

TO BHMA

International edition

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How a Tsunami Was Unleashed at 17,000 Feet, Shattering Lives Below

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Tripti Lahiri, Krishna Pokharel and Emma Brown

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

RANGPO FOREST VILLAGE, India—Far from human eyes, nestled in the Himalayas at 17,000 feet, the South Lhonak Lake was growing. Late one night in October 2023, part of the shelf of rocks and ice that dammed the lake in northeast India collapsed.

What followed was part-tsunami, part-landslide.

The water that poured out of the lake picked up stones, sand and other sediment as it flowed through the rocky mountain channels, triggering a series of landslides along the way.

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TO BHMA International edition

Gerard Baker: NATO Is Dead In The Water

By Odin Linardatou

In this interview, Gerard Baker, Editor at Large of The Wall Street Journal, reflects on the growing instability in global politics. Arguing that NATO is dead in the water, Baker also examines the U.S. strategy toward Iran, suggesting it was poorly planned and executed and seems to be failing. Ultimately, he highlights a growing desire among Americans for stability, normalcy, and a reduction in political turbulence.

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Lefteris Tzortis, owner of Movie Galaxy video rental store in Exarcheia, Greece.

MICHAEL PAPANIKOLAOU

TO BHMA International edition

Why Analog Culture Is Back In Style

By Konstantinos Dedes

Late fees, shelves that must be restocked, rude customers, self-proclaimed experts in Kurosawa's filmography, blockbuster hits that drive revenue—and damaged tapes returned after careless

use. All paid for in cash, no cards accepted. These scenes come alive in one of the most talked-about video games of 2026, *Retro Rewind*. Set in a deliberately low-resolution environment—at a time

when most developers are racing toward hyper-realistic graphics—the game puts you in the shoes of a 1990s video rental store owner.

Its success, however, is no surprise. In recent years, a

clear shift from the digital to the analog world has emerged. Nostalgia, combined with a growing desire to escape an increasingly complex reality, is proving powerful.

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Greek screenwriter, director and actor Christoforos Papakaliatis and co-star Klelia Andriolatou in a scene from popular series 'Maestro in Blue', which is also a hit on Netflix.

TO BHMA International edition

Greece: From Scenic Backdrop to Global Film Powerhouse

By Maria Paravantes

A few years ago, the idea of Greece as something more than an "exotic" filming location would have seemed far-fetched. Today, the country boasts one of Europe's fastest-growing film industries, supporting thousands of professionals, showcasing Greece and Greek talent globally,

and generating revenues that help the local industry grow while bolstering the national economy.

The real story isn't that Greece has successfully established itself as a filming destination, but that it has strategically repositioned itself: attracting audiovisual investment, featuring in more international co-productions, and creating jobs across sec-

tors—spanning everything from film crews and transport to hospitality and post-production.

Greece has gone from being a beautiful backdrop to consolidating its position as a global production hub, and continues to build momentum with new policies, international partnerships, and high-profile projects.

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Why Pope Leo Is Such a Challenging Opponent for Trump

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Pontiff is more popular than the president—and is a methodical political operator



Pope Leo XIV holds a holy Mass at the Basilica of Saint Augustine in Annaba, Algeria, April 14, 2026.

GUGLIELMO MANGIAPANE/REUTERS

By Marcus Walker

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

ROME—Not since Napoleon has a political leader taken on the pope as openly as President Trump. Like Pope Pius VII, who ultimately outlasted the French emperor, Pope Leo

XIV is proving a challenging opponent for the president.

The mild-mannered pontiff from Chicago is facing the biggest test of his papacy in a fight with Trump over the Iran war—and he isn't folding. So far, it is Trump—and not Leo—who has taken criticism from Roman Catholics in the

U.S. and elsewhere over their public spat.

Trump accused Leo of catering to the left and posted an AI-generated image on Truth Social showing himself with Christ-like robes and healing powers, which offended the U.S. religious right. He later deleted the post.

Meanwhile, Leo has said he isn't afraid of Trump and will continue to speak out against the war in Iran.

One of Trump's challenges in dealing with Leo is that the pope isn't a solo act like his predecessor Pope Francis, making it harder to dismiss or isolate the current pontiff, said

Francesco Sisci, director of the Appia Institute, a Rome-based geopolitics think tank.

Francis was known for firing off provocative sound bites, but he sometimes alienated groups within the church—including American bishops.

Leo, by contrast, has been

building broad support within the global church for his course, which combines advocacy for peace and dialogue with a stronger emphasis on traditional Catholic doctrines.

"This guy is systematic and methodical, he is active behind the scenes, and when he speaks, it's the last step,"

Mexico Has a Major Crush on Its Top Cop

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Omar Garcia Harfuch, the square-jawed face of the anti-cartel campaign, is a national sex symbol; 'Have a baby with my wife and I'll raise him.'

By Robert P. Walzer

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

In a country long plagued by drug-linked violence, Omar Garcia Harfuch is inspiring a different kind of fixation.

The square-jawed face of Mexico's anti-cartel campaign has become an unlikely sex symbol—his manly likeness splashed on blankets, reimagined in AI-generated fantasies and recast as a caped crusader.

At street markets and online, shoppers browse "Harfuchito" dolls, life-size pillows,



OCTAVIO HERNANDEZ

flannel throws and even cakes bearing his image, depicting him either in a suit or shirtless.

He's memorialized in corridos, or Mexican folk ballads. One singer hailed him as "a man of great honor," a fearless figure turned legend after he was "plugged with lead" in a 2020 assassination attempt that killed two members of his security detail.

On TikTok, fan edits lin-

ger on his smile. "Mexico has a new crush," one video declares. Another, zooming in on his face, reads: "Just to look at you I fall in love."

The wave of adoration has accelerated alongside Garcia Harfuch's high-profile campaign against organized crime. A February operation that killed Nemesio Oseguera, known as El Mencho, leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, further boosted his popularity. The mission carried personal weight: Garcia Harfuch blamed El Mencho for the 2020 attack.

That near-death experience—and his survival—

Supporters at a campaign event for Omar Garcia Harfuch as a candidate for the government of Mexico City.

Sisci said. “Francis was a rock star, but Leo is the conductor of an orchestra.”

The growing disorder in world politics is an opportunity for the Catholic Church to repair its standing as a moral authority, which has suffered in recent decades from the long-running scandals over clerical sexual abuse, say some observers of the Vatican.

For Leo, “this is just a huge blessing,” said Sisci. “It’s wonderful for the church, all over the world, that he is the guy who can stand up to Trump.”

Leo is also considerably more popular in the U.S. than Trump, enjoying a 34 percentage point net-positive rating among registered voters, compared with a 12 percentage point net-negative rating for the president, according to a survey for NBC News in March.

White House spokeswoman Taylor Rogers said Trump had pursued policies that Catholics support, expanding religious rights, pardoning antiabortion activists and restricting medical treatments related to gender transition for minors.

“There has never been a greater president for Catholic Americans than President Trump,” Rogers said.

The public confrontation came after months of tensions between a U.S. administration that has sometimes presented its war with Iran as doing God’s work, and an American pope who is seeking to rebuild the Catholic Church’s moral authority in a war-torn world.

The clash between the world’s two most prominent Americans began over Trump’s hard-line immigration policies. It has escalated this year over the president’s growing use of military force—from Venezuela to Iran.



Pope Leo XIV visits the archaeological site of Hippo Regius in Annaba, Algeria, April 14, 2026.

A drawn-out quarrel between the White House and the Vatican carries risks for both sides. But more of the risk is with Trump, say analysts of U.S. politics and religion.

The attack on the pope is alienating Catholic voters, who played a big part in his 2024 election victory, said the Rev. Robert Sirico, a Catholic priest and co-founder of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty in Grand Rapids, Mich.

“He’s put some of his strongest supporters in a very awkward position,” said Sirico, a self-declared conservative.

Said Ryan Burge, a political scientist at Washington University in St. Louis and a former Baptist pastor: “You’re seeing a lot of people who voted for Trump are reacting less favorably in the last couple of days, asking ‘why are you picking a fight with our pope.’”

Catholics, who make up around one-fifth of voters, used to split about evenly in U.S. presidential elections, but around 56% of them backed Trump in the last



Screenshot from Donald Trump's Truth social. The above post has since been deleted, due to ongoing criticism.

presidential election, said Burge, compared with 42% who supported Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris.

Millions of Catholic voters still support Trump, but the level has slipped in recent months. A survey for Fox News in March found that 52% of Catholics disapprove of Trump’s performance.

To be sure, some conservative Catholics remain loyal to Trump. Robert “Bob” Unanue, the former CEO of Goya Foods who has been vocal about his Catholic faith and ardent support of the president, said Trump had a record of “saving and protecting life around the world” and had stood up for Iranian protesters killed by their government.

“If President Trump did not step in, the bloodbath would be even greater,” Unanue said in an email. “As the leader of the free world, he is the only person alive with the courage to stand up to protect and value life.”

Raids on immigrants by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which have particularly affected Latino Catholics, are one source

of disaffection. Leo and U.S. bishops have criticized the ICE crackdown for violating people’s dignity, which the White House has denied.

The advocacy group CatholicVote, which helped mobilize support for Trump in 2024, warned in February that “widespread distrust” of ICE among Catholics could cost the Republicans in mid-term elections in November.

Trump isn’t backing down. On Tuesday, he repeated his criticism of the pope, telling Italian newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera* that Leo “shouldn’t talk about war, because he has no idea what’s happening” with Iran.

Vice President JD Vance, a Catholic who has expressed polite disagreement with the Vatican over immigration and foreign policy, took a less-confrontational approach than Trump on Monday, telling Fox News that occasional differences of opinion were natural. Still, the pope should keep to his core business, he said.

“I certainly think that in some cases it would be best for the Vatican to stick to matters of morality, stick to matters of what’s going on in the Catholic Church, and let the President of the United States stick to dictating public policy,” Vance said.

But Catholics say their faith has implications for public policy, from abortion to poverty to war and peace—and that these can be uncomfortable for all political parties.

“How to live the gospel in the real world?” Cardinal Michael Czerny, a senior Vatican official, said in a recent interview. “That is inevitably political. The role of the church hierarchy is to form people’s consciousness as much as possible in line with the gospel. When necessary we have to speak truth to power.”

helped cement a folk-hero image now spilling into pop culture. His thousands of online fans call him Mexico’s new “papacito,” or “papuch,” variations on “hottie” or “daddy.”

The phenomenon is striking even in a country accustomed to larger-than-life public figures. Politicians, from the early 20th century dictator Porfirio Díaz to the previous President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, have long shared cultural space with entertainers. García Harfuch’s rise blurs the line further—melding law enforcement, celebrity and fantasy into a single persona.

“What we’re seeing is the making of an icon, fueled by aesthetic appeal, cultural context and a public craving for security amid widespread violence,” said Nelson Arteaga Botello, a professor at the Lat-

in American Faculty of Social Sciences.

Oscar Balmen, a journalist and analyst specializing in crime and security in Mexico, said García Harfuch’s heroic image has even begun to shift underworld culture. Merchandise bearing his likeness is displacing traditional narco-themed goods—featuring El Chapo, marijuana and other drug motifs—in Tepito, a sprawling Mexico City market long associated with organized crime.

People close to García Harfuch say he is uncomfortable with his sex-symbol image. They note that it sprang up spontaneously and that he and his staff don’t actively cultivate it, though they recognize its political value and don’t discourage it. He is approachable, smiles easily, and is willing to take photos, reinforcing his appeal.



Omar García Harfuch, who runs for a seat at the Senate, participates in a political rally in Gustavo A. Madero municipality in Mexico City.

García Harfuch’s mother, María Sorté, says her son is grounded, humble and committed to public service, aware that attention to his looks is fleeting. She is amused by the memes and viral videos, particularly one in which a man yells, “Harfuch! Have

a baby with my wife and I’ll raise him.”

“That one really cracks me up,” said Sorté, a famous Mexican actress.

García Harfuch isn’t the only politician in Mexico who inspires romantic ardor. Nuevo León Gov. Samuel García, known as “the most handsome governor in Mexico,” has also appeared on merchandise, and former President Enrique Peña Nieto was admired as a hunk before leaving office in a cloud of controversy.

Looks aside, García Harfuch is one of Mexico’s most popular public figures.

“People see him as effective, clean and tough,” Balmen said. In a field often tainted by corruption allegations, García Harfuch stands out.

The cultural momentum appears to be translating into political capital. Polls

show García Harfuch as a top contender in Mexico’s 2030 presidential race, though it’s unclear if he would run. He previously won the primary for Mexico City mayor, but didn’t take the role.

Now 44, the Cuernavaca-born official built his reputation as Mexico City’s police chief from 2019 to 2023 under then-Mayor—now president—Claudia Sheinbaum, overseeing a period marked by falling homicide rates and a crackdown on corruption within the force. He was later elevated to national security chief after she became president.

García Harfuch’s résumé—and lineage—add to the mystique. His father led the once-dominant Institutional Revolutionary Party, while his mother is a household name in Mexico. His grandfather, a general, was linked to the

1968 Tlatelolco massacre, a dark chapter in Mexico’s history.

That mix of political pedigree, personal drama and cinematic backstory has helped transform García Harfuch into something more than a technocratic security chief. He has become a symbol of order in a country where insecurity remains stubbornly entrenched. His looks haven’t hurt, either.

América Peraza, a florist in Mexico City, gushes over García Harfuch. She appreciates that he posts videos with his dogs—including a Labrador and shepherds—on social media, which she views as evidence of his sensitivity.

“I get emotional when I see him, but when he speaks I’m so stunned I barely hear what he says,” Peraza said. “I’m going to ask you to give him a hug and a kiss from me when you see him.”



KRISHNA PODHAREL/WSJ

Dharmendra Prasad lost his family in the flood.

How a Tsunami Was Unleashed at 17,000 Feet, Shattering Lives Below

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

When a lake born from a melting Himalayan glacier burst, a wall of water tore through villages below

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In one town, the slurry knocked out a hydropower project, adding even more water to the deluge as it joined the Teesta, a Himalayan river known for its sinewy twists and turns.

Sometime after 2 a.m., Dharmendra Prasad, a 37-year-old taxi driver living far below the lake in the town of Rangpo Forest, awoke to a commotion, as townspeople desperately scrambled to get to higher ground.

Prasad bundled his 23-year-old wife, Priyanka Devi, who was due to deliver their second child, and his 5-year-old son, into his SUV. He then went to get his father, but couldn't find him. He ran back to the car, but as he was about to jump in a wave of water hit him and he fell.

"When I looked around, neither my car nor my wife and child were there," he said. "Somehow I managed to get out of the water and was shouting, 'Save us, save us.' But at the time, everyone was busy trying to save their own families."

Shanti Rai, 45, runs a volunteer rescue group that helped save people stuck on rooftops and clinging to trees, and pulled bodies from the Teesta.

"I used to wonder where tears come from endlessly

when we are sad," said Rai, sitting at the riverside restaurant she built on the highway to Rangpo. "Looking at the river, I wondered: 'Where is so much water coming from? Where in the mountains is there so much water?'"

As warmer global temperatures melt polar ice, ocean waters are rising, posing a threat to island nations and coastal communities. A parallel danger lurks in the Himalayas and other high mountain areas like the Andes, where melting glaciers have created thousands of new lakes.

Between 1990 and 2018, the volume of the world's glacial lakes expanded by nearly 50%, according to the first global survey of these lakes. It was led by Daniel Shugar, a geomorphologist at the University of Calgary in Canada, and is based on an analysis of a quarter of a million NASA satellite images. It showed that the amount of water the lakes have added was about double the volume of Italy's Lake Como.

In the 20th century, several catastrophic glacial lake outbursts took place, including a 1941 incident in Peru that killed at least 1,800 people.

In the Himalayas, which span Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan and China, the impact of a lake burst can be particularly destructive. These lakes are often located at high altitudes, sitting

South Lhonak Lake, 1990-2024



Source: NASA/USGS (satellite images)

above river systems that help channel burst waters far downhill. At the same time, countries have added new hydropower and other infrastructure below them.

In 2024, a glacial lake in Nepal burst, cascading into another lake that also burst, washing away Thame, the hometown of Tenzing Norgay, who, alongside Edmund Hillary, achieved the first recorded summit of Mount Everest.

A study of about 2,400 large Himalayan glacial lakes by India's space agency found that about 600 of them had more than doubled in size between 1984 and 2023.

India's tiny state of Sikkim is a particular hot spot

for glacial lakes, with at least 16 deemed by authorities to be of high risk of bursting.

Less than three weeks before it burst, Indian and Swiss disaster experts journeyed to South Lhonak Lake to put up a weather monitoring station, the first step toward installing an early warning system.

Mozart Maxon, then a consultant for India's National Disaster Management Authority, was awed when he saw the lake for the first time.

"It was a beautiful monster—a massive lake," he said. "We never thought it would come down [so soon], but we had a feeling it would come down at some point."

These lakes are prone

to failing because they are precariously dammed by walls made of frozen earth, rocks and ice created by the movement of a glacier. Rising temperatures are making these walls, called moraines, increasingly unstable.

"The ice, the frozen material, basically it's kind of...a glue," said Ashim Sattar, an assistant professor at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar, who led research examining the South Lhonak Lake burst. "When it melts...the strength of that material will be lost."

Apart from a moraine collapsing, an avalanche or an unusual amount of rainfall can destabilize a lake. Other times, the immediate trigger

In 1985, Nepal's Dig Tsho lake, in the Everest region, burst after part of a hanging glacier fell into it, destroying houses and infrastructure below. It helped catalyze scientific interest in Himalayan glacial lakes.

About two decades ago, the study of glacial lakes was boosted with high-resolution satellite imagery, and scientists began analyzing time-series data, said Umesh Haritashya, a professor of geosciences and sustainability at the University of Dayton, Ohio.

Scientists built out a global inventory of glaciers and measured lakes forming around them.

"There were tiny lakes

that started collapsing, coalescing and becoming one big, larger lake," said Haritashya. "And then there were a couple of large incidents that brought to the forefront that these lakes are really dangerous lakes."

South Lhonak Lake was first captured by a covert CIA satellite surveillance program designed to focus on the Soviet bloc. In 1962, the program spotted a small wedge of lake forming on the eastern side of the Lhonak glacier. Over the next six decades, as the glacier retreated, the wedge expanded into a long finger, and the size of the lake grew twelvefold.

When part of its moraine slid into the lake a little after 10 p.m. on the night of Oct. 3, 2023, seismic monitors picked up the collapse. Strong waves broke through another part of the lake's wall and about half the lake's water gushed out, Sattar and his co-authors estimated in a research paper in the journal *Science*.

The flood triggered multiple landslides and picked up debris. The volume of debris it absorbed was five times greater than the volume of water alone.

"The water comes out in very fast movements, with a high velocity, and it scrapes away all these materials" from the valley, said Sattar, creating a "hyper-concentrated" flood that is savage in its power.

Seeing Queen Elizabeth II as the Fashion Influencer of Her Time

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

A Buckingham Palace show is the largest-ever exhibition of clothing worn by the monarch

By James T. Areddy

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II cultivated the style of a fashion icon and dressed according to a mantra: "I have to be seen to be believed."

Over many decades, the queen in her public

appearances maintained a silhouette of practicality over trend, usually a structured jacket and matching hat, along with Anello & Davide calf leather loafers. As armor, Elizabeth slung a Launer handbag over her forearm.

Her regality is on display in "Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life in Style," the largest-ever exhibition of clothing worn by the monarch, who died at age 96 in September 2022. The Buckingham Palace show features outfits she wore throughout each stage of her life.



Elizabeth's daywear of utilitarian elegance spanned every color of the rainbow.



Above are outfits Elizabeth wore to the 1960 wedding of her sister, Princess Margaret. She entered ahead of her son Charles, now king, and the Queen mother.

See the dress the 27-year-old Elizabeth wore at her coronation in 1953. In her formalwear, Elizabeth favored elaborate embroidery of satin, lace, and silk that incorporated pearls, crystals and sequins. Elizabeth was a quiet fashion influencer and supporter of British couture.

TOBY MEVILL/REUTERS

TOBY MEVILL/REUTERS

BPA

TO BHMA International edition

Why Analog Culture Is Back In Style

From video rental stores to vinyl records and film photography, a new wave of nostalgia—driven largely by younger generations—is reshaping how we consume media in a hyper-digital world

Continued from Page One

Even the sound of a DVD sliding into a player now feels oddly comforting. While DVDs are technically digital, they are considered outdated in an era dominated by streaming platforms like Netflix. They are tangible—you can feel their weight, store them in cases, and admire the artwork on their covers.

The power of human connection

Lefteris Tzortzis, owner of the Movie Galaxy video rental store in Exarcheia—a central Athens neighborhood known for its strong artistic and student community—has been living the Retro Rewind experience in real life since 2006.

He continues to defend what now feels like a rare, authentic ritual: watching a film recommended by an expert. In this case, the expert is the store owner himself, whose knowledge builds a relationship of trust with customers.

“Here, there is human contact and social interaction. People need that. You can’t talk to a platform,” he tells *TO BHMA*.

With more than 50,000 titles, Tzortzis has witnessed both the golden age of video rental stores and their de-

cline during Greece’s economic crisis, when shops shut down one after another. Piracy, the rise of streaming platforms, and the COVID-19 pandemic also dealt heavy blows.

Today, his store is one of the few still operating in

‘Here, there is human contact and social interaction. People need that. You can’t talk to a platform’

Lefteris Tzortzis,
Movie Galaxy store
owner

Greece. “The area helped me—there’s a strong artistic scene and people care about films. There are also many students. I get new registrations all the time. People are tired of all this information. Many tell me they spend an hour browsing platforms and end up watching nothing,” he says.

The comfort of the past

Digital fatigue is becoming increasingly evident, especially among younger people who grew up almost entirely immersed in new technologies. For them, the past holds a particular allure.

Angelos Kyrouis, who spent 17 years working in a record store and now operates online, points to a clear resurgence in vinyl records.

“In Greece, the first strong signs of vinyl’s revival appeared around 2019,” he says. “But it’s a global phe-

‘The security of the past will always have stronger commercial appeal.’

Angelos Kyrouis,
record store
owner

nomenon. The new audience is mainly women. Many people, according to studies I’ve seen, buy records without even owning a turntable. They buy them because they’re popular, fashionable, or simply intriguing. There’s a tactile element—they hold them. It excites them more than a digital platform.”

Rising demand, however, has driven up prices. “If this continues, vinyl will become a luxury,” Kyrouis warns. In Greece, the most popular genres remain pop

and rock—the “classic catalog,” as he puts it—meaning bands like The Beatles and Led Zeppelin dominate. “The security of the past will always have stronger commercial appeal.”

Inside the darkroom

Our lives are now captured through the lenses of ultra-modern smartphones, often rivaling professional equipment. Yet, these devices lack something older analog cameras still offer—especially to younger generations: anticipation.

Was the shot good or not? To find out, you must step into a photography studio’s darkroom.

Generation Z—those born between 1997 and

2012—feels nostalgic for a past they never lived. They carry film rolls, prefer prints over instant edits, and embrace the slower process.

As Stratos Neslechanidis, owner of a specialized photography store in Omonia (central Athens), explains: “People are fed up with screens. The rise of film is real.”

Since opening his shop in 2003, he has witnessed three distinct phases: the decline of film, the rise of digital, and now the return of analog. “There’s nostalgia for the old. Film is relatively expensive, considering everyone can take photos on their phone. But at the same time, it has a romantic quality. That’s what the new generation is looking for.”

Initially, about five years ago, he and others in the industry thought it was just a passing trend. “There was a serious shortage, and we were all searching for film. Gradually, major companies started investing in this sector, and we realized we had to take it seriously.”

Today, in 2026, his shop is frequented by people aged 18 to 25, trying to bridge past and present through vintage aesthetics. “Many ask me to digitize their film photos so they can upload them to Instagram. It helps—and it’s true,” he says.

In a world dominated by speed and endless choice, the slow, tangible, and imperfect nature of analog life is no longer outdated—it’s becoming desirable again.



The interior of Movie Galaxy video rental store.

Continued from Page One

In-house productions are now competing on the world stage, earning nominations and even wins at the Oscars, Golden Globes, and Cannes Film Festival. Greece is set to host the European Film Awards in Athens next year, while its Hollywood presence remains strong, with Brad Pitt in Greece this month filming psychological thriller "The Riders".

Industry expansion is a top priority with collaboration between the Hellenic Film and Audiovisual Center and Netflix. In addition, a broader Memorandum of Understanding signed by Tourism Minister Olga Kefalogianni, the Greek National Tourism Organization, Netflix, and Elise Jalladeau of the Thessaloniki International Film Festival, which celebrated its 66th edition in 2026, seeks to strengthen the link between Greek culture, cinema, and tourism.

At the same time, international productions continue to spotlight the country's diverse locations, from Crete, Mykonos and Santorini to Meteora, Corfu and Kefalonia, while industry buzz includes reports of a potential Greece-set storyline in the 6th season of "Emily in Paris", reflecting how Greece is increasingly featured in both major film productions and high-end television.

A vision over a decade in the making

The seeds of this impressive transformation were planted more than 10 years ago, when persistent industry stakeholders envisioned a multi-layered film industry that would bring Greek talent into the spotlight.

The journey has been rocky, but it's paying off. A key catalyst has been the Hellenic Film and Audiovisual Center (HFAC – Creative Greece), known locally as EKKOMED. This entity, formed in 2024 through the merger of the Greek Film Center and the National Center for Audiovisual Media and Communication, operates under the Culture Ministry and oversees Greece's film and audiovisual policy.

TO BHMA International Edition spoke with Leonidas Christopoulos, President and CEO of EKKOMED, about the growth of the Greek film industry, its prospects, and the challenges it faces.

More than a filming location

Greece has made remarkable strides in attracting international productions through promotion, incentives, and simplified procedures. But how does EKKOMED balance positioning Greece as a competitive filming destination with also strengthening its identity as a producer of



Greece: From Scenic Backdrop to Global Film Powerhouse

Greece has gone from a filming location to an emerging production hub. *TO BHMA International Edition* speaks with EKKOMED President and CEO Leonidas Christopoulos about how the country is building a global ecosystem for creative storytelling

original, internationally-relevant films and series?

"Attracting international producers and strengthening Greek creation are not conflicting goals; they are complementary pillars of the same strategy," explains Christopoulos.

"EKKOMED works to position Greece as both an attractive destination for film and media production and a hub for developing original creative content. International productions bring investment, know-how, and opportunities for Greek crews. Meanwhile, support tools, co-productions, and collaborations create conditions for Greek stories to reach wider international audiences."

Economic impact

The economic benefits of Greece's film growth are un-

deniable, but Christopoulos stresses that success is measured in more than numbers.

"Our goal is for Greece to function not only as a filming location, but as a complete creative content ecosystem. International productions offer Greek professionals the chance to collaborate with global studios, learning high production standards that elevate domestic projects," Christopoulos explains.

"Long-term success depends on establishing a stable production ecosystem with specialized personnel, modern infrastructure, and the ability to produce projects with a global perspective."

This mutually beneficial system attracts international productions that raise technical standards as local crews gain experience that makes them "export-ready". He goes

on to add that profits from these projects can then be re-invested in Greek-led films and series, helping domestic creators gain credibility and access to co-production networks.

The role of financial incentives

In a hyper-competitive global market, financial incentives are crucial. Greece's cash rebate system has not only helped attract productions, it also has a multiplier effect few see: when international companies invest locally, they support employment and contribute to cultural value.

Greece's cash rebate system has attracted significant attention. While it has supported the growth of the Greek film industry and kept funds circulating, reported issues have raised concerns

about transparency.

"There's no doubt that financial tools like cash rebates and co-production schemes have driven growth," says Christopoulos. "The challenge now is maintaining competitive incentives while ensuring they are strategically targeted and sustainable. Our goal is to streamline procedures, enhance transparency, and link incentives to the development of domestic creative talent. Incentives are a tool for developing content, not just attracting filming," he tells *TO BHMA International Edition*.

Greek content on the world stage

In recent years, Greek cinema has gained significant recognition, with auteurs like Yorgos Lanthimos and acclaimed documentary filmmakers making waves. Greek

series on platforms like Netflix are now reaching global audiences.

"The next step is strengthening international distribution and market access," Christopoulos tells *TO BHMA International Edition*.

"This means more co-productions, partnerships with global distributors, and developing projects with international appeal from the outset. EKKOMED supports premieres at international festivals and partners with platforms like Netflix to ensure Greek content travels and reached new audiences."

Building infrastructure and human capital

As production activity grows, Greece faces challenges: the need for modern studios, post-production infrastructure, and skilled crews. EKKOMED is collaborating with government bodies, universities, and the private sector to strengthen investment and create training programs tailored to market needs.

"Developing the industry requires a parallel growth in infrastructure and human capital," says Christopoulos. Another priority is decentralization. "Greece's geographical and cultural diversity is a significant advantage. Regional film offices facilitate productions, connect local authorities with the industry, and create opportunities for local economies." Currently, offices operate in Athens and the Attica Region, the North Aegean, Western Greece, Western Macedonia, Epirus, Thessaly, Central Macedonia, the Peloponnese, and Crete.

"The goal is a balanced national film economy, where the benefits of production activity are spread throughout the country." He is quick to point out that this will require active regional participation in the design of financial incentives and supporting productions.

Lights, Camera... Greece!

Looking ahead, Christopoulos defines success not just by the number of productions but by the development of a mature, sustainable, and internationally recognizable content creation ecosystem.

Gone are the days when Greece was just a pretty face. Today, it is a thriving ecosystem, supporting tourism, exporting Greek culture, and creating highly trained professionals that can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with their global peers.

"Over the coming decade, we aim to see a rise in international co-productions with Greek creative input, more Greek films and series with strong international distribution, and an increasingly dynamic network of infrastructure, professionals, and creators contributing to both cultural extroversion and economic development."



Filming in action in Thessaloniki featuring a classic Plymouth Barracuda during production of action-thriller 'The Enforcer' starring Antonio Banderas.

Gerard Baker: NATO Is Dead In The Water

“The United States did not adequately consider the consequences of striking Iran. I believe this is why the United States finds itself in the mess it’s in right now”

Continued from Page One

You stated in a recent podcast that NATO was already ‘dead in the water.’ Do you think recent developments confirm that assessment?

NATO was dead—poisoned, shot and drowned like Rasputin. That’s what Trump did: he stabbed or poisoned NATO. He’s now proceeding to drown it in the Atlantic Ocean.

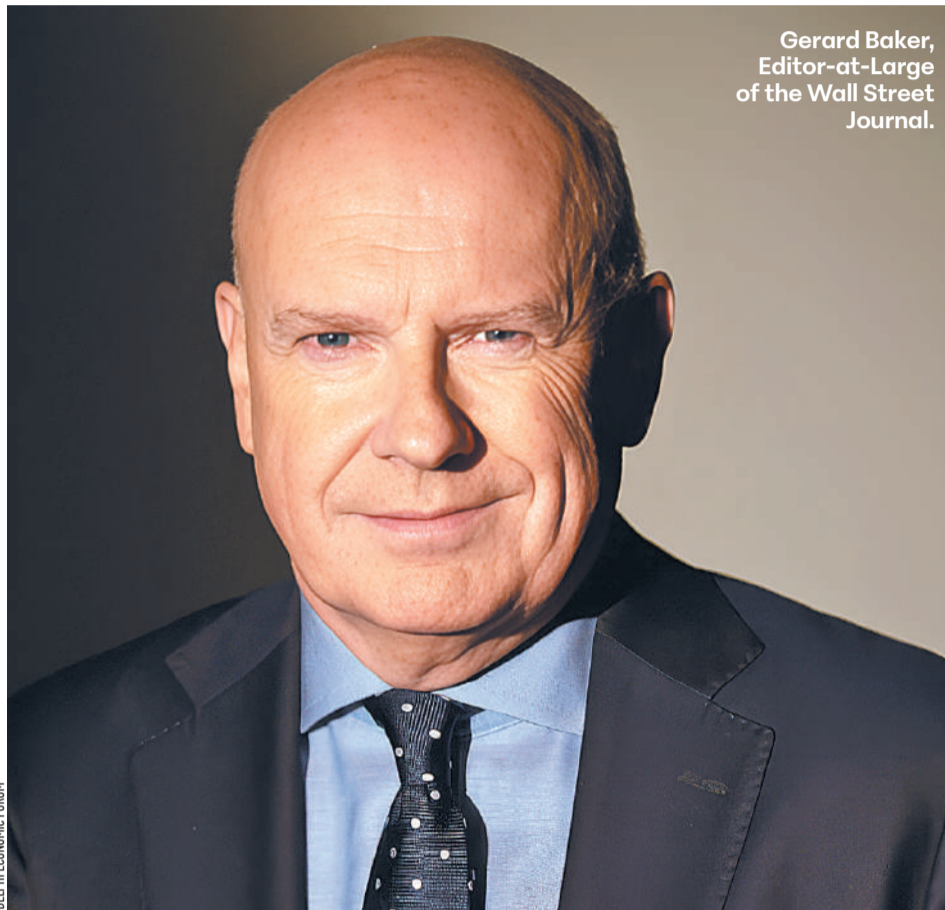
Given what’s happening now with Iran and the wider Middle East, do you think there’s a clear logic behind current developments?

I think the logic behind what the United States was trying to do in Iran was perfectly reasonable. I mean, the United States has been under attack from Iran, directly and indirectly, for 47 years.

The Iranian Revolution in ‘79 was literally born in a fit of anti-American rage. Since then, Iran has been not only a rhetorical enemy, but also an actual enemy, of the United States. Many, many Americans have died at the hands of Iranian or Iranian-backed terrorists.

What’s more, we still strongly believe they are developing a nuclear capability. That would be a nightmare, a disaster for the region. Of course, Netanyahu also played a role, as we know. He was important. But Trump doesn’t really do what other people tell him to do—he’s very much his own man. And I think he was helped by many—Netanyahu among them—to believe that this was the right thing to do. I think the problem with what we have now in Iran is that it wasn’t properly planned; they didn’t really know what they were trying to do. I think Trump really believed that a massive bombing campaign that took out the Ayatollah would lead to the collapse of the regime. And I think Netanyahu played a crucial role in persuading him of that.

Unfortunately, the U.S. never really matched the resources to the task. Nor did they think through the consequences of what would happen if they struck Iran—how Iran would respond, and what could be done to stop the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.



Gerard Baker,
Editor-at-Large
of the Wall Street
Journal.

So, it was badly conceived, badly planned and now badly executed. I think that’s why the United States is in the mess it’s in right now.

You recently wrote about the idea of ‘normalcy’ and argued that neither Donald Trump nor Joe Biden has been able to deliver it. What do you mean by ‘normalcy,’ and why do you think it has been so difficult to achieve?

This is a very turbulent period in American politics, and it has been that way for the

last 20 years or so. I think the 21st century has been more challenging than a lot of people thought it would be. We’ve had a major financial crisis. We’ve had wars that the United States has not really won. Then, you know, we had the COVID crisis. And this period of abnormality in American life has been destabilizing. As a result, I think there’s a hunger among Americans for a period of calm, a period of normality with less turbulence.

In 2020, I think Americans just wanted a period almost boring ordinariness, without this drama/melo-

drama continually playing out. And so they voted for Joe Biden, who looked like the most boring and ordinary person—someone who’d been around in politics for 50 years, and not for Donald Trump.

What happened then was that, instead of presiding over a period of boring normality, Biden proceeded to interpret his election victory as a vote for a kind of revolution, for a political revolution. So, we got an open-border immigration policy and this radical progressive ideology on things like sexual identity and gender.

We had a massive

spending program, a huge expansion in government spending and a huge expansion of the deficit, because Biden interpreted that victory as an opportunity, as a mandate, for revolution. But that wasn’t what the people had voted for.

We had this crazy woke ideological revolution. And to cap it all off, Biden was getting increasingly senile and incapable as his term neared its end. And people were like, “God, that’s not what I voted for. I wanted normality!” Come 2024, then, despite all his own personal eccentricities, Trump represented a kind of normality. But when Trump comes in, he interprets his victory as a mandate to do all the crazy things he’s been doing—whether that be starting foreign wars, alienating our allies by claiming he’s going to invade Greenland, or pursuing his incredibly ruinous lawfare agenda domestically. Needless to say, his approval ratings are now in the basement.

So, while people still want a period of calm normality and ordinary politics, they keep getting these wild periods of extremism. Meaning that, with the midterm elections coming up and the presidential election after that, we can expect a candidate to emerge who says “Look, I’m not going to be a radical progressive with those crazy ideas, and I’m not going to be Donald Trump with his crazy ideas. I’m going to revert to normality, to normalcy”. And I think that candidate will probably win.

Do you see the trends we’ve been discussing in relation to the United States also emerging in Europe? Are we witnessing a broader shift in voter behavior, or is it too early to say? Are the days of populist leaders truly coming to an end, or do they still have the power to disrupt?

I think what Orban represented initially, when he was first elected two decades ago, was a counterpoint to the sort of progressive elites that control European institutions, and in some respects, through this, also control numerous American institutions in the media, academia, and permanent government.

The mindset of these elites seems to be that immigration is fine, that we shouldn’t preserve or defend European (in the sense of traditional Christian, Judeo-Christian, ultra-Christian values). They seem to be obsessed with climate change and think that’s the only thing that matters. I think all that stuff has been ruinous for Europe, and I think Orban and others represented a welcome challenge to that.

Unfortunately, I think Orban became increasingly corrupt and, unfortunately, far too sympathetic towards Vladimir Putin in Russia for my taste. Which is why I’m quite happy to see him defeated.

I think populist parties that oppose the kind of things I’ve talked about are going to continue to do well, partly—once again—because people are fed up with open border and climate policies and the kind of woke ideology that seems so dominant in the mindset of the European elites.

And also because the economies of countries like France and Germany are poor, and the governments that run those economies are going to suffer. So don’t misunderstand my call for a return to normalcy as a wish to return to the great days when Brussels was all powerful in Europe or Barack Obama was president here. I don’t support that idea at all. I think people do need to challenge their leaders, but that they need intelligent, sensible, sane leaders to do it. And those seem a little thin on the ground right now.



A vessel transferring LPG at a port after transiting the Strait of Hormuz amid supply disruptions linked to the U.S.-Israeli conflict with Iran in Mumbai, India, April 1, 2026.