

Is Democracy on the Way Down?

“The Western democratic system is hailed by the developed world as near perfect and the most superior political system to run a country,” mocked China’s official new agency.

“However, what’s happening in the United States today will make more people worldwide reflect on the viability and legitimacy of such a chaotic political system.”

There is a worldwide audience for what Beijing had to say about the shutdown of the U.S. government, for there is truth in it.

According to Freedom House, democracy has been in decline for a dozen years. Less and less do nations look to the world’s greatest democracy, the United States, as a model of the system to best preserve and protect what is most precious to them.

China may be a single-party Communist state that restricts freedom of speech, religion and the press, the defining marks of democracy. Yet Beijing has delivered what makes the Chinese people proud – a superpower nation to rival the mighty United States.

Chinese citizens appear willing to pay, in restricted freedoms, the price of national greatness no modern Chinese generation had ever known.

The same appears true of the Russian people.

After the humiliation of the Boris Yeltsin era, Russians rallied to Vladimir Putin, an autocrat 18 years in power, for having retrieved Crimea and restored Russia to a great power that can stand up to the Americans.

Consider those “illiberal” democracies of Central and Eastern Europe – the Czech Republic, Poland, Austria, Hungary.

To preserve their national character and identity, all have chosen to refuse refugees from Africa and the Middle East. And if this does not comport with the liberal democratic values of the EU, so be it.

President Emmanuel Macron said Sunday that if the French had voted at the time Britain did, for Brexit, France, too, might have voted to get out of the European Union.

Why? One reason, and, no, it's not the economy, stupid.

It is the tribe. As the English wished to remain English, and voted to regain control of their borders, so the French wish to remain who they were and are – whether ruled by a Louis XIV, Napoleon, General de Gaulle or the Fifth Republic.

In these countries, the common denominator is that the nation comes first, and that political system is best which best protects and preserves the unique character of the nation.

Nationalism trumps democratism.

Recall. Donald Trump was not elected because he promised to make America more democratic, but to “make America great again.”

As for the sacred First Amendment right to democratic protest, Trump got a roaring ovation for declaring that NFL players who “take a knee” during the national anthem should be kicked off the field and off the team.

Circling back to the government shutdown, what, at root, was that all about, if not national identity.

The Democrats who refused to vote to keep the government open did not object to anything in the Republican bill. They objected to what was not in the bill: amnesty for the illegal immigrants known as “dreamers.” It was all about who gets to become an American.

And what is the divisive issue of “open borders” immigration all about, if not the future ethnic composition of the United States?

Consider a few of the issues that have convulsed our country in recent months. White cops. The NFL players’ protests. Desecration and removal of statues of Columbus, Lee, Jackson. The Charlottesville battle of antifa versus the “alt-right.” The “s---hole countries” crack of the president. The weeklong TV tirade of rants against the “racist” Trump.

Are they not all really issues of race, culture and identity?

On campuses, leftist students and faculty protest the presence of right-wing speakers, whom they identify as fascists, racists and homophobes. To radicals, there is no right to preach hate, as they see it, for to permit that is to ensure that hate spreads and flourishes.

What the left is saying is this. Our idea of a moral society is one of maximum ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, and, in the burying of the old wicked America, and the creation of a new better America, we will not accord evil ideas equal rights.

In the old rendering, “Error has no rights!”

That fifth of mankind that is Islamic follows a similar logic.

As there is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet, why would we allow inside our societies and nations the propagation of false faiths like Christianity that must inevitably lead to the damnation of many of our children?

“The best test of truth,” said Oliver Wendell Holmes, “is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market.”

But in our world, more and more people believe, and rightly so, that truth exists independent of whether people accept or

reject it.

And there are matters, like the preservation of a unique people and nation, that are too important to be left to temporary majorities to decide.

Patrick J. Buchanan is the author of a new book, "Nixon's White House Wars: The Battles That Made and Broke a President and Divided America Forever." To find out more about Patrick Buchanan and read features by other Creators writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators website at www.creators.com.

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A US-Turkish Clash in Syria?

The war for dominance in the Middle East, following the crushing of ISIS, appears about to commence in Syria – with NATO allies America and Turkey on opposing sides.

Turkey is moving armor and troops south to Syria's border enclave of Afrin, occupied by Kurds, to drive them out, and then drive the Syrian Kurds out of Manbij further south as well.

Says President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, "We will destroy all terror nests, one by one, in Syria, starting from Afrin and Manbij."

For Erdogan, the Kurdish YPG, the major U.S. ally in Syria, is an arm of the Kurdish PKK in Turkey, which we and the Turks have designated as a terrorist organization.

While the Kurds were our most effective allies against ISIS in Syria, Turkey views them as a mortal peril and intends to deal with that threat.

If Erdogan is serious, a clash with the U.S. is coming, as our Kurdish allies occupy most of Syria's border with Turkey.

Moreover, the U.S. has announced plans to create a 30,000-man Border Security Force of Kurds and Arabs to keep ISIS out of Syria.

Erdogan has branded this BSF a "terror army," and President Bashar Assad of Syria has called BSF members "traitors."

This U.S. plan to create a BSF inside Syria, Damascus declared, "represents a blatant attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity and unity of Syria, and a flagrant violation of international law."

Does not the Syrian government have a point?

Now that ISIS has been driven out of Raqqa and Syria, by what authority do U.S. forces remain to arm troops to keep the Damascus government from reimposing its authority on its own territory?

Secretary of State Tillerson gave Syria the news Wednesday.

The U.S. troop commitment to Syria, he said, is now open-ended.

Our goals: Guarantee al-Qaida and ISIS do not return and set up sanctuary; cope with rising Iranian influence in Damascus; and pursue the removal of Bashar Assad's ruthless regime.

But who authorized this strategic commitment, of indefinite duration, in Syria, when near two decades in Afghanistan have failed to secure that nation against the return of al-Qaida and ISIS?

Again and again, the American people have said they do not want to be dragged into Syria's civil war. Donald Trump won the presidency on a promise of no more unnecessary wars.

Have the American people been had again?

Will they support a clash with NATO ally Turkey, to keep armed Kurds on Turkey's border, when the Turks regard them as terrorists?

Are we prepared for a shooting war with a Syrian army, backed by Russia, Iran, Hezbollah and Shiite militias from Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, to hold onto a fourth of Syria's territory in alliance with Kurds?

The U.S. coalition in Syria said this week the BSF will be built up "over the next several years" and "be stationed along the borders ... to include portions of the Euphrates river valley and international borders to the east and north."

Remarkable: A U.S.-created border army is going to occupy and control long stretches of Syria's borders with Turkey and Iraq, over Syria's objections. And the U.S. military will stand behind the BSF.

Are the 2,000 U.S. troops in Syria really up to that task, should the Turks decide to cleanse the Syrian border of Kurds, or should the Syrian regime decide to take back territory occupied by the Kurds?

Who sanctioned this commitment to a new army, which, if Syria and its Russian and Iranian allies, and the Turks, do not all back down, risks a major U.S. war with no allies but the Kurds?

As for Syria's Kurds casting their lot with the Americans, one wonders: Did they not observe what happened when their Iraqi cousins, after helping us drive ISIS out of Mosul, were themselves driven out of Kirkuk by the Iraqi army, as their

U.S. allies watched?

In the six-year Syrian civil war, which may be about to enter a new phase, America faces a familiar situation.

While our “allies” and adversaries have vital interests there, we do not. The Assads have been in power for the lifetime of most Americans. And we Americans have never shown a desire to fight there.

Assad has a vital interest: preservation of his family regime and the reunification of his country. The Turks have a vital interest in keeping armed Kurds out of their border regions adjacent to their own Kurdish minority, which seeks greater independence.

The Israelis and Saudi royals want the U.S. to keep Iran from securing a land bridge from Tehran to Damascus to Lebanon.

The U.S. War Party wants us to smash Iran and remain in the Middle East forever to assure the hegemony of its favorites.

Have the generals taking us into Syria told the president how and when, if ever, they plan to get us out?

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Trump: In Immigration Debate, Race Matters

President Trump “said things which were hate-filled, vile and racist. ... I cannot believe ... any president has ever spoken the words that I ... heard our president speak yesterday.”

So wailed Sen. Dick Durbin after departing the White House.

And what caused the minority leader to almost faint dead away?

Trump called Haiti a “s---hole country,” said Durbin, and then asked why we don’t have more immigrants from neat places “like Norway.”

With that, there erupted one of the great media firestorms of the Trump era. On Martin Luther King Day, it was still blazing.

Trump concedes he may have disparaged Haiti, which, at last check, was not listed among “Best Places to Live” in the Western Hemisphere. Yet Trump insists he did not demean the Haitian people.

Still, by contrasting Norway as a desirable source of immigrants, as opposed to Haiti, El Salvador and Africa, Trump tabled a question that is roiling the West, the answer to which will decide its fate.

Trump is saying with words, as he has with policies, that in taking in a million people a year, race, religion and national origin matter, if we are to preserve our national unity and national character.

Moreover, on deciding who comes, and who does not, Americans have the sovereign right to discriminate in favor of some continents, countries and cultures, and against others.

Moreover, in stating his own preferences, Trump is in a tradition as old as the Republic.

The original Colonies did not want Catholics here. Ben Franklin feared Pennsylvania was being overrun by stupid Germans:

“Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion.”

Just as anti-immigrant parties have arisen in Europe to stem the flood of refugees from the Mideast and Africa, an American Party (“Know-Nothings”) was formed to halt the surge of Irish immigrants during the Potato Famine of 1845-1849.

Lincoln wanted slaves repatriated to Africa. In the 19th and 20th centuries, we had Chinese and Japanese exclusion acts.

“Californians have properly objected” to Japanese migrants, said V.P. nominee FDR “on the sound basic ground that ... the mingling of Asiatic blood with European or American blood produces, in nine cases out of ten, the most unfortunate results.”

After the Great Migration of Italians, Poles, Jews and East Europeans, from 1890 to 1920, the Immigration Act of 1925 established quotas based on the national origins of the American people in 1890, thus favoring Brits, Scots-Irish, Irish and Germans.

Civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph, a major figure in Dr. King’s March on Washington, said of the Harding-Coolidge restrictive quotas:

“We favor reducing immigration to nothing ... shutting out the Germans ... Italians ... Hindus ... Chinese and even the Negroes

from the West Indies. The country is suffering from immigration indigestion.”

The Senate floor leader of the 1965 Immigration Act addressed what were then regarded as valid concerns about the future racial and ethnic composition of the country. Sen. Edward Kennedy pledged:

“Our cities will not be flooded with a million immigrants annually ... the ethnic mix of this country will not be upset. ... S. 500 will not inundate America with immigrants from ... the most populated and economically deprived nations of Africa and Asia.”

What Kennedy assured America would not happen, did happen.

Today, issues of immigration and race are tearing countries and continents apart. There are anti-immigrant parties in every nation in Europe. Turkey is being bribed to keep Syrian refugees out of Europe.

Boatloads of Africans from Libya are being turned back in the Med. After building a wall to keep them out, Bibi Netanyahu has told “illegal aliens” from Africa: Get out of Israel by March, or go to jail.

Angela Merkel’s Party may have suffered irreparable damage when she let a million Mideast refugees in. The larger concentrations of Arabs, Africans and Turks in Britain, France and Germany are not assimilating. Central European nations are sealing borders.

Europe fears a future in which the continent, with its shrinking numbers of native-born, is swamped by peoples from the Third World.

Yet the future alarmed Europeans are resisting is a future U.S. elites have embraced. Among the reasons, endless mass migration here means the demographic death of the GOP.

In U.S. presidential elections, persons of color whose roots are in Asia, Africa and Latin America vote 4-1 Democratic, and against the candidates favored by American's vanishing white majority. Not for the first time, liberal ideology comports precisely with liberal interests.

Mass immigration means an America in 2050 with no core majority, made up of minorities of every race, color, religion and culture on earth, a continent-wide replica of the wonderful diversity we see today in the U.N. General Assembly.

Such a country has never existed before. Are we on the Yellow Brick Road to the new Utopia – or on the path to national suicide?

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Little Rocket Man Wins the Round

After a year in which he tested a hydrogen bomb and an ICBM, threatened to destroy the United States, and called President Trump "a dotard," Kim Jong Un, at the gracious invitation of the president of South Korea, will be sending a skating team to the "Peace Olympics."

An impressive year for Little Rocket Man.

Thus the most serious nuclear crisis since Nikita Khrushchev put missiles in Cuba appears to have abated. Welcome news, even if the confrontation with Pyongyang has probably only been postponed.

Still, we have been given an opportunity to reassess the 65-year-old Cold War treaty that obligates us to go to war if the North attacks Seoul, and drove us to the brink of war today.

2017 demonstrated that we need a reassessment. For the potential cost of carrying out our commitment is rising exponentially.

Two decades ago, a war on the Korean Peninsula, given the massed Northern artillery on the DMZ, meant thousands of U.S. dead.

Today, with Pyongyang's growing arsenal of nuclear weapons, American cities could face Hiroshima-sized strikes, if war breaks out.

What vital U.S. interest is there on the Korean Peninsula that justifies accepting in perpetuity such a risk to our homeland?

We are told that Kim's diplomacy is designed to split South Korea off from the Americans. And this is undeniably true.

For South Korean President Moon Jae-in is first and foremost responsible for his own people, half of whom are in artillery range of the DMZ. In any new Korean war, his country would suffer most.

And while he surely welcomes the U.S. commitment to fight the North on his country's behalf as an insurance policy, Moon does not want a second Korean war, and he does not want President Trump making the decision as to whether there shall be one.

Understandably so. He is looking out for South Korea first.

Yet Moon rightly credits Trump with bringing the North Koreans to the table: "I give President Trump huge credit for bringing about the inter-Korean talks, and I'd like to thank him for that."

But again, what are the U.S. interests there that we should be willing to put at risk of nuclear attack tens of thousands of U.S. troops in Korea and our bases in Asia, and even our great cities, in a war that would otherwise be confined to the Korean Peninsula?

China shares a border with the North, but is not treaty-bound to fight on the North's behalf. Russia, too, has a border with North Korea, and, with China, was indispensable to saving the North in the 1950-53 war. But Russia is not committed by any treaty to fight for the North.

Why, then, are Americans obligated to be among the first to die in a second Korean War? Why is the defense of the South, with 40 times the economy and twice the population of the North, our eternal duty?

Kim's drive for a nuclear deterrent is propelled by both fear and calculation. The fear is that the Americans who detest him will do to him and his regime and country what they did to Saddam Hussein.

The calculation is that what Americans fear most, and the one thing that deters them, is nuclear weapons. Once Soviet Russia and Communist China acquired nukes, the Americans never attacked them.

If he can put nuclear weapons on U.S. troops in Korea, U.S. bases in Japan, and U.S. cities, Kim reasons, the Americans will not launch a war on him. Have not recent events proven him right?

Iran has no nuclear weapons and some Americans clamor daily for “regime change” in Tehran. But because Kim has nukes, the Americans appear more anxious to talk. His policy is succeeding.

What he is saying with his nuclear arsenal is: As you Americans have put my regime and country at risk of annihilation, I am going to put your cities at risk. If we go down in your nuclear “fire and fury,” so, too, will millions of Americans.

The whole world is watching how this plays out.

For the American Imperium, our system of alliances, is held together by a credible commitment: If you attack any of our scores of allies, you are at war with the United States.

From the Baltic to the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf, from the South China Sea to Korea and Japan today, the costs and the risks of maintaining the imperium are growing.

With all these promissory notes out there – guarantees to go to war for other nations – one is inevitably going to be called.

And this generation of Americans, unaware of what their grandfathers obligated them to do, will demand to know, as they did in Iraq and Afghanistan: What are we over doing there, on the other side of the world?

America First is more than a slogan.

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What Is America's Mission Now?

Informing Iran, "The U.S. is watching what you do," Amb. Nikki Haley called an emergency meeting Friday of the Security Council regarding the riots in Iran. The session left her and us looking ridiculous.

France's ambassador tutored Haley that how nations deal with internal disorders is not the council's concern. Russia's ambassador suggested the United Nations should have looked into our Occupy Wall Street clashes and how the Missouri cops handled Ferguson.

Fifty years ago, 100 U.S. cities erupted in flames after Martin Luther King's assassination. Federal troops were called in. In 1992, Los Angeles suffered the worst U.S. riot of the 20th century, after the LA cops who pummeled Rodney King were acquitted in Simi Valley.

Was our handling of these riots any business of the U.N.?

Conservatives have demanded that the U.N. keep its nose out of our sovereign affairs since its birth in 1946. Do we now accept that the U.N. has authority to oversee internal disturbances inside member countries?

Friday's session fizzled out after Iran's ambassador suggested the Security Council might take up the Israeli-Palestinian question or the humanitarian crisis produced by the U.S.-backed Saudi war on Yemen.

The episode exposes a malady of American foreign policy. It lacks consistency, coherence and moral clarity, treats friends and adversaries by separate standards, and is reflexively interventionist.

Thus has America lost much of the near-universal admiration and respect she enjoyed at the close of the Cold War.

This hubristic generation has kicked it all away.

Consider. Is Iran's handling of these disorders more damnable than the thousands of extrajudicial killings of drug dealers attributed to our Filipino ally Rodrigo Duterte, whom the president says is doing an "unbelievable job"?

And how does it compare with Gen. Abdel el-Sissi's 2012 violent overthrow of the elected president of Egypt, Mohammed Morsi, and Sissi's imprisonment of scores of thousands of followers of the Muslim Brotherhood?

Is Iran really the worst situation in the Middle East today?

Hassan Rouhani is president after winning an election with 57 percent of the vote. Who elected Mohammed bin Salman crown prince and future king of Saudi Arabia?

Vladimir Putin, too, is denounced for crimes against democracy for which our allies get a pass.

In Russia, Christianity is flourishing and candidates are declaring against Putin. Some in the Russian press regularly criticize him.

How is Christianity faring in Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan?

It is alleged that Putin's regime is responsible for the death of several journalists. But there are more journalists behind bars in the jails of our NATO ally Turkey than in any other country in the world.

When does the Magnitsky Act get applied to Turkey?

What the world too often sees is an America that berates its adversaries for sins against our "values," while giving allies a general absolution if they follow our lead.

A day has not gone by in 18 months that we have not read or heard of elite outrage over the Kremlin attack on "our democracy," with the hacking of the DNC and John Podesta emails.

How many even recall the revelation in 2015 that China hacked the personnel files of millions of U.S. government employees, past, present and prospective?

While China persecutes Christians, Russia supports a restoration of Christianity after 70 years of Leninist rule.

In Putin's Russia, the Communist Party is running a candidate against him. In China, the Communist Party exercises an absolute monopoly of political power and nobody runs against Xi Jinping.

China's annexation of the Paracel and Spratly Islands and the entire South China Sea is meekly protested, while Russia is endlessly castigated for its bloodless retrieval of a Crimean peninsula that was recognized as Russian territory under the Romanovs.

China, with several times Russia's economy and 10 times her population, is far the greater challenger to America's standing as lone superpower. Why, then, this tilt toward China?

Among the reasons U.S. foreign policy lacks consistency and moral clarity is that we Americans no longer agree on what our vital interests are, who our real adversaries are, what our values are, or what a good and Godly country looks like.

Was JFK's America a better country than Obama's America?

World War II and the Cold War gave us moral clarity. If you stood against Hitler, even if you were a moral monster like Joseph Stalin, we partnered with you.

From Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech in 1946 to the end of the Cold War, if you stood with us against the "Evil Empire" of Reagan's depiction, even if you were a dictator like Gen. Pinochet or the Shah, you were welcome in the camp of the saints.

But now that a worldwide conversion to democracy is no longer America's mission in the world, what exactly is our mission?

"Great Britain has lost an empire," said Dean Acheson in 1962, "but not yet found a role."

Something of the same may fairly be said of us today.

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