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Attachments: A_TALE_OF_TWO_AMERICAS_Nick_Wing_&_Alissa_Scheller_Huff_Post_Mar_25_2015.docx;

The_Return_of_the_Mercenary_KATHY_GILSINAN_The_Atlantic_Mar_25_2015.docx;

What_happens_when_you_find_out_a_year_of_college_costs_\$71,000_Danielle_Douglas-Gabriel_TWP_March_27_2015.docx; Joni_Mitchell_bio.docx;

Power_surge_knocks_out_electrical_service_across_parts_of_DC_Aaron_C._Davis_&_Julie_Zauzmer_TWP_April_7_2015.docx;

How_Long_Your_Leftovers_Actually_Last_Lynn_Andriani_Huff_Post_OWN_April_16_2015.docx

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DEAR FRIEND.....

The Return of the Mercenary

How private armies, and the technology they use, are changing warfare



Inline image 1

As Kathy Gilsinan recently wrote in **The Atlantic** the Mercenary is returning and how technology is changing warfare for these new private armies. The use of mercenaries in warfare has a very long history — much longer, in fact, than the almost-exclusive deployment of national militaries to wage wars. Before the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 ended Europe's *Thirty Years' War* and marked the rise of the modern state system, medieval powers from kings to popes routinely hired private fighters to do battle for them. As state governments sought a monopoly on the use of force within their territories in the 17th century, however, they moved to stamp out violence by non-state actors, including mercenaries, driving the industry underground.

Private militaries never really went away, but according to Sean McFate, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council and associate professor at National Defense University, they have experienced a resurgence in the past 25 years. McFate himself was a contractor with DynCorp International, one of the private military companies whose rise is the subject of his recent book, ***The Modern Mercenary***. Companies like DynCorp — and, more infamously, Blackwater—were major players in the U.S. military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, providing logistics and other services, as well as armed guards and trainers for local armies. McFate draws a distinction between these types of support contractors, used for defense and training, and mercenaries, who stage offensive operations on behalf of a client. Nigeria has reportedly deployed mercenaries from South Africa and elsewhere in the fight against the militant Islamist group Boko Haram. In practice, however, that difference is not clear-cut. “If you can do one, you can do the other,” McFate said in a recent interview.

Private armies also can maybe do things that the national army maybe can't do. So they offer plausible deniability to policymakers. They can go and commit human-rights violations, frankly. This is a

common attraction about hiring private military companies or mercenaries — that they can get away with things that you can't get away with if you're a national government.

America's reliance on private military companies in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past decade hasn't just expanded the industry; it's also started to change the conduct of international relations. In theory, armed forces for hire give private actors the option to wage wars where governments can't, or won't. In 2008, for example, actress and activist Mia Farrow explored hiring Blackwater to intervene in Darfur, telling ABC News at the time, "Blackwater has a much better idea of what an effective peace-keeping mission would look like than Western governments." Private military companies also allow governments to disclaim involvement in politically controversial activities. "Putin is using Chechen mercenaries in Ukraine, allegedly," McFate said. "Who's going to tell him you can't do that after 10 years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan?"

The private military industry allows you to fight wars without having your own blood on the gambling table. And drones just do that as well. If you think about this as an arms-control issue, both drones and private military companies should be part of the same category, because they allow national governments to get involved in fighting without actually having citizens do it. And that creates moral hazard for policymakers, because it lowers the barriers of entry into conflict. Look at what's going on in Nigeria right now. If those mercenaries hired by Nigeria that killed Boko Haram are actually succeeding — and it looks like they are, according to reports — and there's not a whole lot of backlash in the international community, I can imagine somebody saying, well let's do this against al-Shabab in Somalia.

And I could also imagine private military actors showing up and saying, you know, when you hired those mercenaries in Nigeria, they were really effective but they were really expensive. I can do the exact same thing they did at one-tenth the price by using this fleet of 200 drones that are armed. So I can see a situation of arms escalation, trying to get to price points that make sense for consumers, if you will. I hate to commodify conflict that way, but that's kind of what this industry's about.

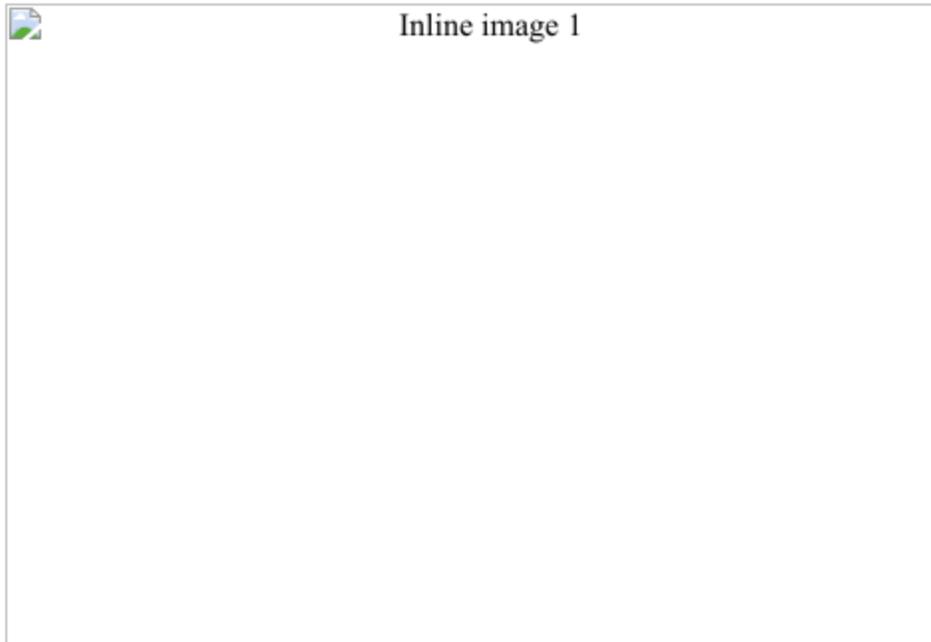
Technology allows private armed groups to punch above their weight class. And technology's ever cheaper, ever more available, and so drones and other types of technologies—weapons systems, night-vision goggles—that's all on the open market as well. So we've got an open market for force, swishing around with these markets of technologies. Supply and demand are going to find each other, and that allows a very small group of people to do some big damage. When we think of technology of war, we think of just national armies using it, but now there's this growing industry of private actors, and they also have access to this technology. They're already using drones, in an unarmed context, like reconnaissance. It would take very little to make a kamikaze drone. And that's just going to happen at some point, which means we're talking about private air forces to some extent.

Future wars won't be like World War III. We call this irregular war, but that's a misnomer. There's no such thing as regular versus irregular war, that's a real Westphalian construction. Most of the wars around the world are dirty, nasty, elongated, in the mud, smaller scale. And that's what's going to be stoked. Now the question is, can a mercenary outfit suck the U.S. into a war someplace? In 2008, when Mia Farrow wanted to hire Blackwater to stage a humanitarian intervention in Darfur, one of the concerns was, if an American person hired a private military company to go into Darfur, could that draw the U.S. into a war with Sudan? And the answer is, of course it could. That group of people at that point was pretty circumspect, but I can imagine a future where some crazy tycoon hires a private

military company to do something outrageous that is for a good cause, but something happens and now the U.S. has got to go rescue people, or stop a situation from getting worse.

What happens after the contract, right? That's always the question. Some will stay in place, look for new opportunities, or make new opportunities, which happened in the Middle Ages. In the case of these private military companies in Afghanistan and Iraq, a lot of those people came from around the world, they go home to, say, Guatemala, and they can start their own private military company there. We're also seeing warlords in these places model themselves as private military companies. The end of the book talks about what this will look like, and I call it "durable disorder." A world that will have mercenaries in it will be a world with more war, because mercenaries are incentivized to do that.

What happens when you find out a year of college costs \$71,000



At twelve years of age, I started hanging out at Washington Square in Greenwich Village, the neighborhood that was *ground zero* for the youth counter-culture in New York at the time. As a result New York University was my campus long before I attended classes there in the late 1960s. So I remember when students held protests in front of University President James Hester office, upset over the tuition being raised. And although I don't remember actually what the tuition was when I attended NYU, I do know that it was less than \$2500 per year. So when I read the article in ***The Washington Post*** by Danielle Douglas-Gabriel – ***What happens when you find out a year of college costs \$71,000*** – I was dumbfounded because as you can see in 1965 the tuition at NYU was only \$1800 and again, even then students protested saying that it was too expensive.



Inline image 2

Throughout the sixties, NYU changed its image to become a more prestigious institution. The NYU administration sold off parts of its huge real estate portfolio (*the third largest after the City itself and the Catholic Church*) and went on a huge building expansion in addition to restructuring the entire university including the implementation of more selective admission policies. In the mid-1960s, with these new standards, NYU's admission rate, and therefore tuition income, had declined. In response, tuition was increased. So, in December of 1965, while relaxing over their winter recess, 30,000 NYU graduate and undergraduate students receive letters announcing the University's first flat-rate tuition hike for full-time students. President James Hester said that "*increased quality in our academic programs has brought increases in our operating expenses.*" After that the university has continued raising prices to the point that they are now the third highest in the country, after Sarah Lawrence College at \$65,480 for the 2014-2015 school year, followed by Harvey Mudd College at \$64,427 and Columbia University at \$63,440.

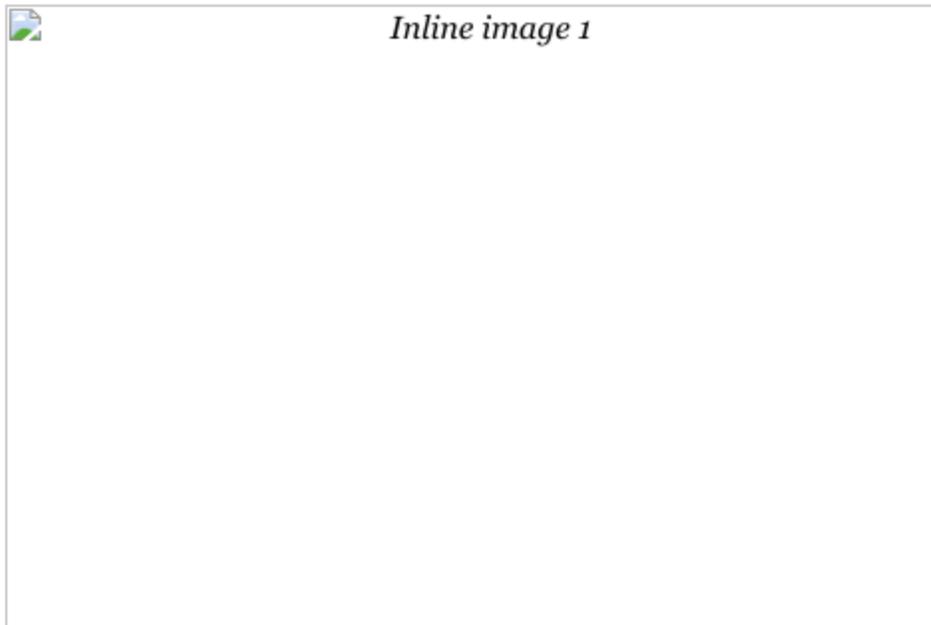
The administration claims that tuition at NYU has gone up about 3 percent for the last few years – putting it in line with other private research universities. And room, board and transportation tends to be much higher at private schools in major cities like New York or Washington DC—Georgetown University's "*living allowance*" costs \$20,274 for the coming school year. The average tuition, room and board at a private college this school year is \$42,419, according to the College Board. Once financial aid is thrown into the mix, the average cost at private universities gets closer to \$12,500. NYU has increased its financial aid budget over 140 percent since 2002, which has led the average student debt to drop by over \$10,000 since 2009. Still, NYU isn't cheap. Students still paid an average \$34,268 for the 2012-2013 academic year after discounts from scholarships and grants.

With everything said, even with discounts, scholarships and grants the average student at a top-tier college/university leaves with more than \$30,000 with many owing into the six-figures. Student loans are at an all-time high with 41 million Americans owing \$1.1 trillion (*surpassing every form of consumer credit in the U.S. except home mortgages*) and more than 20% of student loans in default. Forget the Federal Government Debt, Student Loan Debt is shackling and delaying millions of young people from starting families, buying their first homes and living quality lives. And the fact that NYU can announce a \$71,000 per year price tag without any blowback is mind-blowing.

When I arrived at NYU in the late 1960s there were student groups like, The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Transcendental Students (TS), Black Allied Student Association (BASA) and the Ad Hoc Committee to Oppose the Tuition Increase (born out of the tuition boycott in Dec. 1966). Obviously they are needed today because when people aren't troubled by the announcement of a \$71,000 tuition and there is no outrage, education as we know it will suffer.

The American people are clueless: Why income inequality is so much worse than we realize

A wealth of new research confirms the rich and the poor have no idea how good and how bad the other have it



In a candid conversation with Frank Rich last fall, Chris Rock said, "Oh, people don't even know. If poor people knew how rich rich people are, there would be riots in the streets." The findings of three studies, published over the last several years in *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, suggest that Rock is right. We have no idea how unequal our society has become.

In their 2011 paper, Michael Norton and Dan Ariely analyzed beliefs about wealth inequality. They asked more than 5,000 Americans to guess the percentage of wealth (i.e., savings, property, stocks, etc., minus debts) owned by each fifth of the population. Next, they asked people to construct their ideal distributions. Imagine a pizza of all the wealth in the United States. What percentage of that pizza belongs to the top 20% of Americans? How big of a slice does the bottom 40% have? In an ideal world, how much should they have?

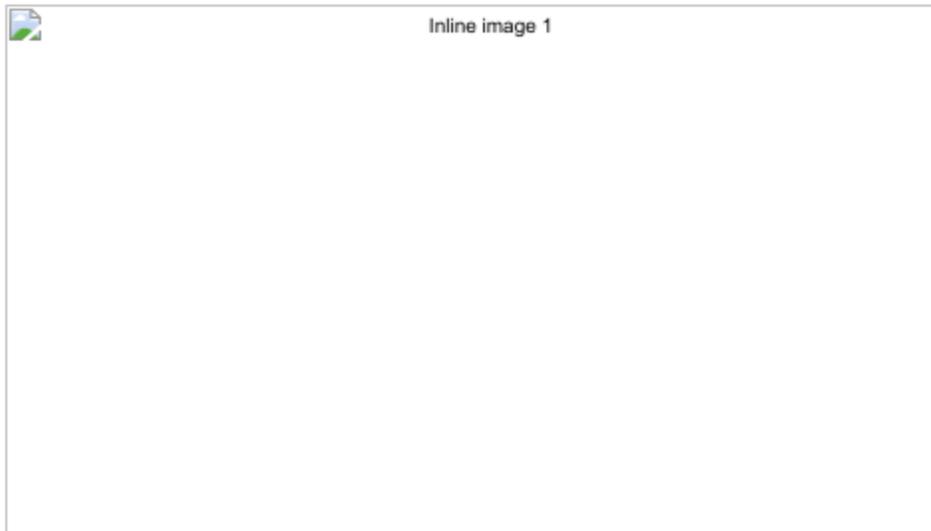
The average American believes that the richest fifth own 59% of the wealth and that the bottom 40% own 9%. The reality is strikingly different. The top 20% of US households own more than 84% of the wealth, and the bottom 40% combine for a paltry 0.3%. The Walton family, for example, has more wealth than 42% of American families combined.

We don't want to live like this. In our ideal distribution, the top quintile owns 32% and the bottom two quintiles own 25%. As the journalist Chrystia Freeland put it, ***"Americans actually live in Russia, although they think they live in Sweden. And they would like to live on a kibbutz."*** Norton and Ariely found a surprising level of consensus: everyone — even Republicans and the wealthy — wants a more equal distribution of wealth than the status quo.

Nicholas Fitz – Scientific American – April 1, 2015

Greece – But For How Long?

A Greek exit from the euro may soon become inevitable



As most of you know the country of Greece is in terrible shape financially and teetering on the verge of insolvency. But to be honest it is already insolvent only being kept out of the abyss by a debt restructure in 2012. And under that restructure it now owes money mainly to other European governments, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the IMF. These official creditors have slashed interest rates and stretched out maturities, but not enough. With a debt stock of 175% of GDP, Greece will need more relief. Most European politicians quietly accept this. The danger lies in a chaotic default born of brinkmanship. The Greek government has bills to pay and no money to pay them. It is resorting to desperate measures.

Last month Alexis Tsipras, the prime minister, ordered local-government bodies to move spare cash to the central bank. That really just bought a few months if not weeks. But in the end Greece will not be able to pay its pensioners, let alone its creditors, without a deal with its European paymasters that unlocks new loans.

But that seems increasingly unlikely, for three reasons. The first is a deep loss of trust on the part of Greece's creditors. The euro zone has always had only a faint version of the solidarity that characterizes a true union. But since Syriza came to power that has been ripped apart. The stunts and stumbles of Greece's inexperienced government are a factor. But the bigger problem has been Syriza's unwillingness, or inability, to name, let alone implement, the reforms that it will undertake in return for its next tranche of money. Once Greece's creditors might have taken general promises; now they want specifics.

How markets are preparing for Grexit

Second, Europeans worry less today about the market consequences of Grexit. Thanks to the 2012 restructuring, the direct effects of another Greek default would be easier to handle because Europe's banks, the weak link in any panic, are now more insulated. As fears of financial contagion have dwindled, so has European creditors' appetite for compromise.

And third, political constraints on both sides make bargaining hard. Syriza was elected on a promise to halt the endless austerity required by its bail-outs. The government has its own factions to control, among them hard-left MPs unprepared to make concessions on privatizations or pensions. Mr. Tsipras might need a referendum or another election to win a mandate to backtrack even if he wanted to. Voters in creditor countries are tired of paying for Greece; politicians in places like Spain that have also been through austerity are hawkish.

Repayments to euro-zone lenders are not due until the 2020s. But if you add all these elements together, it is hard to see how the Greeks can reach a deal that will let them honor their more immediate debts to the IMF and the ECB.

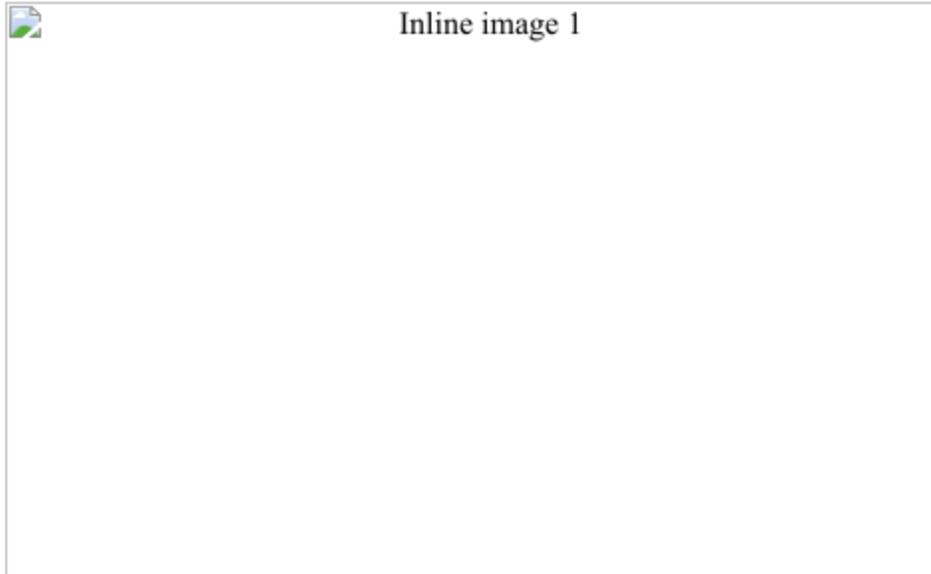
Outward bound

Less clear is whether such a default must lead to euro exit. The two need not go together: Greece defaulted on private-sector creditors in 2012. But stiffing private investors with the support of the euro zone is quite different from unilateral non-payment to official creditors. The decisions of the ECB, which keeps Greece's banks afloat, would be critical. The ECB does not want to be the actor that precipitates Grexit by withdrawing support; and ratings agencies have helpfully said that a missed payment to an official creditor would not constitute a default. But if the ECB itself were not being paid, that would be a hard line to hold. And non-payment would depress the value of Greek banks' holdings of short-term government debt and encourage deposit flight. That would leave the banks needing more liquidity support from the ECB just when doubts about their solvency crystallized. The ECB is unlikely to help then.

Payback time: Greece's financial dilemma, in graphics

There are ways for Greece to defer disaster. It could save hard currency by issuing scrip, a type of IOU, in lieu of payments to its citizens. But that would be an open invitation to Greeks to take their remaining euros out of the banks. So the government could impose capital controls. Cyprus has had these for two years without leaving the euro, but that was done in concert with its partners. If Greece ever got to this stage — a parallel currency in circulation, capital controls in place and bail-out cash withheld — the gap between default and exit would be paper-thin. Obviously there are no easy answers but hopefully Greece and its creditors come to a solution that causes the Greek people the least pain as they are the victims.

The Day That The Lights Went Out



Scattered power outages reported across [REDACTED] area – 10:22 AM - 7 Apr 2015

Here in the United States, I am beginning to feel that I am living in a Third World country where in spite of Verizon, AT&T and Sprint's barrage of television ads I still find my cellular coverage spotty, even in the cities. The State of California is running out of water, yet not a week goes by without a water-main break flooding neighborhoods here in Los Angeles. And although we didn't experience any electrical brownouts last year, it is still a real possibility this summer here in Southern California. So when I heard that a power surge knocked out electrical service across parts of the Washington, [REDACTED], including temporarily knocking out electricity to the White House, State Department, Justice Department, Smithsonian museums, Metro stations, the main campus of the University of Maryland and wide swaths of the nation's capital and its Maryland suburbs on April 7, 2015 – it confirmed that the United States is absolutely slipping into the Third World.

I understand that the power surge was caused by a piece of metal that broke loose and fell off a power line 43 miles from [REDACTED], and almost all of the federal buildings and critical government facilities were able to immediately flip over to emergency backup generators, still many residents were left jittery until the source of the failure began to emerge out of fears of terrorism. Two hours after lights flickered off across much of the city — and after power to most buildings had been restored — homeland security officials both locally and nationally said they were increasingly confident terrorism played no part. Small consolation that a piece of metal did what a terrorist would have been proud of doing. And the fact that this can happen even in the nation's capital and this is becoming the new normal, is what I view as truly disturbing.

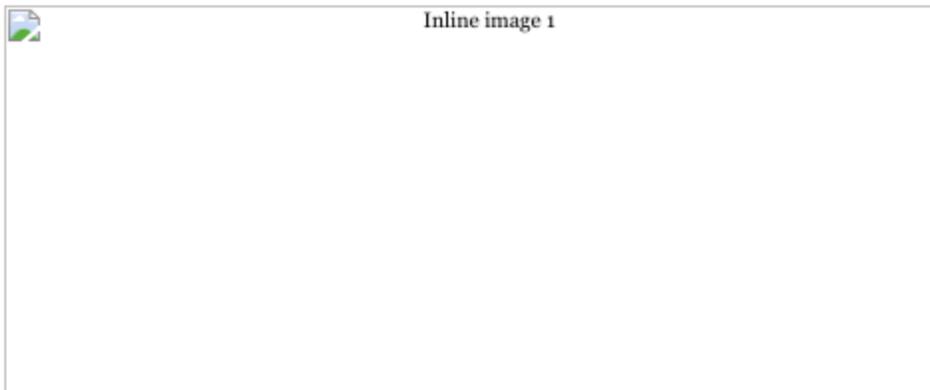
I say all of this because I believe that instead of wasting hundreds of billions of dollars each year in our multiple defense sectors and developing weapons systems that are not needed due to the changing threats against the country, our political leaders need to focus on repairing our country's decaying infrastructure. Last November the television news program "**60 Minutes**" did a scathing report "**Falling Apart**" which said that America's infrastructure is on life support. Our roads and bridges are crumbling, our airports are out of date and the vast majority of our seaports and levies are in danger of becoming obsolete. All the result of decades of neglect. None of this is really in dispute.

Business leaders, labor unions, governors, mayors, congressmen and presidents have complained about a lack of funding for years, but aside from a onetime cash infusion from the stimulus program, nothing much has changed. There is still no consensus on how to solve the problem or where to get the massive amounts of money needed to fix it, just another example of political paralysis in Washington. Obviously this is not a problem that the private sector can fix. And sorry Mr. Cruz, Mr. Paul and other small government advocates – we need big government to fix this gigantic problem and it will cost trillions of dollars which will not come from cutting taxes... or nor by just raising taxes... We need to realign our priorities and we need to do this soon... And parroting the famous AT&T cellphone ad... "**Can You Hear Me**".... And will you hear me before the lights go out again..... **and this is my rant of the week....**

WEEK'S READINGS

Black America Is Just 72 Percent Equal To White America.

In Some Areas, The Inequality Is Worse Than That.

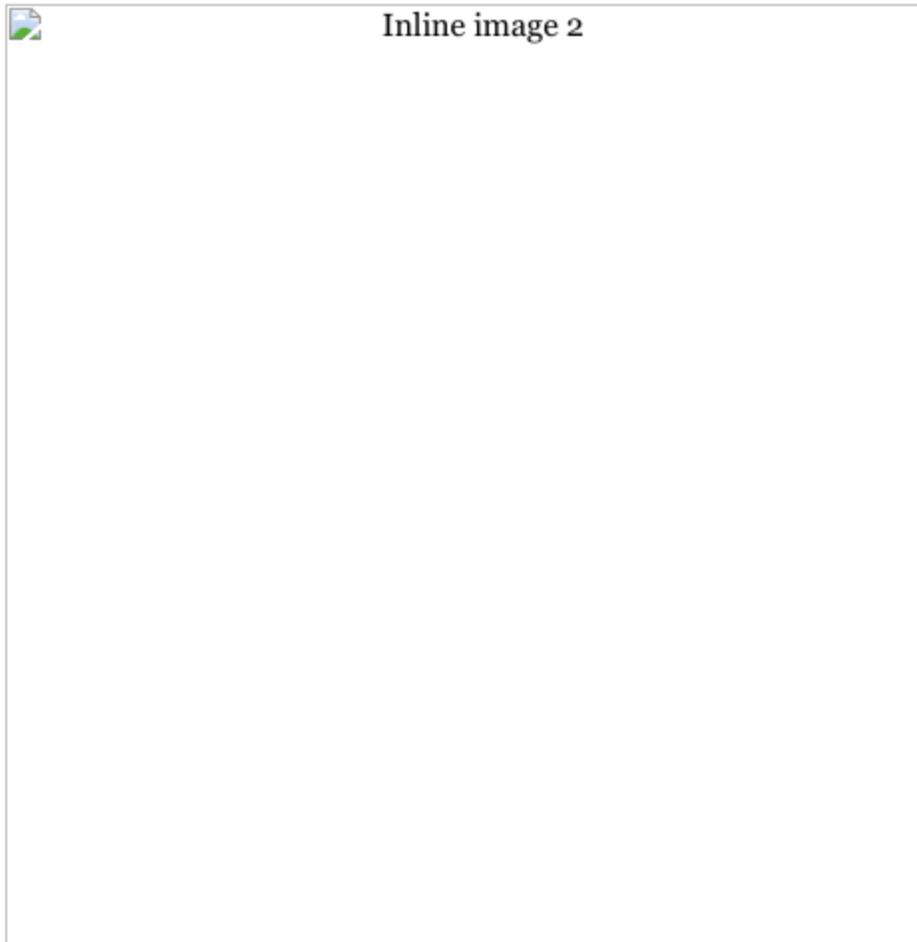


A report released in March holds troubling findings about lasting inequality across the African-American community.

The 2015 "***State of Black America***" study, conducted by the National Urban League, finds that black Americans fare worse than their white peers across a variety of indicators, including economics, social justice and overall equality. The report, issued every year since 1976, showed modest gains in some areas, but leaves plenty of concerns about the speed of progress more than 50 years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act.

"What do we say and how would we frame the state of black America for 2015? I must use the word crisis," said Marc H. Morial, president and chief executive of the **National Urban League**, at a in mid-March news conference in Washington, ■■■.

Here's a breakdown of some of the study's key findings.



Equality in social justice, health and economics showed small increases from 2014, when those numbers stood at 56.9 percent, 78.2 percent and 55.4 percent, respectively. The National Urban League explains that the nearly 4 percentage-point increase in the social justice index is a result of "fewer Blacks being victims of violent crimes and fewer Black high school students carrying weapons, while at the same time, the rate for white high school students increased."

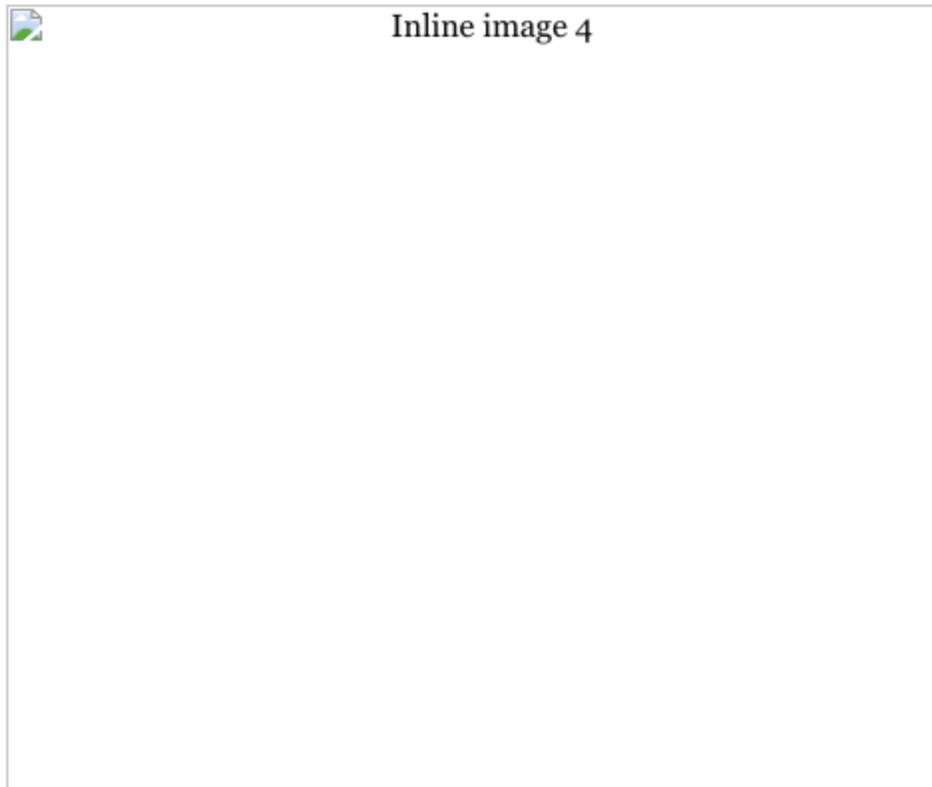
The smaller increase in health equality was attributed in part to increased coverage under the Affordable Care Act, while the minor bump in economic equality was the "result of improvements in the income, poverty and home loan denial camps." The report also points out that unemployment and homeownership gaps widened over the same period.

The "State of Black America" report also showed disturbing inequality across a set of key education indicators.

 Inline image 3

In addition to data on fourth- and eighth-grade proficiency levels, the report also analyzed equality in high school graduation rates and found that black students in some states are graduating at rates up to 35 percent lower than their white counterparts. In Nebraska, the state with the lowest equality index, the high school graduation rate for black students was 65 percent the rate of white students.

The map below plots some key black-white income disparities in metropolitan areas across the nation.

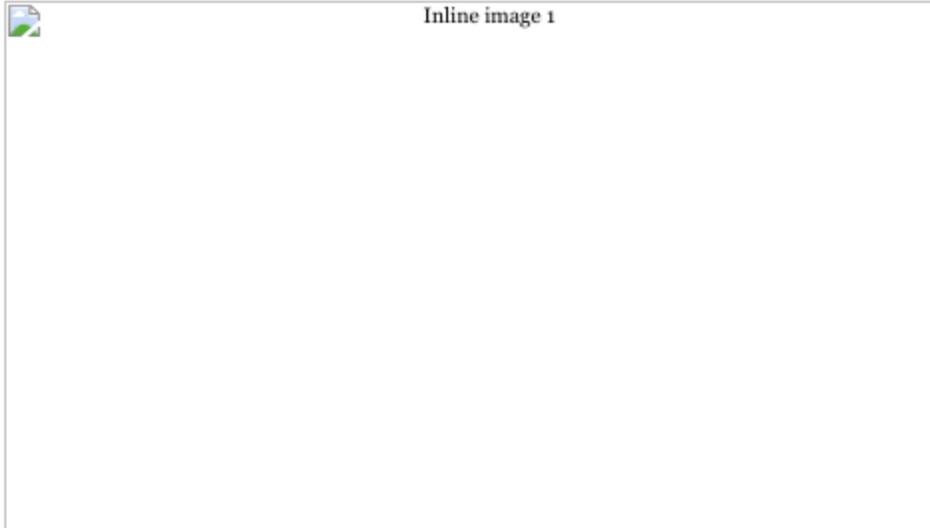


Income inequality between black and white residents was most rampant in the San Francisco metro area, where the median income for white households was \$95,285 and only \$39,902 for black households. The report also analyzed employment equality in metropolitan areas across the country, finding that Jackson, Mississippi, rated the worst, with 14 percent unemployment among black residents and 3.9 percent unemployment among whites.

Read the entire "*State of Black America*" report on this web link:



Is a New Political System Emerging in This Country?



In an interesting article on [REDACTED] Tom Engelhardt asks – **Is a New Political System Emerging in This Country?** Engelhardt asserts that based on developments in our post-9/11 world, we could be watching the birth of a new American political system and way of governing for which, as yet, we have no name. He says that the evidence of this, however inchoate, is all around us and yet it's as if we can't bear to take it in or make sense of it or even say that it might be so. To make his case he points out five areas in which at least the faint outlines of that new system seem to be emerging: political campaigns and elections; the privatization of Washington through the marriage of the corporation and the state; the de-legitimization of our traditional system of governance; the empowerment of the national security state as an untouchable fourth branch of government; and the demobilization of "we the people."

Engelhardt: Whatever this may add up to, it seems to be based, at least in part, on the increasing concentration of wealth and power in a new plutocratic class and in that ever-expanding national security state. Certainly, something out of the ordinary is underway and yet its birth pangs, while widely reported, are generally categorized as aspects of an exceedingly familiar American system somewhat in disarray.

1. One Percent Elections

Check out the news about the 2016 presidential election and you'll quickly feel a sense of been-there, done-that. As a start, the two names most associated with it, Bush and Clinton, couldn't be more familiar, highlighting as they do the curiously dynastic quality of recent presidential contests. (If a Bush or Clinton should win in 2016 and again in 2020, a member of one of those families will have controlled the presidency for 28 of the last 36 years.)

The 2012 presidential campaign was the first \$2 billion election; campaign 2016 is expected to hit the \$5 billion mark without breaking a sweat. He points out that this is not Dwight D. Eisenhower's or even Al Gore's America. If you want a measure of that, consider this year's primaries. I mean, of course, the 2015 ones. Once upon a time, the campaign season started with candidates flocking to Iowa and New Hampshire early in the election year to establish their bona fides among party voters. These days, however, those are already late primaries.

The early primaries, the ones that count, take place among a small group of millionaires and billionaires, a new caste flush with cash who will personally, or through complex networks of funders, pour multi-millions of dollars into the campaigns of candidates of their choice. So the early primaries — this year mainly a Republican affair — are taking place in resort spots like Las Vegas, Rancho Mirage, California, and Sea Island, Georgia, as has been widely reported. These “contests” involve groveling politicians appearing at the beck and call of the rich and powerful and so reflect our new one percent electoral system. (The main pro-Hillary super PAC, for instance, is aiming for a kitty of \$500 million heading into 2016, while the Koch brothers network has already promised to drop almost \$1 billion into the coming campaign season, doubling their efforts in the last presidential election year.)

Ever since the Supreme Court opened up the ultimate floodgates with its 2010 Citizens United decision, each subsequent election has seen record-breaking amounts of money donated and spent. The 2012 presidential campaign was the first \$2 billion election; campaign 2016 is expected to hit the \$5 billion mark without breaking a sweat. By comparison, according to Burton Abrams and Russell Settle in their study, “The Effect of Broadcasting on Political Campaign Spending,” Republicans and Democrats spent just under \$13 million combined in 1956 when Eisenhower won his second term.

In the meantime, it’s still true that the 2016 primaries will involve actual voters, as will the election that follows. The previous election season, the midterms of 2014, cost almost \$4 billion, a record despite the number of small donors continuing to drop. It also represented the lowest midterm voter turnout since World War II. It hardly matters just what the flood of new money does in such elections, when you can feel the weight of inequality bearing down on the whole process in a way that is pushing us somewhere new. So long before a vote is cast in a primary candidates who are not backed by the early bid money are eliminated.

2. The Privatization of the State (or the US as a Prospective Third-World Nation)

Here Engelhardt points to the growing marriage of state and corporations through ever-growing of privatization of state responsibilities in the name of national security. Though the marriage of the state and the corporation has a pre-history, the full-scale arrival of the warrior corporation only occurred after 9/11. Someday, that will undoubtedly be seen as a seminal moment in the formation of whatever may be coming in this country. Only 13 years later, there is no part of the war state that has not experienced major forms of privatization. The US military could no longer go to war without its crony corporations doing KP and guard duty, delivering the mail, building the bases and being involved in just about all of its activities, including training the militaries of foreign allies and even fighting. Such warrior corporations are now involved in every aspect of the national security state, including torture, drone strikes and — to the tune of hundreds of thousands of contract employees like Edward Snowden — intelligence gathering and spying. You name it and, in these years, it’s been at least partly privatized.

In support of this premise he suggest reading reporter James Risen’s recent book, *Pay Any Price*, on how the global war on terror was fought in Washington, and you know that privatization has brought something else with it: corruption, scams and the gaming of the system for profits of a sort that might normally be associated with a typical third-world kleptocracy. And all of this, a new world being born, was reflected in a tiny way in Hillary Clinton’s very personal decision about her emails. And though it’s a subject a subject that most people know little about, this kind of privatization (and the corruption

that goes with it) is undoubtedly underway in the non-war-making, non-security-projecting part of the American state as well.

3. The De-legitimization of Congress and the Presidency

On a third front, American “confidence” in the three classic check-and-balance branches of government, as measured by polling outfits, continues to fall. In 2014, Americans expressing a “*great deal of confidence*” in the Supreme Court hit a new low of 23 percent; in the presidency, it was 11 percent and in Congress a bottom-scraping five percent. (The military, on the other hand, registers at 50 percent.) The figures for “*hardly any confidence at all*” are respectively 20 percent, 44 percent and more than 50 percent. All are in or near record-breaking territory for the last four decades.

It seems fair to say that in recent years Congress has been engaged in a process of delegitimizing itself. Where that body once had the genuine power to declare war, for example, it is now “*debating*” in a desultory fashion an “*authorization*” for a war against the Islamic State in Syria, Iraq and possibly elsewhere that has already been underway for eight months and whose course, it seems, will be essentially unaltered, whether Congress authorizes it or not.

What would President Harry Truman, who once famously ran a presidential campaign against a “*do-nothing*” Congress, have to say about a body that truly can do just about nothing? Or rather, to give the Republican war hawks in that new Congress their due, not quite nothing. They are proving capable of acting effectively to delegitimize the presidency as well. House Majority Leader John Boehner’s invitation to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to undercut the president’s Iranian nuclear negotiations and the letter signed by 47 Republican senators and directed to the Iranian ayatollahs are striking examples of this. They are visibly meant to tear down an “*imperial presidency*” that Republicans gloried in not so long ago. It represents part of a growing pattern in which Congress becomes an ever less effective body, except in its willingness to take on and potentially take out the presidency.

In the 21st century, all that “*small government*” Republicans and “*big government*” Democrats can agree on is offering essentially unconditional support to the military and the national security state. The Republican Party — its various factions increasingly at each other’s throats almost as often as at those of the Democrats — seems reasonably united solely on issues of war-making and security. As for the Democrats, an unpopular administration, facing constant attack by those who loath President Obama, has kept its footing in part by allying with and fusing with the national security state. A president who came into office rejecting torture and promoting sunshine and transparency in government has, in the course of six-plus years, come to identify himself almost totally with the US military, the CIA, the NSA and the like. While it has launched an unprecedented campaign against whistleblowers and leakers (as well as sunshine and transparency), the Obama White House has proved a powerful enabler of, but also remarkably dependent upon, that state-within-a-state, a strange fate for “*the imperial presidency.*”

4. The Rise of the National Security State as the Fourth Branch of Government

One “branch” of government is, however, visibly on the rise and rapidly gaining independence from just about any kind of oversight. Its ability to enact its wishes with almost no opposition in Washington is a striking feature of our moment. But while the symptoms of this process are regularly reported, the overall phenomenon — the creation of a de facto fourth branch of government — gets remarkably little attention. In the war on terror era, the national security state has come into its own. Its growth has been phenomenal. Though it’s seldom pointed out, it should be considered remarkable that in this period we gained a second full-scale “*defense department*,” the Department of Homeland Security and that it and the Pentagon have become even more entrenched, each surrounded by its own growing “*complex*” of private corporations, lobbyists and allied politicians. The militarization of the country has, in these years, proceeded apace.

Meanwhile, the duplication to be found in the US Intelligence Community with its 17 major agencies and outfits is staggering. It’s growing ability to surveil and spy on a global scale, including on its own citizens, puts the totalitarian states of the 20th century to shame. That the various parts of the national security state can act in just about any fashion without fear of accountability in a court of law is by now too obvious to belabor. As wealth has traveled upwards in American society in ways not seen since the first Gilded Age, so taxpayer dollars have migrated into the national security state in an almost plutocratic fashion.

New reports regularly surface about the further activities of parts of that state. For instance, we learned from Jeremy Scahill and Josh Begley of the Intercept that the CIA has spent years trying to break the encryption on Apple iPhones and iPads; it has, that is, been aggressively seeking to attack an all-American corporation (even if significant parts of its production process are actually in China). Meanwhile, Devlin Barrett of the Wall Street Journal reported that the CIA, an agency barred from domestic spying operations of any sort, has been helping the US Marshals Service (part of the Justice Department) create an airborne digital dragnet on American cell phones. Planes flying out of five US cities carry a form of technology that “mimics a cellphone tower.” This technology, developed and tested in distant American war zones and now brought to “*the homeland*,” is just part of the ongoing militarization of the country from its borders to its police forces. And there’s hardly been a week since Edward Snowden first released crucial NSA documents in June 2013 when such “*advances*” haven’t been in the news.

According to the New York Times, the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, an obscure State Department agency, was given a new and expansive role in coordinating “all the existing attempts at counter-messaging [against online propaganda by terror outfits like the Islamic State] by much larger federal departments, including the Pentagon, Homeland Security and intelligence agencies.” This sort of thing is par for the course in an era in which the national security state has only grown stronger, endlessly elaborating, duplicating and overlapping the various parts of its increasingly labyrinthine structure. And keep in mind that, in a structure that has fought hard to keep what its doing cloaked in secrecy, there is so much more that we don’t know. Still, we should know enough to realize that this ongoing process reflects something new in our American world (even if no one cares to notice).

5. The Demobilization of the American People

The New Robber Barons

In *The Age of Acquiescence*, a new book about *America's two Gilded Ages*, Steve Fraser asks why it was that, in the 19th century, another period of plutocratic excesses, concentration of wealth and inequality, buying of politicians and attempts to demobilize the public, Americans took to the streets with such determination and in remarkable numbers over long periods of time to protest their treatment and stayed there even when the brute power of the state was called out against them. In our own moment, Fraser wonders, why has the silence of the public in the face of similar developments been so striking?

After all, a grim new American system is arising before our eyes. Everything we once learned in the civics textbooks of our childhoods about how our government works now seems askew, while the growth of poverty, the flat-lining of wages, the rise of the .01 percent, the collapse of labor and the militarization of society are all evident. The process of demobilizing the public certainly began with the military. It was initially a response to the disruptive and rebellious draftees of the Vietnam-era. In 1973, at the stroke of a presidential pen, the citizen's army was declared no more, the raising of new recruits was turned over to advertising agencies and the public was sent home, never again to meddle in military affairs. Since 2001, that form of demobilization has been etched in stone and transformed into a way of life in the name of the "safety" and "security" of the public.

Since then, "*we the people*" have made ourselves felt in only three disparate ways: from the left in the Occupy movement, which, with its slogans about the one percent and the 99 percent, put the issue of growing economic inequality on the map of American consciousness; from the right, in the tea party movement, a complex expression of discontent backed and at least partially funded by right-wing operatives and billionaires and aimed at the de-legitimization of the "*nanny state*;" and the recent round of post-Ferguson protests spurred at least in part by the militarization of the police in black and brown communities around the country.

6. The Birth of a New System

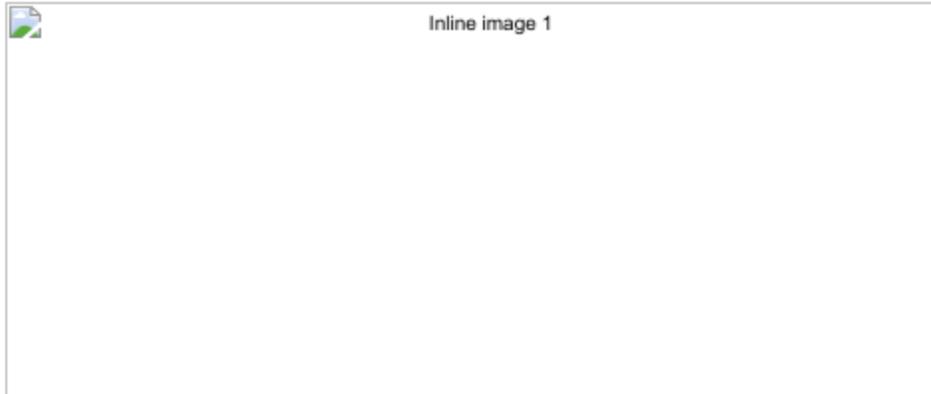
Otherwise, a moment of increasing extremity has also been a moment of — to use Fraser's word — "*acquiescence*." Someday, we'll assumedly understand far better how this all came to be. In the meantime, this period doesn't represent a version, no matter how perverse or extreme, of politics as usual; nor is the 2016 campaign an election as usual; nor are we experiencing Washington as usual. Put together our one percent elections, the privatization of our government, the de-legitimization of Congress and the presidency, as well as the empowerment of the national security state and the US military and add in the demobilization of the American public (in the name of protecting us from terrorism) and you have something like a new ballgame.

While significant planning has been involved in all of this, there may be no ruling pattern or design. Much of it may be happening in a purely seat-of-the-pants fashion. In response, there has been no urge to officially declare that something new is afoot, let alone convene a new constitutional convention. Still, don't for a second think that the American political system isn't being rewritten on the run by interested parties in Congress, our present crop of billionaires, corporate interests, lobbyists, the Pentagon and the officials of the national security state. Engelhardt, "that out of the chaos of this prolonged moment and inside the shell of the old system, a new culture, a new kind of

politics, a new kind of governance is being born right before our eyes. Call it what you want. But call it something. Stop pretending it's not happening."

The Other War

Yemen



More than 500 Yemeni civilians (*although most people believe that this figure is much higher*) have been killed and at least 100,000 have fled their homes in recent weeks as rebels, tribes and the government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi are locked in a bloody battle for power. The capture of much of eastern Yemen's oil-producing province by a newly-formed group of armed tribesmen and Sunni Muslim clerics has alarmed local officials, who say they fear the situation will be exploited by al Qaeda to expand. The Arabian Peninsula's poorest country is now divided between a Saudi-backed exiled government and Iran-backed Shi'ite fighters who control the capital. The country is also now the home to one of the most lethal branches of al Qaeda, sheltering in tribal regions and targeted for years by U.S. drone strikes.

In recent days, troops appear to have abandoned much of the eastern province of Hadramawt, leaving it under control of a new group calling itself the Council of Sunni Scholars. The Council's armed tribesmen took charge of an airport and an oil facility in the province's seaside capital Mukalla on Thursday. "The Council has designated local youth from the area to set up checkpoints near the area of the oil fields and export terminal and near the Al-Rayyan airport," said a local official. "The security situation there and in Mukalla is now under control and calm." Local politicians say the Council, now effectively the de facto ruling authority in the province, is separate from al Qaeda but includes some figures associated with al Qaeda in the past. It negotiated with al Qaeda gunmen who appeared on the streets of Mukalla two weeks ago, and since then appears to have reached some kind of accommodation with them, although the nature of that relationship appears ambiguous.

PBS Frontline recently looked at the players in the fight and the countries in the background in the interactive below. ***The Fight for Yemen***, **PBS Frontline's** documentary on the war, aired on April 7, 2015 and it is available on **PBS'** website.

Web Link: www.frontline.org/yemen/

Who's Who in the Fight for Yemen

is being torn apart by a toxic political crisis between a rebel movement known as the Houthis and the national government. The rebels have taken over the capital of Sanaa and ousted the president. The resulting power vacuum has allowed extremists groups like Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIS to expand their influence in the country. Amid the escalating turmoil, a coalition of nations led by Saudi Arabia has launched a military campaign against the Houthi rebels, raising the odds that the fight for Yemen could soon spillover into a much larger regional and sectarian war. For a look at who is fighting in Yemen, and why please feel free to download the attached overview – ***Who's Who in the Fight for Yemen*** – or click on the above link.

Quick Overview

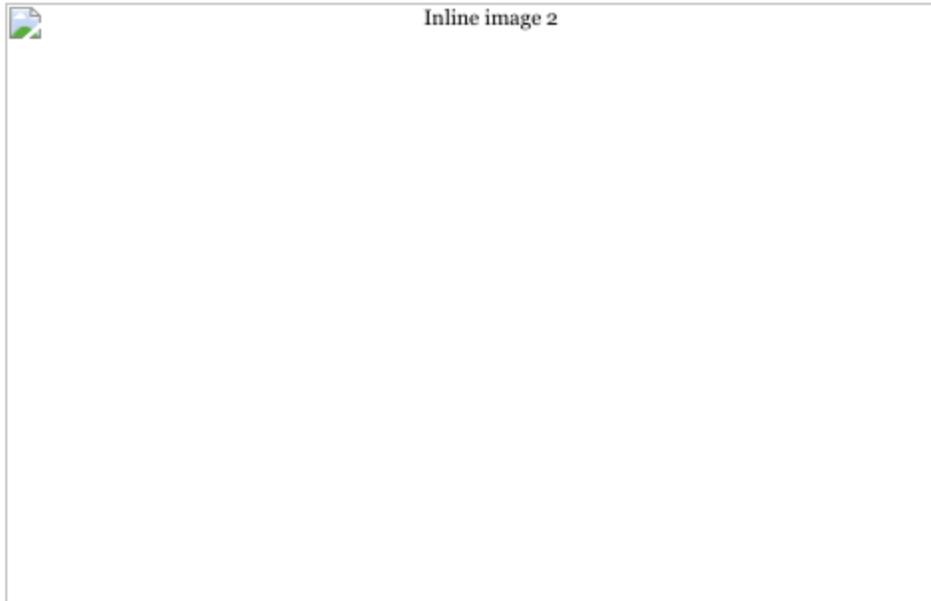
The Yemenis: Forces loyal to these four leaders and groups are on the ground and fighting for control in Yemen and they include the **Houthis, Hadi Government, former President Ali Abdullah Saleh** and **Sunni Tribes**.

Other Actors in the Fight: These countries and groups are intervening in the conflict to further their interests. They may be countries carrying out air strikes or groups taking advantage of the chaos to grow stronger and they include **Saudi Arabia, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Anti-Houthi coalition** and now **ISIS**.

Nations in the Background: These groups have a strategic interest in the conflict and they include **Iran** and as usual the **United States**.

With a population almost as much as its rich neighbor, Saudi Arabia the real danger is for this conflict in Yemen bleeds north and disrupts the oil exports of the World's second largest exporter of crude oil. As a result if the conflict in Yemen grows more than likely other players will join the fray.

Highest Paying Companies in America



If you or have a son or daughter would like a starting, all-in salary of \$140,000 or more, you/they might want to look at these companies, according to a new report from online career community Glassdoor. The list of 15 firms is dominated by the technology, consulting and legal sectors, which Glassdoor's Chief Economist Dr. Andrew Chamberlain said is due to factors that include shortage of labor and barriers to entry.

“Salaries are high (in the tech industry) largely because of shortages of the highest skilled employees needed to advance business into new realms.

Booming demand for software engineers, database administrators and data scientists has far outpaced the supply of these skilled, hard-to-find employees. In the legal and consulting industries, high salaries are largely the result of what economists call ‘barriers to entry...’ Many clients stay with the same attorney or consultant for decades at a time. As a result, these employees are even more valuable to their employers.”

Not a single finance firm made the list due to Glassdoor using the median compensation rather than average. “If we used average pay, they would probably have dominated the list, due to a few very high earners pulling up the average. Instead, we used median pay which is unaffected by the type of large outlier salaries (mostly driven by bonuses) that are common in finance. In this sense, our list is a measure of more broadly based high-paying workplaces.”

Here is Glassdoor's complete list of America's 15 highest paying companies, where the median annual total compensation starts at more than \$140,000. The rankings take into account several forms of financial income on top of annual base salary, such as cash and stock bonuses.

1. Skadden Arps

- Median Total Compensation: \$182,000
- Median Base Salary: \$170,000
- Industry: Law

2. Netflix

- Median Total Compensation: \$180,000
- Median Base Salary: \$180,000
- Industry: Tech

3. Booz & Company* (now known as Strategy&)

- Median Total Compensation: \$162,000
- Median Base Salary: \$135,000
- Industry: Consulting

4. McKinsey & Company

- Median Total Compensation: \$160,000
- Median Base Salary: \$135,000
- Industry: Consulting

5. A.T. Kearney

- Median Total Compensation: \$160,000
- Median Base Salary: \$135,000
- Industry: Consulting

6. Sidley Austin

- Median Total Compensation: \$160,000
- Median Base Salary: \$160,000
- Industry: Law
-

7. Boston Consulting Group

- Median Total Compensation: \$158,463
- Median Base Salary: \$140,000
- Industry: Consulting

8. Mozilla

- Median Total Compensation: \$147,556
- Median Base Salary: \$112,737
- Industry: Tech

9. Good Technology

- Median Total Compensation: \$147,500
- Median Base Salary: \$136,250
- Industry: Tech

10. Altera

- Median Total Compensation: \$147,200
- Median Base Salary: \$133,250
- Industry: Tech

11. VMware

- Median Total Compensation: \$145,000
- Median Base Salary: \$121,500
- Industry: Tech

12. Cadence Design Systems

- Median Total Compensation: \$145,000
- Median Base Salary: \$130,000
- Industry: Tech

13. Google

- Median Total Compensation: \$143,500
- Median Base Salary: \$116,000
- Industry: Tech

14. Synopsys

- Median Total Compensation: \$143,000
- Median Base Salary: \$123,000
- Industry: Tech

15. TrueCar

- Median Total Compensation: \$141,500
- Median Base Salary: \$100,000

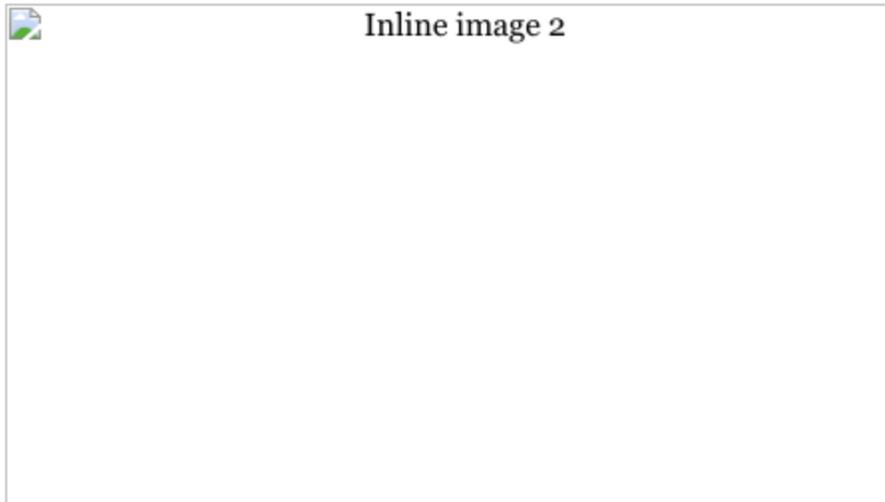
- Industry: Tech

How Long Your Leftovers Actually Last

Tossing things prematurely happens more often than you might think

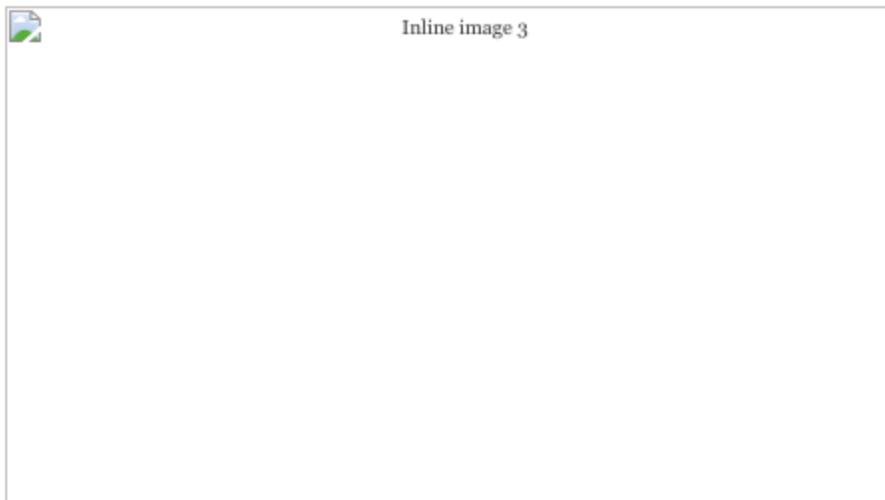
The USDA says almost a pound of food is wasted per person per day

Egg, Tuna Or Chicken Salads



We were surprised to learn that homemade egg, tuna or chicken salad can last up to seven days in the refrigerator. Just remember that your fridge should be set to 40 degrees or colder, says Jen Tong, global managing director of integrity and process excellence for a division of the public health and safety organization NSF International.

Cooked Meats



Poached chicken, grilled steak and roast pork tenderloin all keep well for three to four days in the fridge, says Tong. She recommends putting the items in the refrigerator within two hours, since the less time the food spends at room temperature, the better (and safer). One more thing: While storing in the freezer is another option, cooked meats tend to lose some of their flavor and texture in supercold temps.

Pizza



Just as with cooked meats, pizza is usually good for three or four days in the refrigerator. (Wrap it tightly to keep it tasting fresh.) One more thing: If the pizza sat out for a few hours before being refrigerated, Tong says you're safest reheating it before eating. The skillet method is the most effective way we've seen to revive a soggy bottom, giving you a moist crust and making the cheese melt.

Soups and Chilies

Whether you've made a pot of minestrone, chicken noodle or chili, when it comes to soups and chilies, there are almost always leftovers (and often, the meals taste even better after a day). You can keep enjoying them for three to four days once refrigerated, says Tong. The important thing is to get the temperature down quickly to keep the food in a safe temperature zone (below 40 degrees, or above 140). One more thing: To speed the cool-down process, try separating large quantities into smaller containers. They can go directly into the fridge at that point; just leave the leftovers partially uncovered while they cool, then cover them completely once they reach fridge temperature.

Everything -- And We Mean Everything -- Else



Inline image 6

While three to four days is a good rule of thumb for most leftovers, there are exceptions (for instance, leftover raw shellfish, such as ceviche or sushi, has a lifespan of just one to two days). For an easy way to determine whether to toss something, there are a number of free apps that can help; one is ***Is My Food Safe?*** (a collaboration between the **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics** and **ConAgra Foods**), where you can scroll through by category, say, desserts, and go from cakes to puddings. Another is USDA's new **FoodKeeper** app; among other features, it lets you enter the date you made something and then receive notifications when the food is nearing the end of its recommended storage time.

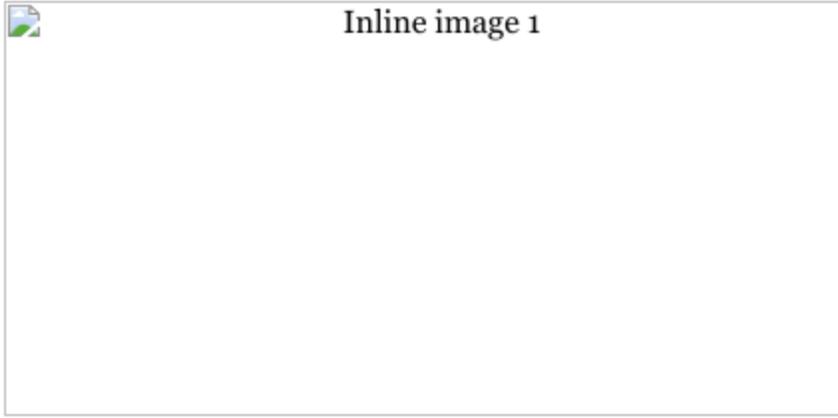
THIS WEEK'S QUOTE

“Americans actually live in Russia, although they think they live in Sweden. And they would like to live on a kibbutz.”

Chrystia Freeland

SOMETHING SPECIAL

Hello....



My dear friend Nabila has a home care and beauty website with a selection of wonderful products that include bath salts, body lotions and scrubs, shower gels, aromatic soaps, candles, stationary and other delightful items. With this said, I invite you to go on Nabila's website below:

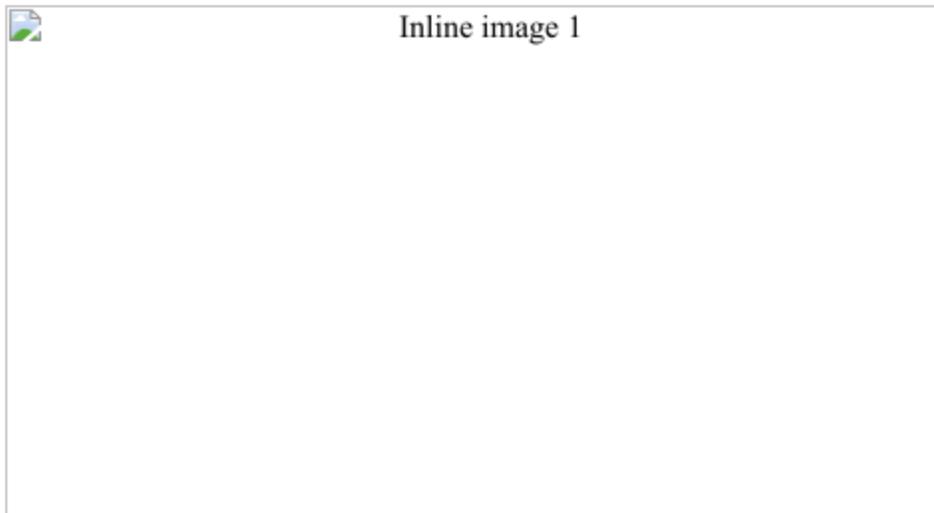


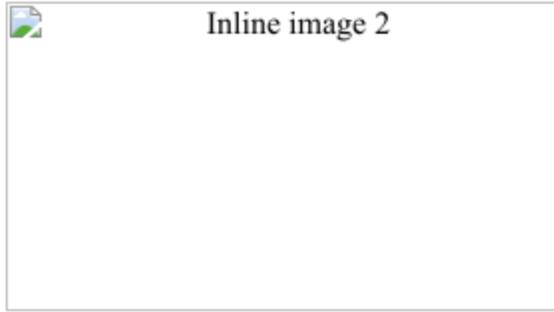
They are wonderful products

BEST VIDEO OF THE WEEK

World's Best Bartender

Impressive Bartending Skills





Web Link: <https://youtu.be/6oGJodJ1xmE>

*This bartender makes Tom Cruise character (Brian Flanagan) in the movie **'Cocktail'** look like an amateur.*

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

Joni Mitchell



Inline image 1

This week I invite you to share the wonderful and lyrical music of **Joni Mitchell**, (*Roberta Joan Anderson born: November 7, 1943*), is a Canadian singer-songwriter and painter. Mitchell began singing in small nightclubs in Saskatchewan and Western Canada and then busking in the streets and dives of Toronto. In 1965, she moved to the United States and began touring. Some of her original songs ("*Urge for Going*", "*Chelsea Morning*", "*Both Sides, Now*", "*The Circle Game*") were covered by folk singers, allowing her to sign with Reprise Records and record her own debut album in 1968. Settling in Southern California, Mitchell, with popular songs like "*Big Yellow Taxi*" and "*Woodstock*", helped define an era and a generation. Her 1971 recording *Blue* was rated the 30th best album ever made in Rolling ████████ list of the "*500 Greatest Albums of All Time*". Mitchell switched labels and began moving toward jazz rhythms by way of lush pop textures on 1974's *Court and Spark*, her best-selling LP, featuring the radio hits "*Help Me*" and "*Free Man in Paris*".

Her wide-ranging contralto vocals and distinctive open-tuned guitar and piano compositions grew more harmonically and rhythmically complex as she explored jazz, melding it with influences of rock and roll, R&B, classical music, and non-western beats. In the late 1970s, she began working closely with noted jazz musicians, among them Jaco Pastorius, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Pat Metheny, and Charles Mingus; the latter asked her to collaborate on his final recordings. She turned again toward pop, embraced electronic music, and engaged in political protest. She is the sole record producer credited on most of her albums, including all her work in the 1970s. With roots in visual art, she has designed her own album artwork throughout her career. A blunt critic of the music industry, she quit touring and released her 17th, and reportedly last, album of original songs in 2007. She describes herself as a "*painter derailed by circumstance*".

Mitchell has deeply influenced fellow musicians in a diverse range of genres, and her work is highly respected by critics. AllMusic said, "When the dust settles, Joni Mitchell may stand as the most important and influential female recording artist of the late 20th century" and Rolling Stone called her "one of the greatest songwriters ever". Her lyrics are noted for their developed poetics, addressing social and environmental ideals alongside personal feelings of romantic longing, confusion, disillusion, and joy.

In 1995, Mitchell received Billboard's Century Award. In 1996, she was awarded the Polar Music Prize. In 1997, Mitchell was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. She has received eight Grammy Awards during her career (seven competitive, one honorary), the first in 1969 and the most recent in 2008. She received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 2002, with the citation describing her as "one of the most important female recording artists of the rock era" and "*a powerful influence on all artists who embrace diversity, imagination and integrity*". In tribute to Mitchell, the TNT network presented an all-star celebration at the Hammerstein Ballroom in New York City, April 6, 2000. Many performers sang Mitchell's songs, including James Taylor, Elton John, Wynonna Judd, Bryan Adams, Cyndi Lauper, Diana Krall, and Richard Thompson of Fairport Convention fame. Mitchell herself ended the evening with a rendition of "Both Sides Now" with a full 70-piece orchestra. The version was featured on the soundtrack to the hit movie, Love Actually.

Mitchell's home country Canada has bestowed several honors on her. She was inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame in 1981 and received the Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement, Canada's highest honor in the performing arts, in 1996. Mitchell received a star on Canada's Walk of Fame in 2000. In 2002 she became only the third popular Canadian singer/songwriter (Gordon Lightfoot and Leonard Cohen being the other two), to be appointed a Companion of the Order of Canada, Canada's highest civilian honor. She received an honorary doctorate in music from McGill University in 2004. In January 2007 she was inducted into the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame. In June 2007 Canada Post featured Mitchell on a postage stamp.

In November 2006, the album Blue was listed by TIME magazine as among the "All-Time 100 Albums". In 1999 Mitchell was listed as fifth on VH1's list of "The 100 Greatest Women of Rock N' Roll". In 2010, VH1 named her the No. 44 Greatest Artist of All Time. In the 2010 film *The Kids Are All Right*, the character Joni is supposed to have been named after Joni Mitchell since the character Nic, Joni's mother, declares to be a fan of Mitchell. On February 12, 2010, "*Both Sides, Now*" was performed at the 2010 Winter Olympics opening ceremony in Vancouver.

At the age of 71 Joni Mitchell was hospitalized on April 1st after being found unconscious at her Los Angeles home. News reports say that she also suffers from the disease of Morgellons. In her memoir, *Joni Mitchell: In Her Own Words*, the songwriter, who famously survived polio as a child, described how Morgellons symptoms have affected her: "*I couldn't wear clothing. I couldn't leave my house for several years. Sometimes it got so I'd have to crawl across the floor. My legs would cramp up, just like a polio spasm. It hit all of the places where I had polio.*" At age eight, Mitchell contracted polio in a big epidemic, and was hospitalized for weeks. Being no longer athletic, she turned her thoughts to her creative talent, and considered a singing or dancing career for the first time. By nine, she was a smoker and still is, though she denies claims that this has affected her voice.

With this said I invite you to enjoy the music of the iconic legendary Joni Mitchell.....

Joni Mitchell – **Both Sides Now** -- <https://youtu.be/tKQSIH-LLTQ>

Joni Mitchell – **Help Me** -- https://youtu.be/Q4oY8ojxp_8

Joni Mitchell – **Coyote** -- <https://youtu.be/f7MbmXklj3Q>

Joni Mitchell – **Free Man In Paris** -- <https://youtu.be/2hcXdtqojEg>

Joni Mitchell – **Big Yellow Taxi** -- <https://youtu.be/XJluP7zEVeM>

Joni Mitchell – **Sex Kills** -- <https://youtu.be/CESBHEDIPzA>

Joni Mitchell – **All I Want** -- <https://youtu.be/2AavxMdfiZo>

Joni Mitchell – **Circle Game** -- <https://youtu.be/iyHMPR3dBY8>

Joni Mitchell – **Little Green** -- <https://youtu.be/QPZ6P7D3BIw>

Joni Mitchell – **Marcie** -- <https://youtu.be/PVxZSp1QN9I>

Joni Mitchell – **Love Puts On A New Face** -- <https://youtu.be/12RSKpStsd4>

Joni Mitchell – **Same Situation & Just Like This Train** -- <https://youtu.be/INTjKbL6oYE>

Joni Mitchell – **Car On A Hill** -- <https://youtu.be/Oau4rvDtuOY>

Joni Mitchell – **Carey** -- <https://youtu.be/DnOK53FMxGw>

Joni Mitchell – **California** -- <https://youtu.be/NS52fO-0pTM>

Joni Mitchell – **A Case of You** -- <https://youtu.be/IAsXMIkwXgs>

Joni Mitchell – **Woodstock** -- <https://youtu.be/3aOGnVKWbwc>

Joni Mitchell – **Court And Spark** -- <https://youtu.be/-w96Fqk9rEk>

Joni Mitchell – **Amelia** -- <https://youtu.be/1N7gPcCgkZU>

Joni Mitchell – **Song For Sharon** -- <https://youtu.be/ojJZ61GBHwY>

Joni Mitchell – **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction Film** -- <https://youtu.be/vdPYIPC0oQw>

I hope that you have enjoyed this week's offerings and wish you and yours a great week and i send my sincere prayers to those of you who are suffering through the tragedy and devastation caused by the recent extreme weather storms

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

--
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Chairman & CEO

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