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Does John Roberts Still Matter?

INTERNATIONAL Newsweek®



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06-13.11.2020

ISSN 2052-1081

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Newsweek

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

NOVEMBER 06 - 13, 2020 _ VOL.175 _ NO.13



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DRAGON'S REACH
Beijing is working quietly through hundreds of community organizations in America to improve its image and attain its goals.

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The New China Syndrome

Attempts to sow unrest ahead of the election are just a small part of China's latest efforts to expand its political and economic influence in the U.S.

BY DIDI KIRSTEN TATLOW

Newsweek

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

NOVEMBER 06 - 13, 2020 _ VOL.175 _ NO.13



COMEDY AND COVID

"Without an audience it's a bit of a challenge to get your energy up to performance levels."

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NEWSWEEK (ISSN2052-1081), is published weekly except one week in January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November and December due to combined issues. Newsweek International is published by Newsweek Magazine LLC, 25 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5LQ, UK. Printed by Quad/Graphics Europe Sp z o.o., Wyszkow, Poland. For Article Reprints, Permissions, Licensing, Back/Bulk Issues **Newsweek.com/licensing** Brian Kolb **Newsweek@EnveritasGroup.com**

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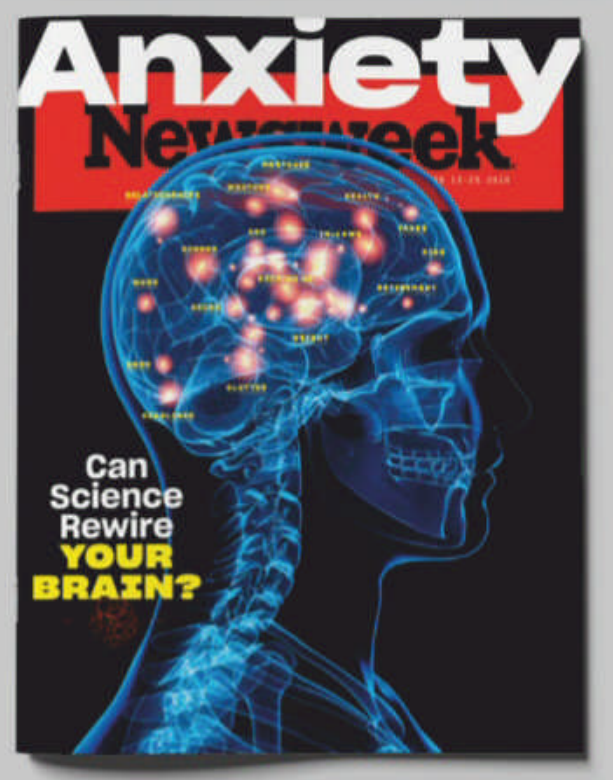
“Journalism I don’t see elsewhere until later, if at all.”

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The Archives

2005

Newsweek wrote that the oldest of the boomer generation—those who were "17 when John F. Kennedy was assassinated, 23 when they converged on Woodstock and 36 for the start of the great bull market of the 1980s"—were now turning 60. In this first cohort of boomers is Donald Trump, Cher, Bill Clinton and Dolly Parton, all born in 1946, whose "exuberance is undiminished," despite nearing retirement. Although boomers got their name from the post-war "baby boom" and population growth, last year millennials passed boomers as the largest generation in America.





1967

"The old taboos are dead or dying," said *Newsweek*. "A new, more permissive society is taking shape...etched most prominently in the arts—in the increasing nudity and freakyness of today's films," as exemplified by the sci-fi movie *Barbarella*. Since 1968 when the Motion Picture Association of America began rating films, more than half have been rated R.



1984

Incumbent Ronald Reagan told *Newsweek* about institutionalized presidential debates, "I have to wonder if they serve a purpose....We've got records; our positions on things certainly are available." This year, President Trump refused to participate in a virtual debate and criticized rule changes by the debate commission.

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In Focus _ THE NEWS IN PICTURES





SANTIAGO, CHILE

Anniversary Day

Demonstrators are sprayed with a water cannon by the riot police during October 18 clashes that erupted on the first anniversary of the social uprising in Chile. The country is preparing for a landmark referendum that would change the constitution enacted under former dictator Augusto Pinochet, who ruled from 1973 to 1990. Chileans will be asked two questions on October 25: do they want a new constitution—and, if so, who should draft it.

MARTIN BERNETTI

MARTIN BERNETTI/AFP/GETTY



NEVSEHIR, TURKEY

Hot Air

Colorful balloons glide over the historical Cappadocia region, located in Central Anatolia's Nevsehir province on October 17. Cappadocia is preserved as a UNESCO World Heritage site and is famous for its chimney rocks, hot air balloon trips, underground cities and boutique hotels carved into rocks. It is one of Turkey's most important tourism regions, drawing local and foreign tourists.

→ BEHCET ALKAN

ORLANDO, FLORIDA

Ready to Rumble

Election workers on October 15 set up booths at a site established by the city of Orlando and the Orlando Magic at the Amway Center. Early voting begins on October 19 in Florida, which is considered one of the key swing states in the battle between former Vice President Joe Biden and President Donald Trump. The most recent polls available have Biden with a slight lead, but within the margin of error.

→ PAUL HENNESSY

GANJA, AZERBAIJAN

Grieving

On October 17, a woman mourns the death of her relative during a funeral for those killed after being struck by ballistic missiles. The weapons were allegedly launched by the Armenian army and hit the second-largest city in Azerbaijan, Ganja. The attack killed at least 13 civilians, including two children, and injured more than 40. The funeral was held for 10 people including 2 children.

→ ONUR COBAN







CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: EHCET ALKAN/ANADOLU AGENCY/GETTY; ONUR COBAN/ANADOLU AGENCY/GETTY; PAUL HENNESSY/NURPHOTO/GETTY; PAUL HENNESSY/NURPHOTO/GETTY



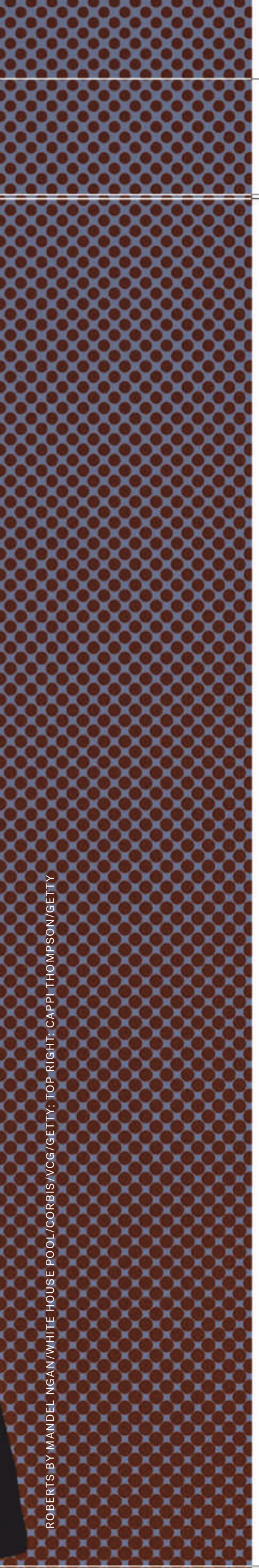
"Perhaps we should all step back, slow down and take a clean, fresh breath." »P.22



SUPREME COURT

Does John Roberts Still Matter?

Amy Coney Barrett's confirmation means a diminished role for the Chief Justice. Can he fight back?



ROBERTS BY MANDEL NGAN/WHITE HOUSE POOL/CORBIS/VCG/GETTY; TOP RIGHT: CAPPI THOMPSON/GETTY

CHIEF JUSTICE JOHN G. ROBERTS JR. IS SMART, shrewd and funny. His mastery as a D.C. appellate lawyer—the best of his time, arguing 39 times before the Court—led admirers to say his middle initial stood for God. (Alas, it's "Glover.") His rulings in controversial cases—including when he was the decisive vote in 2012 to uphold Obamacare—play the long game, planting the seeds for larger conservative triumphs his opponents now don't realize. Only weeks after he was confirmed in 2005, when a light bulb exploded in the courtroom during argument, he quipped, "It's a trick they play on new chief justices all the time!" But for all his talents, few at the Court profess to really know him. Although he'll chat with colleagues at lunch about last night's game, that's about all anybody learns about what's inside.

So it was astonishing several years ago that Roberts let his guard down. Law clerks were taking him to lunch a few blocks from the building. On the walk there, to make small talk, one asked, "How do you like the job?" Instead of pablum like, "It's the privilege of a lifetime," he showed his real self. Roberts reminded the clerks there had been only 16 chiefs before him. Of course he was thrilled to be No. 17. But Roberts understood the history of the Court. Even among the chiefs, he said, there had been only one John Marshall, who served for 34 years at the beginning of the 19th century. Marshall wrote the seminal *Marbury v. Madison* which established the Court's authority over the other branches—a role that the actual text of the Constitution hardly manifested. In the conference room of the Court, where appeals are decided and where only the justices are allowed, Marshall's portrait hung above the fireplace, gazing directly at Roberts, who presided over meetings. Marshall "had the opportunity to decide the great questions because the Constitution was undeveloped," Roberts told the clerks.

"It's not like that anymore," he said. "I was born in the wrong era."

But Roberts got lucky. Justice Anthony M. Kennedy retired in 2018, and with the swearing-in of Brett M. Kavanaugh, Roberts became the median justice. Not exactly a true "swing justice," which might suggest flaming

BY

DAVID A. KAPLAN

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Photo-illustration by GLUEKIT



moderation. He remained a die-hard conservative who came of age during Reagan days. On the Court, though, on most contentious cases he just happened to have four liberal justices to one side and four conservative justices on the other. He would be the most powerful chief justice since FDR's term. And he was still in his early 60s, the third-youngest member of the Court. If he served until he was 87—the age at which Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg died in September—he wouldn't reach the halfway point of his tenure until 2022. While Supreme Court eras get named by whomever sits in the center seat, the Roberts Court really would be. And it was that way for two years, as he cast pivotal votes in such key areas as gerrymandering, abortion and religion.

But Roberts' luck may have run out. With Ginsburg's death and Amy Coney Barrett's expected ascension, the chief justice no longer is the midpoint. Barrett likely will be the Newtonian equal-and-opposite of Ginsburg. With Kavanaugh, and Justices Samuel A. Alito Jr., Neil M. Gorsuch and Clarence Thomas, she will be part of a rock-solid five-vote conservative bloc. Yes, yes, you never know how a justice will vote, but, no, no, you should have little doubt. That alliance could issue rulings that overturn *Roe v. Wade*, invalidate the Affordable Care Act, broaden the rights of gun holders, allow claims of religious freedom to prevail over claims of discrimination, reconsider the right of same-sex couples to marry—and perhaps most significantly, declare unconstitutional the entire federal regulatory regime. The justices have already made little-noticed inroads on the last one. And someday, maybe, Medicare will be in jeopardy. Asked at her confirmation hearings about the constitutionality of the 54-year-old federal program, Barrett declined to say. Too "abstract," she protested. You never know if the Court would ever face the question, she said, which is true of any question, which is why she gave virtually no substantive answers—her strategy from the outset.

Barrett, along with Gorsuch and Kavanaugh, are surely credentialed and competent, but that's not why any of them were anointed by the conservative legal establishment and appointed by President Donald Trump. All three were put on the Court to vote a certain way in critical cases—and in a way that renders the chief justice superfluous.

Remember that the president harbors particular animus toward Roberts. During the 2016 campaign, Trump regularly trashed the chief, whom he called an "absolute disaster." "He gave us Obamacare! It might as well be called RobertsCare!" Trump hollered during one of the debates. (Roberts hated it. After hearing his name booed on TV during the GOP convention that year, he confided his indignation to a friend. "I've been a reliable conservative," he complained. "Don't they realize?")



SHIFTING THE BALANCE
President Trump and Melania Trump with Judge Amy Coney Barrett and her family entering the Rose Garden at the White House on September 20.

OLIVIER DOULIERY/AFP/GETTY

As president, Trump kept up the attacks, which widened to criticism of federal judges generally. Roberts finally responded in a highly unusual statement to an AP reporter. "We do not have Obama judges or Trump judges, Bush judges or Clinton judges," Roberts wrote. "What we have is an extraordinary group of dedicated judges doing their level best to do equal right to those appearing before them." (Never mind that on an increasing number of issues we do have Trump judges and Obama judges: look at who appointed a judge and you've got a reliable gauge how they'll vote on a legal question about, say, immigration.)

"Roberts' luck may have run out. With Ginsburg's death and Amy Coney Barrett's expected ascension, the chief justice no longer is the midpoint."

With Barrett aboard, the new median justice in all likelihood will be Kavanaugh. Even more than the fact of Roberts' two years occupying the position, the change reflects just how far rightward the Court will shift with Barrett on it—and just how quickly chance can transform the slowest, steadiest branch of government. When Roberts in June voted to protect the status of Dreamers under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) immigration program, Kavanaugh was on the other side. Same thing three days later when Roberts aligned with the four liberals to strike down a Louisiana statute requiring physicians performing abortions to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital. Two weeks after, as a momentous term for the Court neared an end, Roberts and Kavanaugh diverged on whether the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits sex discrimination, applied to gay and transgender workers. Roberts said it did. And then in mid-October, Roberts voted with the three remaining liberals to permit election officials in Pennsylvania to count some mailed ballots received after Election Day. (His vote resulted in a 4-to-4 deadlock, which let stand a ruling by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.)

For Democrats and liberals, the Barrett-for-Ginsburg swap and the rush job that made it happen—in turn producing Kavanaugh-for-Roberts—adds injury to the insult of the events of 2016. Back then, Republicans obstructed President Barack Obama's

nomination of Merrick B. Garland for the seat that Gorsuch eventually took. All of that is why expanding the size of the Court became a talking point for so many Democrats.

Being on the Supreme Court is a great gig—easy workload, best marble workplace in Washington, ultimate job security, the whole summer off. Being the chief is better, and being the chief is best when your vote rules. What's John Roberts to do now? The best guess is he'll wind up shifting rightward. For starters, he's less constrained from following his conservative political instincts. It was one thing to play the roles of incrementalist and institutionalist when he could control outcomes in cases and save the Court from the triumphalist instincts that Thomas and Alito display without shame. There's no point in that, all the more when it means consorting with the liberal wing with whom he shares little by way of ideology.

Moreover, the way of continued importance lies in joining with the other five conservatives, not with the remnants of the left. It's not merely to be part of an ascendant majority. By tradition, the chief, though he gets but one of nine votes and may not have served the longest, is deemed the member of the Court with the most seniority. So, anytime he's in the majority on a case he gets to decide who writes the opinion. That privilege of assignment is rarely appreciated by casual observers of the Court. But the justice who writes the main opinion can influence the direction of constitutional law for years, with a subtle signal to future litigants here or a seemingly innocuous aside there. Language matters. Much of the power of William J. Brennan Jr., the liberal lion of the Court from 1956 to 1990, derived from his matchless ability to form unexpected coalitions. Though it helped he had a lot of liberal leaners with him during many of those years, not everyone was always willing. Brennan did his cajoling not with the Irish charm often ascribed to him—but with words.

"The way of continued importance lies in joining with the other five conservatives, not with the remnants of the left."

There's nobody on the current Court who's better at words than Roberts. It was that facility he demonstrated in his straddle in the 5-to-4 Obamacare ruling. Conservatives still rail about him being a turncoat—but that says more about their obtuseness than his treachery. In that ruling, Roberts was able to insert language about reining in congressional powers generally (though not in that case) that a future conservative Court will thank him for. During the many months that produce opinions, coalitions form, dissolve and re-form. In the Obamacare case, Roberts himself shifted from one camp to the other, finally siding with the liberals. To the extent Roberts is now part of a group of six conservatives—keep in mind it only takes five to command a majority—he'll realize there's only so much



OPPOSITION Protestors dressed as "handmaids" on the steps of the Supreme Court on the last day of Amy Coney Barrett's nomination hearing.



PRESENT AT THE CREATION
Chief Justice John Marshall. While serving as the Court's fourth chief, he had the power to shape constitutional law in a way denied any of his successors.

he can do by assigning majority opinions to himself. The others may balk if he refuses to topple certain liberal precedents or tries to play the institutionalist card. The others will be able to do so because they don't need his vote. But only fools would underestimate Roberts' ability to recalibrate.

Other justices might not care. Antonin Scalia, for one, showed little interest in winning allies. It was more satisfying—and easier—to write archly, be witty, take shots. Everybody loves a character. On the left, William O. Douglas, from 1939 to 1975, was the same way—the darling of acolytes, with little sway beyond. And there are a few justices in American history who acquired influence as "great dissenters." What influence that John Marshall Harlan (1877 to 1911) or Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. (1902 to 1932) failed to earn by championing civil liberties in their own time they earned in posterity. (Ginsburg has been called the Great Dissenter of her time, but she had plenty of majority opinions and her instincts favored consensus; if the Court has a strident voice in the minority, it's Sonia Sotomayor.)

Anybody who knows Roberts knows he has little interest in being a lone wolf or just part of the pack. He's renowned as an institutionalist because he loves the Court—its history, its purpose in constitutional design, its mystery and majesty. Those are as crucial to him as his twin policy agendas, the deregulation of political campaigns and the eradication of racial preferences. But his institutionalism is also rooted in love for the role of the chief. In his wily way, he doesn't let anybody forget it.

Consider Elena Kagan's investiture in 2010. That's the ceremony in the courtroom in which a new justice is formally installed. It's takes under 10 minutes, but with dignitaries and family there, it's a big deal. The new justice, seated at ground level in a chair used by Marshall, hears some nice words and then takes the bench. Roberts recognized Kagan as "the 101st associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States." That was true enough, but it wasn't how it had been done before. The prior year, Sotomayor was the "111th justice," without the "associate." Kagan should've been 112th. Roberts changed the script by subtracting the chiefs who hadn't previously served as an associate justice. (Five had.) Now, there would be one tally for associate and another for chief. Kagan noticed. So did the other justices. They each knew their number in the way every president knows his. Why would a chief who revered Court traditions mess with my number?

Because it made his rank more exclusive. Silly? Sure. Vain? A bit. But it tells you something about Roberts, who has two bobbleheads in his chamber, one of Abraham Lincoln and one of himself. The current chief, with a long reign still ahead but his Court taking a hard turn rightward, will not likely tolerate irrelevance.

→ **David A. Kaplan,** *former legal affairs editor of* NEWSWEEK, *is the author of* THE MOST DANGEROUS BRANCH: INSIDE THE SUPREME COURT IN THE AGE OF TRUMP (Crown, 2018), *from which some of this material is adapted. His other books include* THE ACCIDENTAL PRESIDENT (William Morrow, 2001). *He teaches journalism and law at NYU and CUNY.*

FROM LEFT: DREW ANGERER/GETTY; LAWRENCE THORNTON/ARCHIVE PHOTOS/GETTY

Finland - Sustainability and Innovation

Finland's unique growth story stands out in Europe. The country is powering through a pandemic that brought global growth to a standstill, supported by its world-leading tech sector and innovative industries. The Finnish economy will have one of the mildest recessions in the eurozone this year, while millions of government investment has been earmarked for recovery spending.

Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin, the youngest premier in the world, explained that innovative thinking has been the cornerstone of Finland's economic success. Finland's goal is to become a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable society by 2030. The country aims to be climate neutral by 2035, and to support development of a circular economy. Its pandemic economic recovery plans will hinge on innovation and sustainability, according to Prime Minister Marin, creating new opportunities for foreign investment.

"Work on our national recovery plan has already begun, and it is important that we find genuinely effective measures to strengthen Finland's economy, competitiveness and resilience in the midst of this crisis," she told Parliament in September. As the country moves to support new industries and further improve its economic competitiveness, Finland is fast becoming the best place in Europe to do business – particularly for high-tech companies like 3stepIT, a computer leasing and lifecycle services company that embodies the circular economic model.



Sanna Marin
Prime Minister of Finland

"We should all be ambassadors of Finland. It's a beautiful country with educated people. They are loyal, there is no corruption, and it is safe here. Everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed in Finland. I don't know what more you can ask. It's a country where you can trust that everything is in order," explained CEO Jarkko Veijalainen.

For Kristoffer Ekman, CEO of Nordic BioTech, the inventor and manufacturer of a natural microbial solution that kills viruses and prevents the spread of infection, uncertainty surrounding the pandemic offers a challenge Finland is ready to take on – especially since the government is approachable, accessible, and quick to offer feedback and advice.

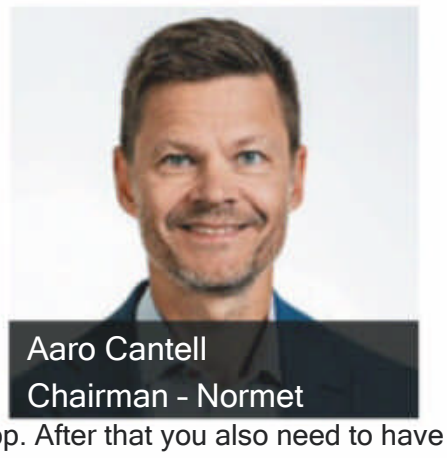
"From a corporate point of view, Finland is a safe environment for an organization to grow. We have a solid judicial system. The government offers a supportive foundation, and there is a low barrier for interaction between, for example, Nordic BioTech and Business Finland. The distance between government and corporations is very short."

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The processes include sprayed concrete, explosives charging, underground logistics, scaling and ground support. Focusing on three core principles – developing safe &sustainable methods, innovating for maximum performance and partnering in lifetime support, the company aims to deliver the highest value possible to each customer. Normet's extensive portfolio of products covers equipment, services, rock reinforcement and construction chemicals. Normet operates globally with over 50 sites in 28 countries. This breadth allows for a rapid response and local commitment to all customers whenever and wherever in the world they may be.

Normet Chairman Aaro Cantell acquired the company in 2005. Cantell's company has witnessed exponential growth since he took over, with Normet business rising from €25 million in 2004, to €340 million last year. "My ambition is to grow by continuous renewal. If you actively look for new expansion opportunities, a pipeline of possible growth projects will begin to develop. After that you also need to have the courage to launch some of the projects and then learn from them. I believe this also makes the work much more motivating for our people" he said.



Aaro Cantell
Chairman – Normet

New innovations, such as Smart-Scan® for scanning concrete lining thickness, Smart-Spray® that automatically sprays a designated section of the tunnel, Smart-Drive® platforms that enable battery electric drives, automation and digital connectivity solutions are some examples of Normet's innovation. Virtual Reality based simulator tools based on these new technologies are designed to help improve operator technique and skills.

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Cantell has targeted reaching €500 million in turnover in the next few years, and in the longer term at least doubling the size. This means that the CEO Ed Santamaria and his team are actively looking into new ways of expanding the business.

"Our company has a very proud history and legacy, and a very strong reputation in the industry. Investing in a business model directly connected to our end customers was a major turning point for Normet. Our close relationship with customers and a deep understanding of their processes is a unique advantage we have, and our geographic reach is unparalleled; we will continue to invest in our global presence, in our expertise and in bringing exciting innovations to the Industry", said Santamaria.

normet

3stepIT - Leading the Way in Sustainable IT

Finland's economy is beginning to stabilize following the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic, and the country's vibrant tech sector is set to play a leading role in supporting growth. Within a thriving ecosystem of disruptive start-ups, technology accounts for more than 50% of the Finnish exports, and more than 700,000 people, or nearly 30% of the workforce are directly or indirectly employed by the tech sector.



JARKKO VEIJALAINEN
Chairman of the board - 3stepIT

This means the country's future rests on the shoulders of private sector innovators like 3stepIT, a fast-growing company offering computer leasing and technology lifecycle management services that have already made a profound impact on client operations across Europe.

3stepIT was founded in 1997 on what was then a completely unknown concept: the circular economy. Its business model was premised on the notion that instead of investing hundreds of thousands on desktops, laptops and smartphones, which would eventually become outdated and be thrown away, companies could lease their devices. This would support a timely refresh strategy enabling businesses to remain at the forefront of innovation. 3stepIT founders also saw demand for businesses looking to dispose of obsolete IT equipment, so it made a unique offer: it would buy old equipment at fair market value to be refurbished and resold. In doing so, it helped businesses to transition to a circular economy model, reducing their carbon footprint and electronic waste in the process. This is the circular economy model in action.

Chairman Jarkko Veijalainen said launching the business took guts. "We asked ourselves what people did with redundant IT equipment. We found that devices were typically given to employees, stored somewhere or thrown away. Each of these choices presented significant data security risks which was a growing customer concern. This was a starting point. But in practice we were just two guys with a bicycle, and the players in the market were huge. We started from scratch and we had to believe we had something more than they did. We decided to give it a go for 12 months, we persevered, and it did work," he said.

3stepIT combines a team of experienced IT professionals, a well-developed and sustainable supply chain, and an asset management platform that allows customers to manage and renew their IT devices. That's where its name comes from: Step one is acquire, step two is manage, and step three is refresh.

Although it was a risk in the late 1990s when the internet barely existed, 3stepIT's business model worked so well that the company soon expanded to Sweden with venture capital support. Though Veijalainen and his co-founder sold 42% of the company in the early 2000s, they re-acquired this share back in 2007. This was driven by a firm conviction that the business model had a newfound global appeal given the popular shift towards new acquisition models such as the subscription economy, as well as an increasing focus on sustainability.

Many milestones followed. By 2010, 32% of the company was acquired by institutional investors, giving it access to resources to fuel expansion and development of next generation services to meet the demands of an international client base. It continued to grow across Scandinavia, strengthening operations in Norway and Denmark, as more and more businesses began to realize the appeal of sustainable IT. "The biggest difference between us and a typical leasing company is that we are very keen to get old IT devices back. Last year more than 500,000 devices were refurbished securely, using best-in-class data sanitization techniques. We then found a new home for 98% of these devices which is a big thing environmentally. Our customers can trust that they will have the best technology in the beginning, and that there will be someone to help them at the end of the cycle," said Veijalainen.

The company's latest, and arguably biggest milestone came in February 2019, when it joined forces with French bank BNP Paribas to create a European strategic alliance, which included a joint venture company and a partnership to serve international customers. The deal was finalized in October 2019. This alliance marked 3stepIT's entrance into Western Europe, with 18 countries including France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and the UK now set to benefit from its unique approach to IT lifecycle management and sustainable tech practices. The deal also demonstrated that major multinationals are recognizing the benefits of incorporating sustainability into their business models.

The company now has 2.2 million assets under management, and business has been booming – in 2019, revenues hit almost €700 million and the outlook for 2020 looks equally promising, forecast to top €1billion consolidated revenue.

The ambition now is to become a €2 billion business over the next five years and expansion across the Atlantic beckons. "Our next goal is to widen our global footprint by expanding into America; our sustainable IT consumption model is wholly scalable and appeals to public, mid-market and enterprise clients who need to manage their IT efficiently, securely and sustainably," said Veijalainen.

3stepIT

Elisa -
Transforming Factories

The world's transition to a digital economy is accelerating in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, leaving Finland well-positioned to steer the course of future global development. Finland's economy is one of the most digitized on earth, and the country took top spot on the European Union's 2019 Digital Economy and Society Index, with 76% of the population having at least basic digital skills – well above the EU average of 57%. Companies like Elisa Corporation, a leading digital services provider, will keep the country in first place.



JARKKO VEIJALAINEN
Chairman of the board – 3stepIT

As an important pillar of the Finnish economy, and an increasingly prominent international player, Elisa has been quick to embrace new technologies.

CEO Veli-Matti Mattila said his company has remained at the forefront of new technology because its long-term strategy and a strong focus on its core mission; a sustainable future through digitalisation. One area where Elisa has made an international breakthrough is Industrial Software Business that the company developed itself, and that now serves major multinational clients.

"Many ask us why a telco is doing this and the answer is simple: we have over 10 years of proven track record in automating our own network management, processing data and utilizing machine learning. Other industries asked us how the trick is to be done and we accepted the challenge, creating a technology known as ElisaSmartFactory, and making intelligent manufacturing happen in practice. We have already gone global with customers like Procter & Gamble and major pharmaceutical corporations. Our way is to make something meaningful from the gigantic amounts of data, improve quality, increase efficiency and reduce waste," said Mattila.

Elisa's concept of Intelligent Manufacturing Anywhere is premised on the idea that all areas of a business's operations can benefit from AI and smart manufacturing processes, from enterprise to the factory floor and back. It has developed solutions covering processes including intelligent procurement, production planning and optimization, and demand sensing. These include data source catalogues, internet-based use cases, data insights and informed and automated decision making, that put insights and recommendations into action. The company is focused on making sure all data processes work in tandem with one another, avoiding over- or underinvestment in any one area, with the goal of offering instant value through proven and pragmatic AI models.

Visual information plays a key role in Elisa's AI processes, and its data computation capabilities are designed to illuminate anomalies, weak points, inefficiencies, and areas for improvement, including through its flagship product, 3D digital factory. As a result, Elisa's agile, speedy, and high-quality solutions offer three major impacts: outperforming competitiveness, undiscovered profits, and limitless productivity.

While it's made its name as an innovator, Elisa's history dates back 140 years. A telecoms operator that has expanded its portfolio to include up-and-coming sectors in the digital economy, Elisa serves more than 2.8 million consumer and corporate customers representing 6.3 million subscriptions. Operating in Finland, Estonia, and internationally it employs over 5000 people in over 20 countries. Elisa is listed on the Nasdaq Helsinki, and international investors hold a 48% stake in the company. Its emphasis on future technologies and unique revenue models in the telecoms segment have been a huge success: Elisa reported €1.84 billion of revenues in 2019, its fifth consecutive year of growth, while EBITDA reached €661 million, a 3.4% increase over 2018. Elisa's Total Shareholder Return since 2003 is 2387% and since 2017 95% respectively.

Elisa's growth strategy will remain forward-looking: it is a world leader in 5G development, and plans to further improve efficiency and productivity through automation, software robots, machine learning, and other technological innovations that have already enabled it to predict 90% of network outages in its telecoms arm. Elisa is likely to remain a customer and investor favourite in the years to come.

"We understand broadly the opportunities in digitalization and best practices in the consumer market, as well as in the business-to-business market. We are not a Silicon Valley online giant, but we have capabilities needed, and we've outdone ourselves over the previous decade. We benefit from talented people and we have interesting businesses that could offer attractive opportunities for new partners and investors. Most importantly, we are continuously learning and developing the capability to leapfrog with new technologies," said Mattila.

Aktia Bank -
The best of old and new

Finland's economy is one of the most modern and stable in Europe, supported by a strong institutional framework and a long track record of effective policymaking. This is especially evident in the banking sector, which has remained resilient throughout multiple crises. According to the European Central Bank, the Finnish banking sector's total consolidated assets surged to hit 322.2% of GDP in Q1 2020, up from 298.8% the previous quarter, and in June this year, Fitch reported Finnish banks remain healthy and well-capitalised, with ample liquidity in the sector despite the Covid-19 pandemic.


Mikko Ayub
CEO – Aktia Bank

This means banks like Aktia will continue playing an important role in driving the Finnish economy.

Aktia's storied history stretches back nearly 200 years. It got its start as a small savings bank, but took its modern form following a financial crisis in the 1990s, when eight Finnish banks merged to become the present-day entity.

Today Aktia operates as an asset manager, bank, and life insurer, boasting a long track record of creating wealth and well-being over generations. CEO Mikko Ayub said the bank's focus on responsible wealth creation, as well strong client partnerships at the individual and corporate level, have kept customers satisfied for centuries.

"We're a medium-sized bank, which means that a customer at Aktia is not just one of tens of millions of customers; they will be treated in a more special and caring manner, instead of a part in a big machine. That is our sweet spot, in the sense that we are able to create customer service models and customer handling models where the customer really feels that they are important to the bank," he said.

Aktia offers asset management, banking and insurance services across digital channels and flagship offices in Helsinki, Turku, Tampere, Vaasa, and Oulu. It employs 750 people in Finland, and serves approximately 300,000 customers.

Although it is best-known as a traditional bank, Aktia's long history has not prevented it from changing with the times. Its asset management services are soaring – the value of assets under management in fixed-income funds offered to international customers rose by 68% y-o-y in 2019 alone to reach €1.9 billion, while total assets under management stood at €9.9bn – and a shift towards these services will be one of the most important focal points for the bank's ongoing mid-term transformation.

Digitization and sustainability are the other key pillars, and in 2019 the bank updated its corporate responsibility indicators, prepared a five-year action plan, selected UN sustainable development themes and goals, and updated its climate principles to guide its operations.

"Asset management has a lot of room to grow still from where we are today; we haven't reached the full potential of this business on both the institutional and retail sides. I also see us growing in cities because of trends in urbanization, and because we have traditionally been concentrated along coastal areas in Finland," said Ayub.

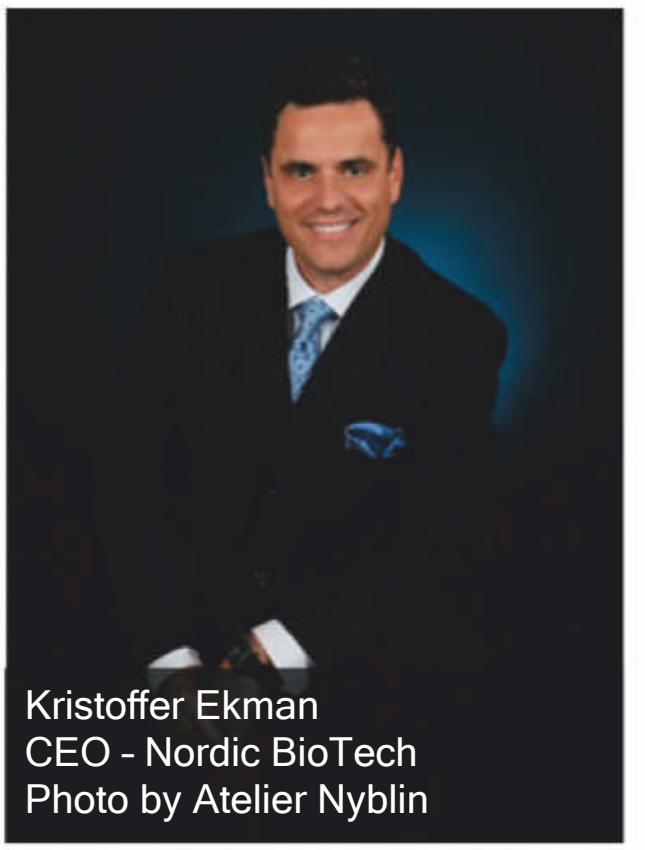
Emerging market debt products in particular have been identified as a high-potential area for future international growth. Aktia is a world leader in this area, and its successes have allowed it to expand well beyond Finnish borders, notably in German-speaking Europe and Sweden. In recent months, distribution agreements have been signed to sell emerging market products in South America, and it is also planning to move into central European markets.

Ayub expects that the winning combination of deep history, unbeatable expertise, and a forward-looking strategy will push a dramatic transformation over the next several years. Aktia's growing base of international investors and clients demonstrates its strong value proposition, and Ayub said the best is yet to come.

"We have a lot of international investors in our debt products. When we go out with bond issuances, we have a good number of German investors. I think – particularly in days like these we are living – the rather conservative profile and stability of our bank is delivering something that investors do value. When I talk to investors, the response is positive and the dialogue is easy. We offer a very clear perspective, a clear and sharp strategy, and it is easy for investors to understand the risks they're taking as a result. This is a strong advantage for us," he said.

Aktia

Nordic BioTech Group -
Nature as Architect Against Pandemic


Kristoffer Ekman
CEO – Nordic BioTech
Photo by Atelier Nyblin

Although economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic has been devastating, in-demand industries and companies are set for a major growth spurt as the world searches for a new normal. The Economist Intelligence Unit forecasts global healthcare spending will rise by 5.5% in dollar terms next year, while the global personal protective equipment market is forecast to grow by 6.7% annually until 2027 to reach $84.7 billion in value.

In Finland, a country known for its advanced research and development (R&D), life sciences, and biotechnology ecosystems, economic growth is set to rebound to 3% in 2021, after a projected 5% contraction in 2020.

New growth will be driven by companies like Nordic BioTech Group, the creator of a unique and innovative, natural antimicrobial solution called NordShield, a multi-purpose product designed to prevent the spread of disease, viruses, bacteria, and infection. This technology offers a game-changing value proposition for governments, companies, and individuals seeking a safer and cleaner existence.

Nordic BioTech Group was founded in 2016 after more than a decade of intensive R&D under the guidance of polymer chemist Kari Holopainen. Its CEO, Kristoffer Ekman, has spent more than 15 years establishing and overseeing commercialization and business development strategies for companies ranging from startups to some of the world's best-known multinationals, including Accenture Nordic, Cognizant Technology Solutions (CTS) and Infosys.

For Ekman, the pitch is simple. "Our technology is sustainably produced from renewable ingredients, safe for the environment, free of heavy metals such as silver, and as our product is produced from by-products of the forest industry, we have nearly limitless access to the ingredients for NordShield. The technology is also non-leaching and has a lower risk of generating resistant microbes or 'superbugs' as is the case with e.g. antibiotic resistance. Our break-through technology ticks all the boxes," he said.

The way NordShield works is that once applied, it forms an antimicrobial protective layer that captures and inactivates the virus or bacteria, and prevents them from spreading, similar to a spider web catching a fly. In textile applications, the layer is durable and retains its properties even after dozens of times of washing.

The technology has many functions and can be used to treat many different kinds of surfaces, e.g. textiles, non-wovens, and filters by imparting antifungal, antibacterial and antiviral properties to the treated surfaces.

NordShield's anti-viral properties are particularly attractive given the world's current state of affairs, and in trials conducted with modified vaccina virus Ankara, a test used to determine its efficacy against enveloped viruses including SARS-Corona, MERS-Corona, and the human coronavirus, NordShield-treated fabric reduced viruses by 99%.

In fact in April this year, the company announced it has made its water-based antimicrobial fiber application available free of charge to European authorities to be used in their pandemic response. So far bureaucracy, hierarchy, and slow decision-making has made it challenging for authorities take up the offer, despite significant interest.

"We are still not over the pandemic and our offer remains valid. We welcome all European authorities to get in touch with us and we will send NordShield to them upon request - and we would be honored to help them in helping their people with our technology," said Ekman.

Before the pandemic, the company had already partnered with organizations around the world, forging new ties with groups in Finland, Sweden, Germany, France, China and Japan. It is working to develop a broad range of applications for NordShield, most notably for medical and personal care industries.

Now overseeing an international team comprising more than 100 employees and partners, Ekman plans to accelerate the company's global expansion as commercialization was ramped up in September. New joint ventures and partnerships are expected in the near-term, and Nordic BioTech Group has fielded dozens of calls and queries from interested parties. But for Ekman, it's all about finding the right fit.

"We do a thorough due-diligence on the companies that we work with and more than often end politely declining potential partners. We need them to have the same value-based approach as we do. Us representing a natural based product is the basis for our value proposition. We put a lot of emphasis on being connected to the right brands, that like us, want to create the best tomorrow." he said.

NordShield©



Silverback Western lowland gorilla.

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THE DEBATE
Newsweek

Is Legal Pot Good for Business or Good for Society?

Critics say it would do nothing but line the pockets of big companies. Advocates say it would put an end to some unjust law enforcement policies



FEDERAL LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA WOULD BE A TRAGIC MISTAKE

by Kevin A. Sabet, Ph.D

MARIJUANA SEEMS TO BE EVERYWHERE these days. In the movies, on the school playground, in the senior center. It has united Martha Stewart and Snoop Dogg. A once-counterculture drug of the 1960s, it's now the topic of annual reports and stock prices. It's even made it into the boardrooms of Big Tobacco, Pharma and Alcohol.

But we should slow this weed train down.

Legalization advocates often begin with the well-worn saying that we should not jail pot users. Instead, they say, we should regulate marijuana to gain tax revenue and reverse social injustice.

It's a great theory.

But it's never worked in practice. Legalizing marijuana is, at the end of the day, all about one thing: money. Let me rephrase: It's about making rich white men richer.

It need not be that way. We have set up a false dichotomy between criminalization and commercialization. We think we either have to give marijuana to Big Tobacco or we have to put users in private prisons. Neither of these are good policy choices—thankfully, they aren't the only ones we have.

Instead, we can look to the science—and, despite popular belief, there is plenty we know about



OLENA RUBAN/GETTY



marijuana that should give us pause. Today's weed is often 10 times stronger than the stuff of 20 or 30 years ago. More and more mental health problems are linked to today's high-potency marijuana—a British study finds schizophrenia risk quintuples among regular users.

This tells me we need a policy of discouragement and treatment—not glamorization and commercialization.

But as a former Obama appointee, I can't think of something less progressive than what has gone on in legalized states today.

Take Illinois, for example. They tried to prioritize people of color in the marijuana license process. The result? Only 3 percent of the applicants made the first cut, including someone being paid $4 million through mega-firm KPMG to grade the actual applicants. Perhaps he will

"Altria Philip Morris has put more than $2 billion into the pot industry."

sell one of the products made by marijuana giant Cronos, who just hired a former Big Pharma exec to lead its company. Or perhaps he will sell some of Big Tobacco's pot products—after all, Altria Philip Morris has put more than $2 billion into the pot industry.

Not much social justice-ing going on.

To make matters worse, some in Congress want to double down on these policies. With wildfires raging in the West, an out-of-control pandemic and unprecedented economic hardships, leadership in Congress has scheduled a vote on the MORE Act, which would federally legalize and commercialize marijuana.

It's a payback to pot lobbyists for their work. And no, the MORE Act is not decriminalization, states' rights or social justice—as advocates have tried to paint it.

It's blanket marijuana commercialization. Unlimited potency, tax breaks to pot companies for advertising and—according to a national trade group—the end of safety-sensitive drug testing for transportation workers as we know it.

Given what we have learned about youth use—surprise, it goes up in legal states—stoned driving deaths (ditto) and the underground market (you guessed it, it gets stronger), this is not what our country needs right now.

After all, according to the independent National Academy of the Sciences, marijuana use has significant links to additional serious mental health conditions—including schizophrenia, anxiety, depression and suicide. Prolonged use has also been shown to lower IQ and motor function and can cause particular damage to the developing brains of young people. And we know this from low-potency pot; the science is still far behind when it comes to the marijuana readily available in "legal" states.

Perhaps we should all step back, slow down and take a clean, fresh breath and get back to work to putting our country back together. Marijuana—and the Big Pharma, Tobacco and Alcohol executives now in charge of that business—certainly won't help us do that.

→ **Kevin A. Sabet, Ph.D.,** *served in three White House administrations, most recently as senior drug policy advisor from 2009 to 2011. He is the president of Smart Approaches to Marijuana. The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.*



LEGALIZATION IS THE ONLY WAY TO IMPROVE THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

by Major Neill Franklin (Ret.)

I SPENT 34 YEARS AS AN OFFICER WITH the Maryland State Police and Baltimore Police Departments, mostly working narcotics cases, so Kevin Sabet and I once stood on the same side of this debate. I retired in 2000, shortly after my friend and co-worker was murdered while buying drugs undercover. After more than three decades on the front lines, I realized that our efforts to eradicate marijuana are not only futile, but are actively counterproductive to public safety. Legalization, not decriminalization, is the only option that will actually effect change.

At this point, most people who have studied this issue (including Mr. Sabet) agree that the prohibition of marijuana has been a catastrophe. Police make hundreds of thousands of marijuana arrests each year—663,000 in 2018 alone—wasting time that could be spent solving and preventing serious crime. Black people are arrested at many times the rate of white people, though both groups use marijuana at about the same rates. And these arrests follow young people for life, preventing them from finding jobs, housing, college scholarships and eligibility for loans.



Mr. Sabet argues that we should decriminalize marijuana ("decrim") so that using it is legal, but selling it is not. On its face, that seems to make sense. But this betrays a deep misunderstanding of how the criminal justice system actually works. And by the way, "decrim" was the failed alcohol model during Prohibition.

Much of the way police departments are evaluated—and, in turn, funded—is based on the number of arrests they make. In order to ensure they make as many arrests as possible, departments evaluate their officers on the same basis, giving out promotions and raises to those who bring in the most arrests.

As a result, a lot of low-level players are being thrown into the criminal justice system. Many will never re-emerge.

CANNABIS CAUCUS Activists demonstrating for reform of federal marijuana law in October 2019.

CAROLINE BREHMAN/CQ-ROLL CALL/GETTY



This also perpetuates huge racial disparities, because outdoor sellers are more likely to be people of color. And yet, this results in exactly zero effects to the market, overall.

Here are some more rules police don't like to talk about:

Claiming that you smell marijuana in a car or a house is one of the easiest ways to justify a search when you have no legal reason for conducting one. The absence of a smell is exceptionally difficult to prove after the fact, so it's one of the most effective ways to deny people their constitutional rights. Decrim will not prevent these searches. In most states where we have decrim, the odor of marijuana is still probable cause to search a person, vehicle or home.

Because of this loophole, marijuana-related searches are the police tool of choice for money seizures under civil asset forfeiture programs—the most destructive aspect of the criminal justice system you've probably never heard of. Criminal forfeiture programs make a lot of sense. In civil forfeiture, the police don't need a conviction. They don't even need to charge anyone with a crime. They just decide that an asset or a certain amount of cash is the result of illegal activity, and they take it. They charge the property rather than any person, because property has no constitutional rights—such as the right to due process. The owner can sue to get his/her property back, but the process is so expensive and complicated that in most cases, it would be more expensive to challenge than to let the property go without a fight.

"Police make hundreds of thousands of marijuana arrests each year—663,000 in 2018 alone—wasting time that could be spent solving and preventing serious crime."

Under a legalization model, people would buy from a regulated supply chain, in which grow facilities are monitored to ensure they follow environmental laws and the product stays within the legal system; in which dispensaries are licensed, taxed and subject to rigorous health and safety inspections; in which security guards stand watch and gatekeepers verify that every patron is of legal age; and in which every business pays its rightful share of taxes and generates local jobs.

Under a decriminalization model, the only place to buy marijuana is through criminal organizations.

Youth marijuana use has not risen in states that have legalized marijuana. Marijuana arrests have plummeted, and states have invested millions of new tax dollars in mental health treatment, schools, law enforcement training and addiction recovery resources.

More than a quarter of the U.S. population now lives in a state where marijuana is legal for adult use, while the nightmares predicted by opponents have not come to pass. It is time to change the debate from whether or not to legalize marijuana to how we legalize marijuana to build the safe, just and healthy society we all want for ourselves and our children. N

→ **Major Neill Franklin (Ret.)** *was a police officer for 34 years and is now the executive director of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership, a nonprofit of police, prosecutors, judges and other law enforcement who advocate for changes in the criminal justice system. The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.*

Serbia's rising star

Offering customs-free access to 15% of the global market, a young, talented workforce, and high potential for future growth in sectors such as construction and IT, Serbia has risen to become the leading investment location in Central and Eastern Europe. Foreign direct investment inflows more than doubled between 2013 and 2018, and rose by 4.4% in 2019 to end the year at $4.3 billion.

Growing the economy and attracting new investment is high on President Aleksandar Vučić's agenda. Speaking with the US Department of International Finance Cooperation after the IFC announced plans to establish operations in Belgrade, he highlighted the importance of new trade and investment, particularly in infrastructure: "It is important to take care of the prosperity of our country, to take care of our people, this is a good job for all people who live together with us. We will build roads and railways. This creates a better life for people, a better economy, everything we dreamed of."

The government is currently undertaking extensive economic reforms to improve the business climate and bolster investment. They will underscore the competitive advantages already on



Aleksandar Vučić
President of Serbia

offer, including an upcoming package of tax incentives that are the most generous in the region, a highly-skilled and cost-effective workforce, and a strong outsourcing industry, particularly IT. A free trade agreement with Russia also offers access to large consumer market, while plans to invest in infrastructure should further support robust growth.

Perhaps that's why Serbia rose four spots on the World Bank's Doing Business 2020 survey to 44th place globally, ahead of Belgium, Montenegro, Croatia, and Hungary, and ranked 9th globally in the "dealing with construction permits" category.

Vučić elaborated on his mid-term plans for the country, which will keep it at the forefront of regional and European growth: "In the next four years, the objective is to raise the economic strength of Serbia including the living standard of citizens, to continue the construction of roads and railways, as well as to enter new projects and strengthen the health power of Serbia. Great things await us; it is important to work, not to be satisfied with the results from the past. I am looking into the future, and I am very optimistic."

Metalfer Group – Thinking Ahead

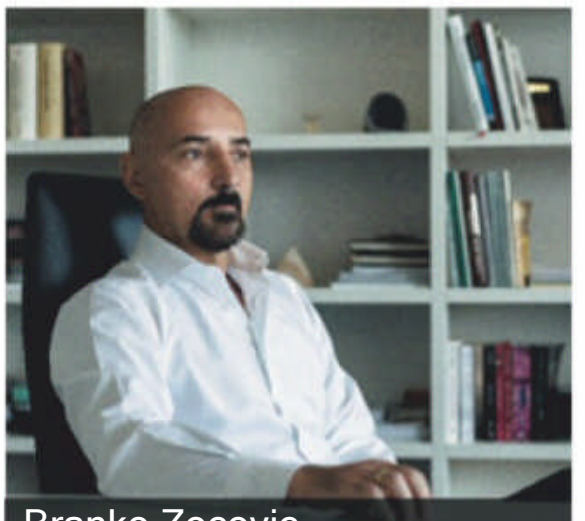
Although industrialization in Serbia has lagged since the 1990s, rapid recent growth is transforming its industrial landscape. Today the country is the largest steel producer in Southeast Europe, and the World Steel Association reports that it led the world in crude steel growth in in 2018, with a 38.9% y-o-y production increase.

This leaves conglomerates like Metalfer Group in pole position to capitalise on new growth opportunities.

Founded in London in 1993, and established in Serbia in 2002, the group was originally active only in steel trading. Since the early 2000s, however, Metalfer's portfolio has swelled to include steel production, mining, and energy business lines. The group recently opened a new rolling mill in July this year, with normal production set to kick off in November.

Chairman Branko Zecevic said an anticipatory approach and early adoption of innovative technology helped Metalfer grow despite intense competition.

"If you want to compete with big international groups, you need to find a niche market and be better than them.



Branko Zecevic
Chairman - Metalfer Group

Vertical integration allows us to retain as much of a profit as possible. We own everything, from sourcing scrap to distribution and sales. We have also ensured that we use the newest technology available in our melt shop and new rolling mill," he said.

The group hit a milestone in 2008 when it established the Metalfer Steel Mill in Serbia. At the time, it was the only factory producing steel reinforcing bars, and its strategic location in Sremska Mitrovica, a regional transport hub, supported further expansion and growth. In the same year, Metalfer began to expand into mining operations in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia, and in 2011 it launched Metalfer Invest, which is active in power and infrastructure.

Zecevic is now examining potential expansion channels, which could include forming strategic partnerships or a bond issuance. The group is also embracing the highest environmental and sustainability practices, and plans to become the first in the region and industry to obtain green certification.

"I don't think there is a single mill in Europe that is 100% green, and we want to be one of the first. Change for us is easier as a smaller entity. In this business, you have to think ten steps ahead of your competition," said Zecevic.

With steel demand rising, a laser focus on quality and reliability, and new sustainability efforts set to pave the way forward, Metalfer's future is bright.

METALFER GROUP

Novkol Company -
Building Innovation

As the world grapples with the economic fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic, Serbia is faring better than most in Europe. The central National Bank of Serbia recently announced that the country's strong, timely, and comprehensive pandemic response helped it avoid a severe economic slowdown, and will also support a speedy recovery. Serbia's recession will be mild – GDP will contract by just 1% in 2020 – and growth is forecast to hit 5% next year. The rebound will be driven by resilient domestic firms such as Novkol Company, a leader in infrastructure construction and geotechnical services for nearly 25 years.


Miloš Hranisavljević
President – Novkol Company

Established in 1997, Novkol's team of experienced engineers, as well as its history of investing in modern equipment and cutting edge practices, have helped it build a reputation as the go-to firm for geotechnical construction that is essential for new infrastructure builds. Today the company employs more than 150 people working on some of the most technically complex builds in the country.

Managing director and co-founder Milos Hranisavljevic said innovation and outside-the-box thinking has been a core component of Novkol's strategy since it was first established. The region was rebuilding after years of war, and business was set to boom.

"There were only three of us, but we invested everything we had into the company and got to work. At that time, we planned to do infrastructural work, hydraulic systems, water systems, sewages, pump stations, but in special conditions. We worked in urban conditions, when the existing buildings are there, where the trenches are very near and deep; it's not a regular work. It was at this point that we began to offer some of our geotechnical services," he said.

The company's corporate identity revolves around providing a full range of services, strong customer satisfaction, and vertically-integrated operations. Hydrotechnical infrastructure offerings include water supply and sewerage structures, reinforced concrete main sewers, pump stations, and other technically-complex infrastructure.

In geotechnical underground structures, the company has design and execution capacity for a variety of piles, pit protections, concrete barrettes, trenchless technology, jet grouting technology, slopes stabilisation, and dewatering systems, among others.

Novkol's unique expertise in geotechnical underground and hydrotechnical structures is informed by a variety of international best practice, from Europe to the US. It was the first to adopt technology that is now standard in Serbia. According to Hranisavljevic, early adoption of international best practices, for example continuous flight auger piles or, more recently, jet grouting, or using natural degradable polymer regarding environmental protection has kept the company successful over the decades.

"When we wanted to expand out geotechnical piling work, we looked at what was happening in Western countries. We got analysts to study soil conditions in Belgrade and compare them to other areas in Europe. We realized we were quite similar to northern Italy, France, and England, so we then looked at what technology was being used there. Step by step, we showed Serbia that the technology we were using was better," he said.

Although the company faced strong resistance to its early efforts, it remained resilient despite the challenges. As a result, Novkol has been active in building some of the most technically-challenging projects in the country. These include a railway project on the Belgrade-Makis line going throw embankment with "pipe roof" technology, foundation work on wind farm Kovacica, work on foundation protection pit in historical part of Belgrade "Rajiceva" shoping mol, foundation work and cofferdam for the railway bridge on river Morava and renovation work on historical castle Golubac and Smederevo on river Danube.

It has also expanded its operations to include new projects in Montenegro, and perhaps most significantly, undertaken geotechnical works for the Belgrade Waterfront project, a $3bn urban revitalisation initiative that includes construction of more than 7000 residential units, building area 1,8 million square meters, Belgrade tower height 168 meter .

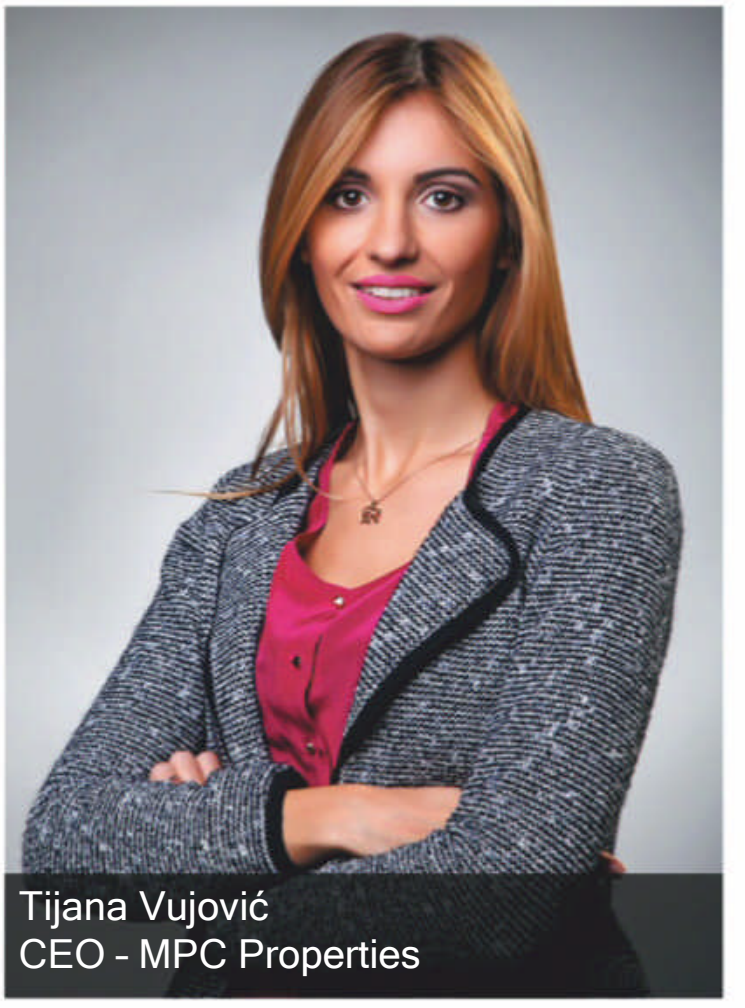
Now that Novkol has a demonstrated track record of successful project design and execution, it is turning its attention to expanding current operations, with an view to forging new strategic partnerships that align with its core values and support future growth.

"We know that Serbia is a great business and investment destination, and there are still many opportunities in the market. We have never been pre-occupied with old technologies and old ideas, which I can say has been a problem here in the region for many years. Our forward-thinking approach makes us the partner of choice for international investors, and that will remain the case in the years to come," said Hranisavljevic.

NOVKOL

MPC Properties - Reliability and Resilience

Real estate in Serbia is benefitting from the country's economic resilience in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. While the country will take a modest macroeconomic hit in 2020, analysts project that real estate prices will still rise between 3% and 9% on average this year, while 28,500 sq m of commercial space was commissioned in Belgrade in Q2 2020 as rising urbanization and steady demand for new space continues driving growth.


Tijana Vujović
CEO – MPC Properties

This means companies like MPC Holding, a diversified conglomerate focused mainly on real estate, should see business booming in the coming years.

Headquartered in Belgrade, MPC Holding was established in 1991 with a focus on the real estate sector through its subsidiaries, real estate service arm Confluence, and real estate investment arm, MPC Properties. The group has expanded over the years to include distribution arm Mercata, a leading domestic consumer goods business.

The group's real estate segment has focused on constructing state-of-the-art office and retail facilities meeting the highest international standards. It has flourished in parallel with Serbia's strong macroeconomic fundamentals, and broader trends that have driven European businesses into the Serbian market. "The recent past has been marked by impressive growth and profits, not only for us. I think that the country's real estate market in general picked up the pace. We have been lucky to operate in an environment that has undergone a lot of growth. There were a lot of developments that had been put on hold for various reasons, but that actually moved forward in the last couple of years, and I think that we contributed to this as a group," according to CEO Tijana Vujović.

A strong track record of developing grade A space has also helped, and MPC Properties has built a reputation for professionalism, timeliness, and reliability since launching in 2002. As a result, it has undertaken more than 30 projects, including the iconic Ušće Tower One and a network of shopping retail parks, rising to become one of the most experienced operators in the Southeastern European market in the process.

Green building practices are another important facet of MPC Properties' operations. The Navigator Business Center was the first in Belgrade to be awarded LEED Gold certification, and the Ušće Shopping Center was the first LEED EBOM-certified retail project in Serbia. In 2018 the company launched the Ušće Tower Two, and Navigator Business Center II, both of which opened this year. Ušće Tower Two is certified in accordance with BREEAM standard (grade Excellent), offering 232,000 sq m of class A office space, while the Navigator Business Center II is also LEED Gold certified.

2020 marks the opening of 130,000-sq-m BEO Shopping Center, home to 130 top global and European brands, including Peek and Cloppenburg's first Serbia store. MPC Properties currently has around 250,000 sq m of gross leasable area under development.

The company expects retail demand to remain strong in Serbia despite the pandemic.

"As always, life goes back sort of to normal, and consolidation will be our focus in the near future. In terms of retail, the sector has been affected by the pandemic and e-commerce has accelerated, but there are always strategies to move forward, for example hybrid online shopping and in-person experiences. I believe bricks and mortar retail will remain popular, and if demand reaches even 80% of what it was before the crisis, the sector will be fine," she said.

Having set the stage for strong future growth with a long-term vision and sharp focus on quality and sustainability, the company is now shifting its strategy abroad, to both international tenants and investors. Serbia will remain Southeastern Europe's leading economy in the coming years, and foreign firms seeking new space will be searching for grade A properties like MPC's.

MPC Holding is considering moving forward on new partnerships with investors, including private equity funds and REITs (real estate investment trusts), as it seeks to expand its portfolio through new builds. This means making the case for Serbia as a safe, secure, and profitable environment for foreign investment.

"Serbia is lucky because it has educated people who know how to work to the highest standards, demand is rising, and our tax regime is favorable compared to the rest of the world. As for MPC, we would love to be recognized as a company that is a leader not only by in its financial results, but a leader in offering new projects and concepts to the market. At the end of the day it's not only about the money, it's also a mission to educate the market and build up the country," she said.

As the trusted partner of choice in Serbian real estate, MPC's future remains bright.

MPC PROPERTIES

Srbijagas -
An Energetic Transformation

Robust economic growth and a return to normal has seen Serbia's energy consumption – specifically its natural gas consumption – rise steadily in recent years. Natural gas consumption is projected to hit 32,675 terajoules in 2020, a 22% increase over 2019 levels, and rise a further 15% until 2026 to reach 37,438 TJ. State-owned natural gas company Srbijagas is now investing millions to connect hundreds of thousands of households, building on a track record of recent successes that have made it one of the most profitable public companies in the country.


Dusan Bajatovic
CEO – Srbijagas

Srbijagas was founded in October 2005 through the merger of several state-owned companies including NIS-Gas, NIS-Energogas, and NIS-Jugopetrol, which had been developing the country's gas sector for more than 50 years. Today it is a leading modern gas company that have invested significantly in knowledge, human resources, and infrastructure in support of the country's ongoing energy sector liberalisation.

Under the strong leadership of the new management and CEO Dusan Bajatovic, Serbia's natural gas market has improved significantly since the 2008 financial crisis put a major dent in consumption, although he argued there is still room for improvement.

"Gas currently comprises around 12.5% of Serbia's energy mix, but it should be around 25%. In gas we have nearly returned to the same consumption levels as 2008, and we are actively investing to grow our contribution, since new hydroelectric and coal power is much less feasible. We need sources for quick and flexible electricity production, and only gas can do that, because "shaving" of peaks and shortcomings of electricity production from "green sources" is required" he explained.

The investment case is solid. An engine of economic development in Serbia, Srbijagas has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years. When Bajatovic took over in 2008, the company's debts stood at €1.4 billion. At the same time, €2.4 billion of consumer and corporate payments were owing, as a result of leading a social policy. The company was selling gas at a loss, without securing receivables. Basically, at the time that was a hidden fiscal deficit of the Republic of Serbia and dramatic reforms were needed.

But the government of Serbia delivered a series of legislative packages beginning in 2016, transforming receivables into capital and improving the company's liquidity. Since then, Srbijagas annual profits have averaged SRD5 billion (€42.5 million). Indeed, between 2015 and 2019, the company reported total net profits of €280 million, with profits rising to hit SRD2 billion (€17 million) during Q1 2020 along.

Bajatovic attributed this success to the company's strong values and deep foundations in the country.

"The brand itself is a big advantage from the start. Our relationship with our customers is great. At any moment, we can guarantee a complete supply of gas and total price transparency. We are supported by our financial recovery and strong foundations, which customers are aware of. We're not only a distributor of gas; we're an important actor in the economic life of Serbia."

Demand has been rising too: In June 2020, Srbijagas reported gas consumption in the country has risen by 30% over the previous three year to hit 2.1 billion cubic metres. Although gas prices are not forecast to increase for individual consumers, the company expects sustained high demand to continue driving growth next year.

With that in mind, it has invested €870 million to construct a new gas distribution network including high-pressure distribution pipelines and a low-pressure network running across the country. At present, 88 gasification projects are underway, as well as over 17,000 km of distribution network that will connect 128,000 households in the near term, with potential to expand to 500,000 households in total. Projects include 1819 km of steel gas pipelines, 15,512 km of low-pressure network, and 160 km of large high-pressure pipelines.

Having built a solid reputation and become a trusted name, Srbjiagas is now setting its sights on further expansion via new strategic partnerships and cooperation agreements, which offer the opportunity for a highly-profitable, high-potential investment opportunity. Bajatovic is looking forward to the next big success story.

"We have unbundled our transporting service, and soon we will do the same with the distributor, as well as the trader. That means that Srbijagas will act as owner of various energy activities, and its role will be more of a fund rather than a public company. We would provide partners with investments, including public-private partnerships, that are backed by the government of the Republic of Serbia. The country is serious about developing its gas sector," he said.

SRBIJAGAS

BUSINESS

What Your Zoom Body Language Says About You

The visual signals you convey in online meetings and email speak volumes in the new era of remote work



BY

DORIE CLARK
@dorieclark

WE ALL UNDERSTAND THE importance of body language at work—the way that a colleague's crossed arms might convey hostility or a manager's feet on the desk might be an attempt to show dominance. But how does that translate into the digital realm, now that so many of us are working from home and conducting so much of our business lives through online video?

That's where Erica Dhawan comes in. Erica is the author of *Get Big Things Done* and the forthcoming *Digital Body Language*, and recently joined me on my weekly *Newsweek* interview show *Better* (Thursdays 12 p.m. ET/9 a.m. PT) to discuss how professionals can communicate more effectively when they're operating digitally. She shared the following four tips.

Digital body language isn't just about your body. You might imagine that the phrase "digital body language" simply refers to your facial expressions when you're on Zoom. Of course, you want to make sure you're not scowling on camera or looking bored, Dhawan says, but digital body language is a much broader concept.

As she notes, "Digital body language is [about] the cues and signals that we send in our digital communication that make up the subtext of our messages. So it's everything from the subject line that we use [in our emails] to our response time: Did we reply in two minutes or in five minutes or in five days?" Even subtle choices, like whether you CC or BCC someone, or the punctuation you use and whether it seems abrupt, are part of the context in which your messages are received. In other words, the choice to address a message as "Dear Erica" vs. "Hey Erica!" is part of how we "project through the body of our language," according to Dhawan.

Reading carefully is the new listening. Nobody likes it when you're in a meeting and a colleague seems to be tuning out or not paying attention. That's true on a video chat, as well. But Dhawan says the same principle now extends to written communication, which has become so much more prevalent during work-from-home. She cites the example of one executive who sent a text message to his boss, Tom, asking, "Do you want to speak Wednesday or Thursday?" And Tom's response to that was "yes." That created confusion and wasted time with additional follow-up.

Then too, Dhawan says, that carelessness can cause people to lose trust in their leaders. Conversely, she says, "If you're showing that you've read things, that will lead to a whole new level of understanding, collaboration and trust in your work environments."

Not everything has to be on video. You might think it's a good idea to have all your meetings on video, in order to maximize engagement. That's true up to a point, says Dhawan—but screen fatigue is real, and video isn't a panacea: "In video communication, there are a lot of nuances. There are



MIA KIEVY/GETTY

screen freezes, or you're on mute, or there are interruptions that can get in the way of psychological safety when people are brainstorming ideas."

"There's also the fact that it's not natural for us to actually see our own video on the camera, while we're trying to talk to other people," Dhawan says. This can be particularly jarring for introverts, who may feel pressure to be "on," if they're on camera. As an antidote, she recommends prioritizing whether a meeting should take place via video—not all of them have to—and holding some via phone, or even just having an email exchange if the topic is straightforward. If a meeting does rise to the level of video, she advises holding it before 2 p.m., "so people don't have that Zoom exhaustion later in the day."

Don't be afraid to adapt your style. Just as you'd likely adjust your physical body language for various circumstances, Dhawan says you should do the same digitally. "In face-to-face, traditional body language," she says, "if you're meeting someone for the first time, you may shake their hand, greet them with direct eye contact and sit down at the table with a clear agenda to run through a meeting with a PowerPoint presentation." In contrast, she notes, "If you're meeting with someone that you've known for a long time, you may see them and hug them."

Similarly, "If you're meeting someone that you've never met before, and maybe they're senior to you in a company or someone you're trying to sell something to, you would send an email to their assistant to get on their calendar. You wouldn't just send them a quick text." Meanwhile, "If this is someone who is a long-time colleague or your assistant or teammate, you may just jump on the phone because you're running around while homeschooling your kid, or you send a one-liner email saying, 'Call me right now.'" There's no universal right or wrong way to handle digital body language, she says—only right or wrong for a given set of circumstances, and we should adapt accordingly.

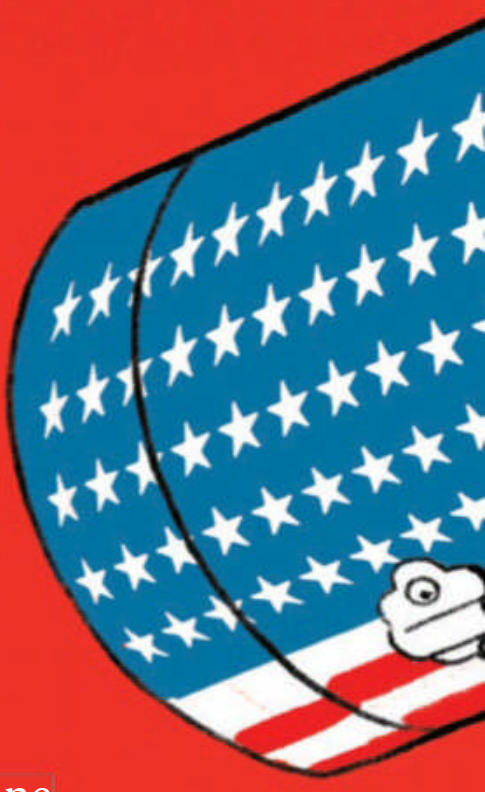
We're all living in a digital world now, so it's even more important to be clear on the messages we're sending. By following these strategies, we can regain control over our digital body language and how we're perceived.

"Screen fatigue is real, and video isn't a panacea."

→ **Dorie Clark,** *author of* ENTREPRENEURIAL YOU *and Duke University Fuqua School of Business professor, hosts* NEWSWEEK'S *weekly interview series,* BETTER, *on Thursdays at 12pm ET/9am PT at newsweek.com/linkedinlive. Sign up for updates at dorieclark.com.*

ATTEMPTS BY BEIJING TO SOW UNREST AHEAD OF THE ELECTION ARE JUST A SMALL PART OF CHINA'S LATEST EFFORTS TO EXPAND ITS **POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INFLUENCE IN THE U.S.**

THE NEW CHINA SYNDROME



by Didi Kirsten Tatlow

Illustration by Alex Fine



GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT
Experts say that Beijing works through hundreds of community groups in America to promote a positive view of China in the U.S. and establish connections that will help advance its political and economic goals.

OVER THE SUMMER, AS BOTH THE TRUMP AND Biden campaigns ramped up efforts to win the most controversial presidential election in decades, Laura Daniels, Jessi Young and Erin Brown also got busy, posting critical comments about American politics and society on Twitter and other social media platforms. They tweeted about mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic. They posted about racial injustice. And they shared their views (not good) of the personal and political scandals dogging President Donald Trump.

The three women appeared to be just like millions of other Americans who take to social media every day to express their displeasure at the state of the U.S. Yet there were anomalies. The women's messages were sometimes identical to others on Twitter and Facebook. Their handles were similar and they tended to make sweeping statements putting down America and its democratic system, rather than referencing specific events. Their use of language was off too, stilted or mixing up familiar expressions—"Black people are never slaves! Stand up your high head!" read one of Jessi's more garbled tweets. And one more thing: Occasionally, a stray Chinese-language character would slip into one of their posts.

That last part was especially odd—until you consider that the women weren't actually women at all but rather bots and trolls used in a systematic campaign by groups affiliated with China to sow division and unrest in the U.S. ahead of the 2020 election. An analysis this summer of thousands of such Twitter and Facebook posts by the International Cyber Policy Center of the Australian Security Policy Institute described them as part of a program of "cross-platform inauthentic activity, conducted by Chinese-speaking actors and broadly in alignment with the political goal of the People's Republic of China to denigrate the standing of the U.S."

The fake accounts are just one example of what appears to be stepped-up activity by groups associated with China as Election Day gets closer. Over the past six weeks, for example, both Google and Microsoft have reported attempted cyber attacks linked to Beijing that targeted individuals who worked with the Biden and Trump campaigns. However, unlike Russian interference in 2016, which worked to bolster Trump's chances of election, most of the activity stemming from China does not clearly favor one candidate over the other. Instead, it seems designed, as William Evanina, director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, puts it, "to shape the policy environment in the United States, pressure political figures it views as opposed to China's interest and deflect any counter criticism."

Experts say the election-related activity is just a small part of a much larger and deeper campaign of influence and interference by China that's been taking place over many years—and is a far more worrisome threat long-term. Interviews with some two dozen







CAST OF CHARACTERS
From top: Deputy Attorney General Jeffrey A. Rosen last month discussing charges related to Chinese hackers; William Evanina, head of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center; cyber attacks tied to China have targeted the Biden campaign.



FROM TOP: TASOS KATOPODIS/POOL/AFP/GETTY; WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY; DREW ANGERER/GETTY

analysts, government officials and other U.S.-China specialists, as part of a four-month investigation by *Newsweek*, suggest there are myriad other ways in which the Communist Party of China (CPC) and other government-linked entities have been working, through multiple channels in the U.S. at the federal, state and local level, to foster conditions and connections that will further Beijing's political and economic interests and ambitions.

Those channels include businesses, universities and think tanks, social and cultural groups, Chinese diaspora organizations, Chinese-language media and WeChat, the Chinese social media and messaging app, says John Garnaut, an Australian political analyst and expert on global CPC interference. Separately, *Newsweek* has identified about 600 such groups in the U.S., all in regular touch with and guided by China's Communist Party—a larger-scale version of a pattern found in other countries around the world.

The scope of alleged activities is enormous, involving social and business gatherings, extensive information campaigns and building political and economic ties that can be leveraged to Beijing's gain—recent reports of Hunter Biden's business dealings with a Chinese energy company eager to connect with his father and President Trump's secret Chinese bank account are just the latest high-profile examples that some China watchers find worrisome.

There are also accusations of large-scale economic espionage. In a speech this summer at the Hudson Institute, F.B.I. director Christopher Wray said the agency opens a China-connected investigation every 10 hours and that, of nearly 5,000 active counterintelligence cases in the U.S., almost half are related to China.

Chinese authorities claim the U.S. distorts its dealings with local community groups, and vehemently deny they are interfering in U.S. internal affairs. But U.S. authorities and U.S.-China experts stand their ground. "Justice, State, the F.B.I., they're peeling back the layers that have been hiding some of these organizations and activities" says Dean Boyd, chief communications executive at the National Counterintelligence and Security Center. As he tells *Newsweek*, "The influencing has been going on non-stop, and it's not happening in a vacuum. There is an election coming up."

Sowing the Seeds of Division

IF THE TWEETS OF "JESSI YOUNG" AND HER FRIENDS WERE ALL you had to go on, China-linked efforts to manipulate U.S. public opinion in advance of the election might be easy to dismiss as amateurish and ineffective.

The Chinese actors involved, for instance, made no attempt to create realistic profiles for the owners of the 200 to 300 Twitter accounts involved, plus 60 or so more on Facebook. And while the messages, posted between February and July of this year, focused on important issues dividing the country, they were so crudely translated into English, without a feel for American tone or cadence, that the possibilities for engagement seemed limited.

A sampling: "'Janky System' is a stupid, failed system!" "Patricia Smith" tweeted, along with a photo of Americans voting. "The Trump Administration has gone so far as to sacrifice our lives to get back to work to make the Dow Jones look good that they now treat us like human beings?" "Sonia Mason" tweeted, complaining about federal response to the pandemic. "The overflow of freedom has created the situation today," said "Laura Daniels" in response to a tweet about a report on religion by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

"The Chinese are not really good at making fake social media accounts," says Ho-fung Hung, a professor of sociology at Johns Hopkins University and author of *The China Boom: Why China Will Not Rule the World*. "The language is not very convincing." In fact, the Cyber Policy Centre found that, of the 2,240 tweets it analyzed,

NEWSWEEK HAS IDENTIFIED ABOUT **600 COMMUNITY GROUPS IN THE U.S.** ALL IN REGULAR TOUCH WITH AND GUIDED BY CHINA'S COMMUNIST PARTY.

99 percent got fewer than two likes, replies and retweets.

But while this particular campaign may not have hit the mark, some of the broad strategies it employed are ones that China uses quite effectively in other contexts—tactics very different from the techniques that Russia has used in its election interference efforts. The social posts from Chinese actors did not have a clear partisan lean—for instance, they promoted messages in support of both the Black Lives Matter and pro-police Blue Lives Matter movements. The point was not to take a side but rather to boost divisiveness by amplifying competing, emotionally-charged view points.

Nor did the Chinese campaign typically spread disinformation. Instead it commonly shared authentic content from news sources like *The New York Times* and MSNBC, along with tweets from civil rights groups, that highlighted racial divisions in the U.S.

"If people in the U.S. are looking [to China] for a repeat of Russia in 2016, they will be disappointed," says Garnaut. "That's not what China does. They repurpose, they don't smash." In other words, the CPC is not out to destroy the U.S., experts say, but rather to change or subvert it from within, and foster a positive view of China, in contrast to the apparent chaos in America.

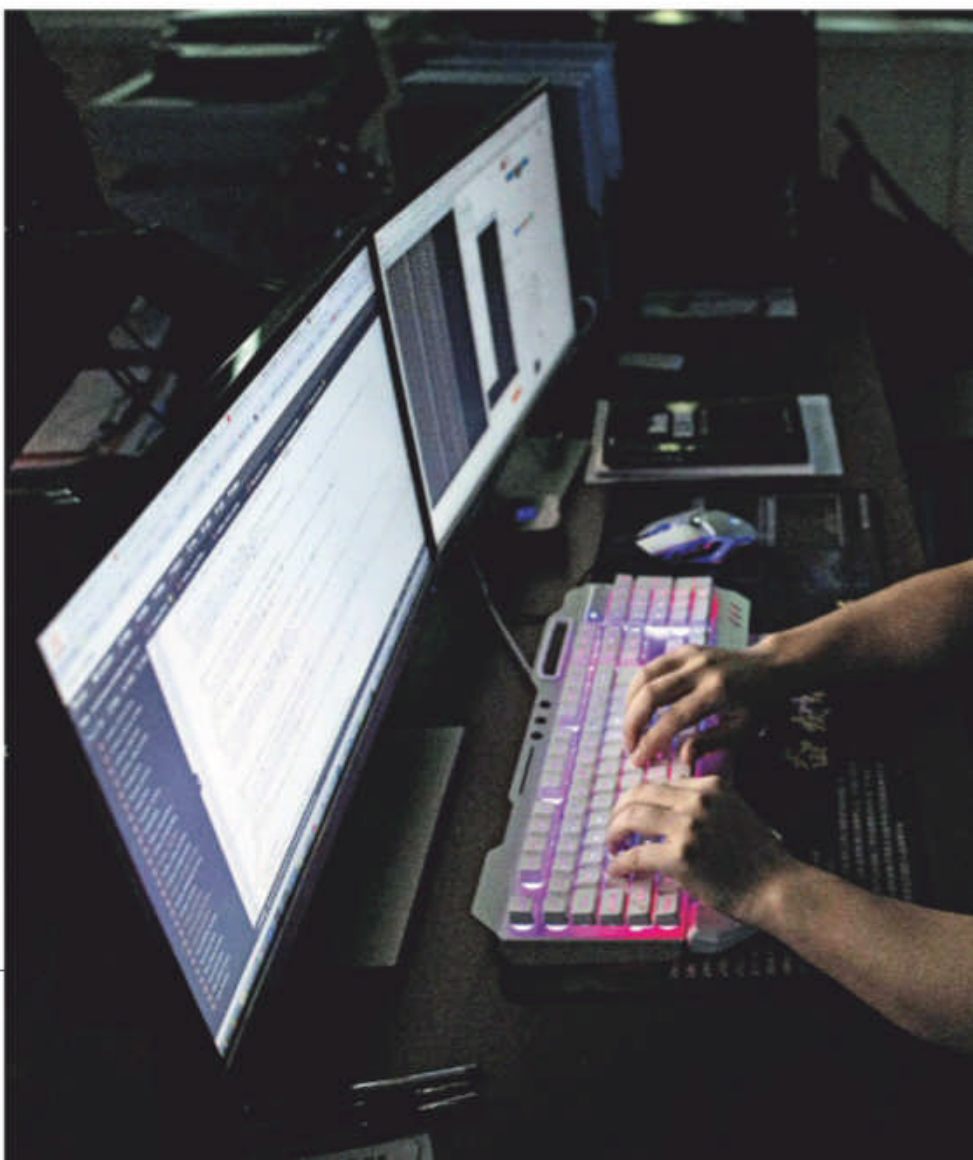
"They are very determined and very organized," says Anna Puglisi, a senior fellow at Georgetown University's Center for Security and Emerging Technology and a former national counterintelligence officer for East Asia. "We [in America] don't think in these ways. It flies in the face of how people in the U.S. see the world."

While China's influence efforts around the election have mostly centered on process vs. outcome, U.S. intelligence officials believe it's clear the country's leaders do have a favorite in the race. Lately Beijing has stepped up negative rhetoric about the Trump administration, harshly criticizing the White House on its statements and actions on Hong Kong and TikTok, among other things, and blasting its COVID-19 response. "We assess that China prefers that President Trump—whom Beijing sees as unpredictable—does not win reelection," said Evanina, the government counterintelligence director, in a statement this August. The *Global Times*, which is owned by the CPC's *People's Daily* newspaper, has also made it clear that China prefers the Democratic candidate, saying in a recent article, "Tactically, the US approach would be more predictable, and Biden is much smoother to deal with than Trump."

Another reason China would prefer to deal with the Democrats: The Biden ranks include many people from the previous two Obama administrations, during which China made great strides on the world stage and experienced little opposition. Anti-China sentiment has heated up in the U.S. since then, as Trump

"THE CHINESE ARE NOT REALLY GOOD AT MAKING FAKE SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS. **THE LANGUAGE IS NOT VERY CONVINCING.**"





very publicly addressed trade, influence and espionage problems, ensuring that China policy going forward will be more critical, no matter who occupies the White House. But it's not clear if the Democrats are willing to challenge China quite as deeply, if they win.

Influence at the Local Level

TWO PARTICULAR MEMBERS OF THE TRUMP ENTOURAGE WHO have been thorns in the CPC's side are Pompeo and his policy adviser Miles Yu, who together have led the administration's broad pushback against China. Lately Pompeo has been sounding an alarm about a key focus of CPC activity in the U.S.— interference in politics, business and community at the state and local level.

In February, for example, Pompeo warned the National Governors Association at a meeting in Washington D.C. that the CPC was identifying and grooming state and local politicians who would support its interests. A Chinese think tank had already graded governors on their "friendliness," Pompeo said. *Newsweek* obtained and translated a copy of the 2019 report, which labeled 17 governors as "friendly;" called 14 "ambiguous," deemed six as "hardline" and the rest "unclear." Pompeo told the governors, "Whether you are viewed by the CPC as friendly or hardline, know that it's working you, know that it's working the team around you."

Six months later, at a meeting of economists and sociologists in Zhongnanhai, a secretive leaders' compound in Beijing, Xi told more than a dozen top economists and sociologists that China would double down on seeking "cooperation" with U.S. politicians and business leaders at the state and local level, exactly what Pompeo had warned about. "We must actively develop cooperation with all countries, regions and enterprises willing to cooperate with us, including states, localities and enterprises in the United States," Xi said, according to Xinhua, the state news agency.

In his talk, Pompeo gave several examples that he said reflected an uptick in CPC interference at the state level. In 2019, he said, diplomats at the Chinese consulate in Houston wrote to the Mississippi governor, Phil Bryant, threatening to cancel a Chinese investment in his state if he traveled to Taiwan, the de facto independent island nation that Beijing claims and says no one may have official ties with. Bryant went anyway.

In another example, Chinese diplomats at the consulate in Chicago wrote to a Wisconsin lawmaker, Republican Roger Roth, asking him to sponsor a bill they wrote praising China's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Wisconsin Examiner* reported. Roth initially ignored the request thinking it a joke. The Chinese diplomats sent it again. Roth replied with one word: "nuts."

Those two attempts may have faltered in the face of pushback, but outreach often works, especially on the business level. Speaking on background, one official described the pattern: "Say you are governor of a state that has tremendous economic investments in China, or that has a good relationship with China exporting soybeans or grain. China can use that relationship," say, by asking their political or business contacts to make calls to Washington to try and influence policy. It sounds like U.S. political lobbying, "but you have to know, it's a foreign government playing this game," the official says.

In other countries, this kind of interference can be even more intense—and has already led to major problems, including threats to national security. In Australia, Chinese intelligence operatives





FROM LEFT: FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP/GETTY; NICOLAS ASFOURI/AFP/GETTY; ALEX WONG/GETTY

TENSIONS RISING
Left to right: Social media campaigns tied to China sought to amplify racial unrest in the U.S; a Chinese hacker at his office in Dongguan, China; Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, a vocal critic of Beijing, is often a target of its ire on social platforms and in the media.

allegedly conspired to place a financially-troubled, ethnic Chinese person, Nick Zhao, in parliament as a spy, offering $1 million to fund his campaign, according to multiple reports in the Australian media last year. Zhao, in his 30s, was found dead of a drug overdose in a Melbourne hotel room in 2019. That same year, China's Ministry of State Security was reportedly responsible for cyberattacks against Australia's parliament and three major political parties that provided access to policy papers and emails, according to Reuters.

In Canada, a special parliamentary committee set up in late 2019 is driving a rethink on China relations amid charges of "brazen" interference. Earlier this year, a report was published that detailed activities that China, along with Russia, had engaged in: "using deceptive means to 'cultivate relationships with elected officials and others perceived to possess influence in the political process; seek to influence the reporting of Canadian media outlets; seek, in some cases, to affect the outcome of elections; and coerce or induce diaspora communities to advance foreign interests.'"

Europe too has begun to reexamine its relations with China amid the shock of COVID-19 when, earlier this year, Beijing sent very public medical aid to struggling nations, including Italy, accompanied by propaganda presenting China as a savior and appearing to try to weaken faith in the European Union. Then in October, Sweden, spooked by a newly-adopted combative style of diplomacy that the Chinese call "wolf warrior" and the kidnapping and detention of a citizen in China, among other problems, banned Huawei and ZTE, the Chinese telecom companies, from its future 5G networks, citing concerns over "Sweden's security." Earlier this year, Sweden also shut down all of the country's Confucius Institutes, a Beijing-funded program with the stated goal of promoting Chinese language and culture that many viewed as a propaganda tool. In the U.S. they have been permitted to remain open but are designated as "foreign missions."

In some ways, the U.S., at least until recently, has lagged in experiencing the more aggressive actions that other nations have documented and in exposing infractions, when discovered. That may have partly to do with Chinese tactics, which are more careful when aimed at the key "enemy," says Ho-fung Hung, the Johns Hopkins professor. Hung quotes a revolutionary saying by Mao Zedong to illustrate his point: "Mao said, 'gather your best forces, annihilate the enemy one by one.' Don't take on the core first, don't take on the toughest opponent first," Hung says. "Take on the smaller and weaker ones, like Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK. They have done that. The U.S. is the toughest nut to crack."

But there are signs the U.S. is now taking the threat more seriously. In July, the State Department shut China's Houston consulate over what it said was persistent technology theft and political interference across a broad swathe of states in the south, southeast and southwest, home of many energy and medical businesses and advanced research. The Chinese government denies these activities.



XINHUA/GAO JIE/GETTY



UNITED FRONT
A government reception last month to commemorate the founding of the People's Republic of China was organized in part by the United Front Work Department, which is responsible for influencing groups to view China and its goals favorably.





MIND GAMES
From bottom, left: Beijing think tank co-founder Wang Huiyao has multiple ties to United Front influencer groups; medical supplies sent by China to help Italy during the pandemic were part of a propaganda effort; the Chinese consulate in Houston is now closed amid charges of espionage.

While the U.S. government has not released many details of what happened, several interviewees described a pattern of espionage by diplomats at the consulate aimed at major cities in the area. "Say, you are a city manager and you have a giant medical industry, and you also have giant collaborative relationships with China, well, then that manager is dependent on China," said one official, who spoke on background. A Chinese diplomat might then feel free to call the manager asking for a meeting with the state governor, or approval for a business project, or to oppose a motion criticizing China for human rights violations in Tibet or Hong Kong. "It's very effective influence," the official said.

"Houston was not chosen at random out of the consulates out there," said John C. Demers, an assistant attorney general in the Department of Justice, in an online event in August with the Center for Strategic & International Studies. The consulate had long been a center of nationwide activity to exert political pressure and extract technology for China, several people interviewed for this story said. In a sign of the scale of activities, F.B.I. agents also conducted about "50 interviews in 30 different cities" across the U.S., with Chinese researchers suspected of working to extract technology—"just the tip of what was going on and what we were trying to disrupt," Demers said.

China's Magic Weapon

TO HELP CARRY OUT ITS PROGRAM OF INFLUENCE AND interference in the U.S., China relies on what Xi calls the country's "magic weapon:" the party's "United Front" system led by a Communist Party division called the United Front Work Department.

This is "a network of party and state agencies responsible for influencing groups outside the party," in and outside China, as Alex Joske, a researcher on Chinese politics at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, has written. Traditionally, outside China, the United Front has focused on overseas Chinese communities, appealing to their ethnic loyalty to persuade them to "repay the motherland." Personal benefit is often involved, with the system offering business opportunities in exchange for good will and cooperation.

Groups that are part of the system often have innocuous-sounding names, like the Chinese Overseas Exchange Association. Running parallel to the United Front is the Chinese government's global network of "friendship associations," under the foreign ministry. The U.S. organizations with which these groups cultivate ties may have no idea of their CPC affiliation. Pompeo, for instance, pointed out that the Governors Association had co-sponsored a U.S.-China "Collaboration Summit" with a group called the Chinese People's Association for Friendship and Foreign Countries, which is, indirectly, tied to the United Front system. He asked the gathering, "How many of you made the link between that group and Chinese Communist Party officials?"

"The United Front is part of China's foreign policy, part of China's intelligence apparatus and runs interference," says Anne-Marie Brady, a professor of Chinese politics at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. Tasks that it may be charged with include everything from making "friends" to outright espionage.

The Chinese government has frequently denied the Front's role in overseas influence and interference operations. Yet it allocates a large amount of money to its work, indicating it is a priority. The budget of the United Front system, both at home and abroad, was more than $2.6 billion in 2019, Ryan Fedasiuk of Georgetown University's Center for Security and Emerging Technology says. Nearly $600 million of that was earmarked for work aimed at overseas Chinese communities and foreigners, Fedasiuk calculates. The total budget outstripped the Chinese Foreign Ministry's, he found.

The United Front in Action

A THREE-DAY SUMMIT THAT TOOK PLACE IN MID-OCTOBER AT THE China Institute, a New York City non-profit, provides a classic

FROM LEFT: NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP/GETTY; XINHUA/ZHENG MENGYU/GETTY; MARK FELIX/AFP/AFP/GETTY





A CHINESE THINK TANK GRADED GOVERNORS ON THEIR "FRIENDLINESS." 17 GOVERNORS WERE DEEMED "FRIENDLY," 14 WERE "AMBIGUOUS," SIX WERE LABELED "HARDLINE" AND THE REST "UNCLEAR."

example of how the United Front works. The event, titled "Finding Success in an Age of Crisis," promised to help participants figure out how to "achieve success in the face of strained U.S.-China relations and a volatile world."

The event featured an illustrious line-up of panelists from U.S. business, academia, technology, media, diplomacy and politics, including Rick Snyder, former governor of Michigan, and Stapleton J. Roy, a founder of the Wilson Center's Kissinger Institute. Yet what participants likely didn't know: Three of the four "knowledge partners" are directly or indirectly part of the United Front.

The Beijing-based China Center of Globalization, a think tank, is one of them. The organization was co-founded by Wang Huiyao, who is also a deputy chairman of the Western Returned Students Association, a United Front Work Department group, says Joske, who has documented Wang's multiple connections to the United Front. The others were the China General Chamber of Commerce USA and the China General Chamber of Commerce USA Chicago, both among the groups *Newsweek* has linked to the CPC system.

Asked for comment, the China Institute replied that it "chose to engage with these organizations because of their large memberships and connection to the issues and topics that are a priority today. We wanted to ensure they were engaged in the conversation."

Importantly, members of these groups, most of them ethnic Chinese, may not be aware of the organization's ties to the China party-state. Individuals may join for a sense of community or a business opportunity. Despite that, the groups may compete to be close to the Chinese embassy and its consulates hoping to gain status and favors, says Yaqiu Wang, an analyst for Human Rights Watch in New York City. China's diplomatic system, in turn, connects through them to local Chinese-language communities.

Some groups assist in technology transfer—acquiring technology developed by U.S. companies for use by Chinese companies—a crucial goal of the party's influencing and interfering. The system also permeates the Chinese-language media in the U.S, shaping the information environment.

Newsweek has identified the following types of organizations as affiliated with the United Front in the U.S.: at least 83 Chinese hometown associations for immigrants from the same place in China; 10 "Chinese Aid Centers;" 32 Chambers of Commerce; 13 Chinese-language media brands; about half of the 70 associations for Chinese professionals; 38 organizations promoting the "peaceful reunification" of China and Taiwan; five "friendship organizations" and 129 other groups engaged in a range of activities such as education and culture. In addition, there are 265 Chinese Student and Scholar Associations for the approximately 300,000 Chinese students in the U.S. These are connected to CPC politics, often via Chinese diplomats, usually the education secretary in a consulate.

The groups were identified by evaluating crossover membership, regular joint activities, events indicating ideological alignment, high-level meetings that can only be obtained by being part of a CPC-trusted system and by crosschecking names, positions and cooperative events described in hundreds of Chinese-language government and party documents and Chinese state media reports as well as reports by the groups themselves.



NO LOVE LOST
A year after his election, U.S. President Donald Trump, here with Chinese President Xi Jinping at a welcome ceremony, visited Beijing. Things have gone downhill between the two leaders ever since.



XINHUA/LI TAO/GETTY

The level of influence and interference activity ranges from simple efforts to promote a positive view of China to outright espionage. The latter was the case in late September, when a New York City policeman of Tibetan origin from China, a naturalized American citizen and army reservist, was arrested and charged with acting as an illegal agent of the Chinese government. His handler in the Chinese consulate in New York City worked for the China Association for Preservation and Development of Tibetan Culture, which is part of the United Front, according to charges laid out by the Department of Justice. Allegedly the policeman spied on Chinese citizens living in the New York area to help assess their potential as intelligence sources and provided Chinese officials with access to the NYPD through invitations to police events.

Start digging and the number of groups in the U.S. with ties to the United Front seem endless. The Committee of 100 (C100), a New York-based advocacy group for Americans of Chinese origin that was founded nearly 30 years ago with the help of Henry Kissinger, is another, according to multiple reports in Chinese-language media and United Front organizations. The website of the United Front Work Department in the Chinese city of Nanjing identifies U.S. businessman and C100 chairman H. Roger Wang as an honorary chairman of the Nanjing Overseas Friendship Association, which is a city-level branch of the United Front's global China Overseas Friendship Association.

Upon his election to the board in 2018, Wang talked enthusiastically about key CPC projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative, in which China committed to invest in infrastructure projects in nearly 70 countries. The U.S. did not join, seeing the initiative as an attempt by Beijing to project its power around the world. "There are so many areas that C100 can get actively involved in now, including the Belt and Road Initiative," Wang said in an interview with *China Daily*. Xi Jinping has described C100 as a "friendly organization" and the group regularly meets with top Chinese leaders.

Asked for comment, Fulton Hou, a program associate at C100 emailed, "We firmly oppose any efforts by a foreign government or a political party—from China or elsewhere—to influence or undermine American society and democracy. Our dual mission is to promote the full participation of Chinese Americans in American life and to advance a constructive Sino-American dialogue."

Is there anything wrong with that? Not on the surface, but what's beneath the surface is harder to discern. "How to deal with China is a question everybody has to face," says Alvin Y.H. Cheung, a research fellow at NYU's U.S.-Asia Law Institute. "The relationship with the CPC is like any other. You have to set boundaries."

→ **Didi Kirsten Tatlow** *is a senior fellow at the German Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin and at Projekt Sinopsis in Prague, and a journalist who began reporting from China in 1995. Cheryl Yu contributed research for this story in the U.S.*

UNCHARTED

Otherworldly Natural Phenomena You've Got to See

The Seven Wonders of the World are famous, but what about those that didn't quite make the cut? Take our word for it—they are just as worth seeing. But visits to some of these marvels need to be timed just right, as they only happen a few months out of the year. Whether it's a special chemical reaction or a synchronized mating ritual, these splendors deserving a spot in your schedule. In every corner of the world, Mother Nature has something up her sleeve that continues to shock visitors year after year. —*Alexandra Schonfeld*

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SARA GILBERT ON THE CONNERS

The family that's suited to handle the pandemic and calm the country post-election. » P.48

LAKE ABRAHAM
ALBERTA, CANADA

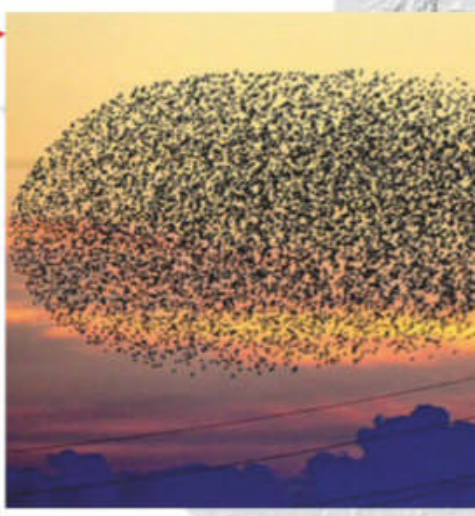
Each winter, as this lake begins to freeze over, what happens under the surface is much more curious than what meets the eye. Bubbles of methane form on the floor of the lake throughout the year and as the temperatures drop, the orbs rise and freeze at various heights in the water. These beautiful patterns can be dangerous though; if a bubble cracks, highly flammable gas is released. (See number 1 on the following page)



02 Synchronous Fireflies
Great Smoky Mountains, Tennessee and North Carolina
Did you see that? In a rare occurrence of non-human life working in mysterious ways, thousands of fireflies gather together and flash simultaneously every few seconds during their mating ritual, which lasts for only two weeks a year, usually sometime during May or June.

01 Lake Abraham
Alberta, Canada
(See previous spread)

05 Starling Murmuration
United Kingdom
In what mimics a dark cloud moving through the air every fall across the United Kingdom, onlookers can witness this amazing display of animals working in ways humans have yet to fully understand. Anywhere from hundreds to thousands of these birds group together, creating this synchronized dance in the sky.



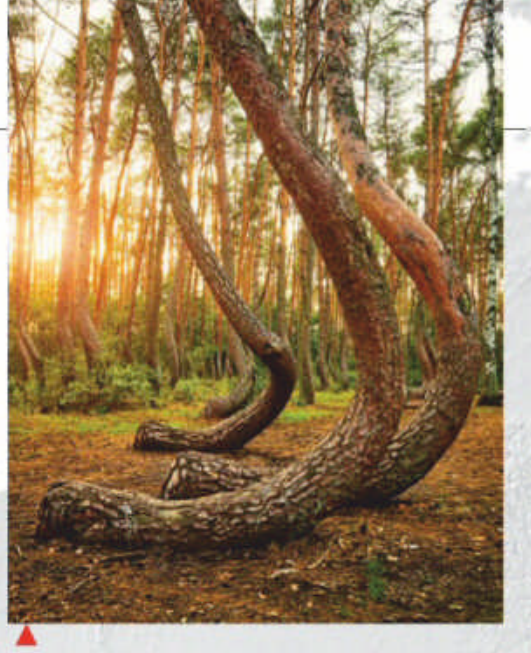


03 Caño Cristales
Meta, Colombia
During part of the year, red algae flowers make this river in the National Park of La Macarena shine a vibrant ruby red color. The peak time to see the colors in full form are late summer to early autumn.

04 Catatumbo Lightning
Maracaibo, Venezuela
Where the Catatumbo River meets Lake Maracaibo, lightning does, in fact, strike twice. It has been known to flash up to 250 times per square kilometer (.4 mile) per year, leading to up to 300 storm days annually, with the best time for viewing June through November. NASA says it is the highest concentration of lightning on earth.



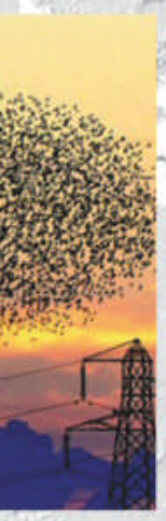
02: HAOXIANG YANG/GETTY; JORGE IVAN VASQUEZ CUARTAS/GETTY; 04: CHRISTIAN PINILLO SALAS/GETTY; 05: OWEN HUMPHREYS/PA IMAGES/GETTY



06 Crooked Forest
Gryfino, Poland
What might appear to be a regular grove of trees from a distance is far from that upon closer inspection. Around 400 pine trees, each less than 100 years old, make up what is known as the "crooked forest" due to the inexplicable way each one developed with a crooked trunk at its base before straightening back up.



07 Sea of Stars
Vaadho, Maldives
The Maldives is known for its beautiful turquoise waters and bungalows, but what's going on just under the sea is at least as impressive. In the late summer, the reefs around the Maldives fill with bioluminescent phytoplankton; ignited by the movement of the waves, they make the water glow like a star-filled sky.





08 Kawah Ijen Crater
Java, Indonesia
While lava typically appears bright red or orange, due to a chemical reaction when sulfur meets the air at this volcano, the lava shines a bright blue color that is only really visible after sundown. Visiting this region is not for the faint of heart, though, due to the presence of toxic gases that make this act of nature possible—but also inhospitable to humans.

09 Nacreous Clouds
Antarctica
While these shimmering iridescent clouds visible mainly in the polar regions are eye-catching, they are in fact quite dangerous to the ozone layer. Occurring only at very high altitudes when the temperature drops enough to crystallize the moisture in the air, the light reflects off of these crystals to create a lustrous, mother-of-pearl effect—and a destructive chemical reaction.



06: MBPROJEKT_MACIEJ_BLEDOWSKI/GETTY; 07: ATANAS BOZHIKOV NASKO/GETTY 08:SOPON CHIENWITTAYAKUN/GETTY; 09: IAN FORSYTH/GETTY

PARTING SHOT

Sara Gilbert

IF THERE'S ONE FAMILY UNIQUELY QUALIFIED TO SELF-ISOLATE, IT'S THE Conner family of Lanford, Illinois. "They don't really have friends. We make jokes about it." The iconic TV family from *Roseanne* tackles the pandemic in the third season of the reboot *The Conners* on ABC. Not only does Sara Gilbert reprise her double Emmy-nominated role of Darlene, she also serves as an executive producer. "I'm just so extremely grateful to be shooting anything," Gilbert says about filming during a pandemic. "Without an audience, it's a bit of a challenge to get your energy up to performance level." Like most Americans, the impact of COVID-19 has also impacted the fictional family financially, with Darlene and Becky forced to work at the local factory where Roseanne and Jackie worked in the original series. Even though the pandemic is a tough story line to tackle, particularly for a comedy series, it's a reality many can relate to right now. "I feel like that's the truth for so many Americans who are smart and driven and do everything they can and can only get to a certain place in their dreams."



"I feel that we're all able to, as a country, really talk and really listen to each other."

How are the Conners holding up amid the pandemic?
The Conners are well equipped because they're constantly in crisis. They're like, okay, this is the next hurdle we have to get through in this life, and they just take it more in stride.

Why are the Conners so relatable amid the country's polarization?
We're pretty imperfect. In terms of the country, it's also a family with varying belief systems. But they still love each other and come together in laughter and love. Dan and Darlene are at odds. It's a way for people to see a family stay close amid those differences. That's where I hope we land. I feel that we're all able to, as a country, really talk and really listen to each other.

Is there a moment or episode from the original series that stands out?
Probably "Darlene Fades to Black." People weren't talking about that in sitcoms, teenage characters being so depressed they don't want to get off the couch. And I think that's something so many kids deal with.

Darlene and Becky return to the plastics factory. Why?
Darlene is a character that everybody thought was gonna get ahead and break the poverty cycle, and she was smart and ambitious and driven. In spite of that, she hasn't been able to do it, and she's kind of back at square one this season. I like what it's saying about this country socioeconomically. *—H. Alan Scott*

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AMES WHITE/CBS/GETTY

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