THE RISK REPORT BY IAN BREMMER

China's ambiguous plans at the bottom of the world

THE ANTARCTIC Treaty, signed at the height of the Cold War in 1959, stipulated that the southern continent could not be used for military purposes, but it encouraged scientific research. Today, rapid technological advances have changed the game. There are information-gathering tools now available that can be used for either scientific or military purposes. These dual-use technologies are at the heart of a growing controversy over China's Antarctic intentions.

China already has four research bases on Antarctica, but it is now accelerating construction work on a fifth, at a place called Inexpressible Island. When it's finished, this site will include a satellite ground station that could be used for scientific communication. But it could also be used for espionage. In particular, it could eavesdrop on the governments of Australia and New Zealand, two members of the so-called Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance with the U.S., Britain, and Canada.

China's latest plan for the South Pole has raised new suspicions

The U.S., the U.K., South Korea, and others also have research facilities in the Antarctic region, but this latest construction comes at a time when some in the West are scrutinizing every major Chinese project for security threats.

The historical context complicates things even further. China was not one of the dozen countries that signed the 1959 treaty, and when it tried to add its signature in 1981, it was blocked on the grounds that it had not invested enough in Antarctic research. China finally joined in 1983 and began construction on its first Antarctic research site a year later. Its current projects will allow Beijing to argue that it now makes a major contribution to scientific understanding of the South Pole and deserves a voice in negotiating future agreements that might include mining for minerals on the continent, a highly controversial subject.

IN FACT, THIS UNDERLINES many of the tension points in today's deteriorating U.S.-Chinese relations. Beijing feels that it's unfair it might be excluded from opportunities, and that it has a right to make important scientific contributions. The U.S. and its allies point to the higher level of secrecy that shrouds China's government and military, its aggressive military actions in the South China Sea and other parts of Asia, and its support for Vladimir Putin's Russia. And while both these interpretations may have merit, there may not be enough trust between them to untangle this knot.

The authors of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty hoped their agreement would ensure that at least one region remained free of competition and conflict. We're still a long way from worst-case scenarios, but, fairly or not, China's latest plan for the South Pole has raised new suspicions. ◻

Coronation preparation

Members of the cavalry regiment of the British army prepare for an April 17 nighttime rehearsal for the coronation of King Charles III. The May 6 event is the U.K.'s first coronation in 70 years, and in addition to crowning Charles alongside his wife Camilla in a lavish ceremony, it will showcase British traditions the monarchy is meant to sustain.

OPENING PAGE: THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX; THIS PAGE: DAN KITWOOD—GETTY IMAGES

THE BULLETIN

Big Tech nervous as Europe prepares to regulate AI

EUROPEAN LAWMAKERS ARE putting the finishing touches on a set of wide-ranging rules designed to govern the use of artificial intelligence. If passed, those rules would make the E.U. the first major jurisdiction outside of China to pass targeted AI regulation. And tech companies are lobbying hard amid the battle over the scope of the rules.

SETTING THE BAR The E.U. Artificial Intelligence Act is likely to ban AI that ranks citizens based on their behavior and facial recognition in public. The rules could set a global standard, as companies may find it easier to comply with E.U. rules in all countries, rather than to build different products for different jurisdictions—a phenomenon known as the "Brussels effect."

BIG TECH'S FIGHT One of the act's most contentious points is whether so-called general-purpose AIs—like ChatGPT—should be considered high risk, and thus subject to the strictest rules. Lobbying against this possibility are Big Tech companies including Google and OpenAI's biggest investor, Microsoft, which have plowed billions of dollars into building general-purpose AIs and seek to benefit from licensing them out to smaller companies. "Predicting all potential risks" of general-purpose AIs would not only be near impossible but also stifle innovation, a letter to E.U. lawmakers co-signed by Microsoft in late 2022 says; instead, it recommends, the new rules should place the regulatory burden on the often smaller companies downstream that apply Big Tech's AIs to specific risky use cases. Categorizing general-purpose AI systems as "high risk" would be wrong, Google argued in a separate letter to E.U. regulators, and could harm consumers and hamper innovation in Europe.

PROGRESSIVE STANCE A group of progressive politicians and technologists resist this notion, arguing that exempting the most powerful AI systems from the new E.U. rules would be akin to passing social media regulation that didn't apply to Facebook or TikTok. Doing so "would exempt [Big Tech] from scrutiny even as general-purpose AIs are core to their business model," says Meredith Whittaker, a former senior adviser to the FTC on artificial intelligence. —BILLY PERRIGO

air into clean drinking water fo
munities that don't have safe ta

Storytelling is often about t
power to proclaim values, defi
sions, and shape the dominant
tive. When community membe
their own stories, they are accurately
portrayed not as victims but as the victors and visionaries they are. And their stories allow everyone to reimagine what an equitable and sustainable future looks like; they help us channel our fear and rage toward taking positive action.

It's heartening that we're now seeing Hollywood accelerate these stories through a drumbeat of movies and shows with climate themes, from the 2016 film *Moana* to this year's Apple TV+ series *Extrapolations*, to the *Black Panther* films. A film cannot change the world if the world isn't ready for it. A movie doesn't come out of nowhere; it is often rooted in social and cultural moments. As more filmmakers, television producers, and writers take on these issues, it's clear our society is open to new ways of approaching the climate crisis. And as frontline climate communities know from experience, all of us—just like the residents of the Marvel Cinematic Universe—are the heroes and sheroes we've been waiting for.

This is our moment. The solutions are right in front of us—we have all the energy and technology needed right here on the surface of the earth. If we invest our resources in our communities, we could ensure that all of us have access to green spaces, healthy foods, health care, and clean air. With record amounts of federal money beginning to flow toward climate solutions, this is our best chance yet to jump-start a rapid transition to a more just, equitable, and sustainable world. And that would be a story for the ages.

Ruffalo is an actor, producer, activist, and co-founder of the Solutions Project, an organization seeking to bring together the fields of science, business, and culture to work toward a 100% renewable-energy transition; Walton is a writer, organizer, and CEO of the Solutions Project

Lisa P. Jackson
A green Apple

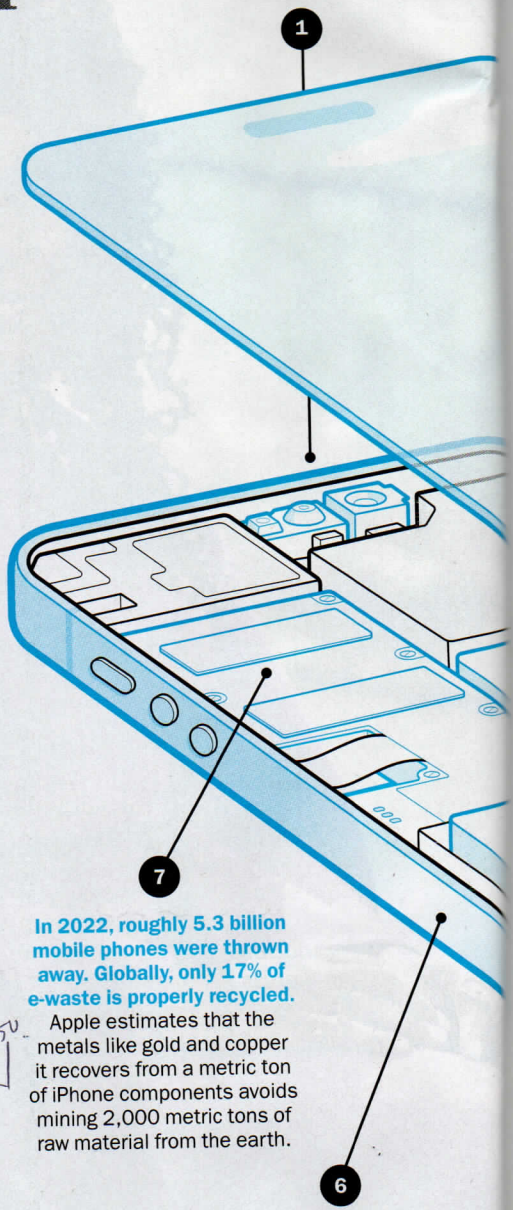
APPLE REVOLUTIONIZED consumer technology. Now it's focused on the climate crisis. For the company's head of environment, policy, and social initiatives, Lisa P. Jackson, this requires "the same kind of innovation and integrity that we bring to our products."

After leading the Environmental Protection Agency from 2009 to 2013 under President Barack Obama, Jackson joined Apple. Her decade of work there "is something that I will put up there in my career right up alongside my time in government service, and my 25 years in public service," she says. "I'm really proud." Jackson has steered the company to carbon neutrality across its global corporate operations; pushed for suppliers to use renewable energy; and spearheaded its Racial Equity and Justice Initiative.

She is currently working toward carbon neutrality across Apple's entire business and supply chain by 2030. That means reducing the fossil fuels used to produce Apple products; grappling with the environmental harm caused by extracting essential metals; and prioritizing recycling components when devices are thrown away and using recycled materials to build shiny new ones—using 40% recycled materials in the MacBook Air with an M2 chip, for instance, cut its emissions impact by 30%. A lot is involved. Consider the efforts, pictured here, to make the iPhone more sustainable.

—KYLA MANDEL, *with reporting by* JUSTIN WORLAND

The life-cycle carbon footprint of an iPhone 14 Pro with 128 GB of storage is 65 kg, equivalent to driving 160 miles in a gas-powered car. Production makes up 81% of this footprint; Apple is working to reduce such related emissions, and as of 2023, over 20% of iPhone 14 manufacturing electricity is sourced from clean energy.

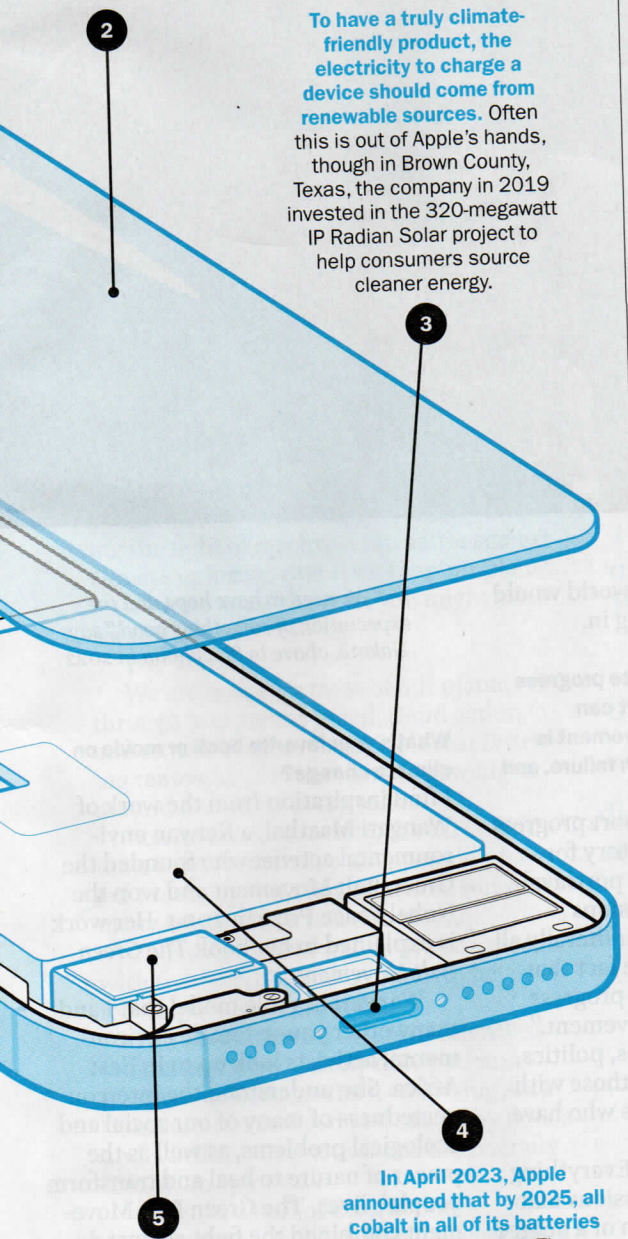


In 2022, roughly 5.3 billion mobile phones were thrown away. Globally, only 17% of e-waste is properly recycled. Apple estimates that the metals like gold and copper it recovers from a metric ton of iPhone components avoids mining 2,000 metric tons of raw material from the earth.

Transportation accounts for 1% to 10% of a device's carbon footprint. For the iPhone 14 Pro, the number is 3%. Decarbonizing this process is tricky given that long-haul flights rely on fossil fuels. To tackle this, Apple aims to use less carbon-intensive transport where possible, along with nature-based carbon offsets.

ILLUSTRATION BY BROWN BIRD DESIGN FOR TIME

Over the phone's entire cycle, 15% of its carbon otprint comes during use. hile different people use eir devices differently, the Phone generally requires 4% less energy than the S. Department of Energy's mandated levels.



To have a truly climate-friendly product, the electricity to charge a device should come from renewable sources. Often this is out of Apple's hands, though in Brown County, Texas, the company in 2019 invested in the 320-megawatt IP Radian Solar project to help consumers source cleaner energy.

In April 2023, Apple announced that by 2025, all cobalt in all of its batteries will be recycled. The company also committed to using only recycled rare earth elements in all its magnets by the same deadline. Apple's battery magnets use only recycled metals already.

A quarter of all the rare earth metals used in an iPhone are found in the Taptic Engine, which creates the vibration you feel when you receive a text, and the click when you type. This requires tungsten, a so-called conflict mineral commonly mined in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Apple today uses 100% recycled tungsten in the Taptic Engine.

Vanessa Nakate's climate-activism advice column

Vanessa Nakate grew up in Kampala, the capital of Uganda. In 2019, at the age of 22, she began to realize how deeply climate change was affecting her country, and launched what has developed into one of the world's most impactful youth-led movements for climate justice. Among other things, Nakate founded the Africa-based Rise Up Movement and has served as a Sustainable Development Goals young leader at the U.N. Her leadership, poise, and clear-eyed approach to climate change make her uniquely qualified to answer some of the most pressing concerns we have on what we all can do to alleviate the problem at hand. She gave her take on TIME's questions about how the climate crisis affects our personal lives.

How do you deal with friends or family members who downplay the seriousness of climate change?

In Uganda, everyone knows that the climate is changing. Those in towns and cities see it in the increasing frequency of flash floods. Those in the countryside know that the weather they once relied upon to grow crops is becoming more unpredictable and extreme. People often don't attribute this to man-made greenhouse-gas emissions, but we are all experiencing this rapid shift in some way or another.

A few years ago, my uncle Charles told me about the difficulties Ugandan farmers were experiencing with changing rainfall patterns. That conversation made me interested in doing more research on climate change. It was kind of the beginning of my activism.

Once you know the facts it can be frustrating to speak to people who are not there yet. For in much human wisdom is much vexation when people are not aware of what you know. But I would suggest trying to find the common ground, because most people understand that something is changing, that our world is becoming more and more unstable, or that our air is being polluted by fossil fuels. From there, education can help us understand the crisis and the solutions we need to address it.

If I were to take a year off and commit my time to climate action, what should I do? Where could I have the most impact?

The kinds of responses we need vary greatly, but they all add up to something that looks like systemic change. For example, spend a year working with an activist group—perhaps organizing people in their community to oppose a new gas power station or campaigning for your city to invest more in public transport. Or fundraise to bring local renewable energy to disadvantaged communities. You can even do both at once. No action is too small to make a difference.

The View

NATION

IT'S A MEAN, MEAN WORLD

BY STEPHANIE ZACHAREK

As a plot driver, the traumatic home invasion has long been a staple of both film pulp—movies like *Cape Fear*, *Death Wish*, and *John Wick*—and artier projects like Michael Haneke's *Funny Games* and Ari Aster's anxious new *Beau Is Afraid*. All play into our collective fears of lawless hooligans invading our personal space. But a plot device, as every sane person knows, is simply a tool for the creation of fantasy.

INSIDE

CHINA'S RISKY PLAN IN THE SOUTH POLE

WRITING WHILE BATHING THE KIDS

AMERICANS ARE DYING YOUNGER

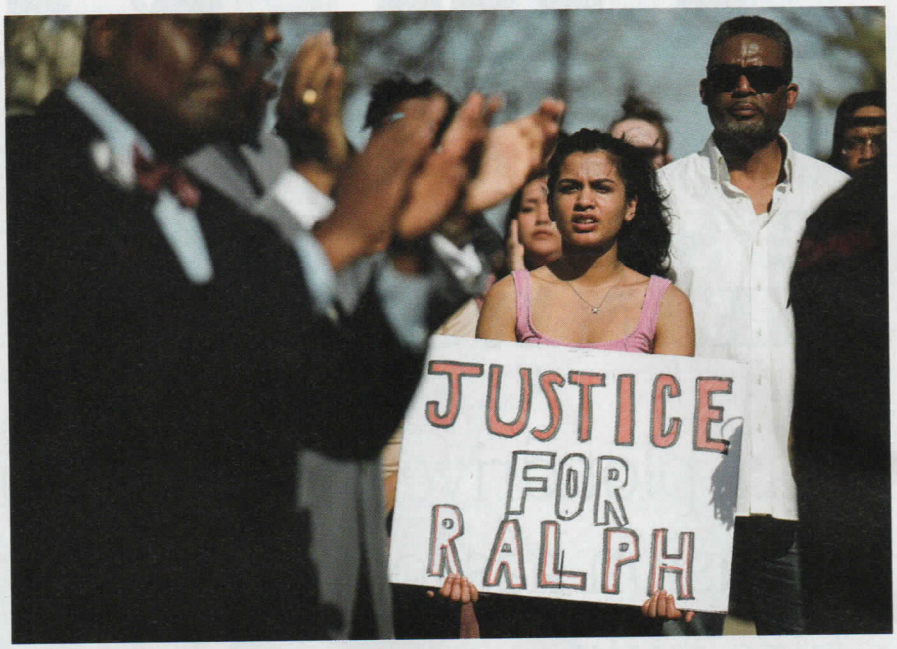
In the space of three days, two individuals more than a thousand miles apart kicked back against innocent young people who, they apparently were convinced, posed a threat to their safety. On April 13, in Kansas City, Mo., 84-year-old Andrew Lester, who is white, shot and seriously wounded 16-year-old Ralph Yarl, who is Black, after the teen mistakenly stopped at the wrong house, looking to pick up his twin brothers. In Hebron, N.Y., on April 15, 65-year-old Kevin Monahan shot and killed 20-year-old Kaylin Gillis, a passenger in one of three vehicles that had mistakenly driven up the winding quarter-mile driveway leading to Monahan's house in a remote wooded area.

These incidents are a warped reflection of a mental state we've seen over and over again in fiction: not the castle-protecting knight, but the paranoid loner, certain the world is a more dangerous place than it really is, who spontaneously defends his turf with the gun he just happens to have in his possession. These types have always been with us, but the 21st century has brought us a new variation. Many fears of a civilization gone mad—particularly when those fears are of a nation of white people under attack—have been stoked by fantasy factories masquerading as news organizations.

In a CNN interview, Andrew Lester's grandson described his grandfather as a racist Fox News obsessive, adding that he believes Lester's views are common among a certain type of older white Christian male. And sure enough, the ballad of the beleaguered white man has been for years the interminable drum solo of the network's most popular pundit, Tucker Carlson, who was ousted on April 24.

Just how unsafe is the world, exactly? And how does that reality mesh with the public's perception? In the 1970s, communications professor George Gerbner came up with the phrase *mean world syndrome* to explain how people's exposure to depictions of violence in the media can lead them to perceive reality as more dangerous than it is.

Violent crime was indeed rising when Gerbner coined the term. But in the 1990s, both homicides and property-crime rates began to decline steadily, and even with a slight uptick in 2020, those rates have not risen significantly. Still, many people in the U.S. have reinvented the country as their own private Gotham City, overrun with villains who might show up on their doorstep at any time. In March, 54% of Americans told Gallup they personally worry "a great deal" about crime and violence. An additional 29% worried "a fair amount."



In Kansas City, Mo., people gather on April 18 to support Ralph Yarl

THERE ARE SHREDS of fact within the fictions. More people ages 50 or older are living alone in the U.S. than ever before—nearly 26 million, up from 15 million in 2000. Not everyone living by themselves, and not every aged person, experiences an increase in feelings of isolation and fear. But anxiety can increase with age, and it's easier than ever to envision a nation of elderly people confining themselves to their homes, believing that the violence reported on television is the reality that may come to their door.

In New York, Kevin Monahan's lawyer claimed that the vehicles containing Gillis and her friends had raced up Monahan's driveway noisily, which "certainly caused some level of alarm to an elderly gentleman who had an elderly wife." Aside from the question of whether 65 is elderly, going forward, we're likely to see more Andrew Lesters and Kevin Monahans than fewer.

Thus a country that has, for good reason, become fixated on the escalation of mass shootings now has something new to worry about: the crime-rate-obsessed fantasist who owns at least one firearm, in a nation with more guns than people. It turns out that the crimes made up by movie and TV writers aren't nearly as vivid and suggestive as the ones far too many people have been led to believe are going on right outside.

The idea that movie violence causes real-life violence is one of those perfectly prepackaged, unprovable theories that feels so true many have come to believe it is. But movies are now more than 130 years old, and we've had a lot of time to think about how they affect us as a society. Guns in movies are inevitable: even if Chekhov's gun was intended as a metaphor, he also knew the dramatic effect of firing one. But at least the entertainment industry knows where guns belong; it's people who don't. And no matter where or how people are getting the wrong idea, their invented reality is the real danger. □

CHARLIE RIEDEL—AP

The View is reported by Leslie Dickstein

ARSENAL *of* DEM

ARTILLERY SHELLS ARE DUNKED INTO A SCALDING OIL BATH AT A SCRANTON, PA., PRODUCTION PLANT

OCRACY

The race to arm Ukraine

By W.J. Hennigan/Scott Air Force Base, Ill.

P32

PHOTOGRAPH BY VINCENT TULLO FOR TIME

Squinting at his computer through wire-rimmed glasses, Greg Hartl monitors an unmarked 18-wheeler as it cuts through the American heartland.

Data from the truck's satellite tracking devices stream into his windowless command center at Scott Air Force Base, about 20 miles east of St. Louis, showing Hartl each stop the driver makes and the weather and road conditions ahead. Most important, as the driver navigates rush-hour traffic and stretches of interstate alongside unknowing travelers, Hartl can track the condition of the volatile cargo: hundreds of high-explosive 155-mm artillery shells bound for Ukraine.

The race to supply Ukraine with the weapons it needs to win the war against Russia unfolds on Hartl's glowing screen at U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) headquarters. As a branch chief with the Army's Defense Transportation Tracking System, he watches each day as scores of trucks crisscross American highways, hauling antitank missiles, rocket launchers, air-defense systems, and artillery shells to air and naval bases. If a truck deviates from its route, or a bathroom break runs suspiciously long, Hartl is notified within seconds. "We have all sorts of alerts built in for high-risk shipments," he says, stroking a graying, chest-length beard. "If they're stationary for too long, we'll get an alert. If the trailers become untethered, we'll get an alert. If the trailer door opens, and it's not supposed to, we'll get an alert."

Nothing quite like this ever has taken place before. For the first time, a country that's outmanned and outgunned by a much larger invading foe is being openly armed and trained almost entirely by its allies. The Pentagon says the Ukraine supply mission is the largest authorized transfer of arms in history from the U.S. military to a foreign nation. More than 1,400 trucks, 230 planes, and 11 cargo ships ferried arms to Ukraine in the first four months of this year alone.

To understand how the U.S. and its allies are delivering this arsenal, TIME spent months speaking with dozens of people in the U.S. and Europe involved in planning, manufacturing, and distributing military aid for Ukraine. Those conversations, as well as visits to three states and three countries to observe different elements of the effort, revealed an operation that has overcome many of the challenges posed by supply-chain issues, diminished manufacturing capabilities, and international logistics to get Ukraine what it needs. But it remains an open question whether the mission can be executed quickly enough to ensure success on the battlefield.

Drawn-out decisionmaking processes in Washington and European capitals have slowed supplies. U.S. intelligence assessments released among the hundreds of classified documents leaked in April describe alarming shortcomings in Ukraine's weapon stockpiles. Interceptors for some air-defense systems are due to run out by May, while the Ukrainian army's position in the besieged eastern city of Bakhmut was deemed "catastrophic" amid Russian artillery bombardment. The disclosures confirm much of what President Volodymyr Zelensky and other Ukrainian officials have said for more than a year: their forces need more of everything, and fast.

The price tag for delivering it is staggeringly high. U.S. taxpayers have spent $35.4 billion on security aid for Ukraine since Russia invaded on Feb. 24, 2022—more than $3 million per hour. Some Republicans are asking how long that spending can continue. Strategic costs can't be ignored, either. U.S. supply missions to the Pacific, the Middle East, or other parts of the globe are sometimes rescheduled because of the priority given to Ukraine, the military admits. "What's challenging right now is just the volume of requirements, including the surge of requirements in Ukraine," says Major General Laura Lenderman, director of TRANSCOM's operations. "We'll sustain the effort. But there is risk."

The supply mission is now at a critical moment. After blunting a Russian push over the winter, the Ukrainian military is on the cusp of launching a counteroffensive against occupying forces. The American-made arsenal must reach the Ukrainians' hands well in advance. If Ukraine can reclaim Russian-held territory, then its army could try to sever Russia's land bridge to Crimea, setting optimal conditions for cease-fire

DELIVERIES TO UKRAINE ARE TRACKED AT TRANSCOM HEADQUARTERS NEAR ST. LOUIS

LYNDON FRENCH FOR TIME

negotiations. But if the counteroffensive sputters, opposition to indefinitely supporting the Ukrainians could intensify. The Biden Administration believes what happens in the coming months could shape the outcome of the war, and potentially the future of Europe itself.

INSIDE TRANSCOM'S Global Operations Center, six large flat screens display real-time information and maps showing the status of the day's deliveries. It has the air of an immense theater with contractors, civilian analysts, and uniformed service members seated in rows. Information funneling nonstop into the encrypted computer network emerges as flowcharts, logistics models, and statistics for leaders to scrutinize. Decisions made in this room often have a domino effect on supply movements across the world.

Each evaluation depends on a range of information: inventories, supply systems, dates of deliveries, and consumption rates. The U.S. has deep and wide-ranging knowledge about the state of Ukraine's military through daily information sharing. An internal Defense Department application, dubbed ADVANA, contains algorithms that map out logistics and calculate munitions rates, so the U.S. and allies can stay ahead of Ukraine's needs. And among the most pressing issues throughout the war has been artillery supplies.

The U.S. spent the past two decades fighting wars with weapons enabled via information-age technology—satellites, sensors, and computer chips. The conflict in Ukraine more closely resembles the grinding trench warfare along the western front in World War I. It is fought largely in artillery duels, each side pounding the other with shells over long distances. Ukrainian artillery units face a deep disadvantage as the number of 152-mm shells for its aging Soviet-era artillery pieces has dwindled. The U.S. and European allies have provided Ukraine with newer 155-mm guns and shells, but it still isn't enough. The Ukrainians have so few artillery shells that they're rationing them, according to a letter Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov wrote to European Union members in March. Reznikov's forces fire around 3,000 rounds a day, he said, while the Russians fire four times as many.

Even so, Kyiv's artillery consumption rate far outstrips American manufacturing capacity. The U.S. military has raided existing artillery stocks in Germany, South Korea, and Israel to keep up with Ukrainian demand. In all, the Biden Administration has already sent more than 1 million of the shells to Ukraine. "We're about at the end of our stock of what we can send," a senior U.S. defense official tells TIME. Allies in Europe have leaped to Ukraine's defense as well. Two weeks after Reznikov's letter, the E.U. announced a $2 billion deal to loot its own arsenals and send 1 million artillery shells over the next 12 months.

At the same time, the U.S. is revitalizing Cold War–era industrial facilities to produce weapons. "We haven't seen production numbers like this in decades," says Mark Cancian, a retired Marine colonel who's now a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "Changes like this have long-lasting effects." Biden has invoked authorities under the Defense Production Act four times to mobilize U.S. private-production capacity for ammunition, missiles, and drones, while $2 billion is being set aside to help expand and modernize manufacturing facilities.

The Scranton Army Ammunition Plant in Pennsylvania finds itself at the center of this transformation. The Army acquired the facility in 1951 after it had been abandoned for several years, and converted it to manufacture artillery shells during the Korean War. Back then, the U.S. had 86 military ammunition plants as part of an industrial mobilization designed to meet wartime needs. Now it has just five. Roughly 300 employees work around the clock, five days a week, across the 15-acre complex of red brick buildings, where steam locomotives were repaired a century ago. I AM A BOMB TECHNICIAN, reads a black T-shirt on a machine operator's chair. IF YOU SEE ME RUNNING TRY TO KEEP UP.

Batches of artillery rounds destined for the Ukrainian battlefield twist their way down a serpentine production line, through house-size furnaces heated to 2,000°F and industrial machinery that bends, stretches, and shapes the red-hot steel. "Don't touch it," warns Richard Hansen, who oversees manufacturing operations at the Scranton plant. "It won't just burn your hand. It will take it off—bone and everything."

Inundated by demand, the Pentagon doubled its production rate for 155-mm howitzer shells over the past year, from around 14,000 per month to 24,000 by year-end. It plans to hit 85,000 by 2028. "Speed is key," Hansen says. Transforming a steel rod into an artillery shell takes about three days. But in peacetime, it could take several weeks before they're loaded onto pallets and driven 10 hours away on a big rig to a plant in Iowa, where they're filled with explosives and affixed with fusing—effectively converting them into oversize exploding bullets, ready to be fired from a howitzer.

howitzers

IN THE RACE to get arms to Ukraine in time for the counteroffensive, every minute counts. Before the Russian invasion, it took four months for an approved $60 million arms package to reach Ukraine because of the bureaucratic and logistic hurdles. Deliveries on a deal like that can now take just four weeks or less. To speed things up, Congress has relaxed constraints on how the Pentagon buys arms, while the U.S. military has come up with new ways to package and supply them. Simple alterations have gone a long way. Air Force personnel have rebuilt pallets to allow for more artillery rounds and rearranged howitzers to squeeze a few more inside a C-17's cargo hull, saving flights and time in the process.

For three weeks last spring, the military compelled trucking companies to prioritize artillery deliveries rather than hauling commercial goods to their destinations. It created "safe havens" at bases throughout the Midwest where truckers could drop their trailers loaded with consumer goods like televisions, sofas, and household cleaners in favor of those filled with artillery shells drawn from seven military depots around the country.

EQUIPMENT BOUND FOR UKRAINE IS READIED AT DOVER AIR FORCE BASE IN DELAWARE

DEMETRIUS FREEMAN—THE WASHINGTON POST/GETTY IMAGES

At Delaware's Dover Air Force Base, trucks were backed up for miles onto a nearby highway, waiting to be off-loaded. Local law enforcement had to guide commuter traffic around snarls of delivery trucks. Inside the base, troops work around the clock loading idling cargo planes. The cargo, stacked on pallets, bore stickers with a European destination—often in Germany or Poland—where it's later off-loaded and driven to the Ukrainian border.

Getting supplies to Ukraine wasn't always so challenging. For years, the U.S. flew weapons and equipment into Kyiv directly. But when the capital was besieged, and Russian missiles were falling across Ukraine, the military arranged to deliver arms through European allies. Within days, dozens of cargo planes were landing on airfields near the Ukrainian border, packed to the brim with weapons.

The hulking, four-engine C-17 jets are the quickest way to get weapons to Ukraine, but they're costly and take resources from other missions around the globe. So once the first set of deliveries was done, contractors took over. Since then, about two-thirds of TRANSCOM's 1,177 flights for Ukraine have been handled by seven commercial cargo carriers that fly into nearby European countries, at a total cost of around $600 million. For deliveries that aren't as time-sensitive, the arms are sent on cargo ships for a two-week trip from East Coast military terminals to seaports across the European continent.

ONCE IN EUROPE, a whole new set of logistical challenges kick in as the U.S. arms-supply effort merges with those of scores of other countries. Arriving at airfields and seaports, freight is off-loaded and put on trains or trucks by local stevedores. Deliveries are vulnerable to weather delays, along with factors unrelated to the battlefield. In July, a German dockworkers' strike impacted the handling of container and cargo vessels in ports. In March, train stations across Germany came to a standstill when tens of thousands of rail workers held a 24-hour walkout.

"Fortunately, I wasn't affected by it," says U.S. General Jacqueline Van Ovost, who at the time of the initial Russian invasion was barely four months into her role as TRANSCOM commander. Specific routes into Ukraine change often and are kept secret out of fear of Russian attack; Western officials say the main supply lines run through Slovakia, Romania, and Poland, requiring substantial coordination with allies. "We need to make sure that it's smooth, like a ballet," says Van Ovost.

Using a so-called presidential drawdown authority, Biden can transfer weapons and equipment from U.S. stocks without congressional approval, which speeds deliveries. Van Ovost has embedded members of her command inside the

Pentagon and European headquarters to anticipate what will be on the President's delivery list before it's announced or signed. "Now I know about four weeks out what they're thinking," she says. "Initially, I was about 12 hours out."

Coordinating the 54 nations in the Ukraine Defense Contact Group is its own challenge. The U.S. convenes a planning meeting every month or so to determine what weapons each country can provide. In November, the military set up a headquarters wholly dedicated to supporting Ukraine at Clay Kaserne in Wiesbaden, Germany. "There's a daily dialogue between the U.S. team and the Ukrainian team on the ground," says Laura Cooper, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russian, Ukrainian, and Eurasian affairs, who has emerged as a point person on the military-aid mission, working with a small team inside the Pentagon.

'We haven't seen production numbers like this in decades.'

—MARK CANCIAN, RETIRED MARINE COLONEL

Speaking to TIME on the sidelines of meetings between Defense Ministers at NATO headquarters in Brussels in February, Cooper described the work of the 54-country military-supply effort. Atop her agenda: a "priority list" based on the Ukrainian forces' battlefield needs and the potentially available weapons systems from the West. The top three items on the list were artillery, armor, and air defense. Under each of those was an itemized set of weapons that would meet Ukraine's needs. "We make sure that we are fielding [weapons] in time for the Ukrainians to make use of them on the battlefield in the coming months," Cooper says.

NOT EVERY ARTILLERY SHELL from foreign stocks will be used on the battlefield in Ukraine's coming counteroffensive. For months, Ukrainian forces have been firing them as part of their training for that assault. Russian forces hold some 20% of the country in the south and east, and have built three layers of defensive lines and antitank barriers running about 75 miles through eastern Zaporizhzhia province, British defense intelligence reported in April. Moscow expects a push on Melitopol, a key city that's vital to Russia's land bridge and critical supply lines stretching from the occupied regions of Donbas and Crimea.

The U.S. and its allies have played a central role in preparing Ukraine's forces. About 4,600 Ukrainian soldiers have completed combat training, including two brigades equipped with American-made Bradley and Stryker vehicles. Ukrainian crews are in Germany learning to operate donated Leopard 2 tanks, and in Britain training on donated Challenger tanks. Ukraine has nine brigades made up of thousands of troops outfitted with new Western equipment, including 200 tanks, 152 artillery pieces, and 867 armored personnel carriers and fighting vehicles, according to one U.S. military assessment leaked online. All this hardware requires new tactics for Ukraine, which has followed Soviet-style sequential operations—barraging the enemy with artillery fire, then proceeding with a ground advance.

The new units are being trained in combined-arms techniques that synchronize artillery, armor, and infantry movements. Western artillery, rockets, missiles, drones, and other aid proved decisive in Kyiv's prior counteroffensive last August, when Russian forces were pushed from the northeastern Kharkiv region and parts of Kherson in the south. The achievement raised hopes that perhaps the Ukrainians could defeat the Russians altogether. In the months since, however, the conflict has devolved into a stalemate, with blood-soaked battles that yield casualties measured in the thousands.

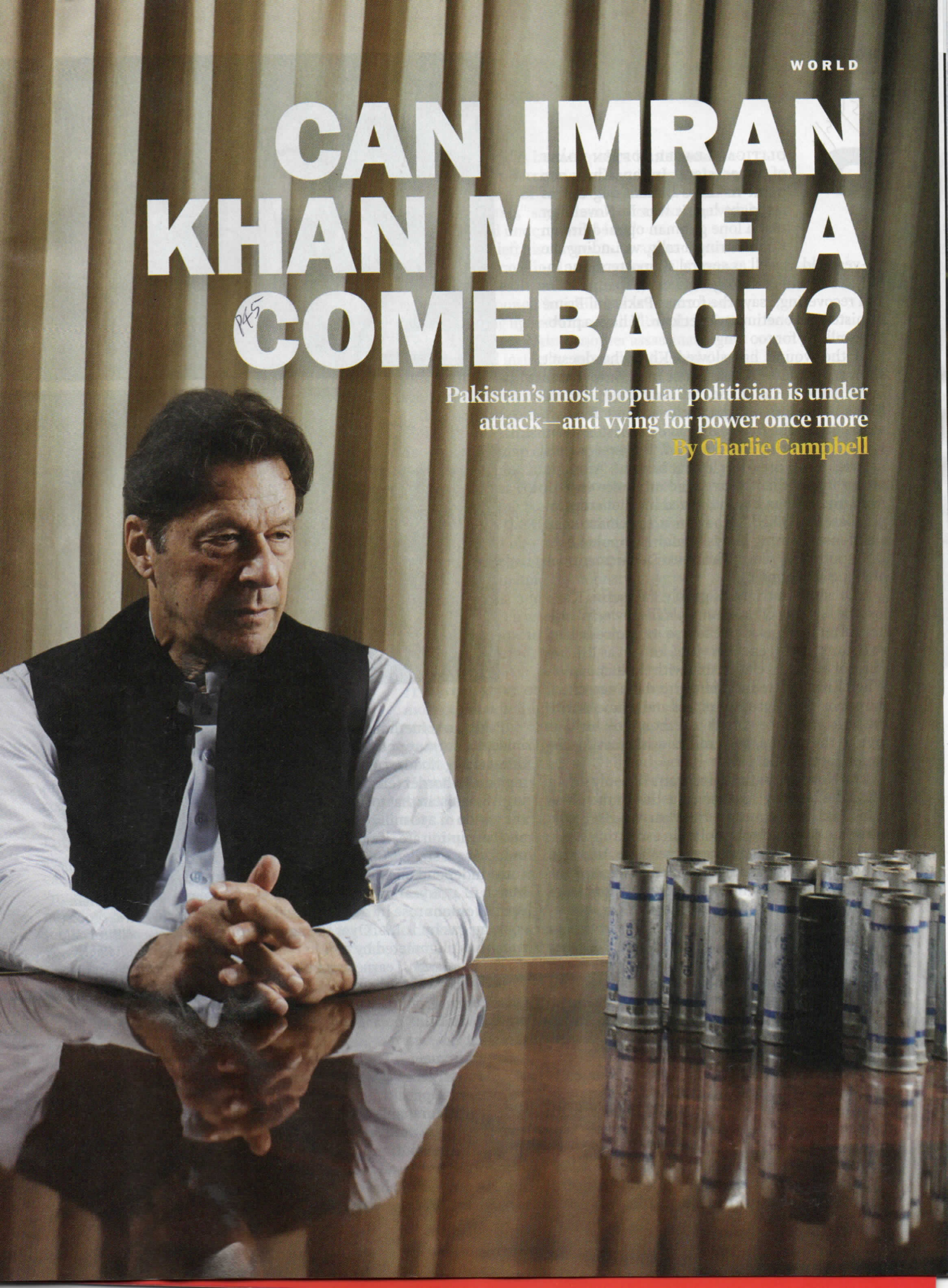
In February, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin walked among the new weapons and troops at Germany's sprawling Grafenwoehr base, the former site of Nazi training grounds, as the first class of 635 Ukrainian fighters drilled on artillery pieces and armored vehicles. The Ukrainians were two weeks into a five-week course, and Austin looked on as concussive, earth-shuddering blasts emanated from a M109 Paladin self-propelled howitzer. Ukrainian crewmen yanked olive-colored shells off the rack, loaded them into the firing chamber, and listened for the radio to crackle with another round of coordinates from a spotter miles away. Smoke billowed out of the barrel and drifted over the surrounding pine trees as the artillery shells whistled downrange toward the target area. With each shot, the blasts inched closer to the bull's-eye. The team fired again. Then again.

In the days ahead, this arsenal and these hard-earned skills may prove decisive in the counteroffensive. And when that battle begins on the eastern front, the fate of more than Ukraine may hang in the balance. —*With reporting by* JULIA ZORTHIAN

CAN IMRAN KHAN MAKE A COMEBACK?

Pakistan's most popular politician is under attack—and vying for power once more

By Charlie Campbell



POLITICAL LEADERS OFTEN BOAST of inner steel. Imran Khan can point to three bullets dug out of his right leg. It was in November that a lone gunman opened fire on Khan during a rally, wounding the 70-year-old as well as several supporters, one fatally. "One bullet damaged a nerve, so my foot is still recovering," says the former Pakistani Prime Minister and onetime cricket icon. "I have a problem walking for too long."

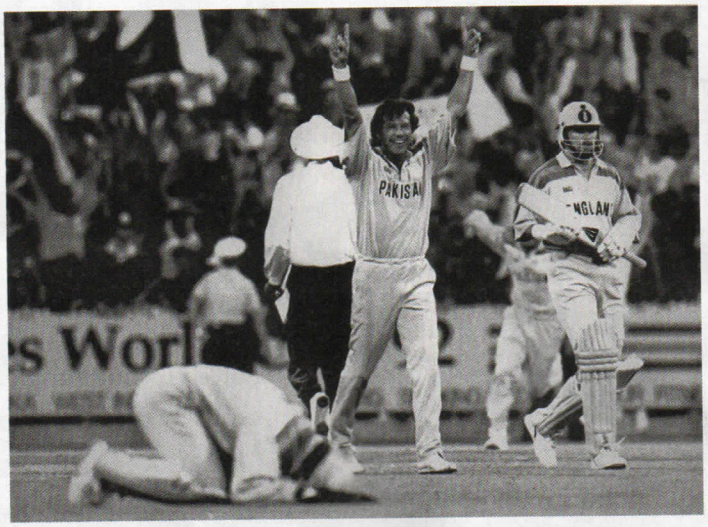
If the wound has slowed Khan, he doesn't show it in a late-March Zoom interview. There is the same bushy mane, the easy laugh, prayer beads wrapped nonchalantly around his left wrist. But in the five years since our last conversation, something has changed. Power—or perhaps its forfeiture—has left its imprint. After his ouster in a parliamentary no-confidence vote in April 2022, Khan has mobilized his diehard support base in a "jihad," as he puts it, to demand snap elections, claiming he was unfairly toppled by a U.S.-sponsored plot. (The State Department denied the allegations.)

The actual intrigue is purely Pakistani. Khan lost the backing of the country's all-powerful military after he refused to endorse its choice to lead Pakistan's intelligence services, known as ISI, because of his close relationship with the incumbent. When Khan belatedly greenlighted the new chief, the opposition sensed weakness and pounced with the no-confidence vote. Khan then took his outrage to the streets, with rallies crisscrossing the nation for months.

The November attack on Khan's life only intensified the burning sense of injustice in members of his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, or PTI, who have since clashed with police in escalating street battles involving slingshots and tear gas. Although an avowed religious fanatic was arrested for the shooting, Khan continues to accuse an assortment of rival politicians of pulling the strings: incumbent Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif—brother of Khan's longtime nemesis, former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif—as well as Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah and Major General Faisal Naseer. (All have denied the accusation.)

In addition to bullets, Khan has also been hit by charges—143 over the past 11 months, by his count, including corruption, sedition, blasphemy, and terrorism—which he claims have been concocted in an attempt to disqualify him from politics. After Sharif's Cabinet declared on March 20 that the PTI was "a gang of militants" whose "enmity against the state" could not be tolerated, police arrested hundreds of Khan supporters in raids.

"Either Imran Khan exists or we do," Interior Minister Sanaullah said on March 26.



Clockwise from top left: Khan at the 1992 Cricket World Cup; with his family in 1999, leading a protest in Islamabad over attacks in Chechnya; leaving the High Court with supporters in February 2023; at a political rally in Shadi Khal, Pakistan, in 2002

Pakistan sometimes seems to reside on a precipice. Its current political instability comes amid devastating floods, runaway inflation, and resurgent cross-border terrorist attacks from neighboring Afghanistan that together threaten the fabric of the nation of 230 million. It's a country where rape and corruption are rife and the economy hinges on unlocking a stalled IMF bailout. Pakistan's 22nd since independence in 1947. Inflation soared in March to 47% year over year; the prices of staples such as onions rose by 228%, wheat by 120%, and cooking gas by 108%. Over the same period, the rupee has plummeted by 54%.

"Ten years ago, I earned 10,000 rupees a month [$100] and I wasn't distressed," says Muhammad Ghazanfer, a groundsman and gardener in Rawalpindi. "With this present wave of inflation, even though I now earn 25,000 [$90 today] I can't make ends meet." The world's fifth most populous country has only $4.6 billion in foreign reserves—$20 per citizen. "If they default and they can't get oil, companies go bust, and people don't have jobs, you would say this is a country ripe for a Bolshevik revolution," says Cameron Munter, a former U.S. ambassador to Pakistan.

"Our economy has gone into a tailspin," says Khan. "We now have the worst economic

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CRAIG GOLDING—FAIRFAX MEDIA/GETTY IMAGES; REUTERS; MOHSIN RAZA—REUTERS; PAULA BRONSTEIN—GETTY IMAGES

indicators in our history." The situation threatens to send the nuclear-armed country deeper into China's orbit. Yet sympathy is slim in a West put off by Khan's years of anti-American bluster and cozying up to autocrats and extremists, including the Taliban. He visited Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on the eve of the Ukraine invasion, remarking on "so much excitement." Khan can both repeatedly declare Osama bin Laden a "martyr" and praise Beijing's confinement of China's Uighur Muslim minority. He has obsessed on Joe Biden's failure to call him after entering the White House. "He's someone that is imbued with this incredibly strong sense of grievance," says Michael Kugelman, the deputy director of the Asia Program at the Woodrow Wilson Center.

Yet Khan can claim to have democracy on his side, with poll numbers suggesting he is a shoo-in to return to power if the elections he demands happen. "Imran Khan is the best bet we have right now," says Osama Rehman, 50, a telecommunications engineer in Islamabad. "If [he] is arrested or disqualified, people will come out onto the street."

The state appears inclined to confrontation. Police raids on Khan's home in the Punjab province capital of Lahore in early March left him choking on tear gas, he says, as supporters brandishing sticks battled police in riot gear before makeshift barricades of sandbags and iron rods. "This sort of crackdown has never taken place in Pakistan," says Khan. "I don't know even if it was as bad under martial law."

After Khan left his compound to appear in court on March 18, traveling in an armored SUV strewn with flower petals and flanked by bodyguards, the police swooped in while his wife was home, he says, beating up servants and hauling the family cook off to jail. He claims another assassination attempt awaited inside the Islamabad Judicial Complex, which was "taken over by the intelligence agencies and paramilitary."

The contest could remain in the streets indefinitely. Prime Minister Sharif has rejected Khan's demand for a snap election, saying polls would be held as scheduled in the fall. "Political stability in Pakistan comes through elections," Khan points out. "That is the starting point for economic recovery." From the U.S. perspective, he may be far from the ideal choice to helm an impoverished, insurgency-racked Islamic state. But is he the only person who can hold the country together?

"Never has one man scared the establishment … as much as right now," says Khan. "They worry about how to keep me out; the people how to get me back in."

IT'S INDICATIVE OF PAKISTAN'S MALAISE that its most popular politician in decades sits barricaded at home. But the nation has always been beyond comparison—a wedge of South Asia that begins in the shimmering Arabian Gulf and ascends to its Himalayan heights. It's the world's largest Islamic state, yet has been governed for half its history by men in olive green uniforms, who continue to act as ultimate arbiters of power.

The only boy of five children, Khan was born on Oct. 5, 1952, to an affluent Pashtun family in Lahore. He studied politics, philosophy, and economics at Oxford University, and it was in the U.K. that he first played cricket for Pakistan, at age 18. Britain's sodden terrain also provided the backdrop to his political awakening.

"When I arrived in England our country had been ruled by a military dictator for 10 years; the powerful had one law, the others were basically not free human beings," he says. "Rule of law actually liberates human beings, liberates potential. This was what I discovered."

On the cricket pitch, Khan was a talisman who knitted mercurial talents and journeymen into a cohesive whole, a team that overcame extraordinary odds to famously lift the Cricket World Cup in 1992. There were glimpses of these qualities when Khan rose to become Prime Minister: running on an antigraft ticket, he fused a

disparate band of students and workers, Islamic hard-liners, and the nation's powerful military to derail the Sharif political juggernaut. But once in power, the self-styled bold reformer turned unnervingly divisive. Opposition is easier than government, and Khan found himself bereft of ideas and besieged by unsavory partners. There were some successes: Pakistan received praise for its handling of the pandemic, with deaths per capita just a third of the toll in neighboring India.

Khan's private life has rarely been out of the headlines. His first wife was British journalist and society heiress Jemima Khan, née Goldsmith, a close friend of Diana, Princess of Wales. She converted to Islam for their wedding, though the pair divorced in 2004 after nine years of marriage, and her family's Jewish heritage was political dynamite. (The couple's two sons live in London.) Khan's second marriage, to British-Pakistani journalist Reham Khan, lasted nine months. According to a 1997 California court ruling, Khan also has one child, a daughter, born out of wedlock, and he's struggled to quash gossip of several more. In 2018, six months before he took office, he married his current wife, Bushra Bibi Khan, a religious conservative who is believed to be the only Pakistan First Lady to wear the full-face niqab shawl in public.

It all fed Khan's legend: the debonair playboy who grew devout; the privileged son who rails against the corrupt; the humanist who stands with the bloodthirsty. His youth was spent carousing with supermodels in London's trendiest nightspots. But his politics has hardened as his handsome features have lined and leathered. He provoked outrage when he said in August 2021 that the Taliban had "broken the shackles of slavery" by taking back power (he insists to TIME he was "taken out of context") and has made various comments criticized as misogynistic. When asked about the drivers of sexual violence in Pakistan, he said, "If a woman is wearing very few clothes, it will have an impact on the men, unless they're robots." Khan has refused to condemn Putin's invasion, insisting, like China, on remaining "neutral" and deflecting uncomfortable questions onto supposed double standards regarding India's inroads into disputed Kashmir. "Morality in foreign policy is reserved for powerful countries," he says with a shrug.

At the same time, Khan's ideological flexibility has not stretched to compromises with opponents. He claims his relationship with the generals frayed over the military's unwillingness to go after Pakistan's influential "two families"—those of Sharif and the Bhutto clan of former Prime Ministers Zulfikar and Benazir—for alleged corruption. "If the ruling elite plunders your country and siphons off money, and you cannot hold them accountable, then that means there is no rule of law," he says.

Yet analysts say it was Khan's relentless taunting of the U.S. that torpedoed his relationship with the military, which remains much more interested in retaining good relations with Washington. Khan insists to TIME that "criticizing U.S. foreign policy does not make you anti-American." Still, by 2022, the generals no longer had his back. The common perception among Pakistan watchers is that Khan's fleeting political success was owed to a Faustian pact with the nation's military and extremist groups that shepherded his election victory and he is now reaping the whirlwind.

'Never has one man scared the establishment as much as right now.'

—IMRAN KHAN

IF PAKISTAN'S ECONOMIC WOES are reaching a new nadir, the trajectory was established during Khan's term. A revolving door of Finance Ministers was compounded by bowing to hard-liners. In 2018, Khan pledged not to follow previous administrations' "begging bowl" tactics of foreign borrowing, in order to end Pakistan's cycle of debt. But less than a year later, he struck a deal with the IMF to cut social and development spending while raising taxes in exchange for a $6 billion loan.

Meanwhile, little was done to address Pakistan's fundamental structural issues: few people pay tax, least of all the feudal landowners who control traditional low-added-value industries like sugar farms, textile mills, and agricultural interests while wielding huge political-patronage networks stemming from their workers' votes. In 2021, only 2.5 million Pakistanis filed tax returns—less than 1% of the adult population. "People don't pay tax, especially the rich elite," says Khan. "They just siphon out money and launder it abroad."

Instead, Pakistan has relied on foreign money to balance a budget and provide government services. The U.S. funneled nearly $78.3 billion to Pakistan from 1948 to 2016. But in 2018, President Trump ended the $300 million security assistance that the U.S. provided annually. Now Pakistan must shop around for new benefactors—chiefly Saudi Arabia, Russia, and China. When Khan visited Putin last February, it was to arrange cheap oil and wheat imports and discuss the $2.5 billion Pakistan Stream gas pipeline, which Moscow wants to build between Karachi and Kasur. In early March,

Tear gas lingers from clashes between Khan's supporters and riot police on March 14 after police tried to arrest Khan at his Lahore residence

RAHAT DAR—EPA-EFE/SHUTTERSTOCK

the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China approved a $1.3 billion loan rollover—a fiscal Band-Aid for a gaping wound.

But if Khan recognized the problem, he did little to solve it. After his election in 2018, he was in an uncommonly strong position with the backing of the military and progressives, as well as the tolerance of the Islamists. Now, "he'll be in a weaker position to actually effect any reforms," says Munter, the former U.S. ambassador, "if he had any reforms to begin with."

That Pakistan is moving away from the U.S. and closer to Russia and China is a moot point; the bigger question is who actually wins from embracing Pakistan. The $65 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was supposed to be the crown jewel in President Xi Jinping's signature Belt and Road Initiative, linking China via roads, rail, and pipeline to the Arabian Sea. But Gwadar Port is rusting, and suicide bombers are taking aim at buses filled with Chinese workers. Loans are more regularly defaulted than paid. Today, even Iran looks like a more stable partner.

For the U.S., competition with Beijing defines foreign policy today, meaning Washington prioritizes relations with Pakistan's archnemesis India, a key partner in the Biden Administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy to contain China. After the U.S. pulled out of Afghanistan, Pakistan is not the strategic linchpin it once claimed to be—and memories are hardly fond; Pakistan secretly invested heavily in the Taliban. "Lots of Americans in Washington say we lost the war in Afghanistan because the Pakistanis stabbed us in the back," says Munter.

What happens next? Many in Khan's PTI suspect the current government may declare their party a terrorist organization or otherwise ban it from politics. Others believe that Pakistan's escalating economic, political, and security turmoil may be used as grounds to postpone October's general election. Ultimately, all sides are using the tools at their disposal to prevent their own demise: Khan wields popular protest and the banner of democracy; the government has the courts and security apparatus. Caught between the two, the people flounder. "There are no heroes here," says Kugelman. "The entire political class and the military are to blame for the very troubled state the country finds itself in now."

It's a crisis that Khan still claims can be solved by elections, despite his broken relationship with the military. "The same people who tried to kill me are still sitting in power," he says. "And they are petrified that if I got back [in] they would be held accountable. So they're more dangerous."

—*With reporting by* HASAN ALI/ISLAMABAD