charters can only be issued to human beings. But those antiquated rules should be revisited, just as regulations that still mandate the use of fax machines should be.

Could we usher in a future where we eliminate error, stop discrimination, and achieve universal access for all? Optimists like me think so. How different would banking in the US be today if regulators, bankers, and policymakers were as bold as carmakers 10 years ago?

The writer is the US acting comptroller of

# The EU must act to profit from the UK's Brexit losses

Miriam González Durántez

uropeans are taking comfort from how much the UK has lost in the Brexit negotiations. The UK has ended up fully opening its market to all EU goods, including agriculture. And it has done so in exchange for roughly the same access to the EU services market that the bloc has granted to countries on the other side of the world, which are not even major exporters of services, such as Vietnam.

But the UK's losses in the negotiations are not European wins. They are a blow for the UK, but they damage the EU, too.

For the EU, Brexit was never just about trade but about international strength. That is why, when presenting the deal, Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission president, went out of her way to insist that the EU is still "one of the giants", and a "great power" with "the largest single market" in the world.

In the negotiations, the UK's flat refusal to become a rule-taker or recognise the European Court of Justice collided with the EU's insistence on protecting the integrity of the single market at all costs.

Instead of recognising that regulation is currently identical on both sides of the channel, which would allow for the mutual recognition of each other's rules unless the UK decides to diverge from them, this barely features in the Brexit trade deal at all.

When it does, it is in the form of a purely defensive mechanism setting out how regulatory retaliation might occur. These "level playing field" rules set out a complex arbitration and rebalancing

> Companies need more responsive rules that will let them compete with Britain

system to prevent the UK lowering its regulatory standards. The purpose is clear: to protect the EU from a more competitive UK.

But for the EU to compete successfully with the UK will require much more than an ability to retaliate.

Only one EU member state, Denmark, scores better than the UK on the ease of doing business, according to the World Bank's rankings. In fact, European companies still find themselves curtailed by multiple barriers in their own single market.

According to reports from the Commission itself, there remain 83 types of trade obstacle, both at general and sectoral level. And more than 40 legislative measures that are needed to complete the single market remain unfinished – a quarter of a century after it was created.

European competitiveness will not depend on protectionism towards the UK, but on whether the EU can truly guarantee that European companies can do business seamlessly in 27 countries, both digitally and non-digitally, at sufficient scale.

Part of what needs to improve is the regulatory responsiveness of the EU to a fast-changing world. Something as simple as making all public procurement throughout Europe electronic is taking years of legislation. And because there are no bloc-wide rules on whether gig workers are employees, national courts are taking widely divergent positions. Even recent flagship policies on green energy and digital services are riddled with procedural rules rather than longterm strategic measures.

Brexit has damaged the EU at a time when Europe is already handling an internal existential threat to democratic standards and the rule of law from Poland and Hungary. But the shock of Brexit can also serve as a powerful catalyst for the EU to step out of its regulatory comfort zone and become an accelerator of European businesses, not just a regulator of them.

For that to happen, the EU will need to focus less on preventing the UK becoming a competitive threat — even as it remains vigilant against unjustified regulatory arbitrage. Instead, it needs to react to that competition by working more directly with member states and businesses to support growth. The conventional wisdom is that, for the EU to prosper, the UK has to fail. But perhaps some challenging competition from the UK is exactly what the EU needs.

The writer is an international lawyer and former EU official

# Lex.

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#### **US tech/Trump:** block party

The calibre of tech companies cutting ties with Donald Trump and his supporters is as impressive as the group of smiling Silicon Valley tycoons who joined the 2016 pre-inauguration roundtable at Trump Tower.

Relations have soured since that "productive" first meeting. Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Twitch have all blocked Mr Trump's accounts. Stripe has halted campaign fund processing. YouTube has removed videos. Amazon's AWS cloud service and Apple and Google app stores have dropped Parler, an app used by far-right extremists. The riot within the Capitol fomented by Mr Trump and his fans was a justifiable reason to confiscate the bullhorns. But the timing is convenient for Big Tech. With a vengeful Democratic administration on its way into power, remorse for giving Mr Trump a soapbox may reduce recriminations.

The Trump years have been lucrative for Big Tech. Lowering the corporate income tax rate from 35 per cent to 21 per cent and ending taxes on overseas profits raised margins. Regulation has remained light. Shares have soared. Mr Trump has just been the loudest cowboy shooting from the lip in the social media Wild West. Since the 2016 election, Facebook's daily active user base has grown from 1.23bn to 1.82bn. Quarterly sales more than doubled to over \$21bn. Twitter has gone from a quarterly net loss of \$167m to operating income of \$56m.

Apple suffered ill effects from the China trade war and flattening iPhone sales, meaning net income is up less than a third since late 2016. But tax cuts enabled share buybacks that propelled it to become the first \$2tn company in the US.

Even Jeff Bezos's frosty relationship with the president did not prevent Amazon's share price from tripling and annual sales from rising 170 per cent.

The First Amendment does not oblige companies to provide services to every user. Parler has little hope of winning its case against Amazon. Ironically, Mr Trump may be forced to communicate via the mainstream media he despises until the threat of violence from his supporters has evaporated. By acting like publishers spiking inflammatory content, Big

Tech hopes to evade the statutory responsibilities of those stick-in-themuds. They may be able to soften the blow from reform through pre-emptive self-regulation and expensive lobbying. But they cannot dodge it altogether.

#### **UBS/negative rates:** parking charges

UBS has a counter-intuitive approach

Its anti-sales drive was explained in a staff memo yesterday. It was an insight into the pain that negative rates cause banks. Negative rates from the Swiss National Bank are not intended to encourage banks to lend, as those of the European Central Bank are. They

Weakening the Swiss franc, which has a haven status globally, is the aim. Manufacturing makes up almost a fifth of the economy, double that of finance.

The currency's lustre has created a liquidity trap. Even PostFinance, the post office bank, is charging depositors with more than SFr100,000 in their accounts. Insurance companies, which seem to have nowhere to put their domestic funds, have started offering

Banks employ a lot of Swiss people. UBS is the country's third-largest private sector employer, for example. But financial services groups are politically unpopular. The rate policies of the SNB are consistent with that, inflicting pain on big finance with the aim of helping engineers and the

UBS's net interest income in its two biggest divisions — wealth management and personal/corporate will have moved sideways since 2016, according to Visible Alpha data. Overall, net interest income has made up 15-20 per cent of UBS group

#### Japan telecoms: close call

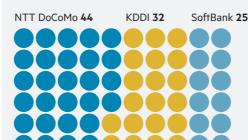
Japan's mobile phone oligopoly has dodged two bullets: disruption from a new entrant and tough price controls. The trio's tight grip on a fast-growing market is reflected in rebounding share prices.

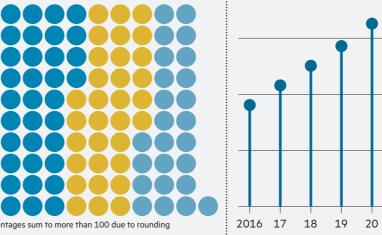
Million users

Mobile demand is growing



%, 2020





FT graphic Sources: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications; Refinitive

Japanese mobile operators were braced for the worst last year. They faced an aggressive newcomer, Rakuten Mobile. Yoshihide Suga, the new prime minister, was calling for price cuts. The earnings of the local oligopoly - NTT DoCoMo, KDDI and SoftBank, a telecoms subsidiary of the investment group of the same name - were under threat. Coronavirus and Rakuten's problems rolling out 5G have granted the incumbents a reprieve.

The industry mood is nevertheless sour after months of ferocious competition and relentless cost pressures created by 5G. A former employee of SoftBank has just been arrested on suspicion of taking 5G trade secrets before joining Rakuten.

it much. The broader squeeze on

bigger problem for Swiss banks.

profitability from low rates is a much

SoftBank plans to file a lawsuit against Rakuten's mobile subsidiary as a result.

Rakuten had been expected to be a big disrupter. It has been offering unlimited data at prices half those of rivals. Mr Suga's promise to lower plan prices was expected to be equally transformative.

Instead, reality has been rough on Rakuten. Stumbling blocks emerged early, with pandemic-related disruptions delaying its planned 5G launch last year. Connection speeds and coverage lagged behind rival services in the early days. The infrastructure and marketing costs of the challenger are ballooning.

Mr Suga has also been driven off course. Coronavirus cases are surging. The state of emergency is expected to

cards has not been kind to public

be widened beyond Tokyo. While operators have made some cuts to mobile fees, they have not heeded calls for a 40 per cent reduction.

Jan

2021

Share prices have rebounded

on softer tone from Suga

Share prices rebased at 100

Nippon Telegraph

and Telephone Corp

SoftBank

KDDI

2020

Japanese telecom stocks have underperformed the broader Nikkei 225 Index for years, reflecting the saturated market and looming regulatory risks.

How should investors react, given that pricing pressures have been far weaker than expected? The three biggest operators should be able to hold on to ebitda margins well above 20 per cent. Rakuten has failed to make the splash it hoped for. Phone Mr Suga for many months. Japanese mobile stocks are a better investment than they have been for years.

charges will be a very low priority for

previous year. About half came from gift sales, the proportion of which has steadily risen in recent years.

An impressive 80 per cent of revenues come from returning customers. Ebitda margins of 26 per cent should get to a full-year number of £80m, double last year's result. The mooted £1bn valuation of 12 times is shy of the racy tech multiple bankers are pushing for. But it is in line with Card Factory shares at their 2015 peak.

That seems reasonable, assuming sales and profit growth are maintained once lockdowns end. The permanent closure of physical rivals should help too. But Moonpig has grabbed an extra slice of the UK market in unfortunate, but temporary, circumstances. Buyers should be wary of sellers trying to keep that fact under wraps.

#### Silver Lake/NZ Rugby: haka backer

Rugby is a full contact sport. CVC, a Luxembourg-based private equity fund has been doing a neat job of rolling up rugby rights, helping bring sports' centuries-long march to capitalist heel. Now Silver Lake has meted out a late tackle to CVC. The US buyout group is in talks to buy a minority stake in New Zealand Rugby, which runs the formidable All Blacks national side.

Copycat strategies were inevitable. Even before CVC was picking up stakes in Six Nations and Pro14, football and motorsports were wowing investors. Sure, fans have at times squealed: most loudly, perhaps, when the billionaire Glazers launched an audacious leveraged buyout for Manchester United and made a killing on it.

Rugby is a different game, and buying a national team has, so far, been impossible. Silver Lake's planned deal is unlikely to change that immediately, despite NZR's ownership of the nation's men's team. Rather than getting its hands on the All Blacks directly, Silver Lake is to take a 15 per cent stake in a carved-out vehicle responsible for commercial activities such as broadcasting rights, sponsorship and licensing. The first two generated twothirds of income last year. But despite the playing success of rugby's selfstyled champions NZR made a loss in its last three reported financial years.

That may have nudged NZR into talks. Carving out commercial activities and bringing in financial sponsors have precedents in football. A consortium including CVC is seeking to buy into a new company that will manage the broadcasting rights for Italy's Serie A football competition.

CVC welcomes healthy competition: its real interest is in leagues and two can do more to spread the influence of the game than one alone, supposedly. Maybe. But other players jostling for assets drive up prices: look at the 20odd investors — including Silver Lake – slugging it out to invest €300m in the Bundesliga, Germany's top football league. That affects returns. Scrums, as players know, can be bruising affairs.



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to customer loyalty programmes. It is charging negative interest rates simply for stashing people's cash. The Swiss bank is lowering the threshold for this unappealing offer to SFr250,000 (\$281,000). But if customers take up enough of its financial products, they do not have to pay after all.

will not help the profits of Swiss banks.

A high Swissie hurts its metal bashers.

residential mortgages.

supply chain of small businesses

Including estimates for last year, revenues in recent years.

UBS's wealth management arm has some \$2.7tn of invested assets. Losing a few lower-margin clients will not hurt

#### Moonpig: on the cards

Britons buy more greetings cards than any other nationality per head. Statisticians even include them as "staples" in inflation calculations. Card shops have still been forced to close during lockdowns. That has benefited online card and gift retailer Moonpig. Booming sales and profits spurred private equity owners Exponent to advance plans yesterday for a mooted £1bn London listing.

The national penchant for greetings

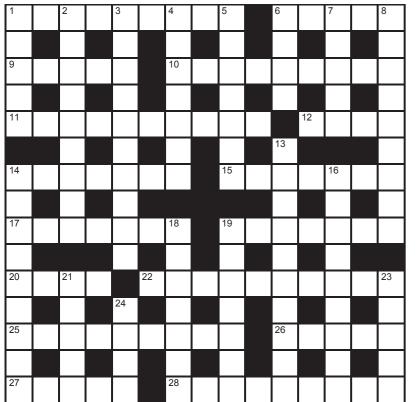
investors in the past. A letter from the administrators is all that Clinton Cards shareholders received in 2012. Shares in the remaining listed business Card Factory have lost 90 per cent of their value since peaking in 2015. Both suffer the same malaise that is hurting other bricks-and-mortar retailers. Moonpig's online business case may stack up but investors should be wary of a valuation boosted by the pandemic.

UK card sales volumes overall have declined by about 1 per cent annually. Retailers have been able to maintain the value of sales via higher prices. Moonpig says that its technology and customer data allow it to upsell more profitable gifts alongside cards. Sales of £156m in the six months to October were 135 per cent higher than the

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#### **CROSSWORD**

No 16,682 Set by AARDVARK



**JOTTER PAD** 

Solution 16,681



- 1 A faceless nobleman's getting staff to
- find tall-stemmed plant (6,3) 6 One entertains English setter around
- deserted copse (5) 9 Poetic device that's heard in ABBA? (5)
- 10 Way of cooking fresh tuna by English river in metal container (2.7)
- 11 Vehicle right by the police building (10) 12 Pasta Toni leaves somewhere on the
- Baltic coast (4) 14 Where to launch Elvis's sneering feature within rock and roll setting? (7)
- 15 One ruminates, picking up bank publication (7)
- 17 Article initially outlining sleep phase principle (7)
- **19** Poles occupying characteristic conveyance (7)
- 20 Arrows seen here reverberating, tips being swapped (4) 22 Boss's tie wildly grabbed by two paid
- workers meeting resistance (10) 25 Music player hurt playing Chicago's
- heartland (9)
- 26 Flipping duke in food shop wasted time 27 Bedroom philanderer displaying sex
- appeal (5) 28 Tree lily Diane relocated (9) DOWN
- 1 Seeing a Northern Irish town, mother let out expression of dismay (5)
- 2 Two chaps running event in Scottish landmark (5,4)
- 3 Christmas on Jersey, say, difficult for Cockney playwright (4,6)
- 4 Again seek job, harvest work (7) 5 Martial arts experts regularly require agile fellow (7)
- 6 Board chair having succeeded finally (4) 7 Fancy that soldier, a member of queen's
- household? (5) 8 English pair pound steak, smashing old container for fish (3-6)
- 13 Clued-up bird with savings account files a complaint (9.1)
- **14** Ancient burial site, shut off, contains one hundred rings (6,3)
- 16 Bill might be so restless (9) 18 Shopping centre one found extremely
- artificial and combative (7) 19 From patio, furtively track bird
- appearing out of hedge perhaps (7) 21 Mark resides below career women living
- together (5) 23 More than one spoke with a detective in US state (5)
- 24 Money belt up under fleece (4)

