

GLEANINGS II - 837
Thursday June 18th, 2020

Quote of the week - "It's not black vs white, it's everyone against the racists." Patrick Hutchinson, a *black* personal trainer who, on Saturday June 13th, became a folk hero in the UK media. For, while participating in a "Black Lives Matter" demonstration in Central London, he saw a white, far right counter-demonstrating activist beset by a group of young black activists fall down a set of steps & laying, obviously hurt, on the ground in a fetal position while they kept hitting him. So, as he told Channel 4 News "I just scooped him up, put him on my shoulders (*and it was not a small man*) and started to march towards the police with him, with the *also black* guys surrounding me and protecting me ... I could actually feel strikes and hits as I was carrying him."

Quote of the week No. 2 - "If we'd stop testing right now, we'd have very few cases, if any." - The US Commander-in-Chief at the White House on Monday June 15th - *This is such errant, escapist nonsense it would be hard to believe that anyone could have said it, if the source had not been reasonably reliable, i.e. Nathaniel Weixel of The Hill, & not a 'fake news' one.*

Quote of the week No. 3 - "The US still has military supremacy and financial leverage but its *global* reserves of political and 'soft' power are being depleted rapidly. Recent street protests have laid bare deeply-rooted inequities in the US that undermine America's status as a standard bearer of ...the promotion of human rights, democracy and free market capitalism." - Derek Burney in a June 18th National Post article entitled This Turbulent World Could Use Another Kissinger Now. - *Now aged 81, Burney had a stellar Canadian public service career culminating in stints as Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's political strategist & Canada's Ambassador to the US, after which he served for a number of years as a corporate 'top dog'. Since 2013 he has been Chancellor of Lakehead University in the city of his birth, Thunder Bay ON.*

Another blow to the Trump ego to illustrate he is not all-powerful - On June 15th, 2012 President Obama created (by Executive Order) DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) to provide a path to US citizenship for the 700,000 US 'Dreamer' illegal US residents who had been brought illegally to the US as children. During the 2016 Presidential election campaign then candidate Trump promised to terminate it "immediately" upon becoming President (although it took him eight months to act on that promise). But this came all to nought for him on Thursday June 18th when the Supreme Court voted 5-4 to toss his September 2017 move to act on his promise. And to make matters worse for him, Chief Justice John Roberts not only sided, for the second time in three days, with the Court's four liberals, but actually wrote the majority opinion. And while Justice Clarence Roberts wrote in a (*'sour grapes'?*) dissent that the majority decision sought to avoid a "politically controversial" decision & had shown "timidity" in doing so, he was supported in doing so by only Justices Samuel Alito & Neil Gorsuch, as Trump's last Supreme Court appointment, Justice Brett Kavanaugh, wrote his own, only partial, dissent opinion - *And while Trump responded by threatening to appoint more conservative judges, this cannot help but inspire the long feisty, now 87 year-old Justice Ruth Bader-Ginsburg, who has long been fighting cancer, to hang on at least until November 3rd when she must hope (and I fully expect) President Trump to be 'sent packing'. And even if she kicks the bucket before then, the now seemingly rapidly eroding awe of President Trump's wrath among GOP law makers might make it difficult for him to get another Supreme Court nomination through the Senate before November 3rd.*

Elizabeth M. Taylor (age 30) was on what the Army called "the fast train" - Her mother was Bush 41's Director of Media Relations, the first black woman to have the job. She herself, a poli.

sci grad from Bryn Mawr ¹, started her career on Capitol Hill at age 16 as a cloakroom attendant & worked her way up to that of an aide to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. A lifelong Republican, somewhere along the way she also interned at Koch Industries & made Forbes' 2018 '30 under 30' list. On the strength of her having become acquainted in McConnell's office with many Senators she was one of the earliest members of Trump's White House staff, being named Deputy Director of Communications (*for Nominations*). As such, she was involved in the easing of 400+ Presidential appointments through the Senate, incl. those of such heavyweights as Supreme Court Justice Neil M. Gorsuch, CIA Director Gina Haspel, Fed Chair Jerome Powell & Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. On October 2018 she was confirmed as the State Department's youngest ever, & first ever black, Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs.

On June 3rd she sent a message to the 60 or so State Department employees working for her that "In the aftermath of George Floyd's death her heart was 'broken' in a way I've had to heal it countless times ... (his) horrific murder and the recent deaths of other Black Americans have shaken the nation to the core. Every time we witness these heinous murderous events, we are reminded that our country's wounds run deep and remain untreated ... For our team members who are hurting right now, please know that you are not alone. You are seen, recognized, heard and supported. I am right here with you." And on Thursday June 18th she followed that up with a letter of resignation to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, telling him among others "Moments of upheaval can change you, shift the trajectory of your life and mold your character. The President's comments and actions surrounding racial injustice and Black Americans cut sharply against my core values and conventions ... I must follow the dictates of my conscience and resign as Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs ... I am deeply grateful to you, Mr. Secretary, for empowering me to lead this team and strategically advise you over these last two years ... You have shown grace and respect in listening to my opinions and your remarkable leadership has made me a better leader and team member..." - *Another bit of evidence of the rising wave of rebellion in the GOP against "Trumpian Republicanism"?*

Fed-induced market melt-up has produced a slough of day traders - Many have accounts with Menlo Park CA-based Robinhood Markets Inc. that, founded in 2013, has grown from 1MM accounts in 2016-, via 6MM in October 2018 & 9MM at the end of last year-, to an estimated 13+MM today ². It is commission-free and says it makes its money from "interest on customer cash ... and rebates from market makers and trading venues" (*the latter alone should make anyone with any market knowledge 'hit for the bushes'*). Many have little, if any, prior experience with markets & are hugely undercapitalized but are full of themselves, with one recently telling his followers in a tweet "I'm sure Warren Buffett ³ is a great guy, but where it comes to stocks, he's washed up."

¹ A horrendously expensive-, but top notch-, private 135 year-old college founded by the Quakers, it has only 1,360 all-female undergraduates (& 450 graduate students of both sexes), a high (1 : 9) teaching staff/ student ratio. 50+% of its classes have 20, or less, students & a tiny few over 50.

² I.e. 3x that of Palo Alto CA-based E*Trade that was founded in 1982. The average age of its client base is 31 years and many of its recently joined clients are locked-down individuals with time on their hands and/or dried -up income sources that have been led to believe that 'day trading' is an interesting & easy way to make some money.

³ Who, if anything, is grossly **overcapitalized**

Forbes has now reported on a tragic consequence of this phenomenon. On Friday June 12th parents' home in Napier, IL was hit by a train & killed. But on his computer his parents found a note asking "How was a 20 year old with no income able to get almost a million dollars worth of leverage ... I had no clue what I was doing." For with time on his hands he had signed up with Robinhood & started trading options. And he had fallen in despair on Thursday night June 11th when he saw that, while his account had US\$16,000 in it, it also had a "negative cash balance" of US\$730, 615, making him think "he had blown up his future" & commit suicide.

Such exuberance by market neophytes has historically been seen in the late-, not early-, days of bull markets. Then Fed Chair Alan Greenspan called it "irrational exuberance" in his December 15th, 1996 televised address to the American Enterprise Institute entitled Central Banking in a Democratic Society (after which NASDAQ rocketed, in the "dot.com" boom, from 1,581 on January 2nd, 1997 to 4,064 three years later, only to crash back to earth, to 1,359 by late 2002).

John Bolton's 'tell all' book "The Room Where it happened" - Originally slated for publication last March, this was delayed after the National Security Council raised objections. Then, after a supposedly thorough NSC/Bolton review, it was rescheduled for publication on Wednesday, June 23rd, until on Monday June 14th a White House lawyer raised more "national security" allegations & promised a "redacted" version by Friday June 19th (*another White House tactical 'faux pas' since the book had already been printed & warehoused until the 23rd?*). Meanwhile, as Trump was considering his legal options, the cat was let out of the bag as copies were leaked to the New York Times & the Washington Post that had a field day with it. Many of its revelations reported on Trump's meetings with President Xi; one reported that, in a conversation between the two, Trump asked Xi to buy more American agricultural goods to make him more popular with the farmers in the 2020 election, in a second he promised Turkey's President Erdogan to "do something" about a Turkish bank under investigation by New York's Southern District for breaking US sanctions on Iran, in a third he told Xi he was "open to serving more than two terms" & that some people were saying the two-term constitutional limit on the President "should be repealed for him" & finally one in which he told Xi that interning the Muslim Uighurs in camps had been "exactly the right thing to do", *all of them instances in which, according to Fareed Zakaria on his Sunday morning GPS program on CNN, he 'comingled his personal-, with the national- interests.'* *And those of you who want a 'quickie' summary of the book may want to google the article by the man himself in the UK's Telegraph, entitled John Bolton's Exclusive Book Extract : What Trump Really Thinks of Nato, May, Merkel and Putin.*

Saturday June 20th turned out to be a bad day for Trump, if not a pivotal turning point in his re-election campaign - First, 76 year-old Royce Lamberth, a Reagan-appointed Republican Senior-, & one time Chief-, Judge of the Washington District Court, in a 10-page decision ruled that the Justice Department's arguments were not enough to stop the release of John Bolton's book (which Trump, however, before leaving for Tulsa, declared a victory because "the judge was very powerful in his statements on classified information and very powerful also in the fact that the country will get the money, any money he makes") - *a questionable interpretation of his arguments which only may open the door to more legal action to convince a judge that Bolton should not financially benefit from the book's publication. And then, before he departed for Tulsa he told the media that it would be an "unbelievable event"; and so it was, but not in the way he had expected; for while he had tweeted on Monday "Almost One Million People Request Tickets", Tulsa's 19,091 seat BOK arena had quite a few empty seats in its upper tiers & on the arena floor (and that only after, at the last minute, non-ticket holders outside had been let in?) & his outdoor appearance for the expected 'overflow crowd of 40,000 ' was canceled due to a lack of live bodies.*

Trump on the November 3rd election - On June 11th, in an interview on Fox News' Daily Show, Biden raised with host Trevor Noah the possibility that Trump could try & "steal the election" by attempting to suppress votes, pointing to his fervent opposition to mail-in-voting & his unfounded allegations that it was rife with fraud. And when asked if he had given any consideration as to what would happen if Trump refused to leave office, he came right out & said (*politically rather unwisely?*), "I was so damn proud to hear that four chiefs of staff (???) coming out and ripping the skin of Trump, and you have so many rank-and- file military personnel saying 'Whoa, we're not a military state, this is not who we are ... I promise you, I am absolutely convinced they will escort him from the White House with great dispatch.'" Then on the 13th in an interview with Fox News' Harris Faulkner, when he asked Trump what he would do if he lost the election, he got the answer "Certainly, if I don't win ... you go and do other things", adding "I think it would be a very bad thing for our country."

Finally, on Thursday June 18th, when Politico interviewed Trump surrounded by senior aides incl. Jared Kushner in the Oval Office, it asked him two questions. Would a substantial amount of mail-in voting - which is widely expected because of the coronavirus - cause him to question the legitimacy of the outcome of the election, and would he accept the results of the election, no matter what? His answers were that mail-in voting could cost him the election but that his campaign was making a multi-million legal effort to block 'expanded ballot access' (as states across the country are rushing to facilitate it out of concern that millions of voters might otherwise be disenfranchised by their coronavirus-driven fear of having to vote in crowded polling stations) and that his biggest risk was that "We don't win law suits ... We have many law suits all over. If we don't win those law suits, I think - I think it puts the election at risk." As to the second question he fudged, unlike the week before. And then he put Senate Republicans (*some of whom seem to be running for their political lives*) on notice that those willing to risk his wrath would pay a heavy price for doing so & that running away from him would trigger a revolt by his loyalists and "You know, I have a very hard base. I have the strongest base people have ever seen." - *But he seems to face 3 (intractable?) problems : his "wrath" no longer seems to have the weight with Republicans it once had (since they can see the 'writing on the wall?'), his chances of legal success must at least have been dented by the Supreme Court this week "handing him his head" on the LGBTQ-, & DACA-, issues, &, while no one questions qualitative 'hardness' of his base, it has quantitatively never nowhere near big enough to win elections on its own & may now be fraying, as suggested by the recent Pew polling report that he had lost key support among the evangelicals (the news of which may have prompted his photo op at St. John's church after the demonstrators on Lafayette Square had been removed unduly roughly, so as to enable him to do so in peace).*

United States Supreme Court's LBGTQ decision - On Monday June 15th it ruled the Civil Rights Act of 1964, that for fifty-odd years has been applied largely to protect women's employment rights, applied equally to the LBGTQ crowd. This had two interesting aspects. One, the majority decision was written by a staunch conservative, Justice Neil M. Gorsuch, Trump's first appointee, & two, both he & Chief Justice John G. Roberts voted with the Court's four 'liberals' to produce a 6-3 decision - *This came three days after it had 'handed him his head' on DACA. One must wonder if this gave President Trump second thoughts about having nominated Gorsuch (although he may already have enough 'on his plate' to worry about such picayune matters of state & may be too self-centered to have second thoughts about any past move unless it had hit him in the pocket book).*

World's largest hedge fund hits a shoal - Ray Dalio's Westport CT-based Bridgewater Associates manages money for 350 very large clients, incl. a number of central banks. Its Assets-

Under-Management (AUM ⁴) shrank from US\$163BN on February 29th to US\$138BN (i.e by 15.4%) on April 30th & its largest fund, Bridgewater Pure Alpha II, by 20%. This prompted its analysts to warn that, with demand declining due to COVID-19, profit margins are now shrinking dramatically, a trend they expect to persist as globalization is peaking & "reshoring" (i.e. corporations shortening their supply lines for reliability reasons, even at the expense of cost effectiveness) gains momentum - US corporate profit margins now are down from 18 months ago, but as 9.5% of GDP in 3Q/19 still are at a level seen only four times in modern history (each time just before & after major recessions). And while that 9.5% of GNP was nearly triple the 3.8% mid-1960s all-time low, since then corporate profits in 1Q/20 were down 8.9% YoY & 14.2% MoM.

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ARE TRUMP'S PROBLEMS WITH WALKING, DRINKING WATER DUE TO HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE? (ACSH, Chuck Dinerstein MD)

- Last weekend, at West Point, he needed both hands to take a sip from a glass of water & displayed an unsteady gait descending a ramp (which he tweeted was on "a slippery incline", although it was a set of steps, not an incline, & the weather was clear & dry). One potential cause thereof could be the hydroxychloroquine he is said to have been taking.
- As a vascular surgeon I am acquainted with a phenomenon we call "gait disturbances", when a person's gait is less than fluid. And his apparent difficulty lifting a glass of water also suggests a muscular strength problem. So he appears to have issues with muscles in his leg & arm, raising the possibility of 'neuromyopathy', *an affliction of nerves & associated muscle tissues*, that may be associated with his taking hydroxychloroquine. For an FDA warning about hydroxychloroquine's *possible* adverse side effects reads in part "Musculototal and connective tissue disorders ... neuromyopathy leading to progressive weakness and atrophy ... and abnormal nerve conduction ... in proximal muscle groups" (*proximal muscles are those closest to the body, like those in the upper arm that raise the hand & in the thigh that are involved in all phases of walking*). While this is a not overly common, if not relatively rare, condition, a quick search uncovered ten cases of hydroxychloroquine-associated neuromyopathy.
- Wouldn't it be ironic if the drug that President Trump described as a "game-changer were to turn out to be a "gait-changer"?

This promptly gave rise to a Biden campaign ad showing him jogging, accompanied by the words "BIDEN FOR PRESIDENT - HE CAN DRINK WATER AND WALK" - ACSH stands for American Council on Science and Health, a NYC-based advocacy group focused on food, nutrition, health, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, biology, biotechnology, infectious diseases and the environment.

SO WHO IS THE FALL GUY FOR TRUMP'S SPUTTERING CAMPAIGN? (WP, Jennifer Rubin)

- 61% of respondents in a Michigan poll had a negative view of Trump, a Democratic Public Policy Survey showed him trailing Biden by two points in Georgia & a Daily Kos/ Civiqs poll had him ahead 49-45 in Arizona (*a state he had carried by nearly 4 points in 2016*). And this despite his campaign has spent \$24MM in six "battle-ground" states (AZ, FL, MI, NC, PN & WI) as polling shows him losing ground in every one of them. So the RNC may be bleeding money with little to show for it, or as AP puts it "The president spent almost

⁴ That it manages for about 350 clients, incl. many central banks.

\$5.6MM on television and online advertising in Florida between April 26 and June 6 while polls in May showed him losing three points and the latest TIPP poll ... between June 9 and 11 had him trailing *there* by 10 points or more” .

- Trump & his advisers can lie to themselves that the polls are wrong, but donors & candidates are figuring out he’s in trouble. And since he won’t take responsibility for his mishandling of the pandemic & his disastrous response to the George Floyd murder, the Lafayette Square incident & his feeble appearance at West Point, he’ll be looking for someone to fire, likely campaign manager Brad Parscale or possibly Jared Kushner.
- But remember. The polls report on the situation now, not in November, & while Biden & the DNC have raised a ton of money, US\$50+MM in May alone, money is not *necessarily* the be-all and end-all. On the other hand, what the GOP needs above all is a decent record & a decent candidate, both of which it lacks.

As do the Democrats. I have long believed Biden is too white, too old & too male, and has ‘too much baggage’, incl. his son Hunter, to be the right candidate. And things have gone from bad to worse since he has, in some of his TV appearances, come across more as a benign grandfather than as a match for a gutter-fighting snipe like Trump. And the party’s use of their majority in the House to build a program to run on has foundered on the GOP’s control of the Senate.

The Democratic convention will be held on August 17-20 in Milwaukee WI & the 24-27 August GOP one now in 2 places; for the RNC has announced candidate selection will be, as scheduled, in Charlottesville & Trump make his acceptance speech in Jacksonville FL on August 27th ^{5 6}.

Sticking my neck out, I can see two “Outlier” scenarios. In one either or both their names will not be on the ballot come November 3rd. For pressure will build on Biden over the next two months to do what Hillary should have done & didn’t, namely to bow out gracefully & create a legacy as a “King Maker” who put the party’s interests ahead of personal ambition (with his replacement being neither Bernie O Elizabeth?) rather than, as she did, risk losing to a jerk like Trump. This would put the media in a ‘feeding frenzy’ & give the Democrats billions of dollars of free airtime, and make the following week’s GOP convention a non-event unless it too, in a culmination of the seemingly rapidly waxing rebelliousness in the GOP against Trump (and Pence?), ‘pulls a rabbit out of the hat’. The other, potentially more damaging, outlier scenario for the United States at home & abroad envisages Trump somehow sneaking through but the Democrats gaining control of the Senate & keeping that of the House. And according to FiveThirtyEight Senate, polling results this month had the Democrats leading in Arizona (in a FoxNews poll!) 51-43, in Michigan 35-30, in Georgia 45-44, in New Mexico 48-34 & in Iowa 46-43 (with at least three of these being “battleground” States).

*This may turn out the most unusual Presidential election year in history since it will be up to both parties to **not to lose**, rather than **win**, the election.*

⁵ Presumably for one of two, or both, reasons. This is ‘deep red country’; even though in 2016 he carried Duval County, in which Jacksonville is located by just 1+%, his lead over Hillary in next door St. John’s County had been 30%. And he had in recent months been feuding with Roy Cooper, North Carolina’s governor.

⁶ Which seems like an utterly ‘tone deaf’ move. For August 27th will be the 60th anniversary of what is known in some circles as “Ax Handle Saturday”. For in Jackson ville on that date in 1960, a group of whites attacked, and beat up with ax handles & baseball bats, a group of young blacks seeking to be served hamburgers & egg salad sandwiches for lunch at an “all-white” diner.

CANADA DOES NOT DESERVE A SEAT ON THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (al-Jazeera, Jonathan Kuttab)

- Once Canada was in the global arena a champion for human rights & international law, unlike the US a stalwart defender of the rights of the oppressed, and a faithful supporter of international humanitarian & refugee organizations. But this began to erode under Prime Minister Harper and, contrary to expectations, wasn't reversed since 2015 under Trudeau.
- It now *pro-actively* is seeking election to one of the two available non-permanent seats on the UN Security Council. This raises questions as to whether it deserves one. For nowhere is its retreat from its *one-time* liberal values clearer than in the case of Palestine in which, in the past two decades (*i.e. since Bill Clinton was succeeded by three lacklustre incumbents*), it has slavishly followed the US lead & voted "No" on 166 UN General Assembly resolutions on Palestine, while, in contrast, the other two countries vying for the seat, Ireland & Norway, have been overwhelmingly supportive of the Palestine cause, having voted 'Yes' 251 and 249 times respectively on such resolutions since 2000 (with Canada having done so only 87 times, all but twice in this century's first decade).
- During Trudeau's time in office Canada has voted only twice for a pro-Palestinian resolution in the General Assembly. And it has made no bones about where it stands on the Israel/ Palestine issue and what position it would take if elected to a two year term on the Security Council. For during an official visit to Israel in 2018, then Foreign Affairs-, and now Deputy Prime -, Minister, Alberta-born Chrystia Freeland declared that, if elected to the Security Council, Canada hoped to "serve as an asset for Israel".
- So it is small wonder that over 100 organizations & prominent individuals from Canada & beyond sent an open letter to all UN ambassadors to urge their governments to let them vote against Canada's bid for a seat on the Security Council because of its government's anti-Palestinian position. And Israel's recent (*Trump-sanctioned but not Biden-condoned*) threat to *formally* annex parts of the West Bank in violation of international law makes opposing Canada's bid for a Security Council seat even more urgent.

In the end Prime Minister Trudeau's dream went up in smoke on Wednesday June 17th when the General Assembly, in a single round of voting, gave the two seats to Ireland & Norway. According The Guardian this was due to Trudeau's "dilettante foreign policy" (suggesting he carries too many of his mother's 'lightweight genes' & not enough of his father's mental 'heavyweight' ones?). Canada (& for that matter the UN & its Security Council) once upon a time 'punched well above their weight in global affairs; but that is no longer the case. One must wonder why, other than for ego reasons, Prime Minister Trudeau made getting a Security Council seat such a priority when there are far more weighty issues back home that urgently need addressing. So it may be just as well that someone has thrown cold water on him, especially so since Israel under Prime Minister Netanyahu has become more reactionary & more of a pariah in global politics - Kuttab is in his late fifties/early sixties. A Palestinian Mennonite, he was born in Jerusalem & lived there as a small child until his family, following the 1967 Six Days' War, emigrated to the US, where he was educated,. He now is a human rights lawyer and a member of the US-, Israeli-, & Palestinian Bar Associations. And it may be good for Canadians to hear that their country is no longer as highly regarded globally as it once was (even if they have long since quit caring).

NORTH KOREA BOMBED INTER-KOREAN LIAISON OFFICE NEAR BORDER AMID GROWING TENSION (NBCNews, Yuliya Talmazan & Stella Kim)

- On Friday June 12th North Korea announced it was pulling away from its relationship with the United States, two years after the historic Trump-Kim handshake in Singapore and

nearly one year after President Trump had taken his symbolic first step on North Korean soil, 'since there had been no actual improvement in ties' (*i.e. neither the UN or the US had eased the sanctions that were strangling its economy*). Then on the 14th, KCNA (North Korea's state news agency) reported the country's military had threatened to move back into zones demilitarized under previous inter-Korean peace agreements (to dial up pressure in Seoul amid the stalled nuclear negotiations with the Trump administration?) so as, according to the Korea People's Army's General Staff, to "turn the front line into a fortress." And finally, on the 15th, the 20th anniversary of the historic first ever inter-Korean Summit hosted in Pyongyang by Kim's father, the late Kim Jong-il, during which the leaders of both countries committed their governments to prioritizing unification and humanitarian & economic cooperation, the South Korean Ministry for Unification reported "North Korea demolished the Inter-Korean Liaison Office in the Gaesong Industrial Complex by bombing at 14:49 KST", with KCNA confirming it was "completely ruined". And it also announced "We are making full effort to manage the situation stably so that the situation does not escalate into a military crisis ... *but* if North Korea carries out military provocation, our military will respond with full force", with its Vice-Minister, who had co-headed the Liaison Office, noting "this is unprecedented in inter-Korean relations ... a nonsensical act that should not have happened", expressing "deep regret and strong protest against it".

It is hard to escape the notion Kim is doing this with the 'wink-wink, nod-nod' support, albeit public disapproval, of President Xi. For the latter may have decided that under current circumstances 'the best defense is an offense' and therefore launched a series of domestic nationalism-engendering moves. They include the current unpleasanties on India's far Northwestern border with China in the Himalayas that recently cost 20 Indian soldiers their lives (although, believe it or not, reports are the PLA soldiers have been using rocks, sticks & clubs, rather than modern weaponry, in their confrontations with the Indian army), Beijing's growing encroachment on the supposedly 50 year "one nation, two systems" status of Hongkong, its arrest of Malaysian and Vietnamese fishing vessels in the South China Sea (one of the world's most important trade routes, above all for Mideastern oil moving to Chinese ports) and its parading of the PLA's so far only actively serving aircraft carrier through the East China Sea, not just once, but twice, & formally laying espionage charges against the two Canadian citizens it had arrested in December 2018 in retaliation for the Vancouver Airport arrest of Huawei's founder's daughter Meng Wanshou (a slap in the face for Prime Minister Trudeau who still seems to be trying to figure out how he might be nice enough to Xi to make him release them).