



Washington Insider

M A G A Z I N E



US to reach debt ceiling by October 18th, defaulting for the first time in history

By Hannah Ochocki

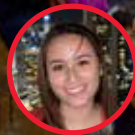
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OUR TEAM



Ryan Day



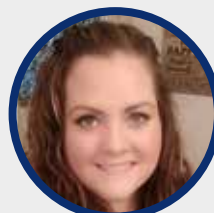
Claire Healy



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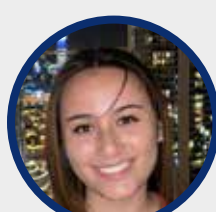
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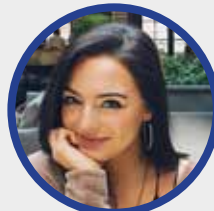
Seb Jenkins



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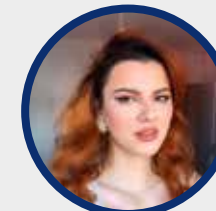
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ABOUT US

Transatlantic Today delighted to present the Washington Insider Magazine, a product that we present to our readers in Washington DC and beyond. Our magazine publishes unique and independent coverage on transatlantic relations with a Washington perspective. Transatlantic Today covers policymaking, politics and business related to the transatlantic relationship.

Our magazine strives to become a key news analysis source for news on politics and policymakers in the US with particular focus on DC. Our coverage is designed with non-partisan journalism and real-time tools create, inform and engage a those seeking timely and concise news.

We believe in providing our audience with independent journalism throughout expert writers, ana-

lysts and journalists. Our culture is distinguished by unwavering grit, honesty, and a focus on innovation.

Our work is designed by relentless grit, integrity and a prioritization of urgent and newsworthy topics.

In both of our website and and this magazine we cover topics about Diplomacy, Security, Defence, Counter Terrorism, foreign policy and international affairs. Indeed our reporting, OPeds, interviews with various stakeholders provide unique insights and analysis as well as the tools to arm you with the intel you need to make informed decisions.

Here I wish to commend.

Editorial Team

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Biden continues to defend withdrawal from Afghanistan amidst political storm



Biden outlines shift in US diplomatic strategy to UN General Assembly



The Iran Nuclear Deal v. the Saudi Nuclear Deal: An Analysis

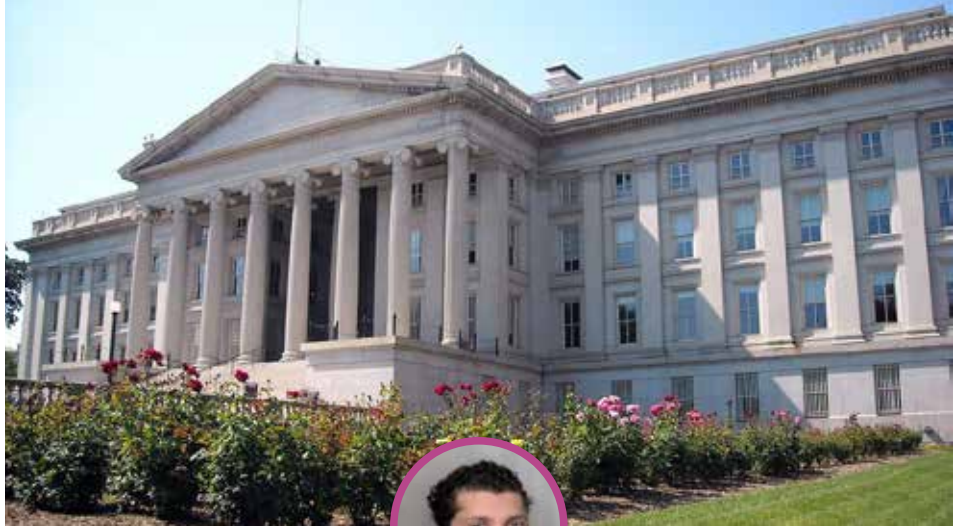
US treasury coffers almost empty with billions missing from wealthy's unpaid taxes

Although the US treasury has operated under huge amounts of debt for decades, it has consistently been bailed out before things became unmanageable with a series of bills that allow extra borrowing.

However, it seems the coffers are very close to being empty and Washington is yet to find a political solution. Washington ICAP chief economist Lou Crandall has said that as things stand, the Treasury will run out of money by October 22nd.

US Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen has said she estimates that deadline to be later this month also and has warned of the catastrophic global effects, were the US forced to default on debt. She claimed it would cause "serious harm to business and consumer confidence, raise short-term borrowing costs for taxpayers, and negatively impact the credit rating of the United States" adding "it would be particularly irresponsible to put the full faith and credit of the United States at risk"

Things have come so close to the edge because of reluctance by Re-



publican lawmakers to raise the borrowing limit, which has been a consistent sticking point in Capitol Hill for years. Some claim the impasses the disagreement regularly creates are just political theatre, as they're always ultimately resolved. Yet this is the latest in the day the US has come before finding a passable solution. Whilst it is typically passed as part of wider legislative economic and budgetary packages, the possibility is being considered of passing a stand-alone bill to ensure the US doesn't slide into disastrous territory.

The deputy assist secretary for economic policy at the Treasury Natasha Sarin has said the problem is linked to the endemic tax dodging by America's wealthiest. According to her, more than \$160 billion is missed out on every year because the wealthiest 1% do not pay their taxes. She said "These unpaid taxes mean policymakers must choose between rising deficits, lower spending on important priorities, or further tax increase to compensate for lost revenue – which will only be borne by compliant taxpayers."

Biden and UK Prime Minister Johnson discuss Afghan situation as withdrawal sparks criticism in both countries

by Claire Healy

U.S. President Joe Biden held a call with U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Aug. 17 to discuss recent developments in Afghanistan.



This is the president's first call with a foreign leader following the Taliban's takeover of Kabul on Aug. 15. U.K. officials have been irritated by the U.S. role in the crisis, the New York Times has reported. Biden and Johnson have also agreed to convene a virtual summit next week for the Group of Seven



(G7) leading industrialized nations to discuss Afghanistan.

According to a White House statement, the two leaders talked about the need for continued close coordination among allies and ways to provide humanitarian assistance for asylum seekers as well as other vulnerable Afghans. London said the prime minister stressed the importance of not losing gains made in the country, of protecting the U.K. against any threat of terrorism and of supporting the people of Afghanistan.

"The leaders welcomed U.S. and U.K. cooperation in recent days to help evacuate our nationals, current and former staff, and others from Afghanistan," a statement from Downing Street in London announced. "They resolved to continue working closely together on this in the days and weeks ahead to allow as many people as possible to leave the country."

The abrupt and chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan is quickly spiraling into a humanitarian crisis. The world has watched – in one incident – Afghans scrambling to leave the country fall from planes this past week, and more recently, the Taliban shoot and beat protesters on Aug. 18, resulting in the death of at least two of them.

While the crisis unfolds, some vet-

erans and policymakers in the U.S.'s closest ally watch with rising embitterment, as criticism builds across Britain. Some are noting a unilateralism from Biden that for many is reminiscent of the "America first" policy championed by Trump, generating concern about the U.S.'s reliability in foreign policy.

"I hope 'America First' hasn't become 'America Alone,'" Tom Tugendhat, a veteran and Conservative Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, told the New York Times.

"The lesson for the U.K. is that interdependence must not become overreliance. We are better partners to others if we have options and can help shape decisions."

The U.K. had the second largest number of foreign troops in Afghanistan throughout the war, and the third highest casualty rate, following Afghanistan and the United States. According to Britain's Defense Secretary, Ben Wallace, the Western ally sought ways to stay in Afghanistan after U.S. withdrawal, but found no support.

Criticism is also building in the U.S., as Biden faces growing backlash in Congress.

"In implementing this flawed plan, I am disappointed that the Biden ad-

ministration clearly did not accurately assess the implications of a rapid U.S. withdrawal," Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said in an Aug. 17 statement. "We are now witnessing the horrifying results of many years of policy and intelligence failures."

Lately, Johnson's tone was closer to that of Biden, as he called the U.S. withdrawal a "long-predicted and well-trailed step."

He praised the bravery of Afghan, British and U.S. troops, and announced the U.K. would be committed to relocating 5,000 Afghans this year in addition to those who had worked directly with the U.K.

"I really think it is an illusion to believe that there is appetite amongst any of our partners for a continued military presence or for a military solution imposed by NATO in Afghanistan," Johnson said.

"The idea ended with the combat mission in 2014 and I do not believe that today deploying tens of thousands of British troops to fight the Taliban is an option ... We must deal with the world as it is, accepting what we have achieved and what we have not achieved."

US judge orders Biden to bring back Trump-era 'Remain in Mexico' program

by Ryan Day

A U.S. federal judge on Aug. 13 ordered President Joe Biden's administration to re-implement a policy initiated by his predecessor, Donald Trump, which requires immigrants seeking asylum to remain on the Mexican side of the border during their application process.

U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, a Trump administration appointee based in Amarillo, Texas, said that the Biden administration has "failed to consider several critical factors" before ending the program, Axios reports.



The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) decision under Biden reversed the previous administration's decision to keep asylum-seekers attempting to enter U.S. soil on the Mexican side of the state border.

Trump's decision in early 2019 had kept potential immigrants from entering. Critics said the practice was inhumane because conditions are relatively worse than on the U.S. side.

"Defenders of the policy said it reduced pressure on overburdened immigration officials," Reuters reported. "Human rights groups said it violated due process and exposed destitute refugees to the risk of kidnap, abuse and rape."

Since Trump's policy was terminated, "the number of enforcement encounters on the southwest border has skyrocketed," the judge said in a written statement, as cited by Bloomberg.

The Wall Street Journal reported that "it is not clear whether it is possi-

ble to restart the program as it would require the cooperation of the Mexican government."

Kacsmatyk has given the Biden administration a week to appeal the decision.

DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas had halted the program, known as the Migrant Protections Program (MPP) in June 2021, citing the often-dangerous conditions immigrants faced while waiting in Mexico.

The Department of Homeland Security reported that an estimated 68,000 people were returned to Mexico following their enrollment in MPP, Axios reported.

In a memo to the leaders of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency and Citizenship and Immigration Services, Mayorkas stated that "I have determined that MPP does not adequately or sustainably enhance border management in such a way as

to justify the program's extensive operational burdens and other shortfalls."

These developments come as the situation at the U.S. – Mexico border remains precarious. The U.S. CBP recorded over 180,000 migrant intercepts in May 2021, the highest recorded in over 20 years, BBC reports. The Biden administration has seen an uptick in the number of minors caught crossing the border, with an estimated 19,000 minors intercepted in March 2021 as opposed to 12,000 in March 2019. In total, the CBP reported that during the 2019 financial year (October 2018 to September 2019) an estimated 800,000 migrants were apprehended at the border. In comparison, the 2021 financial year has already passed the 2019 total, with four months still to go in the financial year. In regard to the situation, Secretary Mayorkas per a statement in March 2021 said that, "This is not new. We have experienced migration surges before – in 2019, 2014, and before then as well."

President Biden reverses Trump Administration's Affordable Care Act rules

by Reese Furlow

After implementing one of the most monumental healthcare acts of the decade with the Affordable Care Act, former President Donald Trump and his administration tried to eliminate everything it protected. Under President Biden, however, the ACA is trying to gain ground again.

Due to the constant efforts of the Trump Administration, the ACA is not like it was 10 years ago. According to Time, it has managed to get the individual mandate ruled unconstitutional, allowed plans that skirt ACA coverage requirements, slashed funds that helped people sign up for insurance, and imposed new regulations on Medicaid – such as new premiums and work requirements.

Under Biden, instead of starting from scratch, he plans to "build on the



ACA by giving Americans more choice, reducing health care costs, and making our health care system less complex to navigate."

The ACA has not only added 20 million people to its insurance, setting the record for most uninsured citizens by 2016, but it has also protected over

100 million Americans with pre-existing conditions from receiving additional costs to their insurance.

While the Trump Administration successfully got rid of some of the ACA's policies, the Biden Administration is countering that with the American Rescue Plan Act, which has lowered

healthcare costs and expanded coverage for millions of Americans through the ACA.

“More than 1.2 million Americans signed up for coverage under the law through a special enrollment period I established during this pandemic,” Biden wrote in a statement in June. “I

look forward to working with the Congress to build on this law so that the American people will continue to have access to quality and affordable health care.”

Since June, over 2.5 million Americans have signed up for coverage, according to the Associated Press. The

cost of coverage went down in April due to coronavirus assistance, allowing more people to enroll.

While the ACA is not the same as it was when it was first implemented because of the Trump Administration, President Biden is at least trying to get it back to how it was before.

The Latest: Bidens visit wounded troops at Walter Reed

by Dejan Srbinovski

By the Associated Press – President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden visited injured U.S. troops at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Thursday night.

There are 15 Marines at the hospital in Bethesda, Maryland, just outside Washington, who were wounded in an Aug. 26 suicide bombing at the Kabul airport. The attack occurred as the U.S. government was arranging evacuations of Americans, Afghans and allies before the nearly two-decade war in Afghanistan officially ended Aug. 31.

Eleven Marines were also killed in the attack, as well as one Army soldier and one Navy corpsman. Biden traveled to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware on Sunday to witness the return of their remains to U.S. soil in a solemn “dignified transfer.”

One of the wounded Marines was in critical condition. Three were in serious condition and 11 in stable condition.

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WASHINGTON — Air Force Gen. Tod Wolters, head of U.S. European Command, said Thursday that so far only one individual evacuated from Afghanistan is being retained in Germany for problems getting through security screening.

Speaking to Pentagon reporters, he said that as far as he knows, the person in custody “is not of a high threat.”

Right now, he said, about 58 indi-

viduals triggered additional security checks and processing as they arrived at the way stations in Europe, and needed additional checks. But he said he expects they will all eventually be cleared.

Afghan evacuees are being flown to several locations across the Middle East and Europe, including Germany, Italy and Spain. Wolters said 155 flights have landed in Europe, with about 38,000 people. He said they go through biometric and biographical screening when they arrive, before they are shown to their sleeping quarters. They are screened again when they leave, and again when they arrive in the U.S.

He said there have been few issues with COVID-19 cases, and most of the people requiring some type of medical attention have been pregnant women.

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WASHINGTON — A Marine Corps spokesman says that of 15 Marines

wounded in the Aug. 26 suicide bombing at the Kabul airport, one is in critical condition. Three are in serious condition and 11 are in stable condition.

All 15 are at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. No names were provided.

A Marine Corps spokesman, Maj. Jim Stenger, said Thursday that the conditions of the 15 were as of Tuesday morning. In addition to the 15 wounded, 11 Marines were killed in the attack, along with one Army soldier and one Navy corpsman.

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UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations says its Humanitarian Air Service is resuming air operations in Afghanistan to enable 160 aid organizations to continue activities in the country’s provinces.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Thursday that the air passenger service, operated by the Rome-based



U.N. World Food Program, is linking the Pakistani capital of Islamabad with Mazar-i-Sharif in the north and Kandahar in the southeast.

He said the food program reports that three flights already have taken place to Mazar-i-Sharif since Sunday and that efforts are being made to step up those operations as soon as possible.

In addition, Dujarric said, a cargo airbridge is being established to transport non-food items such as medical and other emergency supplies to where they are needed the most.

He said the Humanitarian Air Service's domestic passenger service needs \$18 million and the cargo airbridge needs \$12 million to continue operations.

"From 2002 to 2021, the U.N. Humanitarian Air Service in Afghanistan served more than 20 destinations in the country," Dujarric said. "It will seek to return to these locations once security and funding permits."

ISTANBUL – Turkey's foreign minister says his country is evaluating plans to reopen Kabul's airport.

Mevlut Cavusoglu told reporters on Thursday in Ankara that Hamid Karzai International Airport could be reopened in two stages for military flights and later for commercial flights.

"Now there are requests from the Taliban and some countries to cooperate with us. We're evaluating all of this," Cavusoglu said at the news conference with Dutch Foreign Minister Sigrid Kaag.

Turkey has been operating the airport for six years before the American pullout and the Taliban's resurgence. Those leaders, along with Qatar's, have been in discussions about the reopening. Kaag said the Netherlands wanted to help with technical matters or security at the airport.

ROME – Italian Premier Mario Draghi says diplomats are trying to locate Afghans who fled from their homeland to Iran and other nations bordering Afghanistan.

Draghi said Thursday that "fortunately" many Afghans had escaped, but his country wants to locate those who worked with Italy.

Before Italy ended its airlift from Kabul on Aug. 27, it had evacuated nearly 5,000 Afghans who had worked with the Italian military during its 20-year-deployment in Afghanistan as well as their families and others deemed at risk now under Taliban rule.

Draghi didn't say how many Afghans his country was seeking. He added that Afghans who have already reached Italy are immediately being given refugee status and praised Italian communities integrating them into local society.

KABUL, Afghanistan – A Taliban media spokesman has tweeted a picture of Qatar military aircraft on the ground at the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Afghanistan.

Ahmadullah Muttaqi posted the photo on Thursday. In Kabul, meanwhile, the roar of aircraft overhead could be heard.

It was the first air activity in the capital since Monday when the last U.S. evacuation flight left the Afghanistan, bringing to an end to America's longest war. In interviews on Tuesday at the airport Taliban officials said they hoped to get the civilian airport up and running within days and the military portion sometime later.

TIRANA, Albania – The Albanian government says another group of 37 Afghans evacuated from Kabul has arrived in the country.

A statement from the Foreign Ministry said the group arrived early at dawn on Thursday from Kiev, Ukraine. They were taken to university campus

accommodation in the capital, Tirana, where they will stay before moving to hotels.

Albania has accommodated most of the 644 Afghans it is temporarily hosting in hotels.

The government has said it may house up to 4,000 Afghans temporarily, before they travel on to countries for longer-term settlement.

MORE ON AFGHANISTAN:

– Afghans face hunger crisis, adding to Taliban's challenge

– Biden defends departure from 'forever war,' praises airlift

– UN chief urges countries to help Afghans in 'hour of need'

– Victorious Taliban focus on governing after US withdrawal

– New Taliban rulers face tough economic, security challenges

– Analysis: War is over but not Biden's Afghanistan challenges

– Find more AP coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/afghanistan>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates – The United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary says that although the U.K. won't soon recognize the Taliban's government, "there is an important scope" for dialogue with Afghanistan's new rulers.

In a joint press conference in Doha with his Qatari counterpart, Dominic Raab said he supported "engagement" with the Taliban to test the group's wide-ranging promises. He cited the Taliban's pledges to protect freedom of travel for Afghans and foreigners, to form an inclusive government and, significantly, to prevent international terrorist groups from using the war-scarred country as a base.

Raab said: "In all of these areas, we

will judge them by what they do, not just by what they say.”

Diplomatic recognition would prove critical in allowing the Taliban to access development aid and loans from international financial institutions as the group confronts an economy in free fall.

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Qatar’s Foreign Minister says there is still “no clear indication” of when the Kabul airport will resume normal operations, but that the Gulf Arab state is evaluating the situation with Afghanistan’s new Taliban rulers.

In a joint press conference in Doha with his British counterpart, Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said Qatar remains “hopeful that we will be able to operate (the airport) as soon as possible,” without giving a timeline or elaborating on Qatar’s role in providing technical assistance. He said Qatar is working with the Taliban “to identify what are the gaps and the risks of having the airport back up and running.”

Kabul’s international airport has

been closed to normal traffic since Aug. 16, when the Taliban took control of Kabul. Military flights and evacuations continued until Aug. 31, when U.S. forces quit the country and left the runway without air traffic controllers.

Al Thani also urged the Taliban to live up to its promise to allow Afghans and foreigners to leave the country freely once the airport reopens.

Qatar sent a technical team to Kabul airport on Wednesday to assess the operations. The tiny sheikhdom, which facilitated talks between the U.S. and the Taliban, has played an outsized role in American efforts to evacuate tens of thousands of people from Afghanistan.

UNITED NATIONS — The president of the U.N. Security Council says the U.N.’s most powerful body will not take its focus off Afghanistan this month and “the real litmus test” for the new Taliban government will be how it treats women and girls.

Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason

of Ireland said Wednesday that the protection and promotion of human rights for women “must be at the very heart of our collective response to the crisis.”

Under the Taliban’s previous rule from 1996 to 2001, women were not allowed to go to school, work outside the home or leave homes without a male escort. Though they faced many challenges in the country’s male-dominated society after the Taliban’s ouster, Afghan girls were not only educated but over the last 20 years women increasingly stepped into powerful positions in numerous fields including government, business, health and education.

Byrne Nason said: “My question is, will the Taliban be different, and that’s the real question. We haven’t seen any evidence of that.”

She said the international community has clout because whatever form of government emerges in Afghanistan needs international support — and human rights and respect for international law “are red line issues.”

Trump asks Florida judge to force Twitter to restore account

by Adriana Montes

Former US President Donald Trump asked a federal judge in Florida on Friday to ask Twitter to restore his account, which the company suspended in January following the deadly riot on Jan. 6 where a mob of his supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol.

Trump filed a request for preliminary injunction against Twitter and its CEO, Jack Dorsey in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, arguing the social media company was pressured by members of the U.S. Congress to suspend his account and censor the former president in violation of his First Amendment rights, according to the motion.

Twitter and several other social me-



dia platforms banned

Trump from their services citing a risk of incitement of violence.

At the time of removing Trump’s account permanently, Twitter said his tweets had violated the platform’s policy barring “glorification of violence.”

Twitter cited concerns that Trump

would incite further violence. Prior to the ban, Trump had roughly 89 million followers on Twitter.

In July, Trump filed lawsuits in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida against Twitter, Facebook and Google, claiming that he and other conservatives have been wrongfully censored.



Biden continues to defend withdrawal from Afghanistan amidst political storm



BY: CLAIRE HEALY

As U.S. President Joe Biden faces a bipartisan backlash over his withdrawal from Afghanistan, he continues to defend his decision and its execution.

In an interview on Aug. 18 with ABC News' George Stephanopoulos, Biden said the military exit could not have been carried out more effectively, and that no one could have foreseen the rapid Taliban takeover.

"The idea that somehow there was a way to have gotten out without chaos ensuing, I don't know how that happens," said Biden.

The pullout from the U.S.'s longest war has been followed by chaos, as the Taliban took control of the government and capital in the span of 10 days. Scenes flooding the internet throughout the week show Afghan and American citizens scrambling to leave the country including harrowing images of Afghan citizens falling as they cling to planes, and children being passed above crowds to U.S. soldiers at the airport.

While Biden defends the chaos as "unavoidable," many around the country disagree.

U.S. Senator Bob Menendez, Democratic Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, criticized both the agreement between former President Trump and the Taliban and Biden's execution of it in an Aug. 17



statement.

"In implementing this flawed plan, I am disappointed that the Biden administration clearly did not accurately assess the implications of a rapid U.S. withdrawal," he said. "We are now witnessing the horrifying results of many years of policy and intelligence failures."

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell released similarly harsh criticism of the president in an Aug. 15 statement.

"The Biden Administration's botched exit from Afghanistan including the frantic evacuation of Americans and vulnerable Afghans from Kabul is a shameful failure of American leadership," he said. "Everyone saw this coming except the President, who publicly and confidently dismissed these threats just a few weeks ago."

Recent polls suggest that most of the country is equally critical of the president, as his public approval rates reach an all-time low. A Reuters/Ipsos poll on Aug. 16 found that 46%

of Americans adults approved of his performance, down from 53% three days prior.

A Morning Consult/Politico poll conducted Aug. 16 to Aug. 19 shows that support for ending the war is down 20 points since April, with 49% of adults supporting ending the war. The same poll found 51% of voters disapprove of Biden's handling of Afghanistan.

Moving forward, Biden will be assessed on his ability to evacuate U.S. citizens, Afghans who worked with the U.S. military, and other vulnerable people. He will also be judged on his ability to meet the rising needs of Afghan refugees, already the third-largest refugee group in the world, according to 2020 U.N. data. The president will also need to counter weakening credibility abroad, as criticism builds in the U.K.

A Brown University study estimates the U.S. military has spent over \$2 trillion throughout 20 years of war in Afghanistan, and places the death toll of the war at 241,000 people.

President Biden directs the FBI to make the 9/11 investigation public

BY MANDILEE HECHT

Following mounting demand from family members of the victims, President Joe Biden has ordered the extensive declassification of evidence gathered during the US investigation into the September 11 terrorist attacks.

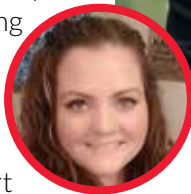
Families of victims and first responders have been putting pressure on the White House in the run-up to the 20th anniversary, believing that classified papers prove a link between Saudi Arabian leaders and the attacks.

The 9/11 Commission report found no proof that Saudi authorities were involved in the attack, although it did state that Saudi nationals were a key source of money for Al Qaeda. Saudi Arabia has denied any involvement in the assaults.

Three prior presidents have refused to declassify the papers, with the Trump administration using the state secrets privilege in 2019 to defend the classification of the documents.

Presidential Executive Order

According to the order, an FBI electronic communication dated April 4, 2016, must be made public by Sept. 11.



The Executive Order, dated Sept. 3 and titled “Executive Order on Declassification Review of Certain Documents Concerning the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001” states the following, in part:

“Although the indiscriminate release of classified information could jeopardize the national security — including the United States Government’s efforts to protect against future acts of terrorism — information should not remain classified when the public interest in disclosure outweighs any damage to the national security that might reasonably be expected from disclosure.”

Revealed Information Timeline

The FBI and other agencies must reveal “any additional materials previously withheld as secret, in full or in part, throughout discovery” within two months of the order, as well as another FBI electronic message concluding Operation Encore.

Within six months, the government must release anything relevant from any other investigation which concerns the hijackers and any “relationship with a foreign government”.

It will be up to the attorney general or the heads of the FBI or other agencies to prove that the release of any information “reasonably could be expected to result in damage to the national security”.

U.S. Federal Reserve may withdraw economic support, despite COVID-19 resurgence

BY JANE FRAIZER

Even as the virus threatens, the United States Fed has hinted at its intention to withdraw economic support. The central bank also stated it is making progress toward its long-term aim of achieving maximum employment and averaging 2 percent inflation.

The Federal Reserve hinted on Wednesday, Sept. 22 that it will begin removing support for the US economy later this year, despite policymak-



ers becoming increasingly gloomy about the outlook for growth and job creation as the resurging Coronavirus weighs on the country.

Half the Fed's 18 officials have penciled in the prospect of an interest rate rise next year, indicating they believe the economy will be robust enough for the central bank to begin withdrawing its enormous assistance more forcefully. During their two-day meeting this week, they kept interest rates steady, according to a recent report.

The Fed's policymaking committee stated in its post-meeting statement the increase of Covid cases has delayed the recovery, and members predict the economy would grow 5.9

percent in 2021. This is lower than members' forecast in June of seven percent.

The central bank stated it is making progress toward its long-term aim of achieving maximum employment and averaging 2 percent inflation. As a result, authorities may begin to reduce their monthly purchases of US government debt and mortgage-backed securities in November or December of this year.

These asset purchases, which average \$120 billion each month, are designed to boost the central bank's attempts to keep borrowing costs low while the economy recovers.

The economy has made progress toward these objectives, according to

the Fed statement. If development is as expected, the Committee believes that a slowing in the pace of asset purchases may be needed soon.

The Fed meeting came amid jitters in the stock market over the past few weeks as investors worriedly eyed legislative drama in Washington, where the government may run out of funding by the end of the month, and the debt ceiling needs to be raised over the next few weeks to avoid defaulting on bills already incurred by the United States.

The financial troubles of Chinese real estate firm Evergrande have also heightened market concerns, as investors try to determine how large a ripple effect there might affect the U.S.

Andrew Yang Quits Democratic Party, Becomes an Independent

BY HANNAH OCHOCKI

Ex presidential candidate, Andrew Yang, is cutting ties with the Democratic Party, he revealed on his website Monday. He will now be politically known as an independent. This announcement comes after he revealed plans to start a new party called the "Forward Party" in his new book *Forward: Notes on the Future of Our Democracy*.

Andrew Yang, an entrepreneur, and politician from New York, is most known for his unsuccessful presidential run in 2020 and again for mayor of New York in 2021. Yang is a strong advocate for Universal Basic Income (UBI) and other left-leaning policies that made him an underdog candidate in both races. However, his charisma and business savviness made him a media favorite during the elections, and he gained considerable popularity.

In his announcement, he recalls registering as a Democrat nearly 20 years prior, participating in the campaigns of Kerry, Sanders, and Hillary



Clinton. He insists that he felt connected to the Democratic Party and the causes they were championing at the time. However, since the election of Donald Trump, politics has become even more polarizing. This change has led Andrew Yang and others to stray from the Democrat's message, which seems to be shifting as compromise happens in Washington.

In his announcement, Andrew Yang made a point to show gratitude to all the members of the Democratic Party who had assisted him during his

campaigns. He also acknowledged the thousands of Democratic Americans he encountered on his travels that he formed incredible relationships with. However, the party isn't aligning with his values, and thus it was time for him to express that. He described his time running for office as a sobering experience that was entirely different from his life as a businessman, adding that "power actually gives you brain damage."

This doesn't mean that Yang is leaving politics entirely. Andrew Yang

states that without the affiliation of the Democratic Party, he can be more honest about his vision for America- going as far as describing the two-party system as “stuck.” Many see the intense polarization between the two parties as to the reason for

the chaos surrounding Washington. However, Yang is not encouraging his supporters to follow his lead in changing to independents. He discourages this practice, stating that it could be disenfranchising for the 83% of the country that lives in traditionally “red”

or “blue” states.

“Breaking up with the Democratic Party feels like the right thing to do because I believe I can have a greater impact this way.” Concludes Yang. No word yet on how this will impact his future political aspirations.

US to reach debt ceiling by October 18th, defaulting for the first time in history



BY HANNAH OCHOCKI

WASHINGTON- The U.S. government is heading into uncharted territory as it approaches its credit limit, otherwise known as the debt ceiling. If Capitol Hill doesn't okay the spending increase, the United States could default on its lenders for the first time in history, leading to global consequences.

What exactly is the debt ceiling?

The debt ceiling is the maximum amount of money the U.S. Government can borrow to pay its debts. It was put into place over a hundred years ago so that the Treasury Department did not have to ask for Congressional signature for already approved spending constantly. The limit has been used to contain expenses and increases each year based on the annual Congressional budget. Although government spending has exceeded the money it was taking in from taxes etc.; it would be the first time in history, the U.S. has defaulted. The U.S. Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen, warns that if not raised, this limit could be reached as soon as October 18th.

What does this mean?

The impact of default would have dire consequences on both the glob-



al and U.S. economy. If they cannot agree and raise the debt ceiling, it could stop payments that millions rely on— payments including paychecks to federal workers, medicare benefits, and social security checks.

It could also significantly affect the U.S. stock market. According to Wall Street, if the U.S. defaults on its credit, it would damage its ability to borrow in the future. It isn't enough to apologize when dealing with billions of dollars; a missed payment is seen as incredibly derogatory. According to President Biden, defaulting would also increase daily expenses such as mortgage payments, auto payments, and credit cards.

What's the holdup?

Democrats and Republicans are refusing to cooperate.

Republicans do not wish to increase

government spending as a polarization of the issue grips Washington. However, Democrats keep reiterating that raising the debt ceiling does not mean increasing government spending but simply paying debts- debts previously approved by GOP members such as Mitch McConnell and Donald Trump.

Democrats wish to vote on the issue and assert that the Republican Party assist with paying down the debt that they both have incurred. The Republicans refuse, and Mitch McConnell suggests they use a special budget process known as reconciliation that Republicans would not have to vote on. Whatever the holdup, it is putting millions of American's jobs at stake and is threatening the health of the global economy. President Joe Biden will hold further discussions with lawmakers later this week in hopes of resolution.

Women's March Targets US Supreme Court to Protect Roe v. Wade

BY ADRIANA MONTES

Thousands of protestors marched at rallies across cities in the US and Washington, D.C. Saturday, demanding continued access to abortion after conservative judges and lawmakers imposed restrictive bans and restrictions on abortion rights.

The first Women's March of the Biden administration headed straight for the steps of the Supreme Court, decrying Texas' recent law that bans abortions after six weeks of pregnancy.

The new Texas law, which took effect Sept. 1, contains no exceptions for cases of rape, sexual abuse or incest — making it the most restrictive in the country.

Women filled the streets surrounding the court, shouting "My body, my choice" and cheering loudly to the beat of drums.

Before heading out on the march, demonstrators rallied in a square near the Whitt House, waving signs that said "Keep your policies off my body," "Time to ovary-react" and "My body my choice" amongst other messages.

Some wore T-shirts reading simply "1973," a reference to the landmark Roe v. Wade decision, which legalized abortion across the country.



"From the east to the west, from the north to the south, we rallied in 650 locations in all 50 states. But this is only the beginning. Our fight for abortion justice is far from over," The Women's March organization tweeted Sunday.

The #RallyForAbortionJustice took place at 650 locations in all 50 states — in-person and virtually.

"No matter where you live, no matter where you are, this moment is dark — it is dark — but that's why we're here," Alexis McGill Johnson, president of Planned Parenthood, told participants at the Washington, D.C. protest.

"It is our job to imagine the light, even when we can't see it. It is our job to turn pain into purpose. It is our job

to turn pain into power."

Nearly all House Democrats came together last week to pass the Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA) in response to the mounting fears that the Supreme Court will overturn Roe after the Texas law was imposed.

Planned Parenthood of Illinois senior director of public policy Brigid Leahy told the Associated Press at the Springfield march that women started traveling to Illinois two days after the Texas law took effect.

On Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court begins a new term, which in December will include arguments in Mississippi's bid to overturn 1973's landmark Roe v. Wade decision guaranteeing a woman's right to an abortion.

Senate Fighting To Stop Government Shutdown

BY SEB JENKINS

Things moved into hyperdrive at the start of this week when a bill revolving around the federal government budget was passed and then blocked by Senate Republicans. The bill would have raised the debt limit and increased the funding for the federal government.

Areas of the United States currently suffering from unavoidable hurricanes and others supporting Afghanistan



refugees would have received billions of dollars in relief.

However, with the bill blocked, the senators now

have just hours on the clock to find a different solution by the end of play today (September 30), at which point funding will be completely exhausted.

The Senate Republicans have taken a fierce stand against any bill that would increase the national debt limit (\$28.8 trillion), but they are still looking for a measure that avoids any shutdown.

Senate Minority Leader, Mitch McConnell said: "Democrats want to use this temporary pandemic as a trojan horse for permanent socialism."

Unfortunately, such views have clashed with those of many Senate Democrats, with the stance being labelled as both 'irresponsible' and 'reckless'.

Senate Majority Leader, Chuck Schumer said: "Senate Republicans voted to drive our country straight towards a government shutdown, and the first default in our country's history".

With a government shutdown now just hours away, the Biden Administration is coming under fire from Re-

publicans as they criticize spending plans. This comes as two bills are expected to pass through Congress in the next seven days, one regarding childcare and family support safety nets and the other revolving around infrastructure. Together, these will cost approximately \$4 trillion.

With the Senate Republicans maintaining that any national debt limit rise should come alongside these two bills, we seem to be edging ever closer to the inevitable shutdown, unless a bipartisan solution can be reached.

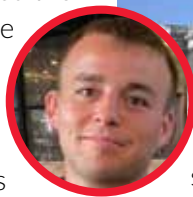
Senate scrambles to prevent government shutdown

BY ZACH SCHRADER

Democrats and republicans are clashing within the senate as they are on the brink of a government shutdown which will occur by the end of the week if a bipartisan solution is not found.

On Monday, a bill passed through the house that was then blocked by Senate Republicans which would have increased funding for the federal government and consequently raised the debt limit. This bill would have allotted billions of dollars to aiding regions of the country experiencing hurricanes as well as supporting refugees from Afghanistan. This leaves senators with just two more days to find another solution, as government funding will be completely exhausted by the end of the day on September 30th.

Senate Republicans have made it very clear they will not allow any bill to pass through the senate that would raise the national debt limit, which currently sits at 28.8 trillion dollars. Senate Minority Leader, Mitch McConnell (R-KY), said that Senate Republicans would be in support of a mea-



sure that prevents a shutdown, supports Louisiana hurricane relief, and aids Afghan Refugees, as long as it does not raise the debt limit. He argues that "Democrats want to use this temporary pandemic as a trojan horse for permanent socialism".

This stance was met by much frustration by Senate Democrats, as Senate Majority Leader, Chuck Schumer (D-NY), believes the Republican stance on this issue is both "reckless" and "irresponsible". "Senate Republicans voted to drive our country straight towards a government shutdown, and the first default in our country's history".

Approaching a government shutdown, Republicans remain unhappy with the Biden Administration's ambitious plans for spending, as two bills will likely be passed through congress this week. One of which for infrastructure and the other a "safety net" bill for child care and family support, totaling over 4 trillion dollars between the two. Senate Republicans believe any increase to the debt limit should be attached to these bills and do not seem to be budging any time soon.

These coming days will be critical as the senate struggles to find a bipartisan solution to avoiding a government shutdown.

Former nurse pleads guilty for threatening U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris

BY MANDILEE HECHT

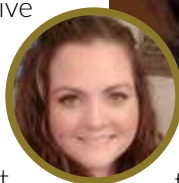
A former American nurse has been arrested and now faces prison time, after she video recorded herself threatening the Vice President of the United States, Kamala Harris.

Niviane Petit Phelps, 39, of Florida, pled guilty Friday, Sept. 10, to six charges for making threats against the vice president. The charges carry a maximum penalty of up to five years in prison.

She recorded herself in a series of videos where she threatened Harris' life. She sent the series of videos to her husband, who currently sits in prison, where she expressed her disdain regarding the 2020 election results, a Secret Service complaint stated.

In the videos, Phelps stated "Kamala Harris, you are going to die. Your days are numbered already."

Phelps, an African American mother of three, stated to authorities that the reason for her threats were because the vice president is not "actually Black" the complaint stated. Phelps



was also enraged because she felt Harris swore in without putting her hand on the Bible, which is incorrect.

Harris is the first Black American, first South Asian American, and first woman to be elected vice president in US history.

Officials say Phelps sent her jailed husband six 30-second recordings in February in which she threatened to murder Harris and claimed to have been paid \$53,000 and was "the hit man." She also filed for a concealed firearm permit and provided a photo

of herself holding a pistol at a shooting range.

Attorney Scott Saul told the Miami Herald that Phelps' threats were "limited to talks with her jailed spouse" and that she was "simply venting during a terrible moment in her life."

According to court documents filed Sept. 10, the prosecution acknowledged that it would have been able to prove the accusations beyond a reasonable doubt if Phelps had consented.

On Nov. 19, a sentencing hearing will be held.

Korean War Veteran From New York Finally Coming Home After 71 Years

BY SEB JENKINS

Reports have revealed that, after 71 long years, the remains of a Korean War veteran are now finally returning to the United States.



Army Corporal Walter A. Smead, who was from New York and died in action back in 1950, has been identified by scientists at long last.

The remains of Army Corporal Smead were turned over to the United States by North Korea in 2018, with the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System working around the clock to identify the fallen veterans using mitochondrial DNA analysis.

Smead, who was 24 years old in 1950, went missing in a bitterly cold December after the United States



Army retreated from the Chosin Reservoir, a process that took six days in total.

During this time, temperatures dropped to a staggering 30 degrees below zero and the US subsequently lost many soldiers to the cold, Army Corporal Smead included.

Chinese forces had attacked the 7th Infantry Division of the 57th Field Artillery Battalion, of which Smead was a part, for multiple nights at the Chosin

Reservoir. Just three days into the assault and over 90% of the division had either been wounded or fallen – numbers sourced from the National Museum of the United States Army.

Reports claim that Army Corporal Smead died during the retreat in an attempt to assist his fellow soldiers across the reservoir, which had frozen over. The US Marines had maintained control on the other side of the frozen water, but Smead was unable to make

it to that point of safety.

Upon returning to the United States, Smead's remains will be buried at the B.H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery in Schuylerville later this month.

Although his return has been a long time coming, at the very least, the Korean War veteran will finally be able to find rest back on familiar shores and his relatives will be able to visit a grave they have long since been without.

Four Tourists Set To Circle The Earth In First Private SpaceX Flight



BY JANE FRAIZER

The United States Army has revealed that soldiers currently on active duty will be given just three months to secure full vaccination against the COVID-19 virus or face possible discharge.

There are currently just under half a million soldiers on active duty throughout the force and each will be given until December 15 to secure their full vaccination. However, National Guard and Reserve troops, of which there are 336,500 and 189,800 respectively, have been handed an extended deadline of June 30, 2022.

From statistics secured on Tuesday, September 14, approximately 80 percent of all active-duty soldiers had already received one or more vaccine doses, although an accurate number could not be provided for the Reserve



troops and National Guard.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said: "After careful consultation with medical experts and military leadership, and with the support of the President, I have determined that mandatory vaccination against coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) is necessary to protect the Force and defend the American people.

"To defend this Nation, we need a healthy and ready force."

This announcement came after similar decisions from the other branches of the US military, however, only the Pfizer vaccine has been granted full approval from the Food and Drug

Administration so far. Therefore, as things stand, this is the only officially mandated vaccine.

That being said, active-duty soldiers will be allowed to receive other vaccinations should they choose to do so, as long as they have their second dose two weeks before the December 15 deadline. This is because each soldier must also pass the two-week waiting period after their vaccine.

Any soldiers who refuse to receive a vaccine will be sought out and counseled by their superior officers, including discussions about order violations. However, such proceedings do not always result in punishment.

United States and United Kingdom are at stalemate with travel restrictions



BY REESE FURLOW

British Airways, Jetblue, Virgin Atlantic, Delta, United Airlines, and American Airlines have joined forces to get the United States and United Kingdom to allow travel between the two nations.

Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, air travel has been on a rapid decline. According to Statista, passenger aviation was expected to lose \$370 million in 2020 after the March lockdowns.

One year later, after thousands of airlines canceling its flights and still no travel between the U.S. and U.K., the transatlantic airlines came together to convince the two nations to “explore a path to safely and expeditiously re-open transatlantic travel in a manner that aligns with public health objectives.”

The open letter also stated the aviation industry has the right tools to “enable a safe and meaningful restart” to traveling between the two nations.

What it comes down to, however, is money. The statement added reopening borders between the two would help both economies recover.



“The return of transatlantic air travel would not only have a significant, positive impact on our respective economies, but will also reunite those who have been separated from their loved ones for over a year.”

The statement came out in May of 2021, and the British government is still waiting to hear from the Biden administration on when they will lift the travel ban.

Now that over 100 million Americans have received their first dose of the vaccine – and nearly 50 million people in the United Kingdom receiving their first dose – the White House said last month that fully vaccinated people can enter the U.S. as early as November, but a specific date was not announced.

The lack of communication between the two nations has seen frustrations growing from the British government, claiming it believes the Biden administration is not giving the travel restrictions any priority, according to The

Independent.

The airlines are also in a panic, as travelers will begin to book their flights by Nov. 1 in hopes of seeing their families again.

Supreme Court rules Biden administration must revive Trump-era 'Remain in Mexico' program



BY RYAN DAY

The U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) decided late on Aug. 24 via a 6-3 decision to issue an order that declined to end a Trump-era policy known as "Remain in Mexico" from being reinstated.

The immigration policy requires asylum seekers to remain on the Mexican side of the U.S.-Mexico border while awaiting approval from immigration authorities. SCOTUS had previously paused an order from a lower court on Aug. 20 that would have forced the Biden administration to immediately reimplement the policy. This would have given the administration time to appeal the decision and give the court time for deliberation, CBS news reported.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas had halted the program, known as the Migrant Protections Program (MPP) in June 2021, citing the often dangerous conditions immigrants faced while waiting in Mexico.

"I have determined that MPP does not adequately or sustainably enhance border management in such a way as to justify the program's extensive operational burdens and other shortfalls," he said in a memo to the leaders of the U.S. Customs and Bor-



der Protection (CBP), the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency and Citizenship and Immigration Services.

U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacmaryk, a Trump administration appointee based in Amarillo, Texas, had written the original order on Aug. 13. It had initially given government officials a week to appeal the decision.

At the time, Axios reported that Kacmaryk had said that the Biden administration has "failed to consider several critical factors" before ending the program. He added this policy would continue until it was "lawfully rescinded," and the U.S. had the capacity to hold asylum seekers and migrants subject to mandatory detention under U.S. law, according to CBS news.

The Biden administration argued that the policy would continue on in "perpetuity" as the U.S. lacks the space for detention holding. Following Kacmaryk decision to not suspend his ruling, the administration asked the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals to intervene. The higher court upheld the

ruling on Aug. 19, agreeing with the legal premise of Kacmaryk's opinion.

This decision forced Biden officials on Aug. 20 to appeal to SCOTUS on the argument that the rushed revival of MPP would "severely disrupt" ongoing operations along the U.S.-Mexican border and that the policy could not be reinstated until gaining consent from the Mexican government, numerous media outlets reported.

The Mexican Foreign Ministry told CBS news that the revival of the Remain-in-Mexico rule would be a "unilateral measure" by the U.S. As of last week, the Foreign Ministry of Mexico said it had yet to receive notification of a policy change. In a statement, the DHS said it regrets that the high court declined to issue a stay. The department added it would continue to challenge the district court's order, as reported by AP.

According to an internal DHS memo obtained by CBS News, U.S. immigration officials were told late on Aug. 24 to "reimplement" the Remain-in-Mexico policy starting at 12:01 AM on Aug. 25.

US appoints former state-run Ukrainian oil and gas company board member as special envoy



BY RYAN DAY

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Aug. 10 appointed Amos Hochstein to the position of senior advisor on energy issues. His biggest hurdle going forward is to implement the Germany-U.S. Nord Stream 2 (NS2) deal, which has been widely criticized by Eastern European allies and many on Capitol Hill.

In a State Department news release, Blinken stated that, “his immediate focus will be the implementation of measures to reduce the risks posed by the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.” Germany in similar fashion, is moving forward with its own special envoy appointment in an attempt to negotiate a 10-year extension of the current Russian-Ukrainian transit deal, set to expire in 2024.

As a vital gas transit country to Europe, Ukraine fears it will be left more vulnerable to ongoing Russian aggression once NS2 is completed later this year.

Hochstein, who many in Eastern Europe consider to be “Biden’s guy,” was



a former special envoy for international energy affairs during the Obama-Biden administration and retired from his role as a supervisory board member of Ukrainian state-owned oil and gas company Naftogaz in October 2020. Most importantly, he has been a critic of the NS2 project and described as a Russian hawk, as reported by Axios.

Once operational, NS2 will pump natural gas under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany and allow Russian state-owned Gazprom to circumvent Ukraine’s existing pipeline network.

The appointment can potentially be viewed as a sign that U.S. President Joe Biden has not simply given up on U.S. resistance to Nord Stream 2 and comes before the expected Aug. 22 visit of German Chancellor Angela Merkel to Ukraine and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky’s visit to Washington, D.C on Aug 30.

A source with knowledge of the process told Axios that “it’s frankly good to have someone who is deeply suspicious of the project and of Russian intentions because he will push hard to execute an effective strategy to manage the threat.”

At the very least, Hochstein’s experience with Nord Stream 2 and his regional expertise will be beneficial in negotiations, but it is yet to be seen if the appointment will prove effective going forward or how it will affect U.S. relations with its allies involved.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett to make first White House visit in August



BY CLAIRE HEALY

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett is scheduled to meet with U.S. President Joe Biden on Aug. 26 in Washington, marking his first official foreign trip since taking office.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki made the announcement in an Aug. 18 statement.

She said they will discuss regional and global security issues, including Iran, and that the visit is an “opportunity for the two leaders to discuss efforts to advance peace, security, and prosperity for Israelis and Palestinians.”

The new Israeli prime minister’s visit “will strengthen the enduring partnership between the United States and Israel, reflect the deep ties between our governments and our people, and underscore the United States’ unwavering commitment to Israel’s security,” she added.

Meanwhile, Bennett’s office released a statement that matched the White House’s message and added the “Iranian nuclear issue,” but made no mention of Palestinians.

Biden and Bennett differ on policy related to Iran, with the U.S. president



having campaigned to re-establish a 2015 nuclear deal with Iran that was unilaterally abandoned by his predecessor, Donald Trump, in 2018.

Both Bennett and his predecessor, former Prime Minister Netanyahu, have staunchly opposed the deal, which offered an easing of sanctions on Tehran with an agreement that the country would only use uranium for energy needs and not pursue a nuclear weapon program.

Netanyahu, the longest-serving Israeli prime minister, was in office for nearly 12 years. He had a close relationship with Trump, and left office facing corruption charges that he denies, among which bribery.

He was widely criticized for his policy towards the Palestinians, which included the expansion of settlements throughout the West Bank and east Jerusalem that are considered illegal under international law.

Bennett is Netanyahu’s former chief

of staff and was elected by a variety of parties across the political spectrum in an indictment of Netanyahu. The new coalition government that he leads represents eight political parties, and includes a party representing Arab citizens for the first time in the country’s history.

According to the agreement, Bennett will lead for the first half of a four-year term, before being replaced by Yair Lapid, who is a former finance minister and head of the centrist Yesh Atid party, for the latter two years.

The White House visit comes amidst rising criticism in Congress of Israel’s policy towards Palestinians, following an 11-day conflict between Israel and the leaders of Iran-backed Hamas, which the U.S. State Department classifies as a foreign terrorist organization, in May 2021.

The deadly fighting decimated the Gaza strip, killing 254 Palestinians, including at least 67 children, accord-

ing to the Gaza Health Ministry. The Israeli Military reported that thirteen Israeli citizens, including two children and one soldier, were killed in the armed clashes.

State dept. ends inquiry into racist and sexist claims against former UK ambassador



BY MANDILEE HECHT

The State Department agency in charge of investigating complaints of discrimination and harassment secretly concluded its inquiry into claims of racist and sexist behavior by former President Donald Trump's then-ambassador to the United Kingdom.

The State Department's Office of Civil Rights found the allegations to have unsubstantiated claims on race, gender, and religion, according to an internal memo sent on Jan. 12, eight days before Trump left office, despite the fact it had been documented in a review by the department's independent inspector general.

The State Department refused to make a confidential paper public, according to latest news reports. That paper was supplied by a former State Department staffer.

While the independent inspector general suggested in an August 2020 report that the Department conduct a more thorough investigation, the



State Department's Bureau of European and Eurasian affairs declined.

Bureau Claims

The bureau claimed that the ambassador had watched an Office of Civil Rights video on workplace harassment and proposed that, rather than a formal assessment of Johnson's compliance with Department Equal Employment Opportunity or leadership policies, it would collaborate with all staff, including the ambassador, to provide advice and additional training to raise awareness on these critical issues.

The inspector general welcomed the bureau's efforts on employee training but said it did not answer requests

for an investigation into Johnson's actions. The IG stated its recommendation for an inquiry into Johnson would remain unresolved until the bureau satisfied its duty to submit a written final judgment on the subject, based on an investigation.

The final, one-paragraph document concerning Johnson, the billionaire owner of the New York Jets and a close friend of Trump's, is dated Jan. 12 and tagged "sensitive but unclassified."

It was sent to Brian Bulatao, a political appointee to then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's Undersecretary of State for Management and appears to bare Bulatao's signature.

How Qatar Helped US In Afghanistan



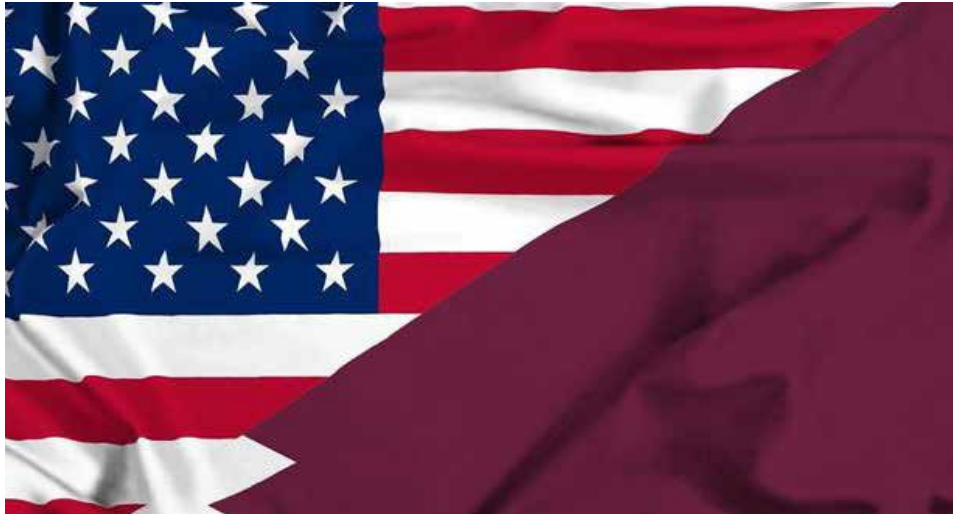
BY VICTORIA MONGIARDO

As US citizens finally find a way out of Afghanistan, credit is being paid to the role played by Qatar in the recent conflict and ultimate resolution.

Scott Taylor, a former US Navy SEAL tasked with organizing evacuation flights out of Kabul, said: "They saved our butts. The reality is, more than any other nation per capita, Qatar stepped up to the plate."

Last week's flights out of Kabul carrying American citizens were the first since the US left Afghanistan in August, with Qatari officials orchestrating the evacuation from a makeshift compound in Doha.

This compound, currently paying refuge to almost 60,000 evacuees flown from Afghanistan to Qatar, was originally built as accommodation for the 2022 World Cup set to take place next November.



Qatar has endured an up-and-down relationship with the United States over the years, but things look to be improving as the country's technical teams got an old airport up and running in the Taliban-held Kabul to rescue stranded American citizens.

It was only a handful of years ago that the US was accusing Qatar of funding terrorism at a 'high level'. The Trump administration labeled the wealthy Arab country as the aggressor in a diplomatic crisis in the Persian Gulf. The US also offered authority to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, who were accusing Qatar of causing Islamic unrest.

The situation became so intense that, penned in by their neighboring countries, Qatar had to airlift cows from Europe to keep up their national milk supply.

Fast forward to 2021 and the operations center in Doha erupted into cheers when the first images of the evacuation flights hit their television screens.

Assistant Foreign Minister Lolwah Rashid Mohammed Al-Khater said: "This is the role of a mediator. It's not to take sides. It's to maintain open channels with all parties, so that we can facilitate discussions, facilitate things like the evacuation."

Blinken calls on Taliban to allow more movement out of Afghanistan



BY VICTORIA MONGIARDO

US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken has called on the Taliban to



match its promises with actions by allowing vulnerable Afghans and foreign nationals to leave the country.

The Afghanistan force which has led the resistance to the US-led invasion for the last twenty years looks set to impose its will on the landlocked country, but despite its announced intentions for pluralism, most outside watchers remain skeptical that things will be very different to the '90s in Afghanistan when the Taliban ruled the country without much resistance.

The speed of the US withdrawal from the country resulted in a frantic scramble by some foreign nations and Kabul residents to get on board one of the last flights before the Taliban finalized the state apparatus as theirs.

Blinken has accused the Taliban of blocking charter flights arranged by individuals and private groups. They have defended the actions as necessary since some people booked on the flights did not have the necessary paperwork.

As the Taliban now faces the prospect of starting and maintaining a stable government, they will have to work out how to balance their ideology with domestic pragmatism and a semblance of acceptance on the international stage.

Insisting on correct documentation is standard practice for international flights the world over but this point of tension is likely to be dwarfed by the upcoming exodus by Afghans who do not wish to live under the Taliban.

The instability this movement of people may cause is one thing, but it is also likely to have deeper economic and social issues for the Taliban to manage. Although there are many parts of Afghanistan where the Taliban remain unpopular, it is particularly among the wealthy and well-educated they are rejected. If people from the demographics leave the country in particularly great numbers then the economic struggles of the country will be compounded. A brain drain is likely to have a long term effect on future investment, productivity and growth.

Although the world is slowly coming to terms with the fact that the Taliban are here to stay, no one is yet sure how to find a sustainable balance.

Ukraine's inaugural summit on Crimea prompts renewed calls for NATO, EU membership



BY RYAN DAY

Germany arrested a British citizen working at the United Kingdom's embassy in Berlin on espionage charges on Aug. 10, accusing the 57-year-old man of spying for Russia.

Residing in nearby Potsdam, the suspect was identified only as David S. He was hired locally and worked at the British embassy in Berlin as a security guard. He is accused of passing counter-terrorism documents to Russian officials and receiving a cash payment of an unknown amount in exchange.

The arrest is part of a joint U.K.-German investigation, according



to a statement released by the German police. Officials suspect that this transaction could have started as early as November 2020.

According to a statement from the British police department, the investigation remains primarily with German authorities with support from the British Counter Terrorism Command.

Pro-Russian paraphernalia was allegedly found in the suspect's resi-

dence according to footage and a report by London-based Daily Mail.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas expressed support for the British government against acts of espionage.

"Spying on a close ally on German soil is absolutely unacceptable and we are in full solidarity with our British friends," he said.

Senior politicians in Berlin have called for a security review of private contractors working at the British embassy.

Relations between the U.K. and Germany, and the Russian government were strained before this latest incident, which could contribute to increasing tension with Moscow.

The U.K. has accused Russia of being responsible for a 2018 nerve agent attack against former Russian spy and British double agent Sergei Skripal,

and his daughter Yulia Skripal. Russia has denied any involvement.

In June, German officials arrested a Russian university researcher and accused him of spying for the Russian government. German-Russian relations had previously been strained over the poisoning of Russian opposition leader Aleksei Navalny, who received life-saving treatment in Germany after he was poisoned on a Russian flight in August 2020.

Independent laboratory findings in

the European Union found that he was poisoned with a nerve agent that is produced in Russia. London-based online sleuth Bellingcat has also concluded that Russia's main spy agency, the Federal Security Service (FSB), was behind his attempted assassination.

Meanwhile, in November 2020, Russian security services arrested Dmitry Fedotkin, a U.K. station manager working for Russia's state-owned Aeroflot airlines, and accused him of spying for Britain.

Biden outlines shift in US diplomatic strategy to UN General Assembly



BY ZACH SCHRADER

President Biden recently addressed the UN General Assembly for the first time since taking office in a speech where he outlined the country's new diplomatic strategy in light of his decision to pull US forces out of Afghanistan. The president promised "a new era of relentless diplomacy" which is to be an end to an "era of relentless war". This is to be seen as a shift in how the US plans on dealing with global challenges, aiming to do so diplomatically while seeing military power as a "last resort". With many of these remarks, President Biden seemed to call on allies within the UN to aid the US in diplomatically solving the world's problems.

President Biden maintained that the US still aims to intervene in major global issues that arise, just from a



more diplomatic standpoint. This new strategy does not just apply to conflicts such as the one in Afghanistan. He went on to announce that he plans double the public international financing "to help developing nations tackle the climate crisis" for the second time in his presidency so far.

Biden added, "We are not seeking a new Cold War... the United States is willing to work with any nation.. That pursues peaceful resolution to shared challenges, even if we have intense disagreements in other areas." It has been speculated that this quote was subtly aimed towards China. Biden went on to urge allies to aid the US in

achieving denuclearization of certain regions, specifically in Iran and North Korea.

This speech in part defended the Biden Administration's handling of the conflict in Afghanistan, which was met with much frustration, but it was made clear he intends to work in conjunction with the UN to handle similar issues in the future. In his closing remarks, Biden stated, "We cannot afford to waste any more time. Let's get to work. Let's make our future better now, we can do this." As he urged allies to aid his efforts to fight issues from climate change, to COVID-19, to terrorism on a global scale.

Top US General For Public Affairs Suspended

Officials within the army confirmed on Thursday, September 23 that allegations against Brig. Gen. Amy Johnston had been made, accusing her of manifesting counterproductive and toxic leadership.



Pending the outcome of the subsequent investigation, Johnston has been placed on special duty and the Principal Deputy Chief, Michael Brady, will serve as the acting chief in her absence.

Sources, who have remained nameless, have revealed that the suspension came about after a command climate survey. The survey reinforced a complaint made against Johnston, with 97% of those working within the Public Affairs department citing workplace hostility.

Johnston has been in the job for over two years, having joined as Chief of Public Affairs in April 2019, a role which involves running all communication, strategies and policies involving the US Army.



Most notably, Johnston was involved in the communication response after Spc. Vanessa Guillen went missing at Fort Hood and was later tragically found dead. An investigation report subsequently stated that the response was not effective. In fact, this even became somewhat of a case study for an improvement drive within the Army Public Affairs sector.

However, Johnston was not directly targeted by the investigation and her name was only mentioned twice in the report as she provided communication advice to Maj. Gen. Scott

Efflandt.

Efflandt reportedly reached out to the Pentagon for advice on public affairs during the Guillen tragedy, only to receive 'two different directions of advice' from Johnston and another employee.

We now await the results of the current investigation into Johnston's leadership and the accusations of toxic behavior. Principal Deputy Chief, Michael Brady will continue in an interim leadership position until the investigation is complete.

US Vice President Kamala Harris criticizes Beijing over South China Sea

BY CLAIRE HEALY

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris delivered a foreign policy speech in Singapore on Aug. 24, criticizing China and detailing U.S. priorities in the region as a part of her seven-day tour of Southeast Asia,



Harris described U.S. commitment to Singapore and other Indo-Pacific relationships, and U.S. goals of advancing an "optimistic vision that we have for



our participation and partnership in the region.” She accused China of coercion and intimidation in the South China Sea, while reassuring countries in the region that they would not be forced to choose between China and the U.S. in their foreign policy.

“Beijing’s actions continue to undermine the rules-based order and threaten the sovereignty of nations,” she said. “The United States stands with our allies and partners in the face of these threats.”

China claims nearly all of the South China Sea, a vital international trade route. These claims were dismissed in 2016 by the tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration. China has ignored the ruling and increased its presence in the sea through patrolling the waters and building artificial islands.

China’s foreign ministry spokesman, Wang Wenbin, rebuked the U.S. Vice President by criticizing American foreign policing in the ongoing military withdrawal from Afghanistan.

“What is happening in Afghanistan clearly reveals the U.S. definition of ‘rules’ and ‘order,’” said Wenbin in a

press conference on Aug. 24, when asked about Harris’s comments.

“The U.S. can arbitrarily launch military intervention in a country without shouldering the responsibility for the suffering of the people in the relevant country; it gets to decide when it wants to come and leave without consulting the international community, not even its allies; it can wantonly smear, suppress, coerce and bully other countries for the sake of ‘America First’ without paying any price,” he added.

Symone Sanders, a spokesperson for the vice president, described Harris’s comments on China as “one piece of the broader agenda” in remarks to Bloomberg Television.

“Frankly, if that’s what we’re focusing on it doesn’t speak to the real vision that the vice president laid out today,” Sanders said.

During her tour Harris is tasked with reassuring countries of U.S. commitment against the backdrop of an internationally criticized withdrawal from Afghanistan. She opened her speech with the assurance that the U.S. is “laser focused” on evacuating its al-

lies and citizens from Afghanistan. Emphasizing U.S. commitment to involvement in the area, she offered for the U.S. to host the 2023 summit of the 21-member Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

On Aug. 23 Harris held a joint press conference with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. In the conference, Lee underscored new areas of partnership between the U.S. and Singapore, specifically regarding cybersecurity and climate, and the importance of economic and security cooperation between the countries. He also commented on Afghanistan and offered Singapore’s air force in support in the evacuation.

“We are watching what is happening in Afghanistan on the TV Screens today, but what will influence perceptions of U.S. resolve and commitment to the region will be what the U.S. does going forward — how it repositions itself in the region, how it engages its broad range of friends and partners in the region, and how it continues the fight against terrorism,” said Lee.

The next stop for Harris is Vietnam before she concludes her tour on Aug. 26.

Poland, Lithuania to build wall along Belarusian border to halt flow of migrants

BY RYAN DAY

Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak announced on Aug. 23 that Warsaw intends to construct a fence along its border with Belarus to stem the flow of migrants, a move that is similar to neighboring Lithuania.

“A new 2.5-metre-(8.2-foot)-high solid fence will be built on the border with Belarus,” he said, per Reuters. Lithuania also confirmed on Aug. 23 that it would construct a 508-kilometer (315 mile) fence along its border with Belarus.



European Union (EU) countries like Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania have reported increases in the number of migrants from Iraq and Afghanistan attempting to cross into their territories from Belarus. The EU says the authoritarian leader of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko has been waging “hybrid activities” with the EU via the migrants in retaliation to western sanctions that were imposed in early August.

Poland claims that 2,100 migrants have tried to enter illegally from Belarus in August, as reported by the Associated Press. Nearly 800 of them have successfully entered the country and have been placed in state-run centers.

Poland has recently come under fire from human rights advocates for its treatment of a migrant group trapped between the Belarus and Polish border village of Usnarz Gorny. Fundacja Ocalenie (Salvation Foundation) has said that the group, comprised of nearly three dozen Afghans, has been stuck at the border for nearly 12 days due to the political stand-off.

Piotr Bystrianin, President of Ocalenie’s management board, said in a statement that “in accordance with

the law in force in Poland, each of these people should be allowed to submit an application for protection,” as reported by Euronews.

Mikolaj Pietrzak, a lawyer for the migrants in question, told Polish broadcaster TVN24 that the migrants are facing dire circumstances while being held at the border.

“The situation is horrible and I have no doubt that these people face cruel, degrading, inhumane treatment, and in some cases, it has to be called by its name: we are dealing with torture,” he said.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki noted on Aug. 19 that while his sympathies lay with the migrants, that they are “a tool in the hands of Mr. Lukashenko,” Euronews reported. Deputy Prime Minister Marcin Przydacz told reporters that, “These are not refugees, they are economic migrants brought in by the Belarusian government,” Reuters reported.

Poland’s Foreign Ministry on Aug. 23 said that it is inquiring about providing care for the migrants. It submitted a diplomatic notice to Belarus, offering to provide food and medicine

for the migrant group, as well as tents, beds, sleeping bags, blankets, and pajamas, AP reported.

The EU discussed the situation in an Aug. 17 meeting of interior ministers. They decided to increase funding and the number border officers to Lithuania, RFE/RL reported.

NATO members in the Baltics and Poland will keep an eye on the Zapad 2021 military exercises that Belarus is holding in three weeks. The exercises will feature nearly 13,000 troops and take place in Belarus. They are slated to take place from Sept. 10 to Sept. 16.

In an interview with the Financial Times, Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics underscored the converging crises of the migrant issue and Zapad 2021 military exercises.

“You have a border crisis, you have a major military exercise going on at the borders of NATO countries, you also have increased presence on our side, the Lithuanian side, Estonian side, and Polish side, of border guards and military formations. Of course, this is increasing the possibility of incidents,” he said.

US Rep. Mike Quigley tours Albania, visits Kucova Air Base

BY CLAIRE HEALY

U.S. Representative Mike Quigley (D-IL) on Aug. 18-19 visited Albania where he toured the Kucova Air Base, met with Minister of Defense Niko Peleshi and Chief of General Staff of the Albanian Armed Forces Maj. Gen. Bajram Begaj, and planned to greet Afghan asylum seekers arriving for temporary resettlement en route to the United States.

While the flights carrying the asylum seekers never arrived, Quigley,



who represents Illinois’ 5th District, commended Albania’s commitment to

aiding evacuations from Afghanistan. Albania has agreed to shelter Afghans fleeing their country temporarily while they wait for visas to enter the U.S.

“The United States is grateful to Prime Minister Rama and the people of Albania for leading the initiative to welcome Afghans into their nation,” he wrote in an Aug. 20 statement.

Albania joined NATO in 2009, as the U.S. used NATO membership to draw Western Balkan countries closer to the West. The Kucova Air Base has received a NATO security investment of 51 million euros (\$58 million) to improve its infrastructure and bring it up to NATO standards as part of NATO’s Security Investment Program.

U.S. Ambassador to Albania Yuri

Kim emphasized the impact of the investment in the air base in a Facebook post after Quigley’s visit.

“The base is the first footprint of NATO in the Western Balkans as it will transform Kucova into the first NATO air base for the region,” Defence Minister Olta Xhacker told Reuters in 2018, explaining the importance of this base both to NATO’s relationship with Albania and the region.

Quigley’s gratitude for the country’s assistance in resettling asylum seekers was shared across Washington, where the evacuation of Americans and Afghan allies from Afghanistan has been a primary focus since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan following U.S. withdrawal.

Albania’s Balkan neighbors, Kosovo and North Macedonia, also offered temporary refuge to Afghans seeking U.S. visas after fleeing Taliban rule.

“In Albania, the concept of ‘besa’ means word of honor, or to keep a promise. This country has a proud tradition of welcoming strangers, saving lives, and keeping their promises to those in need,” said Quigley.

“I welcome the Albanian government’s decision to give temporary safe haven to those fleeing the Taliban onslaught in Afghanistan,” Sen. Bob Mendendez (D-NJ), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, tweeted. “The people of Albania are once again showing the world what ‘BESA’ means. You have our respect and thanks.”

US Space Force set to welcome 670 new active-duty soldiers



BY JANE FRAIZER

The Space Force currently have 6,490 uniformed soldiers, who are referred to as Guardians, meaning their total numbers will rise by around 10% in 2022. 603 of these transfers will come from the army, 49 from the Navy and the remaining 18 from the Marines. 259 civilians will also be joining with the Army and Navy units.

In keeping with the aims and duties of the Space Force, the transfers



largely come from valuable areas such as engineering, cyber, space systems operations, intelligence, and more, including both officers and enlisted.

Vice Chief of Space Operations Gen.

David Thompson, said: “Successfully integrating the units, capabilities and people from sister services into the Space Force is critical to our mission and was one of the driving forces in creating the new service.”

This comes as the second transfer from the other Military divisions into the Space Force in the past year, although the June movement saw just 50 shift over. This was seen as a beta test to explore how well the integration process would go. It was seem-

ingly a success. Judging by the upcoming, far larger, transfer.

Chief Human Capital Officer, Patricia Mulcahy, said: "We are making every effort to ensure all future Guardians feel part of the team from the moment they are identified for

transfer."

The Space Force announced that all troops making this upcoming transfer were volunteers and the Military branch is aiming for further space missions in 2022 and 2023, which could require further units for transfer.

Green Beret who died in reservoir dive training named By the US Army



BY SEB JENKINS

A Staff Sgt. Died on Tuesday, September 21 at the Joe Swing Park Reservoir near the Fort Campbell base in Kentucky.

This became the second water training fatality in three months for the US Army following the death of Staff Sgt. Micah Walker in Florida in July. In November 2016, Staff Sgt. David Witcher also lost his life during army dive training.

Olmstead, who was a Utah National Guard Green Beret, was taking part in a tough 10-day school at the Maritime Assessment Course, where the Special Forces are trained and evaluated on their survival skills in water. The soldiers have to spend lengthy periods in the water, undergoing a variety of examinations, including time underwater holding their breath.

On Tuesday, Olmstead took part in the underwater portion of the assess-



ment but did not come back to the surface, with his body being recovered the next day.

In a press release, Col. Paul Peters, the commander of the 19th Special Forces Group, in which Olmstead served under the Bravo Company 1st Battalion, said: "Sometimes we expect this sort of thing in combat, but not during training, which makes this difficult for the unit and especially the family."

The President of the Combat Diver Foundation, Lino Miani spoke to Mili-

tary.com about the dangers of water training, even with fit soldiers and the relevant safety procedures.

Miani said: "It requires so much training to know how your body is going to respond and know how to use the equipment. Water is inherently unpredictable."

Underwater training for the Special Forces resumed by Friday, September 24, relocating after the tragic accident earlier in the week. The incident involving Olmstead is now under investigation.

Future generations will consider the post-WWII Era to be “The Great Era of Sanction Diplomacy”



BY TRENT R. NELSON

Sanctions are acts of modern barbarism, employed and in disguise as diplomatic innovations that help nations to avoid armed conflict. The idea is simply that pressuring nations, their societies, and their irreconcilable leaders with economic and diplomatic restrictions will ultimately cause the target of these sanctions to yield and partake in reasonable, rational, and emotionally detached diplomacy, eventually.

This was all conceived as an alternative to explicitly physical confrontations, and is certainly not a new innovation in the greater historical sense. The usage of sanctions in the 20th and 21st centuries, however, has grown, as have the numbers of people affected and afflicted by these proclamations; it is all startling, as well as diplomatically and intellectually stifling. With the carnage and horrors of the First World War, a concerted effort was made by the international powers of the time to think of an effective, meaningful, yet civilized alternative to conventional war, with the League of Nations being a theoretically integral part of this effort, that might act as an actual deterrent to the bloodshed and



barbarism nonetheless; hoping to also move beyond blockades, like those famously imposed by the United Kingdom during World War I, that had starved and wasted so many peoples, cities and now societies throughout human history, the sanction began to be reimagined in the various modern ways that we are familiar with today.

While the League would do its best to work towards positive, international ends, a number of factors, including the lack of American participation, would doom its mission to preserve peace across the globe during the interim between the two major conflicts of the 20th century. Although sanctions were both imagined and utilized across the first half of the 1900s, the practice of sanctioning has gained greater popularity in the years since the end of the Second World War, particularly in the last two to three decades, and especially from the United States; yet, ironically, the products

of these pseudo-diplomatic maneuvers are many of the same horrors that have been created before from blockades, sieges, and warfare across human history itself. The modern results of this increasingly American behavior can be witnessed across the modern world, and includes as its victims many of the poorest and greatest suffering nations and populations on Earth today; far from creating a more harmonious world without conflict, sanctions have kept countless leaders in their tenures for years on end, changed little behaviorally over those time periods, and punished so many societies for the predilections and prevarications of their own captors.

When the world and the reality of things are understood and properly appraised in these ways, much of the humanitarian pretense behind sanctioning falls to pieces rather quickly. How can what actually happens to nations under the burden of sanctions,

be reconciled with what is supposed to, eventually, positively occur thanks to them? How can it be said that this international means of punishment, of which, on its best days, almost has to be done with near international unanimity from the most powerful and influential nations of each continent to create the desired effect, works at all, humanely or otherwise, when, in the form it has primarily taken for the last seven to eight decades, all it has primarily accomplished is the suffering and death of countless millions of lives? Appraised with these questions in mind, in other words, the use of sanctions is not obviously successful, humanitarian, or even ultimately non-violent.

This recourse, utilized today as an answer in itself instead of a tool towards actual progress or further diplomatic exercises, has caused real harm for innocent people around the world and has helped to sour international opinion of the United States in the process. This has hurt the people of the world as well as the people of America, and only when an internationally cooperative solution can be found might the healing process really begin in earnest; while the time period since the Second World War has been divided and labeled so many different names, including famously the era of the Cold War, it is possible to divine a still more graphic and vivid interpretation of the character of this time period.

It is difficult, nigh impossible, to expect or think that any era of human existence has the absolute self-awareness of itself that is required to fully comprehend what human time period or era they find themselves in. This is to say, that those individuals in the “Neolithic” Age, knew no more that they were in this time period of hu-

man development, coined by the Englishman Sir John Lubbock in 1865, than some of their successor’s thousands of years later would understand themselves to be living in Petrarch’s “Dark” Age, Leonardo Bruni’s “Middle” Age, Adam Smith’s “Feudal” Era, first mentioned in his famous book “The Wealth of Nations” in 1776, or even the “Renaissance,” made most popular by the famous 19th-century French historian Jules Michelet; all were concretely given their titles by posterity, and, no matter how subjective they might be, they have all have stuck in the years since, for the most part.

These titles are, almost always, handed down by the successors, by those who came afterward and, looking back, both with and without bias, could perhaps appraise the circumstances of those time periods with a different breadth of understanding than those who lived those days intimately. This is not to say that generations or time periods do not attempt to label, define or describe themselves as they are still happening and evolving, as it is quite historically and practically plain that they do and have. It is simply to say that, when all of which those loosely defined eras are made up of can be appraised and analyzed, those observations, analyses, and labels of future generations are often what sticks in our minds as the years compound and existence continues. With this understood, I myself posit that the post-World War II international landscape and story, when properly appraised in the decades of centuries to come, will be understood from the perspective of international relations and the like at least, rather sardonically, as “The Great Era of Sanction Diplomacy.”

“The Great Era of Sanction Diplomacy”, and how it is stifling a broader

human appreciation, comprehension, and compassion of and for one another

Apart from the scale of the torment and depravity, however, there is little very good or great, in the literal sense, about them in principle, practice, or produced effect; my name for the era may not stick, but the notion, I believe, will. Sanctions generally create, for the targeting nations, a relentless, unending blanket of domestic pressure unlike any modern-day or historical strategies or weapons I’m familiar with; blockades, until rather recently in historical times, could not usually suffocate entire states or nations. For this targeted nation on the other hand, what we might call the “siege effect” on a grand scale, in a phantasmal, metaphysical sort of way, is produced by these sanctions instead.

There is no physical siege or blockade at all of course, as have been famously documented and witnessed across time and human history, from the Sieges of Syracuse, Calais, or famously Constantinople, to the British blockades of the United States during the American War of Independence, those of the Napoleonic Wars, that blockade of Venezuela in the early 20th century, or the aforementioned blockade of Germany and the other Central Powers during WWI. These tactics cost money in the form of paychecks and resources, oftentimes lives too, as well as public opinion, time, and energy that the most advanced or powerful modern nations often do not feel they can be bothered to waste over every argument or disagreement. However, instead of working on these problems through open dialogue regarding practical or economic disagreements, cultural or social differences, and the historical barriers that often separate humans

from one another, a nation like the United States, for example, can simply choose to diplomatically and economically damage, and even sometimes, in these same ways, excommunicate nations from the greater international community.

To put it bluntly, this is simply an ineffective strategy to use for any nation or nations with the ambition of persuading nations towards cooperation, innovation, or reconciliation; when a trade embargo and asset freeze and seizure, effectively sanctions, were collectively levied upon the Japanese by the Roosevelt Administration in July 1941, far from bringing Japan to the bargaining table, it set them on a course that would lead them to the attack of Hawaii at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. This type of pressure simply does not typically produce behavioral or regime change, and where regime change has occurred, it has certainly not ever really been successful, in practice, in creating positive, fluid circumstances for any of the involved nations to mutually develop and grow together in the aftermath. This is because, while these sanctions ultimately achieve their goal of expounding a sort of total societal, "Maximum Pressure" on a nation, they fail in the mission of expounding so much pressure across an entire society so as to make them crumble, generally speaking; they hobble, impoverish, sicken, infuriate and attempt to diminish them, sometimes for decades upon decades on end, but while decimating societies and peoples, sanctions very rarely decapitate regimes.

As noted just previously, modern-day sanctions strain not only singular cities and their often blameless populations, as was traditionally seen from both the aforementioned sieges of Syracuse and Constantinople, but

entire nations, as well as their most common people, for as long as the powerful nation or nations feels it remains reasonable and responsible for the exercise to continue. While the siege of old might have trapped the powerful in their cities with their people, even the singularly targeted sanctions of today are avoidable, and indeed, regularly avoided through various means, including financial manipulation and private third parties.

Furthermore, as can be practically witnessed as easily in modern times as in recent history, America, like the powerful nations of human history before it, does not produce punishment, in this form, that of sanctions, equally for all offending, culpable groups, or nations. This inconsistency is in poor taste for America, like when a parent tells their child, after having done something inappropriate, that they cannot have a cookie before supper, only to watch their sibling, who also got caught doing something incorrect, receive a cookie before supper; the restriction of the cookie, always intolerable, becomes less tolerable still when confronted with the lack of restrictions on similar parties, accused or guilty of similar actions.

To this point, while places like Iran struggle to rid themselves of 40-year-old sanctions, and Cuba's notorious embargo is around 60-years-old, Saudi Arabia faces no sanctions and consistently benefits from good economic, social, and diplomatic relations with Washington and London, despite that they have an absolutely abhorrent human rights record spanning nearly 100 years. Were sanctions to be a real answer for actual change, Israel, for the state it has left the Palestinians in, one could argue, might be as deserving of sanctions as any nation, yet it does not suffer them, nor has it

ever even been threatened with them, in large part because of its intimate relationship and internationally strategic importance to America.

Chile under General Augusto Pinochet is another fantastic, relatively contemporary example of a country and regime that, to the aforementioned point, blatantly and consistently commit crimes against humanity against his own people for multiple decades, including the use of secret police, political repression, state terror and disappearance campaigns, as well as the famous mass execution inside of a soccer stadium, yet received little to no real, severe punishment for this at the time. The arms embargo that the United States Congress would enforce on the Pinochet regime beginning in 1974 pales in comparison with the aid that he was provided with in the direct aftermath of the coup that saw Salvador Allende kill himself as the military took control of the nation.

Furthermore, the aid his regime got from the United States and many other nations across the decades succeeding the coup, including the United Kingdom, is telling; that the leader of a violent junta regime had not the enmity aimed at him from either the US or UK in particular, that those nations openly held and displayed for his left-wing counterparts around the world during this same time period, betrays so much in the way of their actual concern for human rights and liberal governance around the world. That Pinochet was later arrested and indicted of various crimes, some even against humanity, nearly 30 years after the fact is positive, yet does not fix that which previously occurred.

While Saudi Arabia and Chile receive and received relative amnesty for their behavior, not all nations can

be so fortunate when facing the ire of the most powerful and influential nations of the international community. A similar strategy to that used regarding Cuba was, for years, practiced in Viet Nam in the aftermath of the Viet Nam War as well, before internal economic innovations within Viet Nam itself, known as “Doi Moi”, made the nation a more capital-friendly refuge for nations and their multinational corporations alike. While Europe would have mixed relations with Viet Nam, in some cases from the early 1970s on, and in other cases, from the early to mid-1990s onward, the United States would take a bit longer; it was ultimately a process which would extend through the 1990s, with still further innovations occurring under Barack Obama at the end of the oughts, culminating with the signing of the U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership of December 16, 2013.

In this scenario, the United States and its international allies did not cease the use of sanctions on Viet Nam because of human rights innovations, for indeed, while a brief moment in time saw minor innovations in these ways, there is truly little difference on that front in Viet Nam when compared to the conditions of some 40 years ago, aside from the issues with Cambodia of course; rampant repression is known there, to be sure. No, the proverbial economic and diplomatic dogs were called off when Viet Nam coalesced, not with human rights and culturally liberalizing or progressive social or political innovations, but economic and financial rights for capital, not people.

This is but one of the many problems of “The Great Era of Sanction Diplomacy”; as has been demonstrated above, while it preaches human rights

and the end of practical barbarism, the only human right it consistently works to protect or expand remains the economic freedom of capital to comfortably function within the society itself. Unilateral sanctioning is too partial and biased a process, and leaves too many human rights hypocrisies not only obvious, but glaringly so. In other words, the list of sanctioned nations and the number of sanctions per nation since World War II ended is quite large, yet with that noted, it could easily be much larger as well.

Because the entire world is not aligned especially well regarding what freedoms, guarantees, and standards of living, if any, people should have on a basic, fundamental level, no international sanction can truly be as total or enveloping, by whatever means, and therefore ultimately effective, as those famous foreign policy dreamers and thinkers of the 1920s and 30s, like Arthur Sweetser, James Shotwell or Quincy Wright imagined might be, somehow, possible. Therefore, all nations can ultimately bide their time, with assistance from their own allies, sometimes aligned only because of common enemies or restrictions, until such a time as the targeting nation finally deems these sanctions to be wasting resources and time where actual diplomacy, or war, would work to remedy, not just ostracize, the problem or issue of the nation or nations in question.

“The most disadvantageous peace is better than the most just war...” – Desiderius Erasmus

There is no war that can end all wars because war and violence cannot stop themselves from further perpetuating. Because sanctions are, like barricades, blockades, sieges, and the like, not actually non-violent recourses to tra-

ditional hand-to-hand, man-to-man, intra-societal warfare, but are simply extensions of that violence, to differing, varying degrees, by other, political and diplomatic means, they too only perpetuate themselves by their own existence. Yet after what the first half of the 20th century wrought, it is not difficult to understand why those powers that be settled on this form of violence over the violence that ravaged societies across the globe, and continues to impact them, 80 years later.

As the legendary Humanist thinker Erasmus rightly noted about 500 years ago, “The most disadvantageous peace is better than the most just war...”; after the previous 200 years of European, American, and frankly world history, the prospect of any further escalation of war, of which had already been growing deadlier at an absolutely frightening pace across that time period, from older style, smaller armies, to military academies, national armies, conscripted civilians, mechanized and trench warfare, submarines, airplanes, bombs, and of course, eventually, nuclear weapons, was as difficult and even horrifying to try to imagine then, as it is today. With this history understood, and the ever-increasing human and destructive cost of war witnessed as clearly today as 100 or 150 years ago, a diplomatic, comparatively non-violent campaign of artificial scarcity and material or diplomatic isolation like sanctions likely felt like a major humanitarian innovation and step, both in the diplomatic and intellectual senses, in the correct direction.

What those insightful minds of their eras did not conclude, however, was that this means of scolding punishment was actually a superficially

non-violent simulation of many of the very same inequities that people and nations routinely suffer from in the midst of traditionally violent, militarized warfare and combat. They did not look at this recourse from the perspectives of those punished nations, but from their gilded seats, and so failed to recognize that the hardships unduly placed upon the people of the nation would not necessarily create a bond between those suffering people and those long distant bureaucrats in far-off governmental buildings in Washington DC, London, Paris or Berlin, but oftentimes instead, with the very regime that behaved in such a manner as to “provoke” the recourse in the first instance.

The belief that, given time and suffering, nations will have to heed the pressures of their suffering populations, does not hold up to the reality that we all share together. These pressures do not evince or create circumstances where more reasonable, mutual, or amicable relations are easy to develop, can be promoted, or are even promotable; if it was conceived that sanctions would invite and even incite the kind of real, earnest diplomatic work and international compromise that I often write about and champion, where real international issues and grievances can be talked about, learned about, better comprehended, eventually worked out and, where appropriate, become compromised and reconciled, then those intellectuals of the time lacked an imagination vivid enough to properly and effectively parody existence as it is, and not how we wish it might be. Coercion, especially that coercion of which is blatant and not even designed to be subtle in the slightest, does not endear nations or their people towards a more dominant power, but further estranges that

power from the target society, and ultimately distances itself from progress in this process.

Far from sanctioning nations, it is cooperation, good faith, and mutual growth and development that is really quite desperately needed, not just for those nations kept upon the fringes of the international community, but for those considered to wield the greatest influence as well. Holding each other, every nation, honestly and fairly accountable, internationally speaking, will promote further accountability and trust where accountability and trust may have been previously lacking. No longer can we have institutions like the International Criminal Court where, while other nations are held to account, the United States can decry it, ignore its findings, and threaten it, and so any true solution would have to have cooperation and commitment from those most influential of nations in order to incentivize commitment by more hesitant countries. A truly “International Arbitration Institution,” as we might call it, of national and international political, not economic, relevance, independent of any current body or singular nation is, I think, necessary for the years and tribulations yet to come.

This type of innovation, one which might make the great, long-dead foreign policy great Edwin Borchard beam, in concert with other changes in international institutions and procedure, of which I’ve previously outlined and look forward to expounding upon further in the future, could help to ensure the end of sanctions and the return of diplomatic problem solving and the innovations that come from learning and understanding different peoples and situations more completely. It would monitor circumstances around the world, as so

many international bodies do already, ensuring that squabbles do not escalate into full-blown issues or crises, that reasonable claims and requests are not derided or dismissed by the other party or parties, and to help to form, while subsequently pushing for, proactive solutions that do not include the isolation of one party from a particular nation, or even a collective of nations might be seen and identified earlier on by representatives of nations with no proverbial skin in the game, as it were.

With sanctions addressed, and international communication and mutual respect more central to the art of international diplomatic, economic, and humanitarian cooperation, the future could very well be quite different from the present. Yet the future will understand this post-Second World War era, in the context of the greater history of the world, as one in which the people of the earth began to truly recognize in a real, tangible way that war was in no way an answer to international conflict any more than randomly fighting with people in your neighborhood, or that you meet along your way each day are reasonable strategies for coping with communal or interpersonal issues and conflicts. It will also understand that, in taking the step away from traditional violence, traditional warfare, and traditional subjugation, the most powerful nations of the world, like the United States, did not distance itself from these pillars of warfare far enough, and so ultimately parodied them through the sanctioning process; this future and its people will hopefully understand too, from the troubles of this time period, how to grow beyond these inequities for the sake of a safer, more cooperative, functional and healthy international community of

nations.

Sanctions are acts of modern barbarism, employed and in disguise as diplomatic innovations that help nations to avoid armed conflict; they also help

nations to avoid crafting actual solutions for problems both old and new. They have no place within humanities intellectual arsenal of diplomacy any longer, and should be discarded in favor of greater global arbitration, coop-

eration, communication, and most of all, empathy, so that we do not end up continuing to punish large swaths of people for the barbarous brutality of their rulers and governments.

Human Rights in America: protected or incomplete?



BY REESE FURLOW

It has been over 70 years since the United Nations implemented the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was to promote their “faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women,” according to the declaration. It was also supposed to “promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.”

This was in 1948, which means it took over 15 years before the United States put it into action by invoking the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which was supposed to prevent any discrimination toward people of color regardless of race.

However, in 2021, women and minorities are still discriminated against, making some people question if human rights in America are protected or incomplete.

While the U.S. has been slowly fighting to protect sex trafficking and



LGBTQ equality, the country is still slacking on other issues as well, and has been since the UDHR was put into effect.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, there are over 30 million citizens who lack their right to basic healthcare on top of having the widest income disparity in the world.

The ACLU also reported that poverty rates among African-Americans and Latinos are nearly twice that of the general population. Despite making up 13 percent of the U.S. population, the poverty rate for Black people was at 19 percent – or 8 million people – in 2019, according to the Census. While it dropped two percent since then, it is still the highest amongst any other race in the country.

Women’s rights have also been an issue since the beginning of time, with the ACLU reporting that an average of 464 women are sexually assaulted or raped each day, but only 40 percent – or 186 women – are reported to the police. Despite the numbers, there has been no action involved with law enforcement taking necessary action to make sure these are prevented.

There are still hundreds of other instances where people are untreated fairly or equally, such as racial profiling by law enforcement, harassment toward the LGBTQ community, deportations, and incarcerations.

If the U.S. is to claim everyone is treated equally, it is time to start implementing better laws to protect these people.

Albania's Foreign Policy Successes and its Domestic Reform Challenges



BY DR. DAVID FELSEN

Despite the backdrop of a global Covid-19 pandemic, Albania has enjoyed a number of foreign policy achievements over the past 18 months. It has been a successful period within the foreign policy sphere for the small former Communist nation – which now is firmly integrated into NATO.

Albania's profile on the international stage has blossomed in 2020 and 2021. Albania chaired the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2020, with Prime Minister Rama serving as the 'Chairperson-in-office.' In May 2021, Albania served as a key host of the NATO military exercise 'Defender 21', one of the largest military exercises to be held in the Balkans since the Second World War.

In June 2021, Albania received the nod to serve a two-year term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council alongside Brazil, Gabon, Ghana and the United Arab Emirates which begins in January 2022.

Only days ago, Albania together with Kosovo and North Macedonia were among the first countries to heed U.S.



calls for assistance in offering sanctuary to thousands of Afghan refugees fleeing the turmoil of the Taliban takeover. Three thousand Afghans will receive temporary refuge in Albania until the U.S. finalizes entry visas.

The Albanian government has also been active at the regional level. In late July 2021, Prime Minister Rama held talks with Western Balkan counterparts Prime Minister Zoran Zaev of North Macedonia and President Aleksander Vucic of Serbia to push forward the 'Open Balkans' project to open up their respective frontiers to goods, services and people by 2023. This has been welcomed as a positive step by the European Union, which has itself advanced the 'Berlin Process' – a 2014 agreement to foster greater integration and cooperation among Western Balkan countries. Albania, a candidate for EU membership, had its request for accession talks approved by EU ministers in 2020.

While it should be noted that the 'Open Balkans' project is not sup-

ported by all Western Balkan nations, most notably Kosovo, which opposes any closer ties between Albania and Serbia – as Serbia continues to withhold recognition of Kosovo's independence – the Albanian government still has demonstrated recently that it is a proactive force globally and regionally.

These foreign policy successes ought to be lauded. Yet Albania might yet achieve even more internationally by fortifying its domestic image and institutions. Albania continues to have an image problem – one associated with corruption, a lack of transparency, a business climate of unfair competition, a dishonest judicial system, and a disregard for civil society demands. In 2020, Transparency International ranked Albania 104th in the world in terms of perception of corruption, alongside El Salvador and below Colombia, Peru, and Ethiopia.

In this regard, the United States and the European Union have actively supported the Albanian government's Special Prosecution Office against

Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) and SPAK's attempt to ferret out corruption in the political system, the judiciary and within the economic realm. American involvement includes the recent use by the Department of State of its 'Section 7031 (c)' instrument to 'publicly designate' Albania's former President and Prime Minister Sali Berisha as being involved in significant corruption this past May and to ban Berisha and his family members from entering the United States.

A perceived reduction in corruption will help improve Albania's economic activity and assist in attracting foreign investment. According to World Bank data, Albania attracted only \$1.2 billion in FDI in 2019. Though this is more than the approximately \$300 million attracted by Kosovo and the \$400 million attracted by Montenegro, it is only around one quarter of

the \$4 billion attracted by Serbia – though Albania has a population of 3 million to Serbia's 7 million.

The recent \$2 billion investment in the Port of Durres by the company Emaar from the United Arab Emirates, announced in December 2020, is a welcome boon to Albania the country needs to further foster the conditions to attract more FDI from the U.S. and other Western countries.

Additionally, addressing civil society concerns, particularly in the area of the environment, will remain a litmus test in determining Albania's ability to attract international investment in the coming years. The Albanian government has been criticized for its insensitivity on that front, especially concerning the multiple projects begun along the Vjosa River, including hydropower plants and dams, as well as oil exploration at the river's basin.

Greater responsiveness to local and global critics regarding the potential damage to the ecosystem, and remedial actions to allay such concerns will help buttress Albania's international image.

Thirty years after the fall of Communism, Albania has emerged as a more active participant in foreign affairs both within the Western Balkans and globally. The current government has achieved several recent foreign policy wins. Be that as it may, in order to guarantee that Albania's reputation as a foreign policy player endures the Albanian government must continue to improve its image and institutions by forcefully tackling corruption, championing greater transparency, creating a more open business climate, and demonstrating greater responsiveness to citizens on issues that matter to them.

Trump is trying to pull a Grover Cleveland in 2024 after he Herbert Hoover-ed his first four years as President



BY TRENT R. NELSON

As 2022 is just months away at this point in the year, it should surprise few that the reports and rumors are becoming louder regarding the 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump, and his prospect of seeking re-election in the 2024 Presidential Election. He is coming off of



a loss to current-and-46th President of the United States, Joe Biden, after doing his best to downplay the seri-



ousness of the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic fallout of the response to it, as well as his administration's de-

tached and frankly negligent response to both; while the death toll is catastrophic, and likely inaccurately low, his economic numbers are also easily the worst since the administration of Herbert Hoover, some 90 years ago.

Yet the former President will not go quietly into the night unless charges are brought up and successfully prosecuted and seems hellbent to win his second term in office. Reports suggested in the weeks and months preceding the election that the President privately feared and opined that he did not wish to be remembered as a single-term President or a “loser” as he actually referred to them as. But by his own definition, he is now a loser; how might he be redeemed, not from his disastrous four years as President, but from the disgrace of not winning another four years?

There is, apparently, an answer. This 21st Century Herbert Hoover, who some even argue, with his disdain for authority, is a 21st Century Andrew Jackson in many ways, apparently, wishes to be America’s 21st Century Grover Cleveland as well?

Grover Cleveland: A Short History and Analysis

Grover Cleveland was an interesting, quite nuanced man and President; he is also an American executive that is not taught in the 21st century as well as he was in the earlier portions of the 20th. In his classic book, “The American Political Tradition” by Professor Richard Hofstadter, the author does a brilliant job of explaining how, in the post-Civil War era, which extends to about 1896 or 1900, Cleveland really was the only truly, semi-noteworthy President, as well as the lone Democrat to be elected to the post between 1860 and 1908; Hofstadter disparages him often as well, as too conservative, as apathetic towards the cause and struggles of the common people, and as the chief executive who allowed both the Haymarket Riot and the Pullman Strike to become deadly with either the support or outright assistance of the federal government.

His story, nonetheless, is a fascinating and worthwhile one to tell, especially in relation to Donald Trump, who cannot be said to have been an “honest president”, as Cleveland was sometimes known as, by any stretch of the imagination. While Cleveland has character and intellectual flaws that can be judged harshly by the standards of our own time period, so does the recently elected and still living Donald Trump; when the contemporary President is appraised next to Cleveland, and can be judged as more grotesque and cruel than the man that was born nearly 200 years ago, it is clear that the two are by no means the same, despite sharing certain unsavory positions and feelings regarding American progress, and what exactly innovation in this nation can or should look like.

Descended from Moses Cleveland, the Revolutionary soldier whom the city of Cleveland was named to honor, Stephen Grover Cleveland was a bright and kind young boy and man by most accounts. Growing up in upstate New York from a young age, he came from humble means; when, following the death of his father, a Presbyterian minister, after working to help support his now widowed mother and siblings, Grover visited his maternal uncle in Buffalo, Lewis F. Allen, founder of the Erie Country Agricultural Society, whom, upon hearing the boys plans for the future, suggested his nephew stay with him while he looked for a law firm to take Grover in as a young law clerk. He would soon be accepted by the well-known Buffalo firm of the time, Rogers, Bowen & Rogers, at the request of his uncle and was promptly given his law lessons via study and practice, initially through William Blackstone’s “Commentaries on the Laws of England.”

He would toil endlessly, learning and practicing, assisting the lawyers in as many ways as he was capable, and would become a useful and considerate lawyer, taking cases on that he felt were necessary even with little to no pay at times. And when the Civil War

began, Grover, now taking care of his mother and siblings, felt it prudent to avoid service by legally paying for a replacement, making him the first President since James Buchannon to have no involvement, either politically or via military service, in the great conflict. Grover Cleveland would work as a lawyer, gaining fame in Buffalo for his legal knowledge, love of beer, good humor, and a general bachelor lifestyle. When that work wasn’t cutting it anymore, monetarily speaking, Grover won the vote to be the Sheriff of the town and, after that, to be Mayor of Buffalo; from there, his political ascension came more swift and remarkable still.

He rose through the ranks of local and state government in Buffalo, New York, in the late 1870s and early 1880s, in part because no one knew too much about him; as a clean, honest candidate in this respect, therefore, he was acceptable to a wider range of voters than many of his predecessors, contemporaries or successors. By 1884, he found himself, having previously won the governorship of New York, running in the Presidential Election against the legendary representative from Maine, James G Blaine, who apart from his legislative and dodgy financial dealings, is quite famous for having wished and worked for the Presidency for so many years, never to come so close as he did in 1884 against the former Sherriff of Buffalo; despite the real, disturbing, and very serious clamor about the potential love child of the suddenly-not-so “honest man” from Buffalo, Blaine could not escape peoples mounting and various suspicions regarding his own character or-lack-their-of. Grover Cleveland would win this election, taking the south solidly, as well as Indiana, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut, and would be the first Democrat elected as President since the aforementioned James Buchannon some 28 years earlier.

While Cleveland was no Jacksonian Democrat, he was a staunch advocate for a more literal interpretation of

much of the constitution and would govern both pragmatically at times, being a full proponent for civil service and tenement reform, while also siding with business interests over labor at other times. He did not hate labor per se, as his attempted, albeit naive, intervention in the Coal Strike of 1902 demonstrates to us, but simply could not think of how to support labor in a way that he could personally reconcile as constitutional from his position as the chief executive, in the same way as he was able to find to support American oligarchs, of whom he did not always like either; his behavior in the lead up to both the Haymarket Riot and the Pullman Strike are great stains upon each of his terms, to be sure. The letter that wealthy gilded age business legend Jay Gould sent to Cleveland upon his victory over Blaine, the candidate Gould had backed, was an interesting, ironic insight into how capital thought at that time, as well as the timbre of Cleveland, considering that the new President had been so recently applauded for having previously fought Mr. Gould during his time as the Governor of New York.

As the nation was growing through its own Industrial Revolution, and with it, the previously alluded to American Gilded Age, there was not a great amount of political innovation coming from the formerly radical Republican party; as two stories went, already in 1870, Iowa's Republican Senator James W Grimes stated, regarding the Republican Party, that "I believe it is today the most corrupt and debauched political party that ever existed", while former Secretary of State Walter Q Gresham stated around this time that the party was, "...an infernally corrupt concern." Those old Republicans, yearning for the days before the party had, in our modern terminology, "sold out" to business and the oligarchic figures of commerce and industry would shortly be left in the past. And so, by the election of Cleveland, if only quite narrowly, the nation was ready for a change. His election was a sign of the desire for some type of progress,

for answers regarding economic and political problems, like the tariff and silver questions, and for something to simply be different than it had been for 25 out of the prior 28 years.

And he was generally well respected, if not always well-liked. Historically speaking, he receives mixed grades and truly, despite the trappings that historians and biographers have given him, was not really very remarkable outside of the disturbing and unfortunate affair involving his first child. While biographers have keyed in on his folksy way of speaking, as well as the relatively kind, fair, and amicable timbre and nature that he held himself with in public and private, Pullman strikers, Haymarket activists, and the mother of Cleveland's first child, Maria Halpin, would likely disagree with even this assessment and portrayal, however. He was economically conservative, opposed to both the tariff and free silver, as well as expansionist policies including even Hawaii. He did not think highly of black people either, or of Reconstruction, and while not explicitly vitriolic against them, was, to use a sweet, if definitely misguided phrase of one of his biographers, "a man of his era," as if his era was not also full of remarkably forward-thinking intellectuals and the like.

His political actions, of which drew mixed reviews from those who suffered mightily through and during the panic of 1884 and its aftermath, were those of a man simply trying to maintain an order, not truly reimagine or redistribute power or privilege. While he entered the White House, like Buchanan before him, as a "Bachelor President," of which was a popular image for him to cultivate, he would not remain that way for long as President and would marry the daughter of his now-dead best friend, Oscar Folsom, the beautiful, then-21-year-old, fresh-out-of-college Frances Folsom. She remains, to this day, the youngest first lady in the history of the United States; a charismatic woman, she legendarily told a member of the White

House's staff to keep things as they left it for when they returned in four years.

When Cleveland ran for his second term as President, unsure he actually wished to win it after the difficulty of the first term, he would find himself running up against the grandson of former, albeit briefly, President of the United States, General William Henry Harrison of the War of 1812 fame, Indiana Governor Benjamin Harrison; these men were the successors of Benjamin Harrison V, Declaration of Independence signee and "founding father" of the nation. Grover pushed discussion about reducing tariffs before the election, something his advisors warned him to hold off on until after the election was won, and he promptly refused, for the sake of honesty towards his constituency. In this Presidential election of 1888, without New York and Harrison's native Indiana, Cleveland would not win the Electoral College, yet would, for the second time in a row, capture the national popular vote, becoming the second person to hold the popular vote in both a victorious and losing election, joining Andrew Jackson.

Benjamin Harrison would have a rather nondescript four-year Presidency, which, despite this historical pronouncement, featured very well known innovations such as the infamous McKinley Tariff Act, the addition of six states to the union, more than any other President, the annexation of the island of Hawaii, as well as the Sherman Antitrust Act. Perhaps his most interesting appointment included, as Civil Service Commissioner, a young man whom Grover Cleveland had already worked with previously and had great praise for, future New York Governor, American Vice President, and eventual President himself, Theodore Roosevelt; that Roosevelt did not much care for Harrison is, while amusing, hardly relevant. While other Republican's, like a still relatively young Thomas Brackett Reed, as well as Henry Cabot Lodge, to name just

two, didn't much like Benjamin Harrison either, there was hardly a question of supporting him in the party climate they existed in at the time, which has seemingly changed little since then.

Yet while Harrison worked away at his "agenda," of which consisted of the agenda of his party and not himself, not much liking the job either, Grover Cleveland continued to be regarded as a politically viable option for the Democrats in the lead up to the next election of 1892, especially when he began making statements regarding the actions of his successor relating to the tariff, territorial statehood, general monetary policy, and the Hawaiian question. Cleveland had not lost to Harrison by so much at all, having bested him in the popular vote, he simply needed New York, Indiana, or some other states that had chosen Harrison over him in the last election.

And as luck would have it for Grover Cleveland, despite that a whole bevy of states were brought into the Union during the preceding four years, many of those states, with small populations would vote, more often than not, for the third party Populist candidate, former Republican congressman James B Weaver. Meanwhile, Cleveland would strike not only into New York and Indiana, Harrison's home state, but also into Illinois, Wisconsin, California, and districts in Michigan, Ohio, and North Dakota as well. With these victories culminating in his own overall Presidential victory, Grover Cleveland became additionally noteworthy and interesting to historians for a number of achievements. He would be the second President to win the popular vote in three elections, although Andrew Jackson won both the popular and electoral votes in all three of his, and would be, as previously noted, the first and only President of this nation, to this point, to serve two, non-consecutive Presidential terms in office.

This second term was also interesting in itself, for as Cleveland tried to move with the currents that were sweeping up the entire world, currents continued to move faster than

he could. Having seen the country, shakily, through the lesser panic that began in 1884 previously, Cleveland again governed through the larger Panic and aftermath of 1893. At this point in American history, the pressures of the Gilded Age and Industrialization were simply becoming too heavy a burden for most people to overcome; striking was on the rise, frustrations were abounding, jingoists wished to annex more land than ever before, led by Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt, and the United Kingdom, led by Queen Victoria and, for the most part under, the last Peer to sit as Prime Minister, the famous Lord Salisbury, was disputing both the boundaries of Samoa in the Pacific, as well as between Venezuela and Guiana in South America.

Dealing with all of this, as well as the Pullman Strike, was surely wearisome for the President. By 1896, Cleveland was again happy to be through the ordeal and quite thrilled to spend time with his young wife and young children; his Democratic Party, meanwhile, would choose to go in an entirely different direction for three of the next four Presidential Elections. William Jennings Bryan was chosen to go up against Ohio's William McKinley two times, before losing to William Howard Taft by a worse margin than he had lost the first two to McKinley by; New York State Judge Alton B Parker in 1904 was an exception to this 16 year run of course, yet he simply could not out Roosevelt Roosevelt in the end.

Grover Cleveland and some other Presidents: Historical Juxtapositions to Donald Trump

Grover Cleveland, as he was getting ready to retreat to a life of solitude with his young wife and small children, was tired, as Donald Trump was, and maybe still is, surely tired after his first term in office. Yet while Cleveland was a man of faults undoubtedly, he was much more practically in touch with them, as well as the thoughts of Americans of his era, outside of the labor movement at least. He, in fact, did

not really wish to become President once, or even twice, so as to soothe his own, personal ambition, but because he felt a duty to serve if his fellow Americans wished for him to; privately, however, he spoke to confidantes about not even truly wishing to be installed into the position, both when he was still the Governor of New York, as well as when he was simply a former President after Benjamin Harrison beat him in the 1888 Presidential Election, because of the great responsibility of which he considered the position of American Presidency to be. The 45th President, as his consistent and thoroughly despicable antics and statements should illustrate, is not looking to win the Presidency with the aim of altruism, but out of rage and spite for the purposes of setting the United States back decades into the past diplomatically, socially, as well as culturally.

Returning back to Grover Cleveland for a moment, however, what he did was not an easy feat to accomplish, for a few reasons at the very least. There is an adage in American Politics that most everyone knows, as they even preached it in the months leading up to Donald Trump's loss to Joe Biden, that it is remarkably difficult in this day and age to stop a President from winning a second term in office. In the 20th century, the list of Presidents who failed to win another four years when they attempted to do so as the incumbent reads as a list of the President's who routinely get skewered by Presidential Historians for one reason or another; they are, for the record, William Howard Taft in 1912, Herbert Hoover in 1932, Jimmy Carter in 1980 and George Herbert Walker Bush in 1992.

That Joe Biden was able to defeat Donald Trump, and therefore put him in this category as well, might be attributed to the 45th President's handling of the pandemic, the economy, the society, or of those protestors who demonstrated against the America of which he wished to create. It was still accomplished, however. Joe Biden today, despite my frustrations with

him in the realm of foreign policy and domestic policy vis-a-vis sanctions and the filibuster, has had a net favorable rating as President, until quite recently, something the 45th President had no experience with throughout his four years in office; if Joe Biden can complete his dual infrastructure and budget bills while perhaps adding some other, easily bi-partisan legislation like Federally legal Marijuana, it will be incredibly difficult, as the adage goes, to stop him from getting another four years in office, should he wish for them.

And while there is no adage regarding presidents reclaiming their office after being defeated, this is likely because it has only successfully happened once. Martin Van Buren attempted to reinvigorate his career many, many more times as a Democrat, and even under other political parties, in the hope of winning his second term in office after losing in the 1840 Presidential Election to the aforementioned William Henry Harrison. Grover Cleveland would be the only former President to turn the trick when he successfully did so in 1892, yet Theodore Roosevelt, too, much more famously than Van Buren, also attempted to win his third term, second election, to office after taking four years off. Having taken over for McKinley after his assassination in 1901, he felt uncomfortable, initially at least, with the idea of sitting for close to 12 consecutive years as President instead of choosing Taft as his successor after nearly eight.

In the 1912 Presidential Election, therefore, after growing frustrated with Taft's Presidency, Roosevelt would decide to run a campaign, when finally he officially decided to, of which he called the "new nationalism," that, after much analysis, can be explained as a strange amalgamation of old Rooseveltian policy ideas and notions, certain Progressive era ideas from himself, as well as both the Robert La Follette's AND the Woodrow Wilson's of the world, and some, what might be called, proto-fascist concepts. His short-lived Bullmoose

Progressive Party would be the most successful third party in American Presidential Election history and would win more votes, both popular and electoral, than his old, formerly beloved Republican Party headed by Taft. Taft, consequently, would become the only candidate of either major party, to this point, to place in third behind a third-party candidate.

Therefore, if an additional American political adage were to be made today, it might be prudently stated that, once a President leaves office, one way or another, the odds of him returning for another term thereafter are nearly nonexistent. While Van Buren and Donald Trump left office with meager public support, and are generally held in poor regards, the same cannot be said regarding the 26th President. Theodore Roosevelt was quite beloved as the Chief Executive during his time in office, and likely could've easily won his second election and third term in office in 1908 had he chosen to run for it then; why then, just four years later, would the public choose the former President of Yale and Governor of New Jersey, Woodrow Wilson instead?

The answer is more complicated than a one-sentence, or even one paragraph, appraisal. Roosevelt was in a strange place regarding his personal politics, as well as within the greater American polisphere itself. The pressure he was exerting on what might be referred to as the natural Progressive candidate and longtime Progressive champion, Wisconsin Senator Robert M La Follette Sr, would inevitably cause the politician to suffer a nervous breakdown while giving a speech in the lead up to the Presidential Election of 1912 and would do a real number on the Progressive movement as a national, political movement going forward. Roosevelt also became sick just before the election, and so, aside from his changing, uneven politics, his health was also uncertain at the time. When Roosevelt lost to Wilson, and it was suggested that he might be able to defeat him in another four years,

Roosevelt quickly demonstrated that he did not really care about the party he had formed or the movement he had stolen from beneath La Follette; he declined to run again and denounced the party he had helped to create. This is certainly an easily imaginable scenario to occur to the Republican Party as well, once Trump finds no more personal, practical use for them, which might be sooner than many believe.

Donald Trump appears to be going for glory with another Presidential run; he will be historically notable regardless of the result, however

While Donald Trump spoke at one point, since he left office in disgrace, of starting a third party to challenge those Republicans who didn't back him at the end of his first term in office, the climate is nowhere near where it was in either 1892 or 1912, and even Trump knows that. No, his best bet to regain office is by running as a Republican once again; in contrast to the circumstance with Roosevelt in which the Republican Party would not choose him over Taft in 1912, the modern GOP is very much still the party of Donald Trump, as can be witnessed across the country. Moreover, with the way Florida Governor Ron DeSantis is performing currently in Florida with the resurgence of the new strain of COVID-19, he might not even be the governor of his own state by the time the nominees are being chosen, and so might prove an ephemeral challenge to Trump's hegemony over the party.

The problem is simply how? Unless Joe Biden slips up massively, in a comparable way as Donald Trump himself did, it feels really difficult to imagine, even with the voting restrictions that state Republicans have sought to enact in the months since the 2020 Presidential Election, that Biden doesn't win another term. The withdrawal from Afghanistan, no matter the way the national and domestic media portrays it, was the correct move, and one that, I think, the American people will

not ultimately hold too harshly against him; what was witnessed when the United States left Afghanistan was inevitable because of so many other factors that previous administrations helped to set into motion years ago. That Biden can even fix the new voting restrictions in some states by using whatever political weight he has to push the John Lewis Voting Rights Act through the senate filibuster should tell you the potential strength of his position, were he able to wield it effectively. He could likely get re-elected by simply extending benefits that have slashed poverty even in the midst of this dire economic and health crisis, sparked of course by COVID-19, while the aforementioned two infrastructure bills, plus a legal marijuana bill on top of all of that, would likely seal another term as President up for him as well.

But while Biden would be sealing up a second term in office, and with it, possibly some further wiggle room to liberally and progressively maneuver, he would also be sealing for Trump, a dubious first for any American President. While past Presidents have run for the executive office multiple times during their lifetimes, Trump would be the first former President to have lost two other Presidential elections as a major party nominee, and would presumably be the first candidate to lose three popular votes since William Jennings Bryan over 100 years ago.

Trump would be, to once again use his impervious logic, the biggest loser of them all. It is, therefore, for a man who is so egotistical and sensitive, a terribly massive risk for him to be taking in the first instant; one must imagine how furious and embarrassed he already is for him to be willing to dig himself an even deeper hole vis-a-vis his Presidential legacy, to redeem his 2020 loss; yet, to be sure, Donald Trump is no Grover Cleveland.

Whereas Cleveland won three popular votes in his day, was well respected and appreciated despite his dismal personal, and oftentimes Presidential,

record on many things that these future generations of Americans care deeply about, the 45th President is widely and historically disliked and detested; it is difficult to imagine Donald Trump's dying words, knowing him how we do, reflecting on how "I have tried so hard to do right," as Cleveland stated just before dying. He is simply out of touch with the time period in which he exists in, and believes in antiquated cultural, social, and economic notions. Trump, in other words, would be lucky to have, at the end of his life, won one in three Presidential elections, and would likely, were he able to become the second President to serve in non-consecutive terms, also become the first President to serve two terms while never winning the popular vote even one time; that is, if he doesn't become the first President to be sent to Prison after his term. While Cleveland is known, whether right or wrong, as kind, fair, thoughtful, reserved, and as someone who wished to be understood as a "fair" person and President, despite his obvious moral and ideological flaws, the 45th President has shown none of those characteristics across either his four years as the President, or throughout his nearly 80 years on this planet; their personal and professional inequities, therefore, are generally worlds apart, if in large part because Cleveland was aware that he possessed character flaws at all.

With the way the economy ended up under Trump, mixed with the way he handled the pandemic and how he continues to act completely childish and irresponsible regarding it, I don't believe that he has the political strength as things currently sit, to throw the proverbial stones through Joe Biden's Presidential glasshouse. If Joe Biden's congress is able to pass the domestic legislation that will see families, who might otherwise vote for Donald Trump, find future and monetary relief thanks to the 46th President while, "Building Back Better," then Trump might be better off waiting for 2028 if he can, yet with such a victory for Biden, he could very well

slam the door shut on the Trump era in politics entirely and for good, under the aging Don Sr at least.

Donald Trump is not interested in becoming President again to make a difference, as Grover Cleveland wished to be able to do should he be given the chance; he simply wishes to bury the shame of losing to "Sleepy Joe" Biden, the "...worst Presidential candidate" in history. Should Biden make advancements in ways that the American people care about: culturally, economically, and otherwise, in concert with the track record Donald Trump had in office when handed the reins before, there will simply be no recourse for the 45th President to win his position back from Biden. And while it wouldn't be the death of the movement that Trump helped to give a face and some life to, it would likely put a major blemish on the completely fabricated aura of invincibility that the Trump's seek to imbue themselves with, all the while complaining about fake news and rigged elections.

Donald Trump is no Andrew Jackson, despite the similarities that one can connect when one reads about each of them. He is no Grover Cleveland either, and would do well to remember that his two best Presidential comparisons remain, not based on social tact, Warren G Harding, thanks instead to the scandalous nature of their times in office, and Herbert Hoover, thanks to their inability to grow and change with the times, circumstances and challenges. Perhaps the most damning mark on his character, aside from all of the obviously horrifying, documented tales of his racism, vulgarity, sexism, and snobbery, is that he is not even able to accept his Presidential loss as real or sincere, or that his failures as President might have led to real, extreme human suffering and death on a tremendous scale; without this humility of self and his own practical, intellectual capabilities, he has absolutely zero chance to recapture the volition of the American electorate in any meaningful way in 2024, or beyond.

The Iran Nuclear Deal v. the Saudi Nuclear Deal: An Analysis



BY TRENT R. NELSON

Not all nuclear deals are equal. In what might be amongst the most fascinating pieces of information revealed in the federal indictment of financier and former advisor to Donald Trump, Tom Barrack, regarding his misadventures representing the United Arab Emirates, the advisor and near ambassador was actively pushing for an eventual Saudi Arabian Nuclear Deal, in which the perennial human rights violators in particular would, instead of being pushed towards further reconciliation of themselves and their society with international human rights norms, simply be granted, sold rather, civilian grade nuclear reactors. In this scenario, through a venture that, ideally, Tom Barrack would've been a part of either with American investors, or the notorious and chronically misused Saudi Public Investment Fund (PiF), the Saudis and Emiratis would benefit, the President would appear to be the great American deal maker, while the aforementioned Barrack and his oligarch friends would pocket a lot of money.

That Tom Barrack's entire plan fell apart because it was so suspicious to so many different agencies and parties should help people to understand his political and diplomatic know-how and why he first left politics all the way back in the early 1980s. Yet this is the subject for another discussion



and time. To return to the topic at hand, while the famous and currently deceased Iranian Nuclear Deal was meant to bring Iran back into the international community of nations while incentivizing their reformation of domestic policies and hopefully, personal and civic freedoms in the process, this Saudi Nuclear Deal seemed a purely transactional endeavor on some levels, while also an incredibly dangerous and potentially reactively explosive piece of foreign policy on others. Giving Saudi Arabia, as well as the United Arab Emirates, American nuclear materials and equipment, even at civilian grades, would be a clear challenge to Iran regionally speaking, and would likely signal, along with the UAE-Israeli "Peace" Deal, of which led directly to vast weapon sales, a trilateral, potentially nuclear capable partnership of American protectorates within the very near vicinity of Iran.

The effects of this cannot be understated, surely. With the Iranian Nuclear Deal still a thing of the past, it would have created a remarkable situation for America to negotiate into the foreseeable future. It would



likely have pushed Iran further into the arms of Russia and even further into the sphere of China, while further cementing ties to Syria and their longtime dictator, Bashar al-Assad. Appraising both Nuclear Deals further, one can see how costly Donald Trump's departure from the JCPOA will likely be for the United States, in one way or another, should Joe Biden succeed in reconciling his predecessors' unilateral decision, and how dangerous that which Donald Trump tried to replace it with, within neighboring nations like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, might have been had the plan been successfully executed.

The Iranian Nuclear Deal: A Good Start towards International Reconciliation Before It Was Stopped Dead In Its Tracks

The Iranian Nuclear Deal, or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, henceforth known here as the JCPOA, was first thought of and designed as a way of reconciling the United States, as well as other nations, with Iran after so many decades of ill-will and conflict. When the administration of Barack Obama began quite secretive

and low-key negotiations with that administration of then-Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad upon winning the Presidency in the 2008 United States Presidential Election, it was the beginning of a diplomatic dance that would see Ahmadinejad's successor, the moderate reformist Iranian diplomat Hassan Rouhani, eventually, alongside the international and American diplomats at the time, get a deal in place and signed with the powerful nations of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany, alongside the European Union, to begin the process of bringing Iran back into the greater diplomatic and economic international community of nations.

The signing of that deal in 2013, and its subsequent implementation beginning in 2016, just over six years ago at the time this piece was written, should have helped create lots of positive innovations vis-a-vis the American-Iranian relationship and yet, was reneged upon by the United States under Barack Obama's successor, the 45th American President Donald Trump, just a few years into a longterm, 15-plus-year agreement. The fallout of this action cannot really be properly stated in the correct magnitude, yet it continues to create fallout within the nation of Iran itself, socially, culturally, and politically. It has affected how Iran has behaved in the years since on the international stage as well, although they generally are as regionally active within their community as any other nation of ambition tends to be. The decision by Donald Trump also continues to affect the United States, as the 46th President looks to find a way to recreate, quite likely in some revised sense, the previous nuclear deal.

For Joe Biden, however, this will be extremely difficult. Donald Trump, by reneging on the Iranian Nuclear Deal without renegotiating or looking to work on some type of compromise

with Iran, was always going to leave his successors in an incredibly difficult position, diplomatically speaking. Obviously, working on relationships in an international sense is really positive and important, and as the JCPOA would have likely helped to grow a relationship with Iran diplomatically, economically, and culturally, while aiding, incentivizing, and enjoying open communications with the nation during some really tough years and tribulations, it is little wonder why Joe Biden would like to secure a new Iranian deal, preferably before the by-elections, and certainly, before his time in office comes to an end.

However, because of the way that Donald Trump left the agreement, there are real problems involved in creating a new one, or even resurrecting the old one. When the old deal was left by Donald Trump and the United States, thanks in large part to both Israel and the Republican Party of the United States, it left the international credibility of American diplomatic agreements at, perhaps historically low levels. If American deals cannot be guaranteed from administration to administration, then these agreements hold little value or weight to or in the international community. Furthermore, as if antagonizing and hinting at leaving the agreement, all the way up until the decision was finally made to do so, wasn't in poor enough taste, as well as bad deal-making in the interests of the United States, Donald Trump then authorized the assassination of one of the most politically powerful, and the most powerful military figure in the entire nation, former Iranian Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani.

These two actions will be linked with the administration of Donald Trump forever, alongside the fallout from each, and the history books will be unkind to him in this way, as in so many others. Together, they put Iran,

dealing already with mass poverty, some of it of America's doing, and some of its own doing of course, as well as water shortages and mass opiate addiction, the latter a horrifying reality that America too has struggled to cope with, right back in the bad place they had been in before the JCPOA had been signed in 2013; it is all a collective mass of individual missed opportunities.

With sanctions back in place, just in time for the COVID-19 pandemic to begin sweeping the world, Iran has stood, and continues to stand, with little to no chance of escaping this blight without mass suffering and severe loss of life. Disconnected from the world and continuously antagonized by the Trump administrations' "Maximum Pressure" theory of foreign policy, it is little wonder that they turned down the aid presented to them by that administration as the plague swept across nations and continents; furthermore, it is little wonder that the trend of distrust of the moderate reformers that had been fomenting inside Iran as the Rouhani administration faced internal and external pushback to their liberalization of Iran and their diplomatic reconciliation with the west, has further intensified in the time since the Nuclear Deal was walked away from. The combined burdens of renewed sanctions, mass poverty and opiate addiction, the assassination of Qassem Soleimani, the global development that is the COVID-19 crisis, water shortages, as well as the new regional innovation that is the reconquering of Afghanistan by the Taliban after the United States recently, and finally, left after twenty years of occupation, are a great many to bear at one point for any country.

This all, over the last year or two in particular, has further developed to the point where parliamentary and Presidential elections gave the re-

actionaries and originalists further power in the federal government and in local constituencies, as well as the Presidency. Ebrahim Raisi, the former Judge and accused international human rights violator for his role in the mass murder of Iranian leftists in Tehran in 1988, is now the President of Iran, and will very likely become the Supreme Leader of the nation once Ayatollah Ali Khamenei finally passes away.

The Ayatollah wants a new nuclear deal, just as he wanted the old one, and trusted Hassan Rouhani to make it happen in the wake of his own predecessors' efforts; he recognizes, however, the sheer gravity of the mistake made by the former American President and how, despite that it has hurt and further stifled the development of Iran gravely in the years since Donald Trump pulled out of the agreement, he has a theoretical, and perhaps practical, opportunity to get a better deal for Iran now than Rouhani had previously gotten in cooperation with Barack Obama. While he will shoot for this through words and posturing, Iran would likely also take a renewal of the old deal if it is offered to them, whether sooner or later. He is, therefore, pressing and pushing to better his nation's position, if he can, as any other national leader would do in a similar situation.

Out of all the horrific ironies and issues of the Trump years, the entire situation surrounding the Iran Nuclear Deal may be amongst the most horrific and ironic of them all. The deal, of which he said was "one of the worst deal I'd ever seen," was replaced by him with no deal at all, and has put Joe Biden in a position where, even with all of the horror that has unfurled in Iran regarding death toll and suffering, the United States has no possible path forward towards a "better" deal for themselves than was previously reached six years ago.

The master of "The Art of the Deal" messed up a really positive, international diplomatic agreement, didn't replace it with anything, and left America in a position to come to a worse agreement with the same nation later, likely in the very near future. The very best circumstance that can be hoped for on the American side moving forward is that the renewed deal is hardly any different from the first one. That international watchdogs agreed, outside of Israel, that Iran was in no way violating the terms of the Nuclear Deal when it was accused of in the leadup to Donald Trump pulling America from the deal, demonstrates that it was reasonable and functional to and for all reasonable parties.

While the posturing and diplomatic maneuverings will continue until a compromise can be reached between all of the interested parties of the previous deal, and with the Iranian Deal and the context around both its creation and dismissal better understood, it is worth considering the Nuclear Deal that Donald Trump was interested in developing and creating, and the scheme that one of his most trusted advisors, Tom Barrack, both championed and would've personally benefited from. Would America, or the world for that matter, have benefited from this Saudi Nuclear Deal in a more tangible way than from the Iranian Nuclear Deal?

Two Nuclear Deal's, Two very different Reasons, and Two very different Results

The short answer to the aforementioned question, is simply no. While the JCPOA was a Nuclear Deal designed, not to "get" anything from Iran in the practical, transactional or material sense, but to work upon relations between Iran and the powers of the world, its success could've, and could maybe still in the future, create real, tangible economic and humanitarian benefits for all. The deal was designed

to reintegrate Iran into the international community in a diplomatic and economic sense, and thereby benefit not only Iran and its people, materially and culturally, but as things become better and better, the entire world and all of its people. It was a pretty significant piece of foreign policy, no matter my distaste for many of the other policies of the Obama administration, yet because of a lack of diplomatic, historical, and economic understanding, it was allowed to die a quick yet miserable death by his successor.

The Saudi Arabian Nuclear Deal, of which was part of a variation on a greater "Middle East Marshall Plan" that Tom Barrack adopted, but was first championed by Russian linked backers, companies, and supporters years ago, had little to do with the Iranian Nuclear Deal other than its similar name. This deal, of which the agreement between the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Israel was actually a necessary, initial step in the larger process, would have seen either an American company or companies at first, followed by the private investment funds of either the Saudis or possibly the Emiratis, in partnership with Tom Barrack, eventually give first Saudi Arabia, followed by the United Arab Emirates, access to civilian grade American nuclear technology necessary to help power each country, allegedly.

There are a few problems with this deal, which to some, might sound interesting or useful to explore in theory, and perhaps even practice. Helping to ween oil and fossil-fuel-dependent nations off of oil and fossil fuels is obviously important, as is the development of relationships and the sharing of technology with other nations; yet if taking action to befriend and influence Iran is necessary, so is pushing Saudi Arabia towards less barbaric, repressive tendencies, no matter how much fossil fuel they sell America and the world at large.

The first problem with the Saudi Nuclear Deal is undoubtedly that Saudi Arabia, a Wahhabist country and extreme human rights violator, should by no means be given American nuclear technology in either a civilian or military capacity. They are a predicate abuser of humanity, and while the United States has long given them preferential treatment despite that they do not change their repressive, murderous ways, other nations, like Iran for example, are not even fully given the opportunity to earn or prove their way into participation in that same international community that has helped to make Saudi Arabia one of the wealthiest kingdoms in the world while still keeping a nation in repression and extreme poverty and violence.

The JCPOA, far from giving Iran nuclear power, worked to ensure that the only nuclear power coming out of Iran was the civilian power that they themselves had previously developed, and that international cooperation could be worked on and developed in return for international diplomatic, as well as practical domestic concessions. While certain nuclear restrictions within the Iran Nuclear deal disappeared over time, years in the future, good cooperation, and relations would leave nuclear proliferation a moot point vis-a-vis diplomatic leverage for Iran. Should they become a normal, functional member of the international community of nations, then there becomes little need to proliferate nuclear material for non-civilian purposes.

If, on the other hand, Saudi Arabia wants to have access to this type of technology from America, major social and political reforms would need to be implemented, and a non-proliferation deal developed, with international watchdogs coming in to check on all the proceedings on a routine basis. Were the United States to give this type of innovation to either Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates,

after having left the Iranian Nuclear Deal, it does not take much to imagine what the diplomatic fallout might be within that region and in relation to America.

An Iran that had just been rebuffed by a completely biased Donald Trump, only to witness that very same President then give regional adversaries nuclear technology, after watching them all reconcile and normalize relations with Israel in the interval, would likely have pushed Iran further away from negotiations with the Biden administration, whether for a better version of the old deal, or simply the old deal itself, and closer towards the likes of China, Russia, and Syria. The appearance that Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates would've given to Iran together, and all thanks to the United States, would have been a terrible message to send to a nation that America wishes to reconcile with.

Additionally, as the reports of this deal detail, the Saudi Arabian Nuclear Deal had no true altruistic initiative or volition behind it; it was simply a hollow money-grab, designed to enrich the companies, investment funds, and oligarchs that lurked behind it. Whether that be Tom Barrack, Westinghouse, Blackstone, Brookfield Business Partners, or the Saudi Private investment Fund (PiF), the deal was designed to amplify capital gains and returns, to transfer nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia and their allies, the United Arab Emirates, to threaten and bully Iran, and to further legitimize rulers and nations that behave towards their people in much the same, brutal manners in which nations America historically deplores, such as Iran and Cuba, are punished and challenged, not rewarded, for acting.

In short, the stories of the Iranian and Saudi Arabian Nuclear Deals demonstrate both sides of the diplomatic, proverbial coin. The Iranian Nuclear Deal functioned as an ave-

nue by which Iran, a long ostracized, theocratic oligarchy, might have been influenced, incentivized, and prodded by further international mutuality and cooperation towards more liberalizing, progressive trends, or even further revolution, as the first Iranian President Abolhassan Banisadr intimated would happen should Iran become more integrated into the greater international community. Its signing gave hope to diplomacy and non-violent, non-barbarous means of working on and through international dilemmas and looked to create a long-term, sustainable "gain" for the entire world, inside and outside of Iran moving far into the future.

The Saudi Arabian Deal, on the other hand, was, as previously noted, nothing more than a lawless cash grab for some, a further political investment in that region to others, and a really bad piece of foreign policy in general when the rest of the region and world is taken into even the most minuscule account. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Israel for that matter, need to be working on their own, perennial human rights violations more than they need to be sold civilian grade nuclear reactors from American owned companies with speculative ties to a financier/part-time political advisor. The crookedness of the Saudi deal in juxtaposition with the Iranian deal can be easily understood by noting that only in the former deal were people subsequently arrested and charged with federal crimes, in connection to working towards and for the interests of foreign actors or governments.

It is important to judge foreign policy on what it aims to do, and how it aims to do it, across both the immediate and long-term spectrums. While many Americans, on the surface, would likely consider a deal made with longtime American ally Saudi Arabia to be a much better, more self-interest laden endeavor, it would likely take them to appraise the facts, and

overcome their own biases and prejudices to understand that it is reconciliation with Iran that, as of right now, can have a larger, long term and short term economic, humanitarian and diplomatic international impact than the further enriching of Saudi Arabia

would; should Washington wish to work on social, political and human rights issues in Saudi Arabia in return for certain concessions, then that is a completely different discussion, however. Donald Trump could not see any of that, yet the current and fu-

ture Presidents must see all of it and, while working with all nations when and where possible, must also hold all nations, whether friend or foe, to the same lofty standard of human rights that we ourselves so often fall short of living up to as well.

Algeria severs ties with Morocco over Western Sahara, U.S. continues with Trump policy



BY RYAN DAY

Algeria on Aug. 24 to cut ties with neighboring Morocco following decades of strained relations over the disputed Western Sahara territory. Algeria cited what it called as hostile actions by Morocco—alleged use of Pegasus spyware against Algerian officials, support of a separatist group and a failure to uphold bi-lateral commitments, as reasons for the decision, according to Al Jazeera

“The Moroccan Kingdom has never stopped its hostile actions against Algeria,” said Algerian Foreign Minister Ramdane Lamamra at a news conference in Algiers, France24 reported. Lamamra added that consulates will remain open in each country despite the cessation of ties.

Morocco’s Foreign Ministry said statement that while the decision was unjustified, that Morocco would remain a “credible and loyal partner” to the Algerian people.

The borders between the two na-



tions have remained closed since 1994, but diplomatic relations have been steady since 1988. Morocco has been fighting off and on with the Algerian-backed Polisario Front, an armed group that has demanded independence for Western Sahara, also known by the Front as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) since 1976.

In December 2020 former U.S. President Donald Trump reversed long-standing U.S. policy and recognized Morocco’s sovereignty over the Western Sahara as a reward to Rabat for formalizing relations with Israel, the Middle East Eye reported.

In a presidential proclamation, the Trump administration stated that, “The United States believes that an independent Sahrawi State is not a realistic option for resolving the con-

flict and that genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty is the only feasible solution.” The prior position of the U.S. and most of the world was to allow for a referendum to be held in Western Sahara to decide its future, according to Bloomberg.

Experts however have said that the move is unlikely to spur support for Morocco. William Lawrence, a professor of political science and international affairs at the American University, told Al Jazeera that the U.S. is now “the first country in the entire world to recognize the Moroccan claim.” The decision was promptly rejected by the United Nations, the European Union and the African Union.

President Biden has thus far not changed the U.S. stance on the matter. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told Moroccan Foreign Minister Nass-

er Bourita that the administration would stay the course with President Trump's recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara, Axios reported.

In late July, the Times of Israel reported that Joey Hood, the Acting Assistant Secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs, said there is "no change in the US position." "Where

you may see a change is in the level of energy and emphasis we are putting on helping the UN process to really produce results," he said at a news conference in Rabat.

Biden has face internal pressure to reverse the decision. More than two-dozen senators wrote a letter to the president in February to undo the "misguided decision" by former Presi-

dent Trump.

"The abrupt decision by the previous administration on December 11, 2020, to officially recognize the Kingdom of Morocco's illegitimate claims of sovereignty over Western Sahara was short-sighted, undermined decades of consistent US policy, and alienated a significant number of African nations," said the senators in the statement.

El Salvador becomes first country to introduce cryptocurrency as legal tender



BY MALLY KAKEMBO

El Salvador has become the first country in the world to introduce a cryptocurrency as legal tender, with Salvadorians now able to use bitcoin the country over to buy and sell goods and services. President Nayib Bukele has matched the announcement with a \$225 million spending plan that includes \$30 credit to every Salvadorian who takes up Chivo, which is the new e-wallet introduced by the government for purchases in bitcoin or USD.

A host of infrastructure has been introduced to accommodate the change including 200 bitcoin ATMs and a string of Chivo-branded kiosks where consumers can go to learn about bitcoin.

The move has been met with a great deal of economic skepticism. The currency's volatility is one of the key reasons the International Monetary Fund has advised against the use of such



mechanisms. Another reason is the token's ability to bypass authorities and consequently aid illegal activities and illicit transactions.

The grey area of trade was one of the reasons Bukele was drawn to bitcoin's introduction. Around 70% of the country's workforce works in a sprawling underground, cash-based economy. The use of a flexible tool is intended to allow this section of the economy to thrive.

Whilst blockchains proponents often paint it as a key part of the libertarian future, many Salvadorian vendors have claimed the mandatory use of bitcoin is a restriction of economic freedom. The USD, which the country has used as national currency since 2001 is relatively stable and business-

es can use it with confidence. Holding reserves in bitcoin is likely to be a much more inconsistent journey. The cryptocurrency's value has fluctuated wildly for the last several years and is highly prone to speculation.

Such fluctuations may cause even greater damage in relation to reserves at a national level. The government is unlikely to have the policy tools or financial capability to respond appropriately should a speculative problem occur.

These concerns are shared by a majority of the Salvadorian population which polls show view the development with distrust and concern. A poll by UCA University showed that 80% have little or no confidence in bitcoin.

Exclusive Interview with Univ. of Lodz Professor Robert Czulda



BY RYAN DAY

In an interview with Transatlantic Today's Ryan Day, a Dr. Robert Czulda from the University of Lodz said that NATO is a pillar of Poland's security and Warsaw has increased its deterrence system since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and there are ongoing hostilities in eastern Ukraine. He described Germany and France as wanting to have good relations with Russia, making Nord Stream 2's reality difficult for Ukraine and Poland as transit countries. He added that "Russia has no interest in giving up the benefits it has gained in eastern Ukraine." In neighboring Belarus, Dr. Czulda said that Belarus is becoming "more aggressive" with its tactics to suppress dissident voices, including minority Polish voices.

Ryan Day (RD): I myself applied for a Fulbright grant to Poland in 2020 under the premise of analyzing how Poland's role in NATO has changed since 2014, with that year marking Russia's annexation of Crimea. What are your thoughts on Poland's current position in NATO? What has changed since 2014 and if you want to add, how do you foresee that role will evolve in the future?

Dr. Robert Czulda (RC): Regarding your question, the whole security environment has changed, unfortunately in a negative direction. Russia became



more aggressive and was joined by Belarus – this year a regime in Minsk decided to kidnap a political dissident. But it was not the only incident – Belarus arrested political activists of Polish origins (there is a Polish minority in Belarus) – Andżelika Borys, who is the leader of the Union of Poles in Belarus, and Andrzej Poczobut – Polish-Belarussian journalist and activist. Now Belarus decided to launch a more direct hybrid war against Poland and Lithuania – it has been sending illegal migrants to the border. The United Kingdom left the European Union, which changed a political balance in favor of Germany, which is worrying.

After the 2014 Russian aggression on Ukraine, Poland decided to invest much more in its deterrence capabilities – many modernization programs were launched, unfortunately some of them have been stalled. It seems that the main reason for this is the fact that our bureaucracy is not efficient and quite often they are unable to make a binding decision. Last year Poland spent a record 2.37% of its GDP

on defence.

Now our foreign and security policy is based on two pillars: transatlantic and regional. Regarding the former, the United States has invariably been the main ally of Poland. Regarding the latter, although closely interlinked with the former, in 2015 Poland initiated "The Bucharest Nine" informal group. During a "mini NATO Summit" in November 2015, a security cooperation framework was formed. Attendees such as Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Hungary jointly and univocally pressed other NATO member states to enhance the military presence on the "Eastern Flank" threatened by Russia. The United States has been the main guarantee of this initiative and a key provider to ongoing NATO's presence in Central-Eastern Europe.

Poland considers NATO as a pillar of its security and is actively engaged in various operations. In January 2020 Poland took a lead from Germany

over NRF 2020's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). In August Poland deployed its F-16s jets to Iceland, which is another NATO mission. We also had our troops in Afghanistan.

RD: The past week has seen German Chancellor Angela Merkel visit Russia and Ukraine for talks, and on Aug. 23 – Aug. 24. the inaugural Crimean Platform Summit was held in Kyiv. Representatives from all 30-NATO countries attended the conference that was intended to put pressure on Russia to return to the negotiation table and discuss the return of Crimea to Ukraine. As at the moment this endeavor seems near impossible, what in your opinion should NATO do in tandem with the EU in order to keep Ukraine engaged with the west and not look to Russia as a potential alternative?

RC: Are NATO and the EU interested in keeping Ukraine engaged? I doubt it. Major European countries – Germany you mentioned and France – are first of all interested in having good ties with Russia. Germany is about to finish a highly controversial project with Russia, known as the Nord Stream 2. It is considered by Warsaw as a threat to Polish energy security as it bypasses Poland, but also Ukraine. In other words – Germany has been egotistically pursuing its own, national interest and ignoring countries such as Poland and Ukraine. As soon as the NS2 is operational, Ukraine will lose its transit role and Russia might invade it without any fear that a secure flow of its gas to Western Europe is threatened.

In order to keep Ukraine engaged, the West should offer Kyiv some very specific economic programs, which are needed to boost the local economy. This is the biggest problem for the Ukrainians – their economy is in poor shape, and due to low salaries and high unemployment, many peo-

ple decided to leave. Currently Poland has roughly 1,3 million Ukrainian citizens. For now, I don't see any valuable programs – the EU has no solid and coherent foreign policy and the main intention is not to antagonize Russia.

RD: I wanted to change my point that the situation of Russia coming to the negotiation table in regard to Ukraine is nigh impossible. I should say that it is proving exceedingly difficult, with Reuters reporting that Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said that Putin is prepared to discuss bilateral relations with his Ukrainian counterpart, but not the situation in eastern Ukraine.

RC: Definitely. Russia has no interest in giving up the benefits it has gained in eastern Ukraine – it has invested too much time and money to give up. What is more, their presence in eastern Ukraine gives them a direct and highly important access to naval bases in the Black Sea, which in turn makes it easier for Moscow to operate in the Mediterranean Sea, including in Syria. In other words, for Russia eastern Ukraine is an important element of a wider, geopolitical plan to rebuild its influence in the world, that is, in the Middle East and Africa. At the same time, the West has neither the will nor the courage to force Russia to change its position. Ukraine and abandoned.

RD: Along the same lines as the first question regarding Poland's role in NATO, I wanted to ask your opinion on what ways if at all has Turkey's NATO role changed in recent years? I ask this as Turkey remains an important European-Middle Eastern border country that also has taken on a large role as a transit country for migrants, especially Afghans fleeing Afghanistan in the wake of the United States' pullout from the country after nearly two-decades.

Turkey's position has undergone a

very significant evolution, but unfortunately in a negative direction. Turkey has always been somewhat on the sidelines of NATO, although it has been a member of NATO since 1952. Under President Erdogan, Turkey tried to increase its independence, but this turned into a series of crises with NATO members. American readers probably know that during the times of President Trump, relations between Turkey and the United States were tense – for example, Turkey was removed from the F-35 program. Sanctions, not only by the United States, were imposed on the Turkish defense industry. However, it should be remembered that at the same time Turkey provoked a serious conflict with France, which unambiguously sided with Greece.

Added to this is the fact that Turkey has recently blocked NATO's defense plans in Central-Eastern Europe and has been using migrants to intimidate the West. Poor relations with Turkey is one of the most important internal problems in NATO.

RD: Do you think NATO should have more of a hand in the evacuation efforts in Afghanistan? With the United States steadily withdrawing from the country, do you see other NATO countries keeping troops in Afghanistan in the long term?

RC: Regarding the first question – many other NATO member states – apart from the United States – are involved in the evacuation efforts. Poland is one of them – we sent both civilian airplanes and military aircraft, with special forces, to secure an evacuation, also on the behalf of our NATO ally Lithuania. The first group of Afghans – including contractors of the Polish military contingent in Afghanistan – is already in Poland. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has expressed his thanks for NATO's work in tandem with the U.S. to keep Kabul

airport open and safely evacuate citizens, Allies, and partners.

There is no possibility to keep troops in the long term. According to the 2020 Doha agreement between the United States and the Taliban, all foreign troops are to be withdrawn by August 31. The West had enough time to prepare an organized withdrawal, but it failed to do so.

RD: What would you say is different for NATO with U.S. President Biden in the White House as opposed to the prior administration? This question comes as in recent weeks European allies have called into question Biden's promise that "America is back," instead fearing that it is still "America first."

RC: For now it is very difficult to see any element of Biden's NATO policy. What I can point out is a decision to freeze President Trump's order to

withdraw some US troops from Germany. This is the only important example, at least for now. "America is back" is just a promise and most likely hollow – a chaotic withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan is considered by many in Poland as proof that the United States is a dying empire without a leader. Biden has been compared to the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev and definitely this is not a compliment. Even those mainstream media, which previously endorsed Biden, now are very critical of him. The main reason is his lack of any leadership and that he ignored NATO allies during the evacuation operation in Afghanistan.

In terms of actual decisions, President Biden waived sanctions on the Nord Stream 2. Biden wanted to improve ties with Germany, who now got a green light to increase its hegemony in Central-Eastern Europe on behalf of the United States. At the same time

the White House can focus more attention on Asia-Pacific. Nevertheless, this move was highly controversial in the region, particularly in Kyiv.

Dr. Robert Czulda is a specialist in international security, defence, Iran and the Middle East and a Professor at the University of Lodz, Poland. He was a 2017-2018 Visiting Scholar at the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) under a Fulbright Senior Award. He is an alumnus of the Young Leaders' Dialogue of the US Department of State (2010-2011), Visiting Lecturer at universities in Iran, Ireland, Lithuania, Turkey and Slovakia, as well as the National Cheng-chi University in Taipei. He is a freelance defence journalist and contributor to IHS Jane's. He travels to Iran regularly and is the author of various papers about Iran and of a book entitled Iran 1925–2014. Between Reza Shah and Hassan Rouhani.

UK Secretary of State for Scotland says a second independence referendum possible



BY CLAIRE HEALY

The United Kingdom could allow Scotland to hold a new independence referendum, if 60% of Scotland supports doing so over an extended period.

This announcement, which detailed for the first-time what U.K. support for a referendum would require, was



made by U.K. Secretary for Scotland, Alister Jack, in an interview with Politico.

"If you consistently saw 60% of the

population wanting a referendum – not wanting independence but wanting a referendum – and that was sustained over a reasonably long period,

then I would acknowledge that there was a desire for a referendum,” Jack said in the interview.

The last Scottish independence referendum was held in 2014. Scotland rejected independence – 55.3% of citizens voted in favor of remaining a part of the U.K. and 44.7% voted against.

Calls for a fresh referendum have been made by the Scottish National Party (SNP) which won 64 of 129 seats in Scottish Parliament in elections in May. The SNP last week announced a historic cooperation agreement with the Greens, which won seven seats in parliament. Both parties favor Scottish independence from the United Kingdom.

First Minister of Scotland and leader of the SNP Nicola Sturgeon has stated her intentions to hold a referendum

after the COVID-19 crisis is under control, calling any U.K. attempts to block a referendum “undemocratic.” The SNP has long pushed for Scottish independence, and Sturgeon pointed to the election in May as evidence that a second referendum should take place.

“Which path Scotland takes should not be the choice of any single politician or party. It must be a decision of the people. That is why – once the crisis is over – people in Scotland should have the right to make that choice,” she said in a statement on May 26.

“The election result delivered a substantial majority in this Parliament for an independence referendum within the current term. There is no justification for the U.K. Government seeking to block that mandate,” Sturgeon added.

Patrick Harvie, the Scottish Green party co-leader, welcomed the statement from Jack, but said that opinion polls don’t matter.

“We have a very clearly pro-independence parliament, and I would like to see that parliament debate a bill to set that referendum, and I would like to see the U.K. government respect that decision,” Harvie told the Guardian.

An Aug. 5 poll from Redfield and Wilton Strategies found that 47% of Scottish respondents said they would vote no in an independence referendum, and 44% said they would vote yes. The survey found a clear correlation between respondent’s age, and how they voted, with 62% of both 16-to-24-year-olds and 25-to-34-year-olds supporting independence, as compared to 29% of respondents aged 65 and above.

Germany’s Merkel: Nord Stream 2 won’t be a ‘Geopolitical Weapon’



BY RYAN DAY

Outgoing German Chancellor Angela Merkel in an Aug. 22 meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attempted to alleviate Kyiv’s fears of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which is set to carry Russian gas via under the Baltic Sea to Europe. This pipeline would bypass Ukraine in the process, the traditional gas supply route through Europe.



During the post-meeting news conference in the Ukrainian capital in Kyiv, Zelenskyy warned Merkel that the pipeline would be used by Russia as a “political weapon.”

“We view this project exclusively through the prism of security and consider it a dangerous geopolitical weapon of the Kremlin,” he said as reported by France24.

After forcibly seizing Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in early 2014, Russian-armed formations have waged a war in eastern Ukraine in Europe's only ongoing shooting conflict, killing about 14,000 people and internally displacing an additional 1.5 million people.

Officials in Kyiv fear once the Russian pipeline project is completed, Ukraine would be left exposed to further Russian aggression.

Ukraine benefits from an existing natural-gas transit deal worth an estimated \$7 billion dollars that will expire in 2024.

Germany and the United States have vowed to work with Ukraine and Russia in negotiating an extension beyond the 2024 deadline following the U.S.-German agreement to lift U.S. sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline in July.

Russia currently supplies more than

40% of gas bound to EU markets, and the Nord Stream 2 pipeline would increase the amount of gas flow under the Baltic Sea to 110 billion cubic meters per year.

Merkel reassured doubters that the pipeline would not be used as a Russian geopolitical weapon and promised to lead the EU in imposing sanctions on Moscow should any adverse action be taken against Ukraine.

She told reporters during the news conference that "we made clear that we will take action in a European framework toward further sanctions if the suspicion gains traction that the pipeline is being used as a weapon," Bloomberg reported.

Other discussion points included Merkel's request to move forward peace talks in eastern Ukraine. Zelenskyy echoed Merkel's call for a joint Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France leaders meeting on ending the war in eastern Ukraine, Euronews reported.

The meeting in Kyiv comes as Merkel, who will step down as chancellor in September following national elections, was in Moscow on Aug. 20 for a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Putin noted that the Nord Stream 2 pipeline has roughly 15 kilometers (9 miles) before it is completed, AP reported.

Merkel and Putin also verbally clashed on the issue of imprisoned Russian dissident Alexei Navalny.

Germany treated the Russian blogger after he was poisoned on Aug. 20, 2020, on a plane in Russia, with analysts blaming the Russian government, RFE/RL reported. The leaders also discussed the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan, the Iranian nuclear deal, and the stalled talks for peace in eastern Ukraine, German broadcaster Deutsche Welle reported.

France and Britain trade barbs over trickle of refugees from neocolonies



BY MARIA-DIANDRA OPPE

It has been estimated that almost 1,000 migrants crossed the channel from France to the south of Britain on Monday in what is expected to be a record number for a single day.

Out of the roughly 1,000 around



200 of the people who arrived at UK beaches intercepted. The heatwave and gentle sea gave smuggling gangs

the perfect opportunity to direct a small group of overcapacity tiny rigid-hulled boats and dinghies to British

shores.

In comparison to the 1,000 people who made it across, the French border and coast guards prevented only 200 others from crossing by boat on the same day.

Although the absolute numbers are still minuscule compared to the population and resources of both former empires, the numbers of migrants crossing illegally via the channel has climbed since last year. Only 8,417 people were recorded to have reached the UK from France in 2020 but the total for 2021 already stands at 13,500.

Although migrants come from all parts of the world for a variety of rea-

sons, it is those from Africa and the Middle East who most catch the eye of the strong xenophobic movement in Western Europe. Both France and Britain still benefit greatly from their legacy of imperialism. The Jubilee Debt Campaign estimated that annually \$40 billion more leaves Africa than is received by the resource-rich but impoverished continent. The Middle East has also suffered from decades of devastating invasions that has left cities flattened and populations in exodus.

Yet two countries with some of the world's highest standards of living seem intent on trying to degradingly flick small numbers of humans back and forth between one another.

British PM Boris Johnson said "we are doing everything we can to encourage the French to do the necessary and impede their passage" before insisting "we use every possible tactic available to us as well."

The spat is made particularly tense between London and Paris because seven weeks ago Britain agreed to pay France £54 million to enforce their border channel more strictly. Since the payment over 5,000 migrants have made the journey to Britain.

MP Natalie Elphicke of PM Johnson's ruling Conservative party said she wanted new laws that allowed the British Border Force to turn the overcrowded boats back into the ocean.

Worry about variant return forces G20 countries to act when empathy couldn't



BY MALLY KAKEMBO

On Sunday and Monday the countries of the G20 convened in Rome to discuss plans for global vaccine distribution and how helpful it may be to provide support to impoverished countries.

The group is made up of wealthy countries including Britain, the USA, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Japan and often assigns itself a leadership role on global affairs that they can't avoid.

With vaccination rates in most of the G20 countries far above the glob-



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al average – although there is still a disparity between the member states (65% in the UK vs 28% in Brazil) – many leaders from countries outside the group have claimed the immorality of the inequality. The fact that some of the world's wealthiest countries have begun discussing people getting a third 'booster' shot and children being given jabs despite inconclusive evidence has emphasized the lack of empathy coming from the leaders of those countries.

This havoc threatened by low vaccination rates in poorer countries has done little to move leaders such as Joe Biden and Boris Johnson but one concern the WHO keeps trying to draw attention to has had them rethinking.

The Health Minister of Italy Robert Speranza said "If we leave part of the world without vaccines we risk new variants which will hurt all of us". This is the reason he deemed that "inequality is too high and is not sustainable".

The new Pact of Rome as the G20 plan has been called is a statement of intent for powerful countries to start doing their part but is almost completely devoid of timelines, resource allocation and concrete plans. Apart from the political commitment of doing something about the devastating equality, the Pact is almost free from

commitment of any economic or logistical substance.

Speranza had vague plans for how the plan would be carried out, saying “Transferring doses is not enough. We have to make other areas of the world capable of producing, sharing methodologies and procedures”.

The commitment among G20 countries to inoculating poorer countries so far varies massively. At the beginning of summer, China had exported over 250 million doses out of its 355 million total, more than the rest of the world combined. The US meanwhile had exported around 1% of the 330 million produced according to Statista.

Serbian President tells Twitter to ‘Delete my account!’



BY RYAN DAY

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic has issued a challenge to Twitter to close his account after the social network labeled several Serbian media outlets as state-affiliated.

“I can’t wait for them [Twitter] to close my account, so I become another Trump in the world,” he said as reported by the Associated Press. “Who should they cooperate with tycoons, thieves and criminals? It is most normal that they cooperate with the government.”

Twitter muzzled former U.S. President Donald Trump at the beginning of the year at the height of protests in Washington on Jan. 6 when Congress was supposed to confirm the electoral vote after his loss. Trump’s defeat ended in the U.S. Capitol Building being stormed and hundreds arrested. Serbia’s Vucic received support from Trump’s Special Envoy to the Koso-



vo-Serbia Dialogue Richard Grenell.

Twitter said the action was to prevent further violence.

The social media platform has defined the term “state-affiliated” as “outlets where the state exercises control over editorial content through financial resources, direct or indirect political pressures, and/or control over production and distribution.”

More than 10 media outlets and newspapers in Serbia have been branded this way. This has led to Vucic stating that the labeled media sources were “spreading freedom-loving ideas,” ABC news reports.

Serbian State television also commented, calling Twitter’s decision “po-

litical,” stating that in an act of protest it would stop posting content on Twitter’s network. A pro-government tabloid called the Informer called the move “a war propaganda machine,” Euronews reports.

Vucic has for much of his 10 years in power maintained a tight grip on the media, utilizing them as government mouthpieces that criticize the few remaining independent media outlets as propagators of Western ideology and as being owned by the opposition or by foreign embassies.

To date, Twitter has labeled accounts in the U.S., China, France, Russia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates as state-affiliated.

Exclusive Interview with United Macedonian Diaspora President Meto Koloski



BY TRANSATLANTIC TODAY

United Macedonian Diaspora President Meto Koloski tells Transatlantic Today that North Macedonia has been a key ally to NATO before joining the collective security organization. This led to the country agreeing to temporarily house up to 1,800 Afghans for up to 90 days while waiting for visas to the United States. He noted that 3,000 Macedonian troops contributed to the NATO-led ISAF Mission in Afghanistan. He added that while Bulgaria was the first country to recognize independence, it continues to block Skopje from formally opening EU accession talks. He highlighted that the recent Euro 2020 soccer tournament brought Macedonians together more than ever before.

Transatlantic Today (TT): Last week, the government in North Macedonia joined neighboring countries in announcing that it would temporarily accept 450 Afghans fleeing from Taliban rule in hopes of receiving visas to the United States. What motivated Skopje to make such a move and how does it change the relationship between Skopje and Washington?

Meto Koloski (MK): Macedonia has a history of giving refuge to those escaping conflict and wars – it welcomed tens of thousands of Mace-



donians fleeing the Greek Civil War 1944-1948; during the wars of the 1990s, Macedonia welcomed Bosnian refugees, and approximately 400,000 Kosovar refugees, which was a quarter of the Macedonian population at the time. During the migrant/refugee crisis of 2014-15, over a million refugees passed through Macedonia.

While it took a long time, including a painful name change to appease Greece, Macedonia became the 30th NATO member – finally with a seat at the table. Macedonia has always stood by the United States in all U.S.-led initiatives and policies around the world. Based on Macedonia's geographical location the importance of the strategic relationship between the US and Macedonia cannot be overstated. In 2008, the U.S. and Macedonia signed a strategic partnership agreement.

According to media reports, up to 1,800 Afghan refugees (officially as of today (Aug. 26) 780 Afghans) will be housed temporarily in Macedonia for up to 90 days and the U.S. will cover

the expenses so that there is no financial burden upon Macedonian institutions. This is important given Macedonia's debt is now 51.25% of its GDP. COVID-19 took a serious toll on the country's economy, coupled with the lowest number of FDI in the region for several years now.

TT: Before joining NATO in 2020, North Macedonia has participated in multiple NATO-led missions including the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan starting in 2002. With the withdrawal of troops, including U.S. and Macedonian, how would you describe N. Macedonia's legacy in the Afghan war?

MK: Macedonia could protect the tent of NATO but couldn't sleep in it. This was a reference by former Michigan Congresswoman Candice Miller when referencing how Macedonia was kept out of NATO by Greece. I recall when 9/11 happened that the now late Macedonian President Boris Trajkovski called President Bush, and stated, "An attack on America, is an

attack on Macedonia," and pledged to do what it could to help America. This included sending troops to Afghanistan to join our ISAF Mission, and at one time, Macedonian troops, which were the 4th largest per capita troop contributors, patrolled the ISAF Headquarters in Kabul. According to NATO, Macedonia continued "supporting the follow-on Resolute Support mission to train, advise and assist the Afghan security forces."

During our Macedonia in NATO advocacy meetings on the Hill, members of Congress who had been to Kabul, and the ISAF compound, would mention meeting the Macedonian troops and they were the first ones to welcome them to the compound.

Over 3,000 Macedonian troops served in Afghanistan – this takes dedication, bravery, and professionalism – I thank them for their service alongside our own troops.

TT: For over a year, Bulgaria has blocked the opening of EU accession talks for N. Macedonia over historical figures and language/identity. Meanwhile, Bulgarians may be set to go for the third parliamentary elections after a coalition was not able to have been formed. When do you predict a solution to this crisis?

MK: Unfortunately, what Bulgaria is doing is not only ultra-nationalist internal dynamics. The President of Bulgaria is a Social Democrat, and he is just as vocal as former PM, Borissov, and the entire Bulgarian parliament across parties passed a resolution demanding the history/identity/language issues. It seems to be a convenient thing for Bulgaria's political elites

to distract the populace with inflammatory positions on Macedonia's EU accession as they flail about unable to form a governing coalition. Bulgaria also seems at a loss as to how to cope with a resurgence of COVID-19. It may well be that politicians find it more appealing to point at an external issue.

I cannot predict a timeframe, but what I can say is that Bulgaria should do the following:

1. Recognize that Macedonians have a right to their own self-determination, and the Macedonian language.
2. Acknowledge and apologize to the Macedonian people for their occupation of Macedonia during World War II, which saw over 25,000 Macedonians killed, and 98% of the Macedonian Jewish community sent to their deaths in Treblinka.
3. Recognize the existence of a Macedonian minority within Bulgaria and implement the 16 judgments from the European Court of Human Rights, which ruled Bulgaria is in violation of basic human rights and freedom of assembly of their Macedonian minority.

Bulgaria was the first country to recognize the independence of Macedonia, and today is the country preventing Macedonia from joining the European Union. Bulgarian leadership has spewed anti-Macedonian rhetoric for decades, and most recently, have even gone as far as harboring territorial aspirations on Macedonia. This is not how a NATO member should act towards another NATO member.

TT: Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia announced the Open Balkans Initiative, a renaming of the Mini-Schengen Area, in a bid to increase trade and cooperation, and freedom of movement between the countries. Not all the countries in the Western Balkans agree with the initiative, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro. How do you envision the Open Balkans operating for the three countries? What do you think would be necessary to convince the three non-members to join?

MK: We, at UMD, have been in opposition to the Mini-Schengen plan by Rama, Vucic, and Zaeu, which is now known as the Open Balkans Initiative. The countries of the region already have free movement of peoples and goods and have free trade agreements with each other and with the EU through the Central European Free Trade Agreement. Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro are members of the World Trade Organization, while Serbia and Bosnia are still negotiating their membership. There is also the South-East European Cooperation Process, Stability Pact, Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, and the Central European Initiative, which all of these countries are part of. Why recreate the wheel?

The EU is the leading trade partner of the Western Balkans, and the Open Balkans Initiative seems to be a creative, nice on paper, substitute for the lack of movement to integrate the Western Balkans into the EU – essentially a substitute to the Stabilization and Association Process. Montenegro has openly stated they will not join, as has Kosovo.

In my opinion, this only further confuses the public of their own government's intentions to join the EU and their commitment to this process. The EU also has a serious problem on its hands, by allowing the EU enlargement process to be held hostage by one member-state over history, identity, and language, which is contrary to what the EU stands for.

TT: Experts claim that brain drain is a serious issue for the Western Balkans. Why is it that young people are moving away from the region and what can be done to limit this?

MK: Kleptocracy, clientelism, corruption, lifestyle, economic opportunities, and growth. I can list out many reasons. The Western Balkans has seen a huge brain drain, and none of these countries have a real concrete plan to turn this into brain gain. The best and brightest are leaving, not just because they can find jobs elsewhere, but because of the lifestyle. Most job opportunities in the Western Balkans are connected to what political party you belong to. For example, in Macedonia, the government is the largest employer in the country. The region needs a complete shift in mindset. This means, improving the education system, giving teachers and professors more tools and resources, creating public-private partnerships, expanding volunteerism/internship opportunities to build skillsets. Most of the leadership in the Western Bal-

kans does not have a 10-year, 20-year plan for their countries – may be because governments change frequently due to elections, they only care for the present moment – but if you look at the political scene – a lot of the players currently are the same as a decade ago. Not much has changed. You need a constant turnaround of ideas and people. This is where the Diaspora comes into play, and how harnessing their power can truly benefit the Western Balkan societies.

As Macedonia marks its 30th anniversary since independence this September 8th, I encourage the country's policymakers to reflect on the accomplishments but also the pitfalls and have an honest conversation about where they want the country to be 10, 20, 30 years from now.

TT: Macedonians rejoiced this year as it was the first time the country made its first major international soccer tournament, Euro 2020 with 38-year-old journeyman Goran Pandev scoring. What did making this tournament mean for Macedonians in the world of sports diplomacy?

MK: Euro 2020 united and brought Macedonians together like never before, even though the team lost all three matches. The fact that Macedonia made it this far is a true accomplishment. The match showcased Macedonia, its people, tourism, and the overall media coverage further

put the country on the world map.

Seeing the videos of Macedonians celebrating on the streets of Bucharest, Romania – a city where the Treaty of Bucharest was signed in 1913, which saw the division of geographic Macedonia putting Macedonians on different sides of several borders – was emotional for all of us of Macedonian heritage. Side note: Romania is one of the few European Union members that recognizes its Macedonian minority and allows full Macedonian linguistic and heritage promotion for the community in the country.

Macedonia has a huge potential in the field of sports, particularly, handball, basketball, and soccer. The country needs to invest more in this potential. Fingers crossed for the World Cup Qualifiers next month – Go Team Macedonia!

Meto Koloski is a globally recognized human rights and religious freedom advocate with nearly two decades of experience working in Washington, D.C. He serves as the President of the United Macedonian Diaspora, co-chairs the Southeast Europe Coalition, sits on the boards of the American Alliance for Automotive Corporate Social Responsibility and the Macedonian Language E-Learning Center and is a member of the Foreign Policy for America Leadership Circle, and the International Religious Freedom Roundtable Congressional Working Group.

Beijing halts new Lithuanian food export permits, tensions grow over Taiwan embassy



BY CLAIRE HEALY

Lithuanian food producers found themselves caught between souring relations between Beijing and Vilnius this past week, as China stopped approving new permits for food exports from Lithuania.

Tension between Lithuania and China has intensified following the reciprocal opening of diplomatic missions between Vilnius and Taipei in early August. While some exports have been able to continue, Director of the State Food and Veterinary Service (SFVS) Mantas Staskevicius told the *Baltic Times* that the certification process for new permits has stopped.

“[China’s authorities] have stopped the certification process,” he said. “Questionnaires are not being completed because of a lack of audits on their side and everything has stopped.

Staskevicius added that the approval of products stopped without any advanced notice.

“They [Chinese authorities] just are not doing it. I can’t comment on why,” he said.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with Lithuanian Min-



ister of Foreign Affairs Gabrielius Landsbergis on Aug. 21. During the call, Blinken expressed “ironclad U.S. solidarity” with Lithuania “in the face of the People’s Republic of China’s coercive behavior,” according to a statement released by State Department Spokesperson Ned Price.

In turn, Landsbergis tweeted that “[China’s] aggressive pressure is unacceptable.”

Blinken tweeted his support for Lithuania’s decision to expand ties with Taiwan, continuing prior U.S. support for its European partners in developing relations with Taiwan.

The halt in new permits for food exports comes days after the China Railway Container Transport Company stopped direct freight trains to Lithuania, according to the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post*.

The embassy in Lithuania is Taiwan’s

first in Europe in 18 years, and the first of which to be named Taiwan instead of Chinese Taipei, the name used by China. Lithuania has remained committed to establishing ties with Taiwan, while maintaining the stance that doing so is not in violation of Beijing’s One China Policy, which sees Taiwan as part of the country.

In a call between Landsbergis and the chair of the UK Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee on Aug. 19, Landsbergis reiterated this belief.

“Lithuania, as well as other E.U. and world countries, is interested in developing economic relations with Taiwan, which is nothing new or extraordinary and does not go contrary to international commitments vis-à-vis China,” he said, according to a statement released from the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

China introduces new gaming laws for children amid wider regulatory crackdown



BY MALLY KAKEMBO

The Chinese government's recent run of taking moves that wipe billions off some of its biggest markets has continued with the introduction of a new round of laws designed to limit the amount of time children spent gaming.

The recent ban of profits for private tutoring companies sent shockwaves through an industry that was worth \$120 billion at the beginning of August. A sweep of measures designed to curb the power and social costs of large corporations falls in line with the Communist Party of China's announced plan to move China to its second stage of growth, intended to be more equitable than the period began by Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s. Both domestic and international companies have had huge falls in stock price over the last week as President Xi Jinping promised to curb "excessively high incomes". One week in August saw the ten most valuable Chinese companies that trade in America lose \$153 billion in market value – over 15% of their combined worth.

The global gaming industry is worth over \$160 billion. It is larger than Hollywood and growing much faster. \$40 billion of that comes from China, the world's largest gaming market.



The world over, people express concern at the effect this relatively new form of media has on people, especially children. It often receives part of the blame for rising rates of ADHD and social anxiety in youth, as well as increasingly sedentary lifestyles.

The gaming market in most parts of the world benefits from a laissez-faire approach, with there being little proof as so far of its direct negative effects as well as making up a substantial part of most developed and developing economies.

China has taken a more proactive approach, however. In 2019 children in China were restricted to 1.5 hours of gaming a day and three hours during holidays. Leading companies such as Tencent annoyed their intention to help curb unhealthy behavior such as children spending money on games.

The new laws restrict this time even further, limiting gaming for children to just three hours a week between

8-9pm on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays.

In the short term the move isn't expected to impact the big players hugely, with the majority of their revenue coming from those in the 19-35 bracket. However, it is expected the move will choke the funnel from which young gamers pick up a habit that they normally stick with for life. An analyst at Lightstream Research Mio Kato said that "If you pick up a sport at 10 or 12 then you are more likely to keep playing it during your life".

The enforceability of such rules is likely to require a solution that develops with the technology. VPNs already in widespread use throughout China, could provide one way out. If gaming companies in China wish to save themselves from the fate other industries are falling to, it may have to rely on the children and technology staying one step ahead of the CPC.

North Korea turns down offer of vaccines whilst new report says nuclear reactor is possibly firing again



BY VICTORIA MONGIARDO

The International Atomic Energy Agency said in a new report that since early July there have been “indications consistent with the operation” of a nuclear reactor at Yongbyon in North Korea.

The reactor was the focal bargaining chip put forward by Pyongyang when they had three face-to-face meetings with President Trump in an attempt to have impoverishing sanctions lifted. The offer to destroy the reactor came to nothing.

The nation of 25 million has been reclusive and militarily focused ever since a US-led genocide from 1950 to 1953 almost returned the country to the stone age.

The extent of this attitude has been taken to seemingly bizarre lengths at times. A recent offer by the UN to provide 3m Sinovac vaccine shots was turned down. Pyongyang instead proposed the shots were sent to countries that need them more.

Whilst North Korea has used tough quarantines and border closures to try



and control the Coronavirus, the claim that the country is entirely virus-free is widely doubted. Some have speculated that the country is merely trying to angle for an allocation of more effective vaccines. UNICEF, who are working with the UN on the distribution of the vaccine allocations, say North Korea's health ministry is in touch. However, the continued global effort against COVID will require maximum cooperation and UN member states continue to feel exasperated by Pyongyang's opaqueness.

The developments come as North Korea faces the daunting task of getting through the fallout of a series of natural disasters. Last year's crops were badly impacted by typhoons whilst this year they were damaged by weeks of drought followed by heavy monsoon rains. Whilst the weak economy meant preparation for such events was poor, the WPK's general secretary Kim Jong-Un also said mea-

asures to tackle climate change were needed.

Whilst abnormal extremities caused by climate change will wreak increased havoc, the poor nation has struggled to cope with natural disasters ever since the fall of the Soviet Union. To be better prepared for the crisis to come, management of the economy will have to improve and the crippling sanctions eased.

When the latest round of sanctions was applied in 2016 charities such as Christian Friends of Korea said that their efforts to help the impoverished nation were being disrupted. Shovels, threshers and compost makers were all reported to be blocked. For the sake of the Korean people and global battles like those against COVID and climate change, better cooperation is needed.

Russian politician claims two opponents have tried to copy his identity

BY SEB JENKINS

A politician in Russia has claimed that two of his election rivals have copied his name and appearance in an attempt to confuse voters.

Boris Vishnevsky, who is a Liberal Yabloko candidate, is running for election for the lower house of Russian Parliament at the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly, in which he is a current seat holder.

The elections themselves are set to run between September 17 and September 19, although the campaign is proving anything but straightforward for Vishnevsky and his team.

When voters in the region come to choose their latest members of the State Duma later this month, there may be some confusion over who is who on the ballot paper.

Alongside Boris Vishnevsky will appear another two Boris Vishnevskys, not only holding the same name as him, but also dressed up to look rather like the man too.

The original Boris has labelled the copycat situation a 'scam' and referred



to the two rival runners as his 'doubles'.

Convinced the situation is nothing more than a ploy to trick votes into ticking the wrong box, Vishnevsky told CNN: "Of course, this is political fraud without a doubt. They seek to confuse citizens so that they take one of the fakes for the original.

"Evidently, there is no other way of preventing me [from winning]."

Vishnevsky, who is said to be one of the most dangerous opponents to Alexander Beglov, the current city governor, added: "All the other parties are Putin's parties in different suits. They all support Putin's policy in one way or

another."

"Apparently, my chances to win are estimated as very high, so now they have to resort to these dirty schemes. This speaks of a high assessment of my merits and of the level of my support in town. You know, this is not the way you fight weak candidates."

Come September 17, votes will seemingly have the choice between three men only separated by their patronymic names, Vishnevsky Boris Lazarevich (65), Vishnevsky Boris Gennadievich (43), Vishnevsky Boris Ivanovich (59), the latter two running as independents.



Russia holds elections overshadowed by foreign influence rhetoric

BY MALLY KAKEMBO

The party United Russia are on course for yet another victory as Russia holds a 3-day election to its Duma. Early results put the party in the lead and exit polls have corroborated this.

Much of Western media preemptively decried the event as an unfair event. Far-right extremist Alexan-



dar Navalny, who was a beneficiary of a leadership scholarship program at Yale's university has made waves in the last couple of years as a vocal opponent of President Vladimir Putin and United Russia's rule. His party and all affiliates have been banned from running due to what the Kremlin deems as his extremity.

It is expected that the Communist Party will, as has consistently been the case for decades, receive the largest portion of the vote outside the longstanding United Russia Party despite harsh treatment from the media and strong opposition from the country's elite. Communists complained of a smear campaign after a baffling endorsement was received from a convicted criminal infamous for keeping two teenage girls captive in a basement.

Some complaints have also been made of doppelgänger candidates who submitted themselves with matching names as those running against United Russia candidates.

Most of the rhetoric from the Kremlin has been focused on defending the elections from foreign influence. Whilst the main opposition, the Communist Party are mostly immune from this criticism due to contempt from the world's wealthiest, there has been a barrage of attacks against individuals like Navalny and many independent media sources which are often funded by grants from western organizations.

Whilst attempts to splinter opposition passed the point of a sizeable challenge has been effective for most of Putin's reign, signs of paranoia crept out in the days leading up to

the election as police were sent to Apple and Google offices to strongarm them into the removal of an app. Developed by Navalny's team, it gave information about how to tactical vote to beat local United Russia candidates but was forced off both platform's app stores before voting began.

Although United Russia is expected to maintain their supermajority of over 2/3rds, their approval rating is near an all-time low at the moment. Unpopular lockdowns are mandatory elections have compounded existing concerns of rocketing food prices and widespread poverty.

Putin, whose position as President isn't up for election until 2014, remains at a solid 56% and is not actually a member of United Russia, although he consistently retains their support.

Rare progress made in Venezuelan power talks

BY VICTORIA MONGIARDO

Mexico City has hosted talks between the Venezuelan government and its opposition that were brokered by Norway in the hopes of helping the country return to a semblance of normalcy.

There was only a small amount of common ground found but the progress offers a ray of hope to the South American country which has descended into political, social and economic turmoil over the last few years. Venezuelans will take the step forward as a good sign for the second round of talks to be held in Mexico City again later this month.

The Venezuelan opposition has changed its strategy in recent months. Their backing at the negotiation table by The Netherlands rather than the US was a key part of this. Washing-



ton's sanctions on Venezuela have been a key factor in the country's economic suffocation that has played a large part in the exodus of 5.7 million people, mainly to neighboring Columbia.

President Maduro's socialist government meanwhile was backed by Russia at the negotiating table. The economic isolation of Caracas in the Americas has increasingly pushed Maduro's government to the East and

eroded the country's autonomy from Moscow and Beijing more than Washington or Maduro would like to admit.

One unifying point during the talks was the rejection of neighboring Guyana's territorial claim to the mineral-rich Essequibo region. Another was the need to look at the devastating consequences that arise from "over-compliance" to the sanctions imposed, which may have been hard to work through had Gaudio's core

backer, the US been at the table.

The opposition recently declared their intention to participate in the upcoming elections, although pessimistically and reluctantly. However, the change in tact appears to be providing more fruit than the last few years, which peaked with Juan Gaudio naming himself president to almost no effect having never been voted for. The US and EU recognized the self-appointment until Europe backed

away at the beginning of this year.

Sceptics of Maduro's government, which won two-thirds of the 48% turnout in 2018's election, say he's just using the talks to try and lift sanctions. If he were to be successful, millions of Venezuelans may be lifted back out of poverty. The populace hopes that this round of negotiations, the fourth in five years, brings some progress to the unstable country.

Venezuela's opposition bloc announce intention to run in November election

BY DEJAN SRBINOVSKI

Venezuela's US-backed opposition block has tacitly admitted the failure of its political tactics by announcing they'll be fielding candidates in November's local and regional elections for the first time in four years.

The bloc boycotted the 2018 elections as part of a wider attempt by right-wing governments from the West to topple the long-standing socialist government. Despite western media widely hailing Venezuela's electoral system a few years earlier – Forbes called it "a model for the world" after Maduro's victory in 2013 – that rhetoric changed in line with foreign policy shifts as the US began a devastating campaign of economic warfare in 2018.

Venezuela has retained support from countries such as China and Russia under Maduro but it has not been enough to prevent the economic spiral the country has found itself in for the last few years. Although the Chavista government oversaw an economic miracle during its first 15 years the collapse of oil prices, which the country relies on heavily, has left Maduro overseeing a perilous situation that has caused one of the world's biggest outpourings of refugees. The down-



turn also led to a drop in popularity from the once highly-esteemed Chavista movement which fractured the political landscape and resulted in a battle that poured into the streets during 2018's hotly contested election.

After embarrassing himself and his backers by declaring himself president to little effect Juan Guaido, who leads the opposition bloc, has now said that returning to the polls will serve as a "useful battleground".

Critics including Guaido accuse Maduro's government of tightening its grip on key institutions and only

using negotiations to divide his enemies. A new round of talks due to run between Friday and Monday will involve greater international participation in the hopes that a non-compromised opposition can fairly compete with a government that respects democracy.

The key goal for Maduro's government during the talks will be sanctions relief so to ease the impoverishment being pushed on the population, which will greatly help any honest electoral chances. Guaido's team will be hoping for the release of political prisoners and the promise of a more

even playing field for the coming election. The US and Europe have recently announced that they were open to easing sanctions if they saw progress

at the negotiating table.

Each side will be skeptical of one another, although both prefer to main-

tain Venezuela's autonomy from Russia and China. That could provide the midway point.

Military coup succeeds in Guinea



BY MALLY KAKEMBO

A so-called National Committee for Reorientation and Development has taken power in a coup by Guinea's military.

Initial reports emerging from the country were convoluted. After state television was taken over and an announcement made that military commanders would take over as governors of the country's provinces, the ministry of defense said the coup attempt had been repelled.

Since then, however, unverified videos have circulated of the seemingly deposed President Alpha Condé being marched around Conakry by men in military uniform. After hours of intense gunfire outside the presidential palace, it now appears that the coup was successful.

Condé first came to power in 2010 in an election in which he benefited from his past as a democratic activist. However, his rule has become increasingly contentious especially after he pushed through a constitutional change that allowed him to run for a third term, which he did successfully. His government cracked down ag-



gressively when large protests filled the streets in response.

The struggle between Condé and Guinea's military is over a decade old. In July 2011, the presidential palace was shelled. A presidential guard was killed and two others injured. Over 40 soldiers were arrested in response to the alleged assassination attempt and a government official claimed many were tied to the country's previous military rulers.

Developments in Guinea hold particular strategic importance because of the country's bauxite reserves. The metal is the main ingredient in aluminum and hit its highest price level in a decade on Monday. Extraction companies from around the world have set up shop in the West African coun-

try which has an impoverished population but a fast-growing economy. It has seen annual growth of over 6% for the last 5 years.

The coup was led by a former French legionnaire named Mamady Doumbouya. His address on state television urged mineral companies to continue operations as normal.

The UN, the African Union and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) all moved quickly to condemn the coup.

Guinea is the third state in the region to have a successful military coup in the last year. Military councils have recently taken power in both Mali and Chad.

Japan PM Suga announces plans to step down



BY DEJAN SRBINOVSKI

Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has unexpectedly announced he has no plans to run in the LDP's upcoming leadership elections. He will also be relinquishing his leadership of the East Asian country.

The move comes with approval ratings for him and the government sitting below 30%. The polls are unlikely to mean the LDP's hold on the country is at risk, however. The Liberal Democratic Party has since 1955 run Japan almost continuously. Between 2009 and 2012 the Democratic Party briefly held power and a coalition government was formed from 1993 to 1994.

An ineffective COVID response and vaccine rollout are the main causes of the general discontent in Suga's government. The country has now had more than 1.5 million cases and repeated extended lockdowns. The decision to press ahead with a mostly unattended Olympics despite widespread opposition meant the event – which often provides boosts to host governments – will be remembered as a particular stain on his short tenure.

Although he only held onto the position for a year, his term won't be won't be remembered as particularly fleeting. The position has had a revolving door for most of the last fifteen years.



Suga was the 9th Prime Minister since 2006. His predecessor Shinzo Abe was an anomaly and served for more than half that period before stepping down due to ill health.

Markets responded positively to the news with Topix stock index closing up by 1.6%. It is expected that his replacement will inject a large fiscal stimulus which contributed to the jump.

Despite the economic miracle that the country experienced in the 2nd half of the 20th century, Japan now sits on top of a growing debt pile. Of advanced economies, it's the most proportionally indebted compared to GDP in the world. Any new fiscal package is likely to be funded by further debt, impounding the structural problem.

The LDP is due to hold its leader-

ship election on September 29th and it's widely expected the winner will take the reigns of the parliamentary majority it holds.

Popular minister Taro Kono, who is in charge of the vaccine rollout intends to run. Former foreign minister Fumio Kishida has also already expressed his intention to partake in the election.

The LDP looked to be heading for turmoil, with suggestions Suga was planning on dissolving parliament and sacking his long-term party ally, before bringing Japan back to more familiar territory with another LDP election.



Washington Insider



AFGHANISTAN WITHDRAWAL...
THE END OF AN ERA

