

## EIR Daily Alert Service

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## EDITORIAL

**Mars, Ahoy!**

Feb. 18 (EIRNS)—The United States' Mars lander Perseverance successfully touched down on Mars today at 3:56 p.m. EST, as the Mars spacecraft from China and the United Arab Emirates, which had arrived just days earlier, orbited the planet. It's hard to conceive of a better image of the one humanity embarked on a common mission which speaks to the essence of Man's role in the universe: Hope, Questions to the Universe, and Perseverance.

In her weekly strategic webcast yesterday, Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche spoke of this mission: "This is the future, and if mankind is supposed to live as an immortal species—and that was a notion which was coined by my late husband—because we are different from other species, because we have creative reason. We can solve any problem through scientific and technological breakthroughs, by discovering new laws of the universe. And since our mind *is* the most advanced part of that universe, there is all the reason for optimism that once we attune our own existence and our own practice with the laws of the universe, our chances to become the immortal species is absolutely there. But it does require space travel as a precondition, and I think this idea of nations working together to discover the beautiful secrets of the universe, that gives you a taste of what the future of man can look like, when we decide to become adults."

In your mind's eye, contrast that image of Man as a creative, spacefaring species, with the image that has led to the current plummeting potential relative population density across the trans-Atlantic region, with all of its consequences: a planetary pandemic; forever wars and the risk of nuclear conflagration; mass unemployment and desperate waves of migration; and now a dramatic drop in the average life expectancy in the United States itself. According to a new study issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in the first six months of 2020

alone, average life expectancy dropped by a full year: from 78.8 in 2019, to 77.8 through June 2020. That is the single largest drop since World War II, and reflects both the direct and indirect impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S. and internationally.

The point is straightforward: It's the *physical* economy, stupid!

And the essence of human physical economy is limitless breakthroughs in fundamental science and classical culture, of the sort portended by Man's Mission to Mars. As Helga Zepp-LaRouche put it in her latest webcast: "At this point, the only voice of reason is really coming from The LaRouche Organization and the policies promoted by my late husband, Lyndon LaRouche. But it needs a broad mobilization of the population to change the course of these developments."

## SCIENCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### **Perseverance Safely on Mars, Right on Target, Ready To Start Search for Life**

Feb. 18 (EIRNS)—NASA's Mars rover, Perseverance, programmed to arrive at Mars this afternoon, plunged through the atmosphere, and landed at 3:55 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, exactly on schedule. It was the fifth time NASA has successfully landed a spacecraft on Mars. For the first time, American and European orbiters already at Mars were aimed, and in some cases repositioned, to photograph and film the craft's entry, descent, and landing. Perseverance, itself, was equipped to record for the first time the sounds and some images of its entry, descent, and landing (EDL). It was described as the first time we put ears on another planet. Within minutes of landing, Perseverance itself had sent back pictures of its surroundings. Mission managers expect to receive more imagery over the next day or so.

During a post-landing briefing, EDL Project manager Al Chen happily reported that Perseverance had found a good "parking lot" in the Jezero Crater, well within its target landing site, landing with very little tilt (1.2°). The surface team, which will be functioning on Mars time in tandem with

their rover, is already at work checking out the rover's status, with its power systems looking good right after landing. The rover will be “unwrapped”—various arms and instruments opened up—over the next few days, and the team will then begin to figure out where it will travel and by what route, avoiding sand ripples and examining differences in terrain as it heads out to find a good spot for a heliport to test Ingenuity, the first powered flight vessel ever deployed on Mars, or on another heavenly body.

Perseverance, known as “Percy” by its developers and admirers, is a major advance over its solar-powered golf-cart-sized predecessor, Curiosity. Percy weighs a ton and is the size of an automobile, and it is nuclear-powered. (The team described how there is no longer any need to worry about sand getting on the solar panel.) There's plenty of dependable power for the two-year mission. It supports advanced equipment, specially designed to search for life on Mars.

The Jezero Crater is the site of an ancient lake. It was picked because of its unique status on Mars—having clearly identified channels of the entrance and exit of the water. Near the entrance is a very rich “delta” region, thought to be ideal for finding Martian micro-organisms. Science team member Matt Wallace described the geological richness of the site, saying that they have ahead of them “years of scientific investigating.”

One of the most exciting features of this mission is its sample-caching system, to collect and store soil samples to be recovered and returned to Earth by the first “round trip” Mars mission which must follow. The tubes being used to collect samples were put through a highly rigorous sanitizing process, to make sure that any microorganisms found would actually be Martian in origin.

President Biden called to congratulate the team, and said he would congratulate them in person.

### **U.A.E.'s Hope Welcomes Perseverance to Mars**

Feb. 18 (EIRNS)—“Every mission starts with hope & ends in a scientific discovery! Congratulations to @NASAPersevere's rover on landing

successfully on the red planet. We are eager & excited for the scientific discoveries this mission will bring. Wishing you all the best in this exciting journey,” tweeted United Arab Emirates Space Agency Chairwoman and Minister of State for Advanced Technology Sarah Al Amiri, shortly after Perseverance had landed.

The U.A.E. Hope Mars Mission could not but enjoy the pleasure of being in a position to welcome Perseverance to Mars: “Inspired by @NASA’s work since we were children, we are humbled to be able to say ‘Welcome to Mars’ @NASAPersevere, as you embark on your amazing mission to further explore the planet. Here’s to yet more technological and scientific ‘firsts’ on your way. Godspeed, Perseverance!”

### **France and South Korea Offer Assistance in Polish Nuclear Program**

Feb. 18 (EIRNS)—On Feb. 2, the day on which the Polish government approved the energy strategy until 2040, French Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade Franck Riester visited Poland to offer support, via the state-owned Electricité de France (EDF). France would fund two-thirds of projects while promoting EDF’s European Pressurized Reactor (EPR), which is already in operation in Taishan, China. With a capacity of more than 1,000 MW (1 GW), the gigantic reactor corresponds to what the government of Poland is looking for.

The state-owned Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power Co (KHNP) has also offered to help Poland build its first nuclear power plants. “We are ready to cooperate with Poland to build its nuclear power plant through access to the proven advanced Korean nuclear technology, and by seeking financial solutions,” KHNP said in a statement. “KHNP is ready to talk to Polish authorities to understand their requirements and the final shape of the nuclear power financing model.” The Koreans have proposed their Advanced Power Reactors (APR 1400) for the Polish nuclear program.

### **Germany Racks Up Record in Nuclear Power**

Feb. 18 (EIRNS)—The German government is still pursuing the complete exit from nuclear power, based on the false assessment that the power

source is unsafe, after a 30-foot tsunami struck the Fukushima plant in Japan in March 2011. However, a world record in long-term reliability as an energy source has just been reached by the Grohnde plant in northern Germany, which, since it was put on the grid in September 1984, has produced more than 400 terawatt-hours of electricity. The 1,360 MWe German pressurized water reactor reached the production milestone at 11 p.m. on Feb. 7, plant operator PreussenElektra announced today.

Under Germany's nuclear power shutdown policy, the Grohnde plant is to be permanently shut down by the end of this year. "Our power plants are still among the best in the world," said Erwin Fischer, technology and operations director at PreussenElektra. "They proved that again last year under the difficult pandemic conditions. We are very pleased that Grohnde has managed to set such a record in its last year of operation."

## COLLAPSING WESTERN FINANCIAL SYSTEM

### U.S. Life Expectancy Plunged in First Half of 2020

Feb. 18 (EIRNS)—Preliminary estimates issued today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate that life expectancy in the United States dropped by a full year in the first half of 2020 alone, largely as a direct and indirect result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The average drop for Black Americans was a stunning three years; for Hispanics nearly two years. This is a lawful expression of what Lyndon LaRouche warned for 50 years would happen if society's potential relative population density drops below the actual population: The total population and its average life expectancy will follow into the abyss, sooner or later.

"This is a huge decline," said Robert Anderson, who oversees the numbers for the CDC, according to a report published by AP. "You have to go back to World War II, the 1940s, to find a decline like this." Dr. Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, a health equity researcher and dean at the University of California San Francisco said: "What is really quite striking in these numbers is that they only reflect the first half of the year.... I would expect that these numbers would only get worse," she said.

In 2019, average life expectancy in the U.S. was 78.8 years—75.1 for males and 80.5 for females. In the first half of 2020, it had dropped to 77.8 years for all Americans. “As a group, Hispanics in the U.S. have had the most longevity and still do. Black people now lag White people by six years in life expectancy, reversing a trend that had been bringing their numbers closer since 1993,” according to AP.

Dr. Otis Brawley, a cancer specialist and public health professor at Johns Hopkins University, stated: “The focus really needs to be broad-spread of getting every American adequate care. And health care needs to be defined as prevention as well as treatment.” He said “our mishandling of the pandemic” is largely responsible for the drop in life expectancy. “We have been devastated by the coronavirus more so than any other country. We are 4% of the world’s population, more than 20% of the world’s coronavirus deaths.”

### **Texas Electricity Generation Coming Back, but Water Crisis Is Growing**

Feb. 18 (EIRNS)—Texas officials estimated the number of homes and businesses without electricity at over 600,000 coming into today—as compared to some 2.7 million yesterday—and that number had dropped to 325,000 by Gov. Greg Abbott’s mid-afternoon briefing. He emphasized that power generation is back online, those who are now still without power are victims of downed power lines or require being manually reconnected to the grid, and that the power company crews were rushing to resolve those.

Temperatures are not forecast to rise above freezing until Feb. 20, however, and Governor Abbott was cautious about declaring the electricity crisis fully over. Officials from grid operator ERCOT were still warning that it might have to institute short, rolling blackouts.

Food supplies in grocery stores, restaurants, and some institutions are running low or empty, but Governor Abbott hopes that this crisis will resolve as roadways become increasingly passable.

Water quality and supply, however, remains a bad and apparently worsening crisis, as the effects of frozen pumps, burst pipes, and low water pressure endanger both. Coming into today, Texas officials had ordered 7 million people—a quarter of the nation’s second-largest state—to boil their tap water before drinking it. By the governor’s mid-afternoon briefing, the boil water order had been extended to 13 million people. An official from the governor’s team reported at the briefing that he and his people had been mobilizing water quality labs across the state, and lining up mobile water quality labs from out of state, in order to have the necessary capacity to test samples from the more than 1,500 public drinking water systems in the state, which are either under boil-water orders already or have some issues developing.

Usually when one water institution runs into trouble, water can be brought in from another area while the problem is being fixed, but this time almost every water institution has been hit, the official pointed out. And it is not just home pipes which have burst, but also those under the streets and those which supply institutions such as hospitals or community centers.

Similar water crises are reported in several cities in Louisiana: New Orleans, Shreveport, and Lake Charles being cited in the media. City fire trucks are delivering water to several hospitals, and bottled water was being brought in for patients and staff; in Lake Charles Mayor Nic Hunter warned yesterday that water reserves remain low and local hospitals without water face having to transfer patients to other areas.

### **More Americans Are Holding Multiple Jobs**

Feb. 18 (EIRNS)—According to a report issued by the Department of Commerce yesterday, the percentage of Americans who have to work two jobs to make ends meet has risen over the last 20 years, from about 6.8% in 1996 to 7.8% of U.S. workers in 2018. No numbers were provided for 2019 and 2020, which undoubtedly are worse. The earnings from the workers’ second jobs make up an average 28% of their total earnings, according to the study. Women are more likely to have multiple jobs than men, with 9.1% of women holding multiple jobs as of 2018, compared with 6.6% of

men. Low-wage earners were, predictably, more likely to hold multiple jobs, as were workers in health care and food services.

### **Bolivia Tells the IMF, We Don't Do Usury, and We Don't Want Your Money!**

Feb. 18 (EIRNS)—Bolivia's Central Bank (BCB) announced yesterday that it was returning \$351.5 million to the International Monetary Fund, part of what it said was a "usurious" credit contracted in April of 2020 by former "President" Jeanine Áñez, who illegally seized power in November 2019, following the coup that ousted President Evo Morales.

In a Feb. 17 press release, the BCB said that not only was the IMF loan "irregular and onerous," because of the array of harsh conditionalities attached to it, but also that the state had to pay "millions in additional costs" to the tune of \$24.3 million, *MDZ Online* reported today. Reporting that it was taking such action in "defense of the country's economic sovereignty, and respect for the State Political Constitution," the BCB thus said it was returning the \$351.5 million, and would further pursue appropriate administrative and criminal actions against those current or former public servants involved in negotiating and contracting the usurious loan.

### **The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Getting Nervous Over Decoupling from China**

Feb. 18 (EIRNS)—The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has released a new study "[Understanding U.S.-China Decoupling: Macro Trends and Industry Impacts](#)," warning of the economic costs of trying to decouple from China. "Pulling two huge economies apart will be expensive.... [However] full, comprehensive decoupling is no longer unthinkable." They claim a loss to the U.S. GDP of \$500 billion. Their computer modelling details various losses: Aviation losses \$38-\$51 billion annually. U.S. semiconductors lose \$54-\$124 billion and 100,000 jobs. Also, the loss of Chinese students and tourism takes \$15-\$30 billion out of U.S. services. "Even based on our rough assessment, we can see that the costs of anything approaching 'full' decoupling are uncomfortably high." One can doubt the physical possibility

of such decoupling and/or the assumptions built into the study, but not the “dollar bill” message meant to convey a clear warning.

## COVID-19

### China Is Mass-Producing Vaccines for Export to the World

Feb. 18 (EIRNS)—An unnamed Chinese expert in vaccines was cited by yesterday’s *Global Times* reporting that, although the Chinese government has confirmed an annual production capacity of 1 billion doses of the vaccine made by Sinopharm, “the actual number may surpass or even double it, the expert said.” The expert is further quoted: “As the epidemic has been successfully contained in China, there is no need to promote nationwide inoculations so far. So the vaccines have been exported to countries more in need of curbing the disease.”

The *Global Times* article went on to report that Feng Duoia, president of the China Vaccine Industry Association, has previously told the *Global Times* that he expected China’s capacity to eventually reach 4 billion doses per year, “covering 40% of global demand, based on calculations of the world’s population and average vaccination rates.”

In remarks on Feb. 17 to the United Nations Security Council open briefing on the COVID-19 vaccine distribution, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi urged resolving the vaccine deficit and providing greater help to developing nations. “What we think about most is to let the vaccines become accessible and affordable public goods for the people of all countries,” Wang said. Xinhua further reported that “China has taken concrete actions to promote the fair distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, he stressed.”

China is already exporting significant amounts of the vaccine produced by state-owned company Sinopharm to many countries around the world. The first batch of China’s Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine purchased by Hungary arrived at Budapest on Feb. 16. Xinhua quoted Tamas Menczer, state secretary from the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade,

as saying: “We are the first country in the European Union that uses Sinopharm vaccine. We try to save lives and preserve the economy, and we are fighting together with our Chinese friends against COVID-19.”

Budapest plans to vaccinate 2.5 million people with the Chinese vaccine; altogether, Hungary has access to five vaccines.

Senegal has also ordered its first vaccine shipment from China on Feb 17. Morocco received its second batch of coronavirus vaccines from China on Feb. 16.

Harare, Zimbabwe, early on Feb. 15 received Chinese vaccines. “And several other countries, including Pakistan and Equatorial Guinea, also gave the green light for more China-developed coronavirus vaccines to be imported,” *Global Times* reported.

### **Studies Demonstrate Infectious Danger of ‘Mutant Strain’ of SARS-CoV-2 Virus**

Feb. 18 (EIRNS)—A particular mutation of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, common to the British, the South African, and the Brazilian variants, has been shown to be eight times more infectious than the original Wuhan virus, according to a study by New York University and Mt. Sinai Hospital. (A 2020 study had indicated similarly elevated levels of infectiousness with the Italian variant.) It is thought to be involved in the greater transmission of the coronavirus in the West, but it also speaks to the danger of allowing a ‘virus stew’ anywhere in the world.

Two other studies, one by the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and one by the University of Texas-Galveston, addressed the South African variant, finding that both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines resulted in about a third of the antibodies as compared to use elsewhere. This would reduce efficacy somewhat, but probably not as much as the tentative AstraZeneca study showed. The mRNA technology of both companies is particularly capable of quickly fine-tuning a vaccine for various strains; but it is not clear yet if that capacity will be deployed rapidly to South Africa and elsewhere.

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), stated during a White House briefing on Feb. 17, “The continued spread of variants that are more transmissible could jeopardize the progress we have made in the last month if we let our guard down ... and dangerously accelerate the trajectory of the pandemic.” The British variant is now spreading very rapidly inside the U.S., and could become the predominant variant in the United States in March. In a Feb. 17 article, [“SARS-CoV-2 Variants of Concern in the United States—Challenges and Opportunities,”](#) in *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, Walensky and her co-authors stated: “A concerted and well-coordinated public health effort, together with rapid and widespread uptake of effective vaccines, is essential to remain ahead of the inevitable evolution of variants that could dangerously accelerate the trajectory of the pandemic.”

## STRATEGIC WAR DANGER

### **Austin a Big Hit with NATO Defense Ministers for Promising Return to Pre-Trump Pro-War Status Quo**

Feb. 18 (EIRNS)—By all accounts, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III was a big hit with his NATO colleagues yesterday. According to the Pentagon readout, Austin addressed two sessions of the NATO defense ministers’ meeting yesterday. The first session discussed deterrence and defense, burden sharing, and Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg’s “NATO 2030” initiative. The second session discussed trans-Atlanticism, NATO-EU relations, Alliance resilience, and emerging and disruptive technologies. Austin reaffirmed President Joe Biden’s message that the United States intends to revitalize the U.S. relationship with the NATO alliance and that the commitment to Article 5 remains ironclad.

According to a report in *Politico*, Austin “charmed” his fellow defense ministers. Unnamed officials reported that during the two sessions, Austin played “all the right mood music” by expressing a willingness to consult and a full-throated commitment to NATO’s principle of collective defense.

The subhead in the *Politico* article says it all: “New Life after Brain Death,” a direct reference to the comment made by French President Emmanuel Macron in 2019. It’s as if the Alliance has been resurrected after four years of being in a Trump-induced Hell. “We have the upcoming summit, we have the NATO 2030, we have a new U.S. administration,” Stoltenberg said. “And all of that together really provides a unique opportunity, after some difficult years for all of us on both sides of the Atlantic, to have a substantive forward-looking agenda.”

According to a separate Pentagon news release, Stoltenberg declared that Europe and North America have an opportunity to open a new chapter in the security relationship within NATO.

Afghanistan remains a tough nut to crack, however, though Stoltenberg made clear that the Alliance will ignore the May 1 deadline in the February 2020 U.S. agreement with the Taliban and make the decision when to leave, based on conditions. “The problem is that we are in a situation where we have a date—the 1st of May—approaching, and so far we have seen that the peace talks are fragile,” Stoltenberg said today after sessions on NATO in Afghanistan and Iraq. “The talks are fragile, and progress is slow. So, it is now imperative to re-energize the peace process,” Stoltenberg said, referring to the stalled negotiations in Qatar between the Afghan government and the Taliban. The May 1 deadline appears to have gone out the window. “At this stage, we have made no final decision on the future of our presence,” Stoltenberg said.

### ***Global Times* Editor Insists that China Is Not Rushing To Play Its ‘Rare-Earth Card’**

Feb. 18 (EIRNS)—After the City of London’s *Financial Times* on Feb. 16 fanned the flames of a new front in their desired U.S. vs. China confrontation, warning that the Chinese were about to “target rare earth export curbs to hobble U.S. defense industry,” Editor-in-Chief Hu Xijin of *Global Times*, responded by saying it was not likely to happen, at least not anytime soon. In an op-ed headlined “Whether China Plays ‘Rare-Earth

Card,' There Will Be No Winner in China-U.S. Decoupling,' Hu explained some of the specifics:

“China does not have absolute monopoly on rare-earth exports. The possible impact of limiting the export of rare earths is uncertain, and may not be as strong as some people think.... The *Financial Times*' report has hyped the confrontational atmosphere between China and the U.S., which is welcomed by some Western media outlets. I believe that China and the U.S. have not yet come to a full-scale confrontation which requires China to launch a 'rare-earth war' against the U.S. regardless of its efficiency.”

Hu went on to suggest that China keep that option as a “reserve force without being comprehensively activated to crack down on our opponents as much as possible regardless of the cost. In China-U.S. ties, cooperation benefits both, and confrontation serves neither.” He also wrote that if some in the U.S. continue to push for a decoupling of the U.S. and China, “The U.S. won't be able to coordinate with its allies such as Germany to gang up against China.”

- Watch [Harley's Updates](#) with Harley Schlanger on Friday, February 19, 2021: Every weekday morning on [The LaRouche Organization](#) website, Harley will give you the strategic briefing on what you need to know to start your day.