

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

*"The object of the Monitor is to injure no man,
but to bless all mankind."*

— MARY BAKER EDDY

WEEKS OF SEPTEMBER 14 & 21, 2026 | VOLUME 118 – ISSUES 43 & 44

C O N T E N T S

FROM THE EDITORS

Sept. 11 has become history. It still shapes the news.1

NEWS: DISPATCHES

Courts consider mail-in voting rules as lawsuits continue. . . .1

Ukrainians target Russia-occupied Crimea1

If you give a bot a body: China’s push for AI robotics.2

US-Venezuela oil deal promises a windfall.
Venezuelans are skeptical.2

Newest NASA telescope to search for universe secrets.3

NUMBERS IN THE NEWS3

OUR WORLD3

NEWS: GLOBAL CURRENTS

The Kremlin sows a roots-bound crop in Russia’s political
garden4

The ‘Clash’ that never was: How Sept. 11 attacks still shape
global relations5

Why heat, wildfires, and drought are slowing Europe’s
move to green energy.7

The Barrio nurtured them. Now, they focus on a new era.. . .8

REPORTERS ON THE JOB.9

THE EXPLAINER

Military’s authority to arrest at southern border grows.
What’s behind the change?10

ENDEAVORS

The guide who put a park, and its crocodiles, on India’s
ecotourism map11

EDITORIALS

Americans search for nonpartisan politics12

Repair, not revenge, in post-autocratic Hungary12

Reform of social media, one click at a time13

THE HOME FORUM

Everyone has a 9/11 story. This is mine, from behind
the lens.13

A CHRISTIAN SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE14

BOOKS

Harry Belafonte sang out for equality and justice14

Looking to keep Americans ‘an informed citizenry’.15

‘The Small Stuff’ urges us to value ordinary delights16

CULTURE

Africa, in harmony17

IN PICTURES

Contours of burnt umber, pumpkin, and rust18

SUDOKU18

CROSSWORD19

Sept. 11 has become history. It still shapes the news.

Twenty-five years. Anniversaries are ready pegs for journalists, sometimes reached for too automatically. We asked ourselves, What's different about remembering 9/11 this year other than the neat framing of a quarter century?

Our newsroom conversations revealed an instructive generational divide. For our younger colleagues, born in the years just before or after the worst-ever attack on American soil, Sept. 11, 2001, is a history lesson. The wars and social ferment it spawned are to them what the Vietnam War and Watergate were to the children born in the late 1960s or early 1970s: events their parents carried. They have their own list of formative disruptions: the iPhone, Donald Trump, the pandemic, and climate change.



By Kurt Shillinger
Managing editor

The 25th anniversary of 9/11 inspired Melanie Stetson Freeman to reflect on her experience photographing New York City in the days after the twin towers fell. She wasn't allowed near the site. "I worked around the edges," she writes in this issue, capturing exhausted firefighters, worshippers at churches and mosques, "people writing words of love and encouragement on the pavement in chalk." In a city without an off switch, what struck her most was "a calm strength and resolve. People seemed kinder, more thoughtful."

The world today is a theater of geopolitical rivals asserting civilizational identity. Xi Jinping evokes China's "continuous civilization" to justify the "necessity of reunification" with "China's sacred territory" of Taiwan. Vladimir Putin, in denying the existence of Ukrainian national identity, describes the "gathering of Russian lands" as "continuing the tradition of ancient Russian statehood." (Fred Weir explores this in his story in this issue.) India's Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi characterizes his country as the "oldest living civilization in the world."

Even Mr. Trump has adopted such language. "We are going to forge the freest, most advanced, most dynamic, and most dominant civilization ever to exist on the face of this Earth," he told Congress last year.

There was a moment, though, 25 years ago, when competition and conflict fueled by religion and culture – a "clash of civilizations," as late Harvard professor Samuel Huntington put it in the early years after the Cold War – met a firm and symbolic rebuke. Six days after the attack, as Howard LaFranchi recounts, President George W. Bush drew a sharp distinction between violent jihadism and the faith it claimed to serve.

"The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam," Mr. Bush said at the Islamic Center of Washington. Reciting a verse from the Quran, he added, "In the long run, evil in the extreme will be the end of those who do evil."

Now, as then, the world is churning over the identities of peoples and nations based on either ethnicity and religion or the values and rights inherent in all mankind. ■

Note to readers: This is one of a handful of double-dated issues we produce each year. Your next issue will be dated September 28, 2026.

NEWS: DISPATCHES

Courts consider mail-in voting rules as lawsuits continue

With the 2026 midterm elections less than two months away, courts are still deciding exactly how some Americans will be able to vote.

Since April, there have been a series of high-stakes legal disputes in response to an executive order issued by President Donald Trump that aims to create federal lists of eligible voters and restrict voting by mail.

At the end of August, the Supreme Court lifted a lower court order blocking the Trump administration from moving forward with its plans. A group of Democratic-led states filed a new lawsuit, challenging a rule the administration published outlining how the U.S. Postal Service should execute the president's order. Then, a new lower-court action blocked that rule.

The ultimate legal fate of Mr. Trump's order remains unclear, and might affect the 2028 presidential election more than this year's midterms, with the swirl of lawsuits likely to remain unresolved in the coming weeks unless courts take unusually swift action. But the effort to exert White House oversight on federal elections represents an escalation of Mr. Trump's long-running and unproven allegations of widespread voter fraud in U.S. elections. Opponents of the order claim that it amounts to unconstitutional interference in the election process by the federal government.

Nearly one-third of voters submitted their ballots by mail in 2024 and several states conduct elections entirely by mail.

– Henry Gass and Caitlin Babcock / Staff writers

Ukrainians target Russia-occupied Crimea

Across Russian-occupied Crimea, Ukraine's summer drone campaign took a toll on residents, even as it deprived Russian forces of safe bases and logistics hubs.

Ukrainian drones first targeted some 300 Russian air-defense assets in late June, then relentlessly struck military targets and electricity and water infrastructure across Crimea.

The goal was to isolate the peninsula.

As pro-Russia residents report growing fear and alarm, pro-Ukraine residents enjoy – discreetly, they say – the hopeful expectation that Russian rule might one day end.

A favorite summer beach getaway for Russians that was illegally annexed by Moscow in 2014, the Crimean Peninsula juts into the Black Sea along southern Ukraine. This season, tourism numbers have plummeted to near zero.

"Almost every night, we hear the sounds of flying drones. ... People panicked at first, but have since gotten used to it," says a Crimean businesswoman, who could not be further identified be-

cause of tight surveillance by Russian authorities.

Progress in the ongoing Crimea campaign is rare good news for Ukrainians, alongside Ukraine's successful deep-strike drone and cruise missile attacks inside Russia, which have raised fuel prices and brought the war tangibly home to Russians for the first time.

The architect of Ukraine's mid- and long-range drone campaign, Maj. Robert "Magyar" Brovdi, commander of Ukraine's Unmanned Systems Forces, has apologized to Ukrainian residents of Crimea for disrupting their lives.

But he also notes how important Crimea is to Russia, after more than a decade of occupation.

Targeting Crimea could be instrumental in ending the war, Major Brovdi told The Associated Press in early August. Ukraine could strike seven times more targets in Crimea, he added, if support pledged by Western allies came faster.

Crimea was once the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea fleet, and a multitude of forward air and logistics hubs used to fight Ukraine.

The swift turn to Ukrainian advantage, and the scale and precision of drone bombardment, have shocked Russia, analysts say.

"Even six months ago, no one could even hope for that, so they are surprised," says Serhii Danylov, a Crimea expert and deputy director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies in Kyiv.

— Scott Peterson / Staff writer

If you give a bot a body: China's push for AI robotics

China is betting big on humanoid robots, which the nation's technology leaders see as key agents in the race to artificial general intelligence (AGI) — an AI system with human-level ability to reason and act.

"This is the future," says Zhang Jianxin, a technical director for the top-ranked Chinese robotics firm AgiBot, pointing toward a 4-foot-tall mannequin, which is billed as friendly, agile, and intelligent.

AgiBot's charismatic X2 model helped the company win more than a dozen gold medals at the World Humanoid Robot Games in Beijing at the end of August.

China's strategy centers on a concept called "embodied AI," in which hardware such as robots, drones, and vehicles are integrated with artificial intelligence. Just as a human's body facilitates learning, the idea is that these dynamic agents, by interacting with the physical environment, can achieve a more holistic kind of intelligence. In contrast, the United States and Europe are mainly relying upon large language models that draw on vast amounts of text data to try to produce AGI.

China has plenty of humanoid robots to work with. Its estimated 140 manufacturers dominate more than 90% of global sales. Shipments are expected to more than triple to 50,000 units this year, compared with roughly 13,000 last year, according to U.S. financial firm Morgan Stanley.

Chinese buyers are snapping up the vast majority of those humanlike robots.

"It's a huge industry in China," says William Hannas, lead analyst at the Center for Security and Emerging Technology at Georgetown University and co-author of a recent report on China's embodied AI policy. "They are eons ahead of us."

Still, even in China, humanoid robots have far to go, says Mr. Zhang, whose company shipped more humanoid robots — 9,700 — than any other manufacturer in the first half of this year, according to Hong Kong-based Counterpoint Research.

"We need AI technology improvements," says Mr. Zhang. "The hardware is good — the software isn't there yet."

— Ann Scott Tyson / Staff writer

US-Venezuela oil deal promises a windfall. Venezuelans are skeptical.

The oil deal between the United States and Venezuela, which secures American access to more than 65 billion barrels of Venezuelan oil reserves, promises something both countries want.

Washington could gain access to vast petroleum resources, while Venezuela could receive much-needed capital and technology to rebuild its oil industry — and its teetering economy.

President Trump called it "the biggest oil deal in the history of the world." Venezuelan experts stress that the reserves remain state property; foreign companies could receive rights to develop fields, extract oil, and commercialize their share. But as the details of the arrangement remain undisclosed, it has stirred shared concern among Venezuelans who normally stand on opposite sides of the country's deep political divide.

The agreement remains somewhat opaque. No full contract has been published. The pact covers 17 fields containing the tens of billions of barrels, but it is unclear which companies would operate them, how revenue would be divided, or how much private capital has been committed.

Acting President Delcy Rodríguez said on Aug. 30 that the agreement would last 25 years, target more than 1.5 million barrels per day, and could generate about \$209 billion for Venezuela.

U.S. officials have separately said a new company would receive rights to the fields for 100 years. It is unclear how that relates to the 25-year agreement described by Ms. Rodríguez.

Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves. But despite this proximity to wealth, over the past 15 years, the country has endured economic collapse and has seen poverty grow and public services fail. Communities are also still rebuilding after two devastating earthquakes in June.

"Will this agreement benefit workers?" asks Oswaldo Rivero, a former *chavista* activist. If it helps the people of Venezuela, "then I welcome it," Mr. Rivero says, though he worries about Ms. Rodríguez's close relationship with Washington. It clashes with the anti-imperialist tradition of Chavismo, as late President Hugo Chávez's political movement came to be known.

Venezuela nationalized its oil industry in the 1970s. Under Mr. Chávez, high oil prices funded expansive social programs, but production later collapsed amid mismanagement, loss of skilled workers, underinvestment, U.S. sanctions, and the deterioration of state-run oil firm *Petróleos de Venezuela*, or PDVSA.

Today, Venezuela produces roughly 1.25 million barrels a day, a fraction of its historic capacity.

The announced agreement emphasizes spectacular figures with-

out the detail normally attached to a major petroleum project, says Rafael Gallegos, who spent 23 years at PDVSA. He was among thousands dismissed after a 2002-03 oil industry strike.

– **Tibisay Zea** / Contributor

Newest NASA telescope to search for universe secrets

NASA's \$4 billion Roman Space Telescope launched Aug. 30 from Florida's Kennedy Space Center, blazing toward an observation point 1 million miles away.

Named after the late Nancy Grace Roman, NASA's first chief astronomer, Roman will take three months to reach its destination.

NASA says the telescope is designed to settle questions about dark energy, exoplanets, and infrared astrophysics. It will measure light from a billion galaxies over the course of its 5-year mission lifetime; it will also survey the inner Milky Way.

– **Staff**

NUMBERS IN THE NEWS

1,000

The number of federal election monitors who will be deployed to polling locations across the United States by the Justice Department during midterm elections this November. Monitors will observe polling spaces, not intervene, according to the DOJ.

\$275

BILLION

The estimated cost of 15 Navy battleships that President Donald Trump wants built. This number is roughly 50% more than the Navy's original projections, according to a recent report from the Congressional Budget Office. The "Trump-class" warships would be designed to be nuclear-powered.

16

The minimum age to use social media under a new bill before New Zealand's Parliament. Under the proposal, platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat must take steps to ensure users are over age 16 or face stiff fines.

\$863.86

The amount of money U.S. families with children in elementary through high school are expected to spend on back-to-school shopping, on average, in 2026, according to a National Retail Federation survey. The total breaks down to an average of \$293.11 on electronics, \$250.29 on clothing and accessories, \$174.01 on shoes, and \$146.45 on school supplies.

15 to 20

MINUTES

The amount of time that 55% of American K-12 teachers said recess at their school lasts, according to a 2025 Education Week survey. Research suggests that

recess improves academic outcomes, yet recess time is declining across grade levels. Eighty percent of high school teachers said their students have no recess.

– **Emily Staunton and Victoria Hoffmann** / Staff writers

Sources: Bloomberg, The New York Times, Congressional Budget Office, BBC, National Retail Federation, Education Week

OUR WORLD

'A "don't-miss-the-Gold-Rush" mentality has taken hold.'

That's how the Tokyo Foundation's Masashi Kawai, speaking to The New York Times, described the reaction to Japan's plan to name a backup capital, a designation that promises incentives such as hefty tax breaks. Thirteen prefectures and municipalities have already thrown their hats into the ring, including Osaka – a business-rich port city and tourism hub. Smaller regions are also making their case; leaders of mountainous Gunma prefecture, located a short train ride from Tokyo, say they are best suited to keep the government running in the event of a tsunami.

– **Lindsey McGinnis**

Singapore offers parents a baby boost

Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong says the city-state wants to "make it easier for Singaporeans who want children to start and raise a family." That's why the government is offering parents more than \$55,000 in direct support per child, as a way to boost the falling birth rate. Singapore, with a population of just over 6 million, had a record-low fertility rate last year. Mr. Wong said parental leave will also be expanded and that the government plans to help subsidize first-time homebuyers as well.

– **Matthew Bell**

Britain speeds up plan on 'subscription traps'

Britain's new prime minister, Andy Burnham, has announced an accelerated plan to make it easier for people to cancel unwanted subscriptions for goods or services. The new rules will come into force in January 2027, three months earlier than planned by his predecessor, Keir Starmer. Under the plan, companies will have to make clear when contracts will auto-renew at a higher price. In a separate move, the government says it's taking action to ban retailers from making misleading claims to customers about discounts. "I know people are sick and tired of rip-off discounts and subscription traps," said Mr. Burnham.

– **Tim Backshall**

A legal setback for Toronto's bicycle advocates

Ontario's government recently won a legal appeal that allows it to tear up Toronto's bike lanes in the name of easing traffic

congestion. Cycling advocates say that removing the lanes will harm not only bicyclists, but also pedestrians and drivers who have to navigate the roads alongside them. Toronto's mayor said she's working to find a way to keep "every road user safe" while Ontario's transportation minister celebrated the legal win as a "victory for common sense." The cost of removing the 12 miles of bike lanes, at about \$35 million, could be a hurdle.

— Whitney Eulich

NEWS: GLOBAL CURRENTS

MOSCOW

The Kremlin sows a roots-bound crop in Russia's political garden

Upcoming elections appear set to be more stage-managed than usual. But they still provide insight into public and Kremlin attitudes.

By Fred Weir / Special correspondent

Russians have voted nine times for their Duma, or lower house of parliament, since it was formed in 1993, as the Russian Federation emerged from the dissolution of the Soviet Union. But these days, it's hard to find much public enthusiasm for the exercise.

Democracy in Russia has always been "managed." Russian elections have never looked like congressional or parliamentary races in the West, with their robust debates and sometimes fiery public protests.

Instead, experts say, Russians accepted that their vote was a tit for tat. For voting in line with the Kremlin, citizens were promised stability that was unthinkable in the chaotic 1990s; or a redistributed slice of national oil profits; or a sense that, together, they were helping rebuild Russia's status as a great power, especially after it annexed its former territory of Crimea in 2014.

But now, after five years of war in Ukraine and growing economic strains, the vote that starts Sept. 18 finds a nation weary. And with President Vladimir Putin under pressure to maintain his place at the pinnacle of Russia's power structure — one he has held since the turn of the century — the public will have little room to express their opinions at the polls.

"These will likely turn out to be the most inconspicuous elections in the history of post-Soviet Russia," says Andrei Kolesnikov, an independent political analyst and Kremlin critic in Moscow.

Maintaining a "systemic opposition"

While many in the West view Mr. Putin's Russia as simply a dictatorship, the reality is a lot more complicated.

After a period of social turmoil and economic collapse in the 1990s, which featured destabilizing struggle between irreconcilable political forces, Mr. Putin set out to tame the country. He banished wealthy oligarchs from politics, ushered in an era of social stability and relative consumer prosperity, and fostered a political system that critics quickly dubbed "managed democracy."

The new system ensured that a certain amount of competition took place between distinctly different parties, and real political debates were sometimes aired. But the Kremlin set the limits and used various methods to ensure that no big electoral surprises ever occurred. That system has evolved over time, mostly in the direction of making it more reliable and predictable from the Kremlin's point of view.

The spectrum of parties is partly genuine, reflecting real political forces that speak to different social constituencies. But the garden has been heavily landscaped over the years to include only parties that play by an accepted set of rules; these are known as the "systemic opposition."

Those parties whose differences with the Kremlin seem fundamental, or who are seen as tied to foreign interests, are excluded. That "nonsystemic opposition," personified by the late populist leader Alexei Navalny, is now mostly in exile and deeply divided, seemingly unable to agree among themselves on what to do — if anything — about Russian elections.

Alexei Venediktov, the founder and longtime editor of the independent Echo Moskvi radio station, says the Kremlin's key goal was to ensure effective management of the country at every level. "And that doesn't involve endless discussions and disputes."

"The task in the upcoming elections is to reproduce the same composition the parliament has now. What is wanted is a simulacrum of a parliament, basically a printer to produce the needed laws with a minimum of discussion," he says.

Echo Moskvi was forced off the air in early 2022 for allegedly spreading "deliberately false information" about the war in Ukraine. When Russians go to the polls starting Sept. 18 to elect a new State Duma, there will be no anti-war candidates on the ballot, the only party advocating for such a position having been barred from competing.

The war's effect

Mr. Putin kicked off the election campaign of United Russia, the ruling party that supports him — but which he does not formally lead — with a speech on Aug. 22, Russia's National Flag Day. In it, he stressed national unity, a determination to win the war without concessions to Ukraine or the West, and economic self-sufficiency for Russia. The fact that Russia is holding these elections amid war, he said, demonstrates the "stability of the state [and] the maturity of our political system."

But over the summer, the war has escalated and moved much closer to home for many Russians.

A new generation of Ukrainian drones has been striking deep into Russia's heartland, destroying oil refineries and laying waste to consumer distribution centers. Most attacks receive detailed coverage in Russian social media.

The psychological impact on average people of seeing huge explosions erupt in their own neighborhoods, and the subsequent shortages of gasoline and other consumer disruptions, is hard to gauge. Polls show that about two-thirds of Russian respondents favor a negotiated end to the conflict, though large majorities still say they support their troops in Ukraine, and only a quarter support making concessions to Ukraine in order to end the conflict.

It's hard to tell how the ongoing hardships might affect voting patterns, but a surprising surge in popularity of Yabloko, the only party that was on the ballot that explicitly opposes the war, from around 1% to as much as 5%, suggests that anti-war sentiment might be on the rise. In mid-August, Russia's Supreme Court disqualified

Yabloko from running candidates in the elections, taking that option away from voters.

A shrinking playing field

An impressive 11 parties will be on the ballot, most of whom describe themselves as opponents of the ruling pro-Kremlin United Russia party. They range from the Communists, the social-democratic Fair Russia, and the quasi-liberal New Peoples' Party on the left, to the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party on the right. At least five of them are likely to surpass the 5% barrier required for gaining representation in the Duma.

The range of available choices narrowed when the Supreme Court barred Yabloko – which has run in every Duma election since 1993 – from fielding any candidates. The court cited alleged violation of election laws, such as using copyrighted material in their campaign literature and some candidates receiving funds from abroad. Regardless, the result was to exclude the only party in the race that explicitly opposes the war in Ukraine.

Analysts pointedly note Yabloko's recent surge in opinion polls. "People ask why the authorities allowed Yabloko to be registered, then removed it," says Mikhail Vinogradov, head of a Moscow-based independent political think tank. "Even though Yabloko had hardly started campaigning, the sudden interest in it from a part of society that has grown tired of the war caused alarm in some government circles, and the authorities decided they didn't want this precedent of a legally permitted anti-war stance to stand.

"It won't make much difference," Mr. Vinogradov adds, "since critics of the war don't have high expectations from the Duma elections anyway."

The court case against Yabloko was instigated by a rival, the small nationalist Rodina party, which accused it of being "unpatriotic." At least seven Russian political parties – including the Communists, Fair Russia, and New People – subsequently issued statements vilifying Yabloko.

Eliminating competitors by denouncing them to the law seems a growing trend in Russian politics. In the Volga region of Samara, a local court stripped a popular incumbent Communist deputy, Mikhail Matveyev, of his right to run after a candidate from the Party of Pensioners accused him of using copyrighted Microsoft fonts in his campaign material. The Communist Party, the largest in the systemic opposition, is outraged but appears helpless to do much about it.

"In many regions, the election campaign is far from clean, honest, and transparent," says Dmitry Novikov, a Communist Duma deputy and party official. "The electoral laws are overregulated, and we are accused not actually of violating them, but of things like copyright infringement.

"How on earth can a candidate, who is not an investigator, know which publicly available fonts are copyrighted and which aren't?" Mr. Novikov asks. "All this leaves us very critical of the way the election is being conducted."

Public disinterest

Sociologists say public enthusiasm for elections has waned over the years, with up to 80% of pensioners voting mostly out of a sense of duty, but only a third of people under age 30 doing so.

"I won't take part in the elections," says Anna, a student in St. Petersburg. She declined to give her full name for fear of potential repercussions from being quoted in a Western publication, a common public concern. "There is no real choice for me, it is all

an imitation of a democratic process. There is an authoritarian regime in Russia, and there is no party I feel any reason to support."

Kseniya, a homemaker in Moscow, agrees. "I gave birth to my third child, and I don't think I'll have time or wish to go to vote, even if there was any real choice," she says.

"At this point public interest in the elections is very weak," says Lev Gudkov, scientific director of the Levada Center, Russia's only independent public opinion agency. "People just don't associate electoral outcomes with the solution of their everyday problems. It's the authorities who need the election to promote the illusion of nationwide support, and to rotate the ranks of the deputies. It's become a largely bureaucratic exercise." ■

NEW YORK

The 'Clash' that never was: How Sept. 11 attacks still shape global relations

After the 2001 attacks, pundits predicted a "clash of civilizations," a geopolitical theory popular in the 1990s. The reality has been much more complicated.

By Howard LaFranchi / Staff writer

The nation was shell-shocked from the Sept. 11 attacks by Islamist terrorists – attacks that produced the worst loss of life the United States had suffered on its soil in a single day since the Civil War battle of Antietam.

To many Americans, the "clash of civilizations" historian Samuel Huntington had predicted nearly a decade earlier – that in the post-Cold War era, wars would be fought not between nations but between religions and cultures – suddenly threatened to come true.

Yet even as the ruins of the twin towers still smoldered in lower Manhattan, President George W. Bush left the White House on the sun-splashed morning of Sept. 17 for the Islamic Center of Washington two miles up Massachusetts Avenue.

There, he declared that America was not at war with Islam and that the U.S. did not confuse the nihilistic extremists – who claimed to advance their religion through terrorism – with Islam.

"The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam," Mr. Bush said. "Islam is peace." The U.S. president then quoted a passage from the Quran, stating that, "in the long run, evil in the extreme will be the end of those who do evil."

Now, a quarter century after that stunning attack, the jihadism that inspired the terrorists that day has been largely sidelined. And the future Huntington predicted of wars pitting religions and cultures against one another has for the most part not come true.

The reasons range from the limited appeal of the jihadists' worldview and its incongruity with the challenges of life in a modern world, analysts say, to rising secularity and the return to big-power conflict that Huntington believed was something of the past.

Some historians and foreign policy analysts say that if there is a cautionary coda to add to the overarching demise of the "clash of civilizations," it is this: A quarter century after launching a global war on terror that precipitated "endless wars" in Afghanistan and

Iraq, the U.S. seems as enthralled as ever with the use of force to solve complex international challenges.

President Donald Trump's war with Iran and his repeated threats to wipe out a "civilization" echo Huntington's thesis and what some say is its inherent Islamophobia.

Still, for many, the broad waning of the "clash of civilizations" cannot be decoupled from the actions taken by leaders both in the West and in Arab and Muslim countries to thwart the extremists' appeal and prevent the threatened clash.

How President Bush's speech resonated

And for many scholars, those efforts can be traced back to President Bush's Islamic Center speech.

"It's often forgotten now, but when President Bush went to the Islamic Center it was less than a week after the attacks," notes Jon Alterman, senior vice president in global security and geostrategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

Saying that alone was "remarkable," he adds. "The president's clear instinct was to not make this into a war on Islam, and that message resonated widely but particularly in Muslim and Arab countries."

Mr. Alterman joined the State Department just a month after the attacks and eventually its policy-planning team. He recalls officials' general bewilderment over how to respond to the attacks and the challenge posed by Al Qaeda – as well as the awkward and ineffective proposals the confusion engendered.

"My favorite was 'mosque in a box.' The idea was that we, the United States, would ship containers and drop boxes with everything the local populations needed to pray," he recalls. "We had to gently explain," he adds, "that aside from maybe a rug, Muslims don't really need anything to be able to pray."

More effective than much of the U.S. effort, Mr. Alterman says, have been the efforts by governments, from Saudi Arabia and Egypt to Jordan and Indonesia, to open the door if only a crack to reforms of their societies, and to address the aspirations of their people.

Saudi Arabia launched a cautious campaign of expanding individual rights, including for women, while Egypt moved to accept Islamist political participation – before eventually banning the Muslim Brotherhood. Indonesia accelerated political reforms initiated in 1998 that replaced a centralized military dictatorship with a decentralized democracy.

"The message of jihadism was essentially dark and murderous, and people wanted to escape dark and murderous, they wanted some measure of prosperity and better futures," he says. "Al Qaeda was never going to address those aspirations, but governments could, and they started to."

For some, President Bush stands out as a symbol of the post-9/11 quarter century for another reason: In many ways, he embodied the paradox of the West's response to the challenge posed by Al Qaeda and jihadism. There were initiatives of compassion and solidarity with the Islamic world, but there was also the global war on terror, with its strains of Islamophobia.

"I credit George W. for his strong rhetorical stand that this was not a conflict between Islam and Christianity, and for his attempts to prevent the 9/11 aftermath from becoming a national crusade," says Michael Doyle, an international relations scholar at Columbia University in New York.

Today, on the contrary, he says, President Trump is encouraging a growing Christian nationalist "crusade" of Islamophobic actions. His travel bans have largely targeted Muslim countries, while Vice

President JD Vance recently raised the specter of Muslims in the U.S. seeking to impose sharia law.

"But at the same time, Bush was responsible for escalating the conflict, with the wars in Afghanistan and then, unapologetically, in Iraq," he adds. "These Middle East wars had the effect of stirring up and prolonging the civilizational conflict his rhetoric had aimed to preclude."

Indeed, one outgrowth of the Iraq war was the meteoric, if relatively short-lived, rise of the Islamic State, an Al Qaeda spinoff that sought establishment of an Islamic caliphate on territory it conquered in Iraq and Syria.

When Huntington published "The Clash of Civilizations?" theory in 1993, it was seen both as an explanation of the emerging post-Cold War era and as a rebuttal to Francis Fukuyama's earlier "The End of History?" theory, which argued that after the Cold War, Western liberal democracy had triumphed and ideological conflict was over.

Gift to jihadis

But some scholars of Islamist extremism say the "clash" theory should be placed in the context of the moment to understand how it fomented extremism's march and the eventual "global war" to counter it.

Huntington's "clash" coincided with America's emergence as the sole superpower, the first Gulf War in the early 1990s, and the stationing of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia.

"Before that moment, Islamists and Islamist fighters were in the same trenches as the U.S.," for example, in Afghanistan, notes Fawaz Gerges, a professor and expert in jihadism at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Al Qaeda leader "Osama bin Laden's worldview was intensely anti-communist."

But U.S. military action in the Gulf quickly shifted jihadism's perceptions of who was the prime enemy. Al Qaeda's first attempt to attack the World Trade Center – a truck bombing in 1993 – failed, but it foreshadowed events to come.

That attack bolstered Huntington's "clash" theory, which in turn enhanced Al Qaeda's appeal while energizing the neoconservative thinkers gaining traction in Washington, Dr. Gerges says.

"The 'clash of civilizations' thesis captured the imagination of many conservative American experts and neoconservative ideologues who saw it as 'the West versus the rest,'" he says. "But at the same time, it was a godsend gift to jihadis, as it provided an ideological framework for their actions."

Among American adherents to the "clash" theory were many of the heavy hitters surrounding President Bush as he debated his response to the 9/11 attacks, Dr. Gerges says.

"It's correct to say that Bush was not a believer of the 'clash of civilizations.' We saw evidence of that in his rhetoric. But actions speak louder than words," he adds, "and it was his actions, promoted by an entourage that wanted a global war on terror, that ended up sustaining the jihadis much longer than they and their widely unpopular ideology should have survived."

As unpopular as the U.S. wars in the Middle East were, Dr. Gerges says, they did not convince "even a sizable minority" in Arab and Muslim countries to adopt the jihadis' worldview.

"Al Qaeda proposed death and destruction, when what the vast majority of people wanted was a better life and bread for their kids," he says.

Today, the "clash of civilizations" is widely discredited, though some see vestiges of its premises in some of today's conflicts, such as the U.S. war against Iran, and in rising Islamophobia in the West.

Another is Russia's war in Ukraine, which Russian President Vladimir Putin justified by invoking elements of religious orthodoxy and Russian imperial tradition, says Dr. Doyle. "But for the most part, we're back to conflict among powers," he says, citing a "new Cold War" pitting an authoritarian camp of China, Russia, North Korea, and a few others against "a fractured West."

Dr. Gerges notes that even some of the onetime fervent advocates of the wars the "clash" theory helped spawn have renounced their post-9/11 orientation.

He points to former neoconservative thinker Robert Kagan, who now calls the wars he once supported a "mistake" and says U.S. foreign policy, then as now, is often infused with Islamophobia.

On the other hand, Dr. Gerges says he worries that what the U.S. has retained from an otherwise disregarded theory is the specter of perpetual conflict.

"Never had I imagined in my wildest dreams that we would find ourselves in a similar situation to the one after 9/11," he says, citing the Iran war – launched by a president who had sworn off Middle East forever wars.

"There seems to be an addiction to the frame of mind that you can resolve whatever problem you have by throwing military power at it," Dr. Gerges says. "That's the ideological luggage of the post-9/11 period that we have been unable to unpack." ■

LONDON

Why heat, wildfires, and drought are slowing Europe's move to green energy

Searing heat, wildfires, dwindling water levels: Europe is suddenly facing a "climate emergency" that scientists and green-energy advocates have been warning about for years. But the climate is not the only thing changing.

Europe's climate policy is also showing signs of change. And the need for governments to respond to the record heat waves buffeting the continent appears likely to reinforce that shift.

The altered approach might best be called "green realpolitik."

While the extreme heat and drought might suggest a need to move more quickly toward green energy, political realities mean the opposite is in fact the case.

Europe's world-leading commitment to replacing carbon fuels with sources such as wind, solar, and nuclear power is not about to be shelved.

But economic and political pressures, both domestic and international, have been prodding policymakers to rethink the path and the pace of getting there.

And now, they've received a humbling reminder: The planet is already warming, and Europe is heating up at about twice the rate of other continents. Even the most ambitious official climate benchmarks – such as Britain's aim to generate all its electricity from renewables by 2030, or the European Union's "net-zero" emission target of 2050 – aren't going to help cope with this summer's record-high temperatures.



By Ned Temko
Connecting
key themes in the
world's news.

A fifth heat wave since May hit the continent in mid-August.

Temperatures were projected to rise above 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.7 degrees Celsius) in a number of areas in the United Kingdom and mainland Europe. A drought was declared in roughly 70% of England, and the EU announced drought alerts in nearly half its 27 member states.

The shortage of rain across much of Europe is taxing water supplies and risking new wildfires. On Aug. 12, British Prime Minister Andy Burnham convened the government's COBRA emergency response committee, usually tasked with major security threats, to address the effects of the heat.

Across Europe, other governments took a range of emergency measures: coordinating air support for firefighting, restricting energy usage, adjusting school or work schedules to deal with the effects of the heat, and safeguarding strained water supplies.

They also debated longer-term responses, which is where "green realpolitik" comes into play.

Their main domestic political challenge is from far-right populist parties, outpacing long-dominant mainstream parties in opinion polls in a number of European countries.

Outright climate-change denial has nothing like the drawing power it has in the United States, where President Donald Trump has often dismissed the issue as a "hoax." More than 80% of Europeans tell pollsters they believe global warming is a serious matter, and that figure is likely to rise further after the heat waves of recent months.

But populist leaders in Europe have echoed Mr. Trump's narrative, saying that EU policies promoting green energy are a "woke" distraction from immediate steps to deal with the heat. They want fewer windmills and more air conditioning – an amenity few Europeans have embraced or needed in years past.

In France, Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally has promised a nationwide rollout of air conditioning if she wins next year's presidential election. Left-of-center and green party politicians have long worried that a spike in air conditioning use will be a drain on energy resources and a potential source of more emissions.

In Britain, the political dividing line has been over further drilling of the depleted gas deposits in the North Sea.

That, not "net-zero" targets, is what Nigel Farage, head of the populist-right Reform UK, says Britain needs. Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch, determined to win back voters who have moved to Reform UK, said recently that she would stop anyone who endorsed the net-zero goal from becoming a Conservative candidate for Parliament.

Even before this summer's heat, the EU had begun loosening a number of its emissions targets and delaying the phaseout of gas and diesel vehicles.

And while the spike in oil and gas prices from Mr. Trump's Iran war initially boosted support for policies to promote green energy alternatives, the immediate focus of European leaders has shifted to the cost-of-living implications of the carbon-based energy Europe does still use.

In Britain, Mr. Burnham has hinted that he might green-light two North Sea drilling licenses granted under the previous Conservative government, saying he'll be "pragmatic" on the issue.

His energy secretary, noting that 4 out of 5 Britons back a move to renewable energy, said that "to keep that number," the government had to prioritize energy "affordability."

Yet their "green realpolitik" is about retaining popular sup-

port in the move away from carbon. The summer's heat has highlighted that priority and how complex managing it is.

In Hungary, half the nation's electricity is from nuclear power, a noncarbon source the EU has been urging member states to use. But in August, Hungary's Paks nuclear facility had to be shut down. There was no technical malfunction.

The problem was a shortage of a critical input: water to cool the reactor, and the long-trusted source was the Danube River. Already affected by low rainfall and drought, it was reduced to record-low levels by Europe's record-high heat. ■

AMARILLO, TEXAS

The Barrio nurtured them. Now, they focus on a new era.

A railroad city's Mexican community, knit tight for generations, is growing looser with time. Two people tied fast to its legacy are now championing its revival.

By Harry Bruinius / Staff writer

David Rosas turns off Arthur Avenue and starts walking through the old Mexican American Barrio of his childhood. The first landmark is an empty lot.

His grandmother's house once stood here, Mr. Rosas says. It was a place where relatives streamed in and out, coffee seemed always to be brewing, and everyone came to learn the family news. He has called it the family's "bank, library, meeting place."

He remembers the railroad men walking home for lunch, then heading back to work. Afterward, his grandmother and a neighbor would pull out flour, water, and lard and begin making tortillas, the kitchen filling with the familiar rhythm of the rolling pins.

"I wish I could hear it right now," he says. Walking down the street a few blocks, he passes a funeral home. But Mr. Rosas knows the building by an older name: El Salón Mexicano.

His grandfather, Mateo Lopez, a Santa Fe railroad worker, helped build the neighborhood hall with other residents in the 1930s as a place for dances, weddings, and quinceañeras. "The Barrio is a town within a town," Mr. Rosas says. "We didn't travel far."

The short walk amounts to a century of Barrio history, a story about how American communities are made, and often remade in order to endure. In the late 19th century, Mexican railroad workers, brought in through programs of the Santa Fe Railway, arrived with their families and built homes, businesses, and a Catholic church – a world within a world, shaped partly by the segregation and discrimination that kept them apart from much of the city's wider civic life. But the Barrio can be seen, too, as a recognizable American story of frontier towns in which neighbors helped out neighbors, and civic services became a fully communal affair.

Like so many small towns along Route 66, old boundaries have loosened, and families have scattered as regional economies reshape where people work and live. But the neighborhood is being rebuilt again. Their challenge is no longer how to create a community within those boundaries, but how to carry forward the belonging that grew there.

There is a Route 66 irony embedded in the Barrio's story. Its

10th Avenue was part of the original highway in 1926 – the road Americans would celebrate as the "Main Street of America." It was rerouted north in 1932.

Yet on the other side of Amarillo's railroad tracks, Mexican American families kept building their version of the Main Street ideal: businesses, places to gather, familiar families, and a commitment to one another.

■ ■ ■

FOR MR. ROSAS, THAT OLDER MAIN STREET can be measured less in storefronts than in relationships.

"Back then when you met somebody, an elderly gentleman, they asked you who your parents were," he says. He would give his name, and the older man would begin placing him.

Lupe's son. Mateo's grandson. Then would come the stories: Your father helped me with this. I knew your grandfather. "Being recognized by your parents and your grandparents, it's a big deal," Mr. Rosas says. "I mean, it carried weight."

His grandfather was one of the first pillars of the Barrio. His father, Lupe Rosas, carried that ethic into a different era. A World War II veteran who later worked at Amarillo's veterans hospital, he was one of the first members of the NAACP. In the 1950s, he and two Catholic priests conducted a sit-in at one of Amarillo's whites-only restaurants.

Lupe also became one of the people neighbors sought out when they did not know how to navigate institutions beyond the Barrio. Someone needed help with a Social Security form. Someone had a problem with the city. Someone needed to know whom to ask.

"When people had problems, nobody had a lawyer," says Mr. Rosas, who dropped out of school in the eighth grade and went on to spend four decades selling cars. "My dad could figure something out. And I do that for a lot of people."

Mr. Rosas holds no public office. But neighbors call him when trash is not picked up or a dilapidated property becomes a problem. He goes to city meetings, pushes officials for neighborhood investment, and says Amarillo's current mayor takes his calls.

People sometimes call him the "mayor of the Barrio." Mr. Rosas has given himself an arguably grander title, printed on his business card: H.M.I.C. – "Head Mexican in Charge."

His charm and levity, however, belie his seriousness. In 2017 he became part of a neighborhood revitalization process.

For him, the effort is about more than getting sidewalks or city money. His grandmother's house is gone. Relatives have scattered across Amarillo and beyond. Mr. Rosas himself lives about five miles from the Barrio.

The old social geography is harder to see. "It's getting lost," he says.

■ ■ ■

TERESA KENEDY TURNS OFF ARTHUR AVENUE onto 10th and drives slowly toward the railroad tracks, narrating the Barrio almost block by block.

There are the murals marking the entrance to the old neighborhood. Then the new trees. Banners celebrating Día de los Muertos with sugar skulls. Street lamps. Bike racks. Nine street benches painted in reds, blues, and greens. Most noticeably, there are sidewalks – wide, wheelchair accessible stretches of concrete in a neighborhood where, away from the businesses, sidewalks are scarce.

"What you're seeing – none of that was here prior to April of

this year,” says Ms. Kenedy, now the president of The Barrio Neighborhood Planning Committee, on which Mr. Rosas serves, too. For the old main street, it amounts to a \$6.1 million makeover the organization helped facilitate.

But Ms. Kenedy does not describe the project as an attempt to make 10th Avenue look new. She talks instead about making the street announce where it is – and what came before.

For Mr. Rosas, the Barrio is an inheritance. He can walk its streets through generations of his own family. His argument for rebuilding the neighborhood begins with memory, but becomes a claim on the larger city: “We’ve paid taxes forever,” he says. “I want some of that money back here.”

Ms. Kenedy’s attachment is chosen. She did not grow up in the Barrio, but in tiny Snowville, Utah, near the Idaho state line, where hers was the only Hispanic family for about 20 miles. Her father died when she was age 2, leaving her mother to raise seven children. Ms. Kenedy says everyone chipped in; she began working at age 9, first as a babysitter and then as a dishwasher.

She arrived in the Amarillo area for college at age 20, studying to be a social worker, “connecting people with resources.”

Her biography appears almost geographically during the drive. She passes Caprock High School, where she worked for 13 years in drug prevention, and then Bowie Middle School, where she spent another seven.

Then she became the coordinator of a federally funded program to place the children of migrant farmworkers in school, even though they might remain for only weeks or months before their families moved on.

When she retired in 2015, Ms. Kenedy, a widow with no children, committed to volunteering in the Barrio, her home for over 45 years.

Together, she and Mr. Rosas represent the challenge facing the Barrio now. The first generations built a community from the ground up. Their descendants inherited its stories and obligations. The work of this generation is different: to turn that inheritance into something sturdy enough to survive change.

In 2018, Ms. Kenedy became something of the Barrio’s historian. She led a task force that interviewed older residents for a book that would preserve the neighborhood’s collective memory.

She conducted many of the interviews herself. When the group needed someone to turn the interviews into a book and nobody volunteered, Ms. Kenedy did that, too.

The book was also part of the committee’s effort to put together a historical map. The map and the memories fed into a neighborhood plan.

And the plan, eventually, became the trees, benches, and lights along 10th Avenue.

Memory, in other words, became infrastructure.

■ ■ ■

MORE THAN A CENTURY after an earlier generation built El Salón Mexicano because the Barrio needed somewhere to gather, Mr. Rosas and Ms. Kenedy are trying to create another such place – not to restore the confining boundaries of the old neighborhood, but to give its communal life a place to flourish again.

The group calls it La Plazita. Right now it’s an empty lot, but they are planning to turn it into a community park with a stage. Mr. Rosas was the one who spotted the property for sale. The city ultimately acquired it and deeded it to the planning committee.

For now, there is a mural, several benches, sponsored paving

stones, and a storage building. Ms. Kenedy envisions a performance stage, food trucks, mariachi musicians, *folklórico* dancers, pop-up markets, movie nights, quinceañeras, and wedding receptions. There will be free Wi-Fi. The committee has already begun holding events on the unfinished lot so people will get used to coming there.

As she walks through the unfinished La Plazita, she also mentions the legacy of Mateo Lopez.

“Here’s someone who came as a young man with his wife from Mexico to the United States, came to Amarillo, helped build this railroad, helped build a community center – and his grandson is now helping renovate this neighborhood. It came full circle, right?” ■

REPORTERS ON THE JOB

BOSTON



Kendra Nordin Beato

When the planes struck the Twin Towers on 9/11, no one at the Monitor had to be asked to work through the weekend. Everyone simply showed up, understanding the gravitas of the moment. Each year since, the anniversary of Sept. 11 became an opportunity to reflect on what had changed. But in 2019, while I was leading the intern program, I realized our youngest journalists had no memory of that day. It was an event they had learned about from history books. So, editors gathered the interns and laid out copies of front pages from 2001, now yellowing with time, and recounted how the Monitor staff had responded in that moment, searching for answers to the question, “Why did this happen?” ■

MEXICO CITY



Whitney Eulich

I was about to start my freshman year at college on Sept. 11, 2001. Much of what I learned as an undergrad and into my professional career was shaped by a post-9/11 lens. As Latin America bureau chief for the Monitor, I’m frequently reminded how profoundly the attacks changed the region’s relationship with the United States. The Department of Homeland Security was created in 2002; Customs and Border Protection in 2003. The rhythm of people regularly crossing the border each year for work was interrupted by a dramatic tightening of security. Nearly anytime I tackle a sweeping story – whether about migration or the U.S.-Mexico border – academics and average citizens remind me that, for this region, 9/11 was a watershed. ■

NOIRMOUTIER, FRANCE



Scott Peterson

I was based in Moscow for the Monitor during 9/11. Little did I realize then how it would transform and define my reporting for the next two decades, with dozens of visits to Afghanistan and Iraq. One scene was emblematic of the epic U.S. trials and failures to come: Soon after Sept. 11, I flew from Moscow to Tajikistan, then on to northern Afghanistan. I drove for days through dramatic mountains on bad roads toward Kabul to witness the fall of the Taliban. Along the way, I saw a sheer granite wall that had been struck by a rocket-propelled grenade during the earlier, failed 1980s Soviet occupation. The powerful explosion left only a few cracks, but the Afghan edifice remained unchanged. ■



Taylor Luck

AMMAN, JORDAN

Sept. 11 sparked in me an intense interest in the Middle East. So, six years later, fresh out of college, I boarded a plane to Amman to start a career as a Middle East correspondent. I came to understand, to hear people tell their own stories, to listen to different views, to challenge my assumptions. Now, as I report on another war in the Middle East, I have

learned not to focus on what the Pentagon or the president says – but what people are saying on the ground in a Riyadh market, a Doha café, on a Damascus street corner. The legacy of that day has become a guiding principle: In this region, American policy impacts everyday lives, but the lives of the people in the Middle East do not revolve around America. ■

THE EXPLAINER

Military's authority to arrest at southern border grows. What's behind the change?

Federal law generally prohibits troops from acting as law enforcement on U.S. soil. But a new legal opinion looks to expand the Pentagon's domestic mission.

By Sarah Matusek and Anna Mulrine Grobe / Staff writers

Across hundreds of miles of barren scrubland, the U.S. military has occupied vast stretches of the southern border for more than a year.

The military, pushing the bounds of its legally limited domestic role, detains suspected trespassers in these patrolled military zones created by the Trump administration. Now, the administration is arguing that the armed forces can stop such people “just outside” those zones as well.

A Justice Department opinion released in August gives that green light. Meanwhile, the potential for more military arrests within the United States has alarmed immigrant advocates and some legal experts. They question the administration's legal logic and point to confusion around the physical boundaries of the military zones.

“National defense areas” cover somewhere between one-third and one-half of the length of the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border.

President Donald Trump ordered the creation of these areas last year. Still, they've drawn far less scrutiny than National Guard surges to cities like Washington, a move the administration justified as a way to combat crime. Joint Task Force-Southern Border, which operates in the zones, referred an interview request to U.S. Northern Command. The command declined to comment.

Q: What are “national defense areas”?

Patrolled by the military, these zones abut the southern border and range from 64 to 250 miles long. Troops have detained people there for unauthorized access.

These areas are part of President Trump's immigration crackdown. U.S. Border Patrol encounters, a proxy for illegal border crossings, spiked to historic highs under the Biden administration.

Yet, by the time Mr. Trump returned to office last year, illegal crossings were lower than when he left in 2021.

Still, on his first day back in January 2025, Mr. Trump claimed an invasion and declared a national emergency at the southern border. He ordered the Pentagon to help secure it and to create military zones through the transfer of federal land.

National defense areas – also called NDAs – span public borderlands in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Along the Rio Grande in Texas, parts of the zones extend into the river, where the international boundary between the U.S. and Mexico lies.

The Posse Comitatus Act, passed in 1878, generally prohibits the use of the military as law enforcement in the U.S. The Pentagon has claimed authority to detain suspected trespassers in NDAs temporarily, and then hand off the migrants to law enforcement agencies, such as the Border Patrol.

The Pentagon doesn't appear to publish a record of NDA detentions. But Joint Task Force-Southern Border has reported making 161 “temporary detentions” in NDAs, according to CBS News in August. That's a speck compared with the Border Patrol, which made about 9,300 apprehensions in July alone. The military's expansion there coincides with the buildup of the largest Border Patrol force in history.

Meanwhile, the Justice Department has prosecuted migrants for their alleged entry into NDAs. They have faced military trespass charges, in addition to the more traditional charge of illegal entry into the U.S.

Q: What are arguments for and against these zones?

Troops have supported Department of Homeland Security border missions before. But Mr. Trump is asking for more: He says the armed forces must now “prioritize the protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity” of the country along its borders. Supporters of NDAs argue they've helped deter border crimes like illegal crossings.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth touted the new NDA plan at an Army War College address in Pennsylvania last year. Troops can turn people over to Customs and Border Protection, he said, “instead of just looking at the border with binoculars and wondering who that person is and hoping CBP interdicts them.”

Some former defense officials challenge the premise of the NDAs.

Even if arrests are lawful outside military zones, the Trump administration wrongly conflates illegal immigration with a national security threat, says retired Army Lt. Col. Dan Maurer, an associate professor at Ohio Northern University's law school and a former judge advocate in the Army.

He disagrees with declaring “swaths of the border that have never been militarized as suddenly a new military installation, because you want to use the military to enforce immigration law.” That at least “violates the spirit” of the Posse Comitatus Act, he says.

Beyond legal concerns about the Pentagon's creeping domestic mission, locals – including local law enforcement – have been confused about the boundaries of NDAs in rural areas, and the risk of accidental entry. The military has posted signs in Spanish and English that warn against trespassing and unauthorized photography, note-taking, drawings, and maps. Still, courts have thrown out many of the military trespass charges on the basis that migrants didn't knowingly enter those unauthorized zones.

The NDAs are “a huge black hole, in terms of implementation and transparency,” says Becca Sheff, senior staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico.

She warns that the Trump administration has previously exported border policies to the interior, such as aggressive immigration arrests on city streets. As the military exerts broader power at the border, “we need to be really watchful as a society,” says Ms. Sheff.

Q: What’s changing?

In April, according to the Justice Department, the Pentagon asked the DOJ for a legal opinion on whether military arrests outside an NDA’s boundary would violate the Posse Comitatus Act. The DOJ’s Aug. 14 response says such arrests would be lawful.

The department cites past cases in which the military pursued suspects off base for crimes that had some tie to a military site. “An arrest of a fleeing suspect that takes place just outside of the NDA serves the same ‘military purpose’ as an arrest within the NDA,” wrote William Hyde, deputy assistant attorney general.

The opinion mentions possible arrests “just outside” an NDA. But it doesn’t specify time or distance limits for those actions.

The actual activity that the opinion claims to authorize is “relatively minimal,” says Chris Mirasola, assistant professor at the University of Houston Law Center. But the legal reasoning is “incorrect” and “dangerous” for how it might scale beyond the border, he says.

Letting the Pentagon define which activities amount to military purposes also lets it decide the “scope of the Posse Comitatus Act,” says Professor Mirasola.

Retired Army Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan, a former U.S. Northern Command Joint Force Land Component commander who also led military support for the Border Patrol, says that clearly explaining to troops the rules for the use of force will be key.

“If the rules are changing, if they have different authorities, then they actually have to train their guys so that they can operate in accordance with those laws,” he says. “I’m confident that they’re doing it.” ■

ENDEAVORS

BHUBANESWAR, INDIA

The guide who put a park, and its crocodiles, on India’s ecotourism map

By Kalpana Sunder / Contributor

As dawn breaks over the misty mangrove creeks winding through Bhitarkanika National Park, the calls of kingfishers and Brahminy kites fill the silence. Standing on the deck of a sleek catamaran gliding through the water, Sanghamitra Jena peers through the binoculars slung around her neck. Suddenly, she spots a sinuous saltwater crocodile sunning itself on a mudflat and points it out to the delighted tour guests on the boat.

“We have local names for many of the crocodiles here,” she announces. “This one is Kalia. ... He’s one of the oldest and has grown darker with age.”

Sprawled across the Brahmani and Baitarani river deltas on the coast of remote Odisha state, Bhitarkanika is India’s second-largest mangrove ecosystem, after the more famous Sundarbans. And Ms. Jena, Odisha’s first female tour guide and the founder of its first nature camp, is the person who put this fragile wilderness teeming

with crocodiles on the country’s ecotourism map.

“I have always loved living close to nature and am happiest here, far away from the concrete jungle,” she says later.

The point of the tours she leads is to spread that feeling.

“The greatest joy is watching our guests discover this place,” she adds.

Breaking barriers

Ms. Jena’s connection with nature began in childhood. She was born in Odisha, in the village of Pokhariapada, but traveled extensively with her father, a civil engineer, while she was growing up. His work building roads and bridges across the state often took the family deep into forests and remote villages. This nurtured Ms. Jena’s fascination with India’s rural areas and the people who lived inside them.

She graduated from college with an honors degree in history. Marriage and a career as a primary school teacher in Kolkata followed, but she found herself yearning for something more and soon moved back to her home state of Odisha.

In the early 1990s, she watched a television documentary about a female guide working with foreign tourists in Mumbai. “This was exactly what I wanted to do,” Ms. Jena recalls. “At that time, very few women worked in tourism, and certainly not in forests or remote places.”

Ignoring skepticism even from people close to her, she enrolled in a professional guide training program and emerged as Odisha’s first female tour guide in 1992. Now licensed to lead tours across five eastern Indian states, she quietly broke barriers in a profession that had been dominated by men.

Her career took another turn in 1995 thanks to Lyle Lawson, an American travel writer and tour operator, whom Ms. Jena met while guiding her group through Odisha. She “funded my reconnaissance trips across India to discover offbeat destinations,” Ms. Jena says.

Soon Ms. Jena started her own agency, Eastern Treasure India Tours, offering village visits and nature walks. Her travels deepened her understanding of her country’s extraordinary diversity – from its food traditions to its flora and fauna.

But it was Bhitarkanika that kept calling her back.

“There was absolutely no infrastructure here,” Ms. Jena says. “People came for day trips and left. Nobody stayed long enough to really understand the forest and the mangroves.”

She established Odisha’s first nature camp in Bhitarkanika in 2008, with just seven Swiss tents, a modest kitchen, and basic bathrooms, employing residents and helping to pioneer community-based tourism in the state. Ms. Jena’s efforts encouraged local residents to value and protect the mangrove ecosystem that surrounded them.

Bhitarkanika is most famous for its crocodiles. According to a 2025 census, 1,826 saltwater crocodiles inhabit these waters; they often bask in the sunshine on the mudflats at low tide. They are some of the world’s longest saltwater crocodiles, reaching up to 7 meters (23 feet).

The bird life here is equally remarkable. More than 300 species have been recorded in the park, making it one of eastern India’s finest birding destinations. Every winter, thousands of migratory birds arrive from Central Asia, Siberia, and parts of Europe. Beyond the birds, there are king cobras, pythons, fishing cats, monitor lizards, spotted deer, and mongooses.

Once the private hunting reserve of the Raj Kanika royal family, the area was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1975, and a national park

in 1998. Today, its mangroves buffer Odisha's vulnerable coastline against frequent cyclones and provide breeding grounds for fish, prawns, and crabs that sustain thousands of fisher families.

When Delhi-based Antara Cruises began operating in Bhitarkanika in 2024, running catamarans from the village of Gupti, company chairman Raj Singh invited Ms. Jena to become the resident naturalist aboard the boats. The partnership was a natural fit, as both believed that tourism should enrich local communities and leave the lightest possible footprint on the environment.

Immersed in mangroves

Ms. Jena was the "natural choice to lead the cruises," Mr. Singh says, citing "her deep knowledge of Odisha's flora, fauna, history, and culture."

The 17-meter catamarans pass silently through Bhitarkanika's waterways, allowing guests to immerse themselves in the mangroves without disturbing them, Ms. Jena says.

"No other accommodation has permission to stay overnight in the core zone of a national park," she notes.

Meals on board are prepared "the way our grandmothers cooked," she says, with traditional regional recipes using locally sourced ingredients. Fresh *bhetki*, also known as Asian sea bass, is often served alongside regional sweets such as *chhena poda*, a caramelized cheese dessert.

"The entire crew is made up of locals from nearby villages," Ms. Jena says. "We switch off most of the lights at night and keep the blinds closed so we don't disturb the wildlife." She adds, "Every piece of rubbish comes back with us to be disposed of properly after the cruise."

Sneha Thomas, a tour guest from Kochi who traveled with Ms. Jena last year, says the guide shifted how she looks at conservation.

"Sanghamitra brings a level of personal connection and compassion to it," she adds.

Today, as protected areas across the world struggle to balance tourism and conservation, Bhitarkanika offers a compelling model. Reflecting on her philosophy, Ms. Jena says with a smile, "I believe nature should groom us and we should not groom nature." ■

EDITORIALS

Americans search for nonpartisan politics

A full 45% of American adults identify as political independents. That's far higher than the share – 27% each – who say they are either Democrats or Republicans, according to a 2026 report by Gallup. Nationally, according to another source, one-fifth of voters "are so independent that they do not vote consistently for one party or the other."

Yet only three out of 535 members of the United States Congress are officially independents – two senators (one each from Maine and Vermont) and one representative (from California).

This growing gap between public preference and the composition of Congress has prompted a retired senator, Joe Manchin, and his daughter Heather to launch an initiative to spur more election bids by candidates not tied to a party. The aim of their Independent Leadership Council is to mentor, fund, and otherwise support in-

dependent candidates for Congress.

During his nearly 15 years representing West Virginia as a Democrat, Mr. Manchin often bucked the party line – and believes that doing so can help a lawmaker lessen partisan gridlock. (He became an independent in 2024, a year before retiring from the Senate.)

"We're not trying to start another party," Mr. Manchin told CNN in July, but to mentor and fund individuals "totally committed" to being "independent with an independent voice."

"They can vote with Democrats and Republicans when they're right," he said, "and speak out against them when they're wrong."

Given the nation's founding principles, what could be more American than exercising judgment independent of a party's agenda?

Reality-based political views

"Independents' political views and perspectives ... reflect the economic and social conditions they see and experience every day," according to a 2024 report in *The Conversation* based on a review of 10 years of opinion surveys.

Reflecting this sentiment, the number of independents contesting House and Senate races shot up to 217 this year (about 80 more than in 2024).

Surveys show nearly 60% of U.S. adults hold unfavorable views of both parties. Yet candidates not linked to a major party often face barriers in fundraising, signature requirements to get on ballots, or limited campaign infrastructure.

Despite the challenges, many candidates are impelled by the desire to steer political discourse toward civility and issues that matter most to ordinary citizens. One of them is Adam Withrow, a Coloradan running for the U.S. Senate.

"We have this false dichotomy of two parties, that we have two choices and nothing else is relevant," he told Colorado Public Radio. "We need to, at very least, widen that conversation."

That's a process – and opportunity – that Americans across the political spectrum can get behind. ■

Repair, not revenge, in post-autocratic Hungary

In countries with eroding democracies, many people have watched Hungary in recent months make rapid reforms under a new prime minister, Péter Magyar. In April, he and his center-right Tisza party won a landslide election victory that ousted Viktor Orbán. The pro-Russia conservative leader ruled for 20 years in total, leaving a web of corrupt cronyism in highly compromised state institutions.

Mr. Magyar's reforms have so far required a nuanced distinction between seeking personal retribution for the closest supporters of Mr. Orbán and merely holding them accountable for misdeeds. "One thing we ... cannot do," said András Baka, a former head of the Supreme Court who took over the largely ceremonial position of president, is "build the new Hungary on revenge."

One liberal newspaper, HVG, noted that Mr. Magyar's supporters are "noticeably impatient" and that "their demand for accountability is by no means free from a desire for revenge." For his part, Mr. Magyar speaks mainly about "total regime change" and a restoration of democratic norms. Yet he often mentions Mr. Orbán and his "affiliates" within the now-diminished Fidesz, the former

governing party.

Several countries in Europe have set models for rehabilitating a democracy with fair and judicial retribution against former officials deemed accountable for wrongdoing. Postwar Germany ran a denazification program while recent elections in Ukraine ousted corrupt, pro-Moscow leaders.

For now, Hungary's record of reforms appears to have pleased the European Union, which has released some of the money withheld because of Mr. Orbán's erosion of the rule of law. The reforms include new drives against corruption, biased public media, and a politicized judiciary.

Rule of law under a fair democracy is indeed a check on political revenge. Or as President Baka said, "Violations of the law must be uncovered, but it is for the courts to determine guilt." ■

Reform of social media, one click at a time

The \$18 billion settlement between Meta Platforms and 48 states announced in late August involved quite a few technology tweaks to limit the exposure of users under 18 years of age to 24/7 social media feeds. Supporters see it as a major step forward; critics say it doesn't go far enough.

Both responses, paradoxically, hint at a confluence of views – that safeguarding the growth and development of children and teenagers is not a one-and-done deal. Rather, balancing the economic drive of private innovation against its potential excesses is a whole-of-society effort, involving parents, children, and families; educators and students; lawmakers and regulators; and those who work for and lead cutting-edge tech companies.

Setting default app limits

In the Aug. 26 agreement, Meta did not accept culpability for features that are allegedly designed to target and hook users of its Facebook and Instagram platforms. But it did agree to set time limits and blockages on app accounts owned by young people. These restrictions would require parental permission to be altered.

These "straightforward changes ... will assist parents," according to Jonathan Turley, a professor of public interest law at George Washington University. While social media is "one of the most transformative inventions in history," Professor Turley wrote on the Fox News website, the technology "is both liberating and captivating."

Managing that tension demands individual agency and attentiveness, especially among the adults responsible for children's well-being.

And setting an example

Age-related bans might avert too-early exposure to social media, but equipping young people with skills and understanding to handle online challenges is key. Even more important is what they see adults doing.

"If parents practice what they preach – limiting screen time and being selective about what they watch," Time magazine wrote in 2024, "children often adopt those patterns as well."

Alertness to private sector accountability helps. Decades ago, vigilance and concerted action spurred self-regulation in movie rating systems and in advertising during children's television pro-

gramming. In the 1990s, video game producers introduced a rating for violent games, which reduced access to those below 16 years old from 85% to 42% in just five years. However, studies have found that the alcohol industry has often violated its own marketing codes when it comes to targeting youth.

One lesson from the Meta settlement and previous efforts to limit potential harms of certain industries is that one-dimensional approaches are not enough. Watchfulness, transparency, and negotiated compromise among a range of players can help society move closer to that goal. ■

THE HOME FORUM

Everyone has a 9/11 story. This is mine, from behind the lens.

Photographer Melanie Stetson Freeman remembers one of her hardest shoots – and the light she found there.

Everyone of a certain age has a story from 9/11. This is mine.

Twenty-five years ago on Sept. 11, I was in the Monitor newsroom in Boston starting my normal workday as a staff photographer. I began with my usual tasks – editing photo shoots and setting up new assignments.

Televisions that hung from the ceiling were broadcasting morning talk shows. And then, they were all showing the same image: a World Trade Center tower in New York on fire. We gathered around to watch. Newscasters first reported that a private plane had hit it by mistake. Then, as we looked on, a second commercial jet flew into the other World Trade Center tower.

My boss asked me to head over to Boston's Logan Airport, where, we soon learned, two of the hijacked planes had originated. I photographed a woman who had overslept and missed one of those flights. She was standing at the American Airlines ticket counter with a stunned look on her face.

I knew what my next assignment would be.

After quickly going home to pack clothing and supplies, I started driving south to New York City. Streets and highways were eerily empty. The only other vehicles I saw were filled with first responders. Authorities had closed all the bridges to Manhattan to anyone who was not a journalist or first responder. My press credentials got me onto the island.

At night, the city that never sleeps was quiet. All businesses and restaurants were shuttered; residents sheltered inside. I was staying with my best friend on the Upper West Side, so at least I wasn't alone in a hotel.

The next morning, I boarded the subway. But it was also damaged and could only take me so far south. I walked. A lot. Day after day, I tried to get near ground zero, but it was a restricted area, even for press. I was in New York City for 10 days after the attack; I never got permission to enter.

And so, I worked around the edges.

I took pictures of exhausted firefighters coming off their shift, or resting briefly before going back in.

I visited churches and mosques where people prayed.

I saw crowds of people writing words of love and encouragement on the pavement with chalk. New Yorkers needed to feel togetherness.

The smell of ash and smoke was everywhere.

I've always loved the energy of this city, which remained despite the violence that had just befallen it. But during that trip, I noticed something new as well: a calm strength and resolve. People seemed kinder, more thoughtful.

My job sometimes sends me to witness hard things. I've been to broken places that have endured war and brutality. It can be a challenge to see, record, and share these moments. But I look for the light. Looking for goodness is not only the way I get through it, but also the way the Monitor helps its readers – we try to report in a way that lets our readers focus on the humanity and solutions that are always there.

A few days into my New York assignment, I was in a taxi heading back uptown at the end of the day. I saw a small group of people holding a vigil with candles. I asked the driver to stop. They welcomed me, asking in broken English if I would help them sing the national anthem. They were immigrants and didn't know all the words. Using my high school Spanish, I told them I'd be proud to assist. Together we sang. Well, they mostly hummed the tune, while I tried to sing on key. It was a gift for an exhausted photographer, a chance to belong. I took it. ■

A CHRISTIAN SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

A substantial lesson from a bike ride

I was riding my bike one day and noticed it was difficult to see the odometer reading on my small bike computer. I'd replaced the battery recently, so I couldn't figure out what the problem was. As I continued riding, the day became sunnier, so I put on my sunglasses. When I looked again at the bike computer, I could read it perfectly. The clarity of the computer had always been there, and my sunglasses eliminated the glare that had kept me from seeing the odometer clearly.

This experience revealed to me a very substantial lesson: When we look through the lens of Spirit – or strive to see as God, Spirit, sees – we will see more clearly our own and everyone's inherent perfection and goodness. And this Godlike view brings healing.

As we read in "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" by Mary Baker Eddy, "God's thoughts are perfect and eternal, are substance and Life" (p. 286). Indeed, God's thoughts about us as His offspring convey our true substance – our true nature as spiritual, perfect, whole, and free of material beliefs of any kind.

At the same time as this bike ride, I was also dealing with pink eye in one of my eyes. I had been praying with Mrs. Eddy's answer to the question "What is man?" in Science and Health, which begins: "Man is not matter; he is not made up of brain, blood, bones, and other material elements. The Scriptures inform us that man is made in the image and likeness of God. Mat-

ter is not that likeness. The likeness of Spirit cannot be so unlike Spirit. Man is spiritual and perfect; and because he is spiritual and perfect, he must be so understood in Christian Science" (p. 475).

I saw my true, substantial nature as spiritual, not material. And I understood that my true ability to see isn't about physical eyes, but about discerning myself as perfectly whole and free from matter, right now. A spiritual definition of "eyes" points to this truth: "EYES. Spiritual discernment, – not material but mental" (Science and Health, p. 586).

After the biking experience, it occurred to me that I needed to conscientiously and consistently maintain a clear, undistorted vision of myself and all humanity by seeing only through the lens of Spirit. The clarity of that vision reveals the substantial nature of our true identity, which originates in God, not matter. As I strived to do this, my eye healed rapidly, and I was soon free of the entire difficulty.

When we maintain our vision – our thinking – so that it is in accord with what God sees about us as His perfect, beloved, wholly good offspring, then we can expect to experience the substance of God's healing power, which invigorates, purifies, restores, regenerates, reconciles, resolves, in all kinds of ways.

■ *Original content on Christian Science written for this column by one of our readers.*

BOOKS

Harry Belafonte sang out for equality and justice

The new biography "Daylight Come" focuses on the performer's determination to use his fame to confront discrimination in the U.S. and abroad.

By Barbara Spindel / Contributor

Actor and singer Harry Belafonte was one of the biggest celebrities of his time: His 1956 album, "Calypso," held the No. 1 spot on the Billboard pop albums chart for 31 weeks, and his iconic version of the Jamaican work song "Day-O" is recognized the world over. But an admiring new biography of the star demonstrates that Belafonte was more passionate about the work he was performing away from the spotlight – from bankrolling the Civil Rights Movement to brokering talks between Martin Luther King Jr. and the Kennedys.

"Daylight Come," by Joshua Jelly-Schapiro, captures the epic sweep of its subject's long life. Belafonte, born in Harlem in 1927 to Caribbean immigrants, had a difficult childhood. His father, a cook on United Fruit Co. ships, was in and out of his life. Meanwhile, his mother frequently sent young Harry and his brother to her native Jamaica to stay with her mother or in a series of boarding houses while she worked as a domestic in New York City.

Belafonte, who struggled academically, dropped out of school in the ninth grade. He worked menial jobs until 1944, when he was old enough to enlist in the U.S. Navy. He was stationed stateside

through the end of World War II, loading military ships bound for the Pacific.

The armed forces were racially segregated then, and Jelly-Schapiro notes that Belafonte's time among Black seamen "supplied him, as a high school dropout who became a proud autodidact, with his essential political education." His fellow service members introduced him to the work of W.E.B. Du Bois and other Black intellectuals.

Back in New York after being discharged, Belafonte was given a ticket to see a play at the American Negro Theatre. Enthralled, he began volunteering there as a stagehand, and eventually, the handsome and charismatic young man was asked to read for parts. He soon met another 19-year-old aspiring actor, Sidney Poitier, whom Belafonte called his "first friend." Both were hungry to see plays but short on funds, so, as Jelly-Schapiro reports, they would purchase a single ticket, with Poitier attending the first act and then, during intermission, summarizing the action for Belafonte, who would swap places with him to see the second.

"Singing wasn't his passion," the author observes of Belafonte, but he was cast in a theater role that required him to sing, and people noticed that he could carry a tune. By 1949, he had married his first wife, Marguerite, and they were expecting a child. In need of steady income, he landed a regular nightclub gig in Manhattan. His successful club engagements led to a record contract.

He started out singing folk music but found his sound with the runaway hit album "Calypso," which, in Jelly-Schapiro's words, "evoked a generic pan-Caribbean: a fantasy Antillean world easy on the ears and minds of Americans." During the 1950s, Belafonte also won groundbreaking roles in films, including "Carmen Jones" and "Island in the Sun." Considering his wide appeal to white audiences, Belafonte opined in his 2011 memoir that he was "Black, but ... not *too* black."

Belafonte met King in 1956, when the young minister traveled to New York seeking support for the mass boycott of segregated buses then underway in Montgomery, Alabama. The two men became friends, and in the coming years, Belafonte worked closely with King in addition to donating generously to civil rights causes. He arranged a meeting between King and presidential candidate John F. Kennedy in 1960. While Kennedy was in office, Belafonte frequently mediated between King and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, the president's brother. He refereed conflicts within the movement as well, as the young activists who would go on to embrace Black Power grew impatient with King's leadership. In addition, Belafonte corralled famous friends including Marlon Brando and Paul Newman to march for civil rights.

"Daylight Come" succeeds in elucidating Belafonte's cultural significance. He headed his own production company and produced a number of remarkable television specials, including a 1966 tribute to the Harlem Renaissance written by Langston Hughes. Late-night host Johnny Carson turned "The Tonight Show" over to Belafonte for an extraordinary week in February 1968, during which Belafonte talked politics with King, Robert Kennedy, Zero Mostel, and Buffy Sainte-Marie, among others. While hosting the show, Belafonte – then married to his second wife, Julie Robinson, who was white – aired "home videos of his interracial family water-skiing on vacation in Las Vegas," Jelly-Schapiro writes. To convey how meaningful this was, the author reports that around the same time, a brouhaha erupted over a television special featuring a duet between Belafonte and British singer Petula Clark: A corporate sponsor protested because the white Clark had touched Belafonte's arm during the performance.

Belafonte spoke openly about his ambivalent relationship with fame, at times feeling resentful of the expectations placed on him and fearful that he wouldn't live up to them. But as a person, as opposed to an icon, he remains remote throughout the book. Jelly-Schapiro alludes several times to an anger that drove the star; he observes, "Harry, for those closest to him, isn't always the easiest to be around." The author references tensions in Belafonte's first two marriages (he was married to his third wife, Pamela Frank, when he died) and calls Belafonte an "inconstant" father.

While these vague characterizations add up to a blurry picture of Belafonte's personality, his deeply felt work as an activist comes through clearly. That work continued well beyond the tumult of the 1960s. In the 1980s, he was a vocal opponent of South Africa's apartheid regime. The supergroup USA for Africa, which recorded the single "We Are the World" for African famine relief in 1985, was Belafonte's brainchild.

A 1996 profile of Belafonte by writer Henry Louis Gates Jr. noted that the singer "was radical before it was chic and remained so long after it wasn't." Jelly-Schapiro attests that the star's political commitment never wavered, with Belafonte, who died at age 96 in 2023, remaining a "crotchety radical" to the end. ■

Looking to keep Americans 'an informed citizenry'

A historian of the U.S. Constitution examines the future of democracy, as artificial intelligence tests the foundational values that have guided America.

By Danny Heitman / Contributor

As the United States marks its 250th birthday this year, Jill Lepore has been a prominent voice in the public conversation about the nation's origins. Lepore, a professor of history and law at Harvard University and a longtime writer for *The New Yorker*, had already gained a lot of attention last year with the publication of "We the People," her sweeping account of the creation of the U.S. Constitution.

After commanding a large stage as an explorer of the American past, Lepore looks to its future in her new book, "The Rise and Fall of the Artificial State." As the Orwellian title suggests, Lepore is deeply worried about what lies ahead, though she isn't hopeless.

Taking its cue from "The Origins of Totalitarianism," a 1951 work in which philosopher Hannah Arendt speculated on how widespread automation and totalitarianism could go hand in hand, Lepore draws a similar parallel between today's rise of Big Tech and threats to democracy. Her concerns involve the pernicious algorithms and dark distortions of social media, but Lepore's primary worry is that artificial intelligence will disconnect our species from the very things that make us human. In a world run by machines, she argues, the ability of free people to chart their own destinies is in danger.

Lepore defines the "Artificial State" as:

... an unfinished digital communications infrastructure with which governments and especially private corporations organize and automate political behavior and public

discourse by way of everything from direct mailing and robocalls to predictive algorithms, social media campaigns, AI agents, and bots (programs that mimic and often pass as humans). Within the Artificial State, nearly every element of public and democratic life – civil society, representative government, an informed citizenry, equality of rights, freedom of thought, freedom of expression, and faith in elections – is vulnerable to subversion through the reduction of politics to the digital manipulation of attention-mining algorithms, the trussing of government by corporate-owned digital architecture, the diminishment of citizenship to minutely message-tested online engagement.

That's a lengthy bill of indictment for AI and its related technologies, and it doesn't even include Lepore's broader alarm about how AI development might damage the planet. "Between 2025 and 2030," she tells readers, "AI was expected to drive a power increase for global data centers of as much as 200 percent. And, given the pace of the race, the power used by data centers was far likelier to draw on fossil fuels – especially coal – than the power used by other industries."

The concerns raised in Lepore's book are not new; one can find similar critiques of Big Tech on just about any recent op-ed page or public affairs podcast. What makes "The Rise and Fall of the Artificial State" worth reading is what makes any Lepore book worthwhile – namely, the breadth of her historical knowledge and gift for anecdote, which often give her narratives the brightly arresting feel of an odyssey through a curio cabinet.

Where else would we learn, for example, that counterculture writer Richard Brautigan championed ecology by handing out packets of seeds with his poems? Or that ancient Chinese census-takers developed a special category for babies with teeth? "A Sicilian priest invented an ingenious voting machine in 1897," readers learn in a quick tutorial on data collection, "though it appears to never have been adopted."

Lepore notes that innovations such as algorithmic prediction and machine learning "have made possible and will continue to make possible astounding and invaluable advances in scientific research. ... But their effects on political discourse, representative democracy, and constitutional government have been almost wholly malign."

"The Rise and Fall of the Artificial State" is vague about how public policy should sort out the good from the bad in its stewardship of these new technologies. It concludes with a general exhortation for citizens to reconnect with their own sense of agency. "The defeat of the Artificial State," Lepore writes, "will require the inspection of facts, the exercise of reason, the search for meaning, the reading and study of philosophy and art and history and literature, and even learning the lessons of ancient parables and of modern science fiction."

Lepore makes the case that the human mind, in all its bright variety, shouldn't be sidelined by an artificial replacement. Her own intellect, ceaselessly surprising in its turns of compassion, humor, and curiosity, seems like a prime example of the values she's fighting to preserve. ■

'The Small Stuff' urges us to value ordinary delights

A video game designer plugs the experience of beauty as a means to ground us in our humanity.

By Danny Heitman / Contributor

In writing a book called "The Small Stuff," Ian Bogost has modestly – and perhaps shrewdly – lowered expectations about what's in store for his readers. While books about achieving happiness abound, Bogost's latest work focuses on something a bit more low-key. He wants us to pay attention to the little pleasures, "such as the autumn leaves that you feel and hear crunch under your feet, or the way a puddle refracts the colors of a sunset." The author has a name for such simple wonder: "I call it *gratification*, and this is a book about how to rediscover it."

Bogost, a contributing writer at The Atlantic and a university professor across several disciplines, makes a distinction among three ideals of a life well lived. He defines happiness as "overarching, big-picture contentment," which happens when what matters most in our life aligns with how we're living it. Satisfaction, as Bogost describes it, "is the pride in accomplishment," that lovely glow that warms us when our work toward a goal pays off. Happiness and satisfaction are both worthy of pursuit, Bogost points out, though they can take a long time to secure.

"But gratification is different," he writes. "It happens right away, and it demands little effort to produce. ... It is always available but often unseen and underappreciated." Gratification, what Bogost calls "the sensory enchantment of everyday life," is delight in "the small stuff" that can inspire us as we tackle higher aspirations. "And doing so takes nothing away from pursuing the big stuff, the ones that produce happiness and satisfaction," he adds.

To illustrate how happiness, satisfaction, and gratification can support each other, Bogost shares the story of his friend, Tom, who became happier after he embraced a challenging career transition. As part of a broader reordering of his life, Tom also renovated his basement so that it would be a brighter place for his family, a big project that brought him satisfaction once it was done. The gratification came from the glide of the brush as Tom painted the basement walls. "He *allowed* himself to enjoy that process rather than scoffing at it, deeming it irritating, or overlooking it entirely," Bogost writes. "He gave himself permission to commune with the brick and the brush and the paint, as if they were old friends with whom he was catching up, rather than inanimate objects with nothing more to offer than their utility."

Not everyone will find the prospect of painting a basement an unalloyed pleasure, but Bogost argues that these modest sensory experiences help ground us in our humanity. "Every day," he notes, "an endless barrage of this small stuff confronts you: pressing the buttons to summon the elevator and then to send it to a desired floor; lifting the lever of a faucet to adjust the temperature of the water it releases; producing the *tinkle-jangle* of ice against glass when stirring milk into your iced coffee with a spoon; summoning a neighbor's deep doorbell; dropping an automobile's gearshift from second down through neutral and into third. You may live for the big stuff, but small things like these comprise the preponderance of your life."

Bogost believes that in a world driven by digital efficiency, with more of us spending time in front of screens, we've become largely removed from the physical connections that give life its texture. Although he's an award-winning video game designer, the author doesn't really delve into how his work in that field might have shaped his views on online life. It's a missed opportunity, and "The Small Stuff" could have benefited from more historical context, too.

Previous technological revolutions have also raised concerns that machines were making human life more detached. William Morris, the 19th-century Englishman who championed the Arts and Crafts Movement to answer what he regarded as the sterility of industrial progress, is a case in point. Bogost's sense of his subject is more topical, which can make it a zippy if glancing read.

"The Small Stuff" is one of several recent books touting the benefits of boosting our sensory awareness. Others include Todd Doughty's "Little Pieces of Hope" and Gretchen Rubin's "Life in Five Senses." But maybe there's no harm in another reminder to make room for serendipity.

"It's cliché to urge you to *stop and smell the roses*," Bogost writes, "but you don't even have to stop. Their scent is already in the air when they bloom alongside the path to the preschool drop-off. Have you taken a whiff?" ■

CULTURE

Africa, in harmony

Boston-based Nigerian musician Temidayo Balogun mixes styles and beats to promote unity on his home continent.

By Goodluck Ajeh / Staff writer

Temidayo Balogun lives thousands of miles from his native country, Nigeria. But when the Boston-based artist uses his saxophone to tell a story – phrases climb and fade as his notes mimic the tonal Yoruba language – his focus is fully on home.

After spending five years in the United States, where he moved for graduate school, Mr. Balogun this summer released his latest album, "Afrolution." It is, he says, a way to connect with Africa from afar. And it's an attempt to inspire other Africans to delve into their own histories and cultures to address the continent's modern challenges.

According to the album's liner notes, Mr. Balogun grounds his ideas and songs from pan-African figures and history, including Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, who once wrote that "Africa is one continent, one people, and one nation."

It is a modern-day iteration, music scholars say, of a long tradition of African diaspora artists bringing their music to a global audience, and of using this music to raise awareness about political situations back home.

"If we go back to the 1960s and '70s, we had a number of African artists who were even in exile who would come to the West and continue playing their music," says Stephanie Shonekan, a professor of ethnomusicology and dean of the College of Arts and Humanities at the University of Maryland.

Today, the challenges facing the continent include a humanitarian crisis in South Sudan, a spate of kidnappings and killings in

Nigeria, and conflict between rebels and government forces in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. In South Africa, anti-migrant tensions are on the rise, with mass protests and door-to-door raids targeting foreign nationals – moves that have divided Africans.

"The only way I can really contribute ... as a Nigerian living in the U.S. who doesn't really have much power to do anything in Nigeria is by making music that speaks about these issues," Mr. Balogun says.

For many West Africans, Dr. Shonekan says, music is an integral part of life – present from children's naming ceremonies to funerals. Mr. Balogun has been making music since he was 5 years old, starting with the akuba drum, a local African instrument. Today, he also plays the saxophone, piano, flute, clarinet, and talking drum.

Mr. Balogun has collaborated with several bands, including Charlie Kohlhase's Saxophone Support Group, and regularly plays with The Makanda Project – a Boston-based jazz ensemble devoted to performing and extending the work of American composer Makanda Ken McIntyre.

"There is a joy and a love and a sincerity that he brings to it, and you can feel that in his playing," says John Kordalewski, who leads The Makanda Project. "It's not like he isn't playing jazz. There's just a level of rhythmic depth and sophistication that I can kind of feel he's bringing something else into jazz."

Abimbola Kai-Lewis, an assistant professor in the Africana studies department at Berklee College of Music in Boston, says diaspora artists can introduce African traditions to unfamiliar audiences while reinterpreting them through their own identities and contemporary styles.

Mr. Balogun's song, "ttowgfuth – Jan 17th 1961," which stands for "To The Ones Who Gave For Us To Have," for instance, is in honor of Patrice Lumumba, the first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, who led the country to its independence. The song, he says, is a way to remind "the young ones that the freedom that we enjoy today is at the back [sic] of so many people."

When Mr. Balogun was making his new album, he says, he explored various ideas of the Yoruba tradition along with those of other West African countries. In the fourth track, titled "Òṣùṣù Qwọ̀," which means "a bound broom," he draws on the Yoruba concept of unity.

"In the composition process, I had a lot of percussion instruments like the *gangan*, which is known as the talking drum; *agogo*, which is known as the cowbell; [and] *shekere* ... and you also have the *omele batá*," Mr. Balogun says.

Despite the artist's focus on African cultures and traditions, Eric Hofbauer, a jazz guitarist and composer, notes that Mr. Balogun's music doesn't only appeal to listeners of one music style. Within his music, Mr. Hofbauer says, is Afrobeat, blues, "Charlie Parker and bebop and [John] Coltrane and funk."

"You don't have to ... only listen to a certain type of jazz or only listen to modern jazz or only listen to Nigerian Afropop or anything like that, to get into his music," he says.

To Mr. Balogun, the various instruments mixed with the melody of the Yoruba language and the jazz harmony symbolize people coming together.

"That's a way of showcasing the power of unity, and I wanted to really talk or explore the idea of unity both in music and also in our society," he says. "Right now, we have so much going on between some West African countries and South Africa."

Mr. Balogun notes that, despite the current division, "We can hope for a united Africa." ■

Contours of burnt umber, pumpkin, and rust

NAVAJO NATION, ARIZ.

Stepping into the cool, dark mouth of the slot canyon, I feel an immediate relief from the relentless desert sun. Only then do my eyes adjust to the sandy, swerving path ahead, allowing Upper Antelope Canyon to reveal itself to me.

Light streams in from the top of the canyon at different angles, as Navajo tour guides help pose and photograph visitors for the perfectly illuminated shot. For a quarter of a mile, I join the other visitors weaving between the tall walls of Navajo sandstone, through pockets of darkness and light, while the jagged canyon shifts between shades of burnt umber, rust, and pumpkin.

Antelope Canyon, sitting on Navajo Nation land a few miles south of Page, Arizona, is one of the most photographed slot canyons in the world. Thousands of people from around the globe visit Upper Antelope Canyon each day during peak season, with nearby Lower Antelope Canyon also regularly selling out its daily tours. Visitors are required to book with one of half a dozen tour operators approved by Navajo Nation Parks & Recreation, with a 90-minute excursion costing more than \$100 per person.

After bouncing in vans and trucks through the sand to the canyon's entrance, visitors spend roughly half an hour between the sandstone walls before hiking almost a mile back to the cars and then flipping through new photos on their phones during the drive back to Page. Even those who haven't walked through the canyon themselves or seen it posted on social media feeds will likely recognize the orange slopes: A photo of Upper Antelope Canyon is a Microsoft Windows default desktop wallpaper on computer screens around the world.

But Antelope Canyon was formed millions of years ago and has a storied, sacred history that goes back long before the creation of cellphones or computers. For the Navajo people, the upper canyon is Tsé bigháníliní ("the place where water runs through rocks"). It is forever being carved and recarved by monsoon flash floods rushing through narrow passageways, with turbulent whirlpools cutting deep spirals on the walls and shifting the fragile sandstone. That means this place is always changing. As I left, I realized something spectacular: My next visit might look different from this one. ■

Sudoku difficulty: ★☆☆☆

3	8		9	7		1		
		1					3	6
7		4	3	1	6		9	8
4		2	7	6				
	3						7	
	7	9		4	8		2	
8							5	
9		7	5		1		8	
					7		6	

How to do Sudoku

Fill in the grid so the numbers 1 through 9 appear just once in each column, row, and three-by-three block.

Crossword and Sudoku solutions

ANSWER KEY

D	A	S	E	D	S	L	E	S	S	A	N	T	S	A
A	E	N	E	A	P	O	L	C	L	O	E	S	I	D
E	D	O	K	C	K	A	R	A	T	S	I	D	E	S
L	I	C	E	C	E	A	S	E	A	S	E	A	S	E
S	T	S	T	S	P	A	R	S	A	L	A	R	E	L
N	A	M	A	N	S	A	R	S	O	A	R	S	E	T
O	L	O	S	I	D	E	T	E	C	R	E	S	E	S
S	E	A	S	E	C	E	A	S	A	L	A	R	E	L
D	E	S	A	W	S	I	D	E	S	A	L	A	R	E
D	E	S	O	P	O	S	I	D	E	S	A	L	A	R
A	R	E	A	N	O	R	I	H	S	A	L	A	R	E
T	A	F	S	A	B	S	R	A	B	S	R	A	B	S

2	4	5	8	3	7	9	6	1
9	6	7	5	2	1	4	8	3
8	1	3	6	9	4	2	5	7
6	7	9	1	4	8	3	2	5
1	3	8	2	5	9	6	7	4
4	5	2	7	6	3	8	1	9
7	2	4	3	1	6	5	9	8
5	9	1	4	8	2	7	3	6
3	8	6	9	7	5	1	4	2

Crossword

ACROSS

1. However
4. Mortar beaters
8. Goofy
12. Oar wood
13. Certain golf club
14. A in geometry
15. Bovine hangout
16. Banked
18. Aired out
20. Isn't anymore
21. Alack's partner
24. Discontinue
28. Stashed away
32. Grain storage site
33. ____ kwon do (Korean karate)
34. Glides on high
36. Winnipeg's prov.
37. Bali or Elba
39. Objects to
41. Meet race
43. Crystalline rock
44. ____ biscuit (hardtack)
46. ____ B. DeMille
50. Divert
55. Emotional verse
56. Swimming hole
57. Crossword hint
58. Cultural funding grp.
59. Aardvark delicacies
60. Rosebud, famously
61. Jerry Lewis movie "The ____ Sack"

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15				16				17				
18			19				20					
			21		22	23		24		25	26	27
28	29	30					31		32			
33				34				35		36		
37			38		39				40			
41				42		43						
			44		45			46		47	48	49
50	51	52				53	54			55		
56					57					58		
59					60					61		

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DOWN

1. Dis-tressed
2. Client online
3. Cuisine type
4. Enigmas
5. "____ You Lonesome Tonight?" (Elvis tune)
6. Charlie Parker's jazz style
7. Blizzard feature
8. Oration locations
9. Craft's kin
10. Invoice inclusion
11. Lincoln's son
17. Bunt, on a scorecard
19. Melodic sense
22. Covering
23. Old catalog issuer
25. Sightings
26. Blind element
27. Almost forever
28. Blend
29. Fluidity
30. Battery component
31. Downslide
35. Like 80 decks of cards
38. Hopper's proppers
40. Bard's "before"
42. Besides
45. Lob trajectories
47. Pros and ____
48. Cartoon bubble
49. First position
50. Backyard luxury
51. Fluoride, for one
52. Braille bit
53. Everything
54. Snooker player's need