THE REGIONAL AND GLOBAL EFFECTS OF THE AZERBAIJAN-ARMENIA CONFLICT

By Max Borsch-Powers

Fighting erupted in late September between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, with reports suggesting at least 23 people were killed and hundreds wounded. The clash is the latest border skirmish over who can claim the disputed region. Although Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, an overwhelming ethnic Armenian majority reside in the enclave and have controlled the regional congress since 1994. The fighting has persisted since the first civil war over the territory in 1988. Still, casualties have not reached current levels since the mid-1990s. There are reports of long-range missile attacks, drone strikes, and exchanges of fire along the border. In recent days, both countries have been taking shots at each other’s missile complexes, with Azerbaijan claiming to have destroyed an Armenian missile system. Other allegations include missiles fired at a hospital in Armenia and an Armenian scheme to target oil and gas pipelines in Azerbaijan. Near the border, mortars were fired, and armed drones have been intentionally crashed. While the death toll is the highest in almost three decades, the long history between Armenia and Azerbaijan precedes the current fighting.

The countries of Azerbaijan and Armenia are nestled together amongst the Caucasus region in the east of Europe. As the Soviet Union began to form in the 1920s, both modern-day Armenia and Azerbaijan were invaded and became part of the overarching USSR. Directly before the invasion, the independent congress in Nagorno-Karabakh voted that the region be part of Armenia.

CONTINUED AS "FIGHTING BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN AND ARMENIA" ON PAGE 6

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**POLITICS**

**SALVADORAN PRESIDENT NAYIB BUKELE INVESTIGATES VIRTUAL NEWSPAPER EL FARO FOR MONEY-LAUNDERING, IN RESPONSE TO CORRUPTION ACCUSATIONS**

Continued from Page I

E l Faro, a “regional stalwart for independent, transparent and reliable journalism,” according to the Global Investigative Journalism Network, provides daily coverage on Central American events and in-depth investigations into corruption, human-rights abuses, and gang violence. El Faro has published numerous investigations into Bukele, including alleged corruption, his growing authoritarianism, his mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic, and most recently, forming a secret truce with the MS-13 gang, which is considered a terrorist organization in El Salvador.

With about 67,000 Salvadoran gang members, the acts of terrorism MS-13 gangs commit in their communities cannot be dealt with lightly. To properly approach this issue, El Salvador’s president must deal with gang-violence at its roots, a feat no past president has done so far. Presidents should act to deal with gang-violence by investing in youth disengagement from gangs and embracing security policies, rather than making corruption deals with gangs. Now, it appears Bukele is following in their footsteps. El Faro has claimed to have “obtained copies of hundreds of prison reports confirming dozens of covert meetings between government officials and gang leaders since 2019, as well as intelligence regarding the outcomes of the encounters.” The outcomes include representatives of MS-13 agreeing to reduce homicides and accepting prison privileges which although not specified, may consist of entertainment access, work, money, and other freedoms. MS-13 also pledged to Bukele promising results of congressional elections in 2021. Bukele has denied these claims, but the accusation and Bukele’s unusual response have not gone unnoticed.

Bukele’s growing anti-press rhetoric has amplified the suspicions of journalists questioning Bukele’s actions. Within his first six months in office, journalists began to report exclusion from presidential press conferences. Bukele’s high social media usage has resulted in ample Twitter attacks against journalism and spreading rumors against the press. Bukele’s response to El Faro’s accusations has gone beyond Twitter-banter, though. Upon first hearing the damaging accusations, state-run news site La Pagina accused an El Faro reporter of sexual assault. Only two days later, the supposed victim publicly denied the claims. Regardless, the Finance Ministry has been unable to prove any financial mishaps, and speculators believe the government is trying to uncover private information harmful to the news site. Bukele has publicly announced that El Faro is being investigated for money laundering without providing evidence.

Due to El Faro’s suspicion that the Ministry has perpetrated a “deviation of powers”—the government use of a legitimate tool for which the result is different from what is stated—the publication has appealed before the Constitutional Chamber of El Salvador’s Supreme Court. Attorney General Raúl Melara, who practices independent of Bukele’s presidency, announced that he would investigate the allegations reported by El Faro. Melara stated, “there are politicians and ex-politicians prosecuted for negotiations with the gangs. Rumors have arisen that this situation is happening again and we are going to investigate. No one can take advantage of the institutionality to negotiate with terrorists.” Bukele’s attitude towards the press and investigation into El Faro provides a more startling reality of what freedom of speech and democratic institutions entail on a global scale. While Bukele, a close ally of President Donald Trump, has received Trump’s expressed support in the investigation, not all United States political figures agree. In September, House of Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Elliot Engel and Senator Patrick Leahy wrote directly to Bukele about their concerns about El Faro’s accusations. Bukele dismissed this letter.

In response to El Faro’s accusations of President Bukele’s secret truce with Salvadoran gang MS-13, Bukele’s administration has accused El Faro of money laundering. With no evidence and an ill-ridden track record of anti-press rhetoric, Bukele risks reneging his anti-corruption campaign promises. Thus, Salvadoran citizens are beginning to doubt his intentions.
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as9 is a specific protein within this defense system that acts as the genetic "scissors" used to cut out the DNA of invading viruses. Doudna discovered this previously unknown tracrRNA molecule during her studies in 2011 of the Streptococcus pyogenes bacteria. She published a paper on the molecule’s function the same year and began collaborating with Charpentier, an experienced biochemist. Together, they recreated the tracrRNA’s genetic scissors in a test tube. Though the molecule’s natural function is to fight viruses, Charpentier and Doudna proved that genetic scissors could cut DNA in a wide range of cells. Compared to previous genetic editing technology, CRISPR is more efficient, precise, and easier to use, so its practical applications are vast. For example, a 2016 study by researchers at MIT on in vitro models showed that CRISPR proteins were effective in enabling “precise genetic dissection of neuronal circuits and modeling of neurological disorders.” Food industry scientists have also begun to test CRISPR on crops; in 2018, researchers at Cornell University announced they had genetically edited a groundberry bush to produce larger fruit and higher yields. The groundberry is closely related to the tomato, which researchers in 2016 discovered could be genetically edited using CRISPR to produce flowers more quickly.

Since its inception in 2012, however, the technology has aroused fears that a lack of genetic editing regulations could lead to unethical behavior. In 2015, CRISPR made the news when it was used by Chinese researchers to edit the genes of a human embryo to create resistance to a blood disease. Yet, no attempts were made to fertilize and grow an embryo until 2018 when Chinese scientist He Jianku announced the birth of two twin girls that his lab had edited in vitro to be HIV resistant. Reactions in the global community were overwhelming and adverse, with scientists calling Jianku’s behavior unethical. “It is profoundly unfortunate that the first apparent application of this powerful technique...has been carried out so irresponsibly,” said Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, as he called for limits to be set on genetic editing research, or “the world will face the serious risk of a deluge of similarly ill-considered and unethical projects.” In December of 2018, the WHO announced the creation of a committee “to develop global standards for governance and oversight of human genome editing.” Days later, He Jianku was sentenced to three years in prison and a $430,000 fine for “illegal medical practice.”

The technology is also the subject of a fierce patent battle between the recently awarded laureates’ team at the University of California Berkeley and a team from MIT working in Harvard’s Broad Institute. Both institutions claim their teams made the most relevant and important advancements in the project. “...There is indeed surprise that [the committee] elected to exclude all other pioneeers who have made substantial contributions...some others well documented in the CRISPR literature who have been recognized by other award committees,” said Professor Rodolphe Barrangou of North Carolina State University, a researcher of CRISPR Cas-9 in bacteria. This year’s Nobel prize announcements have also raised conversations about the diversity of Nobel laureates. Prize winners, across all categories, are predominantly white men. Charpentier and Doudna are the sixth and seventh female recipients of the prize and the first team consisting of only women to be awarded the prize. In the category’s 119 year history, only 3.8% of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry’s laureates have been women. Across all categories, 57 of the organization’s 934 laureates have also been female. For people of color, the statistics are even smaller. Only 16 laureates across all categories have been black; additionally, there has never been a black recipient in any organization’s scientific categories. During her acceptance speech, Charpentier said that she hopes girls and young female scientists “understand that nothing is impossible.” They can “find great discoveries, great findings that can be impactful,” she said. “It’s independent of the gender.” This year’s Nobel Prize in Chemistry has not only disrupted stereotypes about gender in science but moved a relatively new and controversial technology into the spotlight. As research continues into the functions and possible uses of CRISPR and its proteins, the technique will take a more prominent place in the broader range of global scientific communities.
IMPEACHMENT VOTE AGAINST PERUVIAN PRESIDENT MARTIN VIZCARRA, FAILS

By Amber Ting

On September 18th, Peru’s Congress voted against impeaching President Martin Vizcarra. While the Peruvian legislature needed 87 votes to impeach Vizcarra, ten hours of deliberation culminated in a 32 to 78 legislative vote against impeachment. Fifteen legislators abstained from voting.

The impeachment process began on September 11th when Peru’s Congress voted to begin impeachment proceedings against Vizcarra under charges of “moral incapacity.” The proceedings occurred after the discovery of government contracts with a singer, Richard Cisneros. It was widely presumed Vizcarra had a hand in awarding Cisneros contracts, abusing his government position. Cisneros, also known as Richard Swing, had been given close to $50,000 from the Peruvian Ministry of Culture for activities such as motivational speaking. An audio clip from legislator Edgar Alarcón revealed that two of Vizcarra’s aides attempted to determine how many times the president and musician had met. Alarcón had released a series of recordings after being threatened with political persecution; he had been accused of embezzlement.

The exact nature of Vizcarra and Cisneros’ relationship has remained private. Peru’s Parliament and auditor general are currently investigating Cisneros’ contracts and Vizcarra’s relation to them. While President Vizcarra has acknowledged meeting Cisneros, he has vehemently denied his alleged involvement with the Ministry of Culture.

On Friday, in a twenty-minute speech before Congress, Vizcarra said, “I am here, with my head high and my conscience clear.” Previously, Vizcarra expressed an unwillingness to run for re-election. However, he has also refused to resign over the Cisneros contracts. In a little over half a year, Peru will have a new leader, but it looks like Vizcarra will remain president until then. He has also accused Peru’s speaker, Manuel Merino, of “conspiring” against him under the guise of impeachment. Merino would have replaced Vizcarra for the rest of his term had he been impeached.

The relationship between Peru’s president and Congress has always been strained, marred by presidential scandals. Peru’s Congress has tried to impeach a president three times in the last five years. On September 9th, former President Alan García committed suicide before being arrested for allegedly receiving more than $100,000 from Odebrecht, a Brazilian construction company. His successor, Ollanta Humala, is currently serving jail time for bribery. In 2018, former president Pedro Pablo Kuczynski resigned after more than $782,000 in funds from Odebrecht were discovered in Kuczynski’s personal accounts. As vice president, Vizcarra succeeded Kuczynski.

Vizcarra’s relationship with many legislators has been particularly tumultuous. Last year, he dissolved Parliament over a legislative disagreement with his anti-corruption reforms, leading to snap elections. Directly before, though, lawmakers who voted to impeach Vizcarra were told that their votes would be nullified. People protested these snap elections, refusing to leave their seats. Vizcarra has been called dictatorial in the past. He is currently claiming impeachment proceedings against him were a Congressional plot.

While a successful impeachment vote would have further divided the country, the failed impeachment vote spells equally devastating consequences. Public opinion towards the president continues to sour; a month after escaping impeachment, Vizcarra finds himself embroiled in a new scandal. Ironically, this latest scandal is concerning bribes from a construction company.

Many Peruvians will also surely question their President and Congress’ ability to continue political collaboration during a time of crisis. Indeed, the country currently reports 850,000 coronavirus cases, the highest rate in the Western Hemisphere. Although the government purchased more than 1.6 million antibody tests in March, they have mostly been ineffective due to the high false-positive/negative rate and their inability to detect early infections.

What is worse, the economy is possibly facing the highest rate in the world. Agriculture currently reports 850,000 cases, the eighth highest rate in the world. Tourism is still on the decline as cases throughout Latin America top ten million, and experts have expressed further concerns about a second wave. If the country wants to recover, Vizcarra and Peru’s Congress will need to cooperate. Right now, it is unclear if they will be able to.

ECONOMY
FROM RAGS TO RICHES: THE COLLAPSE OF VENEZUELA’S MASSIVE OIL SECTOR

By Daniel Waheed

Venezuela has more proven oil reserves compared to any other country on the planet. With roughly 300.9 billion barrels of oil, Venezuela is home to 18% of the world’s total oil reserves. However, despite the plethora of oil within Venezuelan lands, Venezuela’s massive oil sector is experiencing the culmination of a collapse that started in 2010, the likes of which the world has never before seen.

Just a decade ago, Venezuela was the largest exporter of oil in Latin America and earned a net $90 billion a year doing so. By this year’s end, however, Venezuela “is expected to net about $2.3 billion,” according to The New York Times’ estimates. The sudden drop in Venezuela’s revenue, primarily based on oil, can be attributed to a decrease in exports. Oil exports from Venezuela plummeted 32% last year, and Industry Consultancy IHS Markit believes that oil production could fall to zero by 2021.

This lack of revenue has resulted in numerous negative ramifications for Venezuela. Though many used to praise the country as a stable and confident democracy in Latin America, it now has a reputation in which 90% of Venezuelans are in poverty, and 70% are in extreme poverty, a result of the rule of corrupt politicians removing democratic institutions since the beginning of the 21st century. So, how did a once-great, wealthy, and booming country which began to contest the United States for regional Latin American influence just a decade ago become a piece of economically and politically dysfunctional land with a humanitarian crisis, where the average income in 2019 was 72 U.S. cents per day? The answer is a combination of corruption and excessive dependence on oil.

Robert Papier, an engineer in the energy industry, believes that Venezuela’s decline stems from the reign of the deceased Hugo Chavez, the former president of Venezuela. Papier identifies a lack of expertise in Venezuela’s oil company, PDVSA, as the root cause for the eventual downfall. For example, 19,000 PDVSA employees were fired and replaced with Chavez loyalists. Thus, when oil prices fluctuated, the absence of professionals who had an understanding of the international market led to billions being invested in the wrong places, as Chavez “failed to reinvest adequately in this capital-intensive industry,” according to a Forbes article.

Furthermore, he blamed the people with a false dream of short-term economic prosperity while secretly transforming Venezuela into a socialist regime by erasing the private sector and placing the entirety of the economy in his administration’s hands.

Papier also allowed corruption to imbue all sectors of the government. His improper and novice grip on the nation’s oil sector, or in other words the overwhelming majority of Venezuela’s economy, crippled it. Notwithstanding that the oil sector failed, millions should not have been thrown into utter destitution.
After a long complicated history, tensions between China and India rise over border disputes.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2020

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n the case of Venezuela, how- ever, the socialist govern- ment had an over-reliance on oil. Often referred to as the "oil curse," Venezuela found oil so profitable that it ignored oth- er industries. As a rentier state, the economy may not survive the inevitable drop in oil prices. Must see this lack of diversifica- tion as a problem of the Middle East, but Venezuela exempli- fies its disastrous consequences. Oil prices fell, and Venezuela was not equipped to deal with the repercussions of its inade- quate leadership. To this day, Venezuela's national budget is consumed with paying off debt and, ironically, spending the last of their gold reserves to buy oil from Iran, as the oil infra- structure in Venezuela is mostly obsolete due to a lack of capital to reinvest. Moreover, the subject here may be the oil sector, but the participants are the people. The collapse of the Venezuelan economy, caused by the lack of diversification, cor- ruption, and bad leadership, has primarily affected people, who are often overlooked. According to a recent report, the U.S's his- tory of sanctions on Venezuela has caused up to 40,000 Vene- zuelan deaths. Perhaps, in the future, Venezuela can rebuild its infrastructure and revive the oil sector by incentivizing private industry. But first, the humani- tarian crisis that caused the collapse of Venezuela's oil sector must be addressed.

Venezuela could be galva- nized into the state it once was, without a humanitarian crisis, through proper leadership, new oil infrastructure, and an econ- omy based on more than just oil exports. Because its leaders de- stroyed the country, Venezuela should learn from its past mis- takes. Venezuelans, once their basic needs are met, have the power to elect new represen-
The result was brutal. Reports of skirmishes explode into full war. Independence in 1991 did the MENIA and Azerbaijan gained along the border, only when Ar-pressuring the countries to halt der its control. With the USSR gorno-Karabakh region was un-hand, maintained that the Na-
tinct from previous violence as tion. Armenia endorsed the base, characterized by Armenia's territorial. Armenia could call on for Russia and Armenia are both a Caucasus region. Additionally, Russia and Armenia are a part of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, composed of former USSR countries, which Armenia could call for on military support. Armenia also hosts a large Russian military base, characterized by Armenia's

President Armen Sarkissian, as a critical bulwark against a possible Turkish invasion. Additional support this time around includes a small supply of dis-counted weapons and missile batteries that Armenia had not had access to in the past. De-pite these new benefits, Rus-sia has not been doing as much as possible to give Armenia an upper hand in the conflict. The lack of support is partly due to Armenian Prime Minister Ni-kol Pashinyan's fierce nationalist rhetoric and his long-standing refusal to negotiate with Azer-baijan. Pashinyan's actions and words could prove catastrophic for Armenia if they continue to dissuade Russia from offering essential aid.

The ramifications of the most recent border skirmish will take the form of lives lost, mass displacement, and the infrastructure destruction on both sides. The well-established alliances between Azerbaijan and Tur-key and Armenia and Russia have extended the conflict, and the coalitions will continue to affect the timeline going forward. With the rhetoric from both sides growing exponentially, the prospects for a peaceful resolution continue to grow dimmer. Momentarily, the most optimistic scenarios is that both countries resume the tense disagreement over the territory and make another attempt at negotiatiing. If not, the consequences could include large-scale warfare involving four military powerhouses across two regions in Europe.

By Emma Jing

SUMMARY: The legacy of colonialism has caused indigenous communi-ties to rely on their local ecosystems as a means of subsistence. Because of this, climate change is much more detrimental to indigenous tribes and people, negatively affecting every-thing from their land resources to public health. It is no secret that indigenous groups across the United States have been the victims of brutal Western imperialism and land acquisition for centuries. The threat of unrestricted American cap-

itlalism has since manifested in a new way; climate change threatens the livelihood of every Native American tribe and land across the country. I attempt to highlight the dire nature of the environmental conditions that affect America's indigenous peoples due to the colonial legacy of America and the consequences of climate change that influence tribal population health and access to natural resources.

The indigenous peoples of the United States are dispro-
portionately affected by the ravishes of climate change. The National Institute of Health (NIH) and the U.S. Depart-
ment of Agriculture (USDA) classify Native Americans as a vulnerable population partly because of the extensive prob-
lems climate change presents to indigenous communities and their habitation in regions undergoing rapid change. The 565 federally recognized indigen-ous tribes inhabit about 95 million acres of land. With a notable 47 percent overall unemployment rate among Native American tribes, tribal members rely heavily on ag-
cultural pursuits on native land for their source of in-
come and sustainability.

Armenia's flag decorates tank carrying armed soldiers
To many Native Americans, their economic practices and cultural activities vary with the preservation and cultivation of native land. The impacts of climate change differ between the regions and climates of indigenous tribes. Native tribes often surround their cultural practices with the natural landmarks within their land, making climate effects much more pervasive. For tribes in California and the Pacific Northwest, water temperature and streamflow changes will increase the severity of existing declines in salmon and other culturally important species. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) predicts that the next 40 to 80 years will see the loss of more than half of the salmon and trout habitats throughout the United States. Tribes in coastal areas are experiencing record-breaking rising sea levels and erosion that threaten essential community infrastructure and lead to the forced relocation and displacement of indigenous tribes. Tribes in the Southwestern United States face reductions in rainfall, which cause prolonged drought, affecting soil quality, ranching, and the agricultural practices of tribes.

However, the problems haunting Native American tribal lands are not as distinct from each other as they appear. Tribes across the United States are subject to reductions in access to culturally significant habitats and species. In Alaska, permafrost melting, which thaws crucial ice environments, is a substantial issue, making access to traditional hunting grounds much more difficult for indigenous tribes. The melting is also changing the migration patterns of certain essential species. In the Pacific Northwest, changes in the water flow patterns and temperature of the water are exacerbating existing stresses on salmon and other shellfish populations, which are central to communities’ economic, spiritual, and cultural health. In the Southwest, the influx of invasive species and prolonged drought create unfounded difficulties in tribal practices for sustenance and subsistence. Climate change in all of these regions impacts traditional knowledge, food security, water availability and sourcing, historical homelands, and territorial existence of Native American tribes—undermining thousands of years of rich histories and the indigenous way of life.

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) stated that “native foods and fisheries are also declining, and tribal access to traditional foods and medicines is often limited by reservation boundaries. The large role of climate change in separating tribal people from their natural resources poses a threat to Indigenous identity.” The devastation of these environmental changes is brought on by the social, economic, and cultural dependence of native tribes on their local habitats and ecosystems. This dependence stems from the social and economic contexts of colonialism and forced relocation from American settlers. The legacy of generational trauma through indigenous erasure and exploitation of treaty agreements have caused significant setbacks in Native American economic growth and land development. As Emilie Cameron wrote in Science Direct in 2012, “Climate change itself...is thoroughly tied to colonial practices, both historically and in the present, insofar as greenhouse gas production over the last two centuries hinged on the dispossession of indigenous lands and resources.” Colonialism has created the conditions for such levels of indigenous vulnerability to climate change.

The health implications of climate change within native populations create experiences of vulnerability and cultural dependence of native tribes. In the Pacific Northwest, climate change means food security, water availability, and subsistence. Climate change in all of these regions impacts traditional knowledge, food security, water availability and sourcing, historical homelands, and territorial existence of Native American tribes—undermining thousands of years of rich histories and the indigenous way of life. The devastation of these environmental changes is brought on by the social, economic, and cultural dependence of native tribes on their local habitats and ecosystems. This dependence stems from the social and economic contexts of colonialism and forced relocation from American settlers. The legacy of generational trauma through indigenous erasure and exploitation of treaty agreements have caused significant setbacks in Native American economic growth and land development. As Emilie Cameron wrote in Science Direct in 2012, “Climate change itself...is thoroughly tied to colonial practices, both historically and in the present, insofar as greenhouse gas production over the last two centuries hinged on the dispossession of indigenous lands and resources.” Colonialism has created the conditions for such levels of indigenous vulnerability to climate change.

The health implications of climate change within native populations create experiences of vulnerability and cultural dependence of native tribes. In the Pacific Northwest, climate change means food security, water availability, and subsistence. Climate change in all of these regions impacts traditional knowledge, food security, water availability and sourcing, historical homelands, and territorial existence of Native American tribes—undermining thousands of years of rich histories and the indigenous way of life.
2020 has been crazy beyond belief for most of us. We have been battered by an invisible COVID-19, had homes ravaged by natural disasters, and been left reeling by a series of high-profile deaths. And then there are the murder hornets and locusts and on and on. But if there is one thing we have learned, Donald Trump is not like "most people." He does not pay taxes like a normal person, he does not know how to wait his turn like a normal person, and he does not tell the truth like a normal person. In some ways, then, Donald Trump's 2020 has been utterly predictable. He has shown a flagrant disregard for scientific facts amid a pandemic, thrown political rallies for thousands of people sans masks, and refused to acknowledge thousands of daily deaths. The virus was not "under control" when he claimed so in March, April, May, June, July, or August, and it is not now. When a reporter asked him about the 200,000 American deaths from COVID-19, Trump turned the opposite direction and asked for another question. When he inevitably caught the virus, he claimed that his experience with the world's best doctors and highly experimental drug cocktails means that everyone else will be okay. Trump has plowed through this year – through the past four years – as though nothing has ever changed. Despite how much you may object to what he has done and is doing, he is almost right. As 2016 seemed to prove, polls do not tell the whole story. But in this case, there is a pretty clear message. Since Donald Trump took office, the FiveThirtyEight project shows he has dropped only from 45.5% to 43.8% approval. However, 96% of his original voters still support him, despite failing to handle the raging pandemic, address the systemic racism pervading our nation, and stop our GDP from plunging 33% in one quarter— in addition to being impeached. Anything Donald Trump does daily would be enough to sink most presidents (remember when he said, "we’ll have to see what happens," regarding a peaceful transfer of power? That one passed pretty quickly for being one of the founding principles of this country...). It has been a long time since the days of Jimmy Carter, when a single speech about "malaise," a term the then-President did not even use, could effectively guillotine a presidential bid. Thinking back to the V.P. Debate, Pence’s constant cutting in would have been a significant detractor in most prior elections. Still, it has been entirely overshadowed by the continually rotating news cycle of crazy scandals.

In the last month, general election polls have stayed precisely in the same spot (they have been in the same place since July of 2019). According to Quinnipiaciac, 94% of voters have already decided who to vote for, and Democrats might consider that a good thing since they already have the lead, but it is not. Due to the electoral college system, not only can Trump win without taking the popular vote, he may not even need an outright electoral college win. Instead of individual representatives voting in the case of an electoral college tie that goes to the House of Representatives, state delegations vote. Though Republicans control fewer seats, they have a slim delegation lead. In other words, if there is a tie in the electoral college, which is possible due to swing states, and

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the election goes to the House of Representatives, we get round two of the Trump Presidency. NBC News and SurveyMonkey put the numbers at 50% to 45% in Hillary Clinton’s favor exactly this week four years ago. Current Survey Monkey polls have it at 53% to 45% in Joe Biden’s favor. Given how easily Mr. Trump abuses presidential powers, from his methods of extracting dirt on opponents, to undermining the intelligence and stature of his own CDC director for political gain, to forcing the weather service to redraw a hurricane map, it is not promising that he would be a responsible incumbent. Attacks on both the Post Office and voting-by-mail, allegations of Russian interference, and widespread voter suppression mean that these election results are shaky at best. We have already seen how in Fairfax, VA, voters had to wait upwards of 5 hours to cast their ballots while being harassed by Trump supporters. In other words, with two weeks left, Democrats and sensible Republicans have to be desperate to win.

The V.P. Debate was supposed to be a chance for two of America’s potential Presidents to make their cases. However, what we got was a relatively bland night, which allowed a small insect to become the headline.”

Senator Kamala Harris and Vice President Mike Pence separated by plexi-glass on the debate stage