

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

World peace and the World Cup

The World Cup kicks off today and, for a world in turmoil, it could not arrive at a better time.

Some international athletic tournaments have long had the high ideals of promoting entertainment and sport, along with peace and rule-bound competition.

Pierre de Coubertin, the French academic and historian largely credited as being the father of the modern Olympics, saw athletics as an opportunity to promote understanding between cultures and reduce the danger of war. The ancient Olympics in Greece was a literal truce: wars paused to allow for safe travel to the games and sportsmanship secured it at the event itself.

But de Coubertin thought that, by promoting friendly competition and cultural exchange, a worldwide sporting event could provide more than a temporary truce. Soccer is the best avenue for doing so.

The Olympics are grand and historic, but Euro-centric and dominated by rich nations — and Nordic ones especially so in the winter. Soccer, on the other foot, is a sport that does not require a gargantuan budget. You need only a dozen top-notch athletes who have practiced with an inexpensive ball and



An Iranian fan dances in front of the Saviour of Spilled Blood Cathedral in St. Petersburg, Russia, on Wednesday. Iran will face Morocco in the 2018 soccer World Cup match on Friday in St. Petersburg.

AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky

an open field since they could stand up. That's why such diverse countries as Germany and Brazil are co-favorites to win this year's cup and smaller, poorer countries like Uruguay and Poland could advance far in the tournament.

For local audiences, there is a huge missing ingredient in this summer's event: the American team. It felt close

to a national tragedy when the United States failed to qualify last year, though in our new geopolitical environment that may have been a blessing in disguise. President Donald Trump can now remain far from Russia. And the world gets to play without us, an apt metaphor for Trump's "America Alone" policy.

Granted, the World Cup is not without

its faults, just like the world at large. FIFA is a corrupt organization. And yes, Russia bribed FIFA officials to secure these games, and Putin will use the World Cup — as he used the Olympics — to promote nationalism and Russian influence.

But the world can combat that with friendship and camaraderie, both for their country and for the sport. After all, a win is just a win and a loss does not correspond to a loss of life. We are proud of our places, our countries and our cultures. And we humans are competitive. So isn't it great to compete in something where no one dies?

We're prone to diminish sport by calling it a distraction, but that's exactly what it is. And in times like these, isn't it a blessing?

There are a lot of problems out there. But the more capital — emotional and literal — that the world puts into sport and games, the better off it will be.

As you watch this summer's tournament, seize the opportunity of not having the focus on the American team. Study the faces of foreign players, listen to their stories and find empathy with their dreams and goals. Learn to cheer for them in their own languages. Become a fan of the world, then work to protect it.

OTHER VIEWS

On North Korea, a president who tried something different

Reaction to President Trump's summit with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un has broken down along the usual Trump/anti-Trump divisions. The truth is, it will take a while before it's clear whether the summit achieved anything or not.

But give the president credit for trying a new approach to an intractable problem.

Trump had no electoral mandate on North Korea. Despite the oversized role it has played in his presidency, the issue of Kim Jong Un did not come up much in the 2016 campaign. It was rarely discussed in the GOP primary debates and wasn't a factor in the Trump-Clinton general election debates.

Even when it did come up, the discussion could be pretty unifying, as when rival GOP candidate Sen. Marco Rubio compared candidate Trump to Kim. "You have a lunatic in North Korea trying to get access to nuclear weapons," Rubio said in February 2016. "We have a lunatic in America trying to get hold of them, too."

To the extent that he had a position on North Korea, Trump's was that he would be willing to hold direct negotiations with Kim. While he said he would not travel to North Korea to see Kim, and would not honor him with a White House dinner, Trump made clear he saw benefit in talking to the North Korean leader.

"I would speak to him," Trump said in May 2016, shortly after effectively clinching the Republican nomination. "I would have no problem speaking to him."

Of all the controversial proposals that Trump made during the campaign — that wasn't one of them. And that was because of the long record of failure of talks between the U.S. and North Korea. What was wrong with suggesting a new approach to a problem no other president had been able to solve?

The problem was, North Korea became a front-burner issue almost immediately after Trump took office, when Kim began a series of provocative acts to test the new president. On Feb. 12, 2017, North Korea tested a new ballistic missile. On March 6, it fired four ballistic missiles into the ocean near Japan. On April 5, it fired another missile. On April 16, another missile. On April 28, another. Later, there was a nuclear weapons test. And so on.

In response, Trump came up with

something called "maximum pressure and engagement." He imposed sanctions on top of the sanctions that have long been in place against North Korea. He made more progress than previous administrations in enlisting China to help. And he made military plans.

Have you heard people say war is not an option in North Korea, or that it is unthinkable? Trump started thinking about it. His

top military officers worked through a number of scenarios for war on the Korean peninsula. And while they were doing it, Trump escalated his anti-Kim rhetoric to unheard-of levels. Kim was "Little Rocket Man," and North Korean aggression would be "met with fire, fury, and frankly power, the likes of which this world has never seen before."

Trump later explained he did it because he believed the old way had not worked. "Other administrations ... had a policy of silence," he told Fox News' Sean Hannity after the summit. "That's not the answer. That's not what you have to do. So I think the rhetoric — I hated to do it, sometimes I felt foolish doing it — but we had no choice."

So while Trump bellowed threats, his administration quietly planned to make good on those threats, if it came to that.

Put it together, and what seemed to some critics like a reckless strategy worked — or worked enough to pressure the North Koreans into at least temporarily stopping their provocations and wanting to talk. And when, after the talks were on track, the North Koreans resumed their provocative statements, Trump abruptly canceled them — and the North got back on board.

So now the talks have happened, and North Korea has agreed — much like it has in years past — to denuclearize. Critics rightly point out that Kim and his predecessors never kept their promises before. On the other hand, these talks were the result of a series of events unlike those in the past.

Maybe Trump's plan will work. Maybe it will work a little and not work a little. Or maybe it will fail altogether. But it's the result of a president re-thinking a problem that desperately needed a new approach.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.



OTHER VIEWS

Infrastructure key to attracting more airport business

A recent editorial in the *East Oregonian* talked extensively about the risks involved with developing the infrastructure at the Pendleton Regional Airport and its associated UAV test range. The editorial called the plans to put in more robust utilities at the airport "a detriment, not a benefit, to most residents."

The article seemed to infer that improving the airport's infrastructure was an ill-conceived gamble with taxpayer dollars.

The *EO* also voiced discontent with a city council "who barely deigned to discuss this pivot to an expensive new project." I found this attitude quite curious and can only ask the authors: Where have you been?

For the past year, the city council and I have been talking to dozens of civic groups about the turnaround that has been taking place at the airport and its UAV test range. Progress reports have been given to the council in public meetings. We have been saying, very consistently, that as the airport generates more money we need to reinvest those profits into making our test range more available, safe and modern.

Included in this idea is the building of more hangars and office spaces so new customers can have a place to work. Also necessary are the water, sewer, and power lines that this type of infrastructure requires.

In fact, for the past six months, we have been working closely with the Economic Development Administration to apply for a \$3 million grant for just



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such improvements. For some reason this EDA grant wasn't even mentioned in the *EO* editorial, and yet it is the catalyst required to spur any new building projects at the airport. Without the EDA money, improvements will proceed much more slowly.

The talk of spending \$25 million is for the total scope of projects in the master plan and would probably be spread over many years, if not a couple of

decades.

The *EO* article said I was "out of touch" because I emphasized the hundreds of thousands of dollars that the UAS test range returns to Pendleton more than the importance of job creation. Let's be honest, the test range is creating some well-paying jobs, but we have hundreds of jobs with benefits sitting open in Pendleton right now.

The revenues generated by the test range have put airport operations in the black (we have started to pay off the airport debt and have ceased loaning the airport money each year to pay for operations). Revenues are up by about 60 percent this fiscal year and are projected to double again next year. What is not to like about that?

Improvements at the airport are not a case of "if we build it they will come." They, our customers, are already here and new infrastructure is the key to attracting more.

John Turner is the mayor of Pendleton.

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