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① 12.15.17

Question: Why Erdogan seems to be stronger than his opponent?

Answer: Because of his independent policy against EU and Russia.

THE RISK REPORT BY IAN BREMMER

Erdogan may face both an election and a decision



FOR MORE THAN 20 years, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has remade and dominated Turkey's politics. First as Prime

Minister, then as President, he built a political foundation with support from voters outside the country's powerhouse cities—Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir—with appeals to traditional religious values and socially conservative policies.

Over time, however, he has also polarized the country by amassing more and more executive power in his own hands, and by silencing, in some cases imprisoning, critics and journalists who tell stories he doesn't like. He has sidelined judges who don't rule his way. Following a failed military coup in 2016, he purged the upper ranks of the army.

Now he faces his toughest test. The largest opposition parties have united behind the candidacy of a single challenger, a technocrat named Kemal Kilicdaroglu. Voting begins on May 14, and a second-round runoff on May 28 appears likely between the combative and charismatic Erdogan and the mild-mannered and consensus-oriented Kilicdaroglu. Current polling says this race could go either way.

Outsiders will focus on expected differences in their foreign policies. Even as a member of the NATO alliance, Erdogan has established a degree of independence between the West and Russia. At various times, he has both courted and infuriated Russia, Europe, and the

U.S. with a transactional approach to nearly every important question. His ability to play one off the other is limited by Turkey's dependence for security on NATO and on Russia for a strong economy, particularly in the tourism sector. Erdogan has not joined other NATO members in full backing for Ukraine, but he has offered Turkey's services as a crucial dealmaker, including on the flow of both Ukrainian and

continues to approach Vladimir Putin with pragmatic caution. Kilicdaroglu would also be expected to breathe new life into Turkey's long-term bid to join the European Union. If so, E.U. officials would respond with warm diplomatic pleasantries, but the cost of support for Ukraine and hesitancy in Europe about Turkey's longer-term direction will encourage Brussels to slow-play a return to serious accession negotiations.



Posters for Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the opposition's presidential candidate in Turkey's May 14 election

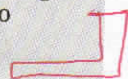
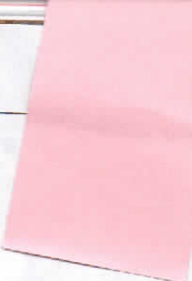
YET THERE'S a more immediate question that has the attention of observers both inside and outside Turkey. If Kilicdaroglu wins the presidency by a razor-thin margin, might Erdogan simply reject the result? He's done it before. When his party's candidate lost the race for mayor of Istanbul in 2019, Erdogan forced Turkey's electoral court to annul the result and rerun the election. This strategy would work only if the vote is close, but the stakes for Erdogan are now much higher. This time, it's his name on a nationwide ballot. If Erdogan hesitates, it would likely

be because his party then lost that re-run Istanbul mayor's race by a much bigger margin, dealing Erdogan's reputation for political invincibility a blow from which it hasn't fully recovered.

It would still be a mistake to underestimate Erdogan's willingness to urge his supporters into the streets, and opposition demonstrators would be quick to respond, creating political upheaval. It would also be a mistake to doubt Erdogan's ability to win. His political talent and the loyalty of his supporters remain formidable.

Russian agricultural products out of the Black Sea and into the Mediterranean. Erdogan's harsh words for the E.U. and some European governments, and his foot-dragging on questions like NATO membership for Finland and Sweden, has made him a gadfly in Brussels.

That's the main reason a Kilicdaroglu victory would be welcomed in Europe and in Washington. His foreign policy would focus on restoring trust in Turkey's reliability as an ally for both NATO and the E.U., even as he



Q B



① 12.15.17

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 SOCIETY 7

Teach citizenship the way the founders intended

BY SAL KHAN AND JEFFREY ROSEN

NEW DATA RELEASED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION—known as the Nation's Report Card and widely regarded as the best assessment of how well we are educating our future citizens—paints a stark and worrying picture. Eighth-graders scored worse on the history section this year than in any other since the test was first administered on the subject in 1994, and civics scores dropped for the first time since it was first tested in 1998. Fewer than 1 in 4 students scored as proficient.

proficient
 proficient

The problem is not necessarily in the classroom. When our political leaders wage “school wars” over what historical models can and cannot be taught, they signal to students that certain views are simply not worth considering. When our news media promote the loudest and most antagonistic voices, students learn that shouting is more effective than listening. And when parents refuse to engage with arguments that they disagree with, students come to believe that listening to opposing viewpoints is a sign of weakness rather than of civic strength. Small wonder, then, that according to a recent UCLA-UC Riverside study, more than two-thirds of high school principals reported substantial political conflict over hot-button issues inside their classrooms.

We will endanger the American project if we fail to teach our children the principles of our democracy and the habits of civil dialogue necessary to sustaining it. Instead of building a better future by finding common ground, they will only slide deeper into partisanship and extremism.



Fortunately, there is a way out. But it requires a new way of thinking about civic education. We need to teach students not just history and civics, but also the virtues of democratic citizenship, beginning with the ability to consider arguments with which we disagree and to engage in dialogue and deliberation with people who hold views different from our own. In practice, this means giving students a rigorously nonpartisan education in American history and civics. We must expose them to the best arguments on all sides of the major constitutional debates past and present, and give them the tools to make up their own minds.

The problem is not necessarily in the classroom

At the founding, leading framers including George Washington and James Madison dreamed of a national university that would bring together young Americans of different perspectives and backgrounds to teach the habits of deliberation and the core civic knowledge necessary

to informed citizenship. They never built this institution, but technology makes it possible today.

FOR EXAMPLE, our organizations are partnering to create a free online Constitution 101 course premised on a simple act: bringing together experts who genuinely disagree about the most important constitutional issues facing our nation today, and using their examples to model thoughtful, respectful civil dialogue. With a “faculty” composed of leading conservative and liberal historians, constitutional scholars, judges, and public servants, our course will teach students America’s constitutional principles using primary sources spanning U.S. history, including Supreme Court decisions and the dissents. Exposed to ideas across the ideological spectrum, students will have the content and the space to consider America’s past and present from multiple perspectives and reach their own conclusions.

There is already evidence that this approach works. In research conducted during a pilot phase of this new course, we found that 20% of students reported an increased desire to engage in difficult conversations both inside and outside their classrooms.

As we approach America’s 250th birthday in 2026, we have the opportunity to reverse our civics spiral and revitalize knowledge of the ideals, rooted in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, that unite us. It will take all the adults in the room to show our young citizens that compromise and deliberation are not vestiges of their grandparents’ America.

Khan and Rosen are the respective heads of the educational organizations Khan Academy and the National Constitution Center

FRAZER WALLER—LOOP IMAGES/UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP/GETTY IMAGES

(A)

The Brief



DIGITAL BLIND SPOT

BY VERA BERGENGRUEN

The U.S. government's
security-clearance
process is struggling
to keep up online

INSIDE

THE WOMAN
SUING FOX NEWS

PLAYING MAGIC: THE GATHERING
WITH A SENATE CANDIDATE

PRIVATE SECURITY IS
REPLACING POLICE

3 1100
IN NOVEMBER 2020, JACK TEIXEIRA WROTE A letter to the local police chief asking him to reconsider allowing him to own guns. The Dighton, Mass., police had denied the 18-year-old's two previous requests for a firearms license, citing an incident when Teixeira was suspended for alleged violent and racial threats, including comments about guns at school.

This time, Teixeira's pleas worked. As a newly minted member of the Massachusetts Air National Guard, he had recently received a top-secret security clearance. "The investigation process was extremely thorough," he wrote to the police chief, arguing that the U.S. government had deemed him qualified to become "a person that now has the national trust to safeguard classified information."

That trust turned out to be misplaced. In April, Teixeira was arrested and charged with posting classified military documents online in the most damaging leak of U.S. intelligence in a decade, revealing sensitive information about the war in Ukraine and complicating relations with U.S. allies. Federal investigators also found that he had continued to regularly post "about violence and murder" in online forums, researched mass shootings, amassed an "arsenal" of weapons in his home, and asked for advice on how to turn an SUV into an "assassination van."

Not surprisingly, these revelations have raised new questions about the U.S. government's security-clearance process. For decades, the system has made judgments about whom to grant clearances based on the "whole person concept," considering the "totality" of the person's conduct in order to determine whether they pose an acceptable level of risk. The probe scrutinizes both personal and professional lives, from family relationships and interactions with foreigners to finances, mental health, sexual behavior, psychological state, past handling of protected information, and drug and alcohol use.

Social media would seem an obvious place to look. But unlike offline interactions, an applicant's digital life—like social media posts or online groups they belong to—is not typically analyzed and is very rarely investigated, according to national-security legal experts and U.S. officials.

Dozens of cases in recent years have exposed the double lives led online by people who underwent rigorous screenings to be granted high-level clearances. The government's blind spot only grows larger as a new generation of military service members, intelligence officers, government officials, and contractors come of age online. "Our physical and digital lives are merging," says Marek Posard, a military sociologist at the Rand Corp. "If the

government does, in fact, want to assess risk using the whole-person concept, we need to recognize that people's lives exist online."

THE CHALLENGE IS that following the digital trails of millions of applicants would raise a host of privacy and First Amendment issues and perhaps overwhelm an already balky process. Parsing teenagers' sometimes problematic but benign internet activity could also cause the U.S. to lose out on qualified applicants at a time when the military is struggling to recruit. In some realms, security-clearance criteria have been periodically updated to keep up with the times. (Guidance from the 1960s, for example, listed cohabitation and homosexuality as risk factors.) Yet the online lives of applicants—including the 1.3 million with top-secret clearances—remain largely off-limits. "The Investigator's Handbook is antiquated,"

Merton Miller, the associate director for the Federal Investigative Services, told congressional investigators probing flaws in the system in 2014. "I think most people would say it's a no-brainer."

Subsequent updates to the security-clearance criteria for individuals to access classified information have mentioned social media monitoring but put few concrete practices into effect. Almost 20 years after Facebook began, the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA), which conducts the vast majority of background checks on people like Teixeira, is still "assessing options to integrate

publicly available social media information searches into personnel vetting," a spokesman told TIME.

There's no shortage of examples. In more than a dozen recent high-profile cases reviewed by TIME, individuals with high-level security clearances left clear and often brazen trails online showing their links to extremist groups, violent propaganda, antigovernment activities, and leaks of classified U.S. information. "The security-vetting procedures are approaching a crossroads given the widespread use of social media and its existence as an untapped source of information for investigators," says Brad Moss, a lawyer who specializes in security clearance law.

Whether that would solve the problem is another matter. The clearance process would have to keep up with the proliferation of online platforms, like Discord, where tomorrow's applicants spend their time. With almost 50% of active-duty U.S. service members under the age of 25, failing to do so could lead to a fresh generation of problems. "There needs to be a sustained effort to understand what trends are occurring," says Posard, "and what platforms are emerging on the forefront where there could be new risks." □

'We need to recognize that people's lives exist online.'

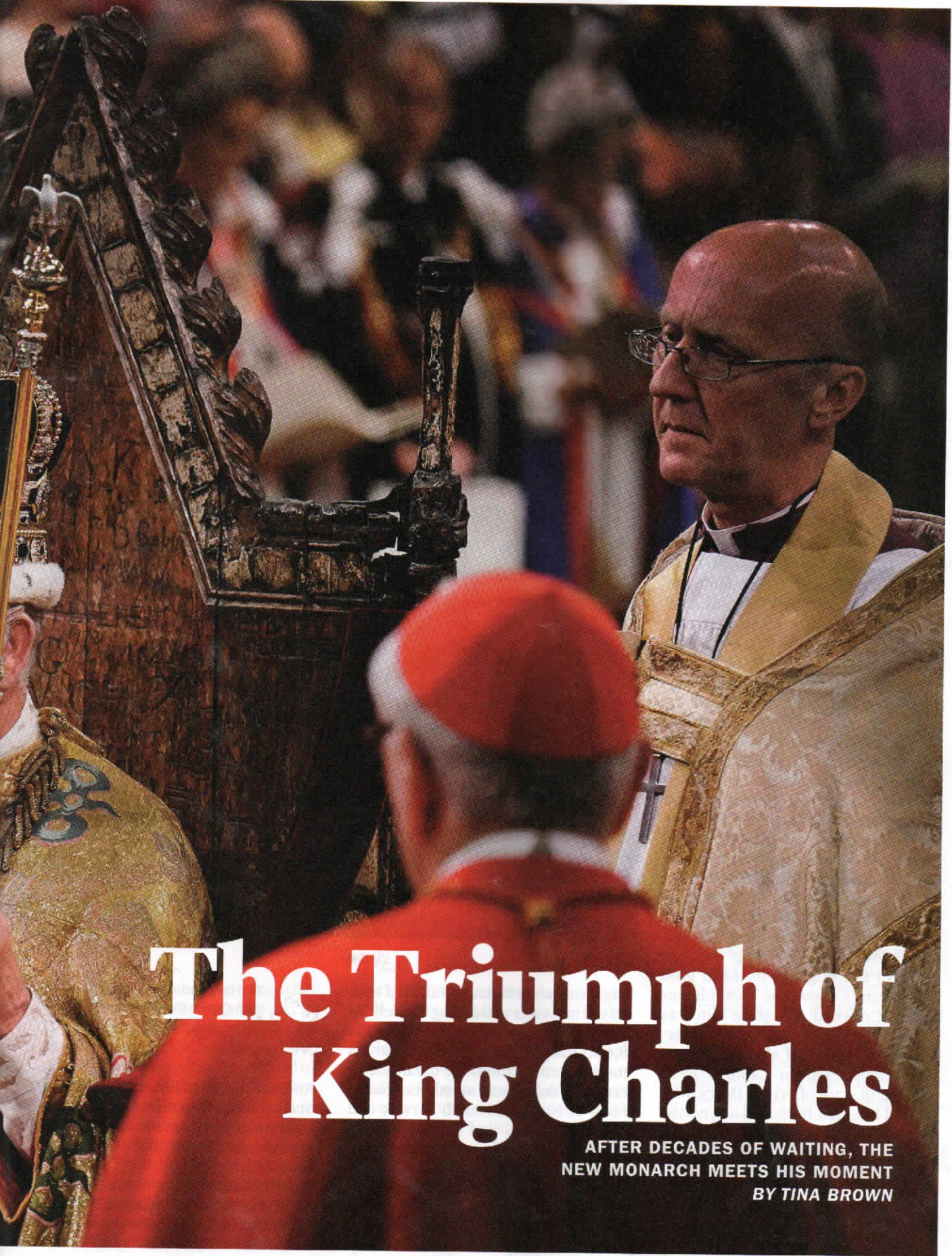
—MAREK POSARD,
 RAND CORP.
 MILITARY SOCIOLOGIST

SPECIAL REPORT

King Charles III, in solemnity, wearing the St. Edward's Crown and holding the Sovereign's Sceptres in Westminster Abbey on May 6

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The Triumph of King Charles

AFTER DECADES OF WAITING, THE
NEW MONARCH MEETS HIS MOMENT
BY TINA BROWN

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AS HE STOOD IN FOR HIS AILING 96-year-old mother at the opening of Parliament in May 2022, it was hard not to catch Prince Charles gazing mournfully at the Imperial Crown next to him on a velvet cushion. The irresistible thought bubble his expression suggested was “Mummy, when?”

Cue trumpets. On May 6, 2023, the 74-year-old man who spent more than five decades in the waiting room of his destiny—longer than any Prince of Wales in history—finally walked through its door. King Charles III by the Grace of God, of the (still) United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of His Other Realms and Territory, Head of the Commonwealth, and Defender of the Faith, had placed on his head by the Most Rev. Justin Welby (Archbishop of Canterbury) the nearly 5-lb. solid gold St. Edward’s Crown at Westminster Abbey. Crowned alongside him was the 75-year-old woman who has herself shown years of shrewd, strategic patience: Queen Camilla. Even the baleful stare of Prince Harry, who blurted late that he would attend the ceremony—but without Meghan—cannot throw shade on the former mistress’s vindication.

This was no off-the-rack coronation. A flurry of belabored palace bulletins in the past months about a “slimmed-down,” budget-conscious ceremony



suggested an occasion as suffused with mixed messages as the King himself. To whittle the guest list to 2,000 from the 8,000 hanging from the rafters at his mother’s coronation, the cavalcade of ermined dukes was mostly booted in favor of National Health Service and charity workers and other inclusive representatives of an effortfully modern Britain. The few MPs who made the cut didn’t get a plus-one (a bitter pill). Princes of the Blood and other grandees were not required to take the knee and swear a Shakespearean oath of fealty.

The coronation procession, with Queen Camilla, inside Westminster

And unlike Queen Elizabeth’s bladder-busting three-hour ceremony, this two-hour 21st century coronation was not much longer than a Premier League soccer match.

Not that the King would have arrived at his coronation in the Diamond Jubilee State Coach wearing a lounge suit. Nor would much daylight be let

suffused
 nuptials
 cavalcade
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 bladder busting
 MP
 fealty



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WORLD

A growing skepticism

Even as the pomp of coronation day got under way in Westminster Abbey, not everyone was excited. Antimonarchy sentiment in the U.K. has grown in recent years amid a string of royal scandals. The 25% of Brits now saying the country should have an elected head of state is up from 17% a decade ago, according to YouGov. Just 9% of people said they care "a great deal" about the coronation.

The British royals are the last in Europe to practice coronation ceremonies. The weekend's official events were expected to cost U.K. taxpayers at least £100 million (\$125 million), though the government and Buckingham Palace refused to share the exact figure. "We're increasingly irrelevant, and the future of Britain seems quite backward," says Andy Hallett, who was attending a coronation event at Hyde Park. "We're no longer in the E.U., and we're poorer every year. All we have is for the masses to get excited about things like this."

A protest was planned at London's Trafalgar Square, a historically popular site for protests. But before it could begin, police arrested six people, including Graham Smith, the leader of antimonarchy group Republic, "on suspicion of breaching the peace." Two days later police apologized. Smith told TIME in the run-up to the coronation that he expected as many as 1,700 people at the Trafalgar protest, to chant "Not my king" and hear speeches from lawmakers, activists, and representatives of other republican movements. The monarchy, he says, is inherently antidemocratic and Britain should have an elected head of state instead. By preventing some from peacefully protesting, the activists pointed out, British authorities may have inadvertently bolstered their point.

—Yasmeen Serhan

into the magic of the anointing when, like his mother 70 years before, the King donned an austere, shiftlike garment off camera and was doused from a medieval spoon with consecrated oil. Unlike at Queen Elizabeth's coronation, no civet oil or ambergris from the intestines of sperm whales was added to the formula for the sometimes-vegan Charles. Then he slipped out of his sacred mufti into the gold, floor-length "supertunica," before emerging in the pièce de résistance of the deep purple Robe of Estate, or Imperial Robe.

IF IT ALL THREATENED to be irresistibly Monty Python, so what? The potent flummery of the monarchy still holds the British people in its thrall. It is meant to be a never-ending story, and the months since Charles' ascension have been a seamless rebrand of the House of Windsor as an institution built to survive. A recent BBC/YouGov poll found that 58% of Brits support the monarchy.

Charles' reign began with his pitch-perfect address to the nation after Elizabeth's death. Ten days later, striding

civet

ambergris

mufti

consecrated

Monty Python

flummery

thrall

10:07



The royal family and friends in London on coronation day, May 6

at the head of her funeral procession, bearing his field marshal's baton, he seemed to grow in stature with each metronomic step. For most of his life, Charles was tortured by his father Prince Philip's underestimation of his gifts and the Queen's remote mothering. But in this critical moment of transition, it all fell away. On his face, you could see both the pain of losing his mother and the final shedding of his childhood's doubting burdens.

The benefit of his eternal wait is that Charles has become King at a moment that uniquely speaks to his concerns.

For decades, he was mocked for his jeremiads about climate change and the despoilment of the English countryside. Now, as the world self-immolates and glaciers melt, even his most merciless critics acknowledge his prescience. His people know exactly who he is: Charles the Green, a woke grandpa with a complexion pinker by the minute, who drives an Aston Martin fueled

by a bioethanol blend of cheese and English white wine by-products, and who assuaged his grief in the Queen's last hours by foraging for mushrooms in the Balmoral woods. At a time of divisiveness and volatility, it's a kingly image that quickly is reassuring.

Charles has defied every prediction of what would happen when a monarch as beloved as his mother dies. There has been no national identity crisis (certainly none attributable to him). No collapse in public appetite for a monarchy. No immediate repudiation—yet—by the sovereign Commonwealth realms. And no

prescience realm

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The line of succession



GETTY IMAGES (11); MISAN HARRIMAN/PRINCE HARRY AND MEGHAN, THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF SUSSEX

easy to forget that after decades of dullsville Commonwealth tours and ceaseless face time with an encyclopedia of potentates, Charles is one of the best-wired diplomats in the world. His first state visit as King, to Germany in March where he tapped his Hanoverian roots to speak in fluent German, was hailed as a flawless post-Brexit charm-krieg.

The perception of Charles' progressive instincts has always been undermined by his foggy self-presentation. (He must have been the only Cambridge undergraduate to wear a suit and tie in the Summer of Love.) Some of his first acts as King have brought refreshing flair to the stodgy iconography of monarchy. The image of himself Charles selected for the nation's postage stamps to replace the crowned head of his mother is a simple one, bareheaded and unadorned. He chose Jony Ive, ex-Apple design whiz, to conceive a beautiful, optimistic coronation emblem with the four entwined flowers of the U.K. that reflects the

King's concern for the planet, and he blessed the cool innovation of releasing digital twins of the coronation crowns using augmented reality—brainchild of Anthony Geffen, producer of the documentary *The Crown Jewels*—that were available on smartphones everywhere.

MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, Charles' decision to open the Windsor archives to aid independent research into the British monarchy's ties to slavery is nothing short of revolutionary for an institution that has usually batted down on the past. Some might see Charles' actions as a brilliant stroke of proactive public relations at a time when demands for colonial reparations are part of an ever rising tide of grievance, especially among the young. But in Charles' case, his earliest speeches show his desire for deep cultural re-examination comes from an authentic place. A spokesperson for Buckingham Palace on April 6 repeated his message to Commonwealth leaders in Rwanda last year: "I cannot describe

disregarding of constitutional red lines, as some expected, to sound off about his favored causes. Yes, then Prime Minister Liz Truss put the kibosh on his attendance at the November COP27 U.N. Climate Change Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, where he had planned to make a speech. But Charles immediately asserted the puissance of the Crown as a political convener. His Buckingham Palace reception for world leaders on the eve of COP turned out to be the most coveted power ticket of the week, all the more effective because it stood aloof from white-hot policy debate. It's



Prince William and Princess Catherine, with Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis, during the coronation ceremony

expiate

the depths of my personal sorrow at the suffering of so many, as I continue to deepen my own understanding of slavery's enduring impact." The King is said to be accepting—even relaxed—about his inevitable removal as head of state in the 14 remaining Commonwealth realms. Elizabeth II, after all, was a master at presiding gracefully over imperial retreat. But unlike his mother, Charles knows that the "deep sympathy" she expressed in her historic 2011 trip to Ireland would never be enough to expiate some of colonialism's worst sins.

The only serious migraines for Charles in the first months of his reign were caused by his own son. The Firm has contained the blast radius of explosions from Harry the human hand grenade by following Queen Elizabeth's tested playbook. When faced with tumult like the publication of his incendiary memoir *Spare* and the solipsistic whine of Meghan and Harry's Netflix documentary, the royal family has ramped up public appearances and done what they always do: say nothing, and smile, smile, smile. With a certain

amount of backstage mirth, the palace released a statement expressing the King's disappointment that Meghan would be staying in Montecito, Calif., with his grandchildren. Harry nonetheless managed to grab the spotlight yet again when he galloped back on his steed in late March to appear in a London courtroom for the latest round in the tabloid phone-hacking cases. Revelations about what seemed to be covered-up complicity between his own family and the tabloids ensures that each brother is still ready to raise an army against the other.

And what of Queen Camilla? Palace

solipsistic whine

His people know exactly who he is

insiders believe that her success is even more assured than the King's. Hers is one of the greatest image rehabs in modern history. In the 18 years since she married Charles, her performance has been so sure-footed that the woman reviled as an "old bag," "old trout," "prune," and "hatchet face" in the '90s by the tabloids for usurping the adored Princess Diana is now on her way—at least in the now uniformly glowing press coverage—to becoming a British national treasure, the Maggie Smith of the monarchy. Camilla's loyalty, humor, and humanity, her stoic commitment, like her late mother-in-law's, to "just getting on with it" has proved she understands the quintessential tenet of monarchy—how to play the long game.

Vivat Rex! At a time when everything seems to be bollixed up in Britain—sometimes spectacularly—tribal and atavistic beliefs in the monarchy, both mortal and majestic, somehow trundle on.

Brown is the author of *The Palace Papers: Inside the House of Windsor*

bollixed
trundle on
atavistic

LEFT: VUI MON—WPA POOL/GETTY IMAGES; RIGHT: CHRIS JACKSON/ANDREW J. RICHMAN/ALAMY; PALACE: GETTY IMAGES

WORLD

Prime Minister
Kishida at his
official residence in
Tokyo on April 28

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**Facing
Ghosts**

PRIME MINISTER FUMIO KISHIDA IS GIVING JAPAN A MORE ASSERTIVE
ROLE ON THE GLOBAL STAGE BY CHARLIE CAMPBELL/TOKYO

PHOTOGRAPH BY KO TSUCHIYA FOR TIME



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The official residence of Japan's Prime Minister is a spooky place. Inspired by American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, the stone and brick mansion in central

Tokyo had been around for only three years when young naval officers charged in and assassinated Prime Minister Tsuyoshi Inukai in 1932. Four years later, Prime Minister Keisuke Okada was forced to hide in a closet during another attempted coup d'état, which killed five and left bullet holes that still pepper the building's Art Deco facade.

and he lost several relatives to the atomic bomb dropped by the U.S. in 1945. His earliest memories include sitting on his grandmother's knee in the beleaguered city and hearing horrific tales of local suffering. "The unspeakable devastation experienced by Hiroshima and its people was inscribed vividly in my memory," he says. "This childhood experience has been a major driver of my pursuit... of a world without nuclear weapons."



The bad energy became transpacific when, in 1992, U.S. President George H.W. Bush became ill during a banquet here, vomiting onto the lap of Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa before passing out. Despite a reported exorcism by Shinto priests, an association with malevolent spirits was sealed, and the residence went unoccupied for nine years until Prime Minister Fumio Kishida moved in soon after taking power in October 2021.

It's to Hiroshima that Kishida welcomes leaders of the G-7 from May 19 to 21, when he'll hope to leverage the city's tragic history to convince the world's most powerful democracies that only collective resolve can face down the authoritarian threat of an increasingly belligerent Russia, China, and North Korea. Tokyo may be 5,000 miles from Kyiv, but the war in Ukraine has alerted Japan to a more perilous world, not least since Japan remains entangled in land and sea territorial disputes with Russia, and regularly sees North Korean ballistic missiles flying overhead. Even more worrisome for Japan has been China's aggression against Taiwan, the self-ruling island that authoritarian President Xi Jinping has repeatedly vowed to bring to heel. When Beijing launched military drills last summer to protest U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei, five missiles fell into the waters of Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone, through which Chinese naval vessels and aircraft regularly intrude.

It's a transformation that had long been touted by Japan's former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who belonged to the same right-leaning Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and was assassinated during a campaign stop in July. But while Abe's hawkish reputation was divisive, Kishida's dovish persona has enabled him to enact security reform without significant pushback.

"I have been warned by my predecessors that you will encounter ghosts in this building," Kishida, 65, tells TIME in an exclusive interview inside the red-carpeted residence, gazing around at the expressionist wall motifs, which include at least one rather menacing concrete gargoyle. "Of course, it is an old building, so I hear sounds from time to time. But fortunately, I have yet to encounter a ghost."

Kishida is preoccupied by more earthly issues. In Japan, he has launched a "new model of capitalism" to grow the middle class through redistributive policies. Overseas, he has set about revolutionizing the East Asian nation's foreign relations: soothing historical grievances with South Korea, strengthening security alliances with the U.S. and others, and boosting defense spending by over 50%. Buoyed by a White House eager for influential partners to check China's growing clout, Kishida has set about turning the world's No. 3 economy back into a global power with a military presence to match.

Against this backdrop, Kishida in December unveiled Japan's biggest military buildup since World War II, mirroring upticks in defense spending across Europe, including Germany, which like Japan was humbled by that war. The commitment would raise defense spending to 2% of GDP by 2027, giving Japan the world's third largest defense budget. And while previous Japanese leaders dithered over imposing international sanctions, Kishida has joined U.S.-led measures with alacrity.

Still, Japan's martial resurgence isn't without controversy. The nation has a pacifist constitution, and critics say its military buildup pours fuel on an already combustive regional security picture. And given that China is Japan's top trading partner, it's unclear how Kishida can fund an ambitious domestic agenda while turning the screws on America's superpower rival, which has proved all too willing to mete out economic retribution. More fundamentally, some believe that Japan's rearmament chafes with Kishida's long-standing pledges to work toward a nuclear-free world. The Prime Minister, for his part, says his only goal is to prevent tragedies like Hiroshima unfolding once again: "Today's Ukraine could be tomorrow's East Asia."

KISHIDA'S TENURE has already encountered drama that belies his

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KISHIDA OMA—POOL/AP/GETTY IMAGES; THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN/AA; (2) SERGEI CHIZHAYEV—AP/GETTY IMAGES

expressionist
gargoyle

alacrity

chafes with



bland functionary (軽蔑)

Clockwise from top left: Kishida inspects military equipment; G-7 preparations; police restrain a man who tried to attack Kishida; a visit to Bucha, Ukraine, in March

reputation as a bland functionary. On April 15, Kishida narrowly avoided joining the ghosts stalking the Prime Minister's residence when a homemade pipe bomb was hurled at him during a campaign speech, injuring a policeman. "I am living in the world of politics," he shrugs when asked about the incident. "All sorts of events and developments could happen."

When he took office 18 months ago, he was thought of as a steady but uninspiring politician, unscarred by scandal but lacking major accomplishments. His father and grandfather were both lawmakers, and he spent part of his childhood in the U.S., attending a public school in Queens. Classes were filled with children of myriad cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and Kishida says he found communication "very challenging." But because of this, "I was reminded of the importance of listening carefully to the views of others," he says. "As a child, I was inspired by what makes America the United States, which is respect for freedom and an abundance of energy."

Kishida was an average student, failing his law school entrance exam three times. After cutting his teeth in banking, Kishida entered politics in

1993. He rose to various cabinet posts and was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs in 2012, serving in the position for five years, a Japanese record. He forged a reputation as a consensus builder, coordinating policy in back rooms by deliberating with various factions. Aides say Kishida takes advice, but once his mind is made up, he doesn't waver.

As Prime Minister, he's proved himself a prodigious worker. Kishida has made a dizzying 16 overseas trips since taking office. The day after he sat down with TIME inside his official residence's vaulted Great Hall, he departed for a four-nation tour of Africa. Aides say he's barely managed to take any time for himself. "After the [parliamentary] session is over, if some time remains, I hope I will be able to play some golf," he says with a grin.

But it has not all been smooth on the domestic front. Kishida's approval ratings plummeted following a backlash

to his decision to hold a state funeral for Abe, over both the expense and Abe's polarizing character. Late last year, Kishida fired four cabinet ministers in two months over a variety of scandals. In February, he dismissed a close aide for saying "quite a few people would abandon this country" if same-sex marriage were legalized, despite a majority of the population's supporting it. In response, Kishida tells TIME that he is committed to "realizing a society where diversity is respected." Kishida's approval rating has since picked up, and his LDP won key seats in local elections in April.

"He may not be an inspiring leader," says Jeff Kingston, director of Asian studies at Tokyo's Temple University. "But he has proven to be fairly effective in terms of promoting his agenda."

It's an ambitious one. Japan has the world's second most educated population and boasts its longest life expectancy, lowest murder rate, little unemployment, and unusually smooth political transitions. But it also has one of the world's lowest birth rates, stagnated growth, and a severely aging population. In the late 1980s, Japanese people earned more than Americans. Now they earn 40% less on average. Kishida's mission is to drag Japan back up. He has embarked on a sweeping modernization drive, recently greenlighting the nation's first casino as well as a dedicated autonomous driving lane for the Shin-Tomei Expressway, a key logistics artery.

Kishida's domestic agenda rests on a nebulous "income-doubling plan" to boost household earnings, but his big problem is how to pay for redistribution without alienating the affluent. Japan's ratio of public debt to GDP stands at 256%—over double that of the U.S.—and Kishida has little wiggle room to keep borrowing. When he floated the idea of raising taxes on stock transfers and dividends, Japan's bourses tanked. "Mr. Kishida has to be pretty careful to keep key right-wing support," says Mieko Nakabayashi, a professor at Tokyo's Waseda University and a former Japanese lawmaker.

Kishida also wants to get more women and seniors into gainful employment. Japan ranked 116th among

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146 countries—the lowest of developed economies—in the World Economic Forum's 2022 gender-gap report. But while Kishida's government has set targets to reach 30% female executives at big firms by 2030, "I don't think it has clearly stated what kind of action plan it will actually take to achieve the goal," says Makiko Ono, CEO of Suntory Beverages & Food, Japan's most valuable company with a female boss.

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Ultimately, Japan remains over 30% less productive than the U.S. Kishida has charged Japan's Digital Agency to cut red tape and boost efficiency. Digital Minister Taro Kono tells TIME that he's discovered 9,000 government regulations that still require handling via antiquated technology, such as faxes, floppy disks, and the *hanko*—an iconic carved stamp that is obligatory for many official documents.

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But Kono has only 800 officials to serve Japan's population of 125 million, complaining that his agency is "desperately understaffed." It's a monumental challenge; embracing the Fourth Industrial Revolution is crucial for developed societies everywhere, though perhaps none more so than Japan, whose shrinking, aging population has "no precedent in the world," says Kishida. "This is a matter of survival."

IT'S A DIFFERENT KIND of existential threat that will occupy the G-7 in Hiroshima, where posters promoting the summit adorn billboards and vending machines across the city, with countdown clocks inside the cavernous main railway station. Denied a seat on the U.N. Security Council, Japan has always placed great emphasis on the economic grouping, where it is the only Asian member. Close aides to Kishida say that welcoming the G-7 to his home city will be the realization of "a lifelong dream." Not only is it Kishida's best chance to catapult Japan to true global leadership, Nakabayashi says he also may use any bounce in domestic approval as a platform to dissolve parliament and seek a fresh mandate.

In January, Kishida made whistle-stop visits to member states Britain, France, Italy, Canada, and the U.S. to drum up support for his agenda. He also invited Indian Prime Minister

Narendra Modi and South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol to attend as observers. The stakes are high. "Given the very sketchy situation in the international order, with Ukraine and Taiwan figuring prominently, the G-7 must step up or risk becoming irrelevant," says Kingston.

But not all agree with the G-7's combative posture. Setsuko Thurlow remembers Aug. 6, 1945, clearly. She was just 13 when she was recruited to help decipher intercepted Allied communications as part of Japan's World War II efforts. At 8:15 a.m., she glimpsed a bluish-white flash through the window of the wooden building that served as the military headquarters in what today is Hiroshima's Higashi suburb. The bomb detonated at a temperature of 7,700°C just over a mile away.

"I had the sensation of flying up and floating in the air," she says. After she crawled out from beneath the charred timber, "I started seeing moving figures like people, but not really human beings," recalls Thurlow, 91, who accepted a Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 on behalf of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. "They looked like ghosts."

The bombings of Hiroshima and, three days later, Nagasaki claimed some 170,000 lives. Japan's more aggressive military posture under Kishida makes Thurlow "alarmed," she says. "[Kishida] said his top priority was to work toward a world free of nuclear weapons. But right now, I realize he was deceiving us."

Kishida tells TIME he's committed to global denuclearization and his government "will not discuss nuclear armament." And no doubt G-7 attendees will have poignant tours of Hiroshima's Peace Museum and A-Bomb Dome, which was one of the few buildings left standing after the blast, remaining today a rubble-strewn shell of broken bricks and twisted iron girders, rimmed by a neat hedge of flowering azalea.

Kishida draws a straight line between Hiroshima and the stricken Ukrainian city of Bucha, which he visited in March, speaking of "great anger at the atrocity" in a departure from his

trademark equanimity. He wants the G-7 to know the true horror lurking within Vladimir Putin's repeated threats of nuclear war, which "came as a huge shock to me," he says.

Still, it would be disingenuous to pretend that Russia is Kishida's sole focus. His intention is also to convey that, just as Ukraine is Asia's problem, Taiwan is Europe's—rebutting the sentiments of French President Emmanuel Macron, who when asked about Taiwan in April said that Europe must not get "caught up in crises that are not ours." For Kishida, "Russian aggression against Ukraine is not a development that happened far away," he says. "Attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force, wherever they may happen in the world, cannot be allowed."

Kishida is diplomatic when asked about China's challenge, citing the need to build on the "positive momentum" forged by his November summit with Xi. However, he admits "China's current external posture and military trends are matters of serious concern."

Others in his administration are bolder. Rather than Russia or

North Korea, "the major threat is coming from China," says Kono, who previously served as both Japan's Foreign Minister and Defense Minister. "We need to be prepared for their military actions as well as economic coercion against Taiwan or others."

Washington agrees. In recent months, President Biden has committed to enhanced military cooperation with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Australia. He will be pressuring Kishida to assist not only with defense matters but also to prevent technology transfer to China.

Meanwhile, Beijing has set about courting the Global South with a new forum for international relations, which the nation's state media has dubbed "Xivilization." It's a clash of worldviews that promises to keep heating up. Kishida's mission at Hiroshima will be to keep focus on the city's charred remains and paper cranes. To let the ghosts have their say.

'Today's Ukraine could be tomorrow's East Asia.'

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