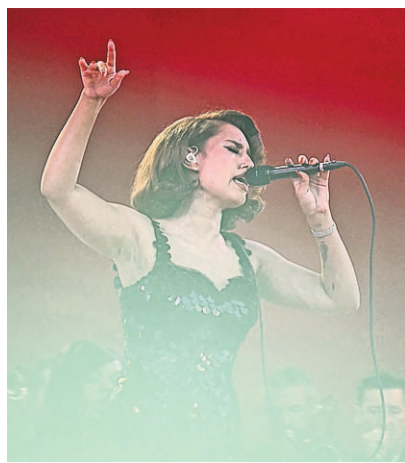




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The New York Times

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Not taking Cuba, but starving it

Ricardo Zúniga

OPINION

Cuba is undergoing its worst economic and humanitarian crisis in over a century. After nearly seven decades of authoritarian rule, much of the country's population lives in extreme poverty, the power grid is collapsing, and people are fleeing the island in droves. Cuba is hurtling not toward socialism or capitalism but toward ruin.

Atop those miseries the Trump administration has heaped the threat of war and blocked most oil shipments to the island, bringing transportation, food distribution and other basic services to a halt. Administration officials have made clear that 2026 is the year they intend to bring down the country's Communist government. The only thing missing is a plan. I spent more than a decade working on Cuba as a U.S. diplomat. In that time, I both enforced and un-

wound parts of the American embargo on the nation that has been in place since the early 1960s, depending on the administration in power and the mood of U.S.-Cuban relations. Before now, I have never seen a greater level of desperation and anger at the government within Cuba, nor a greater willingness by the United States to use the suffering of Cuban citizens as leverage in our long-running dispute with their leaders.

For too long, Washington and Havana have allowed outdated grievances to dictate their relationship. This hostile status quo has done nothing to advance American interests and has only deepened the hardship faced by ordinary Cubans. It's time to stop holding both countries hostage to history, and to build a better path that delivers progress for citizens on both sides of the Straits of Florida.

When I first served as a U.S. diplomat in Havana, from 2002 to 2004, the country was still recovering from a protracted economic crisis that had set ZÚNIGA, PAGE 10

The New York Times publishes opinion from a wide range of perspectives in hopes of promoting constructive debate about consequential questions.



Mourners at a funeral ceremony for Alireza Tangsiri, Iran's naval commander, in Tehran on April 1. He was one of several senior leaders killed by U.S.-Israeli strikes.

Even threats to abandon NATO make it weaker

NEWS ANALYSIS
BERLIN

Trump's comments prompt Europe to consider an alliance without America

BY STEVEN ERLANGER

Since his re-election, President Trump has threatened to leave the NATO alliance several times. This past week, he did it again, frustrated that European nations had refused to join the so far indecisive United States-Israeli war against Iran.

But the more he disparages NATO and threatens to abandon it, the more hollow it becomes.

The alliance, built after World War II to deter the Soviet Union and keep the peace in Europe, is in crisis, with some questioning whether it can survive. The Mideast war has brought existing doubts about American commitment to the alliance to the fore, argued Ivo Daalder, a former American ambassador to NATO.

"It's hard to see how any European country will now be able and willing to trust the United States to come to its defense," he said. "Hope, perhaps. But they can't count on it."

In his speech to the United States on Wednesday, Mr. Trump did not mention NATO, to the relief of allies.

But a senior European official said he thought most Europeans did not believe that Article 5, the NATO commitment to collective defense, still had teeth. The United States now seems part of the problem of world disorder, the official said, speaking anonymously, given the sensitivity of the topic. The country is no longer the solution and the guarantor of last resort, he said.

On Thursday, speaking in Seoul, President Emmanuel Macron of France was explicit: Mr. Trump was undermining NATO with his repeated threats to pull out of it.

"If you create daily doubt about your commitment, you hollow it out," he said. Last month, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, reflecting Mr. Trump's unhappiness with European allies, warned that relations with NATO would need to be re-examined after the war in Iran is resolved. "Without the United States, there is no NATO," Mr. Rubio said. "An alliance has to be mutually beneficial. It cannot be a one-way street. Let's hope we can fix it."

NATO, PAGE 4

Boxed in by the war in Iran

NEWS ANALYSIS
WASHINGTON

Trump says he will end the conflict in weeks, but offers no exit strategy

BY DAVID E. SANGER

More than a month into a war that he insists will come to an end within two or three weeks, President Trump has put himself in a strategic box from which he is finding no easy exit.

Talks with Iran about a deal to end the conflict, to the degree they are substantive, have so far shown little promise. The key metrics of success described at various points by Mr. Trump — keeping Iran from possessing the fuel to make a nuclear weapon, helping the Iranian people topple a government much of the populace despises and reopening the

Straits of Hormuz — remain in the distance, at best.

Iran's tolerance for pain appears far higher than Mr. Trump anticipated, and despite devastating losses to its arsenal, it retains some ability to strike Israel with missiles. It did so even while Mr. Trump spoke about the war on Wednesday evening.

That televised, prime-time address was intended to reassure Americans that the costs of the war would be transitory, that an end to hostilities and a return to normal economic life were imminent. But the markets reacted to his speech with deep skepticism.

Oil prices surged 8 percent in the hours after his 19-minute address, largely because he described no plan to end what amounts to a tanker hostage crisis in the Strait of Hormuz that is now rippling across the global economy. The Strait, he insisted, would "open up naturally" when the conflict is over.

At this stage, Mr. Trump appears to be

offering a host of sometimes contradictory paths forward and faces the possibility that at the end of his own two-to-three-week window, nothing much will have changed. And his promise to send Iran back to the "Stone Ages" if it did not agree to his terms — which he did not specify on Wednesday — would amount to an expansion of the war, not a winding down.

Mr. Trump has never been troubled by internal contradictions, of course. He is the master of raising and dispensing with arguments to fit the moment. In the opening moments of the war he urged Iranians to rise up and take over their government, but he hasn't mentioned that approach since, other than to say it would probably lead to the slaughter of the Iranian protesters.

On Wednesday he said that "regime change was not our goal," although he had called for just that after the initial attack by the United States and Israel on Feb. 28. He now claims that "regime

change has occurred because of their original leaders' death," as if a change of personnel was the same as a change of regime. (When Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini died in 1989, only to be succeeded by another supreme leader, few argued that it constituted a change of the governing structure.)

In weaving back and forth, Mr. Trump is relying on techniques he honed in the New York real estate world, where he often succeeded at creating his own reality. But war is different. The enemy gets to shape the environment as well, and the Iranians apparently sense they can wait Mr. Trump out. And while Iran has precious few allies — even its biggest oil customer, China, has kept its distance — Iranian leaders seem to be counting on IRAN, PAGE 4

FORECASTING THE FINANCIAL IMPACT
Market scenarios for the longer term range from bad to much worse as the conflict in Iran continues. PAGE 8

In new race to the moon, China may have an edge

HONG KONG

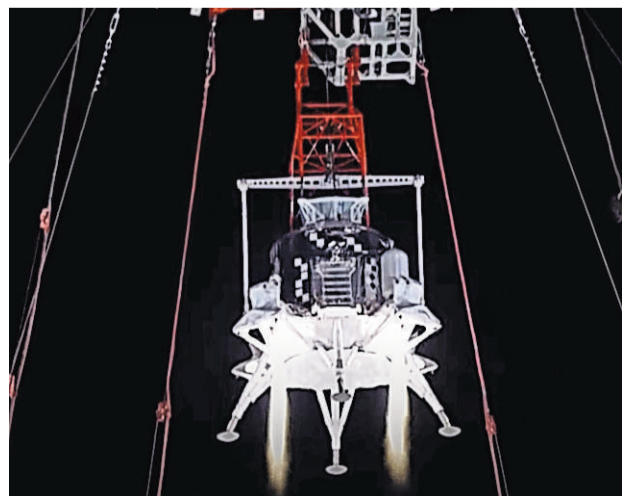
NASA plans 2028 landing, but experts see advantages in Beijing's space program

BY SELAM GEBREKIDAN AND JOY DONG

More than half a century after the United States put humans on the moon, it is once again locked in a space race. This one is with China.

NASA sent astronauts on a lunar flyby on Wednesday, a milestone toward grander ambitions. Both the United States and China want to build outposts around the moon's south pole and hope to tap frozen water, hydrogen and helium there.

Both countries plan to build nuclear reactors to power lunar bases from which they would be able to launch missions into deep space. It is a new frontier, and whoever gets



China's moonbound astronauts will be fitted with spacesuits called Wangyu, left, and land on the moon in a lander called Lanyue, right.

to the moon first will have a big say in setting the rules.

NASA's program, known as Artemis, has hit repeated snags. The United States wants to be back on the moon by

2028, two years ahead of China's target, but even NASA acknowledges that it might not be there first. "They may be early," Jared Isaacman, the NASA administrator, said last month. "And re-

cent history suggests we might be late." China is pursuing its lunar ambitions with a singular, formidable focus. Beijing's program also has several advantages. MOON, PAGE 2

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