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OUR VIEW

Still waiting for better trade deals

Reporters at Politico recently published an analysis that showed our 11 former partners in the Trans-Pacific Partnership are involved in 27 separate negotiations with each other, with major international trading blocs and regional powerhouses such as China.

It reports that seven deals that impact U.S. farmers have been signed since the Trump administration pulled the United States out of TPP.

The TPP was seen by many, but not all, U.S. agricultural groups as a boon. It included the U.S. and 11 other countries — Japan, Canada, Mexico,

Australia, Vietnam, Chile, Malaysia, Peru, New Zealand, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam. Japan, Mexico and Canada are among the biggest trade partners for U.S. agriculture.

Negotiations on the pact began in 2008 under President George W. Bush. A deal was reached in October of 2015.

President Obama supported the final deal and submitted it to Congress for ratification. With an election looming, Republicans and Democrats in Congress weren't anxious to be pinned down on a deal that had both support and opposition that crossed party lines.

The pact's critics included the Republican and the Democratic presidential nominees.

Donald Trump said the deal would undermine the U.S. economy.

As secretary of state, Hillary Clinton raved about the deal, calling it the "gold standard" of trade pacts. Candidate Clinton then opposed the deal during the campaign and vowed to oppose it as president.

So without ratification prior to the

election, the U.S. was destined to reject TPP in its present form.

Following through on his campaign promise, President Trump withdrew from the accord on Jan. 23.

Among the other parties in the pact there are differing opinions as to what TPP means without the United States. Shinzo Abe, Japan's prime minister, says the deal is meaningless without the U.S.

Nevertheless, our trading partners around the Pacific Rim aren't wasting time. There are a host of bilateral and multilateral discussions in the works. China,

Trump's campaign nemesis, is trying to make deals with our trading partners.

Throughout the campaign, and since taking office, Trump said he'd replace the 12-party pact with a series of bilateral trade deals that would bring jobs and industry back to the United States. That sounds great. When can we expect that to happen?

Farmers and ranchers, a group that largely supported Trump's election, have a lot riding on foreign trade. The U.S. exports \$135 billion in agricultural products each year. It could always be better, but it's pretty great as it is.

It's hard to say what dumping TPP and renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement may mean for the economy in general, and for farmers and ranchers in particular.

But at the moment it's fair to ask what happens next, and when will it happen? We await a tweet, or any other appropriate communication, from the Oval Office.

The TPP was seen by many agricultural groups as a boon — now 11 of our former partners are moving on without us.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of publisher Kathryn Brown, managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, and opinion page editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

YOUR VIEWS

March against racism sadly necessary in 2017

The recent march against hate in Pendleton was so bittersweet. On the one hand, there is still a spectrum of deplorable beliefs and behaviors that impact our society. On the other hand, the march demonstrated the widespread intolerance in our communities for hate.

Whether we are conservative, moderate, or liberal in our ideologies, I strongly believe we share a common sense of civil decency. In the current political climate where bad behavior has become more enabled and prevalent, it is so important that we demonstrate how unacceptable hate is. We all have our ways, and there is no one right way. Either through community service, how we vote, contacting elected officials, supporting efforts for equality, or just in how we model our behavior to our children and others, we can all make a difference.

Thanks to all who organized the march. It is regretful that it needed to happen, but the strong participation speaks wonders.

Jeff Blackwood
Pendleton

Media has picked their side — they're the Nazis

We used to pledge allegiance to our flag that ended "with liberty and justice for all." When the Hammonds go to prison for starting fires to save their ranch from a government that lusted for their land, their is no more justice in the land. When Lavoy Finicum is murdered in cold blood for protesting that sentence

the judge called unconscionable, there is no justice in the land.

When Judge Navarro denies defendants the rights of the Constitution and Bill of Rights to the point of ripping a defendant off the witness stand, there is no justice in the land. When Gov. Brown signs a law forcing taxpayers to fund illegal alien, partial birth and sex-selection abortions there is no justice in the land.

The *East Oregonian* has challenged Oregonians to "pick a side, Nazi or American." The Nazi party denied liberty by erasing those they deemed unworthy. The Nazi party denied justice to those who opposed their oppression and they murdered those who opposed them and the press was silent. Hitler set himself up as judge, jury and executioner and the press and media justified the fascism. Isn't that what the *EO* and the media and press advocate by erasing everything, violently if necessary, from our past that offends them?

When Judge Navarro set herself up as judge, jury and executioner the press and media, including the *EO*, has been silent, they have picked their side. When Lavoy Finicum was murdered and the government covered up the injustice, the press and media have been silent, they have picked their side.

When Donald Trump exposes the hypocrisy of the press and media railing against white fascism while condoning the racism, censorship and violence of Antifa and BLM, the press and media incessantly rails against the president. Why? Because they have picked their side.

Stuart Dick
Irrigon

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

OTHER VIEWS



From Kabul to Baghdad, my bird's-eye view

BAGHDAD — I just spent eight days traveling with the Air Force to all of its key forward bases in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. So President Donald Trump's speech Monday night was very timely for me. It was also unnerving.

It was so full of bombast and clichés, so larded with phrases like "we will break their will," so lacking in details and, most of all, so lacking in humility in confronting a problem and a region that has vexed better men for ages that I still don't know where he's going — only that he is going there very definitively.

I totally agreed with the president's remarks that our men and women serving in the Middle East "deserve to return to a country that is not at war with itself at home." But the rank hypocrisy of this man — who has done so much to divide us in recent months to satisfy only his "base" — using our troops as a prop to extol the virtues of national unity made me sick to my stomach.

It also made me recall a lunch I had last week in the mess hall at Bagram Airfield, near Kabul, with Chief Master Sgt. Cory Olson from the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing. Olson explained that working in Afghanistan he was really disconnected from all the political turmoil in America.

And then he told me this story: "I was talking to this civilian contractor the other day who just came back from a couple of weeks' home leave in Dallas. And this guy told me he was really relieved to get back to 'reality' in Kabul — because the politics back home was so crazy."

You know that U.S. politics has jumped the rails when a U.S. contractor is relieved to get back from America to his little base in Afghanistan.

Anyway, enough of that. Since I can't explain Trump's Middle East, let me explain what I saw here — three things in particular: I saw a new way of mounting warfare by the United States in Iraq. I saw in this new warfare a strategy that offers at least a glimmer of hope for Iraq, if and when ISIS is defeated. But, though only a glimpse, I saw in Afghanistan an eroding stalemate — with all the same issues that have undermined stability there for years: government corruption, distrust among Afghans and perfidious interventions by Pakistan and Iran.

The best way for me to explain what's new in Iraq is with a scene I watched unfold Saturday. We were at the joint strike cell in Irbil, in Iraqi Kurdistan. This is where multiple Air Force television feeds come in live from drones, U-2s, satellites and U.S. and coalition fighter jets. The officers there are coordinating with Iraqi army combat forces on the ground, and their U.S. military advisers embedded just behind the battlefield, to hit ISIS targets as the Iraqi army begins its push west.

Having retaken Mosul, the Iraqi army is driving ISIS into the Euphrates River Valley, where it looks like it will make a last stand. This was the second day of the Iraqis' thrust west and they were already meeting resistance in a small town on the road to ISIS-controlled Tal Afar. Several U.S. eyes in the sky were trained on a single-story, flat-roof building, about 30 feet wide, sandwiched between two larger buildings. Iraqi soldiers crawling toward this building were receiving lots of small-arms fire from inside, stalling their advance about 500 feet away.

Their U.S. advisers were sending all this information to the strike cell in real time. Meanwhile, in the strike cell, team members sitting in front of computer screens were calculating exactly how much firepower was required to kill the ISIS fighters and not hurt any civilians who might be nearby. They did a quick tally of the remaining weapons on the U.S. fighter aircraft in the area — seeing which had what smart bombs left.

Seconds later a call of "weapon away, 30 seconds" rang out as an F-15E released a 500-pound GPS-guided smart bomb. The screen rebroadcasting the F-15E's targeting pod showed the bomb going straight down through the roof.

"We have splash," said one of the controllers in a monotone as a huge plume of smoke engulfed the video screen. Quickly, the smoke cleared and the 30-foot-wide building was smoldering rubble — but the two buildings to the sides were totally intact, so any civilians inside should be unhurt.

The officer in charge told me that a few



THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment

weeks earlier, during the campaign to retake Mosul, two Iraqi soldiers were wounded, and hiding from an ISIS unit inside a building 15 yards away. Using laser targeting, the U.S. team fired a rocket whose size, direction and shape were chosen to take down only the ISIS building and make its walls fall in the opposite direction of the two pinned-down Iraqis. The rocket worked as intended, and they were rescued.

This is war in Iraq today in a nutshell.

For years we've measured our involvement in Middle East wars by one pair of indexes — boots on the ground and killed in action.

Because of that, most Americans are now paying scant attention to Iraq, where our boots on the ground have shrunk to a few thousand and where there have been just 17 U.S. military deaths since we re-engaged in Iraq to defeat ISIS in 2014.

But the real story is wings in the air. We are involved in a gigantic military enterprise in Iraq. But it's with massive conventional air power married to unconventional special forces, who are advising the Iraqi army

that is actually doing the ground fighting. This is making our presence in Iraq much more sustainable for us and for the Iraqis.

Ironically, it might never have happened had President Barack Obama not withdrawn our combat troops from Iraq in 2011, because Iraqis couldn't agree on a legal formula for their staying.

After that, the then-Shiite-led Iraqi government began abusing Sunnis, and ISIS emerged in response. That forced Iraqis to rethink their relationship with us. A U.S. Air Force special operations officer told me of returning to Iraq in early 2014 and meeting with the Iraqi Counterterrorism Service — the only truly professional, nonsectarian fighting unit then left in the country. The U.S. officer had come to ask the CTS what material aid the U.S. could offer in the fight against ISIS, and the CTS commander responded that he didn't need aid: "We want you," he said.

And so Obama began slowly reintroducing U.S. Special Forces back into Iraq and, for the first time, sending some into Syria, all in a totally new context. When George W. Bush invaded Iraq in 2003 to topple Saddam Hussein, we destroyed the government from the top down. We toppled Saddam's statue. And we were advised largely by Iraqi exiles of dubious legitimacy in local eyes.

It became our war, producing iconic pictures of U.S. soldiers kicking down doors and pointing guns at cowering women.

Even though ISIS emerged after we left, we have now returned at the invitation of Iraqis from the bottom up, not exiles — making our presence much more legitimate and sustainable for any long fight. Iraqi Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds were forced to unify, at least minimally, to defeat ISIS, opening new possibilities.

This is Iraq's war of liberation. They own it.

The war in Afghanistan is different. The air power component is there, but U.S. Special Forces are still doing too much fighting and dying. And Trump talked Monday night like they will now do more. And we don't have the legitimacy you now feel in Iraq.

Personal security for our Afghan allies is still minimal. I stood on the tarmac at Bagram Airfield and listened as a U.S.-trained Afghan pilot explained that the last thing he does before climbing into the cockpit is call home to be sure his kids have not been abducted by the Taliban, who know that he works with the U.S. and have threatened him repeatedly.

Again, the fact that this pilot is still ready to fly with the U.S. shows real courage. He wants something different for his country, and he's not alone. But is he in the majority? Clearly he's got neighbors who don't think that we, or the Afghan government we're supporting, are legitimate. Culture trumps strategy.

This is going to take ages to fix, and if you fix Afghanistan, well, you fix Afghanistan. So what. If you fix Iraq with a real power-sharing accord you create a model that can radiate out across the Arab world, because Iraq is a microcosm of the Arab world, with Sunnis, Shiites, Kurds, Turkmen, Christians and many others.

Thomas Friedman, a *New York Times* columnist, was awarded Pulitzer Prizes for international reporting and commentary.