

# **HERMIT HERALD**

## **ISSUE 113**

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### **QUOTE FOR THE DAY**

**“All truth passes through three stages. First it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as self-evident.” Arthur Schopenhauer, German philosopher.**

### **IRAN REDUX**

**Recall, if you will, that president Trump hated the Iranian nuclear deal as it was of short time duration with no restrictions on Iran with regard to missile development and fomenting regional discord through its proxy militias.**

**The result was that he pulled the U.S. out of the nuclear deal for which he was excoriated. At the same time, he imposed crippling sanctions on Iran in an effort to bring the country back to the negotiating table. Among his greatest detractors was presidential candidate, Joe Biden.**

**Fast forward to the era of president Biden who decides he wants to re-engage with Iran and re-enter the nuclear deal. Iran is excited – a real possibility to get the sanctions lifted. We learned this week that negotiators are optimistic that the U.S. may be able to get back in the deal. As Lara Jakes writes in the NY Times, “President Biden has pledged to rejoin the nuclear accord- but has also called for negotiating a ‘longer and stronger’ deal afterward to curb iran’s missile program and its support for proxy forces in places such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen where they threaten U.S. allies, including Israel and Saudi Arabia.”**

**And so you see dear reader, the truth is self-evident.**

### **IF I WERE A REPUBLICAN STRATEGIST**

**It’s really time to give up the hunt for the “fraudulent” ballots that “stole” the election. The latest is a conspiracy theory that, “40,000 ballots were flown into Arizona and stuffed into ballot boxes and they came from the southeast part of the world, Asia, OK?” this according to John Brakey, helping to audit**

**votes in Maricopa County, Arizona. The NY Times article goes on to say, “Some ballots are receiving microscope and ultra-violet light examinations, apparently to address unfounded claims that fraudulent ballots contained watermarks that were visible under UV light – or that thousands of fraudulent ballots were flown in from Southeast Asia using paper with bamboo fibers.” I mean, folks this just has to end. There was no problem with the voting machines and not a shred of evidence has been produced to show the election was stolen at the ballot box. 70% of Republicans believe voting irregularities affected the outcome of the election – that’s 27.8 million people, but in the entire country (including those republicans) only one third, or 52.9 million people have that view. With such a low level of support, the Republicans are making this the loudest instrument in their band.**

**Instead of grasping at straws, the Conservatives would be better off going after real believable targets to explain the loss. How about the pandemic that ruined the economy and truly “stole” the election? How about the**

**press, with its incessant hatred for the president – might they have had a role in “stealing” the election? Just a couple of thoughts, but it’s time to stop the ballot chasing.**

**As the Republicans look for ways to attack the Democrats and gain voters they have some wonderful targets: 78% of the country says the border is in crisis and 59% say the president is doing a poor job in that sector.**

**41% of Democrats want to reduce police funding, but only one quarter of the population agrees. 44% of Democrats have a negative view of capitalism – where is that going – Socialism – Marxism? You know where the Republicans will go with that one.**

**Senate Republican, Ben Sasse, attacks the president over the anti-employment effect that increased unemployment benefits are causing. “Bad Federal policy is making unemployment pay more than work, and millions of jobs aren’t getting filled.” Realizing he can get beaten up on this one, the president, belatedly,**

**Is now calling for proof that recipients are looking for jobs. The political damage is already done and the Republicans have one more point of attack.**

**Senator Rick Scott has a pretty concise target list: “Do we want open borders? No. Do we want to shut down our schools? No. Do we want men playing in women’s sports? No. Do we want to shut down the Keystone pipeline? No. Do we want voter ID? Yes.”**

**Obviously the Democrats are polar opposites on Scott’s target list, but no Republican is trying to win their hearts. The Gallup poll of 12/20 has a U.S. voting base of: Democrats, 31%, 49.3 million; Republicans, 25%, 39.7 million and Independents, 41%, 65.2 million. Who do you think is the target audience?**

## **AFGHANISTAN AND TAIWAN/CHINA**

**AFGHANISTAN: Look, president Biden didn’t create these problems, but they are his babies now. Screw it up and he owns them.**

**Michael McCaul, a Republican congressman reports bad news about the peace process with the Taliban which gave the U.S. a rationale to withdraw from the country – but not so fast – “The Taliban tellingly announced they would not participate in a peace conference planned to start late last month in Turkey and refused to commit to a new date, effectively ending the peace process. The Taliban clearly do not want peace.”**

**This changes the calculus regarding our announced departure. I have previously written on several occasions that whether it’s six months or six years, the Taliban are going to take over the country. Thinking that a peace settlement with the Taliban and our departure would bring peace to the country was a nice way to make ourselves feel comfortable with withdrawal. Now it can be seen for what it is – a total sham. The thinking had been that with the Taliban being party to a peace agreement, there was a likelihood that they would moderate their behavior, especially with regard to women and education. Also, as a party to the peace accord, even if the Taliban became the most powerful entity in the**

**country, they would remain eligible for the hundreds of millions of dollars that Afghanistan gets every year from other countries.**

**McCaul goes on, “Many in the defense and intelligence communities oppose the pullout. A complete withdrawal based on an arbitrary deadline, rather than conditions on the ground threatens OUR long term national security.” As true as that may be, how about the Afghans themselves, plus our responsibility to evacuate thousands of Afghan interpreters who we have agreed to bring to the U.S.? If we don’t get them out, they will be killed when we leave. It is a false dream that we will be able to effectively provide air cover for the Afghan army from “over the horizon locations” – remote sites. Face it, they are toast. Scuttling the peace process by the Taliban should give president Biden pause to reconsider. Yes, 20 years has been a long time and we have experienced the loss of 2,300 American military. As a comparison, in 14 years between 2006 and 2020, 5,605 American military have died in training accidents, 82, just this year to date. Point being, pretend you are the president,**

**have gone ahead with the complete withdrawal in light of the Taliban having reneged on their agreement to a peace deal and you wake up one morning to learn there has been whole sale slaughter of the Afghan military, girls and women are no longer allowed to go to school, millions, having fled the country (as they did when the Taliban ruled in the 1990s) are in dire straits, and, as happened when we pulled out of Iraq, leaving a power vacuum, ISIS has come right back.**

**Having imagined yourself as president how do you feel about your decision- any regrets? 80 killed in a bombing of a school in Kabul this past Saturday. Columnist, Thomas Gibbons, comments, “The reality as American troops depart is being driven home by massacres like the one on Saturday- there has been more chaos than accord and more fear than hope.” As a recent article concluded, “The Taliban’s oft repeated adage loomed over the day, ‘You have the watches, we have the time’”.**

**TAIWAN/CHINA**

**In issue 109 we discussed, “Strategic Ambiguity”, which has been in place since the early 1970s, wherein we recognize only one China and do not recognize Taiwan as an independent country. According to political science professor, Peter Beinart, president Biden is playing with fire. He writes, “Mr. Biden’s quiet, incremental moves to establish official relations with Taiwan is meaningfully increasing the risk of world war.”**

**In April the administration said it was easing decades-old limitations on contacts with the Taiwanese government. “The administration has said that America’s support for Taiwan is, ‘rock solid’ and calls for a more formal commitment to the island’s defense.” Beinart continues, “It is deeply reckless to believe that the administration can both provoke Beijing by undoing the, ‘one China’ compact and deter it with the threat of military force.”**

**The fear is that Taiwan may become more emboldened by the U.S. statements of increased support and declare itself an independent nation. Harvard political scientist, Graham Allison observed, “No**

**Chinese National security official I have ever met, and no U.S. official who has examined the situation doubts that China would choose war over losing territory it considers vital to its national interest.”**

**Beinart states, “Deterrence requires power and will, and when it comes to Taiwan, the United States is deficient in both.” Fared Zakaria points out, “The Pentagon has reportedly enacted 18 war games against China over Taiwan, and China has prevailed in every one.”**

**Taiwan is 100 miles away from main-land China and 5,000 miles from Honolulu. Within the region, China has 39 air bases, the United States, two. As referenced in my earlier issue, the supply lines are unacceptably long. Lastly, in terms of concern related to U.S. China relations, among Americans, Taiwan doesn't make the top seven. Among the Chinese, it's topic number one. Proceed with care Mr. President.**

**A BED TIME STORY**

**Ah, yes – Snow White and the seven dwarfs. Who can forget that wonderful tale we all heard or read as children. Put in suspended animation for eternity by an evil witch, Snow White is saved by Prince Charming as he kisses her on the cheek, bringing her back to life.**

**At the recently reopened Disneyland people are mesmerized by the newly opened Snow White Ride, which, near the end, takes you by a recreation of the prince kissing the sleeping beauty. “Not so fast,” say SFGate reviewers, Katie Dowd and Julie Tremaine, criticizing the prince’s, “kiss he gives her without her consent, which cannot possibly be true love if only one person knows its happening.” Hey, but they are not alone. Japanese gender-studies professor, Kazue Muta insisted it showed, “sexual assault on an unconscious person.” So there you have it “non-consensual sex” with a sleeping person – well at least she’s alive and can get out to Publix to buy groceries.**

**AND THIS JUST IN**

**The Woke movement has the game of Chess in its crosshairs. How so? I’ve played a lot of**

**mediocre Chess, but never considered for a moment that there might be an issue about which I should be concerned. Well, it turns out there is a rule in Chess I never knew. The White Chess piece always goes first. So now you know the problem. My suggestion – flip a coin and who ever wins gets to start with which ever pieces he chooses.**

### **AND SPEAKING OF CHOICES**

**Can't help but remember a favorite story of Don Imus. Seems this guy down in Brooklyn had trained his pet chicken to play Tic, Tac, Toe by pecking at and picking up a kernel of corn. It was absolutely uncanny – the chicken won about 70% of the time against humans. Some people just can't take defeat gracefully. The common loser's complaint was, "But the chicken always gets to go first."**

**Your faithful scribe,**

**PB**