

1973

Vietnam War: Citing progress in peace negotiations, President Richard Nixon announces the suspension of offensive action in North Vietnam.

1975

The **Alvor Agreement** is signed, ending the Angolan War of Independence and giving Angola independence from Portugal.

1976

Gerald Ford's would-be assassin, Sara Jane Moore, is sentenced to life in prison.



1981

Pope John Paul II receives a delegation from Solidarity (Polish trade union) at the Vatican led by Lech Wałęsa.



The Boeing 737-800 that crashed outside the

mobilising its puppets, it must resort to increasingly coercive techniques, or see its influence wither away. In Iraq, this would mean subverting parliament, forcibly entrenching Hashd allies in power, and unleashing paramilitaries to crush protests. Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani is right to call for an end to foreign meddling and for the protection of Iraq's sovereignty, but US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is also correct to insist that US troops remain. In the absence of radical political reform in Iraq, the withdrawal of foreign troops would summarily deliver the country to the twin plagues of Iran-aligned paramilitarism and Daesh.

The West must also do everything possible to neutralise a conflict that it scarcely appears to realise is hurtling toward it. Boasting about killing Soleimani has become a central plank of Donald Trump's pre-electoral grandstanding, and many observers justifiably fear that the US president's foreign-policy decision making throughout 2020 will be similarly driven by myopic domestic calculations. This is a dangerous dynamic when we are already so close to wider conflict.

Trump's accumulated barrages of sanctions have only encouraged Tehran to further dig in with its transnational paramilitary strategy. Instead, there must be redoubled muscular diplomatic efforts to block Iranian expansionism in Arab states. Even if war is unavoidable, global powers should at least constrain the number of fronts Tehran can fight on.

Although recent escalations may have killed off any immediate prospects for diplomacy, Europe should not pin its hopes on an eventual resuscitation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the effectively defunct 2015 deal to curb Iran's nuclear program in return for easing sanctions. The myriad shortcomings of this agreement (over-reliance on Iran's good nature for implementation, releasing frozen funds without preventing their use for regional aggression) prevented it becoming a viable tool to comprehensively address Tehran's misbehaviour.

Iranian citizens' loathing for their mendacious, dictatorial regime means that an end to this tyranny is only a matter of time. Ordinary Iranians have more at stake than anyone in avoiding a war that would cost tens of thousands of their lives, just like the innocents who died senselessly

on that downed Ukrainian passenger jet. Iran's incompetent attempts to cover up its culpability for the crash have triggered yet more anti-regime protests, with demonstrators shredding images of Soleimani and demanding Khamenei's downfall. This is surely a leadership that has burned its last vestiges of credibility, at home and abroad.

The ayatollahs, and Soleimani's successors, must recognise that their deranged ambitions are unachievable. Iran's dysfunctional, sanctions-shattered economy cannot afford this megalomaniacal vision of region-wide supremacy. Palestinians have been struggling for over a century for their right to a homeland; Arab citizens too will fight for as long as it takes to free their nations from Iranian domination. If there is a war in which America, Israel and Western allies directly confront the Islamic Republic's decrepit military capabilities, there can be only one outcome.

The regime cannot escape this fate through vague messages about not desiring conflict, while redoubling overseas subversion and terrorism. It is not Iran's words that make conflict inevitable, but its actions.

The ayatollahs are thus at a moment of decision: If they retreat from their terrorism and warmongering, perhaps their regime can limp on for a few more years before dying an unlamented death. If, instead, they stubbornly accelerate efforts to build a nuclear bomb, dominate neighbours, and threaten peace-loving nations, they are simply choosing the quickest way to dig their own graves.

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to removal from office

The Republicans won a landslide in Congressional elections in 1994 under Ms Pelosi's predecessor Newt Gingrich and they immediately investigated the Clintons. It was clear to me at the time that many Republicans simply loathed Bill and Hillary.

both of which merely confirmed what we all knew from the start. Those two things were that people sometimes lie about sex, and that Mr Clinton had an eye for the ladies. He was acquitted. After all the sound and fury, he continued in office, re-built his presidency and left the White House in January 2001 more popular than when he had first arrived in January 1993.

So consider Mr Trump and the impeachment proceedings against him. They focus on the alleged lies he has told about his dealings with Ukraine over Joe Biden, the former vice-president. Clearly, there is a case that these allegations amount to impeachable "high crimes and misdemeanours". But so what? Mr Trump is the mirror image of the Clintons. Democrats loathe him. He speaks of a witch-hunt against him in the same way the Clintons claimed a witch-hunt against them. Like the Clintons, Mr Trump has his enemies but again like them he has a solid base of support from 40 per cent or more of the American people. Karl Marx once quipped

that history repeats itself, the first time as tragedy the second as farce.

It is not to minimise the charges against Mr Trump - which are clearly serious - to predict that what of what we are about to see will itself appear farcical. At the end of weeks of public hearings what will we learn? That Mr Trump tells lies? That he can be vindictive towards his political enemies? What a surprise. And will the Republican-dominated Senate vote to throw him out of office? Very unlikely.

The key, as with the Clintons, will not be some abstract concept of justice and the constitution but a much harder political battle. Will the revelations about Mr Trump - perhaps over his business dealings - prove politically damaging as he seeks re-election? Was he far less successful in business than his carefully crafted image suggests? Perhaps.

But do not hold your breath. Impeachment is theatre, and experience suggests the final act may be a dramatic disappointment.



TOP
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TWEETS

01



Today I have written to Nicola Sturgeon. The Scottish people voted decisively to keep our United Kingdom together, a result which both the Scottish and UK Governments committed to respect. Let's make 2020 a year of growth and opportunity for the whole of the UK.

@BorisJohnson

02



Compassion enhances our self-confidence because a calm mind allows our marvellous human intelligence to bloom. When we're angry, our thinking is distorted and we don't see the different aspects of reality. A calm mind enables us to take a broader, more realistic view.

@DalaiLama

03



Arrest of decorated J&K Officer Davinder Singh escorting top Kashmiri terrorists to Delhi ahead of Republic day should have been the top story on all TV channels for days. He was accused by Afzal Guru of torturing him to help terrorists who attacked Parliament. But TV blackout? @pbbhusani

04



Ending the scourge of human trafficking is a priority for President @realDonaldTrump and his Administration. Today, @IvankaTrump will visit two facilities in Atlanta, Georgia, that support trafficking survivors as they recover and rebuild.

@WhiteHouse

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)

Wide Angle

Passwords and pins: A memory muddle?



JOEL INDRUPATI

How many passwords can one remember? And, what about PIN numbers? Or those security-answers?

To unlock or open software and hardware systems today, it looks like we all need a personal memory that must rival that of the elephant's.

For our email, for our computer, for our mobile device, for our phone-banking service, and for our TV receiver, we are now forced to remember a growing number of passwords and pin numbers.

"All things remaining constant, the number of passwords one must remember is directly proportional to the number of electronic devices one is buying."

This great law (which I just postulated) could have some exceptions. But companies are going the extra mile, to make password-memory fun.

Well, fun for them. But frustrating for us.

They are conducting free check-up of our mental-health - perhaps for Alzheimer's or Amnesia - by asking us to participate in mental exercises.

They test our cerebral resilience by telling us that our password must contain at least one capital letter, one small letter, one number, and at least one 'special character'.

One Special character?

Shylock, of Shakespeare? The Joker, from Hollywood? Crime-Master Gogo, from Bollywood?

No. They tell us it could be an exclamation mark or an ampersand, a hash or a comma, a double quote or a dollar sign.

After all that you do, if you still don't remember the password when you need it, you are in for trouble.

You will have to answer a few security questions, the answers to which you should also, now, remember.

And if your answers match with theirs, they might help you reset the password.

A few days ago, no matter how many times I tried, I was unable to enter into an online web service. So, after several attempts, with different old passwords, I finally gave up.

Once, I entered my email address after clicking on 'forgot password' section to get the 'reset password' link by

email.

Now, when I tried to make up a password, imagine my annoyance when the system says, 'Sorry. You cannot use any previously used passwords'!

Yes. I had tried to use an old one. But that is because, tell me, how many words can I really, effectively, remember?

And as if that is not enough, some websites are even telling me, "We have noticed that you have not changed your password for a long time. We recommend you change it".

There are OTPs too; One-time passwords which work if you have your phone handy when you are booking or buying online.

So, when you travel to another country and use a different temporary number, you would need another phone. Or a phone with dual Sim Card provision.

Otherwise, you won't get text messages from the banks and other web service providers to help u reset.

In one way, I agree, of course, it is good to find our online services becoming more and more secure.

But on the other hand, I feel they should allow us to create and use passwords without too many restrictions.

Recently, a telephone banking service told me I cannot even use two consecutive digits in my pin number! Is that not a needless restriction?

Thanks to the new biometrics-enabled devices, which recognise fingerprints and faces, at least some of the problems are now reducing.

But then, my complaints aside, let us remember our past.

If we had remembered scores of telephone numbers in our head before the advent of mobile phone, perhaps, we can remember these passwords and pins too.

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