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**"It was one of the best planes we had, with an amazing, reliable crew."**

*Yevhen Dykhne, President of Ukraine International Airlines*

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**"We have not seen a single paddlefish since 2003. That means we can't even help save them using artificial breeding."**

*Xiao Hui, chief scientist at the Chinese Sturgeon Research Institute, on the extinction of China's "aquatic panda"*

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**"It's like any kind of project management. Once you've done it before, it goes that much faster the second time. They know exactly what they're doing."**

*Sarah Cook, a senior China analyst at the watchdog organization Freedom House, on China's campaign to monitor, suppress, and persecute Muslim minorities in Xinjiang*

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**"Human traffickers exploit others through forced labor or commercial sex, and traffickers profit from their victims' horrific suffering. The evil of human trafficking must be defeated."**

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GLEN MOREY VIA AP

Wildfires rage under plumes of smoke in Bairnsdale, Victoria, on Dec. 30, 2019. Police have arrested and charged a 36-year-old man after reports he allegedly lit a fire in Johnsonville, east of Bairnsdale.

## BUSHFIRE CRISIS

# Nearly 200 People Face Legal Action As Police Target Bushfire-Related Offences

Police say more than 100 fires deliberately lit

KATABELLA ROBERTS

**S**tate authorities have taken legal action against nearly 200 people for bushfire-related offences.

Since November, a total of 183 people have been targeted by police across the states of Queensland, New South Wales (NSW), Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania for 205 bushfire-related offences, reported the Nine network.

In NSW, 24 were apprehended and charged with deliberately lighting bushfires. A further 53 people are facing legal action for allegedly failing to comply with a total fire ban, while 47 others are accused of improperly discarding a lit cigarette or match outdoors, according to NSW police.

In Queensland, police concluded that 103 fires had been deliberately lit, with 98 people—67 of them juveniles—having been identified as the culprits.

Devastating bushfires have ravaged Australia in recent months, killing at least 25 people and destroying hundreds of millions of animals and livestock. Over 2,000 homes have been destroyed by the blazes, which have so far burned through more than 5.25 million hectares (13 million acres) of land, an area twice the size of the U.S. state of Maryland.

Under the NSW Crimes Act, the Rural Fires Act, and Rural Fires Regulation, penalties relating to lighting bushfires include up to 25 years in prison for damaging property with the intention of endangering life and 21 years in prison for starting a bushfire and being reckless as to its spread.

Those caught lighting a fire when a total fire ban is in place risk up to 12 months imprisonment and/

**Under the NSW Crimes Act, penalties relating to lighting bushfires include up to 25 years in prison for damaging property with the intention of endangering life.**

SAEED KHAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Firefighters struggle against strong wind to secure houses from bushfires near the town of Nowra, NSW, on Dec. 31, 2019.

## CHINA

# China Adding New Coal Power Plants Equivalent to Entire European Union Capacity

CHRISS STREET

*News Analysis*

China is planning to build another 300 coal-fired power plants that will produce the equivalent of all the coal-fired power plants in the 28-nation European Union.

Despite signing climate-change treaties to reduce CO2 emissions, including the United Nations-sponsored 2009 Copenhagen Accords and the 2015 Paris Agreements, China's coal-fired power capacity quintupled from 195 gigawatts in 2000 to 973 gigawatts in 2018.

While China relentlessly increased its coal-fired power generation, 1,756 gigawatts of planned coal-fired power capacity was canceled between 2010 and 2018, according to Global Energy Monitor. Already accounting for almost half of the world's 2,024 gigawatts of coal-fired capacity, the Financial Times reported that China will add another 148 gigawatts of domestic coal-fired power, about the same as the European Union's 149 gigawatts of existing coal-fired capacity.

China did make "significant declines" in air pollution in the five years from 2013 to 2017 by reducing

*Continued on A5*

CAROLINA CABRAL/GETTY IMAGES



Re-elected president of the National Assembly Juan Guaidó speaks to the press in Caracas, Venezuela, on Jan. 7, 2020.

## VENEZUELA

# Venezuela's Congress Reelects Guaido in Pushback Against Socialist 'Parliamentary Coup'

TOM OZIMEK

Venezuelan opposition legislators on Sunday reelected Juan Guaido as head of the country's congress in a session held outside the country's legislative palace, denouncing

*Continued on A2*

## OPINION

# New Year's Resolution for the Mainstream Media: Stop Lying

ROGER L. SIMON

*Commentary*

Ever since Donald Trump declared for the presidency, the mainstream media—apparently to protect us and themselves from the dreaded Donald (even though his candidacy and presidency were enriching many of them as never before)—have given themselves permission to lie about and/or distort and/or exaggerate almost everything they say about the president.

We all know why this has happened, but how does it work? It's not that complicated. Shakespeare spoke of the "lie circumstantial" and the "lie direct" in Touchstone's magnificent speech in "As You Like It," but a more contemporary version might be the "lie iPhoned" or

*Continued on A10*

YASUYOSHI CHIBA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



A worker cleans a surveillance camera on a street in Nairobi, Kenya, on Jan. 18, 2019.

## SURVEILLANCE

# Huawei 'Safe City' Systems Are Ineffective, Crime Figures Show

NICOLE HAO

China has been heavily promoting its surveillance technology among client governments around the world, but apart from miring the locals in debt and raising national security risks, the projects have produced lackluster results.

Multiple cities in Pakistan have reported increased crime rates, even after installing "Safe City" infrastructure built by China's state-linked tech company Huawei.

Completed in 2016 at a cost of about \$100 million, the Safe City project in Islamabad boasts 1,950 surveil-

*Continued on A4*

## SOLEIMANI DEATH

# Pompeo Posts Footage of Iraqis Celebrating Death of Iran's Top Military General

MIMI NGUYEN LY

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo shared footage showing Iraqis celebrating the death of Iran's top military general, Qassem Soleimani on Jan. 3.

Pompeo's post showed footage of people running through the streets in Iraq, cheering as they carried the national flag after news of Soleimani's death. The tweet, which was flooded by ensuing comments that also celebrated the death of Soleimani, read: "Iraqis—Iraqis—dancing in the street for freedom; thankful that General Soleimani is no more."

Soleimani's death came shortly after reports emerged about at least three Katyusha rockets fired at an Iraqi military base that was housing U.S. and Iraqi counterterrorism forces, located near Baghdad International Airport. Drones were also

*Continued on A7*

**Accuracy & Integrity**

The Epoch Times was founded in 2000 to provide honest and uncensored news coverage of China. Based in New York City, our newsroom is dedicated to restoring accuracy and integrity in media. We stand outside political interests and the pursuit of profit. And we stand against the systematic destruction of traditional culture by destructive ideologies such as communism.

# Venezuela's Congress Reelects Guaido in Pushback Against Socialist 'Parliamentary Coup'

CONTINUED FROM A1

moves by Socialist Party members to forcibly install their own candidate as illegitimate.

Hours before Guaido's reelection, the ruling Socialist Party installed rival lawmaker Luis Parra as chief of Venezuela's National Assembly after troops blocked a group of opposition legislators, including Guaido, from entering parliament.

Guaido and allies denounced the Socialist Party's move as a "violent takeover and coup d'etat" and held a competing vote offsite.

"Today we have conducted a session of the National Assembly with most of the deputies present. With 100 votes in favor, the Board of Directors has been installed for this year, despite the violent takeover and coup d'etat in the Federal Legislative Palace by the dictatorship," Guaido said in a statement.

Guaido, who dozens of countries view as Venezuela's legitimate leader, said he plans to try and gain entry to the Federal Legislative Palace, which houses the National Assembly, on Tuesday.

"I regret the embarrassing show of the dictatorship to try to prevent the inevitable: that despite persecuting and imprisoning, they have not broken the fighting spirit of the deputies and of all Venezuela. On Tuesday, we will meet at the Federal Legislative Palace accordingly," he said.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo congratulated Guaido on his reelection and denounced "corrupt regime officials" for what he said were moves to undermine democracy in



Venezuela's interim President Juan Guaidó climbs a railing in an attempt to reach the National Assembly Palace in Caracas after he was blocked by pro-Maduro security forces on Jan. 5, 2020.

**Opposition leaders said the incident showed that Maduro has again flouted basic democratic principles by using intimidation and force to control an institution that the Socialist Party lost control of in a landslide 2015 election.**

Venezuela and intimidate political opponents.

"For months corrupt regime officials have engaged in an unlawful, violent, and despicable campaign of arrests, intimidation, and bribery to destroy the last democratic institution in Venezuela," Pompeo said in a statement.

The Department of State chief criticized the process by which Socialist Party lawmakers "forcibly denied access to Juan Guaido and his supporters" and then "held a farcical 'vote'" without the constitutionally required quorum needed to give legitimacy to Parra as head of Venezuela's congress.

Pompeo insisted the vote installing Parra was illegitimate and Guaido remained the country's interim president.

"The United States and 57 other countries continue to regard him as the legitimate leader of the National Assembly and thus the legitimate interim president of Venezuela,"



Venezuela's opposition lawmaker Luis Parra delivers a speech after swearing in as parliament speaker at the National Assembly in Caracas, Venezuela, on Jan. 5, 2020.

Pompeo added.

Opposition leaders had expected to reelect Guaido to a second term as chief of the legislature to continue pushing for the ouster of unpopular President Nicolas Maduro.

Following a confused scuffle on the floor of parliament on Sunday, state television announced that the new parliament leader was Parra—a legislator expelled last month from an opposition party following corruption accusations that he denies.

"Luis Parra... has been sworn in during this session today," said a state television announcer, following an improvised swearing-in ceremony amid clamoring and what appeared to be protests by opposition legislators.

Opposition leaders said the incident showed that Maduro has again flouted basic democratic principles by using intimidation and force to control an institution that the Socialist Party lost control of in a landslide 2015 election.

One video distributed by Guaido's press team shows him attempting to scale a fence outside parliament and being pushed back by security forces. He declared the new congress illegal and said he will continue holding sessions elsewhere.

The gambit to install Parra as head of congress appears to be a bid by Venezuela's socialist dictator Maduro to sideline Guaido, who last year became an icon of hope for millions of Venezuelans seeking an end to the country's hyperinflationary crisis that has fueled an exodus of some 5 million citizens.

Guaido's formal claim to the interim presidency rested on his position as president of the opposition-held National Assembly. He argued that Maduro's 2018 reelection was fraudulent, meaning the presidency was vacant and that the constitution dictated the head of parliament should take charge temporarily.

Reuters contributed to this report.



L: Kuomintang presidential candidate Han Kuo-yu arriving at a public stadium in Panchiao district, Taipei, on Dec. 8, 2019. R: Taiwan's president Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) waving after her victory in the presidential election on Jan. 16, 2016.

## Taiwan to Vote in Shadow of China Pressure, Hong Kong Protests

TAIPEI—Taiwan votes on Jan. 11 in an election overshadowed by renewed Chinese efforts to get the island to accept their rule, and as Taiwan nervously watches Hong Kong protests, worried they may be next if China ever succeeds in bringing them under its control.

Taiwan has been a democratic success story since holding its first direct presidential election in 1996, the culmination of decades of struggle against authoritarian rule and martial law under the Kuomintang, which ruled China until forced to flee to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war with the Communists.

President Tsai Ing-wen of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party is seeking a second term, and is being challenged by the Kuomintang's Han Kuo-yu, who favors close ties with Beijing and says this is the only way to ensure Taiwan's security and prosperity.

The issue of China has taken front and center in the campaign, especially after Chinese leader Xi Jinping warned last year they could attack Taiwan, though said he'd prefer a peaceful "one country, two systems" formula to get control of the island.

Both Tsai and Han have rejected "one country, two systems," though the DPP has painted a vote for the Kuomintang as effectively

a vote for that model. Han has angrily denied this.

On Monday, Tsai's team released a slick new campaign video comparing Taiwan's freedoms with the struggle in Hong Kong, interspersed with images of Xi and Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam.

"A few hundred miles from here, many young people are using their blood and tears to defend freedom," Tsai wrote on Facebook in introducing the video.

The idea of imposing a "one country, two systems" model of a high degree of autonomy much like China offers the former British colony of Hong Kong has never been popular in Taiwan.

It is even less so now after months of pro-democracy protests in the former British colony. The protesters have widespread public sympathy in Taiwan, and both the DPP and Kuomintang have pledged to help those who flee to the island.

Han has complained of "dirty tricks" being used to smear him as a puppet for China, especially revelations in Australian media from a self-proclaimed Chinese spy who claimed China has supported Han. Han strongly rejects this.

"I beseech Taiwan's people, in the 2020 presidential and parliamentary election, open your eyes. I hope Taiwan's people see these wicked smears to paint me black,

red and yellow and make a rational decision," Han said on Tuesday.

### 'Scaring Taiwan'

In the run-up to the election, China has repeated its "one country, two systems" offer to Taiwan.

Liu Jieyi, the urbane head of China's policy-making Taiwan Affairs Office, wrote in the Communist Party's official People's Daily last week that people in Taiwan were "positively exploring" this model, though offered no evidence.

But one Chinese official, who meets regularly with senior members of the People's Liberation Army, told Reuters that the Hong Kong protests had "increased the difficulty of getting Taiwan back."

"What's happening there is scaring Taiwan," the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said, referring to conversations with military officers.

While China has denied seeking to interfere in Taiwan's elections, Taiwan's parliament on the final day of last year passed a new anti-infiltration law designed to stop Chinese influence on Taiwan's democracy.

China's military is not idly sitting on the sidelines.

Its newest aircraft carrier, the Shandong, has twice sailed through the sensitive Taiwan Strait in the past two months, most recently in late December.

The United States, Taiwan's main arms supplier and strongest international backer even in the absence of official diplomatic ties, has said it is concerned at Chinese efforts to sway the election.

Zhou Bo, director of the Center for Security Cooperation of the Office for International Military Cooperation at China's Defense Ministry, said China "of course" wanted to resolve the "Taiwan issue" peacefully.

But China could not sit by while Taiwan continued attempts to distance itself from China, and the United States should heed that warning, he said.

"I don't know whether the United States is prepared to pay the price militarily for Taiwan."

By Yimou Lee and Ben Blanchard  
From Reuters

## Ukrainian Airplane Crashes Near Iran's Capital, Killing 176

SHAHEDSHAHR, Iran—A Ukrainian passenger jet carrying 176 people crashed on Jan. 8, just minutes after taking off from the Iranian capital's main airport, turning farmland on the outskirts of Tehran into fields of flaming debris and killing all on board.

Both Ukrainian and Iranian officials said they suspected a mechanical issue brought down the Ukraine International Airline's Boeing 737-800 aircraft. The crash came hours after Iran launched a ballistic missile attack on Iraqi bases housing U.S.-led coalition soldiers.

The plane carried 167 passengers and nine crew members from different nations. Ukraine's foreign minister, Vadym Prystaiko, said that there were 82 Iranians, 63 Canadians and 11 Ukrainians on board—the Ukrainian nationals included two passengers and the nine crew. There were also 10 Swedish, four Afghan, three German and three British nationals. Airline officials said most of the passengers were en route to the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, transiting through there to other destinations.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy extended his condolences to the families of the victims. His office said he had cut his visit to Oman short and was returning to Kyiv because of the crash. The country's Prime Minister Oleksiy Honcharuk confirmed the casualty toll.

"Our task is to establish the cause of the crash of the Boeing and provide all necessary help to the families of the victims," said parliament speaker, Dmytro Razumkov, in a Facebook statement.

Ukraine International Airlines said it had indefinitely suspended flights to Tehran after the crash. "It was one of the best planes we had, with an amazing, reliable crew," Yevhen Dykhne, president of the Ukraine International Airlines, said at a briefing following the crash.

Zelenskiy, the Ukrainian president, ordered a sweeping inspection of all civil airplanes in the country, "no matter the conclusions about the crash in Iran."

The plane had been delayed from taking off from Imam Khomeini International Airport by almost an hour. It took off to the west, but never made it above 8,000 feet in the air, according to data from the flight-tracking website FlightRadar24.

It remains unclear what happened. Qassem Biniiaz, a spokesman for Iran's Road and Transportation Ministry, said it appeared a fire struck one of its engines. The pilot of the aircraft then lost control of the plane, sending it crashing into the ground, Biniiaz said, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

Hassan Razaefar, the head of air crash investigation committee, said it appeared the pilot couldn't communicate with air-traffic controllers in Tehran in the last moments of the flight. He did not elaborate.

Ukrainian authorities have offered to help with the investigation of the plane crash. "We're preparing a group of specialists in order to help with the search operation and the investigation of the cause of the crash," Honcharuk said.

The majority of the passengers were Iranian nationals, Russia's RIA Novosti agency reported, citing Iranian authorities. Staff at the Boryspil airport in Kyiv, told the AP that passengers on this flight are usually Iranian students coming back to Ukraine after winter holidays.

Following the crash, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued an emergency restriction over the Persian Gulf airspace.

The FAA said the emergency restriction "prohibit[s] U.S., civil aviation operators, from operating in the airspace over Iraq, Iran, and the waters of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman," the agency said on Tuesday night. "The FAA will continue closely monitoring events in the Middle East. We continue coordinating with our national security partners and sharing information with U.S. air carriers and foreign civil aviation authorities."

With reporting by Epoch Times writer Jack Phillips.

From The Associated Press

# Pneumonia Outbreak in Central China Stirs Further Panic Across Asia

EVA FU

China's Asian neighbors are on guard as the country continues to investigate a mysterious strain of pneumonia that has sickened 59 locals, all of whom are receiving treatment in isolation.

On Jan. 7, hospitals in Hong Kong, which borders southern China, admitted nine more patients who had symptoms of fever, respiratory infection, or pneumonia, bringing the total number of suspected cases to 30. All patients have recently visited Wuhan, a bustling commercial city in central China where the illness first broke out.

The Hong Kong patients, who range in age from 2 to 65, remain in stable condition; 13 have been discharged.

The World Health Organisation said it was closely monitoring the situation and maintaining contact with Chinese authorities, adding that no travel or trade restrictions are necessary at this time.

Multiple nearby countries and regions have taken measures to prevent the illness from spreading.

Thailand's government has stepped up its alert to level 2 following the rise in suspected infections. Major Thai airports such as Suvarnabhumi, Don Mueang, Chiang Mai, and Phuket airports have set up infrared thermal scanners at arrival halls for screening body temperatures of incoming passengers.

Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau also have adopted similar measures.

Taiwan has reported eight people who had light respiratory symptoms or fever after traveling to Wuhan.

In Hong Kong, the government



Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam, second from right, accompanied by Secretary for Food and Health, Prof. Sophia Chan, right, reviews the health surveillance measures by officers of the Port Health Division at West Kowloon Station in Hong Kong on Jan. 3, 2020.

Annual passenger traffic at Wuhan Tianhe airport is over 23 million, with direct flights to 63 overseas cities, including Sydney.

said it would amend its health law this week to add the mysterious Wuhan pneumonia to an official list of infectious diseases, which means that medical staffers are required to report all suspected or confirmed cases to health authorities.

Philippines Secretary of Health Francisco Duque advised residents to avoid traveling to China and postpone any trip plans to Wuhan until there's a clear advisory from the Chinese health authorities, ac-

ording to local newspaper Manila Bulletin.

Also taking note of the Wuhan outbreak, Japan's health ministry also issued a statement on Jan. 6 advising nationals with suspected pneumonia-like symptoms after visiting Wuhan to inform medical institutions.

Wuhan health authorities reported that the first case of the illness was detected on Dec. 12. Chinese health authorities said they are

closely monitoring 163 people who had contact with those who were infected, but have yet to identify the strain of pneumonia or confirm the source of the illness. It isn't clear if the illness is contagious.

One of the patients, a 44-year-old seafood market worker named Wang, has incurred medical expenses of as much as 43,000 yuan (\$6,191), according to China Business Journal, a Chinese language newspaper affiliated with the Chinese regime's cabinet-like State Council. Wang suffered from a high fever for more than a week before going to the hospital on Dec. 24. Medical scans discovered white shadows on two-thirds of Wang's lungs, a relative told the outlet.

Health authorities suspect that the outbreak originated from the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market and have temporarily closed the site.

Wuhan Central Hospital, where some patients are receiving treatment, declined to comment when contacted by the Chinese-language Epoch Times.

Chuang Jen-hsiang, deputy director-general for Taiwan's Centers for Disease Control, suggested that a new type of coronavirus—a family of viruses that produce SARS and MERS—might be the source. Chuang said that if new cases continue to surface after Jan. 14—which is 14 days after the market's closure—it might suggest that the virus is transmissible from person to person. The incubation period for a coronavirus is up to 14 days, Chuang said.

Annual passenger traffic at Wuhan Tianhe airport is over 23 million, with direct flights to 63 overseas cities, including Sydney.

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# 'Panda of the Yangtze River,' The Giant Chinese Paddlefish, Declared Extinct

OLIVIA LI

Researchers at Yangtze River Fisheries Research Institute, Chinese Academy of Fishery Sciences, announced that the Chinese paddlefish, often referred to as China's "aquatic panda," is extinct. Prior to this declaration, it was listed as "critically endangered, possibly extinct" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

The news was published in a research paper on *Science of The Total Environment* on Dec. 23, 2019. The authors estimated that the once commonly found paddlefish became extinct between 2005 and 2010.

"The mega river ecosystem of the Yangtze River was once home to diverse aquatic megafauna but is increasingly affected by various anthropogenic stressors that have resulted in continuous loss of biodiversity," the research paper read, "The Chinese paddlefish, *Psephurus gladius*, was one of only two extant members of a relict lineage that was most diverse and widespread 34–75 million years ago....Based on 210 sightings of Chinese paddlefish during the period 1981–2003, we estimated the timing of extinction to be by 2005, and no later than by 2010."

It is the third species unique to the Yangtze River ecosystem to be declared extinct, following the Baiji dolphin in 2006 and the Chinese shad in 2015. The Baiji is remembered as one of the most adorable freshwater creatures, and the Chinese shad is deeply missed as "one of the top three delicious fish" of the river.

## King of Freshwater Fish

Paddlefish is one of the largest freshwater fish species, and was therefore given the nickname "king of freshwater fish" by the Chinese people. China's first-generation modern biologist Bing Zhi reported in one of his scientific writings that a fisherman caught a giant paddlefish, which measured 7 meters (23 feet) long, in the 1950s.

Unfortunately, in Bing's publication, typical of old time literature in China, there was no photographic evidence to confirm the claim.

A more reliable record, widely used today, is from a paddlefish caught on Jan. 8, 2007 in Hubei Province in the Yangtze River that measured 3.6 meters (11.8 feet) long and weighed 250 kilograms (551 pounds).

## Dams May be Responsible

Chinese state media widely reported the extinction of the paddlefish on the first day of 2020, and attributed it to overfishing, river transportation, and pollution.



A mature *Psephurus gladius* (Chinese Paddlefish) exhibited in the Wuhan Institute of Hydrobiology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

"We should not be called fishermen anymore. Instead, we should be called shrimpmen."

Chinese fisherman



Early-mid 17th century depiction of *Psephurus gladius* in 'Searching the Mountains for Demons,' a scroll painted by Chinese artist Zheng Zhong (1612-1648).

However, a couple of outspoken scientists and a Chinese fisherman previously stated that the two dams on the Yangtze River, Three Gorges Dam and Gezhouba Dam, are likely the number one factor in the rapid decline of fish populations and the extinction of certain species in the river.

Building of the Gezhouba Dam started in January 1981 and ended on December 10, 1988. The construction of the Three Gorges Dam began in December 1994, and filling of the reservoirs began in June 2003.

These dams are considered political achievements—criticizing them would be viewed as criticizing the Chinese leaders who initiated the projects.

Xiao Hui, chief scientist at the Chinese Sturgeon Research Institute (the sturgeon is closely related to the paddlefish), told Shanghai-based *Oriental Morning Post* in March 2013 that during the initial construction stage of the Gezhouba Dam, the paddlefish were still common. Fishermen easily netted several of them in one catch.

"However, we have not seen a single paddlefish since 2003. That means we can't even help save them using artificial breeding," Xiao said.

Fisherman Yang Jianglong described the shocking scene he observed several months after the damming of Gezhouba Dam was completed.

He saw groups of large fish gathered

in front of the dam—most of them weighing 700–800 pounds, some exceeding 1,000 pounds—trying hard to swim upstream, despite the rushing torrent pushing them away. Many rammed into the concrete wall and were bleeding all over, while some were tragically killed inside the spinning motor blades.

"It was a mind-boggling scene that I will never forget," Yang told *Oriental Morning Post*.

According to Yang, most of these giant fish were sturgeon and paddlefish. Both are migratory fish that need to swim upstream to lay their eggs.

Several years later, local fishermen noticed these fish searching for new hatching sites downstream of the dam. It was during this time that the number of these precious species dropped drastically. Very soon, the sturgeon and paddlefish were both rated as endangered.

Yang said he believes that the impact of the Three Gorges Dam is much more severe than that of the Gezhouba Dam. "Gezhouba Dam blocked large fish species, but not the river. It is the Three Gorges Dam that has changed everything," he said.

A comprehensive ecological and environmental report on the Three Gorges Dam Project indicates that in the Wanzhou river section, the epicenter, the catch in 2004 was 107 tons of fish, a 68 percent drop from that of 2002, before the reservoirs were filled.

Chinese aquaculture scientists pointed out that China's four major domestic fish: black carp, grass carp, silver carp, and bighead carp, all need the stimulation of rising water to lay eggs. Before the Three Gorges Dam was erected, there were frequent water risings in their natural settings in May and June, their peak breeding season. The balanced water level provided by the dam may be why these fish species are laying drastically fewer eggs than before.

Data from China's fishery supervision office revealed that the number of juvenile fish of these four major domestic species has decreased by more than 90 percent compared with that of the 1950s. While the highest number of eggs laid on record was 120 billion, the current number is less than 1 billion.

According to *Oriental Morning Post*, fishermen operating near the Three Gorges Dam had to give up this endeavor shortly after the dam started operation, as all catches found in the net were juvenile fish and shrimps.

"We should not be called fishermen anymore," one fisherman said. "Instead, we should be called shrimpmen."

# Huawei 'Safe City' Systems Are Ineffective, Crime Figures Show

CONTINUED FROM A1

lance cameras. Seventy-two screens in the Pakistani capital's police headquarters help officers monitor the streets.

Huawei claimed that the endeavor would dramatically improve order, with a projected 15 percent reduction in violent crime. But while crime in Islamabad did fall in 2016, by the end of 2018, it had increased by 33 percent.

Pakistan is a key country in the "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) initiative, the Chinese regime's global infrastructure investment project. It has also been one of Beijing's long-term allies.

Since 2015, Pakistan has engaged Huawei to build Safe City systems in nine cities.

Huawei claims that the Safe City project can substantially improve emergency response time, crime rates, and case-solving. But data from the country's National Police Bureau shows that the overall crime rate rose by 11 percent.

A Nov. 12, 2019, report by Bloomberg cited a Pakistani legislative committee as say-

Huawei claims that the Safe City project can substantially improve emergency response time, crime rates, and case-solving. But data from [Pakistan's] National Police Bureau shows that the overall crime rate rose by 11 percent.

ing that half of the Huawei-produced cameras in Islamabad were out of order.

From 2017 to 2018, instances of dacoity, a term used on the Indian subcontinent to refer to banditry, rose by 244 percent, while robbery and burglary saw a roughly 62 percent increase. Murders and kidnappings also became more frequent.

Police statistics showed that crime rose by about 2.9 percent throughout Pakistan from 2017 to 2018, with the capital seeing the worse increases.

## More Hype Than Results

Kenya, another country with heavy OBOR investments, has also installed Huawei's Safe City system in its cities, including Mombasa and the capital, Nairobi. According to Huawei, the projects helped slash crime rates in the cities by 46 percent year-over-year from 2014 to 2015.

But Kenya's National Police Service reported different results. Its statistics indicated the crime rate in Nairobi experienced a slight decrease in 2015, but increased in subsequent years, reaching a higher level by 2017 than

before the Safe City program was introduced.

The same police report said that crime rates in Mombasa didn't decrease following the installation, which also took place in 2014. Kenyan authorities haven't commented on why the Huawei technology failed to work as advertised.

On Nov. 4, 2019, the Washington-based Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) published a report that said Huawei used exaggerated data to promote Safe City projects. The report looked at data from Safe City projects installed in 73 cities across 52 countries; Huawei itself claims that the infrastructure has been set up in 230 cities in 90 countries.

CSIS's report questioned Huawei's claims about the program's success, noting that "all statistics are reported for an unspecified location and time period and no specific data or sources are provided for the numbers."

Moreover, "after adopting Huawei's equipment, countries may be 'locked-in' by high replacement costs," the report stated. That includes tech upgrades, as well as

replacement and repair of poorly built components.

## Debt and National Security

The CSIS report warns that the Chinese regime may be "exporting authoritarianism" by repurposing "facial and license-plate recognition, social media monitoring, and other surveillance capabilities" associated with the programs.

And because most of the projects are part of the OBOR plan, the clients are likely to be saddled with debts they can't pay. There's currently no publicly available data that show how much debt is caused by Huawei. But most of the OBOR countries with high debt risks use Huawei's systems.

In 2018, the Washington-based Center for Global Development (CGD) published a report analyzing OBOR-related debts.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) envisions OBOR as a project to span at least 68 countries and involve as much as \$8 trillion in investments worldwide to build a vast network of transportation, energy, and telecom-

munications infrastructure, primarily linking Europe, Africa, and Asia.

To build this network, the Chinese regime steered funding to partner countries via the China Development Bank, the Export-Import Bank of China, and the Agricultural Development Bank of China.

In order to qualify for the loans, the client states are required to use Chinese products.

The report, which integrated the countries' overall public debt-to-GDP ratio and the concentration of that debt with China as the creditor, identified eight countries where OBOR appears to create the potential for debt sustainability problems.

For example, Djibouti's GDP was \$1.73 billion in 2016, but it owes China \$1.2 billion. The other seven at-risk countries are Pakistan, Laos, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Maldives, and Montenegro.

Kenya owes China \$4 billion, and is among 15 countries that are significantly or highly vulnerable to debt distress because of their acceptance of OBOR loans.

# Beijing Is 'Following the Anti-Falun Gong Playbook' in Uyghur Crackdown, Says Expert

EVA FU

Yan Yuhua is one among the millions who have languished in Chinese prisons because of their faith. The first time she was arrested, in 2006, guards put her in solitary confinement in an effort to force her to sign a renouncement of her belief in Falun Gong, a banned spiritual practice. Sleeping, showering, eating, and even lying down were luxuries. They poured cold water over her body and forced her to stand for prolonged periods. They also barred her family—parents in their 70s and a teenage son—from visiting her.

Later, she was detained at a brainwashing center for 2 1/2 years. Guards made her wear earbuds blasting propaganda that attacked Falun Gong. "Watchers" would take turns beating and insulting her.

Stories mirroring the experiences of Yan and other Falun Gong adherents—who have suffered such persecution since the beginning of the Chinese Communist Party's campaign against them in 1999—are now also occurring in China's northwestern region of Xinjiang.

## Origins of the Xinjiang Model

Xinjiang is home to roughly 11 million Uyghurs and members of other Muslim minorities.

Under the guise of "eradicating extremism," Chinese authorities began a campaign in 2014 to monitor, suppress, and persecute Muslim minorities, including by establishing an overarching surveillance network. The regime collected biodata from residents and installed cameras and phone apps to monitor their activities.

Estimates by the United Nations found that more than a million Muslim residents are currently detained in internment camps, where they are tortured, "re-educated," and forced to swear allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), in an effort to coerce them into giving up their faith.

According to experts, the tactics used in the current repression were not devised recently, but are the culmination of the regime's two decades of experience in targeting Falun Gong.

The spiritual discipline, which incorporates meditative exercises and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance, drew roughly 70 million to 100 million adherents before the CCP launched a nationwide campaign to eradicate the practice in 1999.

## 'Transformation Through Education'

The concept of "transformation through education," for example, emerged with the persecution of Falun Gong, according to Sarah Cook, a senior China analyst at the watchdog organization Freedom House, in a February 2019 report.

The Chinese regime detains Falun Gong practitioners in prisons and "legal education centers" (often dubbed brainwashing centers), and previously sent them en masse to labor camps, which were abolished in 2013. In the prisons and centers, detainees are forced to watch propaganda videos, sing pro-CCP songs, and "repent" for their supposed crimes of faith. Those who resist the pressure are subject to torture.

The euphemism "transformation" is a way for the Chinese regime to "invoke a positive image" and frame the process as "compassionate treatment," Cook said.

"It's such a Falun Gong-oriented term that really emerged and took off. ... Then you see this exact same term coming up in Xinjiang," Cook said in an interview with The Epoch Times.

She recalled a 2018 panel about Xinjiang, held at the Hudson Institute in Washington, where she was surprised to hear a China analyst associating the term "transformation" with Xinjiang. "These scholars ... are not that familiar with the specific Party language related to Falun Gong, and that was really striking when I heard them say that."



Sarah Cook, China analyst at Freedom House, at an event at the Jamestown Foundation on Oct. 15, 2019.

According to an incomplete survey from Minghui.org, a clearinghouse documenting the persecution of Falun Gong, there are 449 brainwashing centers in 173 cities and 329 districts or counties across China.

Such facilities proliferated after the Chinese regime abolished the labor camp system in 2013, Cook noted. The persecution of Falun Gong continues unabated.

## Officials

A most telling link between the two persecution campaigns, according to Cook, is the fact that key officials who are now influencing Xinjiang policy originally built their careers through campaigns against Falun Gong.

Fu Zhenghua is currently China's minister of justice in charge of funding Xinjiang's political indoctrination programs. From 2015 to 2016, he led the 610 Office, an extralegal agency created expressly to oversee the Falun Gong persecution.

He also held a top post at the Beijing municipal police bureau between 2010 and 2015, during which time Falun Gong practitioners who refused to renounce their faith were "reported to have been directly sent to various 'brainwashing centers'" following the official dissolution of the labor camp system, according to a 2013 Amnesty International report.

Sun Jinlong, Party secretary of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, a state-owned quasi-military and business conglomerate, also has extended experience with the persecution. In a 2001 national conference, Sun made a public speech denouncing Falun Gong and encouraged officials to "tirelessly struggle against" the spiritual practice, according to the Party's mouthpiece newspaper People's Daily.

In 2010, while Sun was Party secretary of Hefei city, Anhui Province, he outlined an "overall battle work plan" to monitor and harass local Falun Gong practitioners, including setting up databases of practitioners and brainwashing centers for "stubborn" adherents, and conducting door-to-door visits. The plan announced a goal to "transform" all "newly identified" adherents within a year. Street-level officials would

receive honorary titles recognizing their effectiveness in those efforts, local government records showed.

Their "proven track record of harshly suppressing innocent religious believers" seemed to be "precisely" what got them to higher ranks, Cook said.

The World Organization to Investigate the Persecution of Falun Gong, a U.S.-based nonprofit dedicated to documenting the persecution of the spiritual discipline, has named both officials as human rights violators.

## The Learning Curve

The Xinjiang policy bears other hallmarks of the campaign against Falun Gong.

In terms of terminology, officials executing the suppression in Xinjiang and of Falun Gong have framed reeducation efforts as "psychological counseling" and have assigned target quotas for security officers, Cook said.

Authorities also use similar terms to refer to the two groups: "die-hard" Falun Gong practitioners and "strike hard" detainees in Xinjiang, for example.

Minghui.org has reported extensively on how police have eavesdropped on Falun Gong practitioners' phones since the early 2000s to collect intelligence on them. A quick search on the website reveals a dozen cases of prolonged phone tapping, most of which were followed by subsequent arrests. The 20 years of experience in suppressing Falun Gong allowed the Chinese regime to quickly pull together an apparatus to persecute Muslim minorities in Xinjiang.

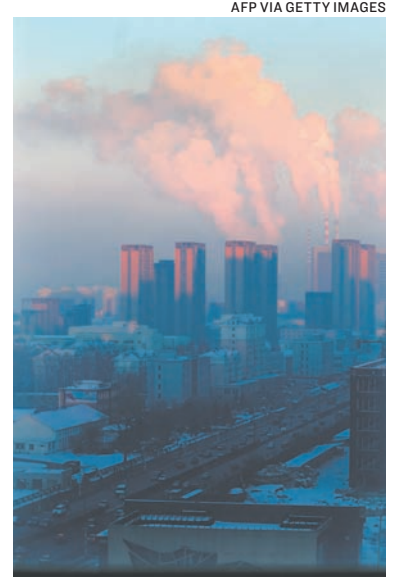
"It's like any kind of project management. Once you've done it before, it goes that much faster the second time," Cook said. "They know exactly what they're doing."

She said the recurring patterns showing Chinese officials "following the anti-Falun Gong playbook in Xinjiang" is cause for alarm.

"It indicates that they are playing the long game, have little intention of reversing the policy, and have few qualms about using harsh tactics like severe torture or long prison terms to achieve their aims," Cook wrote in her February report.



Schoolchildren walking below surveillance cameras in Akto, south of Kashgar, in China's western Xinjiang region on June 4, 2019.



A thermal power plant in Changchun, northeast China's Jilin province on Jan. 22, 2013.

## China Adding New Coal Power Plants Equivalent to Entire European Union Capacity

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PM2.5 fine particle pollution levels by about one third, according to a study published by the U.S. journal Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS). But given that Beijing's PM2.5 concentration in 2013 was 40 times higher than the recommended standards of the World Health Organization (WHO), cutting levels by a third means that Beijing's PM2.5 concentrations are still 27 times higher than the recommended WHO standards.

The study credits China with implementing new standards for thermal power plants and industrial boilers, the replacement of old factories, and new emissions rules for vehicles. PNAS praised China's big increases in renewable energy capacity, but made no mention of China's coal-fired capacity rising by 28 percent during the same period.

The main reason for China's staggering energy consumption growth is the communist leadership directing state-owned power companies to maximize manufacturing export growth by subsidizing industrial customer electrical prices. But facing trade retaliation threats from developed nations suffering from job losses, China was forced in 2017 to move to market-driven pricing by 2020, according to Enodo Economics.

Environmentalists assumed that with renewable energy's average revenue per unit of electricity generated falling to a modest premium over the cost of coal, China would dramatically increase its industrial-scale deployment of solar and wind farms.

But the Institute for Energy Research reports that the intermittent nature of wind and solar power production and inability to generate peak power during peak consumption demand "imposed" added costs on utilities to constantly keep stand-by fossil-fuel power capacity available. The study found that, "on average, new wind and solar plants cost about 65 percent more than existing coal-fired power plants before applying the imposed costs to wind and solar, and twice as much when the imposed costs are applied."

Chinese leader Xi Jinping told 40 nations at the Beijing "Belt and Road Forum" in April that China is committed to "open, clean, and green development." He also said that China's overseas ventures included more than 300 coal plants, in places such as Turkey, Vietnam, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Egypt, and the Philippines.

Due to China's internal and external expansions, coal currently generates a near-decades high of 40 percent of the world's electricity, according to the World Bank. There now are 78 countries using coal to generate power, up from 66 in 2000, with another 16 in construction or planning to build coal-fired power plants.

# Trump Declares January Human Trafficking Prevention Month

BOWEN XIAO

On the last day of 2019, President Donald Trump proclaimed January as “National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month,” calling the crime of trafficking an “affront to humanity that tragically reaches all parts of the world.”

In the Dec. 31 proclamation, Trump said trafficking “erodes personal dignity and also ‘destroys the moral fabric of society.’” He said there are new trafficking victims every day in the United States, adding that in January, his administration is reaffirming their commitment to eradicating the crime.

“In all its forms, human trafficking is an intolerable blight on any society dedicated to freedom, individual rights, and the rule of law,” he said.

Trafficking is a global, everyday problem hidden in plain sight. About 1 in 800 people in the United States are living in “modern slavery,” according to 2018 data by the Walk Free Foundation. The phrase is a broad term used to describe victims of forced labor, sexual exploitation or servitude, and forced marriages, among numerous other abuses.

Trump pointed to some estimates stating that 24.9 million people around the world and in the United States, including both adults and children, are trapped in some form of human trafficking. These trafficking crimes, he said, were perpetrated by a mix of “transnational criminal enterprises, gangs, and cruel individuals.”

“Human traffickers exploit others through forced labor or commercial



An ethnic Uyghur boy stands inside a police van in Thailand's southern Songkhla Province on March 15, 2014, after Thai officials said they suspected a group of 200 people were recently rescued from a human trafficking camp.

sex, and traffickers profit from their victims' horrific suffering,” he said. “The evil of human trafficking must be defeated.”

Trump has made combating human trafficking a focal point of his administration. In January 2019, he signed both the Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims

Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act and the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act that reaffirmed his commitment to preventing trafficking in all its forms.

Trump said that with his support, departments and agencies have continued the battle to abol-

ish trafficking.

The Department of Homeland Security has initiated more than 800 investigations related to human trafficking, he noted, adding that the Department of State has also launched its Human Trafficking Expert Consultant Network, made up of survivors and other experts, to inform its anti-trafficking policies and programs.

He also noted that for the first time, the Department of Transportation committed \$5.4 million in grants to go toward preventing human trafficking and other crimes that could occur on public transportation.

“The inherent dignity, freedom, and autonomy of every person must be respected and protected,” he said.

“This month, we renew our resolve to redouble our efforts to deliver justice to all who contribute to the cruelty of human trafficking, and we will tenaciously pursue the promise of freedom for all victims of this terrible crime.”

In April 2018, Trump signed into law a bill dubbed the “Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act of 2017.” The act makes it easier to take legal action against individuals who use websites to facilitate sex trafficking, while also helping victims fight back against websites that profit from their exploitation.

In the same month, the FBI seized Backpage.com, the largest child-sex trafficking website in the United States. Nearly three-quarters of the cases submitted to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children relate to ads posted on Backpage.com.



JIM WATSON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

U.S. President Donald Trump makes a statement on Iran at the Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida, on Jan. 3, 2020. Trump said that America does not seek war or regime change with Iran.

## Trump: Now ‘Isn’t the Right Point’ to Pull Out US Troops From Iraq

JACK PHILLIPS

President Donald Trump addressed reports alleging the United States would pull several thousand soldiers out of Iraq, saying it’s not going to happen in the near future while stressing that the country would suffer following the death of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

“It’s the worst thing that could happen to Iraq” for the U.S. to withdraw now, Trump told reporters in the White House as he met with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

“That would mean that Iran would have a much bigger foothold” in the country, Trump said, adding that he believes the Iraqi people wouldn’t want to see Iran overseeing their affairs. “They’re neighbors,” he said.

Trump, who has long been a critic of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, again said that his administration would like to see the country handle its own security.

“At some point, we want to get out, but this isn’t the right point,” the president added. He said the United States would want to be reimbursed for the cost of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad as well as other costs related to fighting the ISIS terrorist group.

There were questions about whether the U.S. would leave Iraq after a letter surfaced that appeared to tell military officials in Iraq that

American forces were moving to depart the country. But Defense Secretary Mark Esper and Army General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, both stressed on Monday and Tuesday that it was a draft letter that should have never been sent.

Trump said he knew nothing about the letter but suggested it was a hoax.

Esper said Tuesday he hasn’t received any request from Iraqi leaders to withdraw troops. He said that Soleimani was just days away from attacking American assets in the region.

“To the best of my knowledge, I haven’t received any communication from (Iraq’s prime minister) or the Iraqi government about the legislation, or about an order or a request to withdraw U.S. forces,” Esper said.

Soleimani was the head of the Iranian Quds Force, an intelligence agency that was labeled a terrorist organization by the U.S. Department of State. He has been blamed for the deaths of numerous Americans over the years.

In response to pushback from Democrats in Congress and 2020 presidential candidates, the White House did Americans “and a lot of countries a big favor” by taking out Soleimani, Trump told reporters.

That would mean that Iran would have a much bigger foothold.

U.S. President Donald Trump

## US Alarmed by China’s Trial and Sentencing of Pastor

WASHINGTON—The United States expressed alarm on Dec. 31 at the trial and sentencing to a nine-year prison term of the pastor of one of China’s best-known unregistered “house” churches.

Wang Yi, pastor of the Early Rain Covenant Church in China’s southwestern city of Chengdu, was among dozens of the church’s members and leaders detained by police in December 2018, most of whom were subsequently released.

He was sentenced to prison on Monday on charges of inciting subversion of state power, part of Beijing’s crackdown on unregistered religious groups.

“We are alarmed that Pastor Wang Yi ... was tried in secret and sentenced to nine years in prison in connection to his peaceful advocacy for religious freedom,” U.S. State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said in a statement that called for his immediate and unconditional release.

“This is yet another example of Beijing’s intensification of repression of Chinese Christians and members of other religious groups,” the statement added. “We continue to call on Beijing to uphold its international commitments and promises made in its own constitution to promote religious freedom for all.”

China’s constitution guarantees religious freedom, but since Chinese leader Xi Jinping took office six years ago, the government has tightened restrictions on religions

We continue to call on Beijing to uphold its international commitments and promises made in its own constitution to promote religious freedom for all.

Morgan Ortagus, spokeswoman for the U.S. State Department

seen as a challenge to the authority of the ruling Communist Party.

The government has cracked down on underground churches, both Protestant and Catholic, and has rolled out legislation to increase oversight of religious education and practices, with harsher punishment for practices not sanctioned by authorities.

Chinese law requires that places of worship register and submit to government oversight, but some have declined to register, for various reasons, and are known as “house” or “underground” churches.

An unusually outspoken religious figure, Wang has openly criticized Xi and was among three Chinese Christians who traveled to Washington in 2006, where they met with then-President George W. Bush, asking for his support in their fight for religious freedom.

By David Brunnstrom  
From Reuters



CHINA AID VIA AP

Pastor Wang Yi with his wife, Jiang Rong, at the study room of their home in Chengdu, China, in the year 2000.

# Trump's Order to Kill Soleimani Helps 'Reestablish Deterrence': Petraeus

ZACHARY STIEBER

President Donald Trump's order to kill Iranian General Qassem Soleimani was "a very significant effort to reestablish deterrence, which obviously had not been shored up by the relatively insignificant responses up until now," former CIA director and retired Gen. David Petraeus has said.

"The reasoning seems to be to show in the most significant way possible that the U.S. is just not going to allow the continued violence—the rocketing of our bases, the killing of an American contractor, the attacks on shipping, on unarmed drones—without a very significant response," Petraeus told Foreign Policy when asked why Trump acted to kill Soleimani where previous presidents did not.

"Many people had rightly questioned whether American deterrence had eroded somewhat because of the relatively insignificant responses to the earlier actions. This clearly was of vastly greater importance. Of course it also, per the Defense Department statement, was a defensive action given the reported planning and contingencies that Soleimani was going to Iraq to discuss and presumably approve," he added.

"This was in response to the killing of an American contractor, the wounding of American forces, and just a sense of how this could go downhill from here if the Iranians don't realize that this cannot continue."

Soleimani was killed overnight Jan. 2 by a drone strike near the Baghdad International Airport.

U.S. military leaders said the strike was ordered because they



Retired U.S. Army General David Petraeus speaks in Washington in a file photograph.

**"This was in response to the killing of an American contractor, the wounding of American forces, and just a sense of how this could go downhill from here if the Iranians don't realize that this cannot continue."**

David Petraeus, retired U.S. Army General

learned Soleimani was planning attacks on American interests, including U.S. troops.

"Soleimani was plotting imminent and sinister attacks on American diplomats and military personnel, but we caught him in the act and terminated him," Trump told reporters in Florida on Jan. 3.

"For years, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its ruthless Quds Force—under Soleimani's leadership—has targeted, injured, and murdered hundreds of American civilians and servicemen," he added.

The strike was carried out "to stop a war" not "to start a war," Trump said.

"The United States has the best military by far, anywhere in the world. We have best intelligence in the world. If Americans anywhere are threatened, we have all of those



A burning vehicle at the Baghdad International Airport following an airstrike, in Baghdad, Iraq, early on Jan. 2, 2020.

targets already fully identified, and I am ready and prepared to take whatever action is necessary. And that, in particular, refers to Iran," he said.

Soleimani was a high-level operative in Iran, commanding the country's elite Quds Force. Petraeus described him as "the most formidable adversary that we have faced for decades," who essentially served in three different roles for the country.

"He is a combination of CIA director, JSOC [Joint Special Operations Command] commander, and special presidential envoy for the region," said Petraeus, who commanded U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan in stints under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

Iran's situation right now, the former CIA director said, is "very

precarious" economically.

"Iran is in a very precarious economic situation, it is very fragile domestically—they've killed many, many hundreds if not thousands of Iranian citizens who were demonstrating on the streets of Iran in response to the dismal economic situation and the mismanagement and corruption. I just don't see the Iranians as anywhere near as supportive of the regime at this point as they were decades ago during the Iran-Iraq War," he said.

"Clearly the supreme leader has to consider that as Iran considers the potential responses to what the U.S. has done. It will be interesting now to see if there is a U.S. diplomatic initiative to reach out to Iran and to say, 'Okay, the next move could be strikes against your oil infrastructure and your forces in your country—where does that end?'"



Iraqi anti-government protesters celebrate outside their protest tents in Baghdad's Tahrir Square following news of the killing of Iranian Revolutionary Guards top commander Qassem Soleimani in a U.S. strike on his convoy at Baghdad international airport on Jan. 3, 2020.

## Pompeo Posts Footage of Iraqis Celebrating Death of Iran's Top Military General

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seen in the area.

Soleimani, 62, is considered the architect behind Iran's elite Quds Force—an elite unit within Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) that is tasked with Iran's extra-territorial military operations—including activities to expand Iranian influence in Syria and rocket attacks on Israel.

According to the United States, Soleimani was responsible for orchestrating attacks on coalition bases in Iraq over the past several months, which included the attack at the Kirkuk military base in northern Iraq on Dec. 27 that killed an American and wounded several American and Iraqi troops.

Soleimani also approved the attacks on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad that took place last week, the department said in their statement. The two-day Iran-backed embassy attack, which began on New Year's Eve and ended Wednesday, prompted Trump to deploy about 750 U.S. soldiers to the embassy.

The United States in April 2019 designated Iran's IRGC as

a foreign terrorist organization (FTO). It marked the first time that the United States designated part of a foreign government as a terror group. The State Department announced at the time that the FTO designation "highlights that Iran is an outlaw regime that uses terrorism as a key tool of statecraft and that the IRGC, part of Iran's official military, has engaged in terrorist activity or terrorism since its inception 40 years ago."

Officials who confirmed Soleimani's death said the strike also killed Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of Iraq's Iran-backed Shiite militias known as the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). The PMF, formed in 2014 with about 140,000 members in total, is an Iraqi government-sanctioned state umbrella group spanning about a dozen militia groups. Many of the groups, however, are backed by Iran.

Pompeo pointed out in an earlier tweet that al-Muhandis was spotted outside the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad amid the attacks. Al-Muhandis's role in the attacks

was unclear. He had a long history of terrorist and subversive activities. In 1983, he led terrorist attacks against the U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait, and his men have since been accused of extrajudicial killings in western Iraq.

### Months-Long Protests in Iraq

Widespread protests in Iraq have been happening since October and have seen thousands of local Iraqis taking to the streets in Baghdad. Protesters have accused the government of being corrupt and decry the Iranian regime's growing influence in Iraqi state affairs through the militia groups. The mass uprisings have left more than 450 people dead, the vast majority being protesters—killed by militia forces using tear gas and live ammunition.

The Wall Street Journal reported that Iraq's militia groups hold about 47 parliamentary seats, giving them significant influence in the Iraqi government. According to the WSJ, Iran's increasing influence over the militia forces and members of the Iraqi parliament "has stirred public discontent and contributed to nationwide protests" since October.

U.S. officials have denounced Tehran's meddling in Iraqi affairs.

"We call on our friends and allies to continue to work together to reduce Iran's destabilizing influence so Iraq is governed by Iraqis without this interference in its internal affairs," Defense Secretary Mark Esper said on Thursday.

"Unlike the Iranians who continue to meddle in Iraq's internal affairs and seek to use corruption to further Tehran's malign influence, the United States and our allies are committed to an independent, stable, secure, and sovereign democratic Iraq that addresses the aspirations and needs of the Iraqi people, who we see protesting for these very things and objecting to Iran's malign influence."

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

## Democratic Senators Ask Trump to Declassify War Powers Notification After General's Death

JACK PHILLIPS

Top Democrats in the Senate have asked President Donald Trump to declassify the war powers notification that he submitted to Congress after the United States killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Iraq last week.

In a letter submitted on Sunday, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), who is the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, asked Trump to take immediate action to declassify the notification.

"Immediately declassify in full the January 4, 2020 war powers notification you submitted to Congress following the U.S. military operation targeting Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani," they requested of Trump in their letter.

"It is critical that national security matters of such import be shared with the American people in a timely manner," the two Democrats said. "An entirely classified notification is simply not appropriate in a democratic society."

On Saturday, the White House sent the notification of the drone strike to Congress under the 1973 War Powers Act that requires the president to tell the legislative body of incidents that require the introduction of the military within 48 hours.

White House counselor Kellyanne Conway responded to their letter, saying that Congress could be briefed by the week's end.

"They know that Congress will be briefed. It could start as recently as this week. But that's up to the Pentagon," she told reporters on Monday. "They will be briefed, but they also should calm down and celebrate, not denigrate, the fact that the world's greatest terrorist, who is single-handedly responsible for the deaths of hundreds of

Americans ... they should celebrate not denigrate" that Soleimani was killed, she said.

In defense of Trump's strike, which drew backlash from Democrats in Congress about them not being notified, Conway said that "he's the commander in chief, and he did what a responsible, strong—not weak—commander in chief does when faced with the opportunity to take out one of the, if not the world's most wanted terrorist."

Following the Trump administration's notification on Saturday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), who led the House's impeachment of the president, said it "raises more questions than it answers."

"The highly unusual decision to classify this document in its entirety compounds our many concerns, and suggests that the Congress and the American people are being left in the dark about our national security," she said Saturday, noting that it "prompts serious and urgent questions about the timing, manner and justification of the Administration's decision to engage in hostilities against Iran."

President Barack Obama's Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Jeh Johnson disputed the notion that Trump needed to first ask Congress before the strike.

"If you believe everything our government is saying about General Soleimani, he was a lawful military objective and the president, under his Constitutional authority as commander-in-chief, had ample domestic legal authority to take him out without additional Congressional authorization," Johnson told MSNBC. "Whether he was a terrorist or a general in a military force that was engaged in armed attacks against our people, he was a lawful military objective."



An RFS assessment crew walks through a property recording damage after fire previously tore through the town of Wingello, NSW, on Jan. 6, 2020.

## Nearly 200 People Face Legal Action As Police Target Bushfire-Related Offences

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or a \$5,500 fine, while those seen lighting or using a tobacco product within 15 metres of any stack of grain, hay corn, straw or any standing crop, dry grass, or stubble field could receive a fine of up to \$5,500.

Around 85 per cent of bushfires are caused by humans either deliberately or accidentally starting them, Dr. Paul Read, co-director of the National Centre for Research in Bushfire and Arson, told the ABC in September last year.

"About 85 percent are related to human activity, 13 percent confirmed arson and 37 percent suspected arson," he said. "The remainder are usually due to reckless fire lighting or even just children playing with fire."

According to Melbourne University bushfire expert Janet Stanley, the majority of fires are lit by young people aged 12 to 24. However, they have also been set by children as young as 10.

"Unfortunately, 10 percent of people who we think light fires are 10 years old or younger," she told Newscorp in December 2019.

Although there is very little research conducted on arsonists worldwide, Stanley believes there are a number of reasons and circumstances why they may start fires, adding that she doesn't believe they are evil. Stanley started researching bushfire arson after her own home was burned down in 1983.

"Older men are also prone to lighting fires," she said. "They often have a history of child abuse and neglect. They probably dropped out of school at a very early age, living on the edge of society, likely to be unemployed, not engaged in the community."

"In most cases, they don't intend to cause this chaos, they might just like to make a fuss," she added.

Stanley added that "much clearer" data needs to be collected to understand why people are lighting fires and noted that "not all fires are officially recorded, let alone being investigated."

"We need to understand how to better protect and understand these people [arsonists]. Sometimes they are quite happy to be caught—they feel safer in jail," she said.

# Climate Patterns Contributing to Catastrophic Bushfire Conditions Set to Improve

KATABELLA ROBERTS

Early January 2020 is likely to see a temperature imbalance in the Indian Ocean dissipate, according to the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), which may help create more favorable climatic conditions for Australia's bushfire ravaged east coast.

BOM stated that unusually significant differences between sea-surface temperatures in opposite parts of the Indian Ocean, referred to as the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), has been a major cause of this year's extreme climate conditions.

Temperatures in the eastern part of the ocean oscillate between warm and cold compared with the western part, cycling through three phases, which meteorologists call "positive," "neutral," and "negative."

A positive IOD occurs when waters near the Horn of Africa are warmer than average, while cooler waters develop off Indonesia, resulting in less rainfall and high temperatures for Australia.

The dipole's very strong positive phase this year—its strongest in six decades—has therefore had a big impact on Australia's climate. It's led to a drying influence over many parts of the country as well as reduced rainfall and low humidity, enhancing potential evaporation and increasing the risk of fires.

However, BOM stated that while the drier than average conditions being experienced are forecast to ease heading into 2020, the rainfall outlook for January to March will not bring the rainfall needed to "see a recovery from current long-term rainfall deficiencies."

On a positive note, the forecast said that the existing negative Southern Annular Mode (SAM), in which westerly winds have expanded toward the equator, started to decay southward at the end of December. In summer, this shift is often associated with more moist onshore flow from the east, which leads to increased rain over eastern Australia.

"The good news is, these drivers (dipole and mode) have now started to weaken," senior climatologist Robyn Duell, told local media.

Duell added that as the drivers continue to weaken, the chance of rainfall will rise, although much of the country may still be subject to warmer than usual conditions over the summer, particularly in the east as the impacts of the IOD and SAM



Sharnie Moren and her 18-month-old daughter Charlotte look on as thick smoke rises from bushfires near Nana Glen, near Coffs Harbour, Australia, on Nov. 12, 2019.



South Sudanese people walk in a flooded area that has been isolated for about a month and half due to the heavy rain in Pibor Town, Boma state, eastern South Sudan, on Nov. 6, 2019. The governor of Boma State explained 76 people have died and over 400,000 people are displaced in the state. The government declared a state of emergency on Oct. 27, 2019.

The good news is, these drivers (dipole and mode) have now started to weaken.

Robyn Duell, senior climatologist at BOM

linger.

"The not-so-good news is the effects of these drivers are likely to linger. If we look at the first quarter of 2020, we can see that days remain likely warmer than average," he said.

"Evenings are also likely to be warmer than average. So again, a continuation of that elevated risk of bushfires and heatwaves will likely continue into the first quarter of 2020. In terms of rainfall, we have quite a neutral outlook.

"For most of Australia, there's no strong indication either way of it being particularly wet or particularly dry," he said.

According to BOM, the IOD event peaked in mid-October, when waters around East Africa were roughly 2 degrees Celsius warmer than those near Australia.

So far, record-low rainfall across Australia has contributed to widespread bushfires that have devastated more than 5 million hectares (about 12.4 million acres) of land and killed nine people.

Meanwhile, thousands of miles away in East Africa, the opposite has been seen as intense rain wreaks havoc.

Devastating flooding and landslides have killed more than 280 people, and hundreds of thousands more have been forced to flee their homes, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

At least 2.8 million people have been affected by severe weather conditions, which have destroyed homes and infrastructure and increased the risk of infectious diseases including cholera.

## Morrison Commits \$2B to Bushfire Recovery Fund

At least \$2 billion will be pumped into a national bushfire recovery fund over the next two years.

The fund will support local governments, farmers and primary producers, and deliver mental health support, including to first responders.

"The fires are still burning and they will be burning for months to come," Scott Morrison told reporters on Monday.

"If more is needed and the cost is higher, then more will be provided."

The prime minister says he is unfazed by the impact of the bushfire recovery fund on the federal budget.

"The surplus is no focus for me," Morrison said.

"What matters to me is the human cost and meeting whatever cost we need to meet."

Morrison clarified on Wednesday that the disaster recovery payments offered to bushfire victims will not be taxed.

"The treasurer and I have agreed that we will be bringing forward legislation to ensure the disaster payments people receive will be non-taxable," he said.

Similar tax breaks have been legislated after other disasters, most recently the north Queensland floods.



Prime Minister Scott Morrison speaks alongside Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack and Treasurer Josh Frydenberg at Parliament House in Canberra on Jan. 6, 2020.

The bushfire recovery fund will operate alongside three levels of existing disaster relief payments available through the Commonwealth.

Twenty temporary Service Australia offices will open in fire-affected communities to help people access disaster payments.

"We have taken a number of decisions to streamline those payments to make sure cash gets into people's hands as soon as possible," Morrison said on Monday.

Welfare debt recovery and mutual obligation requirements in bushfire-affected regions are also being suspended for at least two months.

The government said the tax office will also not be chasing up returns in bushfire-affected areas for two years, giving people in those areas some breathing space.

As bushfires persisted through light rain across southeast Australia on Tuesday, comedian Celeste Barber's global online fundraiser—running since Friday—tipped over \$41 million with no signs of slowing.

U.S. singer Pink, Nicole Kidman, James Packer, Chris Hemsworth, Shane Warne, and the Wiggles are among the multimillionaire actors and entertainers joining the effort to raise funds for bushfire victims.

Since New Year's Eve, the Red Cross Disaster Response and Recovery Fund has also received \$34.9 million in donations from across the globe.

"Australians and indeed people around the world have shown extraordinary generosity in donating to the fund, which will mean we can scale up our work helping communities recover from these devastating fires across multiple states," Australian Red Cross acting chief executive Noel Clement said.

The Catholic church said it will have a special collection at Australia Day weekend masses to give to the Vinnies bushfire appeal and will connect people in need with those who can prepare meals and clear properties.

The consumer watchdog said it will set up a hotline for people to report any bogus charities using the bushfire crisis to rip people off.

There have been 24 fatalities and two people remain unaccounted for in New South Wales, while more than 1600 homes have been lost across the country.

So far, 497 Army reservists have been called to help in the bushfire response.

From AAP



# OPINION

ALEX EDELMAN/GETTY IMAGES



Anti-war demonstrators march during a demonstration against war in Iraq and Iran in Washington on Jan. 4, 2020.

## Trump Derangement Syndrome Skyrockets Over Soleimani

ROGER L. SIMON



Remember “politics stops at the water’s edge”?

In the Trump era, that patriotic phrase isn’t only dead, it’s decomposed.

And ironically so, since the latest manifestation of this decomposition is over the termination of Qassem Soleimani, the terror mastermind who was, on analysis, even more dangerous to the United States and the world than Osama bin Laden and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, monumentally evil as they were.

Neither bin Laden nor al-Baghdadi ever had remotely the power at their disposals—even when the latter controlled his caliphate—that Soleimani did as the military leader of by far the greatest state sponsor of terrorism. They weren’t even close to the man who was head of Iran’s Quds force and the second most powerful person in that country of 80-plus million, with all its attendant weaponry and technology and ties to China and Russia.

Besides the thousands of Americans who either died or were maimed for life because of Soleimani, hundreds of thousands across the Middle East have met their fates at least in part through this man’s ministrations.

**On analysis, the terror mastermind Qassem Soleimani was even more dangerous to the United States and the world than bin Laden and al-Baghdadi, monumentally evil as they were.**

The once-shining state of Lebanon is practically decimated through the rise of his Hezbollah, a fate he was replicating in Iraq. And then there’s Yemen and his Houthis and their simultaneous war against Saudi Arabia and their own people. And, of course, Israel, where he kept the Jewish state in a crossfire between his clients Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and, again

Hezbollah (when Hezbollah wasn’t busy exporting drugs into the United States).

It’s worth remembering that Soleimani was in charge of all these operations at once, a veritable superstar of terror.

On top of all that, he had as much influence as anyone in keeping the Syrian Civil War alive. Current death (under) count: 400,000. Number of refugees: 5.7 million. He may have changed Europe as we knew it forever.

And let’s not forget Iran itself, where only in the past few weeks, Soleimani’s footprints were all over the deaths of thousands of peaceful anti-regime demonstrators. Nobody knows how many. And torture as well—something that the Islamic Republic has made a specialty since 1979. Only the other day, they again executed a man for homosexuality.

Yet the supposedly liberal and progressive Democrats are all in a dither about the assassination of Soleimani. After all, Trump did it. It has to be wrong.

Not only would these same Democrats obviously have applauded the action if it had been done by one of their own, equally obviously, many of them would have attacked Trump even if had he assassinated Hitler in 1940, blaming the president for escalating the conflict.

It’s that simple—and nauseating—and every honest person in America knows it, especially the vets, almost all of whom have friends incinerated by one of Soleimani’s roadside bombs, if they aren’t themselves walking around on prosthetic devices.

And this leaves aside whatever Soleimani’s plans were that constituted the proximate cause of the assassination. If past performance is any indication, he had many.

Meanwhile, the Democratic candidates are demonstrating uniform cowardice in the face of the action. Is there one of them you would want to have beside you in a foxhole?

It would seem to have been impossible, but as bad as it’s been for the past three years, Trump Derangement Syndrome has reached unforeseen levels.

But a deeper cause of this increased



▲ Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani (C) attends a meeting in Tehran, Iran, on Sept. 18, 2016.

derangement may stem from events that began Sept. 11, 2012—the Obama administration’s behavior in the aftermath of the deaths of four Americans in Benghazi, Libya.

As most will recall, the administration sent Susan Rice to inform the nation that the lethal terror attack occurred because of a spontaneous emotional reaction to an amateur anti-Islamic video that barely anyone had ever watched. It wasn’t a planned attack by a terror group, Rice said. That was a despicable lie.

Kenneth Timmerman wrote in the *New York Post* in June 2014, “My sources, meanwhile, say Suleymani [sic] was involved in an even more direct attack on the U.S.—the killing of Ambassador Christopher Stevens in Benghazi, Libya.”

Timmerman goes on to detail a complicated and clever plot behind Benghazi worthy of the evil mastermind Soleimani.

If this is true—and it seems vastly more likely than Rice’s “explanation”—then what just occurred at Baghdad Airport is a prime, and highly justified, example of that old saw: what goes around comes around.

*Epoch Times* senior political analyst Roger L. Simon’s new novel “*The GOAT*” is available on Amazon.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of *The Epoch Times*.

# Rent-a-Mobs Will Not Ease Khamenei's Grim Future

MICHAEL LEDEEN

Commentary

There are demonstrations all over Iran for a big goodbye to Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

But the bulk of the demonstrators are there, not because they wish to pay tribute to the fallen martyr, but because they have to be. They have been commanded to be present, and, in addition to their fees, they are getting food and transportation to the various mob sites.

So it's a very big rent-a-mob. But don't for a minute fall for the propaganda. Of the 80 million inhabitants of Iran, probably 70 million are pleased that Soleimani is dead.

The killing of Soleimani has changed the world, as the world always changes when the United States moves decisively. For 40 years, no U.S. president dared strike at the heart of the Islamic Republic. It didn't much matter if the president was a lefty or a righty, a Democrat or a Republican, the basic war game was always the same: We invaded Iran, and lost. If we played the war game today, chances are good that 80 million Iranian people would fight on our side, and the leaders of the regime would be given a choice of lamp posts.

Note that Iran's key allies, Russia and China, aren't adding their voices to the calls for revenge against

Moscow and Beijing see the wisdom of cooperating with Trump, but Tehran is banking on his defeat in November.

Crowds surround a vehicle during the funeral procession for Iranian military commander Gen. Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi paramilitary chief Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in Baghdad on Jan. 4, 2020.

SABAH ARAR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Iranians gather in the northeastern city of Mashhad in response to the death of Qassem Soleimani on Jan. 5, 2020.

the Trump administration. China gave the United States the keys to a Chinese app that the Iranians had been using for their secure communications. Accounts differ as to whether the transfer took place before or after the most recent round of violence in Iran, culminating in the elimination of Soleimani, but it certainly wasn't the sort of help that Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was hoping for.

And as for Russia, just before the New Year's celebrations, this took place, as reported by Radio Free Europe:

"Russian authorities say that they have taken into custody two suspects in connection with a purported plot to carry out terrorist attacks in St. Petersburg on New Year's Eve that was foiled, in part, based on an intelligence tip from the United States.

"The Federal Security Service (FSB) announced last weekend that the men were detained on December 27, based on information from their 'American partners.'"

Trump wants a working partnership with the Russians, as he does with the Chinese, and as he wanted with the Iranian dictators. But the Persian tyrants know that they have tens of millions of opponents, and relentlessly crack down on them.

Khamenei recently told a would-be intermediary from Oman that he didn't want an Omani middleman to mediate the many conflicts between Tehran and Washington.

While Moscow and Beijing see the wisdom of cooperating with Trump, Tehran is banking on his defeat in November. It would be fascinating to study the exchange of documents with Trump's U.S. opponents, to see what plans the Iranians made to drag out the process of negotiation.

In any case, those plans have now been knocked into a cocked hat. With the death of Soleimani, many of Iran's schemes perished. Iran is scrambling to save face, as in Iraq, where the United States is reinforcing its troop commitment, and Lebanon and Syria, where Soleimani was a principal architect of Iran's domination. Iran will go all-out to achieve a U.S. withdrawal, but its chances are poor. Trump didn't order the killing of Soleimani in order to withdraw from the battlefield; if anything, he will intensify U.S. efforts.

The killing of Soleimani was only one in a series of planned U.S. responses to Iranian aggression, and in the days since the strike, there have been many arrests and there will be more. Tehran will keep ordering its proxies to hit Americans

and U.S. bases, but such efforts will only lead to more Iranian deaths and arrests. The Iranian strategy of fighting to the last Arab won't work.

Indeed, Khamenei faces a grim future. Not only does he face an incipient uprising in his own country once the Soleimani circus is over, but he must deal with open rebellion against Iranian influence in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and the lesser powers. It won't be easy for him.

As we can read at the Belmont Club blog, "There may have been enough resources to launch covert ops against America, but there is way too little to confront it openly."

Michael Ledeen is a freedom scholar at Foundation for Defense of Democracies. He has served as a consultant to the National Security Council and the departments of State and Defense, and as a special adviser to the secretary of state. He is the author of 35 books, most recently "Field of Fight: How to Win the War Against Radical Islam and Its Allies," co-authored with retired Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

## New Year's Resolution for the Mainstream Media: Stop Lying

CONTINUED FROM A1

more simply "the leak."

The leak is the mother of most of today's journalistic malfeasance, especially for anything political, and why the public, according to so many polls, has little respect for the press.

It's been a pattern for years. Someone on the inside of wherever (the State Department, the FBI, the CIA, the Pentagon, the White House ...) or someone who knows someone inside or knows someone who knows someone inside or ... (well, you get the picture) calls their favorite reporter—someone who has been cultivated, sometimes for years in a symbiotic relationship—to convey information he/she (the leaker) deems important.

What is the reporter then thinking? Is the info true? Well, maybe in some cases. More likely, is it true enough? Can I sell it? Can I make it sound true? And is it a scoop and if so, more importantly, what side is it on? Whose ox will be gored? Will it satisfy my reader/viewership and will my boss approve? (Or, as Dean Baquet, executive editor of The New York Times, put it, "We wrote a lot about Russia and I have no regrets. It's not our job to determine whether or not there was illegality.") And, best of all, is there a Pulitzer in it for moi? (No matter that several recent Pulitzers were shown to be premised on lies that undoubtedly arrived via leaks. They're not taken back.)

If all these boxes are checked, and especially if the ox that gets gored is Donald Trump or someone close to him, even remotely, step two

Most newspapers supposedly require a certain number of these corroborating sources before they run an article, but who knows if they really do, because they are ... anonymous?



Newspaper front pages are on display at the Newseum in Washington on Dec. 19, 2019.

occurs. Corroborating evidence is sought from other sources.

As with the first step, these sources will almost always be anonymous and referred to in the text as "a source close to ..." (whatever or whoever it is) or "someone in a position to know ..." and so forth.

Most newspapers supposedly require a certain number of these corroborating sources before they run an article, but who knows if they really do, because they are ... anonymous?

This leaking—whether factual, a lie, or, as is often the case, a combination of the two—is, of course, illegal, but the leakers are rarely if ever prosecuted, despite promises from the Justice Department and others. The journalists who rely on the

leakers are a protected class of their own and are at little risk for printing what they wish. They rarely, with only a handful of exceptions, pay a penalty for promulgating lies or half-truths, creating a perfect *pas de deux* of corruption.

Nevertheless, this is the essence of the bulk of modern political journalism—a far cry from the police blotter of yore or the "who, what, why, when, where, and how" of the pre-Watergate days. Journalism then was not so high and mighty, and you could still pick up a newspaper with at least some certainty that you weren't about to be propagandized.

Isn't it time we went back to those old days for the new year?

What about a resolution never to

run an article based on or even containing anonymous sources?

Plenty of other possible resolutions exist for the errant journalistic class, but at least that's a start. One step at a time, as they say. Unwinding this situation won't be easy. We're all biased humans, after all. But if some of us try, others may follow.

Happy New Year.

Epoch Times senior political analyst Roger L. Simon's latest novel is "The GOAT," available on Amazon in hardcover, paperback, Kindle, and audiobook.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

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#### ABOUT US

The Epoch Times is a media organisation dedicated to seeking the truth through insightful and independent journalism.

Standing outside of political interests and the pursuit of profit, our starting point and our goal is to create a media for the public benefit, to be truly responsible to society.

We endeavor to educate readers about today's most important topics, seeking to broaden and uplift minds. We believe that rational, balanced debate is key for fostering a healthy democracy and a compassionate society.

As an independent media outlet, we use our freedom to investigate issues overlooked—or avoided—by other media outlets. We seek to highlight solutions and what's good in society rather than what divides us.

We report respectfully, compassionately, and rigorously.

We stand against the destruction wrought by communism, including the harm done to cultures around the world.

We are inspired in this by our own experience. The Epoch Times was founded in 2000 to bring honest and uncensored news to people oppressed by the lies and violence in communist China.

We still believe journalism is a noble vocation, but only when it genuinely seeks to serve its communities and help them to flourish. In all that we do, we will hold ourselves to the highest standards of integrity. This is our promise to you.

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#### SPECIAL SERIES

# How the Specter of Communism Is Ruling Our World

## How Communism Sows Chaos in Politics

The Epoch Times here serializes a translation from the Chinese of “How the Specter of Communism Is Ruling Our World,” a new book by the editorial team of the “Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party.”

Chapter Eight (Cont.)

### 5. Totalitarianism: The Consequence of Communist Politics (cont.)

#### a. Totalitarianism Eradicates Free Will and Suppresses Kindness

When human beings follow the traditional values established by the divine, God will lead people in the further development of that culture. Having a culture informed by divine inspiration is an important channel for people to connect with the divine. Based on this culture the variety of methods of social organization that is political life is derived.

God gives people free will and the ability to manage their own affairs. People ought to manage themselves through self-discipline, moral conduct, and responsibility for themselves and their families. After studying American politics in the nineteenth century, the French political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville came to a great appreciation for the society. He was impressed with Americans' ability for introspection, their understanding of evil, their willingness to solve problems with patience, and the general lack of violence in solving social problems. He thought that the greatness of the United States lies in its ability to correct its own mistakes.

What the communist evil specter wants, on the other hand, is totalitarian politics in order to instigate people to oppose tradition and morality, and to block the path for people to incline toward goodness and toward the divine. People in communist countries, however, are transformed from being God's people to becoming subjects of the devil, all without noticing it. Gradually, they willingly obey the norms that accord with the devil.

In communist countries, the government monopolizes social resources, including the economy, the educational system, and the media. Thus, everything must be carried out by following the instructions of communist party leaders, and their methods of ruling are based on lies, evil, and violence. Those who try to follow their conscience and incline toward goodness end up violating the party's ideology and rules, and are called enemies of the party. They then become the underclass, forced to struggle at the bottom of society, or they simply die.

There is no such thing in this world as a free lunch. High levels of welfare are based on forced taxation, and the welfare itself ends up creating problems.

In free societies, the government is also moving toward authoritarianism, with “big government” coming to control almost everything. One of the characteristics of autocratic politics is a strong central government that plans and directs the economy. At present,

Western governments have increasingly strengthened their ability to intervene and control the economy to achieve government plans; they use the instruments of state revenue and expenditures, taxation, and debt financing.

At the same time, their sphere of management has come to encompass beliefs, families, education, the economy, culture, energy and resources, transportation, communications, travel, and more. From the expansion of the central administrative power to local governmental control over the lives of citizens, numerous laws and judgments, the result has been an all-round expansion of governmental power and unprecedented societal control. For instance, the purchase of health insurance is mandatory, lest people be fined. In the name of the public interest, governments can deprive people of their property and personal rights.

A totalitarian government uses “political correctness” as an excuse to deprive people of their freedom of speech and dictate what people can and cannot say. Those who openly denounce sinister policies are dismissed as engaging in “hate speech.” Those who dare to oppose political correctness are marginalized, isolated, in some cases fired, and in extreme instances threatened or attacked.

Using deviated political standards to replace upright moral standards and enforcing them with the power of the law, regulation, and public attacks, creates an atmosphere of social terror and pressure, suppressing people's free will and the freedom to pursue kindness. This is the essence of totalitarian politics.

#### b. From Cradle to Grave: The Welfare System

Today, welfare policies have become a universal phenomenon. No matter which country or party, whether conservative or liberal, there is no essential difference. People who have lived in communist countries and come to the West are all impressed with the benefits: free education for children, medical insurance, and care for the elderly. They believe that this is what “real communism” is about.

Isn't the welfare society of today precisely a communist set of ideas brought into capitalist society? The difference is that it wasn't done through violent revolution.

The pursuit of a better life is not at fault in itself, but there are major problems hidden behind the large welfare states established by governments. There is no such thing in this world as a free lunch. High levels of welfare are based on forced taxation, and the welfare itself ends up creating problems.

The British jurist Dicey observed: “Now before 1908 the question whether a man, rich or poor, should insure his health, was a matter left entirely to the free discretion or indiscretion of each individual. His conduct no more concerned the State than the question whether he should wear a black coat or a brown coat. ... But the National Insurance Act will, in the long run, bring upon the State, that is, upon the taxpayers ... unemployment insurance. ... It is in fact the admission by the State of its duty to insure a man against the evil ensuing from his having no work. ... The National Insurance Act is in accordance with the doctrines of socialism.”

The Nordic model of socialist

welfare has been recognized and adopted by many countries. It was once considered a positive example of socialist prosperity to be imitated by the West. Yet in Northern Europe, the ratio of tax rate to GDP is among the highest in the world, with many of the countries' tax rates hovering at around 50 percent.

A totalitarian government uses ‘political correctness’ as an excuse to deprive people of their freedom of speech and dictate what people can and cannot say.

Analysts have pointed out that there are six fatal problems with the socialist medical welfare that the government engages in: It is unsustainable, as people want to benefit from free services more than they pay into them. There are no rewards or penalties for performance, and medical industry practitioners don't assume any legal responsibility for what they do, but get paid no matter how much they work. It causes huge losses to the government: People steal through loopholes, abuse the system, and engage in underground trade. The government decides the life and death of the people through the medical system, and it's plagued by bureaucracy.

In 2010, a man named Jonas in northern Sweden had to suture his bleeding wounds in an emergency room. He first went to the outpatient clinic, which had closed. He then waited for three hours in the emergency room. The wound was bleeding, but he received no aid. He had no choice but to attempt to treat himself, but this led to him being reported by the hospital staff as having violated the law by possessing hospital equipment without authorization (he had picked up a thread and needle the nurses left out). This is just one instance; the reality is far worse. Because everyone wants free medical care, resources are abused. The clash between limitations on resources and the demand that things be free causes mismatches between supply and demand. The lack of supply means long queues, while those who really need care are harmed by socialized medicine.

It's not merely a matter of efficiency. The greater danger is that everything a person needs from cradle to grave is arranged by the government. It may seem to be desirable, but in fact, a population's dependence on the government is the path to an autocratic regime.

As Tocqueville wrote: “If despotism were to be established amongst the democratic nations of our days, it might assume a different character; it would be more extensive and more mild; it would degrade men without tormenting them.” The welfare state is thus best described.

See next edition for the next installment.

LIU JIN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Internet users in Beijing, in a file photo. The control of the internet in China is among the strictest in the world.

# China-Style Censorship Going Global

When it comes to internet censorship, is the world becoming more like China?

JAMES GORRIE



The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) hates the free flow of information and the expression of ideas. China's leadership knows that their continued existence depends on their ability to stifle individualism, political expression, and human rights—all the ideas and rights that Hongkongers are fighting to hold onto as much as they can.

There's no way the CCP—or any totalitarian regime—could exist in such an open environment.

Unfortunately, the results of the CCP's Orwellian state are, as tragic as they are, predictable. According to the 2019 report, "China's Pursuit of a New World Media Order" issued by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), China is one of the least free nations on the planet, ranking 176 out of 180 countries.

But there's more to China's censorship efforts than most are aware.

## 'Internet Sovereignty' Just the Beginning

With its so-called Great Firewall, the CCP controls almost every piece of information in China via its own internet, search engines, chat apps, and other social media. Chinese are denied internet access to the outside world. All that most Chinese people know from the internet, newspapers, television, and radio is what the CCP allows them to see, read, or hear.

Furthermore, with its highly intrusive data decryption laws, AI-powered algorithms, and thousands of teams of content monitors, the CCP also controls—and sees—the vast majority of data that comes into the country from foreign business personnel, academics, and other sources.

That's called "internet sovereignty" by the way, and to Beijing, is just as important as territorial sovereignty.

There are good reasons why, of course. Dictatorial control over a population means controlling and shaping the perceptions of the people, and of course, their thoughts. For that to be successful, there must be only one source of information. That would be the Chinese state, i.e., the CCP. It's no surprise that China has no rival when it comes to imprisoning journalists and netizens.

But it gets much worse.

## China's 'Great Cannon' Kills Foreign Websites

The CCP isn't just working very hard to block Chinese citizens' access to information it doesn't like; it's also out to stop the rest of the world from seeing it as well. China's "Great Cannon" is programming code that allows the Chinese regime potential control over foreign websites and even to limit users' access to data. It was first used in 2015 to target and exploit any unsecured foreign computer that communicates with China. It gives the CCP the opportunity to target and exploit any foreign computer that communicates with any China-based website.

This Great Cannon weaponizes the millions of mainland Chinese internet connections that visit unsecured websites. It downloads and runs the Chinese regime's malicious JavaScript, which allows them to control traffic to those sites, overwhelm them to the point of shutdown, or even launch cyberattacks against offending or opposition sites. This was the case with Github in 2015 and in Hong Kong in June 2019. What's more, China routinely injects software on opposition groups beyond its borders to spy on and discredit them.

## China's Big Global Propaganda Spend

In addition to shutting down offensive or threatening websites, Chinese media is making major strides in expanding its presence around the world. Spending \$1.3 billion a year to push out its state-run television and radio programming, the CCP wants to tell the world China's story, in Chinese terms, rewriting history according to CCP-approved narrative. China's media expansion is considerable, with the China Global Television Network seen in 165 countries and China Radio International heard in 65 languages.

## China, more than most people realize, is well into the process of remaking much of the world in its own image.

It's a bold and powerful effort to turn much of the world's thinking away from American ideas and toward China's oppressive and successful looking state capitalism, and syncs well with China's Confucius Institutes on college campuses throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. These institutes are yet another CCP propaganda tool aimed to shape young people's views of China and undermine the righteous grievances of the Hong Kong protesters, as well as the foundational concepts of Western civilization.

China's efforts to expand its global presence is a direct threat to the open, liberal democracies of the West:

"What is at stake is not only the Chinese authorities trying to spread their own propaganda ... what is at stake is journalism as we know it," Cédric Alviani, East Asia bureau director of RSF, told TIME Magazine.

It's disappointing, if not surprising, just how many authoritarian countries such

as Russia, Iran, Pakistan, and others are racing to censor internet access and limit the freedoms of their own people. Without question, China is leading the way for dictators of all stripes around the globe to hold onto their illegitimate power.

Even more disappointing and dangerous is how China is influencing global mass media and entertainment companies in an extremely prolific effort to stop criticism and reshape opinions around the world. It appears as if U.S. firms have made kowtowing to Beijing just another business decision. Web and technology giants such as Facebook, Apple, and others willingly comply with Beijing's censorship demands in exchange for access to China's market of 1.3 billion people.

What's more, airlines and publishers are rewriting their maps so as not to offend China. Apparently, Tibet and Taiwan, for example, aren't real countries after all.

Beijing is showing its hand to the world, and it's quite a bloody and dirty one. It's also a much more insidious threat to Western civilization than any weapons system Beijing may deploy against the United States. China, more than most people realize, is well into the process of remaking much of the world in its own image.

The people of Hong Kong are well aware of the danger such a transformation brings, which is why they're willing to take the risk of standing up to the CCP leadership. They know that their future under Beijing's thumb is a bleak one.

Western companies should take heed.

*James Gorrie is a writer and speaker based in Southern California. He is the author of "The China Crisis."*

*Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.*



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TRY AT HOME

Cantonese Roast Duck for the Holiday Table

With juicy meat and shiny, crackly-crisp skin, the classic dish makes a show-stopping centerpiece.

See B2

KHENG GUAN TOH/SHUTTERSTOCK



RUSTIC FRENCH COOKING

Gratin Dauphinois Is the Ultimate Comfort Food

Potatoes meet cream in this traditional gratin, an embodiment of simple but decadent French cooking.

See B3

JANUARY 9 - 15, 2020 B1

# LIFE

THE EPOCH TIMES

LEKKERWATER BEACH LODGE AT DE HOOP

ALL PHOTOS BY DE HOOP COLLECTION UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE



This 130-square-mile preserve brings together a wide variety of ecosystems, mountains, grasslands, and sand dunes.



(Top left) An aerial shot of whales. (Top right) A bontebok, and an eland in the background. (Above) A marine walk.

## Wildlife Encounters at De Hoop Nature Reserve

This stunning UNESCO World Heritage site is home to South Africa's most endangered animals

TIM JOHNSON

Rolling out from the roost, I hear the light, arid air swoosh and sizzle of the eight-foot wingspan of these big birds. They swoop down from their craggy mountain redoubt and out, riding the arid thermals, headed for the sea.

Getting up to this sunbaked platform wasn't easy. With my guide, Theodore, behind the wheel, we bumped down an unpaved road, running right into the heart of a country traffic jam—hundreds of sheep crowding the road, kicking up dust as they trot in lockstep just ahead of our bumper.

And then, there was the hike. Starting out thin and undulating, the path took us past a number of small curiosities common in remote parts of the South African countryside—at one turn, a dung beetle, doing his thing, and at another, we stepped carefully past a scorpion, steering clear of his toxic tail, and we stayed always mindful that this place is home to cape cobras, puff adders, and green mambas.



(Above) A francolin, a terrestrial (but not flightless) bird in the pheasant family.

(Right) A beach walk.

Soon the path inclined sharply, and I huffed and puffed up the steep side, pausing occasionally for an extra breath. Theodore encouraged me by telling the story of an 82-year-old woman who completed this same hike, although it took her all day. And he made a joke, too, pointing high in the air, at one of the birds of prey circling above me. "He's waiting on you," Theodore laughed. "Just give him a minute."

I'm inside the De Hoop Nature Reserve, hanging out with a colony of Cape vultures. A long way from anywhere—way out on the windswept Western Cape, a scenic three-hour drive east of Cape Town. This 130-square-mile preserve brings together a wide variety of ecosystems, mountains, and bio-diverse grasslands and sand dunes strung along hundreds of miles of unoccupied Indian Ocean beaches. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it's home to South Africa's most endangered animals, brought here for protection when numbers reach critically low levels.

For example—the Cape vulture, the most endangered animal in the park. Noting that this is the last remaining colony in the

Western Cape, Theodore told me that their numbers once sank as low as 60, but, since being protected at De Hoop, they have increased to more than 350. While vultures aren't normally known for being a beautiful bird, this species, with white splashed across its wings, is rather majestic when in flight.

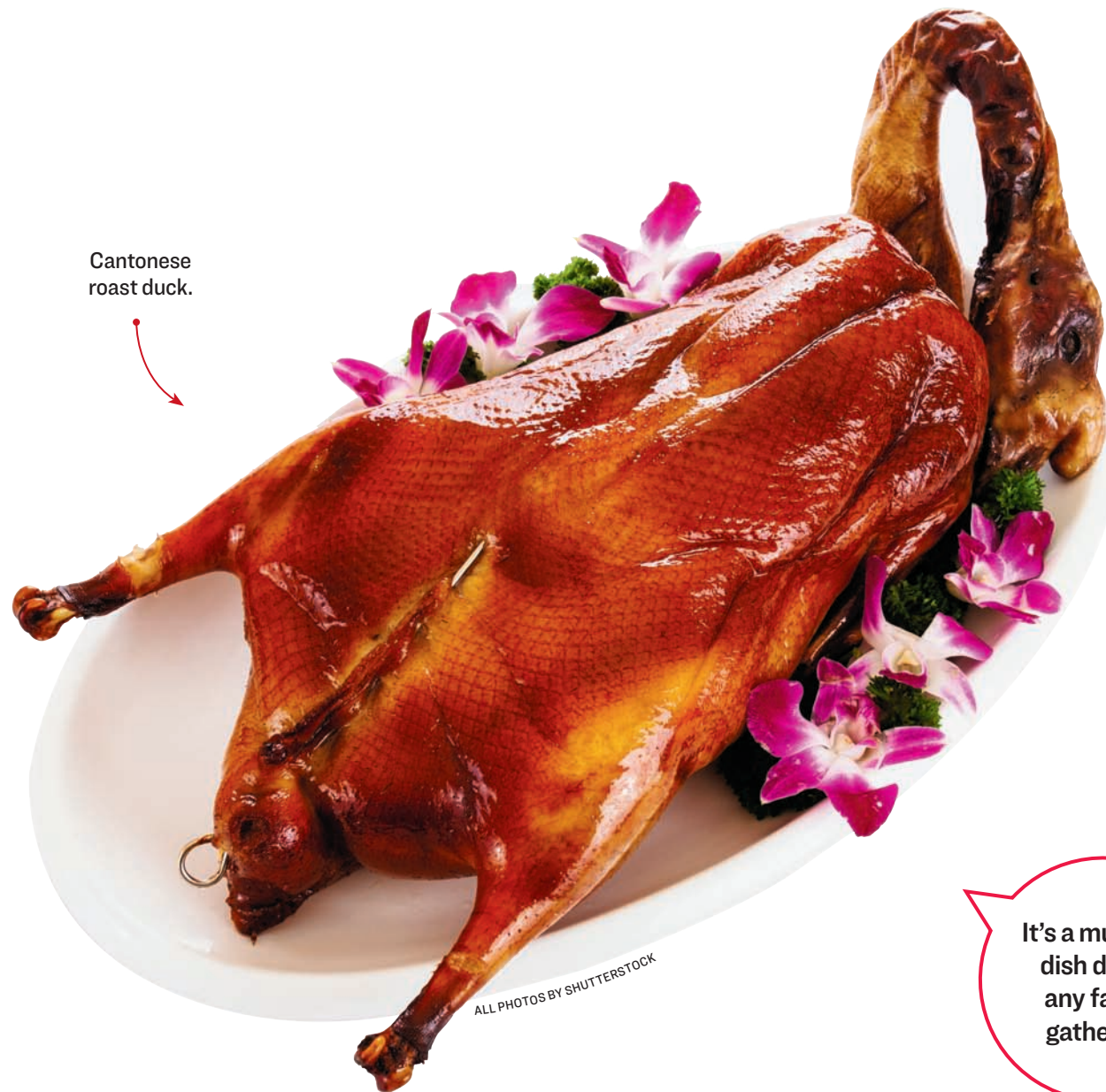
### I'm inside the De Hoop Nature Reserve, hanging out with a colony of Cape vultures.

But life isn't easy for a Cape vulture. It lays just a single egg per year, and the threats are myriad—from predators to power lines to loss of habitat. But here, nestled into a crag in the cliff, in one of the highest places in De Hoop, Benans said they've found a life-giving refuge.

Continued on B4

LEKKERWATER BEACH LODGE AT DE HOOP





It's a must-eat dish during any family gathering.

## CHINESE HOME COOKING

# Cantonese Roast Duck

## for the Holiday Table

With juicy meat and shiny, crackly-crisp skin, the classic dish makes a show-stopping centerpiece

### CICI LI & CRYSTAL SHI

**H**old the turkey; how about roasting a duck instead?

Cantonese roast duck—the glistening red birds you see hanging in Chinatown shop windows—is known for its shiny, crackly-crisp skin and succulent meat. The duck is traditionally hung to air-dry before cooking, for extra crispy skin, and roasted with a liquid marinade sealed inside the cavity, for extra juicy and flavorful meat. It's a must-eat dish during any family gathering.

Making the dish at home is a multi-step

process that you'll have to start a day or two in advance. But when you break down the steps, it's actually quite simple, and the results are well worth the time.

Several steps are geared toward ensuring your duck roasts up with the crispiest of skin.

First, the duck is “inflated” with an air compressor inserted under the skin, to separate it from the meat. This way, excess fat can safely drip off while the duck roasts, without softening the skin. This is a com-

mon practice for preparing Peking duck, Cantonese roast duck's northern cousin, but many high-end Cantonese roast duck places use the method as well.

The duck is then blanched in two rounds: first with just water, to firm up the skin, and then with water mixed with Chinese rose cooking wine, red vinegar, and maltose or honey, to add color and flavor.

Finally, the duck rests in the refrigerator for at least 24 hours to air-dry, for another layer of protection against soggy

skin. Traditionally, it would simply be hung up in a cool, dry place.

After that, most of your hard work is done. All that's left to do is roast the duck in the oven, first at a higher temperature, for, you guessed it, extra crispy skin, and then at a slightly lower one to finish. Serve with a side of plum sauce, and you have an impressive centerpiece for a Cantonese-style feast.

*CiCi Li is the producer and presenter of “CiCi's Food Paradise” on NTD. Join her in discovering the world of Asian home cooking at CiCiLi.tv*

When you break down the steps, it's actually quite simple, and the results are well worth the time.

### CANTONESE ROAST DUCK

**PREP TIME: 40 MINUTES**

**REST TIME: AT LEAST 24 HOURS**

**COOK TIME: 1 HOUR, AND 10 MINUTES**

**SERVES 4**

**SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:**

**Tweezers**

**8-inch stainless steel turkey lacer (or, you can use a bamboo skewer)**

**Air compressor**

**Stainless steel S-shaped hook, or butcher's twine**

**Wire cooling rack**

**Roasting pan and rack**

**FOR THE DUCK:**

**1 3 1/2-pound whole duck, neck attached**

**16 cups water, divided**

**2 cups ice, for ice bath**

**Plum sauce, for serving**

**FOR THE DRY RUB:**

**1 tablespoon salt**

**1 tablespoon white pepper**

**1 tablespoon five-spice powder**

**1 teaspoon sugar**

**FOR THE MARINADE:**

**1 tablespoon soy sauce**

**1 tablespoon oyster sauce**

**1 tablespoon hoisin sauce**

**2 pieces fermented red bean curd**

**1 teaspoon five-spice powder**

**1 teaspoon sugar**

**3 scallions, cut into 3-inch pieces**

**3 slices ginger**

**3 garlic cloves, lightly smashed**

**FOR THE BLANCHING LIQUID:**

**8 cups water**

**1/2 cup rose cooking wine (mei kuei lu chiew), or substitute rice wine**

**1/2 cup diluted red vinegar (da hong zhe cu), or substitute rice vinegar (though you will lose some of the red color)**

**1/2 cup maltose, or substitute honey**

**The day before, prepare the duck:**

Wash duck with warm water and pat dry with paper towels. Remove excess fat from the inside of the cavity and discard. (If you can, choose a leaner duck, which will roast up crispier.) Use tweezers to pluck out any pinfeathers; if you have a cooking torch, you can also use it to singe them off. Chop off the feet, if attached, with a knife.

To make the dry rub, in a small bowl, combine salt, white pepper, five-spice powder, and sugar and mix well. Rub the mixture all over the duck and inside the cavity. Transfer to the fridge and let sit for 2 hours.

To make the marinade, in a bowl, combine soy sauce, oyster sauce, hoisin sauce, fermented red bean curd, five-spice powder, and sugar and mix well, breaking up the bean curd. Add scallions, ginger, and garlic.

Remove duck from the fridge. Pour the marinade inside the cavity and rub it all over. Use an 8-inch stainless steel turkey lacer or bamboo skewer to truss the cavity closed.

If you have an air compressor, use it to blow air under the skin of the duck. Place the duck breast side up and insert the tube of the air compressor under the skin, around the neck area. Press paper towels over the cavity and rest of the neck to ensure that no air leaks out. Blow air under the skin for about 1 minute, until the duck inflates like a balloon and the skin is separated from the meat. Flip the duck and repeat.

If you do not have an air compressor, use your hands or the back of a wooden spoon to reach under the skin and loosen it from the meat.

Secure an S-shaped hook on the duck's neck, or tie butcher's twine securely under both wings. Ensure that the duck does not fall when you lift it by the hook or the twine.

In a large bowl or pot big enough to fit the duck, prepare an ice bath. In another large pot, bring 8 cups of water to a boil. Turn off the heat. Holding the duck by the hook or the twine, suspend it over

Chop the duck into bite-sized pieces to serve.



the oven and preheat to 425 degrees F.

Transfer duck to the middle rack of the oven and roast for 10 minutes. Then, lower the oven temperature to 350 degrees F and continue to roast for another 20 minutes.

Remove roasting pan from the oven. Flip the duck so that it is breast side down. Return roasting pan to the middle rack of the oven and roast, still at 350 degrees F, for 20 minutes.

Remove roasting pan from the oven. Remove the foil from the wings and legs of the duck. Return roasting pan to the oven and roast for another 20 minutes. (If your duck is larger than what this recipe calls for, add 15 minutes of roasting time for each additional pound. The USDA recommends cooking duck breasts to an internal temperature of 165 degrees F to ensure that any harmful bacteria are killed.)

Remove duck from the oven and let cool for 10 minutes. Remove aromatics and liquid from the cavity and discard. Chop the duck into small pieces and serve with plum sauce for dipping.

*Recipe by CiCi Li*

the pot and use a ladle to spoon the water all over the duck, for about 2 minutes, until the skin turns firm and white.

Discard the water. Immediately submerge the duck in the ice bath, to further firm up the skin. Remove and pat dry with paper towels.

To make the blanching liquid, clean the pot of any grease and bring another 8 cups of water to a boil. Add the rose cooking wine, red vinegar, and maltose and mix well. Turn off the heat. Once again, holding the duck by the hook or twine, suspend it over the pot and use a ladle to spoon the liquid all over the duck, for about 2 minutes.

Remove hook from the neck, or snip off the twine, and chop off the neck and head with a knife.

Set a wire cooling rack on a plate and place the duck on the rack, breast side up. Transfer to the fridge to air dry for 24 to 48 hours. (You can also use a fan or blow dryer to speed up the process.)

**The next day, roast the duck:** Line a roasting pan with foil, for easier clean-up, and set a roasting rack on top. Place the duck breast side up on the roasting rack (because the breast side is thicker). Wrap up the wings and legs with foil, to prevent burning. Let rest at room temperature for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, place a rack in the center of

## RUSTIC FRENCH COOKING

# Gratin Dauphinois

## Is the Ultimate Comfort Food

Potatoes meet cream in this traditional gratin, an embodiment of simple but decadent French cooking

AUDREY LE GOFF

**P**otatoes, milk, and cream. You need little more than that to make gratin dauphinois, proof that French cuisine doesn't have to be complicated, and often relies solely on simple ingredients to create a decadent dish.

In this traditional French gratin, thinly sliced potatoes are baked slowly in creamy milk until fork tender. This is an easy, affordable, and oh so comforting dish that would make a perfect addition to your holiday table.

### History

As its name suggests, the gratin dauphinois was born in the Dauphiné, a former province of southeastern France. Straddling the mountain range of the Alps, the Dauphiné is a region of mountain-style cooking, based on produce that can grow at high altitudes, such as potatoes.

With the introduction of potatoes to France circa the 1500s, potato-focused dishes, like gratins, have likely been part of the local cuisine for centuries. But it wasn't until the 18th century, according to Dauphiné historian Claude Muller, that the "gratin dauphinois" was first officially mentioned.

It is said that in 1788, the Lieutenant-general of the Dauphiné, the Duke of Clermont-Tonnerre, hosted a dinner for the municipal officers of the town of Gap. He served a gratin dauphinois to accompany a dish of orlolan birds (small, sparrow-sized birds), and wrote its name down for the first time on a menu.

By the 19th century, the gratin dauphinois recipe had become a staple in local inns and restaurants. Now, it is a great classic of the French culinary repertoire, and one of the most beloved dishes to make in the winter.

### Potatoes, Milk, Cream

Gratin dauphinois was traditionally baked in a clay pot, but now, any clay, ceramic, or glass baking dish is acceptable; you can even use a Dutch oven. For this recipe, choose one that holds from 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 quarts, but not any bigger than that. The gratin needs to be at least three inches high, so it can be cut into hefty slices.

Potatoes are the stars of the dish, so choosing the right ones is of utmost importance. Opt for starchy potatoes that will release a large amount of starch as they cook; this will bind all the ingredients together and make for the creamiest gratin.

In France, gratin dauphinois traditionalists recommend using only specific potato varieties, such as the starchy Monalisa, the tender Nicola, or older heirloom varieties like the Belle de Fontenay or the Charlotte.

In North America, you can also find great varieties to recreate the dish. Try fluffy Russets, which have the most starch, or Yukon Golds, which hold their shape especially well.

For whichever variety you choose, one rule applies: Do not rinse the potato slices! You want to keep all that precious starch, so that it slowly releases into the milk and creates that signature consistency.

**In France, gratin dauphinois traditionalists recommend using only specific potato varieties, such as the starchy Monalisa, the tender Nicola, and older heirloom varieties like the Belle de Fontenay or the Charlotte.**

Gratin dauphinois. ▼



When the gratin dauphinois became popular in the 19th century, milk wasn't exactly as we know it today. Often directly sourced from local farms, milk was unskimmed and thus much creamier, with a much higher fat content.

With today's generic supermarket milk, you'll need to use both whole milk and heavy cream—at least 35 percent milk fat—to achieve the same velvety texture. (Sure, it makes for an indulgent dish ... but it's worth every calorie, if you ask me.)

### Hold the Eggs

As per tradition, only a few subtle additional flavors should be added to a gratin dauphinois.

Garlic, instead of being minced and directly added with the other ingredients, is simply rubbed against the walls of the baking dish before it's filled with the potatoes, milk, and cream. This lends a very subtle garlic flavor to the gratin: just enough to be noticeable, but not so much that it's overwhelming.

A pinch of nutmeg and black pepper are also acceptable, and fresh thyme, although a step away from the traditional recipe, is lovely, too.

Some modern recipes by French authorities like Escoffier, Carrier, and De Croze call for the addition of cheese and eggs. I think eggs are *de trop*, giving the sauce an unpleasant, curdled texture, but I have to admit that I enjoy a light sprinkle of Alpine cheese, such as Swiss Gruyère or Emmental, on top.

### To Serve

There are two ways to serve a gratin dauphinois, both equally delicious, so you can decide which one you prefer.

Home cooks, in general, prefer to serve the dish hot and by the heaping spoonful, for creamy and slightly messy platefuls.

In restaurants, you will more likely find it served cut in clean, square slices. To achieve the same effect, let the gratin cool completely to room temperature and then pop it in the fridge for at least two hours before serving, or ideally overnight. When ready to serve, cut clean slices, wrap them individually in foil, and reheat them under a hot broiler.

*Audrey Le Goff is a French food writer, photographer, and creator of the food blog Pardon Your French, where she shares recipes and stories from her beloved home country, France. She is the author of the cookbook "Rustic French Cooking Made Easy" (2019). She currently lives in Niagara, Canada.*

## GRATIN DAUPHINOIS

SERVES 4 TO 6

1 cup heavy cream (35 percent milk fat)

1/2 cup whole milk

1 clove garlic, cut in half  
2 sprigs fresh thyme, de-stemmed

1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

2 teaspoons salt

1 2/3 pounds baking potatoes, such as Russet or Yukon Gold

2 tablespoons butter (salted or unsalted), divided, at room temperature

Optional: 1/3 cup Gruyère cheese, grated

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F, with a rack in the middle.

In a large pot over medium heat, combine the cream, milk, thyme, nutmeg, pepper, and salt and bring to a simmer.

While the milk mixture simmers, peel the potatoes and thinly slice them, ideally with a mandoline. Drop the potato slices immediately into the milk (to avoid browning). Cover the pot and continue to simmer for 10 minutes, until potatoes are just tender and can be easily pierced with a sharp knife. Remove from heat.

Rub the inside of a 10 1/2 inch by 7 1/2 inch gratin dish with the cut side of a halved garlic clove. Then, grease the inside of the dish evenly with 1 tablespoon of butter.

Transfer the potatoes and milk to the dish and spread them out in an even layer. Dot the top with the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter.

Cover the dish with foil and bake for 30 minutes.

Remove the foil and sprinkle the grated cheese evenly on top of the gratin. Bake for another 30 minutes, until the cheese turns golden.

Let the gratin rest for at least 15 minutes before serving.



Potatoes are the star of the dish.



Simmering the potatoes with milk and cream.



Ready to bake.



# Wildlife Encounters

at

# De Hoop

## Nature Reserve

Continued From B1

"Everything happens here in the Potberg Mountains," he said, noting that the birds mate and lay eggs just over there, near the platform where we're standing. "It's the perfect place to boost the population—they're well-camouflaged, they look like little stones in the cliff."

And the vultures aren't the only animal protected here—driving up to my accommodation the previous day at the De Hoop Collection, for a two-night stay, the first thing I noticed were the bontebok, everywhere. Horned antelope with a distinctive white patch on their faces, this species was hunted almost to extinction, and there were once as few as 17 animals left in the world. But they're flourishing now—with as many as 600 at De Hoop alone.

I parked next to one of these curious creatures, just grazing out in an open field near the parking lot, and checked into my suite, the Opstal Manor House. Turning the key, I found a large, historic, whitewashed and thatch-roofed dwelling with three bedrooms and a full kitchen. I took a little self-guided tour around the complex, which was once a thriving farm and now features tennis courts, a swimming pool, and an excellent restaurant.

After settling in, I got on a boat. Cruising onto the calm waters of a 10 mile-long lake, the captain and guide, William, noted that this brackish water was once a river, but it's widened over time. He pointed out the abundant wildlife that surrounded the lake, adding the fact that you can sometimes track rare and elusive Cape mountain leopards along the beaches here.

We motored slowly past a band of baboons, the alpha male digging for crabs in the mud, eyeing us warily as we passed. And then a fish eagle startled hundreds of pink flamingos. And, after that, a huge eland—big and somewhat bovine, the world's largest breed of antelope. William also told us to keep an eye out for the curious and playful clawless otter (none emerge) and, signaling to the sea, noted that as many as 1,200 southern

right whales could be spotted right from the shore, in season.

Back on dry land, I took a little time to don a hard hat and tour a brand-new nearby waterfront hotel, at the time not yet opened—the Lekkerwater Beach Lodge. Set on the footprint of former president F.W. de Klerk's country getaway (his own version of Camp David), the seas here teem with wildlife—thousands of dolphins, millions of fish, with great white sharks routinely cruising by. Seeing some rooms, and walking along the beach, I was told that, in part because of this vibrant sea life, evidence of human settlement here dates back 40,000 years.

Returning to my lodge in the final hours of my visit, I headed back to the beach, to a world that's constantly in flux. Led by two guides—Del and Adolph—I joined a group and strode over a series of dunes, stepping carefully to keep the sand under my soles. Down at the water's edge, we reached the intertidal zone, where the wildlife changes every day with the pull of the moon and the subsequent flow of the Indian and Atlantic, which flow together here.

**We motored slowly past a band of baboons, the alpha male digging for crabs in the mud, eyeing us warily as we passed.**

"We have one of the fastest currents in the world," Del said, noting that just beneath the waves you'll find more than 150 shipwrecks.

We walked across a shell midden dating back 5,000 years, fossilized remnants of prehistoric human development, right here, a place where prehistoric people would spend two to three days feasting on mussels and



1. Lekkerwater Beach Lodge at De Hoop. 2. Mountain zebras.

snails, discarding their shells here before migrating inland. Adolph found treasures in every rock pool we encountered. He pulled out a sea urchin, which he assured us wasn't poisonous, and everyone in the group got a chance to handle it. We step lightly across the slick surfaces, also seeing sea stars and abalone, and even a small octopus.

Back in my car and headed back to Cape Town, I startled a few rare bontebok on the way out. Soon I would be back in the hustle and bustle of the city. But for now, the Potberg Mountains just on the horizon, I knew that another Cape vulture, strange and majestic, has probably launched from its safe

place, soaring through the blue sky above.

Toronto-based writer Tim Johnson is always traveling, in search of the next great story. Having visited 140 countries across all seven continents, he's tracked lions on foot in Botswana, dug for dinosaur bones in Mongolia, and walked among a half-million penguins on South Georgia Island. He contributes to some of North America's largest publications, including CNN Travel, Bloomberg, and The Globe and Mail.

He was a guest of Expert Africa and the De Hoop Collection.



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## homemakers

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1

DE HOOP COLLECTION

TIM JOHNSON

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2



3



4

3. Looking for creatures and crustaceans in tidal pools. 4. Walking the dunes to the shore.



EXPERT AFRICA

Eland at De Hoop Nature Reserve.

**WHEN YOU GO**

Expert Africa, a tour operator based in the UK, offers tailor-made itineraries to South Africa (as well as several other countries in Southern Africa) and De Hoop. Led by a founder who spent years on the continent, trips are planned by experts who spend generous amounts of time touring their countries of specialization. They offer a well-curated list of hand-picked lodges, top guides, and high-end transfers, by road and air. At De Hoop, stays can include both Opstal and Lekkerwater.

Most trips to De Hoop will start and finish in Cape Town. There, stay at the Vineyard Hotel, which sits on a lush, eight-acre property that includes namesake vineyards, planted to celebrate more than three centuries of winemaking on the Cape. Rooms are located in a palatial, historic home.

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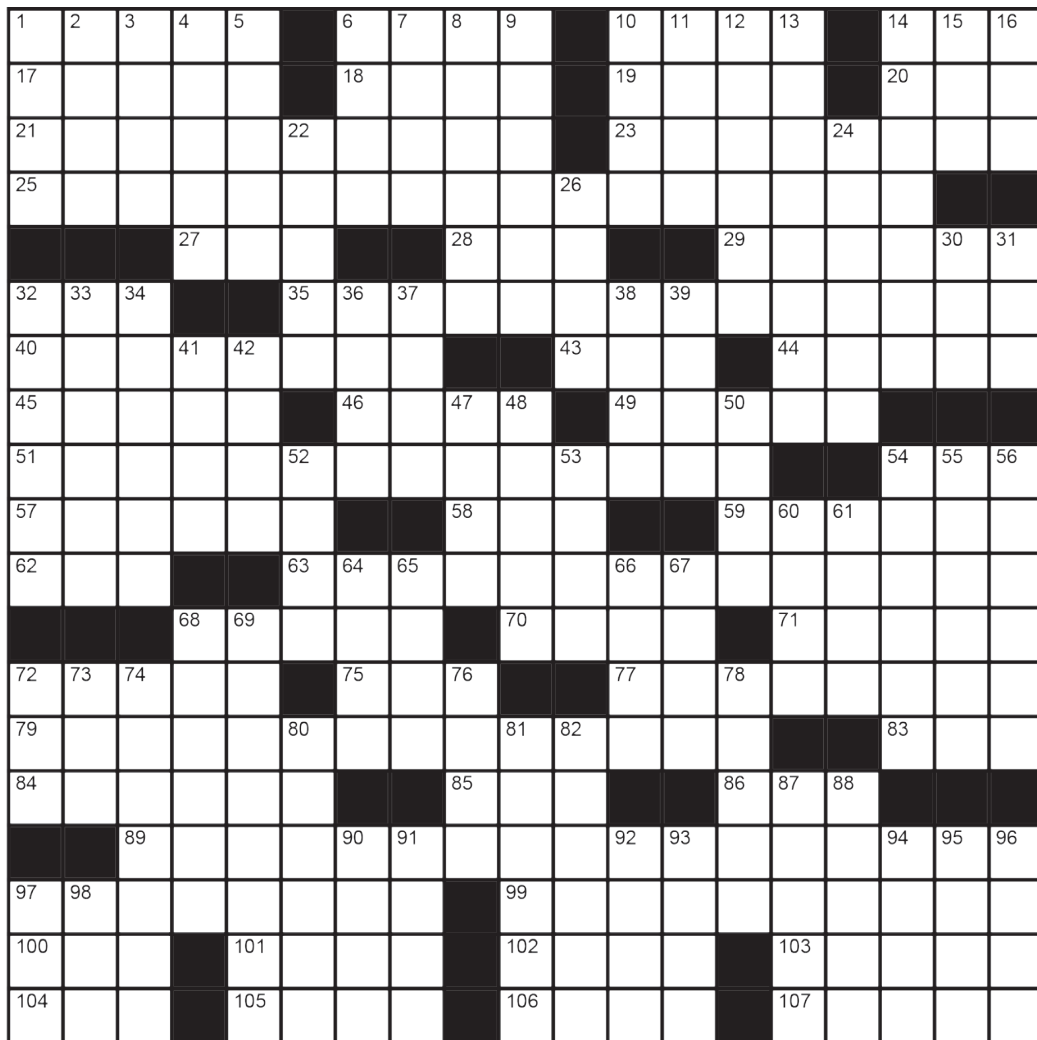
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CROSSWORD

CONSTRUCTED BY TOM HOUSTON EPOCH TIMES STAFF



Across

- 1. Cause for pause
6. Broken-off branch
10. Old Mogul capital
14. Grade of wine
17. Bay window
18. "Belly" or "back" attachment
19. Vault
20. Pin \_\_\_\_
21. Investigator
23. Announcer's aid
25. Presidential appointee
27. Landscaper's need
28. --'wester
29. "Send a \_\_\_\_ to your boy in the army" (Katz's Delicatessen sign)

- 32. Met display
35. Involving members of multiple social categories
40. Follows Ezra
43. La Brea pits' substance
44. Begin
45. Ammonia derivative
46. Brass component
49. Lasered
51. Fruit-salad fruit
54. "Casablanca" pianist
57. Bighorn
58. "Losing My Religion" rock group
59. Washer setting
62. Blue hue
63. One's territory

- 68. Anatomical cul-de-sac
70. The Bee Gees, e.g.
71. Slowpoke
72. Leading
75. Stretch of turbulent water
77. Ancient Roman coin
79. What a sidewalk sketcher is called in Sussex
83. Diversion
84. The Wizard of Menlo Park
85. Cheer
86. Backrub response
89. Golf course horticulturist

- 97. "...care of business and working \_\_\_\_" (BTO lyric)
99. Most politicians?
100. Low island
101. Place to broil
102. Mideast title
103. Dish with seasoned rice
104. Took a course?
105. A successor of Tip
106. Like some muscles
107. "... it \_\_\_\_ for thee"

Down

- 1. Biz abbr.
2. "Dunkiest" treat
3. Overlook
4. Runs into
5. "13 Days to Glory" subject
6. Air \_\_\_\_ (alveoli)
7. Authentic, in Thuringia
8. V.I.P.
9. "Holy" brat
10. Not aweather
11. Sweet cherry
12. Least cooked
13. Evaluate
14. Antifreeze
15. "And Esau \_\_\_\_ to meet him" (Genesis 33:4)
16. Island strings
22. Rays
24. Like a saint's head
26. Heavy blow
30. Tangle
31. Nobel Peace Prize-winning U.N. grp.
32. Souls
33. Say
34. GIZMO
36. WWII German Political Party
37. Weak

- 38. Deserve
39. Prominence
41. 15th Century Old Norse poetic saga
42. Square \_\_\_\_
47. Cliff's pal on "Cheers"
48. Inched
50. Safecracker
52. Computer architecture acronym
53. Mideast ruler
54. E. B. White's \_\_\_\_ Little
55. Magnet alloy
56. Olio
60. Once, once
61. All's opposite
64. Go sour
65. Overlook
66. Like some decrees
67. Takes off
68. Kind of salad
69. Home of the Oilers
72. Parrot
73. Ate
74. Curse
76. Legal prefix
78. Great balls of fire
80. Salad green
81. Kind of wit
82. Beginning with "dynamic" or "nuclear"
87. Assume
88. Prefix with centric
90. Crested diving duck
91. Tiny payment
92. Hold
93. Unsubstantial
94. Zero
95. Roster abbr.
96. Makes calls
97. "L\_\_\_\_ del Cairo" (Mozart opera)
98. A large vessel

4NUMBERS

CONSTRUCTED BY C. CHANG AT 4NUMS.COM

Use the four numbers in the corners, and the operands (+, -, X, and ÷) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle.

4Numbers puzzle with numbers 13, 26, 8, 20 and solution 84.

Hard 1 - 1 Solution

4Numbers puzzle with numbers 14, 24, 12, 22 and solution 96.

Hard 2 - 2 Solutions

4Numbers puzzle with numbers 3, 9, 1, 8 and solution 14.

Easy 1 - 1 Solution

4Numbers puzzle with numbers 4, 6, 4, 6 and solution 10.

Easy 2 - 1 Solution

WORDSEARCH

CONSTRUCTED BY TOM HOUSTON EPOCH TIMES STAFF

Help with Today's Crossword Puzzle?

A A I G S T H I N G Y H F S K
A N H M S N E H E M I A H C G
J X I E I S T U A R T L K R Y
I A R M A D E A R P H O N E S
R A A S A D E N D I V E L P T
R L Y S E S T E R C E D I T A
E A E C E C U M Z T E R R O R
S M D A C O Y T B M K T A R S
O O Y I K O R I O R R E P C A
L S N A I L M I A L B D I A R
U O V E R T I M E A L I E E G
T C H E E S E E A L D S R S A
E I N T E R S E C T I O N A L
P I L A F G M T S A O N P R I
N A L N I C O S A L A M I T R

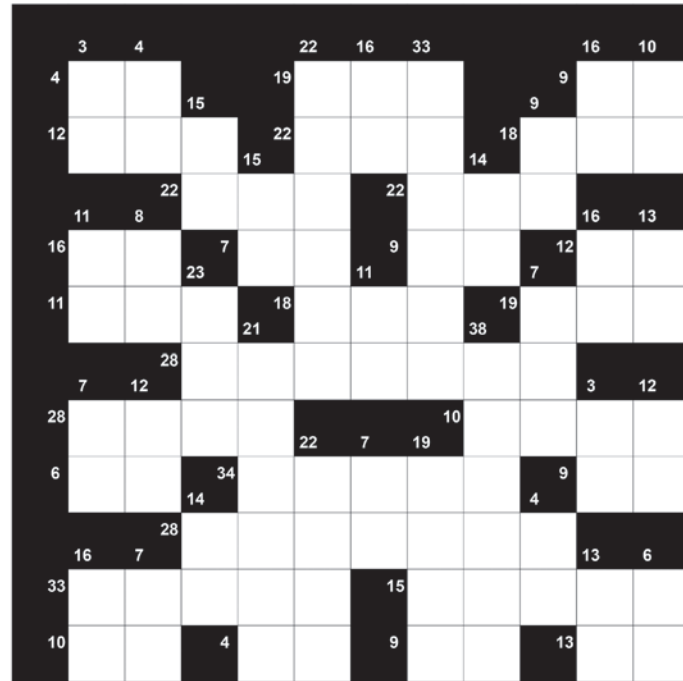
- AHEAD, ALAMO, ANIMAS, ARGALI, CAESAR, CECUM, CHEESE, COMMA, CREPT, EARPHONE, EDISON, ENDIVE, HALOED, IMIDE, MEDLEY, MEETS, NEHEMIAH, ORIEL, OVERTIME, PILAF, RADII, RAPIER, RAREST, RAYED, REMARK, SALAMI, SESTERCE, SNAIL, STARS, STUART, TERROR, THINGY, TOLLS, ADOPT, ALNICO, INTERSECTIONAL, IRRESOLUTE

KAKURO

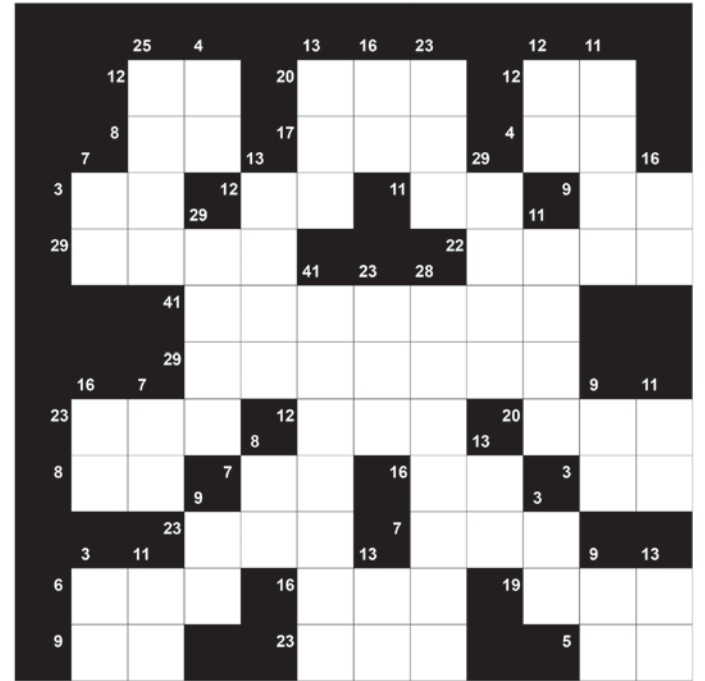
CONSTRUCTED BY EPOCH TIMES STAFF

Kakuro puzzles are like crosswords that use numbers instead of words. The goal is to fill the blank squares associated with a clue (called a "run") with the numbers 1-9 so that the numbers add up to the corresponding clues. Like Sudoku, digits in a run cannot repeat. When the grid is filled, the puzzle is complete.

Large: Hard



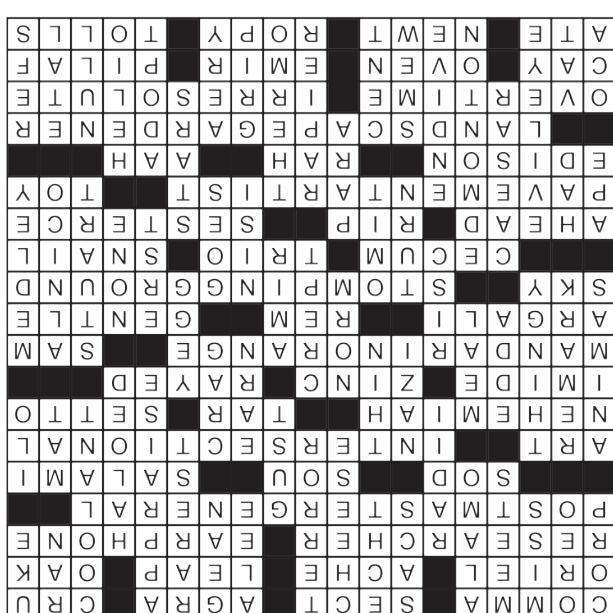
Large: Easy



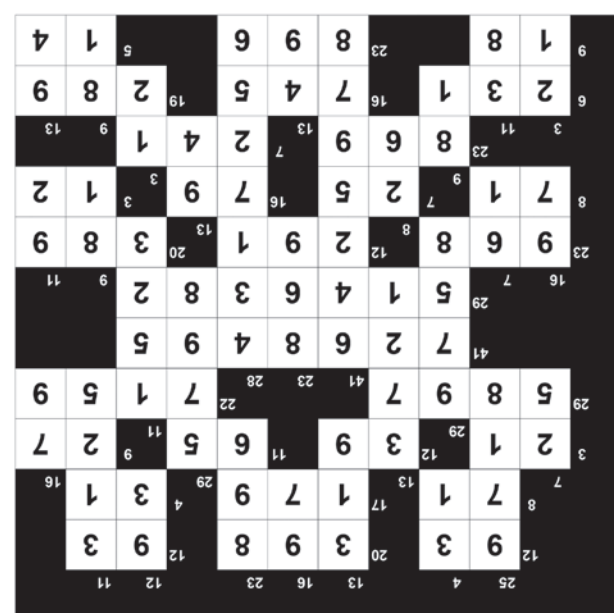
WORK SPACE

SOLUTIONS

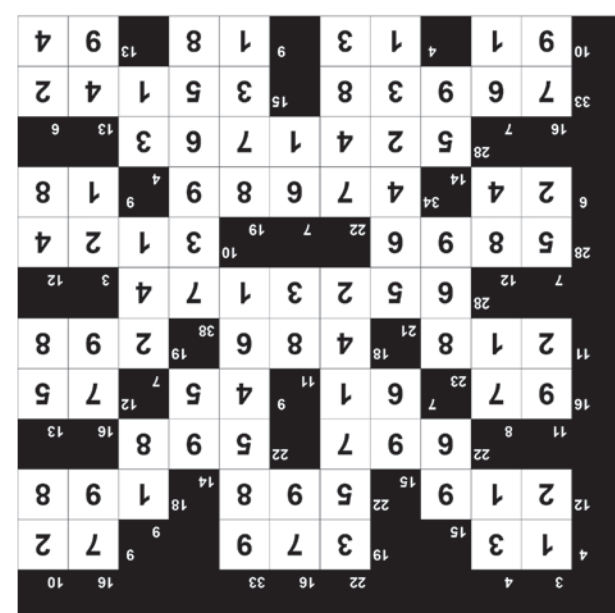
CROSSWORD



KAKURO LARGE: EASY



KAKURO LARGE: HARD

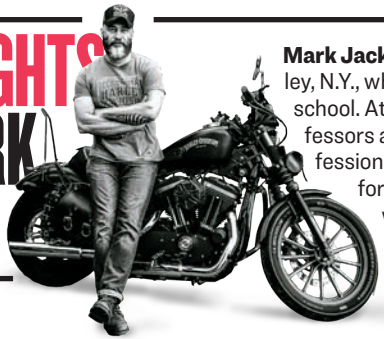


4NUMBERS

- HARD 1: 26 - 13 x 8 - 20
HARD 2: (14 + 12 - 22) x 24
EASY 1: (9 + 8 - 3) x 1
EASY 2: (6 x 6 + 4) ÷ 4



## FILM INSIGHTS WITH MARK JACKSON



Mark Jackson grew up in Spring Valley, N.Y., where he attended a Waldorf school. At Williams College, his professors all suggested he write professionally. He acted professionally for 20 years instead. Now he writes professionally about acting. In the movies.

# 'Last Christmas': A Rom-Com Whitewashing of Organ Transplantation

## The CCP Tries Pulling a Fast One

### MARK JACKSON

Here's a film review of "Last Christmas." I'll jump right to it. I'm not playing around today. This is a bad movie. I'm giving it a negative star. Why so vociferous, you ask? Because 'Last Christmas' is a whitewashing attempt by the Chinese Communist Party to sneak their vast, illegal live organ harvesting trade into our collective subconsciousness via the Trojan Horse vehicle of an innocuous-looking Christmas Rom-Com, using two popular Asian movie stars.

Here's the deal: As you may know, the United States is already well into World War III with China. Yes, it's cyberwarfare—for now—but it's World War III, alright. Trust me—this is what the Epoch Times does better than anybody, because nobody else dares to address this issue.

China is attempting, covertly, to take over the world, and part of that plan includes taking over Hollywood. You've seen it already; you've

### 'Last Christmas'

**Director**  
Paul Feig

**Starring**  
Emilia Clarke,  
Emma Thompson,  
Henry Golding,  
Michelle Yeoh,  
Patti LuPone

**Rated**  
PG-13

**Running Time**  
1 hour, 42 minutes

**Release Date**  
Nov. 8

**Rated**  
-1 star out of 5



(Left) Kate (Emilia Clarke) works in a Christmas store.

(Middle) Michelle Yeoh amid a sea of Asian faces, in a British Christmas decorations store, in "Last Christmas." Is that not perhaps a bit odd?

(Below) Emilia Clarke (L) and Emma Thompson play mother and daughter.



Universal Pictures presents  
Emilia Clarke and Henry  
Golding in the romantic  
comedy "Last Christmas."



Kate (Emilia Clarke) puts on a Christmas show for a homeless shelter.

seen the Chinese symbols of Chinese production company names glowing onscreen, in your local movie multiplex. Yeah, so what?

So this: China is also covering up the worst atrocity in the history of humans—live organ harvesting from peaceful prisoners of conscience: hiding them in black jails, strapping them down, sawing open their chests in unmarked vans—while they're still alive—and pulling out live, beating hearts. And making giant, megatons of cold cash. Megamillions.

### Here's the Deal With 'Last Christmas'

Well, dear readership of The Epoch Times, you know the deal by now; you know what we stand for, and stand up to. Anytime our staff runs across a situation involving China trying to get away with making giant piles of money off live organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience, we blow the whistle on it.

So what have we got here? A movie blatantly about organ transplantation masquerading as a cute Christmas romance, funded by a Chinese production company.

"At the start of 2016, Perfect World announced a long term co-financing deal with Universal Pictures, which represents the first time a Chinese company has directly invested in a multi-year slate deal with a major U.S. studio," according to UniversalFanon.Fandom.

A sweet little Christmas romance: cute, cozy, progressive, and politically correct (lesbian side narrative!). It puts a big smiley-face on organ transplantation. Makes it so nice and warm and fuzzy! Spiritual, even!

Right. Shame on Hollywood. Writer and star Emma Thompson can perhaps be given the benefit of the doubt for not being aware of China's communist agenda, with its concept of the "Long march through the institutions," in this case American, in order to rot our traditions and morals from the inside out. She can perhaps be forgiven for letting China get its paws on her script.

However, the script plagiarizes a famous 11th-hour plot switcheroo from a 1990s movie that put that particular plot concept on the map. This is a bit lazy.

### Guess I Better Do My Film Review Job

The film's heroine, Kate (Emilia Clarke), is a carbon copy of the bull-in-China-shop, semi-alcoholic that Anna Kendrick played a couple of years ago in "Happy Christmas"—couch-surfing and alienating friends by drunkenly sitting on their meticulously crafted matchstick galleons, and such.

Kate's a wannabe actress whose day job is being a green-clad sales elf in a quaint, all-season Christmas shop, which is run by Santa (it's more of a job description, re-

ally), her imperious-and-snarky-but-with-a-heart-of-gold boss (Michelle Yeoh).

Yeoh is normally a cinematic kung fu master, but is lately demonstrating a growing knack for comedy.

Kate gets unceremoniously dumped in the street by the arriving-home-early-from-a-trip fiancée of a cheater-dude Kate just had extramarital relations with (nice Christmas touch; 'tis the season to commit adultery, fa-la-la, etc.). Kate then runs into a very, very handsome Asian man named Tom (Golding).

She spies him looking at a peregrine falcon perched in some rafters. The bird immediately poops in Kate's eye, and he tells her she's lucky. He's a whimsical, lighthearted, glass-half-full kinda guy, a sort of toned-down Asian version of Dick Van Dyke's character in the original "Mary Poppins." He likes to twirl when he walks because, you know, joyousness.

## A movie blatantly about organ transplantation masquerades as a cute Christmas romance.

### Are You a George Michael Fan?

You better be a George Michael fan because every song in this movie is a George Michael song. The only song I ever liked of his was that duet he did with Elton John, and even that I didn't like.

Anyway, Kate ends up homeless and has to crawl home to her Yugoslavian mom (Emma Thompson) and former-lawyer dad Ivan (Boris Isakovic), who now drives an Uber, and lesbian sister (Lydia Leonard).

Sister Marta resents Kate's prodigal sister status. Emma Thompson doing a Yugoslavian accent could be potentially hysterical, but this isn't that movie. This is where it starts getting alluded to that Kate had some strange illness that landed her in the hospital for a while. All the while, Kate keeps running into the handsome Asian man and going on cute dates with him.

Emilia Clarke is very adorable. In "Game of Thrones" she was very naked. Here, she's a very fetching, charismatic, cute green elf who sings well. Can't fault her; one can easily see why her currently very famous "Game of Thrones" co-star Jason Momoa—Aquaman himself—cherishes knowing her.

Michelle Yeoh is also a little bit adorable. Even Mr. Golding is adorable.

Anyway, where was I? Oh yes. Kate ends up volunteering at a homeless shelter, where they eventually ... wait for it ... put on a Christmas show.

Isn't that nice? Isn't that just a nice, cute movie for your Christmas entertainment?

And wouldn't it be an absolute crying shame that, were it not for an organ transplant, the two leads couldn't be together? What am I talking about? To fully explain it, it's going to require a spoiler, so consider yourself herewith spoiler-alerted.

And here it is: Are you familiar with the line "I see dead people"? Viva organ transplantation! Viva guardian angels!

And it's so nice that China provides the world with so incredibly, unprecedentedly, many organs! Get this—if you have five bazillion dollars, you can send China your stats, like blood type and such, and get a perfect match from a freshly slaughtered Tibetan, or Uyghur, or Falun Gong practitioner, who's been held in a pen like cattle, and slaughtered. Just for you.

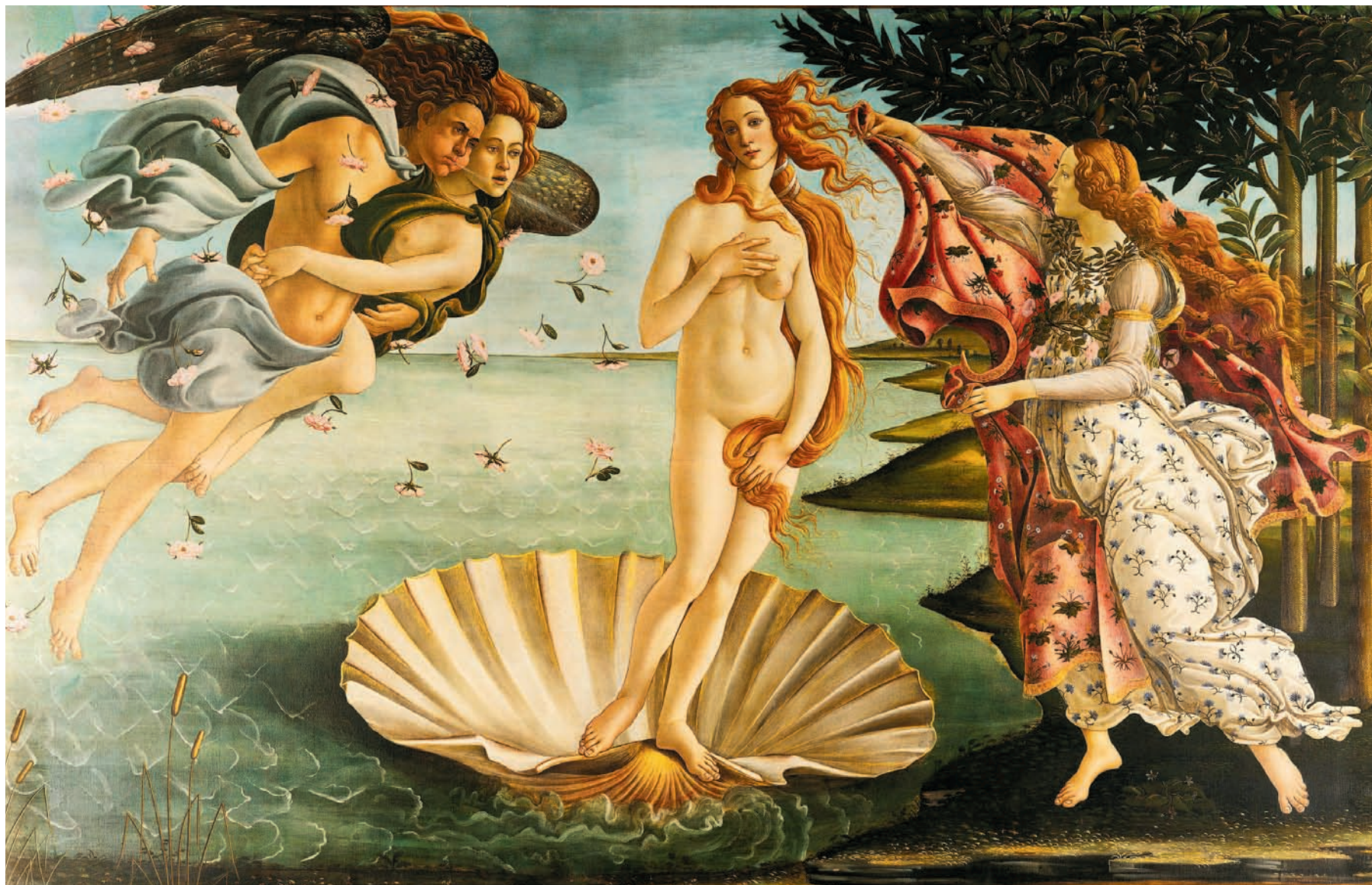
And here's the kicker: You can get that set of lungs or heart or kidneys or cornea—by next week! No wait time! Normally, the average national wait time for a kidney in the United States (although it varies by state and by organ) is three to five years! Isn't that unbelievable?

Maybe the title "Last Christmas" doesn't have anything to do with the George Michael song. Maybe it's a happy, happy message, like, you never have to worry about having a last Christmas anymore, due to a failing liver or lung cancer. Thanks to China.

World War III, people. This is how it starts.



PUBLIC DOMAIN



“The Birth of Venus,” 1486, by Sandro Botticelli. Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy.

FINE ARTS

# On Botticelli’s ‘Birth of Venus’

MANFRED VON PENTZ

The Gothic era, an epoch so marvelous, magical, and perplexing that to this day it has never been fully fathomed, triggered the rebirth of yet another magnificent period. That rebirth, of course, was the Renaissance, which discovered the great cultures of our forebears, Greek and Roman alike, and polished them off with Christ’s maxims. And so, the first literary giants of Christianity stepped onto the stage and Humanism was born.

Amazing heroines such as Petrarch’s Laura and Dante’s Beatrice captivated the hearts of educated Italy and those beyond. As a result, the veneration of the weaker sex received yet another elevation of their status. The first was the highly romantic if not quasi-divine spheres the female reached by way of the troubadours. But now dukes, popes, counts, and condottieri, all with an infallible sense for beauty and elegance, had their spouses, daughters, and mistresses educated, usually by the best scholars money could buy.

Where previously the

wealthy proudly exhibited their ladies’ outer splendor, they now touted with equal delight that these ladies could read Aristophanes in the original and, perhaps over a glass of sublime Montepulciano, embark on a spirited critique of his doubts and certainties.

Small wonder, therefore, that Lorenzo the Magnificent, ruler of Florence in those times, decided one day to bestow immortality on an exceptionally lovely maiden. He entrusted the task to a preferred protégé, the artist Sandro Botticelli, and to imbue it with a measure of subdued passion and complex intellectual depth, as was the habit in those days, he most likely invited a close friend to get some ideas.

Now my guess is, and more it can’t be, that this friend with whom he had a little chat was the venerated humanist and poet Leon Battista Alberti. It came to pass that they forged an emotionally staggering and philosophically overwhelming allegory as an underpinning for the world’s most beautiful work of art.

Leon Battista, by the way, was the first Christian lyricist to write an elegy on the death of his beloved dog, a

mongrel, which is, at least in my book, one of the finest credentials a true humanist can advance if asked to declare himself.

In any case, the “Birth of Venus” was born.

‘The Birth of Venus’

The goddess of love stands in a large seashell that rests close to the shore. She is immensely beautiful, with shimmering blond hair and light-green eyes. Though naked, she radiates an impression of virginity and purity. She covers her loins with a strand of her long hair.

To the left hovers a winged couple, firmly embracing each other and loosely clad in a sky-blue cloth. They fly in a cloud of wild roses and both are blowing air, in this way producing a breeze that pushes the goddess ashore. There waits a young woman, ready to receive her. She holds a finely woven cloak, clearly intending to wrap the goddess into it.

Apart from its breathtaking beauty, what makes the painting so unique is its symbolism. Scholars

often accept the secondary figures in the painting as minor Greek deities. But remembering that the painting was only discovered in 1815 without any historical documentation as to its name or its meaning, and more importantly acknowledging that the Italian Renaissance forged new philosophies, combining ideas from antiquity and the Middle Ages, I, on the contrary, see it as reasonable that the winged young couple, together on the left, represents the Lord God and Creator of the World.

Never before has the Creator been represented in European art as a deeply intertwined man and woman, sparsely veiled on top of that. The lady on the right I see as representing mankind, anxious to receive the goddess, then to cover her and thus to honor and protect her.

Why do I make this assertion? Because, indeed, Love is the greatest and most wondrous gift ever bestowed upon humanity by its Creator.

Often misunderstood only as a sensually induced emotion, Love is much more:

Namely, it is a rational attitude to life, as an all-embracing sentiment, as an eternal philosophy, and as a divine principle. Love for the good and beautiful; Love for truth and justice; Love for the sad, the poor, and the downtrodden. Love for a tree, a butterfly, a sunset, a bird, a dog; Love for children; Love between a man and a woman. Love for the divine creation in general; and Love as mankind’s ultimate and highest achievement, key to a single fulfilled life and hope for a better future.

In other words, the painting is not only a grandiose example of Greek mythology but, in fact, one of the most beautiful arguments for the validity of our Christian faith ever conceived.

So there she stands, the most supreme of all goddesses, and I cannot imagine a greater compliment for our womenfolk than she.

*Manfred von Pentz previously worked in advertising, graphic design, and real estate development. Now a writer and painter, he is the author of novels such as “The Crimson Goddess.” His artwork can be found at manfredvonpentz.net*

Apart from its breathtaking beauty, what makes the painting so unique is its symbolism.

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MINDSET MATTERS

# Are You Lonely When You're Alone?

Asking ourselves the right questions can bring us home

NANCY COLIER

While our use of technology has profoundly changed our relationships with other people, it has changed our relationship with ourselves even more, and this is the most important relationship of all.

We no longer see our self as a destination. Our self is a void to be filled, with entertainment, information, or anything else that feels good. To be alone is to be lonely, as if our own company is worth nothing. The instant our friend gets up to go to the bathroom, we're waiting in a line, or we're between activities, we grab our phone to check whatever we can check—anything but to be with ourselves. We relate to ourselves as the hole at the center of the donut.

As a result of our disappeared sense of worth, we survive on validation as our source of meaning. "Does anyone else think this matters? How did I do in other people's eyes?" We offer our experience up to social media to find out what it means to everyone else so we can know what it should mean to us. In so doing, we effectively give away our experience and its corresponding value. We deprive ourselves of the nourishment that could come from our own life.

Furthermore, we create a persona, a brand, the person who stands in for our real self who's gone missing. We then use life to support and defend that persona, capture our experience on our devices to prove that we are indeed the per-



Time alone, in silence, is a precious way to connect with yourself and discover what you truly want. TYLER NIX/UNSPASH

**The important thing is no longer what we think of ourselves, but rather what we think others think of us.**

son we're advertised to be, the person the rest of the world thinks we are. Life is not lived directly but rather used as evidence to support our identity. As a result, we have a photo library that's full, but our inner well is empty.

It's also no wonder that we struggle with self-esteem these days. Our new value system places ease and immediacy above all else. But a true sense of self-worth doesn't come from what's easy. It's built on hard work, effort, and time. We can get to the top of the mountain by helicopter and even take selfies once we've arrived, proving that we're a hiker and that we travel to moun-

tain tops. But none of that branding will build self respect like walking and sweating each step to the top.

In one study, young people were faced with an empty room with nothing in it but a small shocking machine. With a choice between doing nothing and giving themselves mild shocks, 70 percent of men and 25 percent of women chose to shock themselves rather than sit with their own thoughts and feelings. The goal in life seems to be to entertain ourselves and stay busy all the way to the grave so we can avoid bumping into ourselves along the way.

Moreover, we have forgotten our own inner authority, our own wisdom. We no longer trust that the answers to our questions might come from inside us—not Google. We've stopped asking ourselves what we think is best and what we want. We've given up on ourselves as our guide in life. We've discarded our greatest source in exchange for an algorithm.

The important thing is no longer what we think of ourselves, but rather what we think others think of us. Comparison is the gauge by which we experience ourselves. Are we measuring up to everyone else's Instagram feed? Where do we fit in the greater cultural photograph? Rather than ask "Who do I want to be?" we ask "Who do you (or they) think I should be?"

We need to remember that we ourselves are a destination. And, what matters to us matters, what we think, feel, and want is something to discover. We need to start consulting with ourselves again, not

just Google, rediscovering our own inner authority—the real source that knows what's best for us. We want to start spending time in just our own company, being curious about how we are in the midst of this wild ride called life.

We need to remember what it feels like to have an experience and keep it for ourselves, without asking anyone else for their commentary and approval. So too, we must get back in the habit of doing hard things, things that take time, but build true self-esteem. We need confidence that's reliable and doesn't come and go with likes or followers.

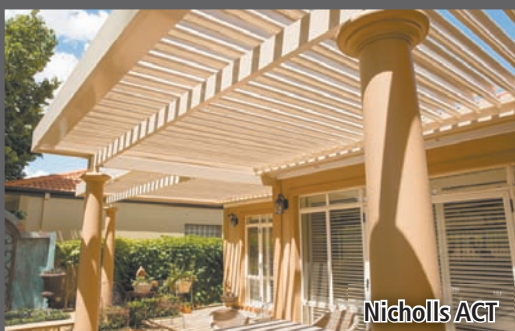
We need to get back in the habit of inviting our own wisdom to the table—asking ourselves the important questions. "What do I think? What do I want? What matters to me? What's the most important thing to me? Who do I want to be?" Ask yourself these questions—every day. Spend time in just your own company. While it can appear that we are focused entirely on ourselves these days, in fact, our relationship with technology has led us to abandon ourselves at a profound level, to make our own presence invisible. Starting today, now, I invite you to come home to yourself, to remember that you are a destination deserving of your own attention. Indeed, you are your own best company.

*Rev. Nancy Colier is a psycho-therapist, interfaith minister, and the author of the book "The Power of Off: The Mindful Way to Stay Sane in a Virtual World." For more information, visit NancyColier.com*



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## FOOD IS MEDICINE

# Foods that Calm Your Nerves (and Mind)

If life's got you overwhelmed, try an avocado or some asparagus

DEBORAH MITCHELL

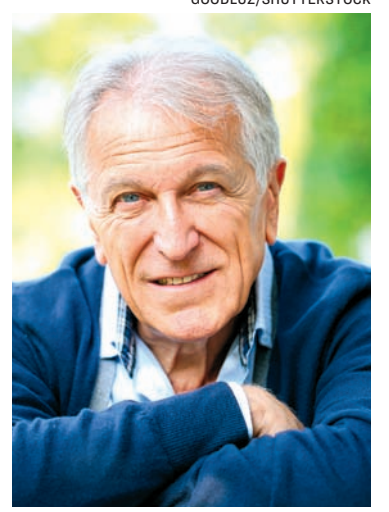
Many of us operate in high gear much of the day, putting out small (and large) fires, juggling schedules, dealing with traffic, and generally trying to keep our lives and that of our families in order. Even when our days and nights aren't streaming at a high speed, levels of the stress hormone cortisol can remain elevated because we often fail to effectively manage stress and return to a state of tranquility.

Several health dangers exist in the presence of high cortisol. One is that it triggers food cravings, which can send us dashing for ice cream or a box of cookies. That same cortisol can also prompt an enzyme in fat cells to transform cortisone into more cortisol. The fat cells in the abdomen have more cortisol receptors than do regular fat cells, which means high cortisol can translate into more belly fat, which in turn raises the risk of diabetes and heart disease.

Certain foods can help restore calm in your life. I'm not talking about comfort foods, which we turn to when we need emotional numbing and that provide only a temporary, even fleeting sense of peace. In fact, we often feel guilty or angry with ourselves after downing a pint of ice cream or an entire bag of chips.

What I'm talking about are foods that have an ability to calm you because of their nutritional content (e.g., folate, which is a super stress reducer) or the steady energy they provide. They are balancing foods that can assist in relieving stress and restoring internal equilibrium. Include these foods as much as possible in your diet and find some creative ways to enjoy them even more.

*Deborah Mitchell is a freelance health writer who is passionate about animals and the environment. She has authored, co-authored, and written more than 50 books and thousands of articles on a wide range of topics. This article was originally published on NaturallySavvy.com*



Functional medicine aims to reverse illness by helping return the patient's body to its optimal condition.

## A Win for Functional Medicine

New study affirms that many patients feel better from functional medicine than from conventional care

MOHAN GARIKIPARITHI

A recent study published in JAMA Network Open found that patients undergoing functional medicine treatment were more likely to report a higher quality of life than those undergoing traditional primary care.

The authors of the study define functional medicine as "model of care [that] provides an operating system that works to reverse illness, promote health, and optimize function by addressing underlying causes, symptoms, and functional imbalances in interconnected biological networks."

These practices may help tame inflammation and other contributing factors to chronic illness like heart disease, back pain, joint pain, and more.

This is a pretty big win for functional medicine because it suggests that these therapies make people feel better during their fight against illness in multiple ways. Using the PROMIS questionnaire—a measurement validated by the National Institute of Health—31 percent of patients undergoing integrative care saw physical health scores jump by 5 points in as little as six months, compared to only 22 percent of primary care patients.

PROMIS scores assess a patient's physical and mental health using variables like fatigue, physical function, pain, mobility, gastrointestinal issues, and emotional well-being. It was a relatively large study group, as well. 1,595 patients were treated at the Cleveland Clinic's Center for Functional Medicine and more than 5,600 were treated at primary care facilities.

Your health is affected by a number of factors. Genetics, stress, relationships, nutrition, sleep, and exercise can all influence risk and severity of chronic illness, and taking steps to address the tapestry of causes can help improve your quality of life. If you're on the fence about functional medicine, it could be worth a try and help treat an ailment that modern medicine might ignore.

*Mohan Garikiparithi holds a degree in medicine from Osmania University (University of Health Sciences). He practiced clinical medicine for over a decade. During a three-year communications program in Germany, he developed an interest in German medicine (homeopathy) and other alternative systems of medicine. This article was originally published on Bel Marra Health.*



### Asparagus

Asparagus. These noble stalks are rich in folate. A study of 2,608 adults found that people who ate the most foods high in folate had a lower risk of depression than those who consumed the least amount.



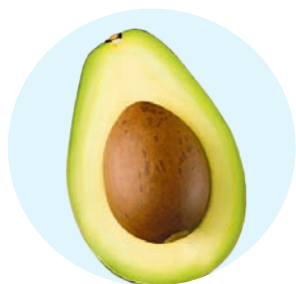
### Berries

Berries are a super source of vitamin C, which has a long history as a stress reducer. For example, in a double-blind, placebo-controlled study, 500 milligrams of vitamin C was found to reduce anxiety in high school students. Another study found that vitamin C was effective in reducing anxiety in people with type 2 diabetes.



### Leafy Greens

Kale, spinach, Swiss chard, mustard greens, and other leafy greens are excellent sources of folate and magnesium, another calming nutrient. If you make a salad with leafy greens, asparagus, and a few slices of avocado, you'll have a super stress-reducing entree on your hands.



### Avocados

Not only do avocados have more folate than any other fruit, they also contain healthy fats and potent antioxidants such as glutathione, lutein, beta-carotene, and vitamin E, which fight cell-damaging free radicals. Alas, they are also a bit high in calories, but even a few thin slices in a salad (leafy greens are also calming foods) or in a sandwich are all you need.



### Fermented Foods

A healthy gut can mean a healthier and calmer brain. That's because there's a direct connection between these two regions of the body known as the brain-gut axis. Therefore, fermented foods that contain reliable sources of beneficial bacteria, known as probiotics, can have a direct impact on brain chemistry via your vagus nerve. In fact, a 2016 review study from Canada noted "apparent psychological benefits from probiotic supplementation." Be sure to choose foods with verifiable amounts of probiotics or even better, make your own fermented veggies, kefir, sauerkraut, and yogurt.



### Oatmeal

You might say oatmeal reduces stress in two ways. One, it's inexpensive and easy to make, so you don't spend a lot of prep time. Two, it prompts your brain to make the calming neurotransmitter called serotonin. Enjoy a bowl of oatmeal with a handful of berries and you'll have double the soothing power.



### Chamomile Tea

This herbal tea is a tried, true, and tested way to help achieve a sense of calm. Two studies from the University of Pennsylvania help illustrate this benefit. In the original 2009 study, 57 adults with anxiety or anxiety and depression were given either chamomile extract or placebo for eight weeks, and there was a clear anti-anxiety benefit seen in those who took the chamomile. In a 2012 follow-up study, researchers determined that chamomile also provided an antidepressant benefit along with reducing anxiety. You can enjoy chamomile tea by pouring 8 ounces of boiling water over 2 to 3 heaping tablespoons of dried chamomile (or buy chamomile in tea bags) and steep for 10 minutes. Chamomile tea is also great served over ice.



### Dark Chocolate

You may have heaved a sigh of relief when you came to this food. It turns out that dark chocolate is more than a comfort food; it can boost serotonin levels as well as reduce blood pressure and provide a significant amount of antioxidants in the form of flavonols and polyphenols. Moderation is the key when it comes to chocolate, however, so be sure to indulge in small amounts infrequently.



### Seeds

Chia, sunflower, flax, hemp, and sesame seeds provide lots of magnesium, which is a precursor for serotonin. Research also shows that magnesium deficiency is associated with anxiety, depression, and panic attacks. For example, a study in Nutrition Neuroscience found that taking magnesium was associated with lower depression symptoms. Another study among 5,708 adults showed a relationship between magnesium intake and depression. Toss some seeds into your leafy greens salad, stir them into your oatmeal, blend them in your smoothie, and enjoy them as a snack!

# From Ethiopia to Australia, the Promises and Pitfalls of Tourism for Good

**A**DDIS ABABA, Ethiopia—The opening of Ethiopia's once-secretive imperial palace complex has been hailed as symbolizing a new era of openness for the East African nation, but it also has another aim—job creation.

The Menelik palace and its 40-acre Unity Park compound overlooking Addis Ababa opened to the public in October after being closed for more than a century when it housed emperors, but was also used as a torture site under the communist Derg regime.

It was established in 1887 by Emperor Menelik II and given back to the city by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who came to power 18 months ago.

The move “symbolizes our ability to come together,” while also boosting tourism and jobs, his office said.

The palace opening was cited at an annual gathering of social entrepreneurs in Addis Ababa as an example of a rising number of tourism businesses set up with a mission to help local communities—with warnings that the projects came with risks.

“[The palace] will add value to our tourism ... it will help Ethiopia,” said Samrawit Moges, founder of Travel Ethiopia, the first company in the country to use female guides. “But tourism is a very delicate sector that can change the country for better or for worse ... we need to give high im-

**In Ireland, for example, the social enterprise My Streets trains homeless people to run tours of Dublin and Drogheda.**



THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION/BELINDA GOLDSMITH

(Top) The newly opened Menelik Palace in Unity Park overlooking Addis Ababa, Oct. 25, 2019.

(Bottom) A baby mountain gorilla in the Sabyinyo Mountains of Rwanda.

portance to the environment.”

The growing social enterprise sector is tapping into the global travel and tourism industry, which contributed a record \$8.8 trillion and 319 million jobs to the world economy in 2018, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).

The WTTC has forecast another 100 million new jobs by 2029.

**Dangers of Growth**

Matt Pfahlert, co-founder of the Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship, said growing numbers of tourism projects from Australia to Africa are being led by social enterprises—businesses set up with a mission to help society.

There is no official record on the number of such ventures.

Pfahlert led a \$1.7 million community buy-back of an old jail in his home town of Beechworth, in the Australian state of Victoria, that was famed for its connection to the nation's legendary outlaw Ned Kelly.

It opened in 2017, creating 22 jobs in a rural area with few opportunities and helping raise funds to train young people on business development to stem a decline in rural areas.

“For us the jail is the engine for a national project,” Pfahlert told the Thomson Reuters Foundation at the 12th annual Social Enterprise World Forum.

“If we get it right we can make a

huge difference,” said Pfahlert, adding that cycling tours are another draw.

He said tourism social enterprises focused on helping communities, while traditional tourism businesses tended to be profit-oriented with a focus on volume growth.

In Ireland, for example, the social enterprise My Streets trains homeless people to run tours of Dublin and Drogheda.

While in India, Grassroutes aims to create “one million livelihood opportunities” and reduce rural migration by running various tourist activities in villages outside Mumbai.

But tourism social entrepreneurs said in the rush to do good, it's important to be wary of not growing too fast, as this could negatively impact communities and the environment.

Theodore Nzabonimpa, founder of Beyond The Gorilla Experiences in Rwanda, said it had been important to stem the number of tourists visiting the mountain gorillas in his country by doubling national park prices in 2017 before damage occurred.

“The risks can be huge even if the intention is good ... you have to take quick action to address any risks,” said Nzabonimpa, whose tour company promotes community ecotourism.

By Belinda Goldsmith

From Reuters



IVAN LIEMAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



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