

# People power crushed, an aide spurned and crime on the Costa

**Last August, thousands took to the streets of Belarus to bravely protest against rigged elections**, in a mood of defiance and hope that the arm of the nation's old strongman ruler, Alexander Lukashenko, could finally be bent. Instead, 10 months on, many of Lukashenko's opponents have either fled the country or - in the shocking case of the journalist Raman Pratasevich last month - been detained in brutal circumstances.

In our big story this week, Andrew Roth looks at how Belarus has deployed a 21st-century reboot of the Soviet-era playbook to crush internal dissent, while Will Hutton reflects on why people power is failing, from Minsk to Hong Kong, and why we should all be concerned.

**The big story** [Page 10](#) →

**Often seen as the brains behind Britain's vote for Brexit, Dominic Cummings is these days a marginal figure in UK politics.** Still, a former aide with an axe to grind can be a dangerous one, as evidenced by his explosive claims last week of widespread incompetence in the government's handling of the pandemic. But with the UK vaccine programme going well, will any of it stick against Boris Johnson's seemingly bulletproof administration?

**Spotlight** [Page 22](#) →

**With its reputation for sun, sea and sangria, Marbella is one of Europe's busiest holiday resorts.** But tourism has dried up during the pandemic, exposing some far murkier activities on the Spanish coastal city's streets. Journalists Nacho Carretero and Arturo Lezcano examine the new international crime gangs operating in broad daylight on the Costa del Sol. **Gangsters' paradise** [Page 34](#) →



**On the cover**

Amid faltering displays of popular dissent against autocratic regimes around the world, our cover this week features a composite of protesters in Belarus, Myanmar and Hong Kong. Can their voices survive beneath the weight of efforts to silence them?

Photos: AFP/Getty; Kiran Ridley; EPA; Reuters



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