

1962

Burundi, Jamaica, Rwanda and Trinidad and Tobago are admitted to the United Nations.

1981

The Assemblée Nationale votes to abolish capital punishment in France

1984

Joe Kittinger completes the first solo balloon crossing of the Atlantic.



2007

Buddhist monks join anti-government protesters in Myanmar, starting what some call the Saffron Revolution.

back in war against fascism



implosion of Israel's political center ground. Instead of being challenged by a resurgent left wing, Israel's far right was outflanked and hijacked by a messianic extreme right, which gleefully hacked to pieces any remaining hopes for Oslo's enlightened vision of two sovereign states living peacefully side by side.

During the EU vote on Hungary, the UK's Conservative Party MEPs disgustingly held their noses and voted on Orban's behalf. As one Tory politician explained: "We are going to gain brownie points with people who might be able to help us in the Brexit negotiations." This demonstrates how Brexit necessitates Britain's surrender of the moral high ground on the world stage. The EU has collectively faced down autocrats in Russia, China, Israel, Iran and Turkey over human rights abuses. When the EU stands determinedly together, it is difficult for bullying authoritarian states to take retaliatory measures against individual European nations.

As Britain attempts to go it alone, the land of the Magna Carta and the cradle of parliamentary democracy finds itself groveling and scraping before tinpot dictators to win trade deals, appease

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egos and avoid disfavor. A populist knee-jerk referendum vote for supposedly reasserting sovereignty has surrendered the UK's international relevance as a core European state, leaving the British Isles fading into humiliating dotage as a declining backwater.

As former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown warned last week, such insular, populist tendencies undermine the world's ability to muster a collective response to severe economic crises, humanitarian threats or genocide. The US' escalating trade war against friends and foes alike also exemplifies how populist leaders are resorting to petty, spiteful and counterpro-

ductive measures that ultimately punish their own most fervent supporters.

The Hungary vote may give MEPs a sense of righteous vindication, yet Orban and his cronies will become even more trenchant in mobilizing supporters against "liberal European elites." The last time European parliamentary democracy collapsed heralded the ascendance of Nazism, a world ripped apart by war and the senseless slaughter of millions in industrial-scale extermination camps. If this Pandora's box of hatred, prejudice and violence is unleashed again, should we expect the consequences to be fundamentally different a second time around?

Why is it only the ultranationalists who are mobilized and organized, with the likes of Bannon and Nigel Farage contributing their malevolent talents to subverting the mainstream? Why is it only populist propagandists who are tapping into the frustrations of ordinary citizens? Liberals appear so transfixed by the Mueller inquiry and Trump's Twitter feed that they miss the bigger picture of how the world is being deluged by an authoritarian tidal wave, exemplified by Vladimir Putin, Orban, Xi Jinping, Ali Khamenei and Recep

Tayyip Erdogan.

It is axiomatic to the liberal world view that mankind collectively benefits by working together to address global challenges. Compare this with fascism's nihilistic ideology that diametrically opposed civilizations are fated to fight to the death. How could such a narrative ever be considered populist?

The malign disease of fascism sets communities against each other, infiltrates and subverts institutions of state, and erodes the very foundations of democracy. The political mainstream must rise to the challenge and define its strategy in this war against anti-liberal authoritarianism, while winning back disaffected communities vulnerable to far-right incitement.

If they fail to vigorously block these extremists at every turn and mobilize the world behind an optimistic, progressive world view, then the political center ground will find itself brutally swept aside and banished to the margins, as the train of human progress thunders off its rails and plunges into hell.

(Baria Alamuddin is an award-winning journalist and broadcaster in the Middle East and the UK. She is editor of the Media Services Syndicate and has interviewed numerous heads of state.)

pets cat murder

killer prowled his victims' cul-de-sacs over decades, peering through their windows at night. The most chilling thing was the suggestion that a side effect of suburban architecture is that the houses become stages for roadside audiences after dark, who watch their inhabitants dance from kitchen to sofa, to bathroom to bed. For all the apparent safety of these homes in the sticks, it seems they have the danger built in.

A year ago, after our baby was born, my partner and I moved to the area where I grew up, to a quiet street at the end of the Northern Line where the capital opens out into golf courses and garden centers, and I immediately began boring him with much existential whining about the shame of having returned to the safety of a life I'd thought left behind. Then, a month after we moved, our house was broken into. The bed was stained with muddy footprints — the burglar had turned over our furniture and opened my face cream, seemingly confused by the lack of jewelry. That night, tidying up, my partner said quietly, "I wonder what he thought of us." The city had broadcast its dangers, using sirens and loud lights, but we learned quickly the sub-

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urbs hide theirs; here, on school fences, cartoon drawings warn of the threat of accidents and strangers' cars in cute, childish scribbles. Now we always keep a light on.

We bought our kitten shortly after the burglary, presenting it to our child with a jangly collar and promise of distant grief. "Here you go, love!" I said to my daughter. "Death! Vaccinated, purring death with green eyes, death that thinks shoelaces are mice." The suburbs had given us the space to teach our daughter about grief — there's only so much loss you can fit in a one-bedroom flat. And the kitten was easy to love. She crept

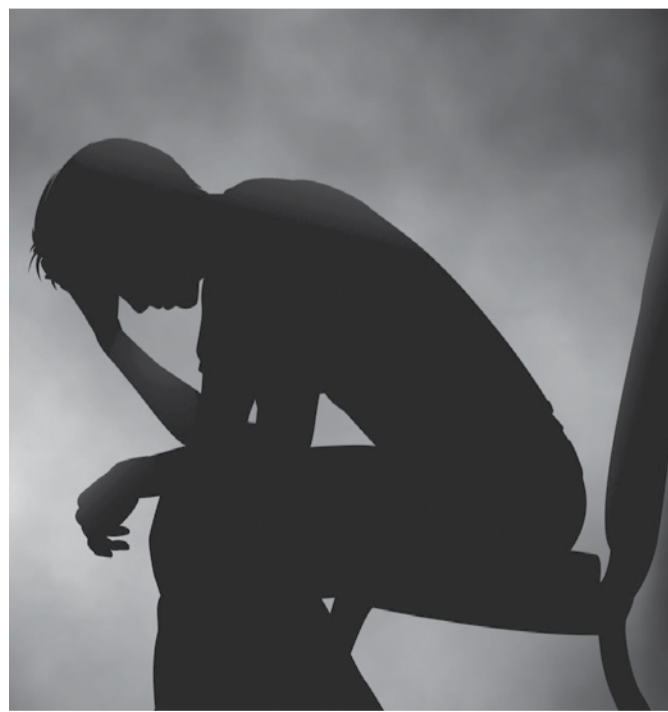
under our duvet at night and slept on my feet. We talked to her in song, and applauded her skill in climbing curtains. It was a couple of months later that I saw the post on a neighborhood website, alongside plant pots for sale, warning that the cat killer had arrived.

In August, after a Guardian writer pointed out that the cat killer story had "parallels with moral panics," The Croydon Advertiser reported that the writer had subsequently "been subjected to foul abuse." That same week, Jenkins suggested that, as the killer is someone he believes moves around for work, "There is certainly a possibility that a journalist" might be committing the crimes. There's a high-pitched madness here, and I don't like it, and neighbors are curfewing their cats, and there is a confluence of tensions as people look at their cats and see their own vulnerability. Our pets are where we keep the stuff we can't put anywhere else — our fawning adoration, our aspirations for security and unconditional love, our grief. In the suburbs, more than just curtains are twitching.

(Eva Wiseman is a columnist and editor at The Observer.)

CIVILIAN'S TRIBUNE

Alarming suicides



Visiting a therapist or a psychiatrist is considered a taboo in our society. And in my knowledge, majority would see the act of meeting a therapist as a sign of emotional incapability. This must change. Many lives can be saved by just talking to a person who is trained to handle complex emotions and psychiatrists are those who can guide people in the right direction. It is particularly unfortunate that so many expatriates are taking their lives, which could have been prevented with right counselling.

We need to be highly careful about what we value the most in life and how much. Even if we lose that, we should not lose ourselves.

Babu Padam



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



Mohan Bhagwat gives Indian National Congress its due by saying its self-sacrificing leaders built a national movement & are an inspiration even today. In the end he said RSS was willing to work with anyone in a constructive way. Clearly a smart PR pitch for a broader engagement @mkvenu1

02



Remember when Obama was president and Republicans pretended to care about the national debt? Now Trump and the Republicans have added more than \$1.5 trillion to the debt in the past year. @keithboykin

03



Putin said he and Erdogan have yet to come to an agreement on Syria's Idlib. "I am very happy to see you, not only to exchange views on this entire range of issues, but also to search for solutions where we not yet have them," RIA Novosti quoted him telling Erdogan @borzou

04



It will be a terrible mistake if #Trump withdraw our forces from Syria & leave it to the whims of #Putin, #Rouhani & #Erdogan. This won't only exclude the US from having a say about Syria's future but put Israel's & Jordan's security at risk & invite regional instability @AlonBenMeir

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