

TRENDSJOURNAL

HISTORY BEFORE IT HAPPENS®

“NEW WORLD DISORDER”

2020 TOP TREND



VIOLENCE TO RISE AS ECONOMIES GO DOWN

21 January 2020

GEOPOLITICAL ROUNDUP

LEBANON: “THE WEEK OF WRATH”



As the top of the economic ladder meet in Davos this week, the bottom rungs, sunk in poverty, deep in desperation, lacking basic human needs, and having lost everything and with nothing left to lose, are losing it.

While stock markets across the globe, from which the one percent reap the riches, reach new highs, while England and much of the global media are in a tizzy about the Prince not wanting to play Prince anymore, and America is obsessed with an impeachment process going nowhere... our 2020 Top Trend, the “[New World Disorder](#),” continues to rage across the globe.

In Lebanon, the protests that began in October – triggered by government tax hikes on phone apps and gasoline that hit the “average” citizens the hardest and then expanded into country-wide anger over entrenched government corruption,

secret bank rules favoring the rich, and lack of basic services such as water and electricity – have greatly escalated.

With Lebanon having the third highest debt load in the world, the World Bank has issued a dire report predicting that as the economy continues to deteriorate, the number of Lebanese citizens living in poverty will rise to almost 50 percent.

Ján Kubiš, United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, called the continuing dysfunction of the Lebanese government “increasingly irresponsible,” and he called out Lebanese politicians for their inaction as the central banks come under more pressure.

Last week he tweeted: “Another evening of vandalism, violence and escalating security incidents, another day of protests notably of young people angry that their demands for decent future are summarily ignored with growing number of desperate people unable to cope with the economic crisis.”

Non-Withdrawal Syndrome

Over the weekend, angry demonstrators physically confronted riot police and vandalized over 300 banks, smashing ATMs in protest of being restricted as to how much of their own money they can withdraw. A protestor told a reporter, “The country is frozen. The state is not doing a thing, they're a bunch of thieves. And if you have money in the bank you can't even get a hundred dollars out.”

Beirut has been turned into an armed camp: the government has encircled the parliament building with razor wire and brought in armed troops supplied with rocket launchers to protect political leaders.

Last Saturday, almost 400 people were injured as protestors used everything from tree branches and uprooted traffic signs to ram armored police who were firing tear gas and water cannons. Other protesters threw stones and firecrackers at rushing police.

Demonstrators have been blocking major highways by setting tires on fire, actively resisting all attempts by police armed with shields, batons, teargas, and, in some reported incidents, live ammunition.

The economic crisis is affecting virtually all sectors of the country. According to medical sources, crucial hospital supplies are depleted, and an impending health catastrophe is looming.

Doctors complain about their salaries being cut in half due to the devaluation of the Lebanese pound and that hospitals lack basic medical supplies to treat patients.

Last week, Lebanese President Michel Aoun acknowledged the delay in forming a new cabinet and asked for patience in a televised speech stating, “The formation of this government demands choosing competent individuals who deserve the trust of the people and parliament, which takes time.”

But yesterday, he admitted time is of the essence, tweeting: “Our government resigned in order to transition to a new government dealing with popular changes but obstruction has continued for 90 days and the country is moving toward the unknown.”

Demonstrators are calling for the resignation of all government leaders and the appointment of qualified experts who have no current affiliation to the current regime.

TREND FORECAST: *The protests in Lebanon, as with Chile, Hong Kong (which ranks as one of the most unequal societies on the planet), Ecuador, Columbia, South Africa, India, Algeria, France, etc., will not only continue to escalate... but will expand to other nations across the globe as economies decline and the gap between the rich and poor continues to widen.*

IRAQ: MORE PROTESTS. U.S HERE TO STAY



Over the past four days, the street protests that began in October, but were halted following America’s assassination of General Soleimani at the Baghdad airport on 3 January, have continued.

Adding to the over 500 killed and the thousands wounded by Iraqi security forces, another five demonstrators were reported killed and scores more wounded.

Thousands of demonstrators continue to block major roads, and they show no signs of weakening their demands for reform.

With the nation bombed into rubble by the United States following its illegal invasion in 2003, the desperate citizens have called for a total overhaul of the political system, which they accuse of rampant corruption and failing to provide basic living services.

Despite being the third largest oil exporter in the world, the vast majority of the revenues (trillions of dollars over the past decade) have gone to foreign corporations and Iraqi hierarchy, as over seven million Iraqi citizens live below the poverty line and over 50 percent suffer from lack of food.

Hundreds of demonstrators are continuing a three month-long sit-in in the center of Baghdad.

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, the UN Special Representative for Iraq, yesterday called on the Iraqi government to initiate meaningful reforms.

As in Lebanon (see article in this issue), the political leaders of Iraq either cannot or are not interested in finding a new way forward to provide basic services, jobs, and equality to its citizens. The Iraqi government has experienced a total vacuum of leadership since Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi announced his resignation. Mahdi is still acting as interim leader.

U.S. Not Leaving

Following the U.S. assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, despite a vote on 6 January by the Iraqi parliament calling for all U.S. troops to leave the country, Abdul-Mahdi backed off the resolution, stating the decision should be left to the next elected Iraqi prime minister.

The Iraqi parliament currently has a Shia majority, which is favorable to Iran. Abdul-Mahdi resigned as prime minister last year and has been presiding over an interim government since.

President Trump threatened Iraq with severe sanctions if its government follows through with the non-binding resolution requiring U.S. troops to leave Iraq.

Among the sanctions would be cuts to the U.S. military aid package to Iraq and the denial of access to its financial deposits with the New York Federal Reserve. Iraq's loss of access to these accounts would create a cash crunch in their financial system because revenue from oil sales are deposited in Fed accounts and are an important part of managing the country's finances.

TARGET IRAN: U.S. MILITARY BUILDUP



There were already over 50,000 U.S. troops in the Middle East before the assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, a buildup by the Trump administration despite the President's promise as a candidate to "end all endless wars."

Since the assassination, the Pentagon has been increasing its ground, air, and sea forces in the region by adding some 4,000 additional American troops.

Recently, the Pentagon dispatched squadrons of fighter jets to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The U.S. Air Force announced in December that a significant U.S. air base in Saudi Arabia "grows daily." Six B-52 bombers have been moved to an island in the Indian Ocean to be closer to potential Iranian targets.

The U.S. has been continually shoring up military support around the Strait of Hormuz, which is a conduit for about 20 percent of the world's oil exports.

And, according to a report by a leading military analyst, the Pentagon “has deployed a new nuclear weapon that increases the prospects for nuclear war.” The weapon, referred to as “W76-2,” is light enough to be fired by submarines.

PUBLISHER’S NOTE: *Casino billionaire Sheldon Adelson, who donated \$35 million to Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign and \$113 million in the 2018 midterm elections, had proposed nuking Iran if they did not bend to U.S. demands:*

“What I would say is, ‘Listen. You see that desert out there, I want to show you something.’ ... You pick up your cellphone and you call somewhere in Nebraska and you say, ‘OK let it go.’ And so there’s an atomic weapon, goes over ballistic missiles, the middle of the desert, that doesn’t hurt a soul. Maybe a couple of rattlesnakes, and scorpions, or whatever. And then you say, ‘See? The next one is in the middle of Tehran.’ So, we mean business.”

Bernard Marcus and Paul Singer, who, along with Adelson, have donated a combined \$259 million to Republican campaigns, were in favor of Trump pulling out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear deal with Iran and have made public statements supporting military action against Iran.

EU Bows to U.S.

Prior to the assassination of General Soleimani, the International Atomic Energy Agency had confirmed Iran was in compliance with the JCPOA.

France, Germany, and Britain, America’s European allies who had been critical of the U.S. breaking the nuclear deal and who had opposed the assassination of Soleimani, have now agreed to re-impose sanctions on Iran for breaking some of the provisions of the JCPOA.

Beyond the Soleimani crisis, Iran said its moves to gradually re-start its nuclear program were a reaction to EU members failing to counteract the severe economic impact of U.S. sanctions, which have ramped up since the U.S. broke the nuclear deal in 2018 and have led to European companies leaving Iran entirely.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi, however, rebutted the charges, saying, “The European powers’ claims about Iran violating the deal are unfounded. Whether Iran will further decrease its nuclear commitments will

depend on other parties and whether Iran's interests are secured under the deal."

Murder in the First Degree

Attorney General William Barr, commenting on President Trump's order to kill Soleimani, said last week, "The president clearly had the authority to act as he did." Barr added, "Frankly, I didn't think it was a close call... We had a situation where the Iranians had already embarked on a series of escalating violent actions taken against our allies, taken against the American people, our troops, with the avowed purpose of driving us out of the Middle East."

Barr referred to Soleimani, Iran's top military leader and beloved political figure, as "a legitimate target" and that his killing was "a legitimate act of self-defense."

The attorney general made these statements despite Executive Order 11905, signed by then-President Gerald Ford in 1976, which stated, "No employee of the United State Government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, political assassination."

For several months before he was murdered, it has been reported there was broad agreement within the Trump administration to take out General Soleimani.

And, as detailed in last week's [Trends Journal](#), not one shred of evidence has been provided that Soleimani posed an "imminent threat," despite claims by the White House, Pentagon, and intelligence agencies otherwise.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: *There has been virtually no condemnation from either political party or the media of the arrogance and inaccuracy of Attorney Barr's conclusion that "The president clearly had the authority act as he did."*

Soleimani, considered the number two leader of Iran, was a high government official of a sovereign nation. Thus, Barr provided no legal justification for what is considered a war crime under both U.S. and international law. Indeed, the Bill of Rights clearly states that "No person shall... be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law."

Further, his statement: "Frankly, I didn't think it was a close call," further illustrates his arrogance. It is not a question of what he "thinks," it is a matter of law.

Barr's claim that "Iranians had already embarked on a series of escalating violent actions taken against our allies," is not legal justification for murder.

In fact, what were the escalating violent actions taken by Iran and against which allies? The beheading-loving Saudi Gang "allies" that, with the help of the U.S., have slaughtered over 100,000 Yemenis and created the worst humanitarian crisis on earth?

As for the violent actions "taken against the American people," what American people is he referring to?

Finally, Barrs' Iran has "the avowed purpose of driving us out of the Middle East," claim is also not a justifiable cause for President Trump's ordering the assassination of Soleimani.

Is Barr referring to the "us" that have illegally invaded, destroyed, and are occupying sovereign nations in the Middle East... several thousand miles from our homeland?

Trump Card: The Joker is Wild

Last week, President Trump, as part of his continuing anti-Iran/anti-Muslim campaign, retweeted a doctored photo of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in a hijab and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer in a turban. The photo was superimposed on the image of the Iranian flag and had the caption: "The corrupted Dems trying their best to come to the Ayatollah's rescue."

Continuing the administration's inflammatory rhetoric, White House Press Secretary Stephanie Grisham stated, "I think the president is making it clear that the Democrats have been parroting Iranian talking points and almost taking the side of terrorists and those who were out to kill the Americans."

Despite Trump's attacks on Pelosi and Schumer, the most influential Democrats have agreed that Soleimani was a murderous criminal who deserved to have been killed, and none of them have publicly denounced the Soleimani assassination as a war crime. Their main complaint was that they were not consulted with first.

Indeed, in the Democrat's non-binding resolution, passed by the House of Representatives to limit President Trump's ability to wage war with Iran, it states, "The Government of Iran is a leading state sponsor of terrorism and engages in a range of destabilizing activities across the Middle East. Iranian General Qasem

Soleimani was the lead architect of much of Iran's destabilizing activities throughout the world."

During the recent presidential debate among the six leading Democratic candidates, neither the reporters asking questions nor any of the candidates referred to Soleimani's assassination as a criminal act or clear violation of international law.

LIBYA: ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER



On Sunday, the two leaders of warring Libyan factions met in Berlin along with leaders and officials from Turkey, Russia, Egypt, France, Italy, UK, U.S., United Arab Emirates, Algeria, China, the Republic of the Congo, the United Nations, European Union, and African Union for an international summit in an attempt to stop the ongoing military conflict in Libya.

On Monday, it was reported there was a broad agreement to "commit to refraining from interference in the armed conflict or in the internal affairs of Libya" and urged all international actors "to do the same."

They agreed to "commit to unequivocally and fully respect and implement the arms embargo," established by the UN in 2011, and called on all actors to "refrain from any activities exacerbating the conflict... including the financing of military capabilities or the recruitment of mercenaries."

Among the two leaders of the Libyan factions was Khalifa Haftar, a former Libyan general who defected to the U.S. in the late 1980s. Haftar is considered a CIA agent, and he consistently supported several attempts to topple and assassinate Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.

Haftar moved to suburban Virginia, outside Washington, D.C., and returned to Libya following the overthrow of Gaddafi in 2011. Later, he was made commander of the Libyan National Army, which had taken full control of Benghazi, the second largest Libyan city and one that contained vital oil fields.

Fayez al-Sarraj, the head of the UN and endorsed by Libyan government, is the other leader of the two rival factions. Neither he nor Haftar agreed to meet in the same room as the talks were in progress.

Following the agreement, there were reports that Haftar's forces prevented Libyan oil exports from being shipped from a number of Libyan ports.

This conference in Berlin is the most visible attempt yet to deal with the ongoing militia warfare since former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi was slaughtered in a 2011 war, which was led by U.S. President Barack Obama, Prime Minister David Cameron of the UK, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Last April, Haftar led forces who tried to take over the capital city of Tripoli and oust the government of al-Sarraj. Since that failed attempt, the UN Security council had been trying to attain a cease-fire.

Libya's current Government of National Accord (GNA), an interim government put together by an UN-led initiative in 2015, was cobbled together from various political groups, including Islamists. While acting as the ruling government, the GNA has no unified military force, but it counts on protection from a number of local militias.

The opposition Haftar military is strongly anti-Islamist, and his forces are also primarily formed from various militias.

Just days before the conference, Haftar was reportedly pressured by Russia to accept a temporary cease-fire.

Since Gaddafi's murder, the once-prosperous nation's infrastructure, which was one of the most advanced in the region, was severely damaged by the U.S.-led NATO bombing in 2011. Sitting on the world's ninth largest oil reserves and also rich in mineral deposits, Libya's strategically-long Mediterranean coastline has long been a key target for foreign interests.

New U.S. Role?

The U.S. was originally a strong supporter of the GNA, but after taking office in 2017, President Trump stated he didn't want the U.S. involved, stating, "I think the United States has right now enough roles. We are in a role everywhere."

This past April, however, the White House put out a conflicting signal after Haftar tried to seize control of the country. After a phone conversation between Trump and Haftar, Trump is quoted as complementing "Field Marshall Haftar's significant role in fighting terrorism and securing Libya's oil resources."

The following day, after Trump's call, Haftar launched an attack into the city borders of Tripoli.

Proxy War

Haftar is backed by the UAE, Egypt, Jordan, and Russia. Currently, Turkey is showing the strongest support for the current GNA government.

The UAE has provided Haftar with jets and drones, and Egypt has offered logistical support. When Haftar's forces failed to infiltrate Tripoli last spring, Moscow sent some 1,500 Russian fighters, mostly privately paid mercenaries, to help Haftar continue his advance.

To counter this, Turkey, which supports the GNC government, is reported to have sent hundreds of its troops to counter the Haftar offensive. Turkey's financial interest includes access to rich mineral deposits the current government agreed to let them exploit. If Haftar wins military and political control, those lucrative rights would be lost.

Colonial History: Follow the \$\$\$

The world's major powers coming together at the invitation of German Chancellor Angela Merkel to discuss Libya's future has a familiar historic echo. In 1884, German leader Otto von Bismarck convened a similar conference of world powers to divide up the lucrative resources of the African continent.

Out of that conference came the "General Act of the Berlin Conference," signed onto by the U.S. along with the major countries of Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and Russia. This act basically carved up Africa into colonies to be exploited by the signers.

Belgium took over the Congo; France seized control of the Sahara region; Germany took over the East African countries of Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi; Britain eventually controlled Sudan; Morocco became occupied by both France and Spain; and Italy conquered Libya.

Fast forward to 2020: in addition to the huge oil and mineral reserves, Libya is geographically the most travelled migration route into Europe.

Russia is reported to seek revamping the lucrative military contracts it had with Libya before the U.S. went after Gaddafi and bombed the country into rubble.

China has invested billions in Africa as part of its “Belt & Road Initiative,” and Germany, which has troops in Mali and Niger, revised its “Africa Policy Guidelines” last May, which specifically cites the continent’s “rich natural resources.”

Two days before Sunday’s international conference, Josep Borrell, the EU Foreign Affairs Commissioner, stated, “It is crucial that we assert our interests more strongly and, if necessary, robustly.”

PUBLISHER’S NOTE: Absent in all the mainstream media coverage is that prior to the France, UK, and U.S.-led overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi, Libya was Africa’s wealthiest nation. With a GDP per capita and life expectancy the highest on the continent, less people lived below the poverty line than in the Netherlands. Under Gaddafi , Libyans had free healthcare, free education, free electricity, and interest-free loans.

Now, when writing about the war-torn, oil-rich country, newspapers, such as the New York Times, ignore the fact that life was much better for Libyans under Gaddafi’s rule and, instead, refer to what’s going on as a “nasty civil war,” and “a mess.”

FRANCE: OLD STRIKES END, NEW STRIKES START



Last week, over 500,000 strikers continued the massive protest against proposed changes to the pension system, which is now over a month long.

Ending the longest transport strike in the history of France this past weekend, other unions kept the fight going by cutting power to thousands in the southern suburbs of Paris.

Last Friday, President Macron and his wife had to be ushered out of a Paris theatre by security guards due to angry protestors outside trying to break in to stop the performance.

On Saturday, about 60 protesters were arrested. Demonstrators shouted at police and called them out for aggressive tactics.

A recent poll shows about two thirds of the French people support the ongoing strikes.

President Macron insists his reforms will simplify the 42 separate pension plans currently in use into a unified system. Critics claim the move will force millions of French employees to work longer hours for a smaller pension and delay the age at which they can retire.

VENEZUELA: GUAIDÓ DOWN, POMPEO PUMPS HIM UP



As reported in last week's [Trends Journal](#), Juan Guaidó, who had declared himself president of Venezuela last January with the support of the U.S. and some 50 other countries, has lost much of his popular support.

In a rally following a disputed vote for his re-nomination as leader of the Congress, only a few hundred people showed up.

In attempt to regain his lost traction, yesterday, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, attending a conference in Bogota, Columbia, met with Guaidó.

Despite Nicolás Maduro winning the Venezuelan presidency last May in an election monitored by international observers, Pompeo insisted Guaidó was the nation's president, stating, "For the Venezuelan people, I want you to know that your President is a great leader who wants to take your country in the right direction – the direction of freedom, democracy, to restore economic prosperity."

After his meeting with Pompeo, Mr. Guaidó stated, "There are forces that cannot be stopped when you seek democracy. This is what we're seeing in Venezuela. We're mobilizing. We have [been] demonstrating, and we are not going to be different in the next few months."

The Russians are Coming

Maduro, Venezuela's current leader, has been receiving increasing support from Russia. According to U.S. officials, Russian oil companies are supporting Maduro by buying some 70 percent of the country's supply.

Russia is reported to have provided some \$17 billion in loans and credits over the past decade.

After the meeting between Maduro and Yury Borisov, the Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, Vice President of Venezuela Tareck El Aissami, stated, “Russian-Venezuelan relations are at their best moment and we’ve shown that in the middle of difficulties we can advance together, with efficient political and diplomatic coordination between both governments against the imperial siege and aggression which Russia also suffers.”

TREND FORECAST: *Despite Guaidó’s loss of support among the general Venezuelan population, considering he is now on his way to London, Brussels, and Davos for the World Economic Forum, we forecast Guaidó will be getting more support from the U.S. and allied nations to overthrow the Maduro government.*

And, while it is noted that severe U.S. sanctions have crippled the Venezuelan economy in an attempt to initiate a popular rebellion to overthrow the Maduro government, as with similar sanctions against Iran, the sanctions cripple citizens while failing to foment regime change.

The Venezuelan bolivar, the nation’s currency, lost nearly 99 percent of its value last year. According to the IMF, inflation is approaching 200,000 percent, and the nation is suffering medicine and food shortages and power blackouts.

It is estimated that some 4.5 million Venezuelans have fled the country. Thus, our “Human Wave” Top Trend of 2019 will continue to escalate as citizens from countries across Central and South America continue to head north to escape poverty, corruption, and violence.

Unnoted in America’s press coverage is the clear fact that severe economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. on nations it seeks to replace regimes in is a form of warfare in which only the “average” citizens suffer... never those in power.

ECONOMIC UPDATE

U.S.-CHINA TRADE TREATY TAKES SMALL STEPS



The new pact gives each side some, but not a lot, of what it wants.

China has agreed to buy about \$200 billion a year in U.S. goods, stiffen protections for intellectual property, and open its markets wider to American firms, especially in financial services. The deal leaves in place about \$370 billion in tariffs on Chinese goods.

China agreed to more widely accept Mastercard, Visa, and American Express cards; the U.S. will move to accept China's UnionPay credit card.

China will not be required to make economic policy reforms the U.S. has sought.

Talks will continue around removing tariffs. Also, it isn't clear whether China can absorb \$200 billion more in U.S. products, whether the U.S. can produce an additional \$200 billion of these items, and how China's current trading partners might react to losing business to the United States.

China made more concessions in the treaty than did the U.S., in part to establish a footing for ongoing negotiations.

TREND FORECAST: As we have been noting for two years, the global economic slowdown has little to do with China-U.S. trade differences. Neither this deal nor

the new NAFTA agreement will reverse the trend leading to the 2021 “Greatest Depression.”

FED PROPS UP THE REPO MARKET – AGAIN, AGAIN, AGAIN...



Last Tuesday, the Fed opened another \$82 billion in short-term liquidity to the repo markets. This followed \$60.7 billion in aid on Monday.

According to the Fed’s calculations, it has offered \$4.2 trillion in props to markets as of 9 January. On 15 January, \$229.5 billion of the short-term loans were outstanding.

The Fed also continues to buy Treasury bills to keep the markets in cash.

As long as the cheap money continues to flow into the equity markets, minus a wild card event, equities while overvalued, will not sink into correction territory.

DOLLAR POISED TO WEAKEN?



Many banks expect the dollar to weaken against other currencies this year. A weaker dollar would make U.S. goods cheaper in other countries, boost commodity prices at home, and buoy the stock price of mining, oil, and other companies that produce commodities.

The weakness would stem from the Fed's continuing low interest rates, which make dollars a less attractive investment.

In the last quarter of 2019, the dollar's value, as rated by the *Wall Street Journal's* Dollar Index, dropped 1.9 percent from its September 2019 high.

During that same period, copper and U.S. crude oil futures rose 9 percent, and gold reached its highest price since 2013.

A cease-fire in the U.S.-China trade war also is pressuring commodity prices upward.

TREND FORECAST: *The dollar remains strong, mostly as a result of central banks continuing to lower interest rates to boost their sagging economies, which in turn is devaluing their currencies.*

While the general consensus on The Street is for the Fed not to lower interest rates, we maintain our forecast for negative to zero interest rate policy before the end of the year, which in turn will put downward pressure on the dollar.

FED: CYBER ATTACK COULD DEVASTATE FINANCIAL SYSTEM



Concerns about U.S. vulnerability to cyber attacks is rising since the assassination of Iran's general Qasem Soleimani and with good reason: according to a research paper by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, a cyber attack on the nation's five biggest banks could send the U.S. economy into turmoil.

An attack that crippled banks' ability to send payments among themselves could cause a domino-like turmoil through the economy and take months to sort out and recover from, the paper says.

The report likens the result of an attack to an old-style bank run in which customers want to withdraw their money but can't.

TREND FORECAST: *Generals are always fighting the last war. Beyond cyber attacks on the financial system, "New Millennium Warfare", a trend detailed by Gerald Celente over the decades, will bring down electric grids and business/government services.*

In the event of such attacks, governments will call for a "Bank Holiday," preventing customers from withdrawing funds, getting access to safe-deposit boxes, and again confiscating gold under the mantra that is necessary to fight the war on terrorism.

RICH INVESTORS MORE BULLISH THAN EVER



With U.S. stocks hitting six new-record highs in 2020's first 12 trading days, investors holding \$1 million or more in stocks are more confident in the market than a month ago.

In 2019's fourth quarter, many investors feared a market drop or recession; now a survey by E-Trade Financial found that 76 percent of these investors rate the U.S. stock market as strong. The survey also recorded a 16-percent increase in the number of investors who expect the Dow to rise by as much as 5 percent by April.

Investors take confidence from an easing in the U.S.-China trade war, a tight labor market, and what they see as continuing strength in the consumer economy. Because this is an election year, analysts expect the Fed not to spring any surprises regarding interest rates.

Earnings growth and overall business performance, however, didn't improve in 2019. Bullish investors are largely staying with well-known companies that pay dividends.

According to Jeremy Seigel, a Wharton finance professor, the market is becoming increasingly vulnerable to a 10-percent correction. "Any little thing could trip things up," he says.

TREND FORECAST: While a "Any little thing could trip things up" and cause a 10-percent correction, a very "big thing," such as war in the Middle East, cyber

attacks, spiking oil prices, etc., will drag the overvalued markets deep in to 20-percent (or more) bear territory.

APARTMENT BUILDING BOOM TARGETS AFFLUENT TENANTS



U.S. builders are expected to add 371,000 apartments to the nation's housing stock this year, a 50-percent increase over last year and more units than in any of the last 30 years.

Available units could double or more in high-demand markets such as Houston and Los Angeles.

But as many as 80 percent of these new flats are targeted to affluent renters. "A typical renter can't afford this brand new product," one analyst said.

TREND FORECAST: *As evidenced by the latest Oxfam report, the rich have gotten much richer while the rest have gotten poorer. The world's 2,153 billionaires now have more wealth between them than a combined 4.6 billion people.*

Therefore, even as economies decline, considering a global population of some 7.8 billion people, sizable affluent market segments will have the cash to support high-end luxury markets.

GOLD: \$2,000 IN SIGHT?



According to an executive at Bridgewater Associates, the world's largest hedge fund, gold could soar above \$2,000 an ounce in the not-too-distant future.

Greg Jensen, the firm's co-chief investment officer, cites a range of factors: geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, especially between the U.S. and Iran; the U.S.-China trade war; the prospect of inflation returning; a U.S. stock market he calls "frothy;" and continued low interest rates.

Jensen said the Fed could cut interest rates to zero later this year to steer the economy between recession and a reduced rate of inflation.

Those factors could push gold prices 30 percent beyond the \$1,550 benchmark level as more investors seek a safe haven, he added.

TREND FORECAST: Bridgewater Associates' forecasts of where gold is going is old news to **Trends Journal** subscribers. Both Ray Dalio, Bridgewater's founder, who has been bullish on gold for several months, and Greg Jensen's recent analysis for gold prices to rise are basically word-for-word what Gerald Celente has been saying since 6 June 2019, when he issued a Trend Alert to subscribers announcing the beginning of the "**Gold Bull Run**."

WORLD ECONOMY: FLIRTING WITH DANGER



Record Bond Issues Heighten Fears of Debt Collapse

In 2019, corporations globally took advantage of low interest rates and issued \$2.5 trillion in bonds during the year, nudging past 2017's record number.

According to the World Bank, while central banks are eager to keep rates low to stave off a recession, their cheap money policies have created a chasm of debt that's the "largest, fastest, and most broad-based" since the 2008 recession.

Low interest rates have coaxed lower-rated companies to flood the market with bonds. Poor performance among many of them has led investors to put money into additional risky bonds to try to stabilize their portfolios' returns.

The bank has warned that the greater the debt burden becomes, the more vulnerable economies are to shocks. Emerging nations' economies are particularly precarious.

The trend isn't slowing. In early January, the bond market took in \$69 billion of new debt in a single week, the second-largest weekly total in history.

IMF FOLLOWS CELENTE: GREAT DEPRESSION 2.0



The world is drifting toward another Great Depression, says Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund.

She points to IMF research that finds parallels between current economic conditions, including economic inequality and financial markets' instability, and those of the 1920s that culminated in the stock market collapse and a 10-year global depression that was ended only by World War II.

While inequality between countries has narrowed, inequality within countries has worsened, Georgieva went on to note in a speech at the Peterson Institute of International Economics.

In the UK, the richest 10 percent of the population controls as much wealth as the bottom 50 percent; in the U.S., Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, and Warren Buffet control as much wealth as the bottom 50 percent.

Although the U.S. median income rose to a record \$61,937 in 2018, income inequality has also reached record levels, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Such inequality not only hinders economic growth but also sparks "populism and political upheaval," Georgieva said.

Growing political instability, even in developed countries, coupled with issues such as trade protectionism and climate disruption, will heighten global financial uncertainty, she predicted.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: *Once again, the establishment systems, be they geopolitical or socio-economic see the future coming but are behind the trend. While Ms. Georgieva in her forecast for another Great Depression, what she does*

not recognize are the crucial elements that differentiate this century from the last that will make it the “**Greatest Depression**,” which Gerald Celente is forecasting for 2021.

Among them are the concentration of wealth, which is greater today than it was during the 1930’s Great Depression, and the addition of some 5.5 billion people in just 90 years, who will be suffering from the economic collapse.

CENTRAL BANKS LOSE THEIR GRIP



After decades of wielding power over national economies, nations’ central banks have spent much of their power.

Their power comes through their ability to adjust interest rates to nudge growth or restrain inflation.

Now many of these national banks have lowered interest rates to or near zero, or in some cases negative numbers, to boost growth and keep recession at bay. But nations’ economies have become so fragile that the banks can’t raise interest rates for fear of sparking inflation or lower them because the rates already are historically low.

Japan has had three recessions since 2008, but its central bank is keeping rates hovering just above or just below zero, giving it no additional leverage over the economy. Europe’s central bank is in the same position.

GERMANY: ECONOMY HITS THE BRAKES



Germany's GDP grew by a feeble 0.6 percent in 2019, its lowest rate since 2013.

Global trade battles weakened exports, as did a general downturn in the world auto market.

Domestic car sales slowed to recession rates, having a ripple effect throughout the industry's national supply chain. What growth there was is being attributed to construction and consumer spending.

Last year's economic crawl compares to a 2.5-percent growth rate in 2017 and 1.5 percent in 2018, indicating a continuing, long-term slowdown.

One area of strong growth: Berlin's apartment rents. The city is growing by 40,000 people a year, rents have doubled over the last decade, and construction hasn't kept up with demand.

Critics point to companies such as Deutsche Wohnen, a national property developer, which has renovated its buildings and then raised rents to attract affluent tenants.

To keep apartments affordable, the city has frozen rents for the next five years. The intervention is the most dramatic in Germany's housing market since the country's reunification more than 20 years ago.

The move already has stalled the city's construction industry, one of the few strengths in Germany's current sluggish economy. The freeze also threatens real

estate investment in general, already plagued by the city's stifling bureaucracy and exhaustive planning reviews.

Despite these woes, Germany has announced the largest-ever expansion of its railway system, an €86-billion investment over 10 years.

The plan will buck up the construction industry, accede to political pressure to expand government spending while interest rates are low, and increase mass transit as part of the country's initiative to discourage single-auto use and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

CHINA: TAKING ADVANTAGE



China has renewed construction projects under its Belt and Road Initiative, which is building ports, rail lines, and other infrastructure to connect its trading partners more firmly and easily to the Asian giant.

During the first 11 months of 2019, China signed contracts worth \$128 billion as part of the plan.

Most of the money is targeted to Chinese firms, but the projects also create jobs and infrastructure in partner countries, building China's political as well as economic influence.

China also continues to press its advantages in other ways.

Last week, the U.S., EU, and Japan issued a joint statement calling for more stringent rules under World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements to keep China

from funneling money into marginal or failing companies to give them a competitive advantage.

Proposed new rules would require governments to notify the WTO of subsidies or other aid given to businesses and to prove that the aid doesn't give those businesses an unearned or unfair advantage.

The WTO has documented evidence of China propping up companies that would have failed under free-market conditions. The WTO also has told the Chinese government that continuing to exploit loopholes in trade rules risks the collapse of the entire trading structure, which has helped China become a global economic power.

But that power is built on an increasingly shaky foundation of debt, much of which has gone to finance public infrastructure and a blossoming, affluent middle class.

In 2019, three large Chinese banks would have failed without government intervention. The shock prompted the government to subject all of the country's 4,300 banks to a stress test. The result: 13 percent were flirting with collapse. If China's growth rate drops to 5.3 percent, nine of 30 medium and large banks would fail, regulators concluded.

Bailing out more than 500 banks would not be practical or possible, analysts say.

But China has lowered by 50 basis points the amount of reserve cash its banks must have on hand.

David Stockman, the director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget in the Reagan administration, said in a recent interview, "The whole global economy is dependent on China piling even more debt onto the \$40 trillion pile they already have."

TREND FORECAST: As we have forecast, with more nations having little room to further lower interest rates or inject more monetary methadone to prop up equity markets and economies, more countries will use fiscal stimulus to generate growth.

Such measures will sink nations deeper into debt, push downward pressure on their currencies, and only temporarily boost growth.

INTEREST RATE CUTS TO JUICE ECONOMIES



Turkey

Inflation crept up above 11 percent in December, but Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has forced the country's central bank to cut its benchmark one-week repo rate from 12 to 11.25 percent. Analysts had expected a cut no more than half a point.

This is the fifth consecutive cut since July 2019.

Because the inflation and interest rates are essentially the same, the actual interest rate is effectively zero.

Erdoğan has promised to cut the inflation rate to single digits, and the central bank is targeting an 8-percent inflation rate by 2021.

After a 2018 currency crisis cut the value of Turkey's money by a third and ignited inflation to a rate of 25 percent at one point, Erdoğan is pushing interest rates lower to jump-start the economy. He believes – contrary to standard economic theory – that lower interest rates also will tame inflation.

The looser monetary policy helped Turkey's economy grow by 0.9 percent in 2019's fourth quarter after contracting during the first nine months of the year.

South Africa

The South African Reserve Bank suddenly cut its base interest rate last week by a quarter-point to 6.25 percent. The country's inflation risk is low and the economy in Africa's most financially sound nation is weakening.

The move surprised analysts because the bank's interest decisions usually reflect those of the U.S. Federal Reserve, which left interest rates unchanged at its last meeting.

The bank shrank its 2020 growth forecast from 1.4 to 1.2 percent and its 2021 outlook from 1.7 to 1.6 percent.

TREND FORECAST: While there are expectations among the financial community that the dollar will weaken this year, with many global economies suffering economic slowdowns, those nations that have room to do so will continue to lower interest rates in efforts to stimulate their economies.

Therefore, the lower their interest rates go, further their currencies will weaken, which will in turn push the U.S. dollar higher.

ARGENTINA: INFLATION SKYROCKETS, ECONOMY TAILSPINS



Argentina's inflation rate ended 2019 at 53.8 percent, down from a peak of 84 percent during the year. It's among the five countries with the world's worst inflation pace.

This month, bank deposits have been off their usual pace by about \$40 million a day, compared to rising deposit rates in December.

Worsening the tailspin is Argentina's inability to pay its bills. The country is facing its ninth default on its sovereign debt, apparently unable to meet its self-imposed March deadline to solve the problem.

The province of Buenos Aires has failed to secure the national government's help to pay its own bondholders and so has delayed a 26 January interest payment until 1 May. The province's insolvency will likely worsen the country's prospects to negotiate its way out of the debt crisis.

CHILE: ECONOMY IN TURMOIL



Since October, Chile has been rocked by public protests against conditions ranging from economic inequality and rising prices to plans to privatize pensions and public education.

Economic policies begun in the 1990s created wealth but also drew millions of people into debt, with most of the new wealth flowing to richest 1 percent of the population.

Protests began last fall when high-school students launched a coordinated initiative to dodge subway fares after prices were raised. The movement has grown from there.

The protests have sunk economic productivity, with Chile's October 2019 economic performance the worst since the 2009 global recession. That month's numbers were 3 percentage points lower than those of October 2018.

A \$5-billion stimulus package last fall was aimed at public infrastructure and strengthening pensions and small businesses. The move buoyed President Sebastian Piñera's popularity, but the effect has since ebbed.

Potential investors are nervous, in part because of this April's referendum asking voters whether the country should rewrite its constitution.

TRENDS-EYE VIEW

U.S. MEDIA CENSORSHIP



The following quote is from “[Censorship 2019](#),” one of our Top Trends from last year:

“Freedom of speech? Freedom of Expression? Forget about it! From the United States to China, from New Zealand to Nepal, Censorship is a megatrend. For well over a year, social media giants and governments have been silencing voices that challenge establishment agendas.”

Our “Censorship” Top Trend of 2019 has now become a way of life: unchallenged and barely reported by the mainstream media, who are included among social media giants as the chief censors banning those who don’t tow their party lines and special interests.

YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter continue to increase their censorship policies.

Last week, the social media giants deleted accounts and posts on multiple platforms that opposed the killing of General Soleimani, and Google deleted Iran’s Press TV’s UK YouTube account under orders from Washington.

Facebook’s statement defending its removal of the posts stated: “To comply with these U.S. sanctions, we remove accounts maintained by or on behalf of a sanctioned party as well as remove content posted by others that supports or represents the sanctioned group or individual.”

TRENDPOST: “GOOGLE: F.U. CELENTE!” *The following is an email sent yesterday from Google to Gerald Celente, disapproving of both the content and headline posted on Celente’s YouTube channel:*

Hi Gerald Celente,

After manually reviewing your video, we’ve confirmed that it isn’t suitable for all advertisers. As a result, it will continue to run limited or no ads.

"Celente Warning: US Fires 1st Shot of WWII"

Your video remains playable and is still eligible to earn subscription revenue from YouTube Red. You can find more information about our advertiser-friendly guidelines in our Help Center.

Thanks,
The YouTube team

Free speech? First Amendment rights?

Gone, unless you’re a member of “The Club.”

HI-TECH SCIENCE

VACCINE AGAINST ALZHEIMER’S



by Ben Daviss

In a test, a vaccine has cleared the brain protein tangles and build-ups that characterize Alzheimer's disease.

Researchers at the University of California and the Institute for Molecular Medicine genetically engineered mice to develop the tau protein tangles and amyloid protein build-ups that accumulate among brain cells that mark the illness.

Previous vaccines had targeted one protein or the other. But new research indicates that Alzheimer's symptoms crop up when accumulations of the two proteins interact.

The researchers paired two vaccines, each one shown to be effective against one or the other protein culprit. Then they combined the pair with a compound that made tissues more receptive to them.

In tests, the cocktail not only removed problem proteins that had accumulated but also prevented them from building up in the brains of mice engineered to develop them.

The vaccine could be in human trials as soon as 2022.

TRENDPOST: Alzheimer's research is shifting from treatment to prevention after the repeated failures of several promising therapies. The new compound could achieve both aspects and turn Alzheimer's into a curable and also preventable illness.

WATER-RELATED VIOLENCE INCREASING



by Ben Daviss

Physical confrontations over water have more than doubled over the past ten years, according to the nonprofit Pacific Institute, who are focused on protecting the world's fresh water.

Water became a weapon in Syria's civil war as government forces damaged a water pipeline into the city of Aleppo, leaving millions of people desperately short of water.

The government also bombed water distribution systems in rebel areas. As water supplies dried up, more people were willing literally to fight for what water there was. Russian and ISIS troops also were cited for water-related acts of war.

In India, huge volumes of water are used to grow rice and cotton that are then exported, leaving people high and dry. Also, cities such as Chennai now depend on pricey water trucked in by tankers, leaving the poor to scavenge or steal what they can't afford. Five farmers were shot in protests over water in a drought-struck region.

Yemen, Iraq, and Indonesia also recorded surges in water-related violence.

The World Resources Institute reports that 17 countries housing 25 percent of the world's people face "extremely high" water stress, raising the likelihood of future battles over water.

TRENDPOST: *As the world's population increases, land and water become more scarce. Violence over basic necessities will continue to flare. People will demand that access to water be recognized as a human right, gradually forcing governments to create policies and infrastructure projects that protect this resource. The new focus on water will create a new economic sector for innovators and their investors.*

NEW WAY TO CLEAN UP OCEAN PLASTIC



by Ben Daviss

About 16 billion pounds of plastic flows into the world's oceans each year. In 2021, the Finnish research center VTT will test a way to start taking it out.

Scientists there have sorted through the realm of bacteria to choose several strains that can digest various forms of plastic and turn them back into raw chemical feedstocks for industry. The bugs will be housed in small factories or refineries designed to be mounted on ships and powered by wind and solar energy.

The ships will be fitted with gear to filter plastics out of ocean water and channel the plastics to the refineries, where the bacteria will break them down into their constituent chemicals.

The bug-based factories also could be set on beaches where plastics wash up.

The research team will be tweaking the chosen bacteria's genomes to sharpen their ability to process plastic, and they are also developing plastic pre-treatments to make the bugs' work easier.

TRENDPOST: The new focus on the problem of ocean plastic is creating opportunities for inventors who can not only reclaim seagoing plastics economically but also help build a circular economy in which one stream's waste is another's feedstock.

Microbes digesting plastic as part of VTT's "PlastBug" initiative