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FINANCIAL TIMES

Tuesday 3 November 2020



FINANCIAL TIMES

'Without fear and without favour'

TUESDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2020

Macron, Islam and secularism in France

The country is battling a new wave of horrific terror attacks

For the second time in two weeks France is mourning a national tragedy, after a knife-wielding attacker killed three people at a church in Nice...

ities they deserved, leaving ghettos on city outskirts. The murders showed France does indeed have a problem with its small minority whose distorted interpretation of Islam can be used to justify or inspire acts of violence.

Even for a country traumatised by recent terrorist outrages, the latest incidents have shocked. Teachers have an elevated status in public life. They helped form the nation in the late 19th century, cultivating the values of a secular republic among children.

The president was earlier criticised by some for stigmatising Muslims after laying out a strategy for tackling radical Islamism in France. Mr Macron's resort to a "separatist" rhetoric was unfortunate. He had been under pressure from the centre-right and far-right opposition for allegedly being too lax against extremist Muslims...

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The battle to save UK businesses in lockdown

Fiscal measures will provide a boost but clarity is just as important

When Britain went into its first lockdown in March, pubs were forced to tip away an estimated 70m pints of beer before they could eventually reopen in July. This was just one of many costs forced on to the UK's businesses by the sudden measures to halt the spread of coronavirus.

As referenced in the article by Philip Stephens ("Rashford has a lesson for all politicians", Opinion, October 30), the prime minister has argued that "higher welfare payments from central government and the grants distributed by local councils already cover the additional costs faced by poor families when schools are closed".

Businesses warned on Monday that they stand to lose millions of pounds in revenue thanks to the shutdown of hospitality and non-essential shops during the key Christmas period, when many reach break-even for the year.

With restrictions set to continue regionally even after the nationwide lockdown ends, there is a clear economic support will be needed in some form throughout the winter. That means clear criteria on when the schemes are available; the Scottish and Welsh governments and local leaders in northern England can rightly point out that the furlough scheme was only extended once southern England was faced with lockdown.

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A new mix of policies will be needed, too, to provide more support for individuals who are laid off rather than sustainably employed. The "zombie" companies or jobs. Gaps in the furlough scheme, created at short notice in March, mean many workers and businesses have been treated very differently despite being in the same place. Future schemes need to be more carefully targeted to sectors that are worst affected or forced by government orders to close.

Letters

It's time for cost-benefit analysis of restrictions

You say that England's lockdown is necessary ("England's new lockdown is necessary but late", The FT View, November 2), but that the economic and wellbeing costs will be hard to bear. Unless you know the size of the latter (and epidemiologists do not), how do you know the former judgment is correct?

presented were epidemiological. No information on the impact of economic and mental health costs or on the intergenerational unfairness of pushing decades of debt on to our young people.

briefings. The prime minister should now put his dozen economists on Sage. It is time to make balanced choices. The FT should be demanding clear cost-benefit analysis. The epidemiological emotional monopoly will continue forever if it is never held to account.

Like others, I watched the announcement speech by Boris Johnson, the prime minister. The data

times recent cost-benefit calculations by David Miles, Sanjay Reddy, Bob Rowthorn and co-authors numbered the costs of lockdowns outweigh the gains. Those whose numbers are not shown in government

Andrew Oswald Professor of Economics and Behavioural Science University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

Covid-19 exposes our failure to tackle inequality

Covid-19 has put a glaring spotlight on the inequalities that exist in this country: poor children going hungry, the highest levels of obesity, life expectancy ten years more in affluent areas, rising unemployment and more.

Now we learn from Sarah O'Connor's column that we have the lowest mandatory sick pay for people affected by Covid-19 ("Threadbare sick pay is a false economy", Opinion, October 27), on which the 26 per cent of people working for mean and uncaring employers have to rely. On just £95 a week it means that many who are meant to isolate cannot afford to do so and this number will include some who know they are not well. This is not just about compassion for the poorest. This is about all of us and we need anyone who may have the virus to stay home and not infect others. The evidence that care homes that paid sick pay were less likely to have Covid-19 is compelling.

Labour anti-Semitism row leaves a lot of questions

In his letter (November 2) praising Keir Starmer for taking action against Jeremy Corbyn, Sebastian Mountbatten disregards the fact that the current Labour leader had been content to serve in Mr Corbyn's shadow cabinet for a considerable period and campaigned for him to be prime minister in the election of less than a year ago.

In the short term, we must implement the measures we know will help the poorest: free meals during school holidays, continuing the furlough scheme and increasing universal credit. These will help many of the poorest and vulnerable and is what a rich country can do to share its compassion and concern.

Something does not add up. That's £3.15 a day, or about a pound per meal. Assume both parents spend their entire increase in welfare payments on one child, and there is no increase in their housing and utility bills. I recall that this was intended to replace the £2.50 per meal dedicated to an eligible child during term time, before the pandemic struck.

The problem of anti-Semitism in the Labour party under Mr Corbyn has been well known for a long time and Sir Keir cannot claim to have been ignorant about this until publication of the recent report. Apart from Mr Corbyn's supporters, no one else was. Unless Sir Keir can come up with a better explanation, one is forced to conclude that his personal interests trump his principles until he had secured the party leadership.

There can be no excuse: we must provide free meals to needy children, we must pay people who are quarantined to stay at home and not go to work and spread coronavirus. We must not forget that we need to commit to addressing the inequalities that exist in this country and that certainly requires a national long-term approach.

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John S Burton Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, UK

Do we call this 'milking' the vegan debate?

In response to Susie Bell's comment that oat milk is mostly water ("Beer and burgers are one thing, but milk is different", Letters, October 31) I would point out cow's milk is also mostly water, in fact approximately 90 per cent water, the same percentage as store-bought oat milk.

She also says cow's milk "has been proved over millennia to be highly nutritious", but then so have oats, and coconuts, and almonds and soybeans.

One way UK can salvage its reputation with Europe

Christopher Sterling raises an extremely pertinent point in his letter "Transatlantic alliance has little holding it together" (October 26).

Johnson needs to do his sums on school meals

As referenced in the article by Philip Stephens ("Rashford has a lesson for all politicians", Opinion, October 30), the prime minister has argued that "higher welfare payments from central government and the grants distributed by local councils already cover the additional costs faced by poor families when schools are closed".

She goes on to state cow's milk is "an entirely natural product". Unlike the blend of oats, water and salt that I make in my kitchen, and use with cereal and tea?

However the divergence between Europe and America presents an opportunity for Europe to become much more militarily self-sufficient and presents a unique opportunity for the UK to salvage something positive from the whole Brexit debacle, namely to forge a "special relationship", this time with its key continental partners.

Regardless of the morality or costs associated with free school meals, this is untrue. Let me illustrate with a typical example.

Oat milk's long-term effects on human health are unknown, she writes. The long-term effects on human health from oats are well known. Whatever one's definition of milk, this argument was not the cream of the crop.

A win – and in terms of pride too. Whatever the frustrations EU partners have had with the British government the respect and appreciation of the role of the British army has never been in doubt.

The growing political clout of Indian Americans

As the US presidential election entered its final stretch, I logged into Twitter to find many of my Indian-American friends, professional contacts and others from south Asia's diaspora tweeting the meaning of their names with the hashtag #Mynames. They were doctors, lawyers, epidemiologists, journalists and civil servants with names like Somini, Ashish, Bhramar, Anand, Hari and Preet. They were joined by Americans with names reflecting roots in other parts of the world.

What triggered this outpouring? The night before, at a rally for President Donald Trump in Macon, Georgia, Indian Senator David Perdue had mocked the name of Democratic vice-presidential candidate, Kamala Harris, whose mother immigrated to the US from India. "KAM ma-la, Ka-MAR-la or Kamala-mala-mala – I don't know – whatever," he sneered, in a tone redolent of a playground bully.

A bigger UK involvement in Europe's security can only pay dividends in terms of strategic relationships with Germany and France.

New Delhi Notebook

by Amy Kazmin

What triggered this outpouring? The night before, at a rally for President Donald Trump in Macon, Georgia, Indian Senator David Perdue had mocked the name of Democratic vice-presidential candidate, Kamala Harris, whose mother immigrated to the US from India.

Indian-Americans' electoral weight is set to grow. Over the next decade, Mr Kapur says around 50,000 to 60,000 Indian immigrants a year will be eligible for naturalisation, and around 40,000 US-born children of Indian descent will come of age each year.

The best help the government can provide is to set out a realistic framework for keeping the virus under control once the latest lockdown comes to

His mangling of the name, which many find offensive, was part of a series of approval from the crowd. It didn't go down as well as the estimated 38,000 registered Indian-Americans voters in Georgia, a rapidly diversifying battleground state where Mr Trump and his Democratic challenger Joe Biden are running neck-and-neck

lean overwhelmingly Democrat, despite Mr Trump's energetic efforts to court them. "There has been a lot of discussion... about why Indian Americans are not more inclined towards Republicans. Perhaps this should be exhibit A?" Mr Vaishnav, the study's co-author, tweeted.

A new constitution is the framework Chile needs

Your editorial "Lessons from Latin America's fallen anger" (FT View, October 29) on Chile's recent plebiscite about a new constitution misses the point.

Instead of welcoming the fact that the country through an orderly election overwhelmingly embraces the process of giving itself a new charter to replace the one inherited from the military dictatorship, it belittles it. Despite many reforms in the 1980 constitution remains a deeply flawed and anachronistic document. Your editorial also minimises the role of elections in democracies.

It erects instead the opinion of business as somehow more relevant. In 200 years of independent history, Chile has had three constitutions (dating from 1833, 1925 and 1980, respectively), none of them the product of a democratically elected body.

This will now be remodelled, and the 1980 constitution, which was intended to be elected on the basis of general party on April 11 next year, offers a great opportunity.

It will provide Chile with a constitutional framework to manage the challenges of the new century. This task is hampered by the current, obsolete charter, whose main concern is protecting private property, and limiting the role of the state, confining it to a subsidiary role.

Jorge Helme Chilean Cabinet Minister and Ambassador Research Professor, Frederick S Pardee School of Global Studies Boston University Boston, MA, US

Calling them 'strongmen' just encourages autocrats

Your piece "Burruses urged to step up Belarus sanctions" (November 2) calls Alexander Lukashenko a "strongman" leader. It's just the latest example of your use of epithet to describe leaders around the world.

It's a bad habit. Stop it. Call them "bully," "call them 'oppressor.'" Call them "abuseful." Call them "inflexible."

Call them "masking their inner weakness with outer bravado" or "too lacking in empathy and imagination to be able to understand and play nicely with people who are different from them." But don't call them "strong." It only encourages them.

Tim Jackson Blewbury, Oxfordshire, UK

US election offers no easy choices, whoever wins

May I slightly revise Simon Kapur's commentary ("If Biden wins, what's next for Trump – and Trumpism?" Magazine, FT Weekend, October 31). What about: "If Mr Biden packed the court with his own justices, the institution would instantly lose legitimacy and with nearly [the other] half of America's..."

Timur Gok Friendship, ME, US

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the diaspora in Houston last year. His trip to India in February, when he spoke at a 110,000-seat stadium in Mr Modi's political hometown, was also seen as partly a salvo in his re-election campaign. The bonhomie fuelled Trump-camp hopes of swinging Indian-Americans to vote Republican this year. In September, Mr Trump's son Eric told Indian voters for Trump in Atlanta: "We as a family, we truly love you... my father will never, never, ever let you down".

Yet such overtures seem to have had little impact, with the survey of Indian-American voters finding just 22 per cent in favour of Mr Trump's re-election, and 72 per cent supporting Mr Biden. "The Republican party has a brand image problem – it is seen as fundamentally unwelcoming to many minorities," says Mr Vaishnav. Indian-Americans – mainly Hindus and adherents of other non-proselytising religions – are also uncomfortable with evangelical Christians' influence over the party, he says. "It strikes them as intolerant." To Mr Kapur, the kind of parity expressed at Mr Perdue's rally is a short-sighted own-goal, alienating communities whose influence is growing in Republican strongholds. "To capture the present, Republicans are sacrificing the future," he says. "If you vote now a forward-thinking party