



Washington Insider

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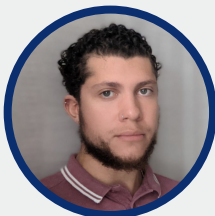
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John Ruehl



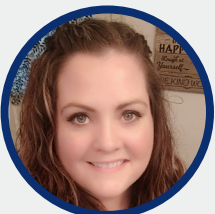
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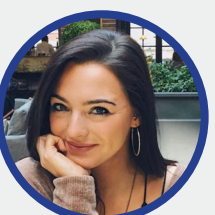
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ABOUT US

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.

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Is the US Ending Its Alliance With Saudi Arabia?



U.S. to provide additional \$67 million to Lebanese army

Biden hopes to reduce social spending bill to \$2.2 trillion or less

BY MANDILEE HECHT

The leader of the progressive House Democrats said earlier this week that her members had a constructive meeting with United States' President Joe Biden, who is working to persuade different factions of his party to agree on a legislative package worth \$1.9 trillion to \$2.2 trillion for his climate and social safety-net plan.

Biden visited nine members of the left-wing caucus for more than two hours on Tuesday, and separately met with a group of moderate House members and senators, as the White House pressed for "urgency" in passing the president's economic plan.

In a written statement, Jayapal stated that Biden is adhering to a topline figure of \$1.9 trillion to \$2.2 trillion, down from his earlier \$3.5 trillion Build Back Better proposal.

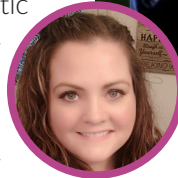
Biden also met individually with Senate holdouts Krysten Sinema, D-Ariz., and Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., on Tuesday, Oct. 19.

Biden needs the support of all 50 Democratic senators to approve the measure in the Senate through a process known as reconciliation, but Manchin and Sinema have objected to the cost. Manchin has stated that his cap is \$1.5 trillion.

Progressives in the House have indicated they will not assume another element of Biden's domestic agenda – a \$1 trillion infrastructure measure passed by the Senate in August – until the more comprehensive reconciliation package is passed.

Manchin has expressed his opposition to a climate plan included in Biden's reconciliation package that would provide incentives to fossil fuel firms that convert to sustainable energy. According to Jayapal, reaching a final consensus on climate change remains a challenging task for progressives.

Biden's social safety-net program calls for increased taxes on high-in-



come individuals and businesses to fund free community college, universal prekindergarten, subsidized childcare, national paid leave, Medicare expansion, and other liberal goals.

Biden will travel to his hometown of Scranton, Pennsylvania, on Wednesday to pitch his plans. The president is under pressure to approve climate-related legislation, particularly before Biden attends a United Nations climate meeting in Glasgow on Oct. 31.

Capitol Police Department whistleblower letter to Congress

by Athena Nagel

As reported by the Washington Post, a whistleblower identified as a former senior member of the Capitol Police slammed the police's leadership in a new letter to Congress in the days leading up to the deadly insurrection on January 6.

The 16-page letter identifies two Capitol Police officials – assistant



chief Yogananda Pittman and acting assistant chief Sean Gallagher — as having not shared critical intelligence with essential police leaders. The letter further claims these leaders did nothing to help officers once the violence began on January 6th. Additionally, they haven't seen any consequences as of the September 28th dated letter. This letter addresses leaders in the US House and Senate.

The whistleblower has 30 years of service in the Capitol Police Department as a former high-ranking officer. Additionally, he worked there on January 6th.

Although there are allegations similar to those of the Senate Judiciary Committee and the Inspector General previously. This letter further identifies police department leadership and congressional leaders for failing to disclose the department's failures.

The former department official wrote that the whistleblower letter alleges that the failures of Pittman and Gallagher have been "marginalized, negligibly investigated, categorically underreported and without account-

ability. As pointed out by many, they have been restored to their same positions as if they were not responsible for the single greatest intelligence failure in the history of the U.S. Capitol Police is astounding."

It is alleged by the former department official that they did not share intelligence information with the department. Had these leaders shared their intelligence, it likely would have "changed the paradigm of that day" and that during the attack, "they did not try to help or assist as officers and officials were fighting for each other, their lives and the Congress."

The observer writes, "What I observed was them mostly sitting there, blankly looking at the TV screens showing real-time footage of the officers and officials fighting for the Congress and their lives," while they were in the command center for part of the attack.

Nine months after the January 6 insurrection, the Capitol Police department faces the fallout from that attack. As a result of the shock of the events and the criticisms issued in

response, the department has made fast changes, like providing cell phone alerts on daily intelligence updates to rank-and-file officers.

According to the new chief, Tom Manger, many changes are being made, and they are working on learning from their prior mistakes to continue to carry out the department's mission.

Tom Manger goes on to say, "The men and women of this Department are committed to that critical mission. Our goal is to work as a team, to move forward, and advance the work that keeps the U.S. Capitol and the people who work here safe."

Within a month after the attack, members of the department voted Pittman and Gallagher out of office.

To express displeasure with management, unions could vote for no confidence, among the most adversarial actions. It reflected USCP officers' frustration with management and sent the loudest message they could issue together.

Records reveal Trump concealed \$70 million during presidency by Mandilee Hecht

Records show that former United States President Donald Trump concealed \$70 million in losses at a DC property throughout his administration. Democrats in the House of Representatives claim misinformation regarding a hotel that became a meeting site for Republicans, was revealed in records.

House Democrats alleged Friday, October 8, that Donald Trump concealed losses of more than \$70 million at his namesake Washington, DC hotel while he was in the White House. The deception was detailed in documents released by the General Services Administration (GSA), which leased the



Old Post Office building on Pennsylvania Avenue to the Trump Organization

in 2011 and signed off on its operation of the hotel after Trump entered the White House, just steps away, according to the House oversight committee.

Trump has faced a slew of concerns regarding potential self-dealing with his businesses while in office. The House committee said on his legally mandated financial reports, President Trump stated the Trump Hotel generated him over \$150 million in revenue during his tenure in office. However, records reviewed by the committee reveal that the Trump Property experienced net losses of more than \$70 million, prompting the former president's holding company to infuse at least \$24 million to save the ailing ho-

tel.

He also appears to have hidden conflicts of interest resulting not just from his ownership of this failing firm, but also from his responsibilities as the hotel's lender and guarantor of third-party debts. According to the committee, Trump obtained special treatment from Deutsche Bank in 2018, allowing him to postpone payments on a \$170 million loan.

Without this postponement," the committee stated, the hotel may have been forced to pay tens of millions of dollars to Deutsche Bank at a time when it was already suffering from severe losses. During his presidency,

Trump did not publicly disclose this major gain from a foreign bank.

The committee added that the former president also failed to disclose sufficient details of more than \$3.7 million in foreign government payments, enough to cover over 7,400 nights at the Trump Hotel at the average daily rate, potentially violating the US constitution's emoluments clause, which prohibits federal officials from profiting from their positions.

The Trump camp did not immediately respond. In the past, Trump has stated that inquiries into his business dealings are politically motivated and devoid of legal substance.

Debt Ceiling Extended Through December



by Athena Nagel

After weeks of partisan deadlock over the issue, Democrats and Republicans came to a deal on Thursday, 10/07/2021, that extended the nation's debt limit until early December.

To be sent to President Joe Biden for his signature, the extension will need to be approved by the House. The House will vote on the bill on Tuesday, according to Majority Leader Steny Hoyer.

The Senate is scheduled to vote today on the final agreement reached by Majority Leader Chuck Schumer. It was revealed by a CNN aide familiar with the negotiations that the agreement includes raising the debt ceiling by \$480 billion to make it to December 3 as required by the Treasury Department.

It was announced a day after Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell announced that he had floated a debt ceiling proposal in his weekly press conference, sparking negotiations



between the two parties to reach an agreement.

Both parties have made clear that default cannot be avoided and that any economic consequences would be grave.

But even though the debt limit extension saves the immediate economy from dire consequences, it does not reduce the partisan discord over the issue. The issue is merely delayed for another time.

Putting the facts before the political spin, CNN's Chris Cillizza reveals the important news.

The floor speech Schumer delivered moments after 10 Republicans joined Democrats to advance the bill was also sharply criticized by Democrats and several Republicans as too partisan.

In order to reduce the debt limit, Republicans have insisted that Democrats should act alone through the budget reconciliation process. In response, Democrats claim that issues of bipartisan responsibility need to go through a lengthy and unwieldy process, with too much risk of miscalculation.

Despite their fundamental differences, the parties will face off in early December.

Following the recent passage of a short-term extension to avert a government shutdown, lawmakers will face the expiration of government funding on December 3rd.

The Senate voted to end the filibuster in the debt ceiling agreement, which needed 60 votes to succeed, just before voting on the final vote Thursday evening. Together with the votes of Democrats from all caucus-

es, 11 Republican senators helped get the Senate over the procedural hurdle. The result was 61 to 38 votes in favor.

The Battle Lines

McConnell said on Thursday that the debt ceiling agreement gives Democrats more time to raise it by themselves, yet another sign that partisan battle lines remain clear.

The majority will no longer have an excuse of "a lack of time" to deal with it through the cumbersome budget process.

Despite the extra time, Democrats

have already stated they have no interest in using the reconciliation process.

The Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen, cautioned lawmakers that the federal government would run out of funds if Congress did not raise the debt ceiling by October 18.

Since the deadline is more of the best guess estimate than a set in stone deadline, Congress may not have even that long. Both sides were pushed harder this week to reach an agreement.

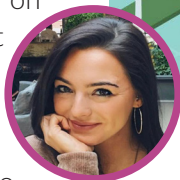
President Biden to Reinstate Environmental Policies Dismantled by Trump

by Hannah Ochocki

WASHINGTON- On Wednesday, the Biden administration announced plans to reinstate three aspects of a significant environmental law. These provisions were rolled back by Donald Trump in the summer of 2020. The policies hold new construction accountable for their disruption of the environment.

The White House Council on Environmental Quality said it would reinstate the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). According to Energy. Gov, the purpose of NEPA is to promote efforts that will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man. It requires government agencies to investigate the environmental impact of new infrastructures such as highways and pipelines. NEPA is considered to be one of the most notable environmental laws since its inception in 1970.

The reinstatement will take place over two phases, the first in which renews aspects that were dismantled. The second phase is opening up to broader involvement between the government and communities.



The Trump administration restricted NEPA in 2020 because it thought it stood in the way of completing necessary projects. It was part of a more extensive operation meant to "cut through red tape" and give way to the quicker approval of new construction. The decision was met with extreme criticism by Democratic leaders and environmentalists alike.

The new proposed changes mean that businesses will have to consider their impact on the environment when building. It's an effort to minimize pollution, especially in cities already overtaken by smog. Representative Raúl M. Grijalva called it "a necessary first step to better protect communities from polluted air and

water, especially those communities that are already overburdened by the cumulative effects of multiple pollution sources."

Although met with overwhelming support from environmentalists, some Republicans have mentioned that the bill will halt the construction of new green infrastructure listed in Biden's other plan. The NEPA proposal comes when Congress reviews one of the most significant infrastructure bills in history, the Build Back Better plan. Along with new construction, the Build Back Better agenda aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030. Other aspects of the plan look to cut energy costs for American families and create a safer, greener economy.

The proposal also comes immediately after a disruption in the White House. Earlier this week, an environmental group blasted 5,600 emails to high-ranking Biden officials to gain more attention for their cause.

Although President Biden has been criticized for not living up to his earlier environmental campaign promises, he has undoubtedly made the environment a greater priority than the last two administrations.

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) will hold two virtual meetings for public comment on the proposed rule changes later this month.

Supply Chain Issues Continue to Hamper Biden Administration

by Liam Flynn

As the U.S. economy continues to open up in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economy is facing historic supply chain bottlenecks that are impacting the availability of goods and services across a wide range of different industries from publishing to consumer goods. Surging demand has exacerbated this issue as consumers enter the holiday season, all while cargo ships remain in-port.

President Joe Biden has called on logistics and shipping companies to “step up” to meet the impending holiday demand. The President met with various stakeholders including executives from the ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach, and executives from the National Retail Federation, American Trucking Association and the Pacific Maritime Association.

Considering bottlenecks, the Port of Los Angeles is expected to expand to 24/7 operations. With 40% of all shipping containers imported to the US coming through either Los Angeles or Long Beach this expanded capacity is essential to improving the current situation.

The administration has also received pledges from major companies to intensify operations to expedite the shipping of goods across the country. Among these companies include Walmart, FedEx, and UPS. The estimated impact of these pledges is expected to be an additional 3,500 containers per week reaching their destination.



The bottleneck has been caused by a shortage of trucks and drivers to pick up the goods in port. This shortage coupled with high demand has resulted in most back-ups in all of the US's largest ports in southern California, Seattle, and the New York area. The impending holiday season is expected to only exacerbate demand.

In addition to many goods not being delivered on time, the reduced supply is also impacting prices. According to one report, high inflation is expected well into 2022. Prices in essential industries such as food, energy, and housing continue to rise as wages remain constant causing Americans to tighten their budget. Some economists argue that this surge in inflation is temporary directly related to the pandemic and supply-chain bottlenecks. Others argue that this inflation is here to stay.

Whether or not surging prices are here to stay, the Biden administration is keen to address it by introducing a “supply chain disruption task-force” in

June. Biden's favorability is currently at an all-time low due to another wave of COVID in the delta variant, a criticized exit from Afghanistan and the current supply chain issue. The administration acknowledges that the government cannot guarantee a quick resolution to supply-chain issues but is committed to using all resources at the government's disposal to make progress.

Major companies and the Biden administration will need a herculean effort to steward the country through this crisis. With a record number of cargo ships idling in port, essential goods and services are delayed as demand for those goods surges. Currently, wages are not growing relative to inflation worsening the country's labor shortage. Meanwhile, a lack of truckers and workers maintains the problem causing the supply-chain bottleneck to begin with. Despite the complicated circumstances, the Biden administration will need to address this crisis to curb a falling approval rating.

Steve Bannon: A Retrospective and Analysis



BY TRENT NELSON

In one of the first essays of note that I was able to get published, I wrote, in the aftermath of the firing of Steve Bannon from his duties as a chief advisor to the President of the United States, that perhaps his firing was actually just politically and practically useful for then-President Donald Trump, as well as for his recently-former advisor. I argued, at the time, that in the position Bannon found himself in, he was actually in a weaker, less capable position to influence the movement that he had helped to cultivate as Donald Trump first swept into power in 2016; being freed from the shackles of public service within a government would make him once again, potentially at least, a very dangerous and influential figure.

The first thing that struck me about Steve Bannon's agenda after he escaped public service was the broad scope of his ambition; after his American success, he clearly felt empowered to not only continue to try to rework the United States, but many other countries across the world as well. Steve Bannon had supported Donald Trump when few, comparatively speaking, would touch him, and that support would pay off with the shock victory over Hillary Clinton in



the 2016 United States Presidential Election. From the lead man at the far-right fringe outlet, Breitbart, to a position of intimacy in the creation and dictation of national policy as an advisor to the President, Bannon's gamble had paid off. He quickly discovered the inhospitable nature of American government towards outsiders, however. Those who do not have the desire to play by the political rules, while also lacking the power to isolate and protect themselves from often harsh criticism, are not destined to stay in the District of Columbia for very long, in an official capacity at least. Steve Bannon's firing was, therefore, always mutual, and always important for both he, and the President of the United States.

While the President got to remove someone highly detested by both parties from his administration, Steve Bannon was released from this bondage of checks and balances, red tape,

and endless committees. Freed back into a world in which he and his influence could wrestle public opinion into submission most effectively, Bannon could really, finally, get things done again.

That was my view in early September of 2017, just after Bannon had been "fired." With four years having passed since that time and piece, I have spent more time than I care to admit keeping a watchful eye on what Steve Bannon, his cronies, and his movement have wanted to do, and what he has actually accomplished across this space. I personally believe that he is a wretched human, without question, and yet he is an ambitious one as well, and that ambition and self-confidence have almost willed his vision into, at least partial, existence at times. After Bannon left his role with the former-President, he began a sort of uber-nationalist tour of the world, which included work to try to get the

nefarious Roy Moore elected as Senator of Alabama in the wake of Jeff Sessions decision to take the Attorney General job in that 45th administration, but that would be but a taste of what Bannon would be attempting to achieve over the next approximately 1,460 days or so.

To properly tell this story, the entire story of Steve Bannon as best as I know it, or to at least explain it all in the most comprehensible way possible, it is necessary to start from just after my original piece was written, nearing the end of 2017. From there, it is possible to better see how the “American Spider,” as I sometimes call him in ode to the “Universal Spider,” Louis XI of France, has been attempting to weave his web around the world, where he succeeded, where he failed, and where he didn’t know he hadn’t failed until it became apparent that he had succeeded; this story takes place, not only in the United States, but across Europe, Asia, Japan, the subcontinent of India, and many places in between.

It is incomplete as well, even with the publication of this massive, divvied-up essay. That is because the story of Steve Bannon is simply not over yet, nor does this writer know all of the nuances of the life of a remarkably secretive, nefarious man over the course of the last four years or so. A great many things have occurred in that time, from success, to failure, a global pandemic, the individual political or social ebbs and flows that nations across the world naturally and perpetually go through, as well as peoples own perceptions of what they want, what they need, and what people like Donald Trump, Jair Bolsonaro, Boris Johnson, and Steve Bannon wish to do for them if elected.

“...The American fascist would prefer not to use violence. His method is to poison the channels of public information. With a fascist the problem is never how best to present the truth to the public but how best to use the news to deceive the public into giving the fascist and his group more money or more power...” – Former Vice President of the United States, Henry A. Wallace, New York Times, 9 April, 1944

Steve Bannon would go all over the world on this mission of his, and he would attempt to put so many different, sometimes simultaneous measures into action, that it would all be very impressive if nearly all of these innovations were not all terrible and/or harmful to people, nations, and the very planet we live on as well. His first order of business after he was dismissed from his position advising Donald Trump, apart from rejoining Breitbart News, would be to attempt to promote Republican candidates that parroted Donald Trump in their vitriolic perspectives and limited worldviews, and could replace some of those politicians whom did not particularly care for Steve Bannon and all that he stands for.

He would look to support fresh candidates, where he could find them at least, as well as turncoats who might have simply seen the Trump opportunity and jumped at it, and, like Trump, alleged political outsiders. Suffolk County New York representative Lee Zeldin (R) was clearly a turncoat, Republican opportunist, and was a rather easy candidate for Steve Bannon to back for the subsequent 2018 mid-term election, as Zeldin is a consistent, proverbial slam dunk with his older, conservative Long Island constituents. But when he decided to back the firebrand, hyper-conservative Roy Moore

in a Special Election in early December of 2017 for the vacant Alabama Senate seat, it was a case of hubris and political misjudgment; it seemed doomed from the start, even despite the fanaticism of Trump supporters in the deep south. Moore was a highly controversial and unpolished candidate that was not able to run from his past indiscretions as the Teflon Trump seemed, for so long, to be able to; Steve Bannon thought that he could work his magic and make Moore into a United States Senator despite all of this, instead of taking the political or social temperature of the nation. Had he done this, he would’ve foreseen the inevitable, and that pushing his luck here would be an unnecessary loss of momentum for his movement.

Roy Moore, who would win the Republican nomination, before only narrowly losing to Democrat Doug Jones in the state election on the 12th of December, 2017, despite all of the quite heinous allegations against him, was a deeply embarrassing failure for both Steve Bannon and Donald Trump. When compared to the younger people that, in time, as we shall see, would grow out of the very message that he and Donald Trump had been helping to spread so far, and with such wide and dangerous influence during the prior years, it can be seen as an illustration of their own lack of political naivety and inexperience.

While the former Presidential advisor was attempting to create candidates to supplant sitting Republicans for the future, he had not taken into consideration the work that he had already previously put in towards this end; like the legendary Johnny Appleseed of the late-18th and early-19th century America, Bannon spread and planted his own seeds, those proverbial seeds of illiberal, reactionary

neo-fascists and would-be-strongmen and women, by his work with both Breitbart and the 45th President. While he was, in late-2017, early-2018, seeking to find or gently mold new Trump allies for Congress, he had not yet realized that he simply needed to wait for his seeds to mature into saplings and, eventually full-grown trees.

When this time would eventually come, which we will get to later in this essay, Bannon would have all the new, young, fresh, and insane new proteges that he might wish for. The success of the impact that Donald Trump, Steve Bannon, that campaign, his presidency, and the overall messages of that movement, had on the psyche of the American general public would, in time, create in the midst of American society, great swaths of Trumpian politicians coming out of the woodwork, instead of, like Roy Moore or Donald Trump themselves, out of 1968.

But Steve Bannon couldn't have necessarily foreseen or known any of that at the time. Having been let go by the White House, and, having been quoted in a book as saying true, yet likely, from his position at least, regrettable things about both the President as well as his family, he would find himself out of his fallback job at the aforementioned Breitbart only months later. And so, by the beginning of 2018, it would've been fair to say that Steve was not having a very good stretch after the triumphs of which he was a part of dating back several years.

These setbacks would do little to deter the man, however, and he would find himself, perhaps only coincidentally, working in Europe, within individual nations, and within the greater European Union environment as well,

to promote and encourage his brash brand of hyper-nationalism and extreme cultural isolationism. After this run of poor luck and form that followed him from the end of 2017 into 2018, Steve Bannon would basically sojourn around the continent, like the aforementioned "Appleseed," a sort of European troubadour of Fascism, Illiberalism, and barbarism.

"No one can be truly powerful unless he has access to the command of major institutions, for it is over these institutional means of power that the truly powerful are, in the first instance, truly powerful..." – Charles Wright Mills

It is likely that Steve Bannon, no matter how much he might or might've disagreed with the late, great Professor, would've wholeheartedly agreed with this particular quote of his. Steve Bannon's recent work has, for many years to this point, been dedicated to putting his peers, disciples, and acolytes into powerful, institutional positions, by manipulating and deceiving the electorate, so that they can wield, with him as a sort of ideological bard, disconnected from all, and so able to influence all, real, consequential power in whatever nation or state they might exist in.

The aim of all of these machinations, and indeed, the aim of this peculiar ideology, would be further exemplified by the European Parliamentary far-right organization "The Movement," of which Steve Bannon is, was, and has been, a sort of founder of. This organizational tool of the far-right, technically created and registered in early 2017 in Brussels by future Steve Bannon ally, Mischael Modrikamen, would be left dormant while Bannon directed Donald Trump in a public, official capacity, and it would remain dormant

until he had already played the role of nationalist pied piper around America for some time, and even bits of Europe too. When Mischael and Bannon met, and would later hold at least one further meeting with the nefarious Nigel Farage of UKIP, "The Movement" was officially living in the capacity of a vehicle for European far-right parties to grow and develop together. This extreme foresight and the grand scale of his ambitions demonstrates in itself, the remarkable groundwork laid in preparation for his ultimate endeavor: To fundamentally transform international relations.

Therefore, to that end, Steve Bannon's time between the start of 2018 and the beginning of the global, COVID-19 pandemic, was spent generally in appearances, communication, assorted conferences and meetings with far-right officials and their parties in and across much of Europe, as well as nations in Asia and South America. He spoke about, or on behalf of, many of the reactionary elements of each nation he visited, at events and in the media, as well as about Donald Trump and his brilliant American administration. This journey had its ups and its downs, with one really positive year and one mediocre year before the world was consumed by the, at this time, still unknown COVID-19.

It included tours and visits to the United Kingdom, England in particular, and the aforementioned, notorious UKIP, as well as their governing Tory Party, previously led, at the time, by the second female Prime Minister in English history, Theresa May, and presently-headed by the despicable Boris Johnson. Across 2018 and 2019, wherever illiberalism and nationalism could be found, Steve Bannon would basically be found as well; this includes time spent in France with Ma-

rie Le Pen and her National Rally, (formerly the National Front), Italy with Lega Nord, Brothers of Italy, and the Five Star Movement (M5S), Poland, with their own ruling Law and Justice Party, Hungary and Viktor Orban's still-ruling Fidesz, the Dutch FvD and PVV, Sweden's Swedish Democrats, Finland's Finn's Party, Austria's FPÖ, Germany's AfD, Belgium's Vlaams Belang and Belgian People's Party, Spain's VOX, the Swiss People's Party (SVP), Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party, India's Bharatiya Janata led by Narendra Modi, and Israel's recently-dethroned Likud, run, at the time, by the infamous Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Steve Bannon attempted to utilize each party, if not in unison, then separately in each of their country's towards a larger, common end, and found genuine success doing so at times. During my own research for this piece that spans the years, it once appeared very much, at another time anyway, as though there was real potential for a far-right, illiberal run of Presidents or parliaments across many parts of Europe and even the greater world. In 2018-19, to be sure, the momentum of these many national, xenophobic movements seemed nearly tangible, palpable, and in some ways, inevitable.

While many of the nations and parties Steve Bannon would visit would welcome him, to varying degrees, Marie Le Pen, the leader of The National Rally and daughter of the Party's founder Jean-Marie Le Pen, was not so warm and hospitable about either his influences in France or Europe. While Bannon would make his usual fire and brimstone speeches, imploring the audience to "let them call you racist," he was not embraced by the far-right intelligentsia of that nation,

at least from the external perspective, in the same ways that he would be in other polities by other parties, like the Italian Lega Nord, still led by Matteo Salvini and Hungary's Fidesz, led by the aforementioned Viktor Orban.

Steve would, in fact, be present in Italy and actually, physically present with Matteo Salvini himself during the general election victory that would earn him the deputy prime ministerial position on the 4th of March, 2018. Salvini's Lega Nord headed the center-right coalition, and alongside then Five Star Movement leader, Luigi Di Maio, Forza Italia, and the Brothers of Italy, were able to garner enough votes collectively to shock Europe and form a government; they chose not to indulge the famous Silvio Berlusconi at this time, which would create less unity across the Italian far-right than including him might have. But, in any event, Matteo Salvini would be deputy Prime Minister in the new government, with jurist Giuseppe Conte of the M5S being appointed as Italy's new Premier. Bannon's loyalty to Salvini and Lega Nord would be rewarded later during his time as Deputy Prime Minister of Italy, while the victory had even broader implications down the line.

It surely emboldened Steve Bannon for future attempted conquests around Europe; a prospective global nationalist institution, like the School of the America's for European neo-fascists, was later planned for the nation of Italy by Bannon himself after the previous success of Salvini and his coalition. With Italy as compromised as circumstances could provide, and with all of 2018 to spend how he would like, Bannon then turned his eyes east to the Kingdom of St. Stephen, Hungary, and its upcoming parliamentary elections less than a month away.

"I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations."
– Fourth President of the United States, James Madison

Viktor Orbán's affection for Steve Bannon has, over the years, vacillated between generally warm, and outright chummy; Bannon's arrival soon after his Italian accomplishments would appear the cherry on the proverbial cake for the incumbent's victory in April of 2018. Not only did Fidesz prove victorious once more, but the second most votes went to their, at the time, more extreme domestic counterparts, Jobbik. With Steve Bannon's close ties to Hungarian reactionary Sebastian Gorka, few things could be as predictable as the success of Orbán with greater external support; Bannon was awarded another layup, another notch on his belt of illiberalism, but could that luck continue?

As Steve Bannon courted more far-right parties and administrations across the globe at this time, he would find greater success still. Other nations could be flipped as well, not only across Europe, but in places with less developed political history than Europe has as well, surely. While parties across Europe like Lega Nord, Fidesz, and others were offering him praise and respect, few were truly enthused to join a sort of European "Legion of Doom" within and without the European Parliament, with an American as the "Lex Luthor" of the whole thing, offering advice on the affairs of other nations. The irony of Bannon's plans for international unity amongst political parties that did not care for international unity for their own nations consistently shines through during these historical moments, I assure

you.

By the end of July, near the beginning of August, only months after his ally's victories in Italy and Hungary, and just weeks before he would travel down to Brazil to announce his support for the ever-controversial, yet lesser known at the time, Jair Bolsonaro, Steve Bannon would find himself back in Washington DC, at one of his many residences. He was with names like Kellyann Conway, Corey Lewandowski, as well as three less familiar names. The first two were former Trump campaign officials, and at least one future Trump administration official, Jason Osbourne and Mike Rubino, who sometimes work with, and lobby for the autonomous Serbian Republic of Bosnia & Herzegovina; the third was the Republic's Prime Minister, Željka Cvijanovic.

They were all discussing the future of the Republic, the coming elections for it, the United States under Donald Trump, and Bannon's own, aforementioned European Movement. That such a powerful man was sitting at Steve Bannon's house for a meeting presumably concerning the United States and the Republic of Serbia's governments is both nefarious and extraordinary; it is a proper illustration of the power that one man can have outside of government. Coordinating two administrations from the shadows, while having no official affiliation with either of them, with Steve Bannon as the central lubricant of the dealings, is consistent with his ambition, vision, and functionality; he sought then, and continues to seek today, to help coordinate his allies across the world for as long as they remain in power or have the prospects of future power within their sights.

Steve Bannon's effect on the Trump

administration was, indeed, proven to be more radical and powerful from without than from within; a feat that, while I predicted, is truly extraordinary to witness. Few men can be seen to have made such an impact on so many political movements around the world, especially while the individual in question is still alive. Bannon would climb higher still on this string of successes in the coming months before 2019, and yet, as the famous poem reads, nothing gold can stay.

Steve Bannon would also back far-right Brazilian presidential candidate, Jair Bolsorano, in mid to late August as well, in preparation for that country's October elections, before quickly hurrying back to Europe for two more pressing matters: the September elections in Sweden, and one of the rewards from Matteo Salvini that Bannon had long been waiting for: The induction of Salvini and his Lega Nord into "The Movement." With the latter being a very positive moment for the greater, European and international far-right movement when it occurred, there was some hope from that world, should the Swedish and Brazilian elections play out well, alongside the United States Midterm, 2018 Elections, that the international impact of their activities going into 2019 could be truly immense, paradigm-shattering, as well as long-lasting.

With the Swedish Democrats placing in third in their election on the 9th of September, Steve Bannon was continuing to make his progress, but this time, in a traditionally progressive part of the world. He could now, in fact, point to nearly every corner of the earth as having been influenced by his silver tongue and predatorial ambitions. Jair Bolsorano's October victory on the 7th and 28th of that month, ensured that another illiberal, neo-fas-

cist would hold sway over millions of people, extensive national resources, as well as the future of an entire nation, and bolstered the feeling further, both in America, as well as around the world, that across the globe, isolation, xenophobia, and selfishness was all becoming more acceptable and, in fact, accepted by the people; if the United States by-election went that way as well, with a further, expanded mandate for Donald Trump and his Republican Party, the future threat to both American Democracy, as well as liberal, free societies, would be even greater, and more pronounced over the remaining two years that remained in Donald Trump's first term in office; would anyone, at that point, even be able to dethrone him in 2020?

To be sure, real and genuine fear was, at this point, now permeating out of nations across the world as it had not for nearly 100 years. Yet when Americans voted on the 6th of November, 2018, they did not give Donald Trump or his party a greater mandate at all, but displayed and demonstrated a pushback against the administration and its congressional lackeys that many did not expect, even with the traditional midterm swings considered, by awarding the House of Representatives to Democrats, while the Senate narrowed but remained in Republican control. It was a massive moment, even if few saw it for as gigantic a moment as it was; with 2019 just around the bend, it was, truly, the beginning of the end of Donald Trump, yet he couldn't have known this at the time, any more than Bannon could have known that the momentum that he had been building himself was set to begin crashing down as well.

Georgia election workers shredded voting applications, raising questions of fraud



BY CASEY FENN

Voters in Fulton County, Georgia will be going to the polls to elect a new mayor, City Council members, and several other municipal officials on November 2. Unfortunately, some of those who show up may discover that their names are not on the voting roster.

Last week, two Georgia election workers were accused of shredding unprocessed voting applications in Fulton County, the state's most populous county. On Monday, officials from Fulton County released a statement detailing the accusations and announcing that the two workers had been let go. According to the preliminary review conducted by the county, the two workers allegedly checked out batches of voting applications, but instead of processing them, they shredded them. Richard Barron, Fulton County's Registration and Elections Director, says that the fraud took place at some point over the past two weeks.

Georgia's Republican Secretary of State, Brad Raffensperger, as many as 300 municipal election-related applications were destroyed by the two workers. After coworkers discovered what had happened, they reported



the two election workers who were immediately fired.

Since Georgia voters do not enroll by party, none of the applications included party affiliations. In addition, Fulton County spokesperson Jessica Corbitt said that the application may not have been completely lost, since there was uncertainty regarding what process the applications went through before they were checked out and shredded.

Nevertheless, the incident threatened to further erode trust in the county's election system. Raffensperger asked the Justice Department to investigate Fulton County and its handling of the upcoming election. Concerning the issue, he said, "After 20 years of documented failure in Fulton County elections, Georgians are tired of waiting to see what the next embarrassing revelation will be." He also noted that his office had al-

ready begun their own probe into the alleged incident.

This incident is only the latest in a string of issues that have plagued Fulton County's elections. Historically, the county has been accused of offering insufficient voting places, leading to long lines. In addition, there have been accusations of inefficient reporting strategies.

Currently, Fulton County is under investigation after the State Election Board voted unanimously to create a bipartisan panel that would review the county's handling of recent elections. Along with this panel, in 2020 Raffensperger required the county to have a state-appointed monitor that would oversee its elections. After the election, the monitor reported that he did not find any evidence of fraud; however, he did note that there were "significant mismanagement issues in Fulton County's elections processes."

Steve Bannon: A Retrospective and Analysis



BY TRENT NELSON

Steve Bannon's mission to radically influence Europe, as well as the 2019 European Parliamentary Elections in May, as he had done in the 2016 United States Presidential Election, was a massive, nearly impossible order. While working across nations in a model similar to the one he employed in the United States, was not legally possible in any official way. But as Bannon was working to pump up parties and candidates that shared his cynical and xenophobic views across Europe and the larger world, his European collective, The Movement, was not necessarily flourishing, despite the shared aims of its members and prospective members. Apart from Matteo Salvini and Brothers of Italy leader, Giorgia Meloni, only subtle hints at cooperation could be heard from Europe's more popular far-right parties.

UKIP had flittered on and off the proverbial fence, while Marie Le Pen and her National Rally of France were still simultaneously insulting him and accepting his well-publicized praise when it was offered. Fidesz of Hungary was more focused on internal "innovations" like armed, guarded border walls and national legislative measures than on Europe or the European Union. Germany's AfD, which at one point had rebuffed Steve Bannon, would make a political u-turn of



sorts as 2019 wore on, and invited him to a conference. Yet other, once luke-warm parties like Austria's FPÖ and Poland's Law and Order Party (PiS) became increasingly wary of the American-based effort at organizing even domestic-nationalist parties, in the same vein that Marie Le Pen had months and months before.

With this understood, it must also be comprehended that The Movement, at the beginning of 2019 at least, had only three European far-right parties even comprising it, which included Lega Nord, the Brothers of Italy, as well as the Montenegrin far-right party, Movement for Changes, of which does not even have membership to the EU itself. What had once seemed so promising as a unifying, organizing presence and blueprint for not only the European far-right, but the international far-right as well, was actually inspiring envy, jealousy, and distrust from those very parties it wished to unify, educate, and ultimately aid; alongside the American midterm elections, this hiccup concerning The Movement and his European relations might have been seen as an omen of what might be to come in the future.

The lack of developed cohesion leading up to 2019 gave little promise of great gains in the European governing body, but The Movement would plan to meet in January for its first summit, in anticipation of a positive year.

“Of all the disorders in the soul, envy is the only one no one confesses to.” – Plutarch

The year 2019 might have had the potential to be a great year for the European far-right, and therefore, for Steve Bannon as well, and yet, from the start, things were just not meshing too well. January of that year, however, quickly became March, which finally turned into May, in the very days leading up to the EU Parliamentary elections themselves. As a result of conflicting schedules of disjointed nationalist parties and leadership; no grand, cohesive coalition could be thrown together in time for the upcoming election, and worse still, there was literally no time left before those particular elections were to take place, leaving it quite impossible for even new singular strategies to be deployed across Europe, its Union, and its constituent nations. The prover-

bial wheels were finally beginning to come off in earnest, but India, if not the Dutch or UK provincial and local elections, would give Steve Bannon a momentary reprieve from the mass of disappointments that would, sooner than later, compromise the illiberal future of the United States, much of Europe, and great swaths of the entire world.

As this was transpiring, Steve Bannon would go on CBS in February of 2019 and discuss the American President, the state of the United States, and the potential that the future held, while his dreams of a populist academy in Italy were dashed in March of that year. He was later quoted as having told Italian Populists that the Pope was an “enemy” of their mindset and movement as well around this time; all of this, the organization in Europe and the PR campaign in America, was as he waited for the rest of the year, for elections in The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the European Union to unfurl, where real trouble could be properly made, instead of only across the mainstream and reactionary media outlets.

In the aforementioned Provincial Election of The Netherlands in March of 2019, Geert Wilders and his beleaguered Party for Freedom (PVV) struggled as per usual, while the relative far-right upstarts, the Forum for Democracy (FvD), managed to secure stunning victories, the most new seats of any other party, and held the most seats in three different provinces. While this success might have bolstered a younger Steve Bannon, it was not nearly enough for him at that point, and so proceedings in the UK and the EU were of greater interest to him and his powerful, political, indus-

trial, and financial friends around the world than was the relatively small nation of The Netherlands.

India’s general election from the 11th of April to the 19th of May, gave Narendra Modi an additional, very large mandate for his “Hindu’s First” agenda, which would subsequently mean the revocation of much of the autonomy of mostly Muslim Kashmir. His victory and what it meant for a nation of such vast population and potential power as India as well as the world was, to be sure, startling at the time, yet political honeymoons rarely last much longer than personal honeymoons do, and Modi would not have much longer before his ended.

By the time the local elections in the United Kingdom were being held around this time in early May, weeks before the European Parliamentary Elections, the pro-Brexit Tory Party was faltering, while the UKIP lost a massive majority of their seats as well. Prime Minister Theresa May would, in the weeks and months to come, inevitably be held accountable for the impossible Brexit negotiations and electoral situation that the likes of Bannon-aligned Nigel Farage, David Cameron, and even the future PM Boris Johnson helped to put the nation into thanks to the 2016 referendum and the subsequent British European exit, or as it is known as, “Brexit.”

Yet before the ultimate, political demise of Theresa May, the biggest opportunity for Steve Bannon since the 2016 United States Presidential Elections came as the 2019 EU Parliamentary Elections took place between the 23rd and 26th of May, and, much to the surprise of analysts and Steve Bannon alike, the far-right did not gain as much at all, but actually

underperformed in contrast to some of the prognostications. There was both progress, as well as fractioning to be sure, as the powers that have been, gave way to nationalists, populists, and other forces, yet it was not the great surge that was predicted. Bannon suffered this relative blow while in Paris, France, as he attempted to drum up support and action by his language and presence. While alternative parties and interests made gains, including Identify and Democracy (ID), the far-right Euro Party, they were not nearly enough to represent any real progress for the movement in the EU Parliament. Even with ID more than doubling their seats with 73, they and the greater European far-right remained woefully in the parliamentary minority.

In Italy around this same time, things were not as great as they had once seemed to be for Steve Bannon either. Matteo Salvini’s time as Deputy Prime Minister was beginning to sour by his one-year anniversary in power. After months of fighting with the often confusing and contradictory right-wingish/anti-establishment Five Star Movement, things continued to heat up as June turned into July. Advisors to Salvini began to suggest that the Deputy call for a SNAP Election to attempt to win a greater or renewed mandate for a federal government. The Deputy Prime Minister was hesitant, however, and Salvini’s hesitancy at this moment can very likely be attributed, in hindsight at the very least, to the sense of a shifting political climate beneath and all around him; with little experience navigating such treacherous circumstances, he proved ill-equipped to handle this adversity. His hesitation to act in July would, however, would ultimately prove a

grave mistake by the time August was turning into September.

“Ability is nothing without opportunity.” – Napoleon Bonaparte

As all of this was evolving, or de-volving as it were, in Italy, the 24th of July, 2019, saw the second woman to become Prime Minister in the history of the United Kingdom replaced by her own Party by MP, Tory, and writer, Boris Johnson. Upon being swiftly voted into power by his Tory pals, he spoke as adamantly as ever that he would lead the United Kingdom out of the European Union, completing Brexit, the alleged will of the people, for the greater, long-term good of the country, and that nothing would stop him from this aim, with or without a deal, on, by or before the 31st of October, 2019 deadline that he himself set and created for the negotiations, as some sort of show of diplomatic strength undoubtedly.

He made it crystal clear on that occasion, as well as on any and every occasion since, that he would, if he had to, drag the U.K. out of the EU kicking and screaming, yet he did not, however, count on his nation recoiling from his language or behavior as they did at the time. This constant antagonism between Johnson, the people, the press, and the House of Commons finally boiled over in this particular instance with Johnson’s announcement that he had asked the Queen to prorogue Parliament on the 28th of August, effective on the 10th of September, essentially two weeks later.

Simultaneously, on the 8th of August in Rome, Italy, Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini had come to grips with the eternal turmoil of Italian politics in his own way; with no end

to the disagreements between Lega Nord and the Five Star Movement in sight, Salvini finally called for SNAP elections to break the deadlock of the current coalition, and to give one party or coalition of parties a stronger mandate. After having dragged his feet for so long before he finally called for a SNAP election on the peninsula, he very likely thought that this new election would be welcomed by both the government and country; he did not anticipate what would happen next, and this remarkable turn, by the end of August, would demonstrate the ignorance of his prior presumption, the fragility of Italian alliances, as well as loyalties within the nuanced, varied Italian far-right movement.

Events would accelerate even more rapidly after the 20th of August, when Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte of the Five Star Movement would resign from his position in response to Salvini’s previous call for a new election. Within a week’s time, however, a breakthrough had occurred in the midst of the Italian, political deadlock that has for years, decades, and centuries even, been a mainstay of life there.

The Five Star Movement had, far from reconciling itself to the idea of a SNAP election, where anything could subsequently happen electorally speaking, came to compromise and form a new coalition with the center-left Democratic Party instead, thereby forming a government that would not need or utilize Matteo Salvini or the previous right-wing coalition of parties that he had captained. By the 5th of September, the new government was sworn in, and all that Steve Bannon had worked for in Italy in 2018 was lost to history. As allud-

ed to previously, Italian politics has a history, however short it might be as a singular, conjoined polity, historically speaking, of being difficult to predict or forecast, yet British politics as Summer began to become Autumn was about to shock and stun the world as well.

The administration of Boris Johnson’s decision to prorogue Parliament led to the pronouncement being challenged in both English and Scottish courts nearly immediately. Johnson, not for the first time during his longer-than-expected reign, kicked Tories out of the party for disagreeing with his Brexit strategy, as well as the aforementioned decision to prorogue (suspend) Parliament. When Johnson was finally backed into a corner by the Tories, Labour, and Liberal Democrats regarding his party’s policies and his own personal behaviour, proclamations, and policies, his recourse, similar to Matteo Salvini, was to request a SNAP election.

As should be understood by this time, Illiberals and fascists are always looking to call SNAP elections to consolidate power, when possible, or to take advantage of the anxieties, energies, and passions of the nation at any given time, in order to create votes or enthusiasm for their cause or various interests. This request was first rejected by Labour, still under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn at the time, as well as the Liberal Democrats, until finally, both relented, and a General Election was scheduled for the end of the year in December.

Around this time, perhaps between late September and early December, consequentially, reports were beginning to emerge, sometimes only in a trickle, from China at first, before oth-

er nations began to chime in as well, that a potentially new, virulent, and fatal illness was infecting, sickening, and killing people at an alarming rate, and that nothing that doctors tried was working to slow it down or fix it. It seemed to be affecting different people differently, and that in itself seemed horrifying, as though whatever was killing people was pinpointing and attacking their weaknesses. COVID-19, now understood to be infecting people in the latter months of 2019, and killing greater numbers of people with underlying, subtle or overt pre-existing conditions. It was still an anomaly, and an illness that would require greater research to better understand, yet the entire world would feel its brunt sooner than later, and the pandemic, which will likely become endemic, continues to strain humanity under its constantly evolving burden, even almost two years into the future.

The General Election of the United Kingdom towards the start of December was, for Bannon and supporters of a disjointed, disconnected world and international community, wildly successful, in contrast to so many other elections and innovations of 2019. Labour's own horrific record during this election ultimately caused Jeremy Corbyn to step down from a position of leadership within the party in lieu of Keir Starmer, who has done, across the board, objectively worse than his eternally scorned predecessor had ever managed. Boris, having increased his electoral advantage after his gamble of a SNAP declaration, in contrast to Matteo Salvini, wielded real power now, and a real mandate that was greater than Theresa May had managed to gain; Donald Trump in America now looked to have a partner who,

according to reports, he actually liked and that could, somehow, understand and placate him.

At this time, as Steve Bannon sat and ruminated, wherever he was, as December of 2019 became January of 2020, it is likely he would've felt a bit of a let down from where he felt he, his ideology, and his greater, international, nationalist movement, had stood just the previous November. The 2018 United States midterm election had not gone great, and while India was in full-throated support for the nationalism of Modi, Europe was proving itself to be an uneasy puzzle to solve, relative to his American efforts, and nothing seemed to be moving as easily as it once had. Intrigue and influence alone could not, at this time at least, effectively grow, develop or unite Europe's far-right as it had helped Steve Bannon achieve in the United States. Bannon failed to grasp the nuances of Europe, its politics, its national cultures, and their various, complex histories, as well as its wary, skeptical, largely educated, and politically interested populaces.

Bannon was, therefore, doomed to fail at this time because of his own presumption and arrogance; while Europe is not as large as America is in terms of sheer size, it is more independent in thought and diverse in culture from nation to nation than is the United States from state to state. Aiding domestic parties in the United Kingdom, Belgium, Italy, Hungary, or elsewhere did not necessarily mean, as Bannon might've at some point imagined, that that gain or trust would translate into broader results within a nation, nations, or the European Parliament. He was struggling in this way, but had ideas in the works, like

a streamable podcast program, "War Room," which began just in October of 2019, just in time to cover the first impeachment trial of the 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump; as he sat, perhaps in Washington DC, as the New Year was upon the United States, it is possible that he knew, not only about the coming, international health crisis, but what his old boss had previously authorized for the 3rd of January, 2020.

"No mighty king, no ambitious emperor, no pope, or prophet ever dreamt of such an awesome pulpit, so potent a magic wand." – Former Head of CBS News, Fred W. Friendly

When the 45th American President called for the assassination of the famous Iranian Military Commander Qasem Soleimani at an airbase in Afghanistan, in what experts have called an illegal, extrajudicial killing, while the now-former President has claimed it as one of the moments he is most proud of during his Presidency, the world held their collective breath. Donald Trump had, essentially, by whatever name you wish to call it, issued a fatwa that an American missile was able to successfully undertake. Iran responded shortly thereafter with a measured strike of their own, narrowly and purposely, missing a barrack of American soldiers in Iraq; Donald Trump would downplay this response, likely understanding in and at that moment what an impetuous, reckless decision he had made in having Soleimani murdered, and the simmering tension would ease.

By this time, what we now call COVID-19 was understood to be spreading across the world, and nations who were suffering from it, as

well as international monitoring institutions, first began alerting and pleading with still unsuspecting or pompous polities to take precautions that, almost two years later, have become commonplace across most of the United States, Europe, and the world at large. Many countries, famously

including the United States, would ignore many of these pleas from countries like Italy, and instead would have to learn as the child who ignores their parents' instructions not to place their hand upon the hot stovetop must learn. The COVID-19 pandemic, an illness unprecedented in mutation,

transmission, and deadliness in modern times, emerged to ruin and tarnish life for so many families across the planet, yet what it did to damage and further mold the emerging illiberal and neo-fascist movement in dramatic, unforeseeable ways, might also be considered as well.

Democrats face dangers within and without

BY CASEY FENN

Just a few short years ago, some political talking heads were predicting the demise of the Republican party. According to those pundits, Donald Trump had forever stained the GOP brand, and the future looked increasingly blue. But that was before the diverse coalition making up the Democratic Party lost their common enemy. Since then, a civil war has broken out between the moderate and more progressive wings of the party. If Democrat leaders fail to act quickly, there is a good chance that they will lose their House majority during the upcoming midterm elections.

Over the past several weeks, Centrist House Democrats from swing districts have been accusing their far-left colleagues of failing to see the big picture. Those more progressive Democrats have refused to vote on a bipartisan infrastructure bill until President Biden's social spending bill is brought before Congress for a vote. Moderate Democrats argue that this hardline stance is hindering the Democratic Party from passing a major piece of legislation that is popular among the American public. According to them, this is the kind of victory that could put the wind at their backs as they face the 2022 midterms.

More progressive Democrats argue that the moderates are the ones who are putting the party in peril ahead

of the election. They believe that they are fighting for the left-leaning agenda that America chose when Biden was elected. This disagreement between moderates and progressives is quickly fracturing their coalition and leaving them politically vulnerable.

Meanwhile, the Republican party has been preparing for a comeback after Trump's defeat in 2020. GOP hopefuls have numerous at-risk Democrats in their sights, including Reps. Elissa Slotkin (MI) and Abigail Spanberger (VA). According to recent attack ads, these swing state Democrats have committed themselves to a "\$3.5 trillion socialist spending spree." Democrats have claimed that this number grossly exaggerates the true cost of the package which

Biden's administration estimates will land between \$1.9 and \$2.3 trillion.

These are not the only dangers that the Democratic Party faces as it approaches 2022, though. President Biden's approval ratings have been dropping for months. Many of the most recent polls have him in the low 40s. This is an ominous sign for hopeful Democrats. With everything else that they're facing, they also have to go to sleep at night knowing that midterms are historically bad for a sitting president's party. For Democrats, 2022 could be the perfect storm that leaves them without a House majority, leaving both moderate and progressive wings of the Democratic Party disappointed and defeated.



Why Does the US Border Patrol Own Even A Single Whip To Begin With?

BY TRENT NELSON

During the previous Presidential administration of Donald Trump, I wrote about a horrific claim that came from a nurse whistleblower in Georgia, who said that young immigrant girls were having forced hysterectomies performed upon them in ICE detention centers. I took that opportunity to lament the horrific, historical dimensions of this claim, which has its roots in racism, eugenics, and the like;



it was particularly surreal because those types of disgusting, crimes against humanity, were being perpetrated by the American government, an alleged global force against that type of barbarism. Yet the Trump administration, to be sure, was quite cruel and apathetic towards the plight of the immigrant and asylum seeker, whether from the middle east or eastern Asia, to the Caribbean, Central or South America, perhaps more cruel than even Trump's Presidential predecessors were.

Much of the disgust around the barbarism of the previous administration, alongside their careless handling of the country, its people, and the economy during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, helped the tide to turn in favor of his eventual Democratic successor, Joe Biden. Biden, a former longtime Senator from Delaware and Vice President under Barack Obama, ran as a return to the timbre of former President's in many ways, while also fancying himself as a "transition" President, or someone who would bridge the gap between the old generation that has run Washington for so long, and the newer generations, who have grown weary of waiting to assume power themselves.

While in some ways, the President may very well be a transition President



of sorts, he, in other ways, is just as out of touch with the timbre of the young people of this nation as the previous President was. When pictures began circulating the internet that showed a border agent on horseback, with a whip-like implement in his hand, terrorizing Haitian refugees who were being held in Del Rio, Texas as they waited to apply for asylum, America exploded in outrage at this atrocious human rights violation; that the administration condemned it all immediately, did little to quell the feelings around the affair. Around this same time, someone on Twitter rightly asked the very reasonable question, "Why does the U.S. Border Patrol own even ONE (1) whip?"

Immigrating to the United States of America, and the Southern Border Patrol: Unpleasant and Difficult by Design

It is certainly a reasonable and moral question to ask, and one that, to my knowledge, has yet to have been met with a reasonable, morally justifiable response to date. Why does the US Border Patrol have a whip, whether they're on horseback or not? Why does the US Border Patrol posture and portray itself in such a manner in the

first instance? For, after all, the crime for which these people are being harassed over, is nothing but a simple misdemeanor in American courtrooms; the violent suppression of the free movement of those humans in need, and indeed, the brutal mutilation of humans in the care of allegedly responsible governments, is without question, infinitely more felonious and despicable than attempting to save your family from a life of violence, despair, poverty and suffering.

The apathy of American citizens and their government to these injustices should be appalling to all people, and would shame those ancestors of most Americans who came to this nation with no money, no English, no hope in their ancestral homelands, and infinite and eternal hope in and for their new homeland. The stories of barbarism, perpetrated by American border agents, in which children, young women, and mothers, as well as their husbands and sons, have been abused or violated in some manner, do not align themselves with the very spirit of this nation, or those beautiful, brilliant words attached to the great plinth of which the Statue of Liberty stands upon in New York Harbor.

As I wrote in a previous piece for this publication, which touches upon both the whip incident, as well as that famous Emma Lazarus poem in passing, these types of grotesque policies bring great dishonor to the United States and its already difficult, and short, imperfect history. The truth of the matter, however, is simply that this mindset and the associated behaviors and beliefs transcend one administration, and even one party of course. They exist within the fabric of the nation, its institutions, and the people themselves, and so cannot necessarily be legislated out by having different Presidential memos or policies passed or presented; this type of engrained feeling or concept can only be diminished or eliminated through compassion, education, and the passage of time and generations of Americans.

Yet we have wandered slightly away from answering the question that makes up the title of this piece. The United States Border Patrol has at least one whip in its arsenal, for the same reason that they keep any other weapon on hand; they believe that there could very well be a reasonable and rationalizable opportunity or excuse to use the weapon. This is common sense, as there would be no reason for the weapon to be there if there was not some anticipatory need for it within day-to-day operations, and no, I don't believe it is meant to be used with and/or on the horse either. Plenty of horse people, including jockeys, get their horses to operate in the way they would like thanks to repetition, rapport, and respect for the animal, instead of this kind of coercion.

The irony that it is less reasonable to presume that the border agents were using the whip on horses, than on people, is certainly horrifying, to put it bluntly. Yet with the history of brutality against people who do not look, speak or act as American's believe other American's should, believing anything otherwise would qualify as willingly

naive. When American border agents see young Haitian refugees, having recently fled a nation torn by earthquakes, political instability, poverty, and violence, it is damning of both the people involved, as well as the institution and greater government they serve, that these asylum-seeking refugees are looked at with disgust and distrust instead of sorrowful compassion and empathy; what makes those poor souls any different from the scared, starving or desperate American adults or children?

To be sure, there is little difference, other than their origin of birth, life experiences, and stories. They are the same people one sees when one walks down the way, except that they may look different, speak a different language, or may have dealt with some traumas that, while similar in how they make a person or peoples feel, are difficult, nigh impossible, to truly feel or understand in a real, relevant and meaningful manner oneself, unless one has gone through them oneself as well. With a whip in one hand, and nothing close to compassion in their hearts, are these the representatives of ourselves and our own morals, that we as Americans might choose to send out to help those poorest, most desperate of the world?

“He who allows oppression shares the crime.” – Desiderius Erasmus

Of course not. To think of sending someone with violent, apathetic intentions or predispositions where those suffering, needy humans are waiting for the possibility of relief and compassion is unthinkable and utterly barbarous. While it is not separating children from their families, taking out their reproductive organs, or splitting up fragile, thoroughly Americanized families, the spirit of the action is the same. While it is not Donald Trump lying and boasting and deflecting, it is a warmer face, with kinder, more articulate language, allowing for the

same institutions to act in the same, inhuman ways, if to different degrees, as his predecessor, and even predecessors.

For while Donald Trump was always going to escalate the anti-immigration policies of the men that came before him, the men before him were generally pretty atrocious in regards to this as well. Men, women, and children were being kept in cages during the Obama administration, as well as under the Trump administration, where the practice was expanded upon and, to be sure, ICE as an agency did not even exist before George W Bush, drunk with power and a feeling of self-righteousness, created the agency in the midsts of both his battles against immigration and terrorism; for each President not named Trump, while the rhetoric all may have sounded kinder, it likely was not much kinder feeling for those who took, and continue to take, the brunt of these policies.

It was the many, varied and similar foreign policies that America maintained against nations, as well as the deportations from America of countless Americanized Latin and South Americans by those former administrations that helped to export gangs of American origin to countries in Central and South America, which had previously not known these particular groups; this helped to exacerbate internal, domestic issues that oftentimes already existed to some varying degree or degrees. While people are always moving around the world, and the United States has always expected immigration, the racial over and undertones of immigration reform, not only aimed at those coming from the southern hemisphere, but from the eastern hemisphere as well, have become as obvious over the last twenty years as they ever have been across the history of the country.

While legal immigration was curtailed to remarkably low levels un-

der the Trump administration, and illegal immigration has been treated as though it is the equivalent to the Visigoths rushing into the decaying western Roman Empire, the truth regarding immigration is that, while reactionaries and racists are frightened that America might change in composition thanks to the influx of immigrants from these far-flung or exotic places, the composition of a nation is not ever fixed, but always changing, morphing and developing in different ways. Rome itself did not “fall” to “Barbarians” in the way that it is often portrayed by those conservative media figures, and indeed, assimilated others and became assimilated themselves over time, similar to the natives of the British Isle in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest of 1066 AD.

The ethnic or racial makeup of the United States in 1800, to offer another example, was radically different than the composition of the nation by 1870, as it would've been by 1940, by 2010, and so on, and yet no subsequent generation could be called more or less “American” than any of the past or future. A person from 1800 might, were they able to, look at 2010 and proclaim that it looks or feels little like the America that they were accustomed to, and yet a person from 2010 going back to 1800, would likely proclaim the same thing, with about as much disgust in their voice as the ancestor from over 200 years ago. When confronted over whose America is more American, it is likely that both would voice their cases for why their era was the correct answer, while in reality, each would be equally as correct.

Our America of today is no less American than those Americas of the past, simply because it today has more, various types of Americans in it than before, while those Americas of the past are no less American than our America of today, simply because they were yet to house the Americans

that were to come. It is not up to each American to judge the claim that an immigrant to the United States, new or old, old or young, has to consider themselves an American, no matter if they just arrived across the border or ocean, or if their ancestors arrived, wherever they arrived to, voluntarily or otherwise, decades or even centuries ago; nearly all of our ancestors, at one time or another, were first-generation Americans too, after all. No, our duty as Americans, on the contrary, is to welcome and embrace these people, whomever they happen to be, and to make them feel and understand how important they are to us all, as fellow citizens and as contributing members of society.

Far from having whips in hand, these agents of the border should have blankets and food with them. They should be armed not with guns or implements of violence, but with immigration paperwork, a temporary ID and Social Security card, bus or train tickets to towns and cities that could use hard-working, humble, and kind new Americans, as well as a warm smile and embrace. America must not be threatened and scared by the suggestion of “freeloaders,” “drug dealers,” “criminals,” “rapists,” “bad hombres,” and “terrorists,” into isolating itself from the people and nations of the world, shutting itself off from the rest of humanity in the vain hope of saving some ever-ephemeral national ethnic, religious and racial composition for itself and its successors.

At the same time, if criminals and crime are the actual concern, then America must stop turning regular, desperate people into criminals, simply for wanting a better life, and must instead focus on the actual drug and human smugglers that do, most certainly, exist, but that make up an extremely small minority of the population attempting to enter the country and usually have super intense, elaborate operations for accomplishing their

objectives. Furthermore, if America would actually like people to stop fleeing in droves to it, then America, instead of begging the utterly desperate not to make the journey up to it, needs to help and assist these nations, wherever they may be, in building, rebuilding, fixing, and/or securing themselves, not with American military violence or occupation, or private, capital-hungry contractors and subcontractors, but with the very people of those various and diverse nations.

To be sure, when this land was full of Englishmen, Scotsmen, and Dutchmen, having cheated and displaced the Natives and abused the Black people they had previously imported from Africa, it was those dastardly Irish who were, to that point, thought to be the greatest blight and lot of immigrants facing the nation. Indeed, the term “Paddywagon” exists because of how many Irish people they once used to haul away to the local lockups, before they themselves became the drivers in the decades to follow. After the Irish took their lumps and abuse, it was the Italians, Jews, and Eastern European's who would be considered the next, biggest problems facing the country from abroad; this third wave of American immigration was a major catalyst for a movement to restrict immigration in a major way for the first time in the country's history, and by the early 1920s, 1924 specifically, the supporters of these types of restrictions would finally have their way.

The fourth wave of American immigration, the wave of which we currently find ourselves in the midst of since 1965, has seen remarkable hatred and disdain emerge from nativist opponents of immigration. These immigrants from the Caribbean, Central, and South America, as well as from the far and middle east regions of Asia, have been tarred with absolutely disgusting epithets, whether it be any of the aforementioned, those xenophobic remarks that might insinuate

any number of things, including ties to “communism,” or even those tasteless and disturbing sentiments regarding the COVID-19 virus and its origins, the hatred of previous eras of American immigration continues to fester and exist in new, disgusting forms, inside the very same people whose ancestors once felt and overcame such cruel and unjust abuse from “older” Americans.

That none of these groups of people or waves of immigration have ever “destroyed” America, in some concrete or abstract sense, should be telling vis-a-vis the current fourth wave of American immigration from across the globe. They are no more untrustworthy, corrupt, criminal, lazy, stupid, or anything else, than any of the previous waves have been and in fact, have as much to give and contribute to

the United States and its story as any other group or groups of people have previously. Each and every person and background adds to the ever-morphing and beautifully diverse culture of America, to its knowledge and experiences dealing with other issues and events, to its economic prosperity, its material wealth, and to the very spirit and essence that has always made the United States a place of hope, despite the horrors suffered here, and despite the struggles of so many different and unique peoples across its history.

A United States that greets these people of the world, desperate for a new start in the midst of horrific circumstances, with such brutality and apathy, is not worthy of the words attached to the Statue of Liberty, nor of the spirit embodied by the great, enormous bronze statue itself. When

it says, as though with the very voice, and as the very embodiment of America itself, to “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breath free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore,” these are not words of hyperbole. It was not, either historically or presently, alluding to something else, or anything else for that matter, other than the very spirit that a nation like France recognized as emanating out of America and its ethos itself. Yet in the final analysis, for anyone who knows both the story of Emma Lazarus, daughter of immigrants and writer of “The New Colossus” poem that adorns the plinth that Lady Liberty stands upon, as well as America in the larger, historical sense, it is only sad, but never surprising, to have to ask why the US Border Patrol even has a single whip in its possession to begin with.

Texas Governor Bans Vaccine Mandates

Greg Abbot, the Governor of Texas, has now banned all COVID-19 vaccine mandates in any form across the state by signing an executive order (TransatlanticToday).

By Seb Jenkins

Abbot’s decision became the latest twist in the fight between pro and anti-mandate politics in Texas, and across America as a whole. However, Texas does have a recent history of side-stepping certain advice from the White House.

In September of this year, President Biden introduced a mandate for all businesses with over 100 employees to ensure that every worker was vaccinated or regularly tested, nationwide.

This mandate from the POTUS was met with criticism from some sections of conservative politics and this new executive order in Texas becomes the latest push back against Biden.

The order comes just as Governor Abbot’s approval rates were dipping, with a 6% drop seen from January



to August 2021, finishing at 41%. Abbot will be up for re-election next year, although over half of those asked in Texas believe he should not be chosen.

The executive order read: “No en-

tity in Texas can compel receipt of a COVID-19 vaccine by any individual, including an employee or a consumer, who objects to such vaccination for any reason of personal conscience, based on a religious belief, or for med-

ical reasons, including prior recovery from COVID-19.”

Anyone who violates this new executive order is said to be subject to maximum fines.

This follows another mandate from Abbot back in August, which only cov-

ered government entities, rather than businesses. Even before this, the Governor placed a ban on vaccine requirements for shots.

Abbot has claimed that his executive order will be removed in the future, but only if a bill is passed that

brings the same order into effect.

Despite all this, Abbot has actually spoken rather positively on the vaccine itself in the past: “The COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective, and our best defense against the virus, but should remain voluntary and never forced.”

Jill Biden to campaign for VA Governor McAuliffe



by Casey Fenn

This Friday, First Lady Jill Biden will visit Henrico, Virginia, near Richmond, to stump for Terry McAuliffe (D-VA). In less than one month, the citizens of Virginia will choose their next governor. At the moment, McAuliffe, the current governor, and Republican nominee Glenn Youngkin are locked in an incredibly tight race, with a recent poll conducted by Emerson College and Nexstar Media Group having McAuliffe at 49 percent and Youngkin at 48 percent.

In addition to the voters committed to McAuliffe and Youngkin, one percent of those surveyed said they intended to vote for someone else. Two percent reported that they were still undecided at the time. However, they do not have much time to make up their minds. Early voting began last month and the deadline for voting is November 2.

Until recently, the nonpartisan Cook Political Report classified the race as “leans Democratic.” However, as the race has tightened over the past few weeks, they’ve moved it into the



“toss-up” column.

Political commentators across the country have their eyes on the Virginia gubernatorial race, since it is one of the first time that American voters will cast their ballots since President Biden’s election. Because of this, operatives on both sides of the aisle believe it could serve as an omen for next year’s midterm election.

Currently, Biden’s approval numbers are at their lowest point since his inauguration, reaching the low 40s in several nationwide polls. These low numbers have many Democrats concerned about their chances of holding on to the House of Representatives.

Several other big names within the Democratic Party are on the campaign trail in Virginia, stumping for McAuliffe. Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-

MN) and President Biden have both made stops on McAuliffe’s behalf in recent months. During her visit, Klobuchar tweeted, “Happy to be back in Virginia to support my friend (former and future Governor) @TerryMcAuliffe! Fewer than 40 days until Election Day. From creating clean energy jobs to preventing gun violence to protecting women’s health decisions, Terry is the right choice for Virginia!”

Meanwhile, Republicans are hoping that McAuliffe’s defeat in Virginia will herald the beginning of a red wave that will sweep the nation next fall. Both sides of the aisle are hoping that the Virginia gubernatorial race will signal that political winds are blowing in their direction. In less than a month, both sides will discover which way those winds are blowing.

Is the US Ending Its Alliance With Saudi Arabia?



BY MARIE SOUKUP

During the Trump administration, the United States and Saudi Arabia renewed their alliance and were connected via trade and diplomatic relations. Some people criticized this, knowing what the Middle Eastern nation has done recently, but this still was the nature of how Trump commanded his diplomacy during his term. Unfortunately, the US and Saudi Arabia have not always had the best relationship. When Biden entered office earlier this year, the Trump-era alliance with the Middle Eastern nation would be put to the side, possibly permanently.

Biden's comments on Saudi Arabia

On the subject matter, President Biden called the Saudi Arabian president a de facto ruler and criticized the efforts made before maintaining the relationship with America. As the Biden administration is similar to the Obama administration just five years prior, there are some similarities. However, people wonder if this will be permanent or if the country will return to the alliance when it appears to be a better fit for America's foreign policy.



A One-Sided Fight for Diplomacy

As it would appear, American forces are willing to end the alliance, but the Saudi Arabian government does not feel the same way about the matter. When asked about the alliance with the American president and administration, the Saudi Arabian president believed that there would be a good relationship between the two nations. However, Biden did not believe in finding common ground to make this a diplomatic arrangement.

No Longer Of US Interest

It can be argued that the US no longer has the same interests as the region. In the past, the Persian Gulf was the home to battles for more ties to the center of the oil industry within the Middle East. The United States who exports much of their oil for higher prices, continually rest on the supply of other nations. However, it can be argued that perhaps

the Biden administration is taking a new path towards diplomatic relationships.

Guided by Moral Principles

The United States no longer wants to associate itself with nations that go against their guiding principles. While people have plenty to speak of on the subject, this decision speaks volumes to the rest of the world. Of course, Biden will continue to move forward with a new foreign policy. However, for now, it appears that Saudi Arabia's desire to be connected and allied with the US will have to take a back seat to America's domestic and foreign interests in this administration.

The US warns Russia of an impending energy catastrophe, while consumer organisations in the UK warn of fuel shortages

BY MARIA DIANDRE OPRE

The United States has urged Russia not to take advantage of the present gas issue. Jake Sullivan, the US national security advisor, warned the BBC that efforts to exploit the situation will backfire.

Natural gas prices have reached all-time highs as economies worldwide continue to rebound from the Covid crisis. As a consequence, companies that provide gas to residential customers are in financial difficulty since they committed to offer energy at a lower price than it costs them to purchase it.



Russia's President Vladimir Putin has suggested that the country may increase supply, although some experts doubt this will ever happen. Russia seemed to be using the situation as leverage to get approval for its contentious Nord Stream 2 project.

In the present, Russia's domestic gas market is constrained, with low inventories, production approaching its peak, and winter approaching in the country, further restricting gas export capability.

There is also little evidence that Gazprom – which owns the monopoly on Russia's gas export pipeline, which provides 35% of Europe's gas needs – is attempting to increase gas supply to spot buyers in Europe via existing routes, and given Gazprom's limited maneuverability, it is improbable that it will supply more than 190 billion cubic meters to Europe this year.



This situation might have a detrimental impact on UK households. According to the BBC, National Energy Action estimates that between 1.2 million and 1.5 million more families would face fuel poverty in the UK. Around 4 million people currently live in fuel poverty, bringing the total to 5.5 million. The regulator, Ofgem, said that if wholesale gas prices keep going up, the price limit would need to be increased again next year.

According to analysts, this may result in an additional £400 to £600 on an average yearly bill in April, resulting in a 20% rise in families suffering fuel poverty. Due to the significant increase in energy prices over the last several weeks, many customers have expressed worry about their ability to pay their bills in the future months, when expenses are projected to rocket much higher.

Clare Moriarty, Citizens Advice's chief executive, said that although fuel poverty definitions vary through-

out the UK, it basically refers to individuals who must choose between heating and eating. According to her comments on BBC Radio 4's Today show, the government has to prepare ahead.

An analysis provided by BBC's Personal Finance Correspondent, Kevin Peachey For consumers and companies in the United Kingdom, the energy crisis is divided into three distinct phases.

To begin, let us consider the here and now. Domestic consumers have noticed an increase in direct debit requests and supplier invoices. They are, however, shielded by the price limit from the high expense of gas on the wholesale markets. Businesses, however, are not. Many are seeing immediate and significant hikes in their energy costs.

Second, as Ofgem confirms, substantially higher energy costs are unavoidable in the spring, possibly adding hundreds of pounds to a household's

yearly bill. That is something that consumers have no control over.

Thirdly, the regulator will weigh the degree to which the price limit safe-

guards consumers against the additional burden placed on all bill payers who would bear the cost if the cap forces providers to close their doors.

The government may intervene at any time throughout this procedure. Thus yet, it has shown little desire to do so.

Is China the Most Serious Threat to the US?



BY MARIE SOUKUP

If people were asked about the most severe threat to the United States, China's first country would likely come to mind. China has been one of the greatest rivals in recent years. It was the birthplace of the coronavirus pandemic. In recent weeks, the US has seen rises in the number of occurrences involving the communist nation. Unfortunately for the US, China is a severe threat. However, it might not be the only one, as severe domestic concerns for the United States pose a greater risk immediately.

China Seeks to Dominate Global Affairs

It was seen throughout the pandemic: China stepped up and took a more active role in politics. For America, it was not great to see their most significant competitor rising and helping people during the pandemic, as it sent a message to the rest of the world. The former communist nation was much more isolated in years past, but modernization forced them to step out of the



shadows. As a result, things became darker and potentially hazardous in many ways as China became more potent in global affairs.

Is This Another Cold War?

No fighting has been had yet, and many people assume that this might lead to the Second Cold War. With the Chinese military in the South China Sea and the US regularly running into them but not attacking, people have plenty of evidence to prove this is happening. It is more probable that the greatest threat of war is the Chinese military and their position economically, politically, and geographically. As the most populous nation in the world, people should be worried about their next moves.

America Has Concerns At Home, Too

It was Abraham Lincoln that first

said that a house divided could stand alone. People can be concerned about the Chinese presence as much as they feel appropriate, but it is essential to also look at the domestic concerns back home. It can be argued that without cohesive moves forward as a nation, America might be its greatest threat.

With the tensions as high as ever between political parties amidst a global pandemic, China might not be the most critical concern. However, suppose America wants to operate in the global arena and focus on its external concerns. In that case, the nation must first find a way to come together or risk weakening the state before a major global war.

Joe Biden Set to Meet President of China Amidst Tensions in the South China Sea



BY LIAM FLYNN

President Joe Biden is set to meet with the president of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Xi Jinping. The summit between the two world leaders will be held virtually and is expected to take place before the end of the calendar year. The news comes after a successful meeting between Chinese and U.S. diplomats on October 6th. This will be the first official meeting between the two presidents since the beginning of the Joe Biden's term in January.

The U.S.-China relationship has been particularly fraught since the trade war between the two countries was initiated by the Trump administration. While the tariffs imposed by the Trump administration are still in effect, Biden's U.S. trade negotiator calls for a "recoupling" of the two nations suggesting greater cooperation between the two world powers.

As the two leaders plan to meet, tensions in the South China Sea rise after Chinese military maneuvers that encompassed 56 fighter planes flying within Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). Meanwhile, it was revealed shortly after that the United States had placed a special contingent of Marines in Taiwan to train Taiwanese troops. U.S. troops have not been permanently stationed in Taiwan since the U.S. formalized diplomatic rela-



tions with the PRC in 1979.

President Biden has reassured the Chinese that the U.S. plans to continue to abide by the "Taiwan Agreement". While there is no official policy called the "Taiwan Agreement", the implication of Biden's statement is the U.S. commitment to maintaining the status quo in the Taiwan relationship, where the U.S. formally recognizing Beijing, and not Taipei. Within this understood framework, the United States would come to the defense of Taiwan in the event of military action from China, but otherwise maintains no diplomatic relationship with Taipei.

After a U.S. nuclear submarine had an accident in the South China Sea in early October, the Chinese foreign ministry is demanding answers around the incident. China fears nuclear contamination, claiming the lack of information provided by the U.S. military was "irresponsible". Moreover, the Chinese official blamed the freedom of navigation act for the accident: "I also want to emphasize that for some

time the US side has been acting, making waves in the SCS under the banner freedom of navigation. This is the source of this accident, severely threatening and imposing serious risks to the regional peace and stability" he told reporters.

The Biden administration describes their China strategy as "strategic competition", acknowledging the tensions between the two countries, all while distancing the approach from the previous Trump administration's hawkish standpoint. The upcoming meeting will elaborate on what "strategic competition" will mean for the two countries.

Amidst present tensions in the South China Sea, the upcoming meeting between the two presidents will be pivotal in determining the state of relations for the next four years. China-watchers and pundits will be sure to analyze and report on the interactions between the leaders of the two most powerful economies in the world.

Should the US Be Worried About War in the South China Sea?



BY MARIE SOUKUP

In recent weeks, the tension between China and the United States has grown increasingly worse. A few days ago, the United States reported that one of their nuclear submarines hit something underneath the water, causing damage to their vessel. While no one has come forward with what caused this disruption, people are concerned about the state of peace in the South China Sea.

China's Desire for Control

China has been vocal about its desire for others to respect the One China policy. However, it has led to years of dismissal about territories like Taiwan and Hong Kong being autonomous from China and many speeches from politicians about their desire to protect democracy. China's grip on Taiwan—or lack thereof—is a clear indicator of the potential for a significant war or battle in this region of the world.

Increasing Surveillance on the Isle of Formosa

Many people do not know that China has been circling Taiwan with its military planes more and more in recent days. One report stated that there were more than 150 planes in four days near the island. Furthermore, reports have even



been released that spoke out about America's plan to support Taiwan. Politicians have confirmed that America has been sending their special operations forces and marines to Taiwan for months, if not an entire year, to train their military in preparation for a devastating war.

Will It Reach the Boiling Point?

With Americans openly supporting Taiwan now and with more presence in the South China Sea, people have every reason to be concerned about the state of the island and Southeast Asia. People forget about China's power and how much their army could damage nations, especially with their developments as they modernized in the last half of the century. It is hard to say when something might happen, but it would be ignorant not to listen to the danger signs in this region.

The United States should be worried about the South China Sea and

what might happen. With the heavy surveillance and the increasing tensions and disagreements with the Chinese government, it only seems like a matter of time before the Biden administration is about to enter a potential World War III scenario. For the sake of the world and America's allies, one can only hope that the nations never reach their boiling point, or there will be significant consequences for both countries.

Cybercrime: Russian Interference in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Elections



BY RANDY WHITEHEAD

Many countries utilize cyber-espionage: the use of advanced technology to both monitor and sometimes attack other countries for political interests or gain. Although both the United States and Russia have a history of cyber-surveillance, Russia reportedly goes further, using its cyber capabilities to start bouts of information warfare. One of the most famous of these cyber interferences was the 2016 presidential election.

Only a short time after Donald Trump was pronounced President of the United States in 2016, rumors of Russian interference in the election process started swirling. The official term was collusion, and there were allegations that a Russian entity somehow tampered with the results of the election. It's important to note that the term "collusion" should not be used as a synonym for any criminal acts; in fact, collusion itself is not a crime. However, that does not mean that the 2016 presidential elections were without criminal acts on the American side.

For example, it's illegal for any foreign country to provide anything "of value" to a presidential campaign. Therefore, if any member of the Trump or Clinton campaigns procured something valuable — such as information — from Russia, it would be considered a crime. Of course, requesting information from a foreign power doesn't



equate to the possible ramifications of hacking into databases and interfering with elections from the inside.

In October of 2016, the United States accused Russia of just that — hacking into the DNC's computer system in an attempt to interfere with the election results. The hackers — under the moniker Guccifer 2.0 — released classified information about the Hillary Clinton campaign to the public. Some of the leaked information included internal campaign communications, classified and controversial emails, research on Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton's public and private views on Wall Street, and more.

However, the interference wasn't limited to just one incident: it involved a long-term series of events and attempts to mess with the election. Throughout the course of the entire election, Russian hackers and officials searched American voter databases for vulnerabilities, released politically incendiary information on the internet, spread propaganda on social media, organized meetings with members

of the Trump campaign, staged rallies in Pennsylvania and Florida, and more. Clearly, Russia had a hand in the election the entire time; and they used cybercrime to get the job done.

After a thorough investigation into the hacking, U.S. intelligence agencies stated that the hacking was organized by President Vladimir Putin in an effort to help Donald Trump's chances of being elected. Despite the severity of the act, the U.S. proceeded with what many called a far too restrained response.

This interference with the U.S. election is not the first time that cybersecurity between Russia and the U.S. has been an issue. Russia and the U.S. have been discussing cybersecurity through diplomacy since 1998; in fact, in June 2013, a cybersecurity agreement was reached. However, shortly after the agreement was made, Edward Snowden shared an unprecedented amount of information about the U.S.'s cyber-surveillance tactics. He fled to Russia, where his extradition was denied. This tension be-

tween the two countries kept the cybersecurity agreement from being fully realized.

Cybersecurity tensions between the U.S. and Russia remain high, largely because of differing perspectives. Russia has expressed interest in drawing up and signing an international treaty on cyber-surveillance, while the U.S. prefers to operate under a shared understanding between the countries. The U.S. wants to have cybercrime very tightly controlled, while Russia — and

China — prefer to have an all-encompassing agreement on cyber-security.

Additionally, Russia and the U.S. simply cannot seem to agree on certain topics. For example, cybercrime is officially frowned upon internationally, but where is the line? Some countries believe that cybercrime technologies should be labeled Weapons of Mass Destruction while others believe that cybercrime should be allowed in certain contexts.

The fear here is both clear and understandable: if Russia and the U.S. can never reach an agreement regarding cyber-espionage, there is the possibility of all-out information warfare. Certainly, cyber-espionage can be effectively damaging. Although Russian interference has never been proven as the cause of Trump's victory, the possibility should not be ignored. And if cyber-espionage can decide leaders of countries, the possible ramifications speak for themselves.

United States Offer Payment And Relocation To Family of 10 Afghans Killed In Failed Drone Strike

The United States have now offered both payment and relocation to an Afghan family after a failed drone strike killed 10 civilians in late August (Military.com).



BY SEB JENKINS

On August 29, the ten civilians were victims of a mistaken US drone strike, with seven of the fatalities being children.

This drone strike came after the US military made the mistake of thinking one of the civilians was a member of ISIS, handling explosives around a vehicle.

On Friday October 15, a statement was released by The Pentagon revealing that an undisclosed sum of money had been offered to the family of the victims, while the US had also offered to relocate them to America should they so desire.

John Kirby, the Pentagon Press Secretary, reported that these offers had been made to an aid organization on Thursday October 14 during a meeting. The organization was the employer of Zemari Ahmadi, the man



the United States targeted as they falsely believed him to be a member of ISIS-K.

Ahmadi's car was hit with a US drone as the military believed he was filling it was boxes of explosives. These boxes turned out to be water containers and the drone strike resulted in ten civilian Afghan fatalities, including Ahmadi himself.

Kirby said: "Dr. Kahl reiterated Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin's commitment to the families, including offering ex gratia condolence payments."

Immediately after the strike, Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, US Gen. Mark Milley, labelled the drone attack as a 'righteous strike'. However, weeks after the event, the United States backtracked and acknowledged the innocent deaths of Ahmadi and nine other civilians.

Although it took the US weeks to admit the wrongdoing, Head of US Central Command, Gen. Kenneth McKenzie revealed they actually learned of the fatal mistake just hours after the drone strike.

Chinese Cyberattacks Against the United States



BY RANDY WHITEHEAD

Anyone paying even the slightest bit of attention to international news knows that China — formally referred to as the People's Republic of China (PRC) — and the United States haven't always had a harmonious relationship. According to the American Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, China has a history of performing cyberattacks on other countries to pursue their own interests.

More recently, China has committed cyberattacks against specific industries and organizations in the United States, including financial services, defense, government facilities, healthcare, communications, IT, and more. As of 2021, the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence says that China presents itself as an increasingly threatening potential source of cyber-attacks. In fact, the office's threat report says that China's cyberattacks can create instability and vulnerability within the United States' "critical infrastructure."

In July of this year, the United States — alongside the European Union, Britain, Australia, Japan, Canada, and New Zealand — officially accused China of a cyberattack and cyber espionage campaign. Going even further, the U.S. Department of Justice accused three Chinese security officials and one contract hacker of attacking dozens of American universities, government agencies, and companies.

Zhao Lijian — China's foreign minis-



try spokesperson — denied all accusations of Chinese cyber espionage, accusing the United States of falsifying claims. Additionally, he stated that China does not take part in cyberattacks or cyber espionage. The United States said that the aforementioned cyberattack campaign claimed that several American industries — including biopharmaceuticals, maritime, government agencies, healthcare, aviation, education, and defense — fell victim to this particular cyberattack spree.

Perhaps the most famous of these cyberattacks was the Microsoft attack. One of the most devastating of China's cyberattacks, the hack attacked Microsoft Exchange servers and is estimated to have affected at least 30,000 organizations across the globe, some of which included school districts and mom-and-pop shops.

The attack was said to have been perpetrated by Hafnium, a hacker group with known ties to China's government. Back in January, Hafnium located and took advantage of a server vulnerability in Microsoft Exchange. They used this weakness in the system to insert backdoors that they could return to later and exploit even further. In these "backdoors," Hafnium placed a string of code that

tricked the Microsoft Exchange servers into sending information. Since these transactions seemed legitimate, it took quite a while before anyone knew anything was wrong.

As many people very well know, this is not the first China-sponsored cyberattack against the United States. The American government has reported numerous cyberattacks in recent years, many of which they have attributed to China. Anthem Inc., the health care insurer, was also a victim of an attack. In the attack, hackers stole names, birth dates, and Social Security numbers — 78 million of them. The credit reporting agency Equifax Inc. and Marriott's Starwood Hotels have also suffered attacks, both of which have affected millions of Americans.

Despite all of the evidence, China continues to deny any participation in international cyberattacks. Zhao has openly denounced the accusations, insisting that they were fabricated to drag China's name through the mud and that the United States has a long history of villainizing China; in fact, China has accused the United States of cyberattacks themselves, pointing the cyber-finger back. According to the accusations, the United States has been performing cyberattacks against China for the past 11 years.

Whether or not every accusation is true or false, the threat of cyberattack is growing more and more concerning. Investigators working on the Microsoft Exchange hack believe that China is working to compile a huge database with information on Americans; they also believe that the Chinese hackers got the emails of Microsoft Exchange IT administrators from a previous attack. From here, it's not difficult to see

a larger potential plan emerging.

Clearly, the more information that China possesses, the easier it becomes for them to perform cyberattacks. Americans are so thoroughly and intricately connected through digital technology. For China, gaining even minute bits of information about Americans can open huge doors for future cyberattacks.

The more information they have, the more attacks they can perform. These attacks lead to more information, which leads to more attacks – and so on. Certainly, there is no easy solution to the problem, especially when considering the possibility that both the U.S. and China are lying. However, if we can't get cyber espionage under control, it may prove more damaging than anyone ever imagined.

Former nuclear engineer and wife, who attempted to sell nuclear codes, appear in court

Jonathan and Diana Toebbe, a couple from West Virginia, were arrested on October 9 for attempting to sell nuclear secrets (TransatlanticToday).



BY SEB JENKINS

The Department of Justice has revealed that the couple were attempting to sell information to a foreign government. However, while the Toebbes thought they were contacting a foreign representative with the desire to build nuclear-powered warships, it was actually an undercover agent from the FBI.

Toebbe reportedly enclosed a sample of the nuclear secrets in a package back in June 2020, sending it to who he believed was a foreign government representative. For a number of months, he also sent emails back and forth with the undercover agent, asking for money in exchange for the information. The FBI sent Toebbe \$10,000 in cryptocurrency in 2021.

Jonathan and his wife moved to West Virginia in 2021 and he made arrangements to drop off an SD card at different locations, revealing more



and more information pertaining to the nuclear secrets in exchange for payment. By the end of the operation, the FBI had paid Toebbe \$70,000 in cryptocurrency.

Jonathan and Diana were arrested on espionage-related charges for breaking the Atomic Energy Act. This act is there to protect the “utilization of atomic energy for peaceful purposes to the maximum extent consistent with the common defense and security and with the health and safety of the public.”

Jonathan Toebbe is a former employee of the Department of the

Navy, where he served as a nuclear engineer and worked under the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program. It was under this program that he first learned the nuclear secrets he and his wife eventually attempted to sell.

On October 12, Jonathan and Diana Toebbe appeared in court, with Attorney General Merrick B. Garland stating: “The work of the FBI, Department of Justice prosecutors, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the Department of Energy was critical in thwarting the plot charged in the complaint and taking this first step in bringing the perpetrators to justice.”

Ebrahim Raisi, the Ayatollah, and the Politics of a Reconstituted Iranian Nuclear Deal at this Juncture

"Circumstances don't make the man, they only reveal him to himself" - Epictetus



BY TRENT R. NELSON

Just a few months ago, I wrote regarding the internal and external innovations which led up to the recent Presidential Election in Iran, which, while contested and largely boycotted as per internal and external sources, saw those people who chose to participate, pick the Principalist hardliner, now-former-Judge and accused human rights criminal, Ebrahim Raisi. This was a significant election for the direction of the nation, and for the sake of the Iranian Nuclear Deal of which had been long championed and won, prior to Donald Trump, by moderate former-President Hassan Rouhani; with the conservative victory, the consolidation of political power that occurred shortly thereafter, as well as the comments made by the current Ayatollah, it appears as though any reimagined "JCPOA 2.0" is in perilous danger of becoming impossible to rework.

Meanwhile, the relatively moderate former administration of the last eight years has given way to one that is not only far more politically and religiously traditionalist, but one that is also culturally repressive vis-a-vis domestic issues. As the world has borne witness to thus far, the Raisi administration has, and will likely continue to be far less diplomatically and outwardly am-



icable or flexible in negotiations with America and the European nations towards the ultimate goal of nuclear deterrence, peace, reconciliation as well as economic and cultural cooperation.

The old, essentially-deceased JCPOA, the one that one Hassan Rouhani signed with Barack Obama and the other major European powers, the one that should be just over six years old this year, might have helped create a massive difference in Iran over the last year and a half or so of COVID-19 and opiate-induced suffering in the midst of great, dire poverty. Hassan Rouhani did his best by coming to this agreement to put his nation in the most favorable position going forward, and especially should a major catastrophe like this end up occurring; in the end, unfortunately, it was all not to be regarding his plans, and while an old revolutionary leader like the recently deceased Abulhassan Bani-sadr predicted that the theological hold was slipping on Iran in the last few years, the Ayatollah, his chief

disciple, and the oligarchic Guardian Council have attempted to reassert power and authority over the nation, in part thanks to the actions of the 45th President.

And speaking of the former American President, Donald Trump, to summarize it succinctly, did all he could to damage the relationship and its prior progress, as well as ultimately nixing the United States' participation in the original JCPOA itself. Yet for America's 46th President, Joe Biden, it will be both crucial, as well as un-enviable, to reconcile this relatively re-fractured relationship so as to resuscitate the international cooperation that will ultimately best serve both nations, as well as the desperately beleaguered Iranian people, best; as we will go into a bit later, it might even, eventually, lead to a happier ending for the Iranian Revolution than has currently been observed since 1979.

With the different posturing both Ebrahim Raisi, as well as the Ayatol-

lah himself has been making recently, however, it appears that negotiations will be guarded and that the timbre of these reconvened sessions will be anything but warm and easy; this will be something a bit different than many diplomats will have seen for some time regarding Iran, as during the early JCPOA discussion between the Obama and Ahmadinejad administrations, discussion and work towards a Nuclear deal has been reported as being reasonable, and as having laid the groundwork for the next, more moderate administration of a Chief international and nuclear negotiator for decades, Hassan Rouhani. It is difficult to imagine an administration less friendly regarding America out of the prior President's of the Islamic Republic of Iran, since perhaps the third President, Ali Khamenei.

The aforementioned former President and current Ayatollah and Supreme Leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei, as he has grown older, weaker, and more sickly, have wished to create a viable path for his chosen successor to smoothly take over from him, as was set into motion by his predecessor, Ruhollah Khomeini so many years ago. It has been suggested that Khamenei, a former religious exile alongside the aforementioned first Ayatollah and Supreme Leader of the Iranian Islamic Republic, has basically chosen Raisi as his successor and raised him to this moment and position for that eventual purpose. And while Ebrahim Raisi might be getting fast-tracked towards this eventual pedestal and all its responsibilities, he cannot claim to be as religiously esteemed, by Islamic education, as either of his predecessors, no matter how badly he might wish to be.

With all of this, the intricacies of the man, and his own religious and political ambitions, whether it be for this Presidency or beyond, in mind, this current "Supreme-Leader-in-waiting," as we might call him, deserves a real

and in-depth analysis; while doing so, it will also be imperative that we appraise the likelihood, as well as the merits, of a rejuvenated JCPOA 2.0. While his Presidential predecessor, the man who negotiated most of the Nuclear Deal with the 44th American President Barack Obama, was, as I have described him before, a "worldly man," President Ebrahim Raisi is a man of tradition, Iranian and Islamic in particular, in very different ways than Hassan Rouhani.

Ebrahim Raisi: A Different History and Legacy than his Predecessor, with a Different Vision as well

Unlike the first two Supreme Ayatollahs of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi was not part of any exilable party or group in the lead up to the overthrow of the last Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. While a small, famous party was centered around the first Ayatollah Khomeini, and sat in exile for around 14 years, planning from Paris how to subvert both the monarchy that he despised, as well as the rights-based revolution dreamed of by men like Banisadr, and agitated for by the equally famous Massoud Rajvi, of which he had no respect for. This current, 81-year-old Khomeini was a younger man who, according to him, was arrested numerous times before being exiled by the Shah himself as well for three years. Over time, he would grow close to the spiritual leader of Iran and would be rewarded for this loyalty by being placed in line to succeed Khomeini when he passed away in 1989. The pattern remains clear today as well: choose a youngish successor with some type of historical, conservative connection to perpetuate "Principalist" Islamic thought and dogma as far into the future as possible. Whether that vision remains practically feasible as new generations of Iranians become more politically and socially engaged will likely be witnessed across the next 20 to 30 years as well.

The man who will likely be the next Ayatollah has already referred to himself as one. This has gone unchallenged by the man he is slated to eventually replace, and that is, of course, not entirely surprising. For one thing, Ayatollah is a religious moniker and one that, based on education and righteousness, can be gained by any practicing male Muslim. The current Supreme Ayatollah of Iran, however, wishes, as his predecessor wished before him, for an easy, frictionless, and bloodless transition of power after his passing.

It is difficult to imagine which scenario might frighten or agitate those currently in power most: that another reasonable choice for Supreme Leader emerges, or that either an internal or external group of secular or religious forces seriously threatens the stability of the regime and nation itself. Therefore the current Ayatollah likely has no issue with his successor reaffirming himself as such; this cleric and justice, Ebrahim Raisi, is nuanced as well, yet in a much less modern sense, and is full of seeming hypocrisies and even some, quite severe, human rights violations.

The eighth President of Iran is 60 years old and so would be older than his predecessor after 32 years as the Supreme Leader of the country than Khomeini is now. The former Deputy Prosecutor of Tehran in the 1980s and 1990s, Ebrahim Raisi would also go on to serve as the Deputy Chief Justice, Attorney General and Chief Justice of the Islamic Republic and is said to be descended from the great prophet of Islam, Muhammad, through his great-grandson, Zayn al-Abidin, and was born of a clerical family befitting this ancestry in the city of Mashhad in 1960. Growing up, Raisi briefly went to the famous and beautiful Qom Hawza at the Boroujerdi School, created by Grand Ayatollah Hajj Sheikh Abdolkarim Haeri Yazdi with Hossein Boroujerdi in 1922; he

has claimed to have earned a Private Law degree from Motahri University although his education has been disputed and even chided, most famously during the first debate for this last Presidential Election.

The clerical qualifications of Ebrahim Raisi are too, however, in contrast to his predecessors who reached the rank of Ayatollah through reflection and dedication, less understood, celebrated, believed, or revered than either the first or second Ayatollah of this Islamic Republic. While he has vacillated between calling himself an Ayatollah and, like his father-in-law, the famous Grand Imam Ahmad Al-amolhoda, as *hujjat al-Islam*, which is a clerical ranking directly below that of Ayatollah, this perceived uncertainty likely did nothing to strengthen his own cult of personality for a time in the future when he'll need it most.

Yet by whatever means, the young Ebrahim Raisi climbed the ranks of the newly formed Islamic Republic, of which he would've been about 18 and 19 during, such that by 1988, shortly before the death of the first Supreme Leader of the nation, Ruhollah Khomeini, in 1989, various international Human Rights Organizations say that Raisi was taking an active part, in a leadership position, in the mass killings of, mostly leftist, political dissidents in Tehran. This brutality, of which is not denied by Iranian leaders, and is generally defended as legal because of the fatwa previously issued by former Ayatollah Khomeini seems to me a price that was paid relatively early on in his career by the young man, and that hasn't ever been forgotten by the Ayatollah whom would succeed Khomeini; while Ebrahim Raisi has served across the legal system and has demonstrated himself a formidable public figure, his real investment began when he committed those crimes against his fellow Iranians, and consequently humanity itself. Everything since has been a sort of prep process

for what had been determined by the blood of secular, religious, and political dissidents on those days in Tehran so long ago.

This is the man who will be leading the nation for the next four years, and the man with whom the Biden administration will have to get cozy with, to some degree, in order to get something like what was lost when Donald Trump pulled America out of the Iranian Nuclear Deal without having to give up way more than the 44th President of America had negotiated with Hassan Rouhani. Ebrahim Raisi, who owes his mandate to the current Ayatollah, has vowed to negotiate Iran out of this "tyranny of US sanctions" as he called them, yet should he play his cards right, with Russia and China trying to enlarge their spheres of influence to further include Iran in more significant proportions, he might be able to achieve a better structure for his nation regarding the reformation of the JCPOA with Europe and the United States as well. While this would very likely still be a positive innovation for the United States, Iran, and the international community going forward, it is understood that there will be blowback from making a deal with Iran, just as there was last time from the Senate, House, and of course, the eventual-45th-President.

Donald Trump, in perhaps the most remarkable irony of his Presidency, reneged America from a landmark diplomatic agreement without any real replacement plan, thereby destroying the diplomatic integrity and leverage of the United States for his successors. In other words, the self-acclaimed master of the Art of the Deal actually bungled the Nuclear Deal all the way down the line and will inevitably be the prime reason why the United States, for those moral, civic, and diplomatic responsibilities that more powerful nations have towards those less fortunate nations that have been excommunicated from the interna-

tional community of nations, will have to end up taking a worse deal than was signed and enacted six years ago between President Obama and President Rouhani. What will it take for the administrations of Joe Biden and Ebrahim Raisi to work towards shared goals where possible, of which the JCPOA is undoubtedly one of them, without growing weary of each other's recalcitrance and prevarication?

Getting to a JCPOA 2.0: Ebrahim Raisi, Joe Biden, the Taliban, and the importance of trust in any relationship

Right now, despite the rhetoric coming out of Tehran towards Washington DC, hope for a revitalized JCPOA is not dead – simply ask Emanuel Macron, or even the pro-JCPOA citizens of Iran themselves. While it appears as though the further Islamization of Iran is being attempted from both the top-down as well as from the bottom up, this does not necessarily mean that it will succeed or that progress in foreign affairs cannot be made, yet things are becoming more complex as time goes on. When Donald Trump unilaterally left the Iranian Nuclear Deal, discrediting and destabilizing the work that Hassan Rouhani had put in over eight years, he played into the hands of the Ayatollah, the clerics and theocratic elite, the Guardian Council, and hardliners making it even easier to make the case that moderation and cultural liberalization had, thus far, failed. Hardliners like Ebrahim Raisi, after all, won not only the Presidency this election, but representative seats in the government as well.

Even as Iran appears to be growing colder in some respects towards the innovations that Rouhani sought, however, there might still be a unifying force in the region. It appears that the answer to the question "what will it take to bring American and Iran closer together?", and the next best opportunity for America to repair its

own relations with Iran, even as the Biden administration seems to be taking harder positions against Tehran, amongst other nations, will involve the still-growing power of the Taliban in the newly reformed and internationally unrecognized Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. While the Taliban has taken back quickly from the secular Afghani government, that which America had long attempted to hold safe from it, Iran's own relationship with the militant extremists has come under analysis and scrutiny in recent years too, albeit in different ways.

There are, regarding this relationship, contradictory reports, pieces, and papers on the connection that Iran has with and to these extremists, of whom previously pushed Iran under Mohammed Khetemi to cooperate against them with the United States during the Presidency of George W Bush; while some claim that Iran has now come to tolerate and diplomatically cooperate with the Taliban, evidence produced in interviews with Taliban officials themselves seem to suggest that the Taliban very much still see the Islamic Republic of Iran as enemies of the brand of fundamentalist Islam of which they practice. It is not as though the people of Iran, no matter their background or national origin, care for the Taliban at all; they remain as despised in Iran as Saudi Arabia and, after the reneging of America from the JCPOA signed by Barack Obama, the United States as well.

While I was not able to have those aforementioned Iranian-Afghani border skirmishes confirmed to me when I brought them up to an Iranian source, of whom would be aware of this were it to have occurred, it strikes me as a strange thing for the Taliban to lie about, given their place in Afghanistan and within the larger region itself.

Depending on which scenario is true, there is potentially a genuine,

plausible diplomatic opportunity that exists to begin fixing the trust between America and Iran. Things might play out any number of ways, yet let us for the sake of this discussion, simply imagine that, like 20 years ago, the Iranian government remains opposed to the ultra-extreme Taliban, as most of its population is, and just as America is too. In this scenario, while the United States has finally decided to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, it too does not desire the Taliban to dominate and repress Afghanistan after a two-decade occupation meant to first push them out of power, and then to ultimately destroy them.

That only one of those ambitions came to pass, and not even permanently, will be written about in the history books as the conflict in Viet Nam is written about today. Yet continuing: The United States cannot go back into the country, despite that it is likely that there will be regional violence in Afghanistan, as was previously reported regarding the Mujahideen, as well as between the Taliban and any number of neighboring communities, peoples, or even nations. America, therefore, must use the nearly-universally-and-mutually-shared distaste for the murderous Taliban to aid its ailing relations with less extreme, yet still disagreeable, nations and peoples.

For so long, the United States has given money and aid to regimes that are not morally agreeable, but are certainly economically agreeable; while I understand and have heard arguments urging non-cooperation with Iran in this way, those arguments often fall to pieces under even the most basic of historical questioning. Does not each and every nation run the risk of materially aiding or befriending a future enemy, should that nation eventually become one at some time down the proverbial road? In other words, no relationship is permanent or unbreakable, whether interpersonal or international; trusting in nations, like in

people, is an exercise in risk-reward that ultimately yields consequences, no matter what.

But as Henry L Stimson famously stated, "The only way to make a man trustworthy is to trust him, and the surest way to make him untrustworthy is to distrust him and show your distrust..." Like with the people that constitute the larger cities, regions, states, and countries of the world, nations also must be trusted in order for trust to be built and grown; Barack Obama, despite his many deficiencies as President, understood this well, and attempted to demonstrate this understanding through his innovations regarding both Iran and Cuba.

Unfortunately, the 45th President did not believe in this diplomatic concept, and so chose to try and overpower any and all who disagreed with him, whether in his own party, his country or within the International community. His successor, the current 46th President, is running out of time to decide what type of President he will be if he hasn't already determined it; the horrifying innovations in Afghanistan regarding the Taliban, and now an ISIS offshoot, known as IS-K, however, might be enough to help accelerate and re-level the negotiations to some extent.

Trust is crucial to any and every relationship, whether between people or nations, just as Mr. Stimson famously said. The United States has broken trust with Iran many times throughout its history, including most recently when America left the Iranian Nuclear Treaty unilaterally, as well as when Donald J Trump ordered the illegal assassination of Qasem Soleimani. In a previous essay regarding Iran, as well as in an earlier paragraph of this piece, I stated my belief that the former-President put Iran in a much better position to negotiate by reneging America from participating in the landmark treaty; I believe this, yet with

the rise of the Taliban once again, as well as what that might mean for the region itself, America's offer of cooperation, aid, assistance, and empathy, might actually be an important and vital enough incentive to convince the oligarchy of Iran, headed by both the Supreme Leader and President Raisi, to trust in the United States one more time, not emotionally, but for diplomatic and material purposes.

If this revised and reimagined JCPOA is consummated based on similar, not identical, nuclear protocols and standards as before, as well as with those innovations of which the Taliban are necessitating, which likely would include funding, humanitarian aid vis-a-vis their COVID-19, opiate, poverty and ever surging refugee crises, then that would be a really positive deal to consider from the perspective of the Biden Administration. There are those, like the aforementioned first President of Iran Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, who believes that the power of the clerics is in decline and that only through empowerment and support of the Iranian people, through private organizations and international aid alike, will they be able to grow strong enough to throw off the yolk of repression that continues to hang around their collective necks. It is not as though America will not be aiding, in the shadows and in the open, other regional nations who might wish to confront the Taliban, like various, pro-secular Afghani forces, as well as external, regional governments like Israel, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and Iraq; while these nations are American "allies," human rights watch has them all as extreme human rights abusers in their own, unique ways.

Again, like the contradictions witnessed between the treatment of Communist Viet Nam v. Communist Cuba over nearly the same time span, it seems as though only unintelligible, antiquated foreign policy drivel from decades gone by exists to justify the

endless contradictions in how America treats other nations. While Russia, an Iranian ally, is analyzing the Taliban before fully engaging or recognizing them as the government of Afghanistan, diplomatically speaking, it is not currently clear whether Iran will do anything similarly, with the potential violence with the mostly Afghani-Iranian Fatemiyoun Brigade as mentioned earlier on the border a real, possible threat to the nation and non-secular regime.

To extrapolate a thought experiment from a prior essay further, the JCPOA would be just a bit over six years old when this paper was written, was it still in place. Were America still a part of it, it is incredibly difficult to say just how many things might be different; I go through a few in the aforementioned essay, of course, but there are more as well, to be sure. Economic conditions in Iran would likely have been better in the lead up to the great COVID-19 outbreak that has swallowed up the world since late 2019/early 2020; consequently, internal social and political conditions, without the external pressure from Donald Trump and internal pressure from factions within Iran, might have also been better as the final term of Hassan Rouhani was winding down. As was predicted by the former first President, in these conditions, the weakening power of the clerics might truly be losing its hold on the nation and its people. While poverty and drug addiction are struggles each and every society have to struggle with, it is plausible to believe that, with greater international cooperation and integration, these hardships too would be alleviated in this aforementioned scenario.

Under the leadership of Hassan Rouhani in this scenario, the nation of Iran would have made massive strides in comparison to past Iranian Presidents, and it is impossible to paint a picture contrary to this within Iran.

With the 2021 Presidential Election on the horizon, it would've been harder for the Ayatollah and the Guardian Council, as well as the nation's reactionaries, to paint the picture that the Rouhani Administration had not created real, tangible progress for his country under a moderate, reformist leader. The Presidency would not have been as easy to fix as has been widely accused of having occurred. The enthusiastic participation of the people on the heels of all of this innovation would've chosen a candidate who stood for Iran that all people might live and exist in, and not Ebrahim Raisi.

While I cannot know for certain, in this scenario, I am not sure that a shrunken election pool and hardline succession could've been manufactured as easily under these alternative conditions; furthermore, with this economic and diplomatic cooperation still ongoing in this scenario, trust would have been developed over nearly a decade in the leadup to this innovation regarding the Taliban. Deciding at this point in the scenario to develop relations even further by funding or working, in some form or fashion, with or alongside Iran to weaken, diminish or beat back, would be less forced and awkward for both America and Iran than it would be in the reality and circumstances we actually, presently find ourselves in.

As it stands, to that end, the situation America finds itself is unfortunate but is hardly anything in comparison to the plight of the newly endangered and subjected people of Afghanistan or the continuously and increasingly desperate people of Iran. The United States finds itself in self-made conundrums of which weigh upon the nation and its citizenry as a kind of moral yolk, or an international scarlet letter of sorts; while it has itself to blame for this, it also knows the solution to reconcile and help itself. As a recent report says in sharp scrutiny, America

did not understand the Afghanistan situation, or the timbre as I myself would have said, and so were unable to tailor a plan that would incorporate and assist Afghanistan's people in creating and rebuilding the society that they wished to have; by creating in Afghanistan the society that the United States hoped for Afghanistan to be, the connection that a people must feel to their government and to their society was ignored because of the sheer power and force that America can, at any moment, wield to disastrous ends.

America must come to the table with Iran and speak plainly, sincerely, and with tact regarding its nuanced and profound set of crises. It must offer support for Iran in return for innovations regarding human rights within the nation, as well as the nature of its nuclear program; of course, Ebrahim Raisi and the Ayatollah will, as previously stated, play the proverbial hardball with America and Europe, the Islamic Republic understands that it needs this innovation as badly, if not worse, than it did all of those years before. These are the two most essential

points in the entire relationship, and so must be reconciled so that cooperation, which has so many bountiful possibilities outside of anti-Taliban action, can be undertaken towards a safer, more cooperative, empathetic, and mutually understanding international community and earth.

Joe Biden has the ability as President to do this if he and his administration are diplomatically and intellectually capable, although I am unsure whether they are in this capacity, to be fair. While Biden appears sometimes reasonably capable of maneuvering within the nuanced and sensitive world of the United States Senate and its mass of factions, the man he served under as Vice President, Barack Obama, understood foreign affairs and diplomatic nuance, I think, more naturally and intuitively than does Joe. I hope to be very wrong regarding that, and should I be, it will be a step towards aiding the relationship between the two nations, in materially aiding the people of Iran as well as creating an environment where a rights-based society can develop.

In any event, between the Taliban

and all of the other internalities and externalities pressuring Iran currently, if the President cannot manage to rework and reconstitute a new Nuclear, and perhaps further cooperative economic and humanitarian, deal with Tehran, then he would never have been able to in better international conditions or circumstances either; with this said, it should also be reiterated that, had the 45th President not been so unwise regarding his own understanding of foreign policy vis-a-vis Iran, there would be no need for Joe Biden to have to renegotiate with Ebrahim Raisi in this way.

Should I be incorrect, it will be one of the happier misfires of my life of intellectual prognostication, yet should I be correct, then the sad, sorry story of which includes over 40 years of torment, since the last Pahlavi Shah was forced to finally flee for good, will stretch on further into the future; no one with positive, international or domestic intentions wins in the latter scenario, and only suffering will accompany further obstinance regarding diplomatic reconciliation between the United States and Iran.

U.S. to provide additional \$67 million to Lebanese army

BY MANDILEE HECHT

The United States will provide an additional \$67 million to Lebanon's army, US Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland said while attending a press conference in Beirut, Thursday, Oct. 14.

Nuland said the US was collaborating with Lebanese officials, as well as the World Bank and humanitarian assistance organizations, to assist the nation in its grave economic crisis.

She expressed the nation's sympathies on behalf of the United States when violence erupted in Beirut, kill-



ing at least six people and injuring many more.

According to authorities, the tragedy was caused by firing on protesters who were about to take part in a rally organized by Hezbollah, an Iran-backed Shi'ite organization. Demonstrators had gathered to demand the resignation of the judge overseeing the investigation into last year's Beirut port bombing.

Hezbollah and its Shi'ite ally, the Amal movement, blamed the shootings on the Christian Lebanese Forces party.

Lebanon has been experiencing a financial collapse, which has resulted in a lack of essential necessities such as petrol. During the turmoil, Iran has

provided petroleum to Lebanon.

A Country in Trouble

Lebanon is in the grip of a severe and protracted economic downturn. According to the World Bank Lebanon Economic Monitor (LEM), issued in June, the economic and fiscal crisis is likely to rank in the top ten, if not top three, most catastrophic crises occurrences worldwide since the mid-nineteenth century.

In the face of massive difficulties, policy inaction and a lack of fully effective executive power jeopardize already precarious socioeconomic conditions and a fragile social peace, with no apparent turning point on the horizon.

Massive Oil Plant Fire

On Monday, Oct. 11, firefighters extinguished a massive fire that started in a storage tank at one of Lebanon's largest oil plants in the country's south. The fire emitted orange flames and a strong column of black smoke into the sky.

Energy Minister Walid Fayad said the incident started as employees in the coastal town of Zahrani were moving gasoline from one storage tank to another. He estimated that 250,000 liters (66,000 gallons) of gasoline were used during the three-hour fire. No one was reported to have been injured.

The country is also amid a major power crisis, exacerbated by fuel shortages and resulting in power outages lasting upwards of 24 hours.

Secretary of State Expresses Growing Concern with Iranian Nuclear Program in Wednesday's Press Availability

BY ZACH SCHRADER

US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, held a press availability on Wednesday at the Department of State. He hosted Israeli Alternate Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Yair Lapid, as well as United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan to discuss their efforts to "shape a more peaceful region (Middle East)" and "Expand the circle of countries with normalized relations with Israel" in the region. A key subject of this press availability was their efforts to put an end to Iran's nuclear program. All three of these officials expressed major concern about the Iranian Nuclear program and suggested they would be willing to resort to military force if a diplomatic solution cannot be reached.

The United States along with China,



France, Russia, United Kingdom, and Germany had established a nuclear deal with Iran in 2015 in which Iran agreed to discontinue most of its nuclear program in exchange for significantly reduced sanctions. However, in 2018, the Trump Administration

pulled out of the deal due to the belief that Iran was not holding up their end of the bargain. It has now become a predominant goal of the Biden Administration to establish a new deal with Iran that prevents them from developing nuclear weapons. However

Iran's new president, Ebrahim Raisi, has been much less cooperative than his predecessor.

Blinken holds the stance that time to act is running thin and while he would much prefer a diplomatic solution, military force may be necessary as Iran continues to lack compliance. Blinken said to the press, "With every passing day and Iran's refusal to engage in good faith, the runway gets shorter... We are prepared to turn to other op-

tions if Iran doesn't change course."

Israel appears to have an even stronger sense of urgency than the US on this issue due to their tumultuous relationship with Iran. After all, "Iran has publicly stated it wants to wipe us out, we have no intention of letting that happen", Lapid said to the press. Lapid also stated, "Israel reserves the right to act at any given moment, in any way.. That is not only our right, it is also our responsibility." Blinken and

the Biden Administration have made it clear that the US fully supports Israel in regards to this issue.

As the US, Israel, and numerous allies become more impatient by the day with Iran stalling on this issue, it seems a solution, diplomatic or otherwise, will be reached very soon. Regardless of the solution, it has been made abundantly clear that allowing Iran to develop nuclear bombs is not an option.

Street war between Hezbollah and Christian Lebanese Forces leaves six dead, many injured in Beirut

BY REESE FURLOW

Six people so far have been confirmed dead after a protest, led by the Hezbollah, broke out in gunfire on Oct. 14 in Lebanon.

The militant group, which is the most powerful political party in the country, protested to remove the judge who was investigating a bomb going off in Beirut in 2020. The explosion killed over 200 people, left over 7,000 injured, and cost over \$15 billion in property damage. The United States Geological Survey considered it one of the most powerful non-nuclear explosions in history.

The protest was put together by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who accused Judge Tarek Bitar for questioning Hezbollah officials for causing the bombing in 2020 while no other political figures in Lebanon were called in for questioning.

While on their way to the Justice Palace to call for Bitar's removal, the right-wing Christian Lebanese Forces took to the streets as well to counter protest the Hezbollah protestors. Their reasoning for the counter protest was because they felt it inter-



fered with the investigation.

Not long after, a shooting started. It is unclear who shot first, but the gunfire lasted roughly four hours according to the Associated Press.

"[We] faced an armed aggression by groups from the Lebanese Forces party, which had spread out in nearby neighborhoods and on building rooftops, and started its direct sniping operations to purposefully kill," a Hezbollah member said.

The CLF denied the allegations and said it started from Hezbollah s

provocation. However, Marc Saad, the Lebanese Forces spokesman, told the Washington Post how the Lebanese Forces were out there because they refused to allow "the streets and their country to be violated by thugs and terrorists who come with [rocket-propelled grenades] now just to oppose a judge who is doing his simple job to make justice heard."

The streets were evacuated and schools were closed as the gunfire between the two groups went on. The army showed up hours later to stop the attack, according to the AP.

Cyber Surveillance and Human Rights Activism in the United Arab Emirates

BY RANDY WHITEHEAD

One of the wealthiest countries in the world, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is famous for its incredible architecture and lavish cityscapes. The UAE paints itself as one of the more progressive countries in its region, but many people are beginning to call this a façade.

At the Expo 2020 Dubai event — a popular and international cultural event — the UAE constructed a public image of freedom and openness that is contrary to their consistent human rights violations against those who speak out against the government. Even though the UAE presents a very progressive, open international persona, its free speech rights are essentially nonexistent. Many people who speak out against or criticize the government are arrested. These stringent restraints on what can and cannot be said have caused many residents and UAE-based companies to carefully monitor what they say for fear that the same thing may happen to them.

Human rights researchers, academics, journalists, and United Nations experts have requested permission to enter the country and investigate the situation, but their requests have been repeatedly denied. Unfortunately, the UAE government has systematically put a ban on the freedom of expression and association. They've prosecuted and arrested hundreds of judges, lawyers, teachers, students, and activists. Using advanced spyware and cyber surveillance methods, they've hacked into and monitored the devices of everyone from human rights activists to government critics.

In 2009, a UAE government-sponsored cyber surveillance agency called Project Raven was created. By recruiting former U.S. intelligence of-



ficers, the government's goal was to allow Americans to run the program until Emirati officers were trained enough to run it themselves. In 2014, Lori Stroud — a former member of the U.S. National Security Agency — joined a team of over a dozen other previous U.S. intelligence officers called Project Raven.

Using advanced cyber surveillance techniques, this team helped the UAE surveil other governments, militants, human rights activists, and anyone else who was critical of the government. However, in 2016, Project Raven morphed into Dark Matter, a group bent on cyber-surveilling Americans. Stroud — an American — finally stepped away from the team, expressing her dismay at the practice of spying on her fellow Americans.

Many other members of Project Raven came out and spoke about their experiences as well, commenting on the severity of the UAE's obsession with cyber surveillance and cybercrime. Ex-members say that the team used numerous cyber tools to spy on activists, political leaders, and suspected terrorists. One of these tools was Karma: a state-of-the-art cyber espionage tool that allowed Project

Raven to hack into iPhones. By exploiting a weakness in Apple's iMessage software, Karma granted UAE's government access to photographs, text messages, locations, and emails.

Groups such as Human Rights Watch have publicly and officially accused the UAE of suppressing free speech and unfairly holding dissidents, but the story seems to go beyond that. According to Stroud, Project Raven's targets were various and sweeping: Yemeni militants, foreign enemies like Turkey, Qatar, and Iran, and anyone who criticized or insulted the government. Under the government's direction, members of Project Raven would monitor social media accounts and target those who officials felt had somehow insulted the government. Sometimes, these "targets" were as young as 16.

The truth is that the UAE has a startling proclivity for spying on its own citizens and punishing them for any acts of free speech. The hugely controversial 2012 cybercrime law was essentially used as a free pass for the government to spy on their citizens. The law gave the UAE's government a legal right to arrest, prosecute, and

imprison anyone who uses technology — such as the web or social media — to criticize government officials, suggest government reform, rally people together for unlicensed demonstrations, and many other things that the government deems to be wrong.

Though it continues to portray itself as a progressive, open country, the UAE has an incredibly backward policy on freedom of speech. Citizens are prohibited from speaking out about the government in any way; and if they do speak out, they are usually

arrested, detained, and prosecuted. Using advanced cyber surveillance, the UAE continues to spy on its own citizens, creating a feeling of constant fear. Despite constant outcry from human rights groups, the UAE refuses to change its policies.

The Great Nuclear Bargaining Chip: How The Iran-JCPOA Actually Worked To Diminish Future Nuclear Proliferation, And Why A New One Is Necessary

BY TRENT NELSON

When the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama, and his administration began negotiating with Iran in the hopes of securing an agreement with the country to bring them back into the international community of nation, which would eventually occur in 2015, the notion behind this agreement was to create for Iran, another avenue for demonstrating its trustworthiness as a country on a global scale. In return for the end of numerous harmful American sanctions against the nation and regime, Iran would limit its nuclear refinement to civilian-grade levels; the beginning of more reasonable relations between the world at large and the Islamic Republic could finally arrive as well.

Almost immediately, however, Republicans, with still-candidate Donald Trump eventually coming to deride the agreement as well, called the deal a bad one, one that either gave billions of dollars to Iran, and one that essentially gave Iran the discretion to continue developing nuclear weapons while getting sanction relief. Therefore, it was a lose-lose for as far as conservatives could tell, and they worked to convince the population that it was, in fact, a lose-lose type of agreement that should be revoked at the earliest convenience.

When Republican candidate Donald Trump eventually won the 2016 Pres-



idential Election in shock fashion, he would not immediately ax the deal, but complain and whine about it instead. He would flip-flop and lie, moan and attempt to convince the world that the deal should certainly be reneged out of; the problem with all of this was simply that no one outside of the Republican Party and the ruling Party of Israel believed that the deal should be reneged upon. There was no evidence that Iran was breaking the agreement at or before the time that now-former President Donald Trump removed the United States from the JCPOA; the purported evidence, provided to the UN by former-Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu, was analyzed and proven to be nothing new or worth canceling the entire deal over at any event.

Yet it would, on the American end at least, be reneged upon in 2018, and while this year, 2021, should be its sixth year in action, the historic agreement as originally negotiated barely survived much longer than the Obama Administration itself did. Now years later, Iran is governed by an originalist Cleric named Ebrahim Raisi, who, according to Amnesty International, was responsible for the mass murder of political and religious dissenters that took place in Tehran in 1988, and will likely be the current Ayatollah's successor once he finally passes away.

Meanwhile, as Joe Biden's administration looks to remake and recreate the original JCPOA, it must be understood that this isn't the same Iran as it was when Barack Obama was

able to make relations work with the administration of the mercurial Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, as well as that of his successor, the moderate former Diplomat Hassan Rouhani. Iran has been suffering from increased poverty, COVID-19, a lack of resources, opiate addiction, and masses of refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq, from before the recent action, as well as in the aftermath of the Taliban resurgence in their neighbor to the east; the Ayatollah, Ali Khamenei, wants a renewed Nuclear Deal, just as he wanted the original one over a decade ago, yet he is proud, as well as mistrustful of the United States. He remembers, not only how the previous Nuclear Deal disintegrated, but the greater history between America and Iran that spans not only decades, but even centuries.

Hence, the negotiations will be tricky. Iran is not so willing to tamely behave as the western nations would like for them to, especially after how Donald Trump behaved as President towards them across four years; he gave them leverage, and they are attempting to leverage that leverage further. They are playing hardball with international watchdogs, with nuclear monitors, with American and certain international diplomats, and ultimately with the administration of Joe Biden himself. This is thanks almost exclusively to Donald Trump, who was thoughtful enough to pull the United States out of a major piece of international nuclear and human rights diplomacy without looking to innovate further upon it, or even replace it with something different; regardless, however, the United States will have to overcome this self-induced setback in order to create a safer world, as well as a more integrated and amicable Iran, with people who can grow freer in the years to come, instead of more sickly, repressed or poverty-stricken.

“Tact is the knack of making a point without making an enemy....” – Sir Isaac Newton

Conservatives, on the contrary, have been saying for years that the

JCPOA or any revitalized, similar type of deal, would eventually hand Iran the power to build nuclear weapons anyway. They’ve famously said, in fact, that a bad deal is worse than no deal at all. When the JCPOA was agreed to all those years ago, a major gripe by these reactionaries was that Iran would be allowed to continue to refine nuclear material at and to certain levels of which are not strong enough for weapons-grade use. These folks argued that this would allow for the country of Iran to develop their own nuclear potential in secret as they seemed to be cooperating with the deal on the surface. This is a portion of the alleged logic behind forcing America from a relatively new and major piece of multilateral diplomatic innovation.

Now, years after the deal was departed from by the United States, Iran is actually further ahead in regards to their nuclear weapons development than they were when Barack Obama signed the original deal, and in fact much further along rhetorically as well. This progress wasn’t achieved when the deal was active, but in the years since the United States stopped participating in it and subsequently reimposed sanctions on Iran; reactionaries see this, likely, as vindication for their original stance vis-a-vis the Nuclear Deal and Iran in the first instance, yet this vindication betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of a few of the elements at play within the entire premise or discussion; as before, these reactionary arguments obfuscate certain key points and understandings that are not, on the surface at least, too difficult to understand.

Gaining nuclear weapons is not so much a practical, military goal for country’s as many might initially suspect or believe; Iran itself has actually stated numerous times that it has little interest in nuclear weapons, outside of their strategic usefulness of course. Gaining civilian-grade nuclear power is much more practically useful and desirable for any nation, while the

only group of people to date that has dropped nuclear weaponry on people purposely is, indeed, the United States of America at the tail end of WWII.

Nuclear weapons are, in fact, for all intents and purposes, the worlds most useful and contentious bargaining chip, one that even China and Russia do not wish for Iran to get; gaining theoretical or even practical ability or access to nuclear weapons makes any nation in question as potentially dangerous as any other nuclear power, while an unfriendly nuclearly capable country is possibly a major threat should that nation let this information leak out to less-responsible parties or groups still. Gaining access or the ability to create nuclear weapons, therefore, appears to be an ignored or ostracized nation’s best hope for being treated with some level of equality when in the midst of negotiations regarding sanctions, trade agreements, or anything else for that matter.

If it is understood that weaponized nuclear capabilities are, in fact, the bargaining chip of all bargaining chips, and that the mere threat of a real, dependable program, unlike North Korea’s, is a valuable tool to position oneself more favorably within global negotiations, then the entire circumstance appears less convoluted than certain parties or actors might attempt to make it all out to be.

First off, no country in their right mind would entirely cease their nuclear program in return for the opportunity to reconcile themselves with nations that have not always treated them very well. As if the United States and the United Kingdom do not have a difficult enough historical relationship with Iran to use to pick and choose a possible example, the 45th American President was kind enough to give us an extraordinarily recent and specific one when he unilaterally pulled the United States out of the JCPOA during his, at the time of this piece, lone term in office. If America can unilaterally cancel a profound, multilateral diplomatic innovation, de-

spite that there was no evidence of any wrongdoing to warrant as much, then what incentives do any nations have to completely cease any type of nuclear development in the hopes of being treated properly in a multilateral, diplomatic agreement themselves?

The diplomatically naive Trump administration demanded something from another country that was as unreasonable then as it would've been had Barack Obama demanded it; ironically, of course, Trump then proceeded to behave in such a way as to demonstrate precisely why it was an unreasonable request to make in the first instance. In the bigger picture, by removing America from this deal so quickly after the President who signed it had left office, and for no actual or good reason, the 45th President and his Republican colleagues have irreparably damaged the integrity of any initial negotiations with nations around the world, as well as any subsequent deals that the United States makes with anyone, friend or foe moving forward.

Secondly, as previously mentioned, while the conservatives were fearful that Iran would somehow parlay its civilian-grade nuclear enrichment, while under the watchful eye of watchdogs and monitoring institutions, into a secret nuclear stockpile as now former Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu accused them of attempting to muster, there was, at no time, any evidence that this was happening or might happen; the same cannot be said in the time since America left the deal, however. Another linked premise of the disdain for this deal, was the idea that Iran would be renegotiating the deal at some point in the distant future, having had the ability to continue developing weapons-grade nuclear material under the guise of continuing to produce civilian-grade nuclear material, and that at that point, America and the rest of the world would somehow be caught comparatively flatfooted; this argument too has been used to assault the efficacy of the deal in stop-

ping Iran from gaining weapons-grade resources and technology moving into the future.

It is this here, for me at least, where the fundamental conceptualization of so many aspects of this discussion becomes more interesting to discuss. For if we, as previously mentioned a few times, understand that nuclear weapons are a bargaining chip more than a practical, useful tool of war, it is not very difficult to understand the disconnect, whether it be real or insincere, that is occurring between individuals who believe the Iran Deal was a giveaway to Iran and those who understood it to be a prudent piece of diplomacy, that, of course, might've been better, as any deal might always be, but that was positive and got the ball rolling on the path to reconcile Iran with not only the United States but much of the rest of the world too.

Let us use the general framework from the last, reneged upon JCPOA to perform a simple, quick, semi-hypothetical thought experiment. If a country is using its own nuclear potential to regain entry into the greater international community of nations, and this creates the desirable outcome of negotiations, and an eventual international and multilateral agreement with the most powerful country and countries in the world, then the need to then further develop a malevolent or threatening nuclear potential is substantially lessened. Those powerful nations of the world, by acting in this way, remove nuclear potential, for the time being at least, from the diplomatic equation moving forward; at that point, it becomes necessary to ask oneself "what would produce the next most desirable results," having gotten the first desirable results when negotiations began and the next when an agreement was reached between all parties. Out of all the potential choices to make at this point, the logical one would not be to push the nuclear envelope, as it might have previously been. Instead, the next positive step would then turn to demonstrat-

ing amicability, compliance, cooperation, growth, reconstruction, respect, mutuality, and consistency with its international counterparts.

This is, according to the information that I've been able to gather on the topic, generally what was in the still-early stages of going on. Had all of this continued undisturbed for the life of the agreement, some 15 years or so, it is unknowable just exactly how Iran as a country would look by then from a political, economic, and humanitarian standpoint, yet for the deal to have lasted the full 15 years would have meant that things had been continuing to go in a very positive trajectory; while there are those analysts or pundits who suggest that, at this point, Iran would unfurl its secret, nearly-two-decades-in-the-making nuclear arsenal out, my singular question in response to these suggestions is always, again, simply why?

When Iran had relatively no seat at the negotiating tables, before they entered into a deal with the most powerful nations of the world, it would make a lot of sense to intimate the continued development of nuclear weaponry. After 15 to 20 years of positive, mutual, and continually developing relations, on the other hand, what exactly would be the logic behind going ahead and setting that progress and trust back so far by using this threat or menace out of the blue? With nearly two decades of improving relations under their belts, both Iran and the involved nations of the world would have developed more understanding of each other and more amicable feelings towards one another, and the Islamic Republic would be foolish to risk those gains at that point.

"The only deadly sin I know is cynicism...." – Henry L Stimson

Positives over this time would've fostered budding opportunities for greater cooperation, and the specifics of the following deal, whatever it might be referred to as, would quite likely be born directly out of the suc-

cesses of the previous, just recently finished agreement. In short, were relations to improve as they had been before Donald Trump stopped this volition itself, for a span of 15 years, going back to base nuclear threats would not only be counterproductive, but simply nonsensical because the means for acquiring progress had been altered through real diplomatic work so long ago.

Therefore, because of agreements in the same spirit as the Iran Nuclear Deal, nuclear proliferation, as Barack Obama was likely able to foresee, can actually be diminished this way. Far from giving Iran carte blanche to develop nuclear weapons, Barack Obama was actually diminishing the need for the development of nuclear weaponry in the first instance. For nations and polities of the world, with what is known about nuclear weapons and the literal fallout, both diplomatically and practically speaking, of using them on this planet against other nations, cities, or their citizens, they exist nearly exclusively for the purpose of creating a practical and theoretical leverage against other nations.

Yet, as Joe Biden looks to recreate the Iran Nuclear Deal for this day and age, with so many differences from the Obama days blatantly obvious, one would have to be hard of hearing to miss that conservative and reactionary politicians, some on each side of the aisle mind you, are once again decrying the possibility of a renewed JCPOA getting done before the midterm elections of 2022, while Democrats wish to build an even more comprehensive deal with and for Iran. They wish to inculcate in the American people a sense of mistrust in the new deal, just as many of them attempted to do so during the Obama administration's final years as well. But the majority of Americans, as well as Iranians, actually support another Iranian Nuclear Deal, or a return to the old one, suggesting that the people of this nation have come to understand the circumstances and consequences

surrounding this real-life running drama better than politicians might give the people credit for, while the people of Iran wish for their lives to improve once again in tangible, meaningful ways.

While the Representatives and Senators, moneyed by interests and lobbyists as they are, vacillate back and forth as the wind appears to be blowing, the actual people of the country do recognize the proper, humane route to go further onward as a country. The 46th President must also understand as the people of the nation do, and he must find a means of consummating a new deal with Iran, for the sake of economic and international relations, as well as, most importantly, for the well being of so many suffering Iranians, Afghans, identifying Kurds of the country, and anyone else that calls the country home.

This will not put Iran on the road to nuclear proliferation. When one understands that the original JCPOA, in its own, previously described way, was actually designed to eliminate the incentive to proliferate weapons-grade nuclear resources and technology, the conclusion can actually be drawn that Donald Trump, far from ceasing the march of Iran towards nuclear development of which was handed to them with the signature of the JCPOA, not only stopped progress in regards to this, but actually set the process back in dangerous and still looming ways. Far from preventing nuclear proliferation, Trump actually incentivized it with his behavior and actions, not only by axing participation in the JCPOA, but by further actions, such as assassinating Qasem Soleimani and attempting to further nuclearize Iran's neighbors, Saudi Arabia and potentially the United Arab Emirates too.

Escorting America out of the Iran Nuclear Deal was not only diplomatically green, politically naive, and practically useless, but it was ultimately damaging to both the United States as well as Iran. Iran would likely look a different place today was the original

agreement still being abided by, even with the hardships, such as COVID-19, that have enveloped the entire world to date; the United States too, would have a different perception of Iran and its people as the Taliban surged across Afghanistan across the last few months. With this nasty innovation, and the knowledge that Iranians hate the Taliban, yesterday's foe might have been a friend of today and tomorrow, and far from an attempted Islamisation from both the top-down, as well as the bottom up, as is being attempted in Iran by the new, hardline originalist administration of Ebrahim Raisi, a different President or regime might be in charge in Iran altogether. In any event, with improving relations and comprehension of each others varied and diverse people and traditions

As it stands, that is not where we are. Instead, we are trying to get back somewhere near where we were, although it can never be exactly replicated of course, and the road ahead remains difficult and, therefore, somewhat ominous and treacherous. A new, reimagined JCPOA could put America, Iran, and the rest of the world back on track towards more positive, cooperative days going forward into the future.

If Joe Biden has the creative imagination and courage to do what must be done to create real progress in this theatre of international diplomacy, with so many countless and innocent lives hanging in the balance, then he will be able to fix the mistake of his Presidential predecessor, even with the new roadblock that could very well be President Ebrahim Raisi. If he is not able to, then he and his successors, whoever they may be, will be tasked to deal with an Iran whose nuclear bargaining chip will be, surely by that time, much more developed and threatening than it was when Barack Obama tried to create an alternative path towards a real, mutually beneficial solution so many years ago.

Understanding the Taliban-ISIS conflict in Afghanistan

BY JOHN RUEHL

Less than three weeks ago, the Taliban was continuing to insist there was no ISIS presence in Afghanistan. Yet the latter has since claimed responsibility for over a dozen terrorist attacks in the country, including an explosion at a funeral for the mother of Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid just days ago.

Though seemingly natural allies, particularly considering the Taliban's previous alliance with Al Qaeda, tensions between the Taliban and ISIS have been brewing for years.

As ISIS expanded into Syria and Iraq in 2014 and 2015, it found support from Taliban members frustrated with their leadership's failure to replicate the same success in Afghanistan. ISIS also exploited sectarianism in the country, gaining support for its promotion of Salafist Islam in comparison to the Hanafism advocated by the Taliban.

In addition, militants from Central and South Asia (many of which had fought in the Middle East) were incentivized to create a province of "Khorasan," a historical region that includes parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and Central Asia.

The Afghan chapter of ISIS, now known as the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), was established in the Nangarhar Province in eastern Afghanistan in January 2015, followed by another outpost in the northern province of Jowzjan.

The developments prompted the Taliban's leader at the time, Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, to write a let-



ter to his then-ISIS counterpart, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, to abandon recruitment in Afghanistan, insisting the war against the US should be led by the Taliban. But ISIS' relentless efforts to create a global caliphate, where the Taliban would naturally play a subordinate role, had already resulted in open conflict.

The first notable incident between the Taliban and IS-K occurred in February 2015, following IS-K's assassination of a senior Taliban commander in Logar province. However, as fighting intensified over the next few years, IS-K's influence in Afghanistan dwindled as it faced the wrath of the Taliban, US-led NATO forces, and the Afghan military.

In comparison, the Taliban's growing strength helped initiate talks with the Afghan and US governments, resulting in the Doha Agreement in 2020. As part of the peace agreement, the Taliban promised to prevent militant groups from operating in Afghanistan. In response, IS-K publicly attacked

the Taliban for deviating from its jihadist path and announced a new war against them and "their U.S. masters."

As the Afghan government fell and a new wave of chaos erupted across the country, countless numbers of ISIS fighters escaped from prison. Though the Taliban attempted to clamp down on the outbreak, the deteriorating security situation helped IS-K to refocus its efforts. The explosion that killed 13 US service members in August was claimed by the group, further undermining the Taliban's claims of its ability to control the country and maintain stability.

Reconciliation between the Taliban and ISIS remains unlikely. The Taliban's alliance with Al Qaeda proved a costly association that saw them removed from power for two decades. Distancing itself from IS-K is paramount to the Taliban's desire to gain official recognition as Afghanistan's legitimate governing authority.

Currently, the Taliban is not recognized by any other country. But some,

including Russia, Iran, and China, have noted the Taliban's importance in maintaining regional stability. Having already worked with the Taliban to evacuate its citizens in August, the US is also considering coordinating with the Taliban to defeat IS-K, Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in September.

To gain international recognition and domestic legitimacy, the Taliban

knows it must confront IS-K across Afghanistan. But doing so may mean disavowing some of its more radical positions, thus risking another wave of defections from the Taliban to IS-K. At the same time, other forces, countries, or interested parties may be willing to support IS-K, directly or indirectly, to put pressure on the Taliban.

The threat posed by IS-K is not limited to Afghanistan. According to a

West Point report, IS-K planned to attack US and NATO military bases in Germany before being thwarted by German authorities last year. Locked in conflict for the last 40 years, Afghanistan's ongoing instability suggests IS-K may be difficult to eradicate. In its quest for desperately needed allies, the Taliban has little choice but to continue trying.

North Korea Launches Submarine Missile into Japanese Waters

BY LIAM FLYNN

South Korean military officials report suspicions that North Korea fired a submarine-launched missile into waters off the coast of Japan. In

the past weeks, North Korea has administered many missile tests, some of which violate international sanctions and standards.

The missile launched into Japanese waters this week was announced by North Korean officials in January. The missile program is part of ongoing efforts from the government to signal strength to the country's citizens as well as chief rivals in the region including the United States, South Korea, and Japan.

Kim Jong-un, the leader of North Korea has committed to building an "invincible army". Despite economic sanctions, the Kim regime continues to build its nuclear and ballistic missile arsenal. Kim claims that the submarine-launched missile is "the most powerful" weapon in the world, all while the military tests other weapons such as a train-based hypersonic missile.



The actual capabilities of the submarine-based weapon remain unclear, but the test solidifies the trend of North Korea's swiftly expanding military technology. It is expected that North Korea already has missile-technology capable of reaching the United States. Additionally, North Korea is among the 9 countries known to have nuclear weapons – an exclusive list that includes the United States, Russia, and China.

The most recent weapons test is significant as the North Korean military continues to refine its subma-

rine-launched missiles which have significant range and are harder to detect. South Korea recently unveiled the development of a similar weapon in recent weeks. The two countries remain in a state of war though significant conflict has not occurred since an armistice was reached in July of 1953.

South Korea will be hosting its largest ever military exhibition this week, which will include the demonstration of new missiles, rockets, and fighter jets. As an arms race on the peninsula continues on the Korean peninsula, Kim

Jong-un claims that the country has no interest in war and is only developing weapons for self-defense.

The White House has responded to the missile launch condemning the violation of the UN Security Council resolutions. Press Secretary Jen Psaki reiterated that the Biden administration's position on North Korea is one of denuclearization in the region.

According to the White House press conference, North Korea has not responded to US efforts to engage in diplomatic talks. In comparison, the prior administration under Donald Trump engaged with the North Korean regime, which included a North Korea-United States summit in Singapore in 2018. Despite the summit, the Trump administration failed to make any meaningful progress on denuclearization.

South Korea and its allies will continue to investigate this incident looking to confirm if there were more than one missile fired, and if the missile was in fact fired from a submarine. Either way, the missile test was one of the first since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, signaling North Korea may be shifting focus from the health crisis to projecting strength abroad.

Human rights activists detained after protest of China's Uyghur genocide BY REESE FURLOW

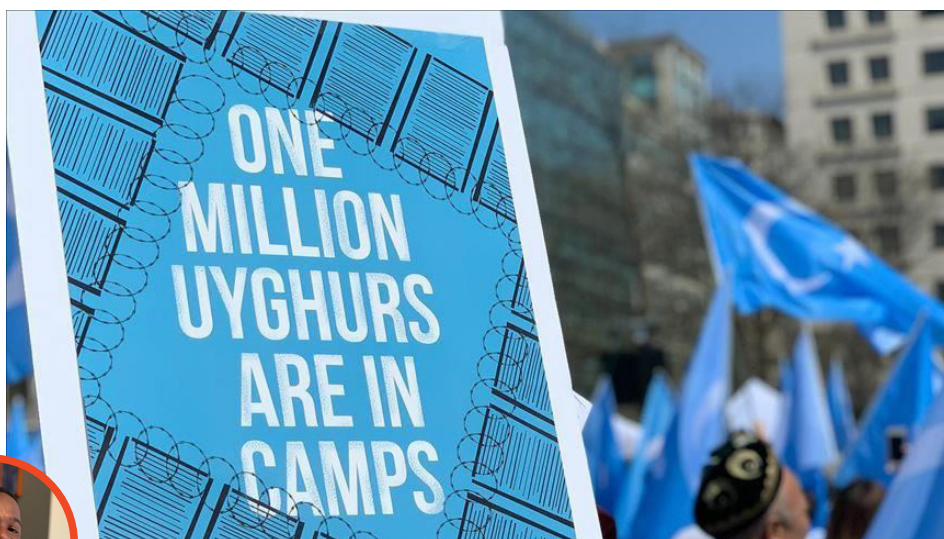
Three human rights activists were arrested on Oct. 18 after they snuck into an archaeological site in Ancient Olympia, Greece, to protest China holding the 2022 Winter Olympics

The activists entered the Temple of Hera to disrupt the lighting of the torch ceremony and held up a banner that read "No genocide games."

Police quickly stopped the protesters by throwing them to the ground and detaining them. Their reasoning for sneaking into the ceremony was to question why China is holding the Winter Games despite poor treatment of Uyghur Muslims in the Xinjiang region.

Uyghur Muslims have faced harsh punishment from Secretary General Xi Jinping since 2016. Praying, having too many children, constantly turning a phone on and off, using foreign social media, and being born after the 1980s has resulted in the Muslims being put into re-education camps, according to For the Martyrs.

Uyghur women who are put into these camps face sexual assault, starvation, forced abortions and tor-



ture from the Chinese men who watch over them. However, the Chinese government denies the allegations despite the United Nations asking for access to assess these camps to determine if it is a human rights violation.

According to For the Martyrs, there have been roughly two million Uyghurs detained by the Chinese government, causing human rights activists from different parts of the world to protest anything significant to do with China, such as the 2022 Winter Olympics.

"How can Beijing be allowed to

host the Olympics, given that they are committing a genocide against the Uyghurs" a protestor told the Associated Press.

Despite the disruption, the lighting of the torch ceremony proceeded as planned with the flame being carried off on a mini torch relay.

The Winter Olympics will be held from Feb. 4-20 in Beijing, making it the first city to host both the Summer and Winter Olympics at some point.

French outrage as Mali tries to defend itself



BY MALLY KAKEMBO

The French ambassador to Mali has been summoned by Bamako in the latest escalation of tensions between the West African country and the eco-colonial power that historically pillaged it.

The falling out has been over the jihadist insurgency in the Sahel that almost overran Mali just a few years ago. Since French President Emmanuel Macron announced in July his plans to cut the 5,000-strong support force in the region, sentiment against the country has gone downhill with both civilians and politicians. In an attempt to reverse the decline in relations, Macron organized a summit last year with the leaders of Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Bukina Faso, and Chad.

Yet things have only worsened in the time since then.

Although French troops still remain in the region alongside a UN peace-keeping force of 13,000 troops, violence has continued to ravage the regions with millions displaced and thousands killed.

By most measures of how things are working out so far, the governments in the region are not fully equipped to deal with the jihadist threat in their lands.



How Mali has chosen to deal with the recent news that France will be taking a step back from the situation has angered Paris, among others.

Bamako is considering, and reports say an agreement has already been reached, hiring Russian private security company Wagner Group. The organization is something of an enigma. Although it trains in Russian Ministry of Defense facilities and is primarily made up of Russian people, the government denies it is a representative of the Russian state. It is officially headquartered in Argentina since Russia does not allow private military forces. However, it is bankrolled by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian businessman with close links to Russian President Vladimir Putin whose vast wealth owes much to his Kremlin connections according to some reports.

The group has played important

roles in the Syria and Libyan, two countries that France poured billions of euros into destabilizing and devastating in the last decade. French defense minister Florence Parly said the private force would be “wiping their feet on the blood of French soldiers”.

The EU, who often followed closely behind France’s brutal aggression said that if the African government’s struck a deal with Wagner it would be a “red line”.

Mali’s interim defense minister on the other hand called Russia a “friendly country” with whom there is a “fruitful partnership”.

With only one country sitting between Mali and Libya, which is now large parts rubble, Bamako must be wondering why their former colonizers feel so strongly about them working in tandem with a force that Paris cannot control, even if it isn’t a conventional one.

10 Countries Call on EU to Classify Nuclear Energy as a Green Source



BY LIAM FLYNN

A coalition of ten European Union countries penned a letter to the European Commission to categorize nuclear power as a “green” energy source. The group of ten countries was led by France and included Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania. The letter penned by these countries argues that nuclear energy is not only a low-carbon energy source but also an independent energy resource.

As demand for natural gas rises globally, prices for natural gas and oil have skyrocketed within the European Union. As COVID-19 restrictions are gradually lifted, economies have reopened causing a shock to the energy market. As 90% of the EU’s natural gas supply comes from foreign importers, namely Russia, the states involved in the push for nuclear power are seeking a path to more energy generated within EU trade zone.

There is an active debate as to which resources should be included within the “EU Green Taxonomy” which is a guidebook used by governments and investors to determine which energy sources will fit into the Paris Climate Agreement or otherwise fall short. On the other end of the spectrum is a coalition led by Germany, where



the plan is to shut down all nuclear reactors by 2022. Other countries in the contingent of countries in the anti-nuclear cause include Austria, Denmark, Luxembourg, and Spain.

In order to qualify for the existing framework, the energy source in question must make a substantial contribution to at least one EU climate objective without significantly curtailing efforts in other criteria. Other sectors that are currently a part of the structure include solar, geothermal, hydrogen, wind power, hydropower, and bioenergy. While nuclear energy is notably considered a non-renewable energy source, an EU report concluded that the greenhouse gas emissions from nuclear plants are similar to renewable sources such as wind energy.

Opponents to widespread nuclear use argue that radioactive waste is harmful to humans and the environment. Moreover, notable nuclear disasters such as Chernobyl and Fukushima weigh on the minds of the public due to the extreme nature of

the fallout.

Meanwhile, in Japan where the Fukushima accident occurred, there is also a debate to return to nuclear power with Japan’s new prime minister calling for a restart. Japan, like members of the EU, is among the largest contributors to carbon pollution. As COP26 approaches, other major economic powers such as the United States and Great Britain have reaffirmed their plans to reduce carbon emissions to reach carbon neutrality by 2050. Advocates of nuclear energy will argue that nuclear is an important part of this plan.

Ultimately, the debate is unlikely to meet its conclusion in the near future. Nuclear energy is a powerful source of energy, that could contribute to the reduction of carbon emission while maintaining the same levels of energy the world economy needs. However, for others, the dramatic nature of a nuclear accident will stay deeply ingrained in society.

As nuclear power rebounds, Russia takes the lead



BY JOHN RUEHL

Following the 2011 Fukushima disaster, the Japanese government vowed to radically reduce nuclear energy production. This decision was mirrored by numerous European states, and over the next several years, many of the world's nuclear power plants were partially or completely shut down. But continual conflict in the Middle East, rising oil and natural gas prices, and the immaturity of the renewables market have reignited nuclear energy demand.

Last week, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida stated his intention to bring the country's shuttered nuclear industry back online. Almost simultaneously, France, the EU's leading nuclear energy producer, led a group of nine other EU states in asking the European Commission to recognize nuclear power as a green energy source to ease the transition to climate neutrality.

The focus on oil, gas, and renewable energy, however, has resulted in years of neglect for much of the world's nuclear industries. 20 of France's 58 nuclear power plants were temporarily shut in 2016 over safety concerns, while its major nuclear power company, Areva, was restructured into several different companies the same year.



Westinghouse, a major US nuclear company, declared bankruptcy in 2017 after cost overruns for both its domestic and overseas contracts. South Korea's Korean Electric Power Corporation's (Kepco) has meanwhile suffered from numerous safety concerns at its nuclear sites and with foreign reactor exports, while corruption scandals have further tainted its image.

The weaknesses plaguing foreign competition have allowed Chinese and Russian state-owned companies to expand their influence. And though China's primary focus has been meeting domestic energy demand, Russia has been able to drastically increase its exports of nuclear power technology. Rosatom, Russia's state-owned nuclear energy company created in 2007, is now the world's only integrated nuclear firm and the most influential actor in the market.

Though only 4th in worldwide nuclear power production, this figure belies Russia's true influence over

the international industry. Through Rosatom and its subsidiaries, Russia is responsible for 20% of the world's uranium conversion and 43% of its uranium enrichment.

But the key to Rosatom's success has been its nuclear reactor exports. Rosatom's funding and operational centralization allows it to offer all-in-one deals on financing, construction, training, uranium supply, and waste management. Between 2000 and 2015, Russia is estimated to have sold more nuclear technology abroad than the US, France, China, South Korea, and Japan combined, with reactors forming a core part of that.

With 19 firmly planned foreign projects and an additional 14 proposed, Rosatom has roughly \$140 billion in contracts for the next ten years. Reactors also require long-term maintenance and uranium supply agreements that make typical contracts last up to 50 years – with the possibility of further extension.

In both Russia's backyard and further abroad, Rosatom has seized the initiative. Kazakhstan and Russia revealed in 2019 a proposed site for a nuclear power plant had been chosen, while Rosatom began construction on Uzbekistan's first nuclear reactor later that year. Four reactors are scheduled for completion in 2028 and 2030, which will account for almost a fifth of Uzbekistan's projected growing electricity consumption.

Rosatom is currently finalizing construction of a second Belarusian nuclear reactor after the first came online earlier this year. However, Rosatom's true ambition in Europe is to expand its influence in the EU, which generates over a quarter of its electricity from nuclear power. This will help offset Russia's reliance on oil and gas revenues as Europe works towards a carbon-free and affordable energy future.

Hungary, which generates roughly half of its electricity from nuclear power, already receives its nuclear fuel from Russia. In 2014, it struck an agreement with Rosatom to help build two new reactors, pending final approval. Rosatom is also finalizing plans to build Finland's first nuclear reactor, as well as Bulgaria's third nuclear reactor after talks with the US' Westinghouse fell apart.

Asia's growing appetite for energy has attracted Moscow's attention, and even as China has rapidly expanded its nuclear energy capabilities, it has actively sought out Russia's expertise. In 2018, the two countries signed a strategic agreement jointly construct four nuclear power plants in China, while future supply deals for radionuclide heat units (UHR) to power equipment in China's space program demonstrate

the broad array of products Rosatom has to offer.

Because of China's growing nuclear energy independence, however, Rosatom is looking to the potential of the enormous Indian market for future demand. Two Russian-built reactors in India have been operational since 2014 and 2017, with three more currently under construction and several others being discussed.

Rosatom is also building two nuclear reactors in neighboring Bangladesh, scheduled for completion by 2025. In 2011, Russia and Vietnam struck a deal for construction of a nuclear Centre and Rosatom has pledged to begin building Vietnam's first nuclear power plant in 2023. Additionally, Rosatom has discussed building a small experimental reactor in Indonesia and making the Philippines' built but never used power plant operational.

Across the resource-rich Middle East, Rosatom has also been busy over the last few years. It is competing with US, French, Chinese, and South Korean companies to build the first of two nuclear power plants in Saudi Arabia, alongside talks with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for uranium supply and nuclear energy agreements with Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.

In Turkey, Rosatom has begun construction of the the first of four reactors to be built by 2023. Egypt agreed in 2015 to allow Rosatom to construct the country's first nuclear power plant with four reactors, with the first unit scheduled to come online in 2026. And after years of delays dating back to the 1990s, Rosatom was able to get Iran's first nuclear reactor online in 2011. Rosatom has since begun construction on two more reactors in Iran, scheduled for completion in 2027-2028.

The rapidly growing population across sub-Saharan Africa has also expanded Rosatom's options. Unlike other major powers, Russia's pledge to import energy rather than export Africa's natural resources has brought enthusiasm and approval from across the continent.

Rwanda signed a deal with Rosatom to develop a Nuclear Center for Science and Technology in 2019, including a small, water-cooled reactor. In 2017, Rosatom signed a deal with Nigeria to construct the country's first nuclear power plant and a nuclear research center, as well as a nuclear research and technology center in Zambia.

The company has also signed agreements over the last decade with the Republic of Congo, Sudan, Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda for the development of nuclear power, in addition to uranium projects in Namibia and Tanzania. Earlier this year, Burundi approached Rosatom to help it develop its first nuclear plant.

To solidify its future appeal, Rosatom is experimenting with new reactor types. The first, a "fast-breeder" reactor, recycles nuclear fuel and generates 10-100 times more energy than boiling water or pressurized-water reactors. Russia's BN-600 is the world's only commercially operating fast-breeder reactor, and the company is now building a BN-800 reactor and a BN-1200.

Rosatom also announced in 2019 that it would be constructing a molten salt research reactor, which would help alleviate concerns over nuclear waste. But the true litmus test of Rosatom's ambitions will rest on its ability to make nuclear power transportable. In late 2019, Rosatom successfully moved a floating nuclear power

plant, the Akademik Lomonosov, from Russia's northwestern port city of Severodvinsk to the eastern Siberian port town of Pevek.

Replacing a coal-burning power plant and supplying electricity to the 50,000 people, the Lomonosov shows the potential to deliver nuclear power around the world. Rosatom plans to build four more floating nuclear power plants by the end of the

decade, while its overseas sales of nuclear technology are meanwhile expected to rise from 47% of the world's total in 2016 to over 2/3 by 2030.

Rosatom's strategy is not bullet-proof. Russia has extended billions of dollars in credit for foreign projects at a time when its economy is strained, and even before coronavirus, many were behind schedule. Any failure to adequately transport and store nucle-

ar waste could also quickly upend Rosatom's operations around the world.

Nonetheless, Rosatom's future looks bright. Its success stems both from its own expertise and the vacuum left by Western nuclear energy companies. Washington would be wise to refocus its attention towards developing its own nuclear industry to prevent China and Russia from dominating it in the 21st Century.

Latest vaccine mandate in Italy sparks massive protest



BY REESE FURLOW

The Italian General Confederation of Labour was met with thousands of Italian protestors on October 10 after the country will be passing a vaccine mandate on Oct. 15.

Italians will soon be required to carry a Green Pass that will confirm if they are vaccinated or have recovered from the virus so they can enter their workplace. The Green Pass is a downloadable app that shows whether a person is vaccinated or has been tested for the virus, but citizens are also given the option to carry their vaccination cards as well.

The Green Pass had been in effect since August, where people were required to carry one to dine inside restaurants and to board trains. The new law, however, now makes it one of the strictest vaccine mandates in the world.

Italians did not take too kindly to the new law either, as protestors took



to the streets chanting "freedom" as they marched from Rome's Piazza del Popolo to the CGIL. Once they made their way to the prime minister Mario Draghi's office, however, they were met with tear gas and water cannons from police officers.

12 people were arrested and a few police officers were injured during the weekend-long protest.

United States Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, was with Draghi during the protest but was safely evacuated when they found out what was going on.

Even though thousands of people protested needing to prove their vaccination status, claiming it takes away their freedom, Italy is one of the highest fully vaccinated countries in the world at 80 percent, according to CBS News.

43 million out of 60 million are now fully vaccinated after the country suffered over 130,000 deaths since last February when the pandemic started. The number of deaths was the second-highest in Europe, and ninth-highest in the world.

Working From Home: How to Balance It All



BY CHELSEA MEECE

We may not be sure when the Covid-19 Pandemic may be over, but one thing we do know is that it caused many people to transition into working from home. Whether your current job transitioned you into making a home office or you've embarked on becoming a digital nomad, it's important to find the balance between your personal and professional life when working from home. Below you will find out just how to do so!

Set Boundaries

Now that your personal and professional life are intertwined, it's important to learn how to set boundaries between the two. Just because you're able to work from home, whenever you want, doesn't mean you should be working 24/7.

Start by setting business hours for yourself. If you already have these in place from your current company, great! Stick to them, if you're supposed to be off at 5 pm, shut the computer down then. If you are building a business or have the flexibility to set your own hours, make a schedule and stick to it! By doing so you'll not only be present at the moment when you're working or enjoying leisure time, but you'll also be more productive and focused during both as well.



Create Separate Spaces

Setting environmental boundaries within your home can be as easy as creating separate spaces and intentionally being mindful of their use. Yes, you may now have the ability to work from bed in your pajamas, but that doesn't mean that it's what's best for you and your productivity. By creating a designated place in your home, such as a home office, den, or even work corner, you're able to condition your mind to focus when in said area.

Within your spaces, be sure that they are also clear of clutter and functional to use. You want your workspace to be inspiring of creativity and allow you to focus on the tasks at hand. Then, within your resting and leisure spaces, create an environment that allows you to relax and restore both your mental and physical stresses from the day.

Self-Care: Prioritize Yourself and Your Family

Being able to work full-time from home is a privilege that many gen-

erations before the internet didn't have access to. Recognize this privilege and remember the benefits that come with it. Take a full day just for yourself or your family each week to grow deeper in the personal relationships that you have with one another. Make that day consistent each week, and truly shut down from your professional duties. When you make yourself and your family a priority, the work week won't seem as daunting and you'll always have something to look forward to while also reminding you of why you're working so hard in the first place.

Wrap-Up

Now that more people than ever are working from home or transitioning to do so, it's important to learn what is right for you in the balance between your personal and professional lives. By setting boundaries, creating separate spaces, and prioritizing yourself and your family, you'll be able to begin finding the proper balance in meeting your self-care needs.

For years, Donald Trump's DC Hotel Losses During Presidency



BY ATHENA NAGEL

The House Oversight Committee released documents showing former president Donald Trump lost more than \$70 million from his Washington, DC, hotel over four years, despite publicly claiming that the hotel was making more than tens of millions of dollars.

For years, Trump did not disclose that the hotel received millions from foreign governments, payments, and deferrals, which raised concerns about potential conflicts of interest during his presidency.

The committee's review and release of the former president's financial information mark the committee's first examination of the data. Still, the Trump Organization disputed the committee's understanding of accounting and denied any wrongdoing. New York's attorney general and the Manhattan district attorney have reviewed Trump's financial statements, but they have yet to be made public.

According to federal financial disclosures, between 2016 to 2020, Trump reported \$156 million in income from the Trump International Hotel.

However, according to hotel financial statements obtained by the committee, Trump's DC hotel incurred losses of more than \$70 million during those four years and subsequently had to borrow more than at least \$27 million from one of Trump's holding



companies between 2017 through 2020. This holding company is known as DJT Holdings LLC. Rather than loan repayments of more than \$24 million in loan payments being repaid, they were instead converted to capital contributions.

The committee analyzed the documents and concluded that Trump hotels received an estimated \$3.7 million in foreign government money.

House lawmakers have been seeking information about foreign payments to Trump businesses since his presidency for years. Democratic lawsuits under the emoluments clause of the Constitution were unsuccessful. Congress should be able to approve any gifts from foreign governments given to officeholders under the emoluments clause, an anti-corruption provision written by the nation's founders. Despite the House's years-long interest in reviewing Trump's finances, congressional approval for foreign payments the Trump Organization accepted never came to pass.

In addition, US committee members

claimed Trump received "undisclosed preferential treatment" from Deutsche Bank for a construction loan worth \$170 million.

As posted on the Trump Hotel's website, the loan terms initially required that principal payments began in 2018, but those terms were revised in 2018 so that payments could be deferred by six years.

A Trump Organization spokesperson disagreed with the committee's findings and felt they were misleading and false. The spokesperson felt the committee didn't understand basic accounting principles.

It is simply an attempt by the White House to mislead the American public and defame Trump in pursuit of their plan," said the spokesperson.

"The loan terms did not change, and payment was not deferred, a person familiar with the matter said." Deutsche Bank also accused the committee of making "several inaccurate statements."

The House Oversight Committee

and the GSA have been contacted for comment by CNN.

GSA handed over a set of Trump's audited financial statements for 2014 through 2020, developed by Weiser Mazars, Trump's accounting firm, and three years of Trump's statement of financial condition prepared by Mazars.

For years, the House has unsuccessfully pursued Trump's tax returns and other financial documents from Mazars USA and Deutsche Bank.

The documents released Friday raise many concerns about the lease

with the General Services Administration and the former President's conflicts of interest during his term in office when he engaged in contracts as landlord and tenant.

Moreover, the committee is asking the GSA to produce more documents within the next two weeks.

The GSA leased the Old Post Office building was leased in 2012 by the GSA, which manages federal buildings and land. When he was a Republican presidential candidate in 2016, Trump opened the hotel.

GSA's management of Trump's hotel lease has been under investigation by the Oversight Committee since then.

When he took office, Trump resigned from his businesses, but he transferred his assets to a trust controlled by his sons. As a result, he continues to benefit financially from the DC hotel and his other businesses.

After Trump was elected to the White House in November 2016, the GSA inspector general declared that the agency had "ignored the Constitution" by maintaining the hotel's lease.

3 Tips to Maintaining a Motivated Mindset



BY CHELSEA MEECE

When it comes to motivation, we often go off of how we are physically feeling, rather than our mental mindset when determining how we are going to go after our goals. This isn't necessarily wrong, as you should always trust your gut, but there is a missing piece to motivation that can be found and cultivated through your mindset. Below you will find out how your mindset matters in determining your level of motivation, and how to maintain a motivated mindset over time.

Why Your Mindset is Important when it comes to Motivation?

As you most likely know, everything you are able to do and accomplish throughout the day comes from the decisions you make and your current mental state. When it comes to motivation, Brenden Bruchard, New York



Times Best Selling Author of *The Motivation Manifesto*, put it best when he said "No one is motivated 24/7. Motivation is an emotion you learn to cultivate by using your mind, your body, and your greater consciousness to ensure that you feel the pull of purpose." Therefore, although how you feel in your body is important when it comes to motivation, it is more about your mind and your ability to connect with the greater consciousness.

Thankfully, you're able to create motivation by taking certain aligned actions towards whatever it is your goal may be.

Think BIG Picture

To start, take some time to reflect and think big picture on whatever your goal or desire is at this time. Don't allow limitations and barriers to sink into this moment, simply allow whatever it is that you want to bring to fruition to flow through you. It is best if you write down a list of these goals and desires, or even better if you take it a step further and create a dream board with images that represent what you want to happen. Once you have your list or dream board created, place it somewhere that it can be seen every day and use it as an

anchor to remind you of what you're working towards.

Take Small Steps

Once you have your overall goals and desires laid out on your list or dream board, it's time to take action. Each item can then be broken down into smaller more manageable steps that can help you get closer to your desired goal. As a rule of thumb, try to work on reaching these goals at least once a week, and reflect once a month on how far you've come. This will allow you to evaluate and analyze how you are currently doing, if you need to make any changes to your plan, and if you are on track with the timeline you set out to reach it.

Utilize Rewards

As you reach your smaller goals and ultimately your larger ones, utilize a personal reward system with yourself. Only you know what is best for you when it comes to rewards, but try to do something fun and memorable for yourself. You will be able to maintain a motivated mindset around the things you enjoy doing which will help you when things get a bit rocky along the way.

Add 10 Minutes of Personal Development to Your Day

Often when we work on developing ourselves and our skillset, we are able to increase our abilities both personally and professionally. By adding

in personal development throughout your day by reading a book or listening to a podcast, even just for 10 minutes, over time will compound into immense mental growth. Not only will your willpower and grit become stronger, but you will also open yourself up to subjects and lessons in life you wouldn't have otherwise thought about.

Wrap-Up

As you can see, there are many ways to maintain a motivated mindset. It's mainly about cultivating the habits to think big picture, breaking your goals down into smaller steps, and rewarding yourself along the way. Now, what are you waiting for, get started!

Self-Care isn't Selfish: 4 Simple Ways to Implement Self-Care into Your Routine



BY CHELSEA MEECE

What is Self-Care?

Self-Care is the act of taking care of your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being through intention and aligned action. By doing so you're able to prioritize yourself and your health to avoid burnout and being overwhelmed. There is a very hallmark image of self-care that includes luxury vacations, lavish spending, and plush spa days when in reality, self-care can be done simply without all of those extravagant things to prioritize one's self.

Get Moving



The easiest way to begin to prioritize yourself is to add movement into your routine. This doesn't have to be a strict gym schedule, rather the intention of adding movement and activity to your routine and finding ways to implement it. Going for a walk at the park to reflect and clear your mind, is just as effective as lifting heavy weights to release some anger or frustrations. Whatever is best for

you in adding movement is what you should do, but bonus if you try something new!

Write It Down

Our minds tend to run a mile a minute and there seem to be constant tasks added to our to-do lists, when this happens grab some paper and write it down. Creating lists or even simply getting your current feelings

out onto paper is a great place to start in prioritizing yourself. You're able to analyze and evaluate your current situation, while also coming up with solutions to what you're working through. Simply starting a list in the morning of the things that need to be done throughout the day or a reflection journal in the evening will allow you to prioritize some time with yourself while writing and will have a ripple effect on your everyday life.

Add Gratitude

Another place to start with writing it down and being intentional about prioritizing yourself is to add gratitude into your day. At the end of each

day, you can begin with writing three things you're grateful for each day or you can simply say out loud "thank you" when things are going well in your life. The more attention and focus you draw towards the things that are going right, the more positivity you will find coming into your life.

Anchor Your Goals

The final simple step in prioritizing your self-care is to anchor your goals. What that means is to find physical representations of your goals and to place them in an area where you're able to see them every day. This can come in the form of a dream board, a goal outfit if your goal is to lose

weight, or even a simple sticky note on your mirror to remind you. We often fall into the "out of sight, out of mind" issue, therefore by anchoring your goals you bring them into the forefront and are reminded each and every day how you're prioritizing yourself.

Wrap-Up

As you can see, there are simple self-care habits that you can implement into your life without expenses including adding movement, writing down your thoughts and emotion, adding gratitude into your life, and anchoring your goals.

Supreme Court grapples with US torture method secrecy

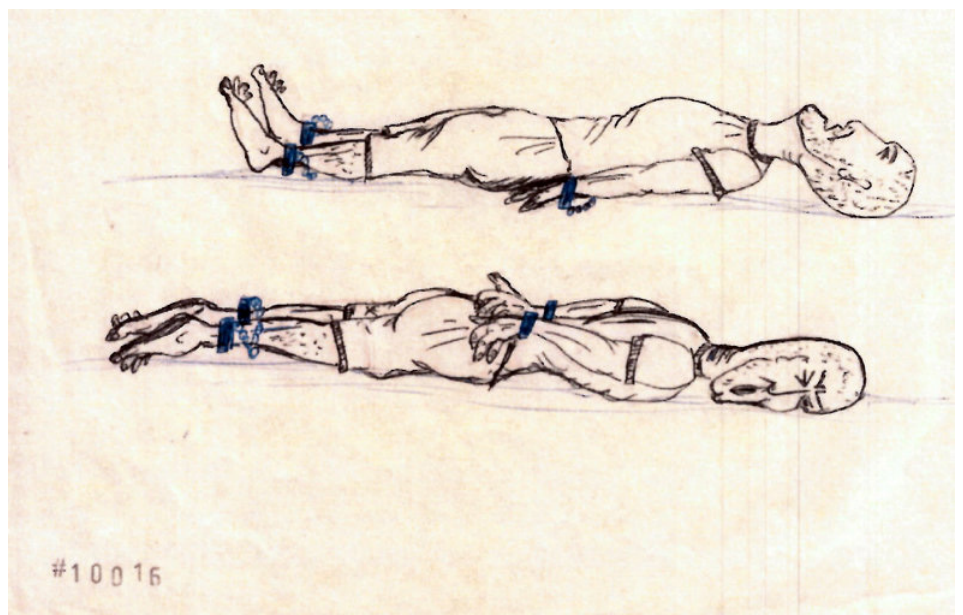


BY MANDILEE HECHT

This week, the Supreme Court discussed the issue of fading secrecy around United States' torture methods. The court debated Wednesday, Oct. 6 about the role of US courts in preserving the remaining secrecy surrounding the increasingly well-known truth that the CIA tortured terrorist detainees nearly 20 years ago during the early years of the war on terror.

The case before the justices, involving the alleged torture of al Qaeda operative and Guantanamo detainee Abu Zubaydah while he was being held in Poland in 2002 and 2003, raises questions about whether and when judges can override executive branch decisions on national security and so-called "state secrets."

While Zubaydah is urging former



CIA contractors James Mitchell and John Jessen to testify to aid a Polish investigation into his treatment in that country, Justice Neil Gorsuch suggested a simpler solution: have Zubaydah himself testify about what happened to him during his detention in Poland.

The government's attorney, acting Solicitor General Brian Fletcher, said Zubaydah could testify via affidavit

or other means, but he warned that his statements could be sanitized of classified information, which is the same reason the government is opposing the demand for Mitchell and Jessen's testimony.

While much of the litigation in the case has focused on whether the government can use the state secrets privilege to prevent any response to

Poland, Klein claims that the publication of a Senate Intelligence Committee report in 2014 and testimony by the two psychologist contractors in military commission proceedings exposed the CIA's tactics.

The Senate report detailed that

Zubaydah had been waterboarded — subjected to a form of simulated drowning — 83 times.

At the end of the debate, Trump nominee Justice Brett Kavanaugh chimed in, prompting Fletcher to state the Biden administration's position

that the detention of Zubaydah and most of the others at Guantanamo is justified, under Congress's 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force. Kavanaugh said this is due to the United States still being engaged in active hostilities with al Qaeda.

How to Practice Mindfulness Throughout a Busy Day



BY CHELSEA MEECE

As we are constantly on the go in such a fast-paced society, it's important to take time throughout the day to be mindful and present. When we age, we can feel as if time flies and life can pass us by, and it can, but you can also be mindful throughout the day with your awareness to get the most out of your life. Below we will discuss simple tips on how to practice mindfulness throughout a busy day.

Create a Morning Routine

Everything you do starts with you and the zest that you have for life. When you create a morning routine focused around taking care of yourself and your needs first you're able to not only prioritize yourself at the beginning of your busy day but you're also better able to serve others throughout it.

An effective mindful morning routine includes having a slow morning to wake up and have time to reflect, even possibly journaling, a workout to get your body moving, and time to take care of your needs first, which may simply be enjoying a coffee. Whatever is best for you in this time to help you get ready for the day will allow you to



be more mindful throughout it.

No Phone Distractions in Meetings or When Eating

Our phones are one of the easiest ways that we slip into a world of distraction and take away from our present moment. By not having your phone on you (or even on the table) you're able to be present throughout your meetings and at mealtimes when you're eating. This will help you with your mindfulness but will also be a sign of respect for those around you. You'll be able to sink in the information that you're obtaining during your meetings and relish in your meal times truly being intentional about nourishing your body or the company you're with.

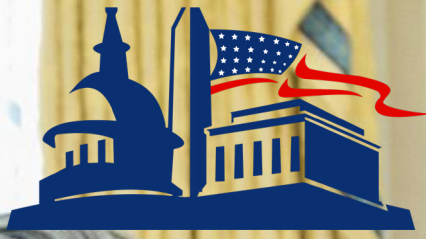
End the Day with Gratitude

Being mindful also comes with a certain level of reflection. By being able to reflect on your day or current life circumstances you're able to come through with breakthroughs and next

steps simply by slowing down enough to reflect. This is best done in the evening after a long day and can be as easy as starting with a short list of three things you're grateful for each day. Then after you have your list, begin to reflect on how far you've come, where you're at, and where you would like to go next. Get it out on paper and as you combine your gratitude with your aspirations your mindfulness and aligned action towards your goals will surely increase over time.

Wrap-Up

It's easy to keep going from one task to another on your to-do list checking them off but at the same time, without mindfulness, your life can seem as if it quickly passes you by. By implementing mindfulness activities into your day by setting yourself up for success, putting your phone away during meetings and meals, and by practicing gratitude, you're able to be more present and get more out of your day.



Washington Insider



**U.S. HOUSE HOLDS TRUMP ALLY BANNON
IN CONTEMPT, SEEKS PROSECUTION**

