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Don't Believe a Word in the
News!

Two Rivals, One Future:
India and Pakistan's
Elections

A Squad Analysis:
Galatasaray S. K.

WHAT DOES LADY JUSTICE SAY?

*A Report on South Africa's
ICJ case against Israel*



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South Africa's ICJ Case Against Israel

By George Wilkinson

It has been over 100 days since Hamas launched attacks on Israel, in what has been referred to as the 'Third Intifada' by many. So far, there have been over 25,000 Palestinian casualties in Gaza (as stated by Hamas, although the death toll is generally thought to be higher), 10,000 of whom are children. In Gaza, over 62,000 people have been wounded during Israel's assault on Gaza in response to the original Hamas attacks. However, despite this, according to a Wall Street Journal report, US intelligence agencies estimate that only 20–30% of Hamas's 20–25,000 strong military has been killed by the IDF (although Israel's official figures claim 10,000 Hamas soldiers have been killed, this is likely skewed upwards). According to an AP news article cited by the South African application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), "researchers say the offensive has wreaked more destruction than the razing of Syrian Aleppo between 2012 and 2016, Ukraine's Mariupol or, proportionally, the Allied bombing of Germany in World War II". The Red Cross has called the conflict a "crisis in humanity".

On 29 December, South Africa instituted proceedings in the ICJ against Israel claiming that the country had violated the Geneva Convention. They submitted an 84-page application containing evidence of both genocide and genocidal intent under the Genocide Convention (and by extension the Rome Statute of International Law within which article 8 defines genocide) to which both countries are signatories. On 11–12 January this year, a public hearing began and South Africa laid out its accusations and Israel its defence. South Africa called upon Israel to "immediately cease hostilities in Gaza and to refrain from conduct constituting or

failing to prevent violations of its obligations under the Convention" in its Note Verbale sent to the Israeli Embassy on 21 December. South Africa raised its concerns about "credible reports that acts meeting the threshold of genocide or related crimes...have been and may still be committed in the context of the conflict". In its application, South Africa claims that:

Israel: (1) is engaged in killing Palestinians in Gaza – including Palestinian children – in large numbers; (2) is causing serious bodily and mental harm to Palestinians in Gaza, including Palestinian children; and is inflicting on them conditions of life intended to bring about their destruction as a group. Those conditions include: (3) expulsions from homes and mass displacement, alongside the large-scale destruction of homes and residential areas; (4) deprivation of access to adequate food and water; (4) deprivation of access to adequate medical care; (5) deprivation of access to adequate shelter, clothes, hygiene and sanitation; and (6) the destruction of the life of the Palestinian people in Gaza; and (7) imposing measures intended to prevent Palestinian births.

South Africa has been trying to prove their case by claiming that Israel and its leaders had genocidal intent against Palestinians, using the words of major politicians and government officials as evidence. In the Note Verbale, they stated they were "alarmed by the rhetoric from Israeli officials". This included directions to the IDF to "starve Gaza". Starvation is reported to have been weaponised by Israel against Gaza, with the UN

warning of "millions at risk of famine" and the Human Right's Watch (HRW) claiming that Israel is using starvation of civilians "as a weapon". Under Article 8 Clause 2.xxi of the Rome Statute of International Law, this is a war crime.

Intentionally using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare by depriving them of objects indispensable to their survival, including wilfully impeding relief supplies as provided for under the Geneva Conventions.

Furthermore, South Africa has accused Israel of blocking supplies from entering Gaza, in violation of the same clause. Israel has denounced the allegations, claiming that over the past fortnight "106 trucks of food" had entered Gaza. By contrast, the UN previously reported that around 500 trucks of supplies had entered Gaza daily before the war. The submission to the ICJ also cited Israel cutting off oil supplies, leaving just one working service vehicle operating in the entirety of the Gaza Strip.

South Africa has also accused Israel of the indiscriminate killing of civilians under Article 8 2.e.i which states:

Intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population as such or against individual civilians not taking direct part in hostilities.

South Africa has claimed that Israel is dropping "dumb [unguided] bombs...upon Gaza" according to a CNN report of US intelligence assessments. These assessments identified bombs with a lethal radius of 360m that cause severe injury within 800m. The AI system used to identify airstrike targets has been used to efficiently assassinate members of Hamas, with the IDF boasting over 100 targets found everyday, around double the number claimed by previous human-driven systems. However, many officials have been raising the question of collateral damage in these "targeted strikes", with one official quote in The Guardian:

Hamas members who don't really mean anything live in homes across Gaza. So, they mark the home and bomb the house and kill everyone there.

South Africa claimed that the disregard for collateral damage and civilian casualties violates the Genocide Convention. It cited the bombing of refugee shelters in Gaza which killed 110 civilians.

It added that the siege of Gaza over the past 15 years has caused trauma in civilians, referencing a Save the Children report which found:

80 per cent of Palestinian children experienced higher levels of emotional distress, demonstrating bedwetting (79 per cent) and reactive mutism (59 per cent), and engaging in self-harm (59 per cent), and suicidal thoughts (55 per cent).

The application goes on further in accusing Israeli military forces of committing war crimes against children, such as blindfolding and arresting them, before taking them to unknown locations, as a UN Human Rights report claims.

Another concern throughout the conflict in Israel-Palestine has been around the repopulation of land in Palestine and the displacement of Palestinians from their homes. An estimated 1.9 million out of 2.3 million of Gaza's population have been internally displaced (as of 27 December, according to an OCHOA report). South African lawyers have referenced Israel's plans for the "voluntary immigration" of Palestinians out of their homes in its long-term 5 step scheme for Gaza, outlined by Danny Danon of the Likud party. This is in violation of Article 8.2.b.viii which forbids:

The transfer, directly or indirectly, by the Occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies, or the deportation or transfer of all or parts of the population of the occupied territory.

South Africa also claims that "Israel's military assault on Gaza has been an attack on Gaza's medical healthcare system, indispensable to the life and survival of the Palestinians in Gaza", deeming it a targeted strategy designed to take down Gaza's ability to heal its own citizens. According to a WHO situation report on 17 December, at least 570 Palestinians had been killed whilst inside hospitals and a further 746 injured. This included patients and internally displaced refugees "who vainly sought sanctuary on or near hospital grounds". South Africa accuses the IDF of indiscriminate killing, even of those tending to patients and counting the dead. They referenced the murder of Saeed Al-Shorbaji, the director of Nasser Hospital Mortuary, who was killed alongside his wife and children in an air strike.

The damage to medical centres by the IDF is beginning to have major impacts on the treatment of diseases amongst Palestinians. There have been over 360,000 reported cases of communicable diseases in UNRWA shelters alone. The attacks on the medical system has rendered it almost impossible for women to give birth. An estimated 5,500 of 52,000 pregnant women in Gaza giving birth each month do so in unsafe conditions, often without medical assistance. In a British medical journal, The Lancet, the writers "highlight the health dimensions of violence resulting from the ongoing siege in and attacks against Palestinians", warning of a "grave risk of genocide".

South Africa cited the UN report which "observed that the level of destruction that had by then taken place of 'housing units, as well as hospitals, schools, mosques, bakeries, water pipes, sewage and electricity networks' ...threaten to make the continuation of Palestinian life in Gaza impossible". South Africa states that:

Israel has targeted the infrastructure and foundations of Palestinian life, deliberately creating conditions of life calculate to bring the physical destruction of Palestinian people.

Since the beginning of the assault on Gaza, Israel has targeted governmental buildings and cultural centres, such as the Gaza city central archives, which holds thousands of documents and national records dating back over 100 years, The IDF bombing campaign has also claimed religious sties and museums, 318 Muslims and Christian places of worship were destroyed between 7 October and 24 December, according to the Red Crescent Society. In the application, South Africa claims that Israeli forces are deliberately destroying Palestinian culture through the targeted assassination of "local legends".

Pastry chef Masoud Muhammad al-Qatati, killed in an Israeli airstrike...reputation for giving away the popular Palestinian treat 'knafeh' to indigent customers – earned him the nickname 'Father of the Poor'. 84-year-old Elham Farah...known as 'Mother Orange' to generations of Palestinian music students for her shock of red hair...was left to bleed to death.

These people were not terrorists, but civilians. The application quotes a Palestinian man in a UNRWA video who sums up the attacks' impact saying, "these are all our memories our entire lives...now it's all gone; everything has turned to ashes". This appears to be in direct violation of Article 8 2.b.ix which forbids:

Intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not military objectives

However, the crux of South Africa's report centres around the declaration of genocidal intent by the Israeli government and its officials. It refers to a series of quotations from Israeli officials that may demonstrate potential violations of sections within the Genocide Convention.

The Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu declared:

We're facing monsters, monsters who murdered children in front of their parents... This is a battle not only of Israel against these barbarians, it's a battle of civilisation against barbarism. (In apparent violation of Articles 8 2.a.i, 2.b.xxi, 2.b.xii)

He further invoked the Biblical story of the total destruction of Amalek by the Israelites, stating:

You must remember what Amalek has done to you, says our Holy Bible. And we do remember. (In apparent violation of Articles 8 2.b.xii, 2.e.i)

He also appeared to encourage the killing of civilians when saying:

It's an entire nation out there that is responsible. It's not true this rhetoric about civilians not aware not involved. It's absolutely not true...and we will fight until we break their backbone. (In apparent violation of Articles 8 2.e, 2.b.xii)

The Minister of Defence is also quoted in the application, saying:

Imposing a complete siege on Gaza. No electricity, no food, no water, no fuel. Everything is closed. We are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly. (In apparent violation of Articles 8 2.e.i, 2.b.xxv, 2.a, and Geneva Convention Article 54 2.b.xii)

The Minister of National Security was also mentioned saying:

When we say that Hamas should be destroyed...they're all terrorists, and they should also be destroyed (In apparent violation of Articles 8 2.e.i, 2.b.xii)

The Minister of Energy tweeted:

All the civilian population in Gaza is ordered to leave immediately. We will win. They will not receive a drop of water or a single battery until they leave the world. (In apparent violation of Articles 2.b.v., 2.b.xii)

The Deputy Speaker of the Knesset said in a Committee tweet:

Now we all have one common goal – erasing the Gaza Strip from the face of the earth. Those who are unable will be replaced. (In apparent violation of Articles 8 2.b.xii, 2.e.i, 2.b.v, 2.b.ix, 2.b.xxiv, 2.e.ii, 2.e.iv)

So far Israel has had little time to make a defence at the ICJ but has made preliminary statements in their defence. Israeli lawyers have called the accusations "sweeping counterfactual descriptions" and argued that the evidence was de-contextualised from the conflict and were "random assertions". Netanyahu gave a statement in defence of the IDF, saying that it "is the most moral army...and does everything to avoid" the killing of innocents. In the preliminary hearing, Israeli lawyers attacked the South African application, with Professor Malcolm Shaw calling the claim "confusing and a partial recital of the facts". He further attacked South Africa for giving "succour and support to Hamas". Tal Becker, first to speak in Israel's defence, accused South Africa of "diminishing" the term of genocide, reminded the court that the word has a resonant meaning within the Jewish population. Becker rebuked the claims of the South African lawyers who accused Israel of enabling Hamas and, by extension, causing the 7 October attacks. He framed the claims as illogical for "blaming Israel for the murder of its own soldiers".

The Israeli defence has been mainly focused around 4 points: Israel's right to self-defence, its denial of genocidal intent, denial of genocidal actions, and the jurisdiction by which the case was presented.

On the question of Israel's self-defence, Israel has a unique situation wherein its nation was born into war, following hundreds of years of anti-Semitic persecution across Europe. However, Neil Sammonds, a senior campaigner on the Palestine human rights organisation War on Want argued:

Of course, both South Africa and human rights organisations like us condemn the killing of civilians and taking of hostages [by Hamas], but this is in no way justifies the response from Israel. As an occupying force, Israel does not have the right to self-defence – the argument does not hold water.

In the public hearing, Israel reiterated its right to self-defence in Article 51 of the UN Charter, in response to the genocidal intent of Hamas. In his speech, Professor Shaw said "there is no limit to the blood Hamas terrorists wanted to spill". The defence referenced the statement of a Hamas political bureau member who was quoted calling for the "cleansing of Palestine of the filth of the Jews". Tal Becker claimed that Israel is fighting "a war of defence" and was delivering a proportionate use of force. Mr Becker then rebutted the claims of the South African application, which attacked the death toll of Israel's assault on Gaza, claiming that most of these casualties were militants. Becker concluded by denouncing the application as it "all but ignored" the events of 7 October.

Israel's defence lawyers also attacked the accusations of actions of genocide with Galit Ragan claiming that the civilian damage and casualties were the fault of Hamas's tactics in urban warfare, arguing that "these undesired outcomes are exacerbated because they are desired outcomes of Hamas". She further defended Israel from South Africa's evidence of damage to civilian buildings, stating that "shelters are all abused for military purposes by Hamas", backing it up with court images of militants firing from a UN school to display how Hamas turned civilian buildings into military targets. Then in defence against South Africa's accusations of war on the Gaza health

system, Ms Ragan claimed that there is "overwhelming evidence of Hamas's military use of such hospitals". She concluded her statement admitting that some damages in the vicinity of hospitals were sometimes caused by IDF fire, and sometimes by Hamas", before reaffirming the damage was a "direct result of Hamas's abhorrent method of warfare".

As both Israeli and South African lawyers point out, genocidal intent is critical for coming to a conclusion in court. South Africa dedicated a significant part of its application to proving this. Israel has denied this on 2 fronts. Firstly, the defence used evidence of quotes from Israeli officials to show what they deem as the opposite to genocidal intent. For example, the Minister of Defence was quoted saying "we are not fighting the Palestinian multitude" and "our war is against Hamas, not the people of Gaza". Professor Shaw rejected the claims of genocidal intent through the reference to Amalek, as "there is not a need here for a theological discussion on the meaning of Amalek" and that it was misinterpreted. Secondly, the Israeli lawyers argued that Israel's humanitarian efforts do not demonstrate genocidal intent. Mr Sender, taking the floor after Ms Ragan, presented evidence of this, as "Israel continues to supply its own water to Gaza" and set up "four field hospitals and two floating hospitals".

Finally, Israel attacked the jurisdiction by which South Africa brought claims against them. Professor Shaw explained that South Africa had refused dialogue before the public hearing, despite multiple attempts to resolve the issue. Israel has contested *prima facie*, denying that there is sufficient evidence to maintain the case, as South Africa refused to engage in negotiations. They reference the wording of the 2007 ICJ report on Bosnia Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro:

Claims against a state involving charges of exceptional gravity must be proved by evidence that is fully conclusive.

Professor Shaw urged the ICJ to invoke Article 41 of the ICJ which states:

The Court shall have the power to indicate, if it considers that circumstances so require, any provisional measures which ought to be taken to preserve the respective rights of either party.

This jurisdiction argument is strong, as Al Jazeera chief political editor, Marwan Bishara, believed it would "make a dent" in South Africa's case.

On the international stage, Germany has stated its support for Israel in the ICJ case and its intent to intervene as a third party. They have been condemned for this by Zambia. However, as Hamas is not a signatory to the Genocide Convention, it has limited leverage over its actions. Regardless, the ICJ has little power to enforce any decision made on the case. Netanyahu has stated that the IDF will continue its assault whatever the ICJ rules.

On the European level, a ruling against Israel would politically justify the application of sanctions and the surfacing of more pro-Palestine rhetoric. Politicians in the UK, like Grant Schapps, who previously expressed a pro-Israel alignment, have begun to hesitate. Schapps stated he was "disappointed" with Netanyahu, particularly as he continues to decline any compromise regarding a 2-state solution.

Whilst in a practical sense, the ICJ ruling has little effect, it plays an important role within the wider trend of displaying shifts in political support on the international stage. Countries are losing political capital by supporting Netanyahu's regime as public opinion shifts. The ICJ's trustworthy reputation would give some weight to a condemnation of Israel's actions, lending validity to pro-Palestine movements.

An append. The previous section was written on Sunday 21 January. On Friday 26 January, the ICJ ruled in favour of South Africa.

Before I begin this secondary article, I feel I have understated the Israeli defence of the devaluation of the word 'genocide'. Historically we have naturally associated the term 'genocide' with the horrific acts of violence committed against the Jewish population known as the Holocaust. Many people on both sides have argued that labelling Israel's actions as 'genocide' will devalue the term in future and almost trivialise the murder of the Jewish people during the Holocaust. Sorry to disrupt the flow of the article but I felt it needed to be restated.

At ipm local time in the Hague the International Court of Justice issued their ruling in favour of South Africa. However what does this ruling mean for Israel and the future of the Palestinian people? From the outset, the ruling was not what South Africa called for in the application and was much more lenient and open to interpretation than what many were calling for. The court recognised the following provisional measures:

The State of Israel shall, in accordance with its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts within the scope of Article II of this Convention, in particular:

- (a) killing members of the group;*
- (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;*
- (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; and*
- (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;*

2) The State of Israel shall ensure with immediate effect that its military does not commit any acts described in point 1 above;

3) The State of Israel shall take all measures within its power to prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide in relation to members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip;

4) The State of Israel shall take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip;

5) The State of Israel shall take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to allegations of acts within the scope of Article II and Article III of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide against members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip;

6) The State of Israel shall submit a report to the Court on all measures taken to give effect to this Order within one month as from the date of this Order.

The notable omission from this declaration by the ICJ is the fact that the ICJ has not called for an end to the conflict and has by this fact recognised Israel's invasion of the Gaza strip as within their international right under article 41 of the UN charter. Therefore the ICJ has ruled that it is within Israel's right to conduct the war as they see fit as long as it does not fall over into genocide. The court ruling furthermore is incredibly broad and has no enforcement mechanism. The first cause simply orders Israel to not commit genocide. It does not recognise that the overwhelming evidence in support of the fact that Israel is committing genocide, and it doesn't put in any measures to

prevent Israel from committing further war crimes. It simply acts as a reassertion of the definition of genocide as outlined by Article 8 of the Rome Statute of International Law. To sum up the first clause in layman's terms, don't commit genocide.

The third clause is not much better calling for Israel to 'to prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide in relation to members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip'. However as Israel outlined in its defence, Israel is already 'dealing' with any genocidal acts. Netanyahu suspended the minister of heritage when he said that nuking Gaza was 'an option'.

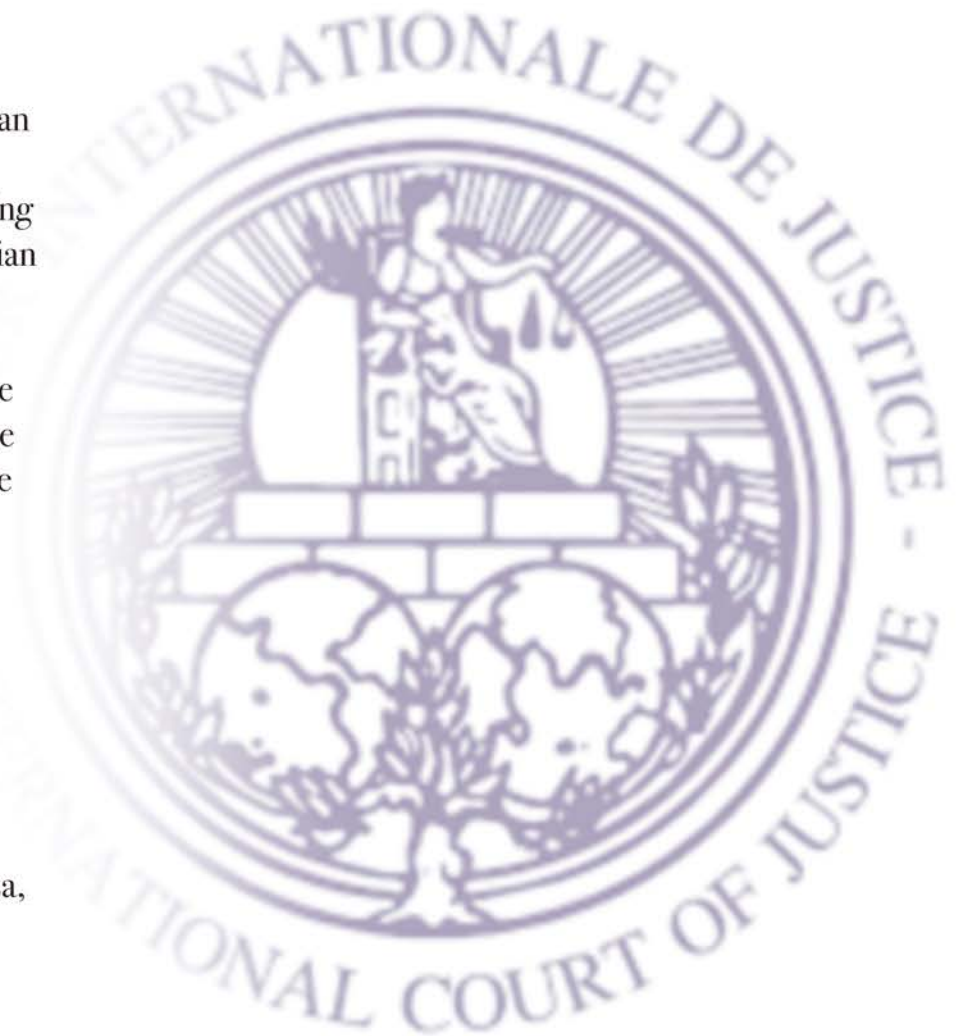
However Amihai Eliyahu, the minister in question, was only suspended from cabinet meetings 'until further notice' despite the clear genocidal intent behind his statement. Furthermore, the Israeli courts has been proved to be biased in cases with the legal system chalking actions committed by the IDF against civilians up to the chaos of war. Even when the IDF killed several Israeli civilians who were hostages, the Israeli government defended them saying they 'appeared a threat'.

In the past, Israeli courts have been far from impartial with common usage of 'administrative detaining' such as with Yazen Alhasnat who was released after almost 5 months in prison with no charge or evidence against him. The conviction rate for Palestinians arrested and tried in military courts is 99%, and the legal system is constructed against them with detainees mounting appeals having no legal access to evidence to base their case on. Many argue that the Israeli legal system has proved itself as a biased institution so they believe that calling for Israeli to internally prosecute and punish acts of genocide or public displays of intent of genocide will not change or force Israel to actually carry out the order as their courts can and will simply rig the conviction.

Similarly Israel has claimed that it is already abiding by clause 4 of the provisional measures and because of the openness of the clause Israeli can stick by its

own definition of what humanitarian assistance is, therefore this clause doesn't force Israel to increase its humanitarian assistance to Gaza (although this does not mean that Israel will not increase its humanitarian assistance, in its defence Israeli lawyers displayed Netanyahu as having every intent at avoiding a humanitarian crisis).

In totality, whilst the ruling does give direct orders to prevent genocide the ICJ has not recognised that genocide occurred stating only that it was 'plausible' that it occurred. Furthermore, the order placed no enforcement mechanisms to make sure Israel keeps to the ICJ ruling. Whilst the ICJ ruling may have achieved nothing practically, the ruling puts backing behind public attacks upon Israel's conduct in Gaza, since the ruling was achieved we've seen more international pushback against Israel's actions and so many claim that the ICJ ruling may simply be the next step on the road to peace in Gaza.



The Iowa Caucus: What's Next for Trump?

By Evan Vayamos

It may already be common knowledge that Donald J. Trump is the undisputed frontrunner for the 2024 Republican Presidential nomination, but the Iowa caucus, which just took place this 15th January, truly set that fact in stone. On the snowstorm-plagued day, Trump managed to secure a record-shattering 51% of the vote in the caucus, a whopping 30 percentage points higher than the second-place candidate Ron DeSantis. But how has a defeated presidential candidate, typically expected to slowly fade from memory, unable to shake the taint of the loss, managed to garner such immense support? And more importantly, will the same outcome occur in future caucuses, or will Trump's cloud of controversy finally get to him, allowing Ron DeSantis or Nikki Haley to take the lead for the Republican nomination?

The Iowa Caucus itself hails the start of the Republican caucus and primary season, which is an arduous process for republican voters to display their opinions on who the next presidential candidate should be. Most states in the USA hold primaries or caucuses to whittle down the vast number of candidates aiming for the Presidential Nomination. However, the Iowa Caucus is very special due to its position as the first caucus or primary in the series; winning it would provide a huge dose of momentum and confidence for future primaries, driving the candidate closer and closer to achieving the presidential nomination.

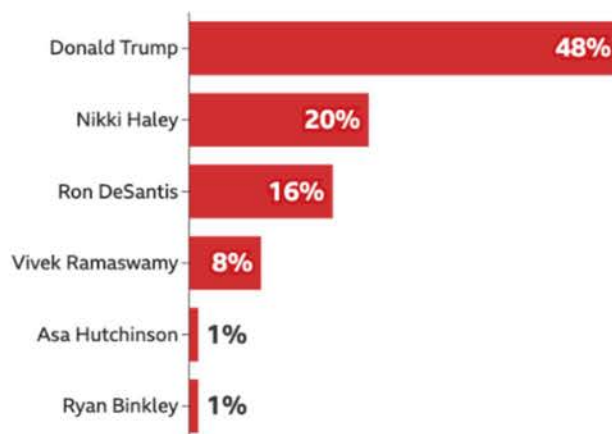
Consequently, every 4 years, Iowa and its voters find themselves catapulted right into the centre of the US's political landscape, wielding the ability to push presidential hopefuls into the spotlight or pulling them back into inconsequentiality and thus driving their campaign into oblivion.

The stakes of the 2024 Iowa Caucus appeared to be higher than ever. A victory for Trump would likely imply the solidification of his state as Republican Presidential frontrunner, whereas a loss would completely discomfit and thwart the heaps of momentum that Trump had accumulated, leaving the door wide open for other candidates to seize the republican nomination.

Trump won it by a landslide. However, his victory didn't come out as excessively surprising. Many polls, such as the one shown below conducted by the BBC, clearly indicated Trump's very favourable odds of attaining such a great lead. But, indisputably, it is evident that the magnitude of his victory may have been seen as completely unfeasible and absurd eight months ago, at the height of Trump's lawsuits of connivance. So how did Trump manage to rack up all this steam?

Trump tops final poll in Iowa

Preferences of likely Republican caucusgoers. Margin of error +/- 3.7pts



Source: Mediacom poll for NBC News/Des Moines Register

BBC

One significant reason for this was the dramatic increase in support provided to Trump among Iowa's evangelical voters. Constituting a solid 28% of Iowa's voters, this shift in preference was one of the key factors of what allowed Trump to swing Iowa from a Democratic-supporting state back in Obama's 2012 election to a Republican stronghold in 2020, pulling in an increase of 14 percentage points.

The main cause for this increase among evangelicals can be attributed to an already growing group among them who seem to care less about the president being 'observant'. Instead, they prefer an individual who can act on social and cultural issues, believing Trump to be what Charles Homan, an esteemed NYT columnist, described as "a vessel for achieving things, particularly in appointing Supreme Court Justices". This trend is also displayed by how, in the words of Axios, a US political news agency, "Bob Vander Plaats, the state's most prominent evangelical leader... [backed] DeSantis", implying that there is a distinct group among Iowa's evangelicals embracing this slightly altered agenda.

Moreover, Trump's appearance in Iowa's State Fair was also a direct cause for all this steam; he played his cards with a stroke of perfection there. As CNN noted, he "seized the spotlight ... swooping overhead in his private plane just as his chief Republican rival, ... Ron DeSantis was flipping pork chops". Trump further weaponised the state fair by travelling to Iowa itself with "an entourage largely designed to troll DeSantis", composed of many Floridian members of Congress backing Trump (Ron DeSantis is governor of Florida).

Thus, having brought down DeSantis's approbation and respect among voters in such a significant event in Iowa, Trump's voter base managed to transcend into DeSantis's, further augmenting his lead leading up to the Caucus, contributing to his landslide victory.



What does the future likely hold for Trump's Campaign?

Well, it's complicated.

This is predominantly due to many uncertainties in Trump's criminal investigations regarding his breaching of the 14th amendment. As stated in the amendment, an individual having sworn the oath to the US during inauguration would be completely banned from ever holding office if proven to have engaged in "insurrection and rebellion" against the country. As you read this article, there are a flurry of ongoing civil lawsuits trying to disqualify Trump on that basis (due to the events of January 6th 2021), with considerable pushes seen already in Georgia, Colorado, California, Oregon and Nevada and more on the way.

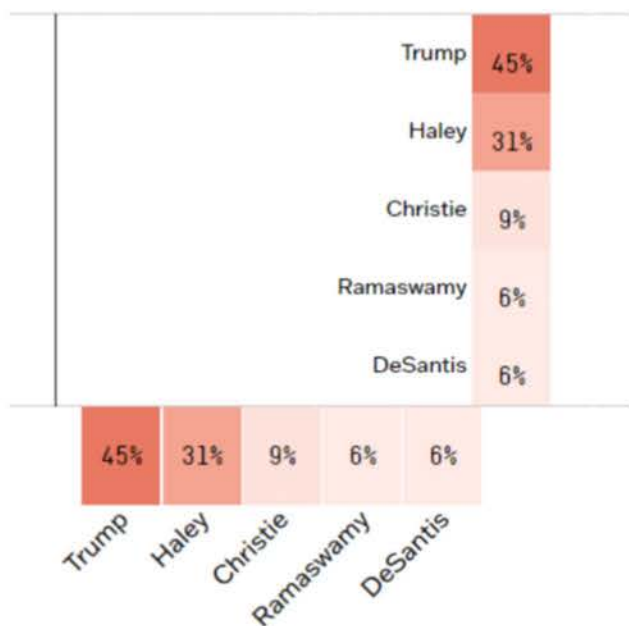


Moreover, the New Hampshire primary on Tuesday the 23rd may also act as a sink for Trump’s gathering momentum. In contrast to Iowa, NH’s population has a far lower proportion of evangelicals as well as an overall lower proportion of White Non-Hispanic citizens (almost 10% lower than Iowa). This is very significant, since extended polling has displayed that White Non-Hispanic citizens form a large part of Trump’s reliable voter base. This is exactly why the Democratic Party, wishing to commence their primary season with a more ethnically-diverse state, pushed back their Iowa caucus to Super Tuesday.

Furthermore, current polling on project 538 for the primary shows 45% of likely voters planning to cast a ballot for Trump, along with 31% preferring to vote for Nikki. However, this polling may be slightly inaccurate, since following the Iowa Caucus, Former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie dropped out. Mr Christie was an acid critic of Trump, and has heavily campaigned in New Hampshire leading up to the primary, mustering 9% of predicted votes from expected NH primary voters. Thus, it is safe to say that his sizeable voter base in NH is likely to switch their vote to Haley, as opposed to Trump, providing her with a sizeable bonus.

In the case that Trump secures the NH primary with a decent lead, it is likely that he will be able to secure the Republican Presidential Nomination, given that he isn’t heavily hindered by lawsuits concerning the events of January 6th, 2021.

In the words of Harvard government professor and author of *How Democracies Die*, Steven Levitsky, “I’m hard-pressed to find any candidates anywhere who are so open that they would use the power of the state to go after critics and enemies”, clearly referring to Trump denigrating political foes as “vermin” needing to be “rooted out”. Whether Trump’s presidential campaign is cut short by lost primaries, civil lawsuits or a Biden victory, all we can do is wait and see as the future unveils what’s next in the complex landscape of US politics.



Two Rivals, One Future: India & Pakistan's Elections

By Imaad Nasir



2024 has been touted as a bumper election year, bringing ballots to the US, UK, EU, Russia, and dozens of other countries. It promises to reorientate the world's political scene, shifting it to the left (as will likely happen in the UK), moving it to the right (as Donald Trump's return may loom in the US) or maintaining the status quo (as polls point to in the European Parliament elections).

South Asia, however, pushes the adjective 'bumper' to its limits: four countries representing 98% of the region's population have gone or are going to the polls for key national elections this year. That the elections themselves are free is a separate question inviting a separate article, but even with this caveat, for a region that is rapidly developing into a bridge that unites the developing and developed worlds, 2024 will be vital, either in unprecedentedly preserving the status quo or bringing change to the region.

The two elections that are the most important in South Asia this year are undoubtedly those in Pakistan and India. They contribute to most of the region's geopolitical weight, and the two are South Asia's only nuclear powers, with more than three hundred warheads combined. And whilst both elections are distinct and embedded in completely different political environments, they share interesting characteristics: linking these to the volatile political past of the two nations gives perhaps the best insight into what the rival powers will look like over the next decade.

India's election is the clearer of the two, partly because of the attention placed on it as the world's biggest democracy, but also because its political picture is not as hazy as its Pakistan's. The two rival factions, the Hindu-nationalist NDA led by incumbent PM Narendra Modi, and the coalition of opposition parties, the INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance)

coexist alongside dozens of other regionalist parties that usually vie for influence in coalitions. But I stress the word ‘usually’: since 2014 the importance of regional parties and parties representing specific classes, who had played a key part in politics since the 1990s, has been reduced by the dominance of Modi. In a landslide victory in 2019, his party, the BJP, secured more than the threshold for a majority, without even needing his right-wing partners in the NDA alliance. That feat is incredibly rare in modern politics, and it has left this election as a foregone conclusion with the NDA likely to remain in control of the country.

Such is the desperation among the opposition that a vast array of twenty-eight parties have come together under the banner of the INDIA alliance. But even aligning the political might of much of India’s elite has barely made a dent in Modi’s march towards triumph. He has calculated that simply appealing to the Hindi-speaking belt of Northern India, along with some ‘Hindi-lite’ states (that have some similarities with the North), is enough to win. Each time Modi uses this strategy, he threatens to destroy the complex and precarious arrangement of ethnicities India has been built on and forces the INDIA to take the much less popular stance of protecting it. Yet that just perpetuates Modi’s success in the most populous Hindi states, creating a virtuous cycle for the BJP and a vicious one for the INDIA. Just on January 22, we saw the Ram Mandir temple (built on the site of a mosque demolished by pro-BJP nationalists in 1992) opened by Modi, in another shrewd but divisive political move fulfilling the promise of a temple on the holy Hindu site of Ayodhya, and creating momentum in an election year.



Having considered India’s election, we can turn to Pakistan’s. The last election in the Islamic Republic, in 2018, saw the populist PTI win, led by former cricketer Imran Khan. This displaced both the conservative PML-N and progressive PPP, who had been the heavyweights of Pakistani politics since 1988. Many argued Khan’s victory was helped by the military, who have led coups thrice in Pakistani history, and are frequently seen as the true kingmakers. From 2018 till 2022, Khan governed in a relatively popular administration, although its original claim of cleaning up politics from corruption was put into question. Then, in 2022, an unprecedented alliance of the PML-N, the PPP, and other parties (known as the PDM) unseated the PTI, pushing it back into opposition. Again, analysts noted the potential importance of the military in supporting this alliance of parties with no ideological similarity, and at the same time, noted the judiciary starting to scrutinise the PTI. This culminated with the order that all PTI contestants compete in the election as independents, which has helped destroy the PTI brand that helped it succeed across the whole country, rather than just in individual provinces. Thus, one can easily predict something of a rerun of the 2013 election, with the PPP dominating its stronghold, Sindh, the PML-N dominating its heartland, Punjab, and Islamic and regional parties dominating the conservative Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan provinces. The only difference would be the PTI having just a few seats in the Punjab and no presence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Therefore, both elections would preserve some sort of status quo: in Pakistan that is the likely reinstating of the status quo of PML-N/PPP hegemony, and in India that is the probable continued dominance of the BJP. We can also see in both a rare alliance of parties to counter the threat of populism, be it the INDIA or PDM, yet in Pakistan the alliance should succeed and in India it will probably fail. And, as in much of the world, political parties are increasingly drawing on populism and nationalism rather than policies to fight these polls. Considering how the two results might relate to each other, we could see increased privatisation in both countries and no active attempt to further social liberalisation. It is possible, however, that a PML-N victory or PPP-led coalition in Pakistan would engage in some form of reform, and that, without the threat of another election and the resultant need to stoke nationalism, both nations could find themselves more amicable to the idea of negotiations over their regional disputes, all of which allows for cautious optimism.

But all this is simply speculation, and, as South Asia's past shows, its future can never be completely predicted. So all that is left to do is view from afar the makings of intrigue and populism, and watch February 8 in Pakistan, and India's mammoth election month, likely to occur in April and May. Then we can only hope for positive changes in a region racked by division, but with the promise of significant development over the next decade.



Evaluating the Effectiveness of Voting Systems in the UK

By Siddharth Shah

The use of First Past the Post (FPTP) in UK elections since 1950 has been a major part of how politics work in this country. The system gives victory to the candidate who gets the most votes in each area, making it simple and clear to determine who wins. However, other countries that were once British colonies, like Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, and South Africa, have moved towards different voting systems that aim to be fairer and more representative. In fact, even the UK has not always used FPTP, and went through a variety of electoral reforms including the Bloc vote and the Limited vote. Despite its popularity, FPTP has faced criticism for not being proportional and for favouring bigger political parties. Important moments in UK electoral history, like the defeat of the Single Transferable Vote in 1917 and the rejection of the "alternative vote" system in 2011, show that there is an ongoing debate about whether FPTP is the best system for the UK.

There have been various suggestions for different voting systems in the UK, each with their own advantages and challenges.

One such system is the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system, which allows voters to rank parties in the order of their preference. This system ensures proportional representation by transferring people's votes to their next preference if their first party is eliminated, until a single party is left. This ensures that people are not forced to vote for only the big parties for fear of their vote not mattering, and means that people can vote for what they really want, knowing their preferences will still be considered if their first choice isn't possible.

However, some proponents of FPTP say that proportional systems like STV can allow smaller radical parties to gain power more easily from the lack of a 2-party system (though proportional systems can still have vote thresholds). As STV is also used to vote for a party not a candidate, it has also been criticised for disconnecting MPs from constituencies, and meaning that people have no direct representative in Parliament.

Another alternative, Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) systems combine elements of FPTP and proportional representation. Voters elect some representatives through constituency based FPTP voting and others through party lists to ensure overall proportionality. This proportionality means MMP faces similar criticism to STV.

Finally, the "alternative vote" system, which was rejected in the 2011 referendum, would have allowed voters to rank candidates in order of preference. The candidate with the fewest first-preference votes would be eliminated until a candidate achieved a majority. Countries like Ireland, New Zealand, and Germany currently use variations of these systems, providing practical examples of how they can work. Though this system might seem similar to STV, here people vote for citizens instead of parties, retaining the advantages of constituencies.

In order to understand some of the problems that these voting systems attempt to solve, I will consider the example of gerrymandering. It is defined as the manipulation of electoral boundaries for political advantage, and has a substantial impact on how fair and representative elections are in the UK. When political parties strategically redraw district boundaries, they can weaken the voting power of certain communities or concentrate their support in specific areas. This goes against the idea of "one person, one vote" and distorts election results by unfairly benefiting certain political parties or demographics. The UK has seen examples of gerrymandering, like the controversial boundary changes proposed by the Boundary Commission for England in 2018. However not all of the voting systems outline above are equally affected by issues such as gerrymandering.

Various voting systems, such as FPTP, STV, and MMP, have different effects on the extent of gerrymandering possible and the fairness of elections. FPTP, which awards all seats to the winner in each constituency, can worsen gerrymandering because it encourages parties to manipulate district boundaries to their advantage by, for example, packing rival parties' voting power into one constituency to reduce their power in critical swing constituencies. On the other hand, proportional representation systems like STV and MMP help reduce gerrymandering by allocating seats based on the overall proportion of votes received by each party. This reduces the impact of district-level boundary changes. The unique characteristics of each voting system determine how votes are converted into seats in parliament. For STV specifically, as it is party based, there are often no constituencies, or in the case of Ireland, exceptionally large constituencies, meaning that the potential effects of gerrymandering are significantly limited.

To assess the fairness of voting systems in the face of issues like this, we can use measurable criteria such as proportionality and voter satisfaction. However, for the issue of gerrymandering more specifically, it is now possible to generate constituencies on a computer to maximise certain outcomes for certain parties (using a technique called Markov Chain Monte Carlo) and therefore to generate the most proportional, representative, and fair constituencies, and to assess this fairness under various voting systems. With these new technological advances, it may soon be much easier to quantitatively determine the most effective voting system.

In conclusion, as the debate surrounding the use of FPTP in the UK and the future of the UK electoral system continues, it is vital to consider the characteristics and properties that we desire from a voting system (such as proportionality, strong constituency links etc), as well as how we can assess them in order to make more informed and fact-based decisions about these matters. By introducing more objective measures of the effectiveness of voting systems, we can eliminate the need for weaker hypothetical arguments such as those of radical parties rising to power in proportional systems or of smaller parties being suppressed in FPTP, and these arguments can be replaced by quantitative measures of these phenomena happening in past elections.

On the Epidemic of Violence in Ecuador

By Bruno Zheng

In 1991, Ecuadorian President Rodrigo Cevallos announced that Ecuador was an 'island of peace' in South America. A bold statement that has not seemed to validate itself: the UN describes Ecuador as a country 'under stress' and is now ranked 111th in the world for violence, alongside countries like Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Just 5 years ago, Ecuador was seen to be one of the safest countries in South America, so what has happened to cause this collapse in security?

The kick-starter for this descent into violence started with the escape of Adolfo Villamar, better known as 'Fito', from the prison where he was held. Fito heads the largest criminal group in Ecuador, called 'Los Choneros', and with his escape, multiple gangs and criminal groups have been aroused, leading to explosive attacks in major cities and kidnappings of police officers, prison officials, and security forces. So how did such an important person like Fito escape?



On the 7th January, police arrived at La Regional, the prison Fito was held at, to transfer him to La Roca, a smaller but more secure prison within the same compound. However, upon their arrival, Fito's cell was found to be empty, as he had been warned a month in advance of his transfer. His escape triggered several violent and coordinated attacks and kidnappings, and it has become clear that these criminal groups possess the same firepower as the state does.

Why is Ecuador particularly susceptible to gang wars and violence?

Ecuador's susceptibility can be attributed to a combination of factors, such as rife poverty, lack of education, and the proliferation of drug activity. Elevated levels of urban poverty create an environment where young people do not possess very many opportunities, leading them to be unable to break out of the poverty cycle. Due to limited job and employment opportunities, they often join gangs, which offer a sense of belonging and financial support. The disregard for these youths is also shown through their lack of education, which often pushes them towards illegal activities.

However, the variable most responsible for the recent rise in violence is drug trafficking. Ecuador is a country that is located next door to some of the world's largest cocaine producers, and in the last few years, local drug lords have formed partnerships with transnational cartels, thus increasing tensions in Ecuador. Overall, criminals have become more professional, cartels have become richer and better trained, and they have access to more dangerous equipment, meaning that the state has a limited ability to deal with the various air, sea, and land drug transport routes into and out of the country.



There is also the problem of Ecuador's prison system. Several years ago, the government's budget for reforming the country's penitentiary system was reduced. Thus, this has directly resulted in a reduction in the number of prison staff, leading to prisons becoming run by rival drug gangs, and this has led to 11 prison riots in the last three years, resulting in 412 deaths. Evidently, this has caused the number of criminals to also rise, and when they are released, they spread their violence into the streets, leading to the phrase 'it is safer to live in prisons than on the streets'.

Currently, Ecuador is still combatting this epidemic of gangs. President Daniel Noboa has already declared a state of emergency, meaning the military have been summoned directly into the cities to restore order. Security forces have planned a major operation to reclaim control of prisons, and the number of police on the streets have more than doubled.

The Evolution of the Korean Economies

By Seojin Lim

On 27 July 1953, the Korean War officially ended. An armistice signalled the end of 3 years of brutal and relentless fighting, and the once unified Korea was divided in two along the 38th parallel, each side adopting vastly different political ideologies which would shape the countries in the following 61 years. However, the successes of the two approaches could not be more different. Perhaps the most striking visual example of the gulf between the two nations in terms of development is the satellite image of the states, the South half filled with lights illuminating the entire region, while the north sits above it, shrouded in darkness. So how did the two countries get to this point?

Contrary to popular belief, North Korea were actually more prosperous than their southern counterpart immediately after the war. Kim Il Sung, a former World War II general, became leader following the armistice and arrested any political opponents, crafting an image that he was an almost mythical or divine being by erecting hundreds of statues and writing in textbooks that Japan had fallen solely due to his war efforts. He was the one to establish the idea of a command economy, where the government alone had complete control over the country's resources. Furthermore, he introduced the idea of 'Juche', meaning that North Korea should be completely self-reliant. The economy surprisingly developed quickly initially, with the North's vast reserves of coal (80% of the peninsula's supply) among other minerals as well as the possession of machinery from pre-1945 Japanese Colonial Rule meant that the country was able to industrial rapidly, much quicker than the South. Furthermore, the government prioritised heavily the importance of primary and secondary



education for all of its people and devoted much of its resources to produce goods for its citizens. In the South, the situation did not seem as promising. Being a largely agrarian society with a noticeable lack of natural resources, the first decade of South Korea as an independent state was littered with few positives. Despite Japan's economic boom in the 50s, the South Korean's were unwilling to form a trading partnership, fearing a dependence on their economy would give them far too much power over their country. Additionally, the lack of political stability and an economy that looked like it was going nowhere was far from appealing for foreign businesses, leaving the country to feed off American support to stay alive.

Following their various successes in the 50s, North Korea were looking to further advance their economy in the 60s. However, this was slowed by the breaking down of relations between their two primary allies, China and the Soviet Union. Kim feared that if he strayed too far towards one country's ideas, he would run the risk of losing one of these connections. As a result, he focused his efforts of enforcing 'Juche', pouring huge sums of

money into arms development to make it onto the international stage as a rising military power.

However, this would turn out to be a costly mistake, as the government, being too immersed in the idea of a potent army, failed to recognise the changing population figures and adjust prices and production accordingly. Given that the government had total control over the economy, its inability to manage the economic side of things was a significant indicator of its incompetence. Throughout the 1970s, problems continued to arise, with the isolationist policies backfiring as North Korea could not benefit from new technologies such as computers. With more and more resources being poured into military advancements and little else, North Korea's economy became stagnant, and while the army was well fed and supplied, the ordinary people began to suffer due a lack of food and money.

Meanwhile, the South Koreans had begun to make steady progress. A coup in 1961 allowed Park Chung-hee to seize power, revising the economic approaches of the country entirely. Under this new government, South Korea deviated to an approach which involved the private sector extensively, rather than letting the government have full control such as in North Korea. This approach turned out to be a huge success, as despite having very little raw materials of their own, they were able to import them from their nations for very cheap, take advantage of the growing secondary sector to assemble large quantities of goods, and export these for much a significant profit. In addition to this, South Korea were also able to form a strong relationship with the US, one which remains very strong to this day. With easy access to the biggest market in the world, a new era of prosperity followed, achieving growth rates around 2.5x higher than the global average. By 1974, South Korea's GDP per capita had overtaken the North's.

In the 1980s, development did not slow down by any means. Large conglomerates such as Samsung, now among the most powerful companies worldwide, began to form. Despite being private entities, they formed close ties with the government, allowing them to use loans to increase production and therefore the rate at which they could export goods. This proved to be a highly successful idea, with the astronomical rate of development of conglomerates allowing them to effectively branch out into all sectors such as food, technology and others. The freedom of private companies in the South proved to be far more effective than the highly controlled and restricted government-centric approach of the North, and allowed them to get up to date with the latest technology and developments around the world.

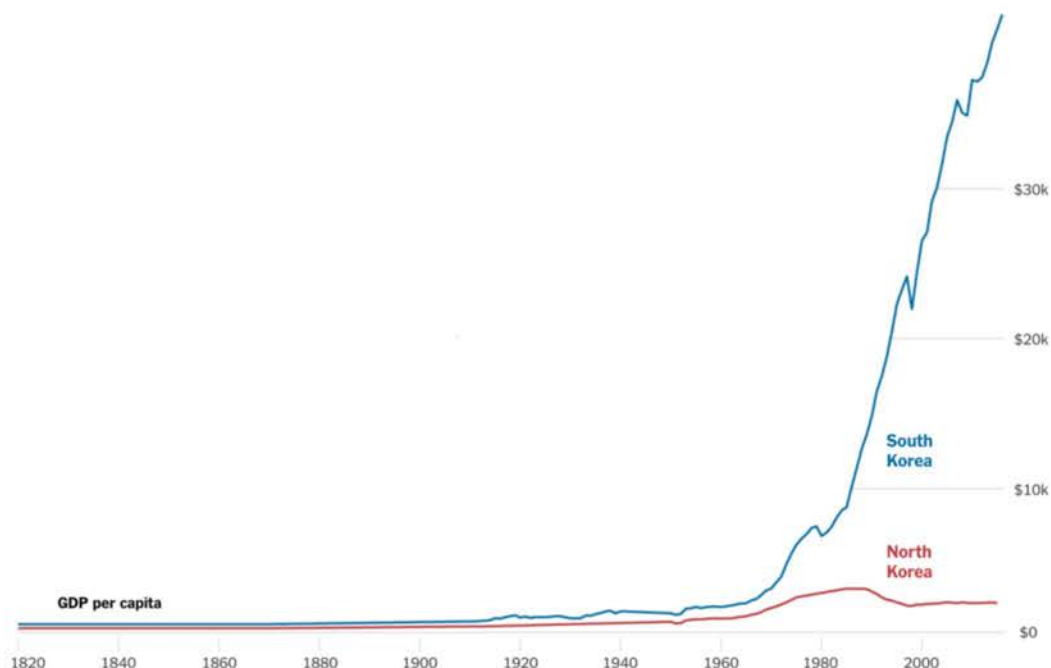


Despite the North's economic failure, they were still able to stay alive due to one factor: the Soviet Union. The communist powerhouse provided cheap energy imports and machinery to the North which sustained them throughout the late 70s and 80s. However, ironically enough, the sole reason the North was still afloat ended up being the reason the economy fell into ruin. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 duly brought North Korea down with it. A second disaster followed in 1994 with the death of the long-standing leader, Kim Il Sung. His successor, Kim Jong-il, was inexperienced and was insistent on sticking to the Juche principle, rather than pursuing alternative methods of reviving the country. Today, North Korea remains a highly isolated and poverty-stricken country, still devoting disproportionate sums of money on the military.

The most significant example of this is its nuclear weapons program, which made it just one of nine countries worldwide with access to this technology. In recent years, as a result of this nuclear program, the US has imposed heavy economic sanctions on North Korea, effectively removing most international trading opportunities. It is now highly reliant on its closest ally, China, for economic aid and energy imports. With a 0.2% decline in GDP in 2022 marking the 3rd successive year in which the North Korean economy has gone backwards, it is highly unlikely that the economy will make any significant advances in the near future.

South Korea continued to thrive following their transition from an authoritarian government to a democracy in 1987. The only major setback was the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis which damaged the economy significantly, with the government needing major assistance from the International Monetary Fund. However, the economy recovered rapidly, and it is now the 12th biggest in the world by nominal GDP. The success of its economy has led to relatively low levels of unemployment and inequality, coupled with a high-quality and free healthcare system alongside a strong education sector. Although the rate of development is far below the rate in years past, the country is maintaining a steady rate of consistent growth, and this is likely to continue into the future.

In conclusion, the two nations adopted drastically different approaches to the development of their economy, and while North Korea had an initial head start with a plethora of natural resources to work with, an incompetent government and an all too military-centric outlook restricted their progress significantly. Furthermore, their unwillingness to trade with other countries hindered their development. By contrast, despite a slow start, South Korea's Japan-esque market economy approach proved to be far more effective, so much so that their GDP in 2021 was 58x of that of North Korea, leading to a far superior standard of living and availability of basic services.



Don't Believe a Word in the News!

By Kumar Banerji Ballester

Pontius Pilate wondered, "What is Truth?" The truth is difficult to find in these times, where many social media platforms compete with each other to promote their views, biases and propagandas. In times of war and conflict it is especially difficult for an outsider to know the truth – the hero of one could be the other's villain, and stories are written to support each one's views.

Shakespeare was not immune from such biased writing. His Richard III was a purely evil hump-back. Yet, recent unearthing of his grave at Leicester shows that he definitely did not possess a hump-back, and current revisionary historians have rehabilitated Richard and blame Shakespeare for spreading Tudor propaganda.

The distinction between the truth and lie can be difficult to fathom, when glib statements are made which, though impossible, appeal to our sense of belief. Take the Brexit cry of "Take Back Control!" That was appealing to many, but what did "control" actually mean? Or, do you remember the other one: "We send the EU £300 million per week – let's fund the NHS instead!" Indeed, if that was the truth, the NHS would not be in the state it is today. Lies, when floated, and believed in, have already done irreversible damage even when the truth is finally revealed. "Falsehood flies, and truth comes limping after it, so that when men come to be undeceived, it is too late; the jest is over, and the tale hath had its effect" according to Jonathan Swift. The Post Office scandal is an example where by the time truth is known, lives have already been irreparably damaged.



It is often in the interests of the stronger party to hide the truth and spread falsehoods. “Holodomor” or the Ukraine famine of the 1930s was only revealed by the persistence of investigative reporting by Mr Gareth Jones of the Times. Seymour Hersch of NY Times revealed the My Lai massacre of Vietnam War in 1968, which was repeatedly denied by the US Army. And, at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, the detainees were treated horribly, and CBS News, when first broadcasting the story, found itself blocked at every turn by the US military. In fact, Maj General Taguba who led the first internal investigation and reported unfavourably was asked to retire early by his bosses!

In fact, the Iraq War of 2003 was based on a big lie posing itself as a truth. Before a shot was fired in Iraq by the US-led coalition, British intelligence, led by MI6, produced flawed evidence about Saddam Hussein’s supposed weapons of mass destruction – this was then amplified by then Prime Minister Tony Blair in his foreword to the Iraq dossier of September 2002. But it was not true and proven not to be so after the initial invasion was over.

Even more recently, on 11th October 2023, President Biden said that he had seen confirmed pictures of Hamas terrorists beheading children. This supposedly came from a news item on an Israeli TV quoting a IDF soldier to have seen beheaded children and women. Only later, the White House clarified that Biden had based his comments on media reports from Israel and on a statement by a spokesperson for the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. It is no longer being made by the Israelis. It had served its purpose. The use of the supposed mutilation of babies as a propaganda tool was used most famously early in WWI when British newspapers published stories about the Germans bayoneting Belgian babies.

And only last week, the news carried stories of Iran-Pakistan affray. A little investigation shows that the party suffering are the Baluchis from Baluchistan – a region sprawling through west Pakistan, south Afghanistan and east Iran. Alexander fought his way through Gedrosia, but today’s Baluchis are fighting both Iran and Pakistan for independence. It is the Baluchi resistance from Pakistan that first set off a bomb in Iran, which retaliated by sending missiles against them. Pakistan shouted foul, its sovereignty was assailed (not that Pakistan cared for the Baluchis), and replied by bombing (who else?) Iranian Baluchis. Thus honour satisfied, both parties took out the partisan Baluchis. Yet, the news was full of Shia-Sunni conflicts, and Iranian over-reach etc.

As George Orwell remarked: “In a time of deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.” So, never believe anything you read in the newspapers. Ask, Investigate, and Question everything!

Why London Should Be Independent

By Julian Herbst



Why did a petition on change.org to declare London independent from the UK receive over 180 000 signatures? Because London deserves better than what it's currently getting. It is a truly special city, the most diverse ever by languages spoken (over 400), and has a GDP of £496 billion. Paddington the bear once said that "in London everyone is different and that means everyone can fit in". Indeed, Benjamin Disraeli would have concurred; he said that London is a "modern Babylon", Babylon being the city-state where, in the Old Testament, all languages are thought to have originated.

London was the centre of the largest empire the world has ever seen, in London one can visit such different places as Canary Wharf, Shoreditch and Westminster in one day, London is what migrants

risk their lives for. And London is also consistently bashed by both the Tories and Labour, despite providing a fiscal surplus of £40 billion each year which is largely spent on other regions. That is to say, it is the only region (other than the South East) where the taxpayer doesn't lose money. Levelling up might improve "impoverished areas" marginally, but it levels down London massively.

Taking a look at the rest of the UK, it is 80% white British compared to 35% here, it is largely pro-Brexit while 28/33 London boroughs voted to remain, and as already shown before London is much more economically productive. None of this means to discredit the rest of the UK, only to highlight difference. Perhaps, however, London should show why one does not bite the hand that feeds one by declaring independence?

London's population is bigger than that of Scotland and Wales (regions with their own separatist movements) combined, and London's GDP is similar to that of Nigeria, Israel and Ireland. We are clearly different enough and big enough to be independent, and to warrant discussion of independence. Self-determination really. If the current pro-Brexit Tory government has any democratic integrity, it should call a referendum and recognise its result. A referendum which, of course, would only have Londoners voting, just as the EU did not have a say in Brexit. One poll suggests support for London independence among inhabitants is 20%, with that percentage increasing sharply among young people.

Now that we have established why this topic should be discussed, let's move on to the practicalities of our independent future. Importantly, London should be friends with the UK, as we rely on them for access to the sea via the Thames as well as significant amounts of our food and energy. A re-entry to the EU would not be feasible, as the border would have to be open to ensure trade, free movement for the 800 000 people who commute in and out of London daily, minimal tension, and access to Heathrow. A comparable situation would be Geneva, where 100 000 commuters cross the French-Swiss border every day. A political system based on the current London Assembly, Mayor and council system would be relatively simple to set up. To ensure international harmony and support development, we could also donate a decreasing percentage of annual governmental revenue to our new neighbour each year. Of course, the pound would remain ours (or shared) as all its value is derived from London institutions.

Independence would crucially also allow us to do what we want. Policies on issues ranging from homelessness, to drugs, to Arts Council funding, to taxes, to migration, could be implemented. We would have tens of billions more to spend; think of the dire state of policing, healthcare services and the TfL. New York controls 50% of its revenue, London only 7%, and yet we're still on similar levels

of global fame and success. We could even outperform our trans-Atlantic rival! Becoming an independent city-state also plays to our strengths and widens our focus and economic potential. Our economy is dominated by financial services, most of which are provided to or by foreign companies. Our population is largely cosmopolitan. Think of the great city-states which grew into empires: Venice, Rome, Carthage. If our friends New York, Paris and Hong Kong secure independence, a new Hanseatic League could be formed.

Moving on to the rest of the UK, they also want London independence. Generalising greatly, they get a chance to free themselves from the international elites they hate, the "softies" they look down upon, the violent and vibrant drill music scene they fear. They are free from London's yoke! They can reindustrialise all they like! Gov.uk states that "By 2025, the Places for Growth programme will relocate more than 2,500 civil service roles from Greater London to Manchester".

To end on a less exuberant, more realistic note, it would be pretty hard to separate a capital from the country which it has been a capital of for centuries. London independence (or Londependence) is unimaginable for most Brits and admittedly for most Londoners. But a campaign for further devolution would increase regional accountability and allow the so-called cosmopolitan elites to push back against their detractors. Mayors from Boris Johnson to Sadiq Khan have supported this, and for good reason. In 1998 there was a referendum on whether there should be a directly elected mayor and London Assembly, and London voted yes. Since then, we have developed an integrated train system for the Tube and the Overground, the Oyster card, as well the Elizabeth line. If a marriage is failing, sometimes it's better to reexamine the relationship before getting a divorce.

This article was written as a slightly tongue-in-cheek polemic. However, if not to be taken seriously, I do believe this deserves discussion. Please contact me with any queries or opinions.

AI-Generated Clickbait Videos

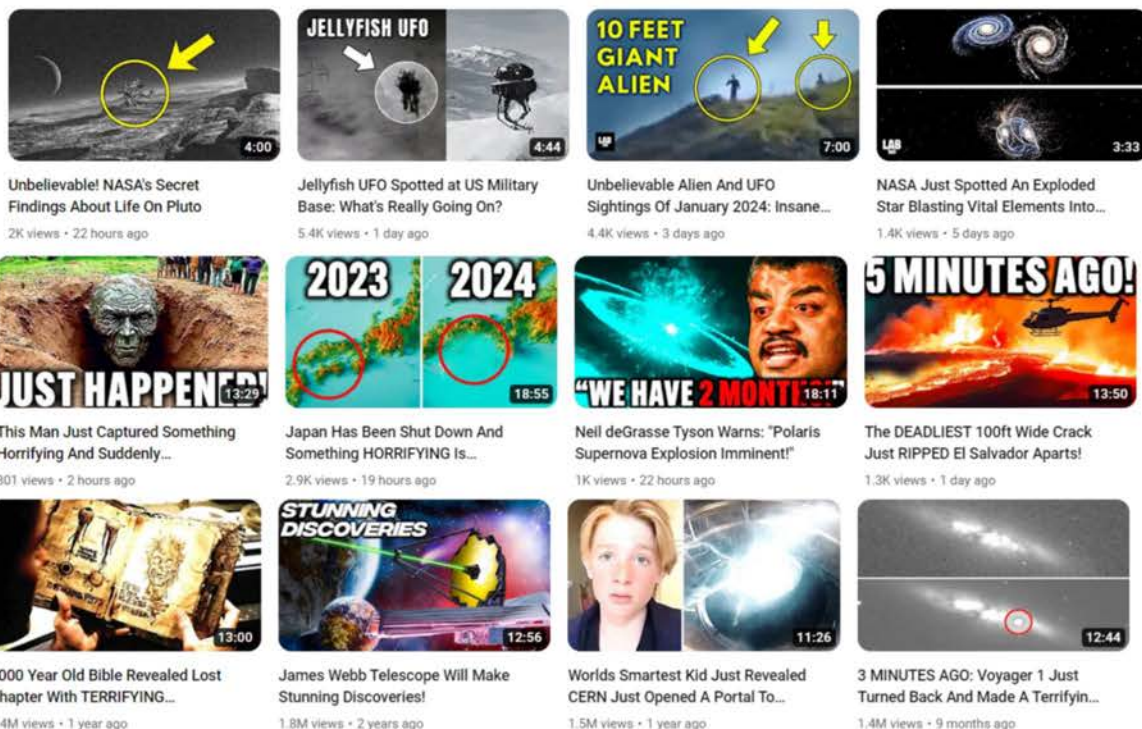
By Gabriel Levy

As artificial intelligence has made its way into many aspects of our lives over the past few years, it has inevitably turned up throughout major social media platforms, especially video-sharing ones like YouTube. The ability of AI software like ChatGPT to create human-like responses to text input, as well as more and more realistic AI-generated human voices, has allowed for the mass production of YouTube without much effort.

This development should be positive; it means that it can be much easier to make informative videos on various topics. However, this is not what has happened. Instead, a wave of clickbait content pretending to be informative, science-related, and real has appeared throughout the science section of YouTube, “discussing” topics ranging from: new discoveries of alien DNA somewhere, something happening “3 MINUTES AGO!!!”, a very vague

description of something heading towards Earth, to more obviously conspiratorial stuff like UFOs, the Electric Universe theory and more. It’s certainly a growing threat, given that some of these videos are getting millions of views, and their channels are amassing tens to hundreds of thousands of subscribers. Some examples are in the image below.

Many are uploading several times a day, which is impossible for almost all content creators, and only possible with automation. They are also using copyrighted content, but try to shield themselves from copyright strikes, by mentioning section 107 of the Copyright Act 1976, supposedly allowing them to use such copyrighted material. Using YouTube’s monetisation program, the groups behind these channels can rake in tens of thousands of dollars every year.



But what is the actual negative impact of these videos? Kyle Hill, a science communicator who has raised a lot of awareness on the issue, investigated this with the BBC in September last year by showing some of these videos to young children in an experiment. Nearly all of them believed the videos shown, even the outright conspiracies about aliens or about the pyramids of Giza being able to generate electricity. This shows that there are many people, especially the younger generation, who simply accept what they see on the internet, and do not have an awareness of the dangers of the bias, clickbait, mis and disinformation present on the internet. It is more important than ever that we check what information sources the claims we see on the internet come from, in order to avoid the many scams and conspiracies that pervade the web.

Even after Kyle Hill released two videos documenting this growing crisis within YouTube's science communication ecosystem, garnering over 3.7 million views altogether, YouTube still has not been able to take down many of these channels. If nothing changes, legal action may be the only way to tackle them. Even so, we can all do our bit by spreading awareness about this mounting problem. But the fact that we are having to deal with this ourselves, coupled with AI's inevitable advancements in the coming years, means that the future of science communication on the internet, and indeed communication on other subjects, is not looking good.



A Squad Analysis: Galatasaray S. K.

By an anonymous football correspondent



Currently drawing with Fenerbahçe at the top of the Turkish Süper Lig.

Okan Buruk: A short, somewhat chubby manager, with a loveable character and a history of success. He was pivotal in our 2000 UEFA Cup win, as a player, and now hopes to repeat the odd-defying success once more. His son has become the club's second mascot, often seen with the players and copying their bleached hair.

Fernando Muslera: A Galatasaray hero. Having been at the club for 11 years, fans often joke about how Muslera's dog has seen more Turkish Süper Lig titles than Fenerbahçe's president. He is majestic between the posts: earning his position as captain. However, this captaincy has led to an increased lippiness, and he has somehow found a suspension due to five yellow cards already this season.



Günay Güvenç: New arrival for this season. He fits the league's requirements for a Turkish goalkeeper, is skilled enough for Cup games and an adequate replacement for Muslera. He may be required soon, as Muslera has had more long-term injuries as he nears 40 years old.

Abdülkerim Bardakci: Lovingly referred to as the gorilla by fans, and dominates any attacker. His hair has been a talking point recently, as he made his Jesus-like locks form dreads, supposedly to resemble Rio Ferdinand.

Kaan Ayhan: He looks like he changes into a full suit before going for a kebab after every game. A benchwarmer, appreciated for his ability to play in multiple defensive positions.

Angelino: We had high expectations of a pacy intentionally bald Spaniard. We were disappointed to find him with hair, and performing subpar. To avoid paying RB Leipzig money through a forced buy-out clause on his loan, the club made sure to only play him 20 times and saved his last appearance for a crucial Champions League game against Copenhagen (we lost).

Davinson Sanchez: A fan favourite for his show boating and extravagant slide tackles. Personally, I find his antics irritating, as he one time turned his back on the action to celebrate a mediocre slide tackle with the fans, and subsequently a midtable team registered a shot on target.

Victor Nelsson: The most loved benchwarmer. He was crucial in our title win last season, famously terrorising attackers with a bandage across his head for a portion of the season. We could have sold him for nearly €15 million, but we instead thought it fit to rest him on our bench for a season. Keep in mind, we have €222 million of debt. ;)

Christian Luyindama: He was decent a few years ago. Now he scams a wage of a first team player while training with the second team, purely because no other team wants him.

Sacha Boey: Unbelievable. Scintillating. Erotic. Massacred Manchester United's left flank. He can defend, and can perform wizardry through the legs of defenders. It's a shame, but he'll either leave to the Premier League or to Bayern Munich soon.

Kazimcan Karatas: Appreciated by fans for his high-pitched voice and likeable nature. Is a poor left back and is benched while an out of position right winger plays.

Dries Mertens: Funny little man. Got us into the Champions League with a magical volley off a corner from outside the box in the qualification rounds. *Ciro Mertens* (his toddler son) is present at every game.

Sérgio Oliveira: One of the slowest playmakers I know. Good pass though. Massive wage for an injured benchwarmer.

Kerem Demirbay: Has been cooking recently, repeatedly assisting with a magical left foot.

Lucas Torreira: So good. Underappreciated in England, and loved in Turkey. He has a Turkish girlfriend who supports Galatasaray, so we hope he won't be leaving soon.

Tanguy Ndombélé: Hated for his high cholesterol, neck folds, and inability to play more than 30 minutes of football. Personally, I adore his skill, and even if it's sometimes in slow motion, it works.

Wilfried Zaha: Cooked Manchester United as usual. Plays beautiful football, seems to be liking life. Lovely stuff.

Cédric Bakambu: Back-up striker. He was slow to start but he does the job when required. Came to Turkey as his second transfer in the same summer, as his wife complained about the living conditions in the UAE where he was set to earn an outrageous wage.

Mauro Icardi: Fan favourite. He was punched in the eye in the penalty box during a derby game against Fenerbahçe, and Edin Dzeko (Fenerbahçe striker) took to Instagram to claim that his black eye was because he hit his chin on the goal post. He earns the most money at the club but is adored for rejecting a wage 10 times the size from Saudi Arabia. He seems to make up for the lost wage by comedically attempting to speak Turkish on multiple national adverts.

Hakim Ziyech: Recently left for AFCON, after being surrounded with controversy after certain journalists claimed he was unhappy at Galatasaray. However, Fabrizio Romano lay these claims to shame.

Baris Alper Yilmaz: A jack of all trades. He started a right winger, with the strength and speed of a tall Adama Traoré, played as a striker, and now fills in as a left-back. A fan favourite for his passion of bullying defenders.

Tete: The disappointment of our summer transfer window, with minimal contributions this season. Shakhtar Donetsk are crying to FIFA to punish us about him joining us on a free transfer before his contract ran down.

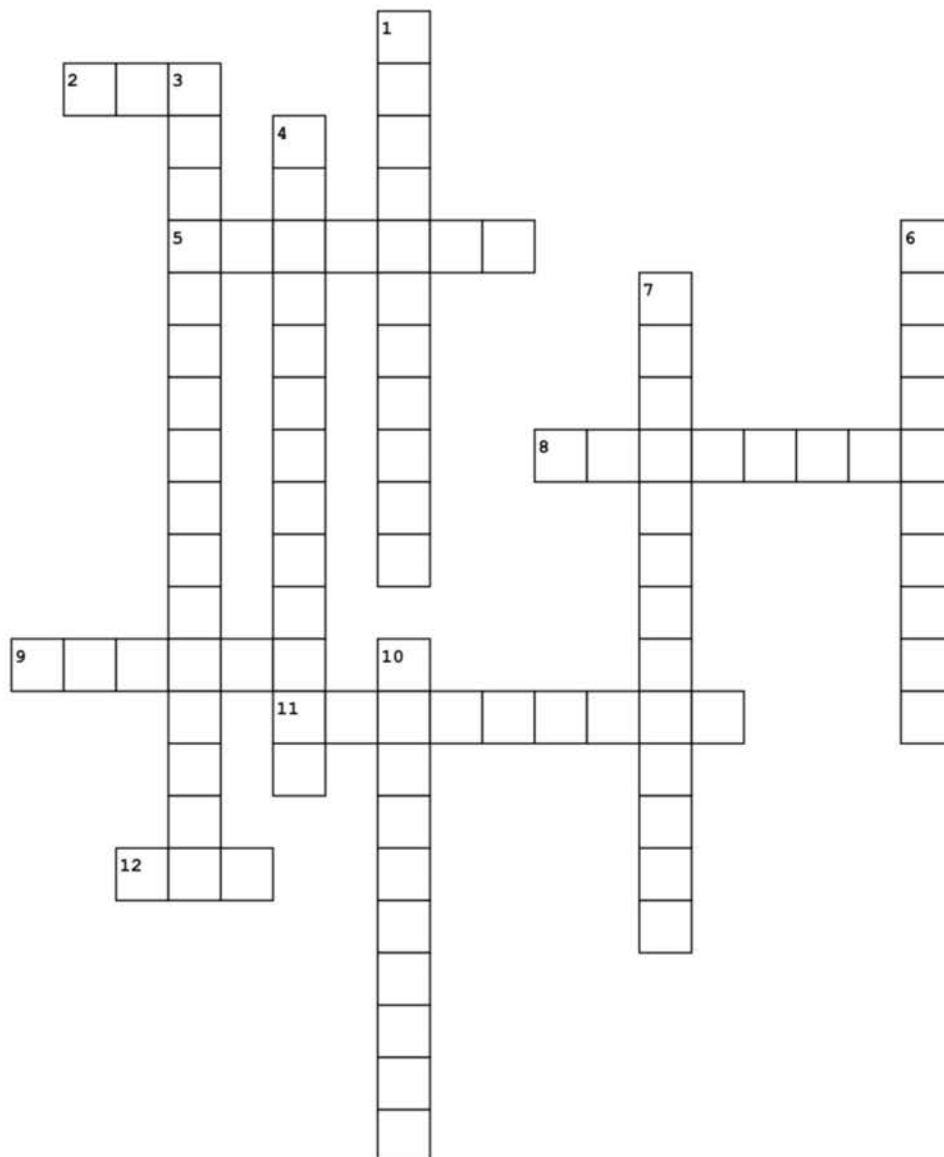
Kerem Akturkoglu: Turkish Harry Potter. Probably because he can do magical things with a football, but largely because he wore circular glasses on a plane one time. He needs a rest, as he misses sitters as often as he assists Icardi.

Eyüp Aydın / Akman brothers: Young men with bags of potential, personal favourites in my Football Manager save.



The Weekly Crossword Puzzle

Read the articles to complete the crossword. Then, email your answers to us for the chance to win an edible prize!



Across

- Israel's army
- Galatasaray's extravagant slide tackler
- A name for the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict
- War Ended in July 1953
- Misleading titles to attract viewers
- Party led by Imran Khan

Down

- 1. Fito's criminal group
- 3. UK election system
- 4. London independence
- 6. Sufficient evidence to support a legal case
- 7. Who wondered "what is truth?"
- 10. Runner up in the Iowa polls

The Student Press Team

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Thank you for reading this edition of the Student Press. If you would like to get involved, feel free to come along to our meetings on Mondays at 1.15pm in D03. Comments, feedback and opinion responses are welcome at hannah.lee@westminster.org.uk or joshua.bornstein@westminster.org.uk. Thank you to all our contributors.