

Top US Politicians Warn of Democratic Values at Risk

WASHINGTON - An extraordinary series of speeches this week from two former US Presidents and a former presidential candidate warned of the dangers to the nation and the world if divisive politics continues to cleave the American electorate into thoughtlessly hostile warring camps.

Former President George W. Bush talked about a rise in bigotry and casual cruelty. Former President Barack Obama observed that public life seems to be regressing from the 21st to the 19th century. Former presidential nominee Sen. John McCain (R) of Arizona stressed the importance of an America engaged with the world and criticized "half-baked, spurious nationalism."



None mentioned Mr. Trump's name. To do so would have been both inflammatory and limiting. Their theme was not so much the content of Trump's tweets as long-developing cracks in the American character. If the cracks are not to widen, voters may need to reach out to each other instead of push away.

"They ... talk about American ideals, they ... talk about the story of America, the American creed and the need to reinvigorate democracy and continue to be the exemplar to the world of democratic values," says Martin Medhurst, a political scientist at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, specializing in rhetoric and communication. (Agencies)

Iraqi FM to Visit Russia Next Week for Cooperation

MOSCOW - Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari will pay a working visit to Moscow on October 23-25 to discuss the current situation in Iraq and bilateral cooperation, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Saturday.

Al-Jaafari will meet Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on October 23 to mainly discuss the situation in Iraq at the final stage of the operation against the Islamic State, the ministry said in a statement.

"The Russian side invariably supports the unity, sovereignty and territo-

rial integrity of Iraq," it read. Al-Jaafari and Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin will co-chair a session of the Russian-Iraqi commission for trade, economic, scientific and technical cooperation on October 23-24, according to the statement.

During the meeting, both sides will discuss the prospect of bilateral partnerships, with a focus on the fuel and energy sector in the light of large-scale projects being implemented in Iraq by Russian oil and gas companies. (Xinhua)

South Korea's President Says will Continue Phasing out Nuclear Power

SEOUL - South Korea's President Moon Jae-in said on Sunday the government will continue to phase out nuclear-generated electricity, following a public opinion survey that dealt a blow to his plans to do so.

"We will completely stop all plans for the construction of new nuclear reactors like the government previously stated," Moon said in a statement distributed to reporters by his office.

"The government will also step up usage of

natural gas and renewables in order to maintain its stance of phasing out nuclear-generated power." Moon's statement came after a public opinion survey on Friday found a majority of almost 60 percent in favor of resuming the stalled construction of two reactors.

The president asked his supporters on Sunday to respect the outcome of the survey, which he called a "wise and intel-



ligent" response. Completing the two reactors could mean a reversal of a strategy to slowly reduce nuclear energy's share of the power mix, and also significantly eat into the liquefied natural gas (LNG) demand of the world's second-largest consumer of the fuel. (Reuters)

Russia Not to Take Part in Talks to Amend Iran Nuclear Deal



MOSCOW - Russia has said it is confident that Iran is fulfilling all its obligations under a multilateral agreement on its nuclear program and will not take part in any talks

on amending the deal. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov made the remarks Saturday at an international nuclear weapons non-proliferation conference here,

TASS news agency reported. Russia is not ready to participate in any talks on amending the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Ryabkov was quoted as saying.

The deal is delicately balanced and any change could cause the collapse of the whole agreement, he warned.

The JCPOA was reached between Iran, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council - Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States - plus Germany, in July 2015. Under

the deal, Iran agreed to halt its nuclear weapon program in exchange for economic aid and lifting of international sanctions. However, on Oct. 13, U.S. President Donald Trump called for decertifying the agreement, alleging Iran had committed "multiple violations". Though the decertification would not mean Washington exiting the Iran nuclear deal at the moment, it would open a 60-day window in which the U.S. Congress could reimpose nuclear-related sanctions on Iran. (Xinhua)

Tillerson Lands in Riyadh at Start of Gulf, South Asia Tour

RIYADH - US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson arrived in Riyadh on Saturday to attend a landmark meeting between officials from Saudi Arabia and Iraq aimed at improving relations between the two countries and countering Iran's growing regional influence.

The chief US diplomat flew into King Salman Air Base a little more than a week after US President Donald Trump unveiled a strategy to contain Iran and compel Tehran to agree to close what he charged are flaws in

the multinational 2015 deal designed to prevent Iran developing nuclear weapons.

Tillerson's only official meeting on Saturday was a working dinner with Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir.

He was stopping in Saudi Arabia on the first leg of a six-day trip that will also take him to Qatar, Pakistan, India and Switzerland. His talks in Saudi Arabia and in Qatar were expected to be dominated by the topic of Iran's growing regional influence. (Reuters)

Five Former U.S. Presidents Appear Together for Hurricane Aid

HOUSTON - All five living former presidents of the United States took to the stage Saturday night at a benefit concert here to raise funds for the victims of recent hurricanes that hit various parts of the country.

Former presidents Jimmy Carter, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama appeared together on stage at the "One America Appeal" fundraiser at the A&M University in College Station, about 140 km northwest of Houston, Texas. Sitting president Donald Trump did not attend the event. Instead, he sent a video message thanking the former presidents for their efforts in helping with hurricane relief.

The event was originally aimed at raising funds for victims of Hurricane Harvey, which hit the Texas Gulf Coast on Aug. 25 and killed more than 80 people. (Xinhua)

Saudi Arabia, Iraq to Form a Coordination Council

RIYADH - Saudi Arabia and Iraq signed on Sunday an agreement here in Riyadh to form a coordination council, Al Arabiya local news reported. The council will open an era of new and improved ties between the two countries that shared cold relations for more than two decades.

The council, which was approved by the Saudi cabinet in August, aims to raise the level of strategic, investment and cultural relations between the two countries, opening a new window for Iraq to revive its economy. Saudi Arabia aims with the council and other initiatives to reduce the influence of Iran in Iraq. (Xinhua)

Spain Hopes Catalans Disregard Instruction from Regional Leaders: Minister

LONDON - Spanish Foreign Minister Alfonso Dastis said on Sunday he hoped that people in Catalonia would disregard any instruction from the regional leadership if Spain moves to suspend the region's autonomy.

"All the government is trying to do, and reluctantly, is to reinstate the legal order, to restore the constitution but also the Catalan rules and proceed from there," he told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show.



"We are going to establish the authorities who are going to rule the day-to-day affairs of Catalonia according to the Catalan laws and norms ...

I hope everyone will disregard whatever instructions they will be planning to give because they will not have the legal authority to do that." (Reuters)

EU Parliament Chief 'Fears' Spread of Small Nations as Italy Regions Vote

ROME - European Parliament chief Antonio Tajani said Europe should "fear" the spread of small nations as Spain struggled Sunday with the Catalonia crisis and the Italian regions of Lombardy and Veneto voted in referendums on greater autonomy.

In an interview with the Rome daily *Il Messaggero*, the Italian politician said Europe must "of course fear" the proliferation of small nations.

"That's why nobody in Europe intends to recognise Catalonia," he said.

"Even (British Prime Minister) Theresa May, in the full throes of Brexit, said

the United Kingdom would never recognise Catalonia." "Spain is by its history a unified state, with many autonomous regions, with diverse populations who also speak different languages but who are part of a unified state." "It is not by degrading nationhood that we reinforce Europe," he said.

The referendums in Lombardy, which includes Milan, and Veneto, where Venice is located, are taking place in regions that together account for nearly a third of Italy's economic output and a quarter of its population. (AFP)

Catalan President Asks Regional Parliament to Meet, Debate 'Attack' by Spanish Central Govt.

BARCELONA - President of the Catalan regional government, Carles Puigdemont, said on Saturday he called on the Catalan parliament to meet and discuss the measures announced by the Spanish central government.

Puigdemont said the measures announced by Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy were "the worst attack" against Catalan institutions since the dictatorship Franco, who ruled Spain since 1939 to 1975.

Puigdemont called on the Catalan parliament to discuss the measures and decide the steps to follow as according to him, the representatives chosen by Catalan citizens are in the Catalan parliament. "What the Catalans have decided on polling stations, the Spanish government is suspending it at the office," he said.

Puigdemont's statement follows the announcement made by Rajoy a few hours earlier on Saturday who explained the measures to apply under the article 155 of the Spanish constitution. Rajoy said the regional government of Catalonia would be dissolved, and their powers would be controlled by the Spanish ministries. He could also dissolve the Catalan parliament and call for elections within six months. All these measures have to be passed by the Spanish Senate to be fully implemented.

Rajoy said he applied the article 155 after Puigdemont failed to clarify whether he had declared the independence of the region or not. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

Xi Jinping Affirms China's Commitment to Developing Global Partnerships

BEIJING - China will provide \$1 million worth of emergency food aid to Afghanistan via the World Food Programme (WFP) to help local people get through the food crisis, Chinese Ambassador to Afghanistan Yao Jing said on Monday, two days before Chinese President Xi Jinping affirmed the country's active commitment to developing global partnerships.

"China has actively developed global partnerships and expanded the convergence of interests with other countries," Xi stressed in his report to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

"No country can alone address the many challenges facing mankind; no country can afford to retreat into self-isolation," he explained.

The president also pledged that China will promote coordination and cooperation with other major countries and work to build a framework for major country relations featuring overall stability and balanced development.

"China will deepen relations with its neighbors in accordance with the principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness, and the policy of forging friendship and partnership with its neighbors," he added. (Agencies)

Pakistan, Turkey Agree to Enhance Trade Ties

ISTANBUL - On the sidelines of the ninth D-8 summit, Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and his Turkish counterpart Binali Yildirim agreed to bolster relations in diverse areas with a focus on trade and economy.

While addressing a joint press stakeout with the Turkish leader on Friday, Mr Abbasi praised Turkey for supporting the people of India-held Kashmir (IHK), who were fighting for their right to self-determination, as well as raising a voice for Rohingya Muslims and Palestinians who were victims of terrorism. During their meeting earlier, the two leaders had a candid discussion on ways and means to strengthen multifaceted ties between the two brotherly nations.

Mr Abbasi said Pakistan would continue

to provide all possible support to Turkey on issues of national interest, including Cyprus. He acknowledged Turkey's role in finding a political situation to the conflict in Syria and praised it for graciously hosting millions of refugees.

About the situation in Afghanistan, he said Turkey had always played a very constructive role in facilitating peace through better relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Prime Minister Abbasi said Pakistan was confident that as chair of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and as an influential power, Turkey would continue to maintain its just and principled position by continuing to call for a fact-finding mission to investigate the violations of human rights in IHK. (Monitoring Desk)

Iranian FM Zarif Begins Key Tour of Africa

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has left the country on a three-leg tour of African nations, his first since the inauguration of the Islamic Republic's 12th administration earlier in the year.

Zarif left the capital Tehran for South Africa at the head of a ranking political and economic delegation on Saturday night, state news agency IRNA reported.

He is traveling to Pretoria, the country's administrative capital, at the invitation of his South African counterpart Maite Nkoana-Mashabane.

The visit is to feature the 13th gathering of the countries' Joint Commission, as well as meetings with the host nation's

president, Nkoana-Mashabane, and finance minister. The gathering will address the implementation of standing agreements between the two sides. The 12th such gathering was hosted by the Islamic Republic in 2015 during a visit by the South African top diplomat. South Africa's Speaker of the National Assembly Baleka Mbete flew to Tehran in September. Meeting with the top parliamentarian, President Hassan Rouhani said the two sides enjoyed "good and effective" cooperation in international organizations, and their collaboration could play a prominent role in promoting peace and stability across the world. (Presstv)

Uzbekistan Hosts Forum on Innovative Developments

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan hosted the second international scientific and technical conference on innovative developments in the field of chemistry and technology of fuels and lubricants. The forum was organized by JSC Uzbekneftegaz and JSC Uzneftmahsulot, the Agency for Science and Technology, the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan jointly by the Bukhara and Fergana oil refineries.

The conference was attended by scientists and specialists from Uzbekistan, the United States,

Germany, Denmark, Russia, South Korea and Ukraine. The participants exchanged views on development of pure, high-octane gasoline, the use of innovative developments, the peculiarities of the transition to production of diesel fuel of the Euro-5 standard and other topical issues.

Currently, oil and condensate processing plants with a design capacity of 8.5 million tons per year operate in Uzbekistan. They produce more than 70 types of gasoline, kerosene and diesel fuel. (Trend)