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THE TRENDS JOURNAL®

HISTORY BEFORE IT HAPPENS

Keep on Truckin'!

MANDATE FREEDOM !!

TRENDS JOURNAL
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Inside

KEEP ON TRUCKIN'

Welcome to this week's **Trends Journal**: KEEP ON TRUCKIN'! MANDATE FREEDOM!!

The Canadian trucker's Freedom Convoy in Ottawa and on the U.S. Canadian border is history in the making.

Yet, the truckers who are protesting against government mandates that force them to be injected with the Operation Warp Speed jab if they cross the border, are barely reported by the mainstream media. And as we note in this week's **Trends Journal**, when it is covered, the Presstitutes degrade the movement.

Another Daddy's Boy, Doug Ford, playing Premier of Ontario, chastised the truckers. "Move on," he said, telling them that "Now it's time to let the people in Ottawa get back to their lives. These businesses have been closed for a while now, the restaurants want to reopen."

"Get back to their lives?" "Restaurants want to open"?

This is the crap spewing out of the mouth of a dictator who for two years imposed a long series of strict lockdown mandates that have robbed and ruined citizens of "their lives" and shut down businesses and restaurants to "flatten the curve" in his fight to win the COVID War.

Yes, it is fine for "leaders" to do what they want, but it is unlawful for We the People to stand up and fight for Freedom.

Freedom is a megatrend that will be the foundation of political movements in much of the world now, and in years to come. And as you know, "Freedom" is the foundation of our **Universal Church of Freedom Peace and Justice**.

This **Trends Journal**, as with all our editions, is jam-packed with information, insights, trend forecasts and analyzes you won't find anywhere in the world. We are doing all we can to help you Prepare, Prevail and Prosper now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Gerald Celente and the Trends Journal Team

COMMENTS

INTEL FOLLOWS CELENTE TREND OF "SELF-SUFFICIENCY"
We can only hope for continued domestic investments from the overlords. Bitcoin is part of the solution. Local politics are going to play a large part in resistance to the dehumanizing effects of techno-feudalism being rolled out.

james Harnden

RUSSIA UKRAINE HYSTERIA ROILING MARKETS
One thing that needs to be known here, is that, it's the USA that's the absolute aggressor in this field of politics. Russia wants nothing from Ukraine. It has a couple of places it protects because there are some 2 million Russian citizens living there. The real protest is about NATO shitting on Russia's doorstep, and so close

to Russia's borders that she can smell the shite for miles inland.

How would America feel if, for instance, the Bahamas, a sovereign nation since July 10, 1973, decides to reinforce its sovereignty by hosting a Russian missile battery pointed across the Gulf Stream at Miami and Fort Lauderdale, Florida, the US would have no say in the matter. Or would it?

ZEBB

BEAR MARKETS & HISTORY
If you look at the stock market from its peak in 1966 and include inflation over a 30-year period, the result may surprise you. Nobody really made much real money in the stock market during the 1966-1982 Bear Market period. Sure, some made "nominal" gains but remember, liars know figures but figures don't lie. Someone must win the lottery but carefully consider your odds first. Don't plan on being "lucky".

Similarly, investors in 1930 did not make money from investments until 1955, 25 years later. Nobody wanted to invest in the 1930's or 1940's. In fact, the stigma in stock market investing carried-over through the seventies, as well. Odds are the next generational bear market will be no different. "Alternatives" won't change the financial trends, risks, or typical results much if at all. FACT: Investors buy in bull markets and they sell in bear markets. That would be the trend one way or the other for most all investments. No silver bullets.

In-addition, Bear Markets can easily last 16 or 20 years. Today, we have a whole generation of investors and their financial advisors who have NEVER witnessed a true generational, multi-year (decade) bear market. So, they have no such experience. If you retire today, just before the next "big one" sets-in, then your portfolio is going nowhere, at least in your home country's currency. Your retirement plans must remain dynamic and adaptive. Luck and good timing are important wildcards in life and in investing, as well.

Craig Bradley

LATIN AMERICA CURRENCY CRISIS
I like the idea of bringing groups home. If other nations can't support or just don't support their own defense, then why are we doing it? Let's all focus on America's problems.

Rick Grauer

POLS VALENTINE TARIFF LIFT TO CHINA
What more proof do we need that our politicians only care about the one supplying them with money. Chinese trade made possible by American traitors.

a1achiropractic

UK WINDING DOWN COVID WAR
[Boris] Johnson and his so called back benchers and followers have managed to push the UK into a massive debt bubble. They created the furlough and allowed criminals to cash in and steal money , imigration is at an all time high and they are putting immigrants up in five star hotels at the cost of the hard working people of the UK. The streets are becoming unsafe for women to walk alone, and this so-called Gov has lost all control over what matters in the UK.

Health Sec. Javid, what he knows about health you can right on the back of your

hand, and he continues to order the good people of the UK. Shame on the UK for having put this shower of shit in charge of this country.

They have fucked up everything. It's a complete mess, and they continue to rule and order the good people. They have all failed and should have their power taken away.

Remo Turisci

"MY COVID EXPERIENCE" ARTICLE
I'm a new subscriber and I loved your COVID story. I'm over 65 and my husband is 80. His immune system is stronger than mine. We both had the J&J vaccine last year and the booster which is not mRNA.

If you are immune compromised like me, you should consider the J&J vaccine.
On the Potomac Watch podcast someone mentioned that getting too many booster shots can exhaust the immune system. This hadn't occurred to me.

Anne Schmidt

CANADIAN TRUCKERS BLAZING PATH
I thought I would comment on the Canadian Truckers protest before the next Trends Issue is mailed!!!!

The Canadians are doing what every nation on Earth should be doing to combat the radical TYRANNY of the Elites and Politicians that are using the COVID FEAR CAMPAIGN to take away the FREEDOMS of the citizens across the world!!!

I am amazed when I observe the lack of commitment by AMERICANS to regain their inherent FREEDOMS and THEIR TOTAL LACK of RESISTANCE to the TAKE-OVER of basic life-sustaining commerce by the WEF, PHARMA, GATES FOUNDATION, GAVI, UN, CCP, DARPA, ETC.,

As a citizen of the US, I feel obligated to resist this TYRANNY at every turn and defy the JAB, MASK, SOCIAL DISTANCING, PASSPORTS and any other obstacle the ELITES try to impose on me that are in violation of my GOD GIVEN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS!!!!!

harlow53

MARTIAL ARTS SKILLS AND HEALTH: STAY ACTIVE
A little bit can go a long way. Starting a walking routine. After a while put a hill in the walk. Today I ran out of time to go work out so I went outside in 0 degree weather and did some push-ups. Cold weather really wakes you up and clears the thinking. Shadow box for 5 minutes each morning. Etc.

Joey F.

5G's CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY
Of course they know the harms – they always have—and nothing will stop it from moving ahead. They installed 5G furiously when everything was shut down during the CV plan-demic. Try to take it to court or have any other actions taken and you will be shot down. Since when do they care about science? If it's going to kill people—all the better.

Kellie Auld

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TRENDS ON THE U.S. ECONOMIC FRONT

U.S. MARKET OVERVIEW

STOCKS CAP WILD WEEK WITH A GAIN, AND KEEP RISING

U.S. equity markets gyrated through last week but managed to close the stretch with a gain for two of the three indexes, ending a three-week downturn.

The late Friday rally was fueled by strong earnings reports by major companies. The biggest of the market pushers was Apple, which gained 7 percent after reporting record quarterly revenue and profits.

Earnings among other corporations have remained strong. About 78 percent of S&P-listed companies that have reported fourth-quarter earnings per share have beaten analysts' predictions, FactSet reported.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 1.3 percent for the week, the Standard and Poor's was up 0.8 percent, and the NASDAQ, burdened by its heavy concentration of tech stocks, closed the week flat after gaining 3 percent on Friday.

Markets have been roiled by the certainty that the U.S. Federal Reserve will begin to stop their cheap money flow that has juiced equities and the economy when they raise interest rates beginning next month.

Again, while the banksters and the Presstitutes keep blaming inflation on supply chain disruptions—while that is part of what is driving prices up—the major inflation drivers are governments' and central banks' unprecedented money pumping schemes and record-low interest rates.

TREND FORECAST: *The Street estimates a maximum of five interest rate hikes this year with the first boost of 50 basis points. Should the Fed raise its benchmark short-term interest rates five times this year, it would bring the rate to 1.25 percentage points.*

As we have noted, with inflation sharply rising, interest rates are actually in negative territory. For example, with December's Consumer Price Index up 7 percent from a year ago, the real interest rate which is near zero, is actually deep in negative territory when inflation is taken into account.

Therefore we maintain our forecast that when interest rates hit above 1.5 percent to 2 percent, it will dramatically bring down equites, the economy and real estate markets.

And with its $30 trillion debt load, the higher interest rates rise, the more it will cost the U.S. to service its debt, which will in turn put downward pressure on the dollar.

Bankster Bullshit

As we keep noting, what the Fed does and says is a complete in-your-face scam.

Go back just six months ago, the word on The Street was that the Fed wouldn't increase interest rates until 2023. That was based on the lie and/or stupidity from the Fed-Head, Jerome Powell, that inflation was only "temporary." Bullshit that he and the other Banksters spread, including former Fed Head Janet Yellen, who is now the U.S. Treasury pawn.

Yes, a pawn. A former Fed Head is now in charge of the U.S. Treasury.

Conflict of interest?

Revolving door?

Both, as Wall Street on Parade documented today:

> "Adding to a very long laundry list of questions about exactly whom the New York Fed serves, is the help-wanted ad that was posted four days ago. The ad is for a Financial Planning & Analysis Expert to work at the New York Fed's headquarters in lower Manhattan. One part of the job description is this: 'modeling of potential investment opportunities.'
>
> The New York Fed is supposed to be implementing monetary policy on behalf of the United States as mandated by the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC). As far as public FOMC records indicate, the New York Fed has not been assigned the job of seeking out 'potential investment opportunities.'"

Con Artists

Notwithstanding the volatile market fluctuations where equites are spiking up and down several hundred points in a session, there has not been a peep from

the Presstitutes about Fed's Plunge Protection Team rigging the markets to keep from crashing.

While there have been recent upticks, major indexes are still below their recent high marks, with the S&P down about 8 percent from its peak.

But to put the downtick in perspective—despite the COVID War which has devastated the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions and destroyed economies and businesses across the globe—between March 2020 and 3 January, the S&P 500 stock index has soared 114 percent.

Also last Friday, U.S. government bonds sold well, pushing yields down from 1.807 percent on Thursday to 1.779 at the end of the week.

Bond yields fall as demand pushes bond prices up.

U.S. futures prices for natural gas jumped 8.3 percent to $4.64 per million British thermal units as weather forecasters warned that February could be colder than expected.

Overseas, the Europe Stoxx 600 gave up 1 percent last week, the Shanghai composite index shed 1.1 percent, and the Hang Seng index in Hong Kong dropped 1 percent.

Japan's Nikkei 225 edged up 1 percent.

Yesterday and Today

Closing out the worst month since March 2020 (when the COVID War was fully launched in America), the S&P 500 climbed nearly 2 percent yesterday. The Dow, again wildly fluctuating, closed up 406 points... and the tech-heavy Nasdaq—that had been pushed down into correction territory as investors dump "growth" stocks—jumped 3.4 percent.

Today it was another more-of-the-same volatile day. Equities opened on a down note following data from the Institute for Supply Management showing inflation in the manufacturing sector surging last month, with prices climbing 7.9 points to 76.1 month over month, up from December's reading of 68.2 percent.

The benchmark 10-year yield topped 1.8 percent following the latest ISM data.

Again, the higher inflation rises, the greater the fear that the Fed will aggressively raise interest rates and cut off the cheap money flow that has inflated Wall Street and Main Street.

On the manufacturing front, while still strong, there was a slight decline, with the ISM manufacturing index at 57.6, down from 58.8 in December. A reading above 50 percent represents expansion.

Keeping the up and down trading day trend going, the Dow, after muddling near zero and trading flat most of the day, ended up 273 points, the S&P rose 0.69 percent and the Nasdaq climbed up 0.75 percent.

TREND FORECAST: *As we have forecast, look for the Fed to sharply raise rates this year and next and then lower them before the presidential election in 2024. They did it before under Ronald Reagan when inflation was skyrocketing, and they will do it again. Remember, the major interest of the general public is the bottom line: "It's the economy, stupid."*

While this strategy will prove risky considering how overvalued markets are and how artificially equities and economies have been pumped up with cheap money flows by central banks and governments, what may keep economies and equities from dramatically crashing is the winding down of the COVID War... which we forecast will begin late March, mid-April.

With "Freedom" ringing, and COVID War restrictions lifted in many nations, states and cities, economies will gain strength as travel, hospitality, conventions, trade shows, entertainment, restaurants and other related sectors sharply spike.

Following up on our forecast, yesterday, Denver Mayor Michael Hancock declared that "this virus is something we are going to have to manage and learn to live with, and the city would end the requirement of wearing masks or proof of vaccine requirements to enter businesses:

> *"Following extensive discussions with our regional partners as well as current health advice and the downward trajectory of cases, positivity and hospitalizations, Denver will not be extending our public health order.*
>
> *"So beginning Friday, people will no longer be required under the public health order to wear masks or show proof of vaccination for entry into a business in Denver."*

GOLD/SILVER: After spiking in recent weeks as equity markets were tanking and investors were seeking safe haven assets, with the markets rebounding, both precious metals are stuck back in their several month range.

Today, Gold moved up nearly $6 per ounce closing at $1,802 per ounce, while silver moved up 1.13 percent to close at $22.64 per ounce.

TREND FORECAST: *We maintain our forecast that in the short term, precious metals will decline as interest rates rise, since interest rate hikes raise the opportunity cost of holding non-yielding bullion.*

It is also expected that as interest rates move higher so too will the U.S. dollar. But today, gold moved higher as the dollar index slipped after the currency hit a 1-1/2-year high on Friday following expectations for sharp interest rate hikes by the Fed.

While the dollar is king now, as we note, and the media is ignoring, it will cost Washington much more to service the $30 trillion U.S. debt burden... which will in turn also put downward pressure on the U.S. dollar and push safe-haven assets such as gold, silver and bitcoin higher.

And beyond government debt, the higher interest rates rise, the heavier the business and personal debt loads grow. Thus, the higher the levels of defaults, the deeper the economy falls.

*And the deeper it falls, the higher safe-haven assets will rise. Again, as we note in this and previous **Trends Journal**s, the economy cannot run without cheap money.*

Again, as a result of the cheap money drying up when interest rates go up, the economy and equity markets will sharply decline... which will in turn strongly drive up precious metals and some cryptocurrency prices as investors seek safe haven and alternative assets.

OIL: As we have been reporting and long forecasting, the higher tensions rise in the Middle East with Israel/Iran/Saudi Arabia/Yemen... the higher oil prices will rise.

And with war-talk tensions between Russia, U.S. and NATO over Ukraine having escalated, last Friday Brent Crude and West Texas Intermediate closed at $91.70 and $88.84 per barrel respectively... its highest levels since October 2014.

Combined with supply shortages, oil prices climbed some 17 percent in January.

Today, while still ranging at their seven-year high, oil prices slipped a bit on speculation OPEC+ will add more oil to the markets than expected and on expectations that U.S. oil inventories will rise. Brent Crude was down 0.10 percent to close at $89.35 per barrel and WTI was up 0.23 percent, closing at $88.35 per barrel.

TREND FORECAST: *Military tensions in the Middle East and Ukraine will continue to be major factors that could spike oil prices above $100 per ounce.*

The more war talk and military actions escalate, the higher oil prices will rise, which in turn will dramatically push inflation higher. As inflation spikes it will force

central banks to radically raise interest rates to fight it... which will sharply drive down equity markets and economies as money becomes too expensive to borrow.

BITCOIN: Going back to 2021, bitcoin began the year around $33,000 per coin and hit a high of $69,000 in November. As we go to press bitcoin is at $38,791. Thus, while crypto's by their nature are volatile, that is the "normal" of the cryptocurrency market. Yet, overall, the coins have dramatically spiked in price since they hit the markets at pennies some 13 years ago.

TREND FORECAST: *While the mainstream media says cryptocurrencies are declining as fear of interest rates rise, we disagree. Cryptocurrency players are not of that breed. Interest rates—high or low—is not why they are buying cryptos. It is their belief in the market potential of a crypto world free of Big Brother and the Banksters.*

As we have been noting for over five years, a major factor in forecasting the future price of bitcoin and other crypto currencies is dependent upon government regulations.

And last week, pushing prices lower, the U.S. Federal Reserve issued its study on the prospect of creating a digital dollar. Other nations also discussed taking measures that would restrict crypto growth.

We maintain our forecast that bitcoin will find strength to hit new highs when it breaks above $55,500 per coin. We had also forecast, the downward breakout point will be hit should prices fall below $25,000 per coin. If they go that low, bitcoin could well fall back to the $10,000 range.

(For more crypto trends and forecasts, please see our TRENDS IN CRYPTOS section.)

FED'S LOOMING RATE HIKE RATTLE

The recent turmoil in U.S. equity markets, including one of the most dramatic sell-offs since the onset of the COVID War, has been sparked by the U.S. Federal Reserve's plan to raise interest rates as soon as next month.

Clearly, it is not rocket science: The higher interest rates rise and the cheap money stops flowing, the deeper equities—and economies fall.

The Fed's next rate bump is expected to set off a rapid series of hikes that could number four to seven this year, according to a range of analysts (see related articles in this issue).

Higher rates will also crimp corporate earnings and growth as borrowing money becomes more expensive.

Facing that future, U.S. stock indexes lost as much as 15 percent in value last month, with past market favorites such as Moderna, Netflix, and Peloton seeing their market values slashed by a third or more.

In large numbers, market gamblers, as we have been reporting for months, have abandoned "growth" tech stocks, speculative SPACs.

Instead, investors are sheltering their money in stocks that are likely to rise with inflation, such as shares of consumer goods companies and stocks that pay dividends are outperforming the weakening equities markets.

Seeking a safe-haven, in the week ending 27 January, investors sent more money into gold exchange-traded funds than any other kind of ETFs, FactSet reported.

The CBOE Volatility Index, which measures investor anxiety, has almost doubled this year; many high-flying hedge funds are down at least 10 percent since December.

Then on Friday, 21 January, the S&P closed its worst week since March 2020 and trading in put options—which make money when stock prices fall—exceeded activity in bullish call options and set a record.

By one measure, call option purchases among individual investors fell recently to their lowest since April 2020, when investors dumped stocks as the COVID War intensified and governments imposed draconian lockdown measures that closed down economies.

However, many investors, particularly individuals, still cling to hope (see related article in this issue); as the market closed on 26 January, the S&P was trading at a price-to-earnings ratio of 22.3, nicely above its 10-year average of 19.2, FactSet reported.

TRENDPOST: *We have documented the Fed's stupidity and/or lies regarding inflation and interest rates throughout 2021 in articles such as "Fed Will Hold Policy Steady, Powell Says" (9 Mar 2021), "Fed Holds Firm on Policy Despite 5-Percent Inflation" (12 May 2021) and "The Powell Push: For Better or Worse" (7 Dec 2021).*

TRENDPOST: *Considering the true strength of inflation, we had forecast the Fed would raise interest rates despite the word on The Street, up until recently, that they would not raise them until 2023-2024.*

In fact, taking into account that the Bankster bullshit for a decade was that when inflation hit above its made-up 2 percent level they would raise interest rates—and that they had raised interest rates when inflation was below that level—with inflation spiking far above 2 percent, we had also forecast a rate increase by late 2021.

TREND FORECAST: *We have long said that when rates rise, equity market values will fall. The truth of that forecast is reflected in the markets' recent turmoil as investors scurry away from the riskiest bets and retreat to safety.*

When the Fed raises interest rates to or past 1.5 percent to 2 percent, which could happen this year, stock markets will enter a severe downturn and the mortgage market will implode as fewer home buyers are able to qualify for a loan.

However, while commercial office real estate will decline, the housing real estate sector will slow down and prices will fall... and absent a wild card event, they will not fall sharply.

FED ON THE RATE HIKE TRAIL

The U.S. Federal Reserve has all but promised to begin raising interest rates next month as inflation raged at 7 percent, a 40-year high, in December and as the Fed is ready to end its $120-billion monthly bond purchases that has propped up the U.S. economy and equity markets since March 2020.

At a 26 January press conference, Fed chair Jerome Powell refused to rule out the possibility that the central bank could raise rates at every one of its meetings this year.

"There's a risk that the high inflation we're seeing will be prolonged…that it will move even higher," he acknowledged. "We have to be in a position with our monetary policy to address all of those plausible outcomes."

Last March, most Fed officials were confident that rates would remain near zero until 2024. Over subsequent meetings last year, as inflation sped far past the bank's 2-percent target, more and more members of the bank's rate-setting committee came to believe that a boost would be needed sooner—first in 2023, then in late 2022, and then as soon as the bank could end its bond-buying spree.

Still, as he spoke to reporters, Powell demurred on what the bank would do when it meets next month.

"It isn't possible…today…to tell you with any confidence what the precise path will be," he said.

"Making appropriate monetary policy in this environment requires humility, recognizing that the economy evolves in unexpected ways," he added. "We'll need to be nimble so that we can respond to the full range of plausible outcomes."

However, he indicated that the Fed will tighten policy more aggressively than it did through 2016, 2017, and 2018, when it lifted rates twice, three, then four times, respectively.

In its quarterly forecast last October, the Fed projected three rate hikes in 2022.

Asked if three would still be enough this year, Neel Kashkari, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, said, "We just don't know. It's going to depend on supply chains [and] what happens to workers."

Analysts have been less coy than Fed officials.

"We now look for seven [quarter-point] hikes this year and a peak funds rate of 2.75 to 3 percent," Bank of America economists said in a 28 January note to clients.

“This should affect the economy with a lag, weighing on 2023 growth,” they forecast.

Fed-watchers at JP Morgan Chase had expected four rate bumps this year; now, after late January’s Fed meeting, they foresee five.

Powell’s comments last week “were clearly intended to dissuade the market from expecting a quarterly tempo of rate hikes,” they told clients.

More than a dozen central banks have already raised rates this year.

The Bank of Canada has signaled a rate increase next month, with investors expecting more to follow. South Africa bumped up its rate last week, as did Singapore and Chile (see related story in this issue).

Australia’s central bank is ending its COVID-related bond purchases this week.

TREND FORECAST: *The Fed will not balance the urgency to raise rates with market behavior. The central bank will raise rates, possibly 50 basis points in March, if not sooner.*

We maintain our forecast that they will raise rates and slow down the economy, and then speed it up, as the Reagan administration did back in the early 1980s, prior to the 1984 Presidential Election.

However, as we have predicted, when rates rise to around 1.5 percent to 2 percent, equity and real estate markets will take a sharp turn south.

AS ECON CLIMATE DARKENS, RETAIL INVESTORS BET ON SUNNY FUTURE

Every trading day during January, individual investors put more money into U.S. stocks than they extracted, according to data service VandaTrack, with new investments exceeding 2021's average on all but two of the days.

Individuals are continuing to buy even as the Standard & Poor's 500 index has declined more than 9 percent from its record high in early January, a slide that brings the market close to a correction.

Individuals taking a flyer on popular stocks such as Tesla were a main driver in last year's record price run-up, analysts told the *Financial Times*. If those investors decide to pull their money out, U.S. equity markets could plunge, the *FT* said.

However, those individual players are shying away from SPACs, random cryptocurrencies, and meme or "me-too" stocks such as GameStop that defined 2021's "speculative craze," as the *FT* termed it.

Trading volumes in GameStop are 80 percent below the peak of the craze and trading in AMC Entertainment and other meme stocks has cratered, the *FT* reported.

The U.S. Federal Reserve's pledge to raise interest rates soon has robbed individuals of their enthusiasm for unfounded speculation, the *FT* said.

The average stock listed in the Russell 2000 index, which emphasizes small companies, has shed 35 percent of its value from its 12-month high; in the tech-heavy NASDAQ, the figure is closer to 45 percent, according to the *FT*.

Virgin Galactic, Beyond Meat, and sports betting website DraftKings all gave up at least a third of their value during the last six weeks of 2021. Bitcoin's value was cut in half from its November peak.

More recently, speculators have swarmed the options market, setting records for the purchase of equity put options, which will turn a profit when stock prices fall.

A significant number of the options are being bought and sold on the same day as gamblers try to eke profits from intraday price ticks, the *FT* said.

TREND FORECAST: *Individual investors began playing the markets as an exciting pastime during the COVID War. Because markets kept rising, many were lulled into believing they had found an easy way to pile up money.*

Prudent professional investors already are reshuffling their portfolios ahead of the Fed's interest rate boosts and inflation's continuing toll on the economy (see related stories in this issue). Individuals who lack market savvy or expert guidance will be left still holding stocks and losing money as they ride the markets down.

THE MUNI BOND MARKET SLIDE

The U.S. municipal bond market has seen its worst beginning to a new year since 2011, with the S&P Municipal Bond Index losing 1.1 percent in the first 20 days of this year.

Muni bond funds took in $830 million in new investment this year through 19 January, compared to $6.1 billion for the same period a year ago.

The muni market has turned sharply after seeing record stability and near-record high prices last year.

When the U.S. Federal Reserve indicated it might raise short-term interest rates sooner than expected, muni yields rose along with those for treasury securities, with the rate on AAA-rated munis jumping from 1.03 percent on 30 December to 1.28 on 20 January, according to data service Refinitiv.

Bond yields rise as prices fall.

Conservative investors tend to like munis because local governments issue them to fund infrastructure projects and the interest the bonds pay usually is exempt from state and federal tax.

However, existing bonds with lower interest rates are likely to find few buyers in the secondary market during a time of inflation and rising rates.

Those conditions also increase costs for municipalities for everything from asphalt to office supplies, as well as driving up the cost of borrowing. Those factors are forcing them to pinch pennies and issue less debt.

State and local governments borrowed only $9.2 billion during the first 20 days of this year, the smallest amount in four years.

As *The Wall Street Journal* noted, the interest on those bonds has shot up: the city of Greenwich, Conn., issued one-year bonds earlier this month carrying .21 percent interest, contrasted with .12 percent a year earlier.

Purchases of munis also might be fewer this year because households are expected to save less in coming months, due to inflation and higher interest rates, compared to the COVID era when savings accounts ballooned as households had income but little to spend it on.

In addition, investors anticipating interest rate hikes have already shifted much of their wealth from riskier investments to bonds, so there is likely to be less money making that shift now, analysts told the *WSJ*.

Making matters worse for munis, many have teetering credit ratings: localities often had to spend big on health care, medical supplies, and other unexpected costs during the COVID crisis and borrowed to meet those needs.

Also, federal supports for cities and towns have now ended, leaving municipalities to fend for themselves financially.

TREND FORECAST: *The growing permanence of remote work is robbing office buildings of their value. As their value sinks, the amount of property tax a city can charge the owner also falls.*

Cities will have less revenue, which could push some to issue additional municipal bonds.

However, considering that moronic politicians with long track records of failure are in charge, cities will not place a greater priority on cutting spending during a time of inflation and economic uncertainty. Thus, rather than cut back, they will tax in all ways they can invent.

AMERICANS' ECONOMIC OUTLOOK BLEAKEST IN 10 YEARS

While the billionaires have gotten trillions of dollars richer, the average Americans' view of their economic future is the darkest since November 2011. That's a low that is even worse than in the early days of the COVID War, according to the University of Michigan's monthly survey of people's economic outlook.

The index fell to 67.2 in January from 70.6 a month earlier, 11.8 points lower than a year ago.

Economists polled by Bloomberg had expected a ranking of 68.7.

Unemployment is near historic lows, wages in 2021 grew faster than at any time in decades, and the economy grew 5.7 percent last year, its fastest expansion in decades, including a 6.9-percent burst in last year's final quarter.

However, individuals responding to the poll cited inflation and the COVID virus's persistence as their overriding concerns and chief sources of gloom, Business Insider reported.

Inflation rose 0.4 percent in December from November and 5.8 percent through all of 2021; during the same month, after-tax personal income, adjusted for inflation, shrank 0.2 percent, the fifth month in a row that take-home pay has lost ground to higher prices.

Public confidence in the federal government's economic management is its lowest since 2014, the poll found.

The U.S. Federal Reserve's looming interest rate increases may worsen the public mood if it is seen as part of the economic problem instead of part of the solution, survey officials warned.

TREND FORECAST: *People's economic outlook is always determined by what they see in their bank accounts, fuel bills, and grocery receipts. The public's outlook will not improve until inflation eases significantly and inflation is largely tamed.*

Neither is likely to happen until at least the second half of this year.

WORKER PAY GROWS, BUT INFLATION BEATS IT

Salaries and wages grew by 4 percent in 2021, their greatest yearly gain since 2001, the U.S. labor department reported, as employers competed for scarce workers during the Great Resignation.

Pay is increasing across the economy, from restaurants boosting wages to, or above, $15 an hour and investment banks paying six figures to hire financial newbies fresh out of college.

Wages at U.S. restaurants have grown by 10 percent, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, with higher wages contributing to McDonald's restaurants' average 6-percent menu price increase.

Airplane manufacturers and their suppliers have boosted pay more than 7 percent, the *WSJ* found.

Businesses' labor costs rose 1 percent in 2021's final quarter compared to 1.2 percent in the quarter before, hinting that the labor shortage might be easing and pay stabilizing, the *WSJ* noted.

The U.S. Federal Reserve, as well as many investors, now consider the labor market to be at, or close to, full employment, with the jobless rate edging under 4 percent.

However, the economy is supporting 16 percent fewer jobs than before the COVID virus arrived, meaning that the labor force itself has shrunk.

TREND FORECAST: *The labor market may be stabilizing. If it is, employers will feel less of an urge to raise wages, or at least to raise them less than they have already.*

Workers' pay already lags inflation, even considering 2021's record wage bump. According to seasonally adjusted data published by the Labor Department, considering the rate of inflation, the average worker got a 2.4 percent pay cut last year.

We forecast this disparity will worsen as employers ease-up on wage hikes while inflation keeps rising.

This in turn will put downward pressure on consumer spending which comprises 70 percent of America's Gross Domestic Product.

U.S. ECONOMIC GROWTH SPIKES, BEATING FORECASTS

The U.S. economy grew 6.9 percent in last year's fourth quarter compared to the same period a year earlier, the strongest quarter in more than a year and far ahead of analysts' predictions, which averaged 5.5 percent.

The growth rate tripled the previous quarter's pace of 2.3 percent.

The Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index (PCE), the U.S. Federal Reserve's favorite measure of inflation, grew by 5.8 percent for the period, lagging the economy's expansion.

Excluding food and fuel costs, the PCE was up 4.9 percent year on year.

Beyond consumers' holiday spending, much of the growth was attributed to companies beginning to rebuild inventories after a year of shortages. That increase in demand should, in turn, energize manufacturing, analysts told Bloomberg.

Companies could restock, in part, because consumers reined in spending, which grew 3.3 percent for the period, a modest bump from the third quarter's 2 percent and about the rate analysts had expected.

However, some of that new extra inventory may be the result of December holiday goods arriving too late for the season, thanks to snarled supply chains, analysts cited by Bloomberg pointed out.

The fourth-quarter surge helped propel the U.S. GDP to a 5.7-percent growth in 2021, adjusted for inflation, the best pace since 1984.

Consumer spending soared 7.9 percent in 2021, the most since 1946 immediately after World War Two ended.

The economy overall grew faster in 2021 than at any time since September 1984, when inflation was slowing and the U.S. was recovering from back-to-back recessions.

However, dangers lurk beneath the positive numbers, the *WSJ* noted.

A significant share of last quarter's economic activity was due to companies restocking their inventories, not to all-important consumer and business spending.

Factoring out the "inventory effect," spending grew by only 1.9 percent in the quarter, the *WSJ* said.

"The 6.9 percent figure is probably a bit overly optimistic assessment of the underlying strength of demand," Andrew Hunter, Capital Economics' chief U.S. economist, told the *WSJ*.

"It's increasingly the case that the economy is essentially at, or rapidly approaching, the capacity-constrained level," he said.

Also, while U.S. productivity now exceeds pre-COVID levels, businesses are doing more with fewer workers; about 3.6 million more workers, or 2.3 percent of 2019's labor force, are off the job now compared to February 2020.

TREND FORECAST: *The faster and higher interest rates rise, the faster and deeper the economy will decline.*

As we have continually detailed, the last two years of the economy were powered by the torrents of cheap and free money in the name of rock-bottom borrowing costs and unprecedented flows of federal stimulus gifts to households.

Now, much of that money is spent and the high saving rates have rapidly declined. In fact, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) the personal savings rate declined 22.3-percentage-point plummet from an all-time high in April, 2020 and is near its pre-COVID War levels.

CONSUMER SPENDING DIPPING DOWN

With the flow of free government money ending and inflation rising, U.S. consumer spending edged down 0.6 percent in December from November, the first monthly decline since February 2021, the U.S. commerce department reported.

With the fear of Omicron spending and people afraid to go out, plus a 7-percent inflation rate that set a 40-year record, spending on goods was down 2.6 percent in December as consumers had finished much of their holiday shopping earlier. In the same month, the Personal Consumption Expenditures Index, a key measure of inflation, grew at a 5.8-percent annual rate, more than at any time since September 1983.

And afraid of getting sick with COVID or coughs, consumers spent 0.5 percent more on services, due largely to Omicron-related health care needs. Consumer spending retreated as many aspects of the economy grew stronger (see related stories in this issue).

The U.S. GDP added 6.9 percent in 2021's last three months as consumers spent for the holidays. Wages and salaries grew by 0.7 percent in December and the personal savings rate rose to 7.9 percent, its second consecutive month of gains, but still just a tenth of a percent higher than it was pre-COVID War level.

The word on The Street is that "We estimate the slowdown [in consumer spending] will be short-lived," Bloomberg analysts said in a public statement, "with virus cases having already peaked.

"Robust gains in labor income will continue to support healthy gains in consumer spending as the year progresses," they predicted.

TREND FORECAST: *While Bloomberg analysts are bullish on consumer growth, their reasoning defies the facts. As we have detailed, labor income has not kept up with inflation, thus, consumers have less money to spend.*

And with interest rates rising, it will cost more to borrow money, which will slow down spending. However, that will not be apparent for several months to come.

Any reports this year of increased consumer spending must specify whether inflation has been factored into the numbers. Consumers will spend more this year to buy the same amount of goods, or even less, than last year.

Reporting "consumer spending is up" as if that alone is positive for the economy will be deceptive without the figure being compared with inflation.

Also, when the COVID War winds down in late March, mid-April, as we forecast, there will be a sharp spike in consumer spending.

PENDING HOME SALES SLIPPED IN DECEMBER

The number of pending home sales slid 3.8 percent in December compared to November and fell 6.9 percent from December 2020, according to the National Association of Realtors (NAR).

The number dropped most in the west and northeast, both of which were off by at least 10 percent, although all regions of the country saw fewer contracts.

"Pending home sales faded toward the end of 2021 as a diminished housing supply offered consumers very few options," NAR chief economist Lawrence Yun said in a statement announcing December's result.

"Mortgage rates have climbed steadily in the last several weeks, which, unfortunately, will push aside marginal buyers," he noted.

TREND FORECAST: *As we have said before in articles such as "Home Prices Up, Incomes Down" (16 Nov 2021), inflation paired with rising interest rates will continue to block more middle-income households, and most young families, from being able to build wealth by buying their own homes.*

Home prices will remain high as shortages of materials and labor constrain new construction. Thanks to inflation, even fewer people now will be able to save enough for a down payment on a house.

Despite the fabled "American Dream" rooted in home ownership, as we have greatly detailed, the U.S. will become a nation with more renters than homeowners.

HOME RENTAL RATES JUMP 12 PERCENT, SET RECORD IN JANUARY

Rental rates across the U.S. for places to live rose an average of 12 percent in January to set a new record, according to Zumper, an online rental agency.

Last month, U.S. renters paid an average of $1,374 for a one-bedroom apartment, compared to $1,217 a year earlier, Zumper said.

In 2020 and 2021, rents edged up only 0.3 and 0.6 percent, respectively, the agency noted.

"For the national index to move by double digits takes incredible price increases everywhere, and that's exactly what we're seeing," Zumper said in a research note.

Rents will continue to rise this year as potential buyers remain priced out of the tight housing market, the note predicted.

In 2020 as the COVID War began, 34.7 percent of homes were rented, according to U.S. census bureau data. As 2021 ended, the proportion had grown to 36 percent, rental database iproperty management reported.

Soaring rents “also reflect a pre-existing housing shortage that will likely continue to push rent up in 2022," Zumper said.

The U.S. needs another 5.24 million single-family homes to fulfill demand, Realtor.com reported, while new-home construction languishes at its slowest space since 1995, due to shortages of land and materials, as we reported in “Despite Steady Demand, Home Builders Limiting Sales” (17 Aug 2021).

TREND FORECAST: *The boom in rental housing continues to feed on itself.*

A shortage of homes keeps home prices high. Inflation and high rents prevent many households from being able to save enough to make a down payment on a house. And as we detailed, wages are not keeping up with inflation... especially home price inflation.

In 2021, home prices rose 19 percent. However, in the rigged Consumer Price Index of the U.S.S.A., rising home prices are not included in the CPI.

Housing landlords get richer while working families are trapped living in other people's properties.

This denial of home ownership to vast numbers of families will continue indefinitely until home prices level off, real incomes rise, and rental rates stabilize... a combination of factors that are unlikely to achieve with the current crime syndicate political gangs running the nation.

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE INVESTMENTS HIT RECORD LEVEL. READ BETWEEN THE LINES

In 2021, investors bought a record $809 billion worth of commercial real estate, according to Real Capital Analytics, far surpassing 2019's previous $600-billion record and doubling 2020's total.

Among the best sellers:

- apartment buildings, raking in $335.3 billion, 128 percent more than in 2020, as landlords kept raising rates in the face of relentless demand;
- industrial properties, totaling $166.1 billion in sales, up 56 percent year on year;

- resorts and vacation hotels that will profit from the resurgence in leisure travel, with hotels racking up $44.5 billion in property sales, more than doubling 2020's figure. However, sales of business-oriented hotels in urban centers slumped;
- warehouses also did well as demand for e-commerce fulfillment centers kept climbing.

In a detailed *Wall Street Journal* article, the value of properties owned by real estate investment trusts shot up 24 percent last year to a record level as December ended, according to data service Green Street.

Banks, insurance companies, and other financiers lent a record $690 billion for commercial property purchases last year, 8.7 percent more than in 2020 and 2.1 percent above 2019's mark, analytics firm Trepp reported.

Dark and Dreary

While the headline of the article sounded upbeat, there are strong downsides in the commercial sector. Retail space and office buildings left investors cold, with online shopping and remote work having become entrenched during the COVID era. Sales of office buildings notched a mediocre $139.2 billion in 2021.

Manhattan, which usually leads the list of hot locales for real estate investment, ranked ninth last year with $18.7 billion in sales, Real Capital's data showed.

"Manhattan has just fallen off the map relative to its size," James Costello, Real Capital's senior vice president, commented to the *WSJ*.

In its place, investors have turned to southern states where weather is warmer, housing is cheaper, and taxes are lower.

Dallas posted the greatest sales, at $48.9 billion, followed by Atlanta with $37.1 billion.

Suburban office towers in sunny spots such as Florida and North Carolina also drew more dollars than previously.

E-commerce continues to grow and demand for apartments has yet to slacken, while land and materials to build new multifamily properties remain in short supply.

Investors and asset managers have a lot of cash on hand and are eyeing medical offices, data centers, and student housing, which are growing in number but have yet to see the rise in value that other property sectors have, the *WSJ* noted.

The appetite for commercial real estate reflected that of the housing market, in which prices grew at a record 19 percent last year and sales were their most numerous in 15 years.

Both markets fed on low interest rates, which tempted investors to shift their assets to real estate, where opportunities for profit growth were better than elsewhere.

TREND FORECAST: *The bulk of investment has come from private equity firms, especially in apartments, as we reported in "Invitation Homes to Buy $1 Billion Worth of Houses This Year" (1 Jun 2021) and "Private Equity Partners Target $5 Billion in Rental Houses" (27 Jul 2021).*

Private equity firms followed the shift to remote work as workers, and investors, left office properties behind, as the data above shows.

The loss of investment momentum in office blocks in northern cities bodes a darker future for those cities. In articles such as "Labor Day: False Hopes of Commuter Economy" (27 Jul 2021), we traced that future: fewer commuters, a shrunken downtown economy, lower property values, a smaller tax base for those cities, and constrained spending leading to a lesser quality of life.

The center of gravity in American business is shifting southward (see "U.S. Financiers: Bye Bye Wall Street," 2 Feb 2021).

GM EXPANDS EV INVESTMENT

General Motors has announced investments of almost $7 billion to build an electric-vehicle battery plant in Michigan and retool a factory near Detroit to make electric Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra pickup trucks.

The two plants will employ about 4,000 people, GM estimated.

The state of Michigan gave GM $824 million in tax breaks and other economic incentives to keep the company's new projects in its home state, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

GM, who also is building battery plants in Ohio and Tennessee, recently began building electric Humvees in a reconfigured Detroit-area plant, and has unveiled plans to make EVs at plants in Mexico and Ontario.

GM's battery factories are a partnership between the automaker and LG Electric. The $2.6-billion cost of the new plants will be split evenly between the two companies.

The moves will help GM keep pace with the transition among U.S.-based auto companies from fossil fuel vehicles to electrics.

Ford's electric version of its F150 pickup truck has booked more than 150,000 advance orders and will begin production this spring. The company already has devoted a second plant to make the trucks and is building new battery factories in Kentucky and Tennessee.

Toyota will build a battery plant in North Carolina that will employ 1,750 workers, the company has said.

TREND FORECAST: *As eager as auto companies are to meet rising demand for EVs, forces already long at work will keep production growing only slowly.*

The global computer chip shortage will last through this year, and lithium for batteries—already up 400 percent in price in recent months (see related story in this issue)—will remain scarce, possibly for years, which we noted in "Commodities Supercycle Underway?" (11 May 2021) and "EV Battery Materials to be in Short Supply for Years" (27 Jul 2021).

Nickel, cobalt and other key minerals needed to make EVs also are falling further and further short of demand.

These shortages will help keep EV prices high and the cars out of reach for many who would like to buy them for years to come.

And, we maintain our forecast that the EV market will explode when a more advanced technology than the current batteries are invented.

TRENDS ON THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC FRONT

STOCKS, CRYPTO FACE BUMPY FUTURE, IMF SAYS

Stocks and cryptocurrencies face a more volatile future as the two become increasingly linked and the U.S. Federal Reserve raises interest rates, the International Monetary Fund warned last week.

“The Fed needs to tighten financial conditions,” Tobias Adrian, IMF’s director of monetary and capital markets, said in a Yahoo! Finance interview.

“That means interest rates have to come up, risky asset prices have to come down, and that could be painful,” he said.

Markets could take as long as six months to adjust to higher interest rates, he added.

Crypto markets are heavily leveraged, which increases volatility, he noted. Equity markets also are heavy on debt and hedge funds and, increasingly, other institutional investors are putting money in both.

Due to a lack of detailed data or disclosure requirements, “investors often don’t know how much risk they’re taking,” he pointed out, adding that regulations are needed and will be forthcoming.

For stablecoins—cryptos with values tied to more stable assets, such as national currencies—some issuers should be required to hold a banking license because they offer services similar to banks, Adrian contended.

“Well-regulated banks and banks backstopped by the U.S. Federal Reserve work well,” he said. Lacking adherence to banking regulations, “it’s going to be difficult for them to be truly stable,” he warned.

Adrian also lauded the Fed’s effort to create a digital dollar.

“A central bank digital currency is an important bridge to the crypto asset universe and makes sure that federal reserve money is an important foundation for this emerging financial system,” he said.

TREND FORECAST: *Speculators and investors will go their separate ways, as we described in “Bitcoin ETFs in Prep as SEC Highlights Path to Approval” (24 Aug 2021): investors will hew to stablecoins and regulated digital assets, while speculators will play on the unregulated free range where volatility reigns.*

On the equities side, markets’ shift to more conservative investments (see related stories in this issue) will hit growth stocks and SPAC enthusiasm. There will be fewer market players among the retail sector which helped inflate the market bubble as they take heavy hits trying to buy on downs and sell on the ups.

EUROZONE'S BUSINESS PACE SLOWS

Business activity in the 19-country Eurozone began this year at its slowest pace since February 2021.

IHS Markit's Eurozone purchasing managers index (PMI), a measure of business activity's momentum, slowed from 53.3 in December to 52.4 last month, slightly worse than analysts had expected.

A score above 50 signals growth, with higher numbers indicating more robust activity.

The survey also found that average prices charged for goods and services grew year over year in January at their fastest clip since 2002, depressing business activity generally as companies and customers tightened their belts.

Inflation across the zone ran at 5 percent in December, a record since the euro common currency was implemented in 1999.

The service sector's PMI registered 51.2, a nine-month low, as Omicron-related restrictions hobbled trade, especially in hospitality businesses where staff shortages also ate into revenue.

In contrast, manufacturing's PMI climbed to a five-month high of 59 as supply chain knots began to loosen and back orders began to be filled.

Germany turned in what IHS called a "surprisingly resilient performance," notching a PMI of 54.3, its best since September. The rise in activity "cast doubt over predictions Germany could slide into recession," the *Financial Times* said.

In France, business activity ground to its slowest in nine months, with a PMI of 52.7, down from 55.8 last month. The government imposed new restrictions last month during the Omicron onslaught and has yet to lift them.

However, France's overall 2021 results outshone its Eurozone partners (see related story in this issue.)

TREND FORECAST: *Until nations relax COVID War restrictions and draconian mandates, Europe's economic output will continue to lag that of China and the United States.*

While some countries, such as Denmark are loosening up, others like Italy are tightening up with vaccine requirements and fines for the unvaxxed.

The European Central Bank (ECB) faces the same choice as the U.S. Federal Reserve: raise interest rates to cool inflation or leave rates low to spark a sluggish economy.

However, despite the ECB's negative interest rates, the cheap money flow still has not sparked an economic renaissance. And, they have kept interest rates low even though Euro area annual inflation was 5.0 percent in December 2021.

The ECB will hold policy until, and probably after, low rates and quantitative easing become obviously untenable. No one knows when that will be. Since, like the rest of the Bankster shills, the ECB had long claimed that when inflation hit their 2 percent target, that would pressure them to raise interest rates... which they have not done.

FRANCE'S 2021 ECONOMY UP, GERMANY DOWN

France's GDP expanded by 7 percent last year, topping pre-COVID output as consumer spending drove the economy's best annual growth in 52 years.

In December, the economy grew 0.7 percent above November's level.

"There are still some sectors having trouble, like tourism and hotels, but most are recovering very strongly and that's creating jobs," finance minister Bruno Le Maire said in a statement announcing the results.

"The French economy has rebounded spectacularly and that's erased the economic crisis," he added.

An increase in tourism gave Spain's economy a 2-percent lift in 2021's fourth quarter, helping it grow 5 percent through 2021, its best record since 2000, although still 4 percent less than its pre-COVID GDP.

On the downside, Europe's largest economy, Germany, saw its manufacturing-dependent economy shrank 0.7 percent over the quarter, giving it a 2.8-percent annual growth in 2021.

TREND FORECAST: *If the ECB continues to keep interest rates zero despite inflation spiking, and nations dramatically withdraw from fighting the COVID War—which is a trend as evidenced by the easing of draconian mandates in Spain, U.K., Denmark, Czech Republic, etc.—Europe's economy will grow during the tourist season.*

However, if nations impose strict travel mandates such as forced vaccinations, testing and quarantine, the recovery will be limited.

GLOBAL JUNK BOND MARKETS REELING

The prospect of imminent higher interest rates has spun the world's junk bond markets into turmoil, with overborrowed companies facing higher costs to refinance debt and other businesses seeking new financing seeing their prospects dim.

In the U.S., new sales of high-yield or "junk" bonds have fallen 45 percent, year over year, Bloomberg reported; in Europe, sales in January were cut in half.

U.S. junk bond funds shrank by $2.8 billion during the week ending 26 January, the third consecutive week of outflows exceeding $2 billion.

"We are now facing the reality of a much more hawkish Fed that will withdraw liquidity faster than expected," David Knutson, Schroders' chief of U.S. fixed income products, told Bloomberg.

"This has curtailed demand in the riskier parts of the market as they will be impacted first," he said. "The balance between borrowers and lenders is starting to turn in favor of lenders."

ION Analytics, a financial data firm, cut in half the size of its recent bond sale. The Italian soccer team FC Internazionale Milano SpA had to settle on an interest rate of 6.75 percent to refinance debt that had been costing it 4.875 percent.

Covis Pharmaceuticals Inc. may delay its $850-million bond issue, which had been targeting a 7-percent interest rate.

Buyouts funded by high-interest bonds also are expected to shrink in number.

The change in market is pushing some companies, such as Fertitta Entertainment, to turn their backs on bonds and take on debt through loans, where rates and terms can be more favorable, Bloomberg reported.

Yields on CCC-rated bonds, among the riskiest, leapt by half a percentage point or more during January's third week to average 7.62 percent, the highest in two months. Better-grade B-rated issues saw yields move to a 15-month high average of 5.53 percent, Bloomberg data showed.

"We're entering into a more skeptical era now and fixed-rate investors are much more price sensitive and cautious, especially on the lower quality names," Ben Thompson, co-director of leveraged finance in Europe for JPMorgan Chase, said to Bloomberg.

"The lesser-known companies, or ones with history, will be a harder sell this year based on what we've seen so far," he added.

TRENDPOST: *In articles such as "Will Junk Bonds Turn to Junk?" (14 Dec 2021), we have repeatedly warned that when interest rates are poised to rise, junk bonds will be among the first facets of the financial market to tumble.*

Their slide has begun and will continue, barring unforeseen external factors, until interest rates level off.

CHILE HIKES INTEREST RATES MOST IN 20 YEARS

Chile's central bank raised its overnight interest rate by 1.5 percentage points to 5.5 percent, surprising analysts' expectations of no more than a 1.25-percent bump.

In its December meeting, the bank had indicated that rate increases would be no more than 1.25 percentage points at a time.

It was the bank's biggest rate hike since 2001, a forceful attempt to tackle inflation, which climbed to 7.2 percent in December, its fastest clip in 14 years.

"The evolution of inflation continues to face significant risks and their possible materialization becomes especially relevant in a context where both the annual change in the [consumer price index] and its outlook are already high," the bank's governing board wrote in a statement announcing the increase.

Chile's economy grew by 12 percent last year, according to the bank's estimates, the fastest rate of any South American nation.

Almost two-thirds of the population has been vaccinated against COVID, which persuaded officials to lift most economic and social restraints.

The expansion also was fueled, in part, by the government's cash payments and by its decision to permit three rounds of penalty-free early pension withdrawals, which put an additional $50 billion into the economy.

"We expect a rate hike of [1.5 percentage points] in March and then to have borrowing costs held at that level for one or two meetings as [bank officials] wait for signs that the economy and inflation are cooling off," Sergio Godoy, STF's chief economist, told Bloomberg.

The bank's rate-setting committee has signaled that rates will reach 6.5 percent during the next quarter and 6.75 percent in the third.

Individual rate boosts are likely to be small "unless there's another inflation surprise," Euroamerica economist Martina Ogaz said to Bloomberg.

TREND FORECAST: *The high interest rates will slow Chile's economic growth. In fact, even though cooper is a primary Chilean export and its prices jumped 25*

percent in 2021, its peso fell nearly 17 percent. Thus, they have to keep rates high from keeping the peso from slipping.

And as we reported, Carlos Jaramillo, head of the World Bank's operations in Latin America and the Caribbean, told the Financial Times, that among the economies of Latin America where the COVID War has done the most damage, it will take at least until 2023 to return to pre-pandemic levels: "It will only be a gradual recovery," he said. "I don't think we're expecting a [quick bounce-back anywhere.]"

Also see, "LATIN AMERICA FACES SLOW, PAINFUL ECONOMIC RECOVERY" and "U.N. WARNS LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC DISASTER LOOMING.")

TURKISH LIRA PAUSES ITS DECLINE; ERDOGAN FIRES STATISTICS CHIEF

The Turkish lira lost about 44 percent of its value against the dollar last year but recently has stabilized after the government unveiled a new savings scheme and the central bank flooded the economy with cash.

Under the savings program, the government guarantees to make up any loss to savings accounts' value due to inflation for a period of up to a year.

Given Turkish president Recep Erdogan's vow to keep interest rates low in the face of inflation, now raging as high as 40 percent or more, there is more inflation danger ahead.

Also, rising U.S. interest rates likely will lure capital out of emerging economies, including Turkey's, which could push inflation even higher and drive Turks to buy dollars again, researcher Guldem Atabay at Istanbul Analytics, warned in a comment to the *Financial Times.*

We maintain that Turkey's central bank is still using the country's foreign currency reserves to buy lira and prop up its value.

A regulation introduced this year requires exporters to sell 25 percent of their foreign currency revenue to the central bank in exchange for lira. Some analysts believe the bank is pouring those proceeds into the bottomless pit that the lira has become.

"The stability in the lira is coming both from the partial, short-term success of the savings mechanism and from the fact that the central bank is probably continuing to support the lira," Ibrahim Aksoy, an HSBC analyst, told the *FT*.

Erdogan already has declared the savings scheme to be a brilliant success.

The government's "lira-ization plan" will combine with rising exports, increased investment, and job growth to knock down inflation, Şahap Kavcıoğlu, Erdogan's hand-picked central bank governor, recently said.

Analysts dismissed his claims; the official inflation rate reached 36.1 percent in December, the highest in 19 years, and interest rates are deeply negative when inflation is factored in.

After the government's statistics agency announced the 36.1 rate, Erdogan fired the agency's chairman, Sait Dincer, saying in private that the agency overstated the number, according to the *FT*.

"Never mind who is the chairman," Dincer said in a comment the *FT* quoted. "Can you imagine that hundreds of my colleagues could stomach or remain quiet about publishing an inflation rate very different from what they had established?"

"I have a responsibility to 84 million people," he said.

The firing "will just increase concern about the reliability of the data, in addition to major concerns about economic policy settings," analyst Timothy Ash of BlueBay Asset Management wrote in a note to clients.

"The authoritarian alliance" headed by Erdogan "keeps harming the country," opposition leader and former Erdogan ally Ali Babacan said in a public statement after Dincer was dumped.

TREND FORECAST: *Erdogan reflexively fires officials who try to force his ideas about Turkey's economy to confront reality.*

Over the past year, Erdogan has dumped three central bank chiefs when they raised interest rates, contradicting his erroneous insistence that low interest rates will cure the country's inflation.

Our coverage has included "Turkey's Financial Markets Crash After Agbal Firing" (30 Mar 2021), "Turkey: Another Day, Another Central Bankster Fired" (1 Jun 2021) and "Turkey: The Famous Lira Dive" (23 Nov 2021).

Before long, the country will run through the rest of its foreign currency reserves, pushing the lira lower.

Also, when the central bank has to make good on its promise to repay losses to savings accounts, it will do so with more lira, which will be of little practical value to savers.

As those events come closer, Erdogan's popularity will erode further as the country's 2023 presidential election looms. And, he has shown no interest in surrendering power, allegedly having rigged the 2018 election.

As a result, he is likely to tighten his authoritarian control, increase brutality in suppressing protests, and find an excuse to attempt to unite the country against a real or imagined external enemy.

As Gerald Celente often says, most recently on the cover of our 25 January issue, "When all else fails, they take you to war."

SPOTLIGHT: INFLATION

LITHIUM PRICES SOAR ON CHINA'S EV BOOM

Lithium prices in China have risen fivefold in the past 12 months on the strength of the country's electric vehicle boom, Bloomberg reported.

The price in China of lithium carbonate, the active ingredient in EV batteries, notched a new record on 17 January, according to data from Asian Metal Inc.

EV registrations in the country shot up 35 percent in January from December, with another 400,000 sold, the China Automotive Technology and Research Center said.

The "fast development" of China's EV industry and market will push up profits for Ganfeng Lithium by more than 400 percent this year, the company said, driven partly by a long-term supply contract it signed with Tesla last November.

The rise in demand, and price, will drive the metal's price 2 percent higher this year, BloombergNEF predicted, pushing the time that EVs will reach cost parity with gas buggies to 2026, two years later than the most recent forecast.

Despite high demand, and rising profits to be had, developers are finding difficulties bringing new supplies into production.

In mid-January, Serbia blocked a proposal for Europe's biggest lithium mine after local residents protested. Lithium Americas' plan to open a mine at Nevada's Thacker pass has been stymied by opposition from environmental activists and native American groups.

TREND FORECAST: *As we have noted elsewhere in this issue, the growing shortage of lithium will hobble EV production for several years.*

The shortage will energize a lithium recycling industry, already under development and being financed in part by automakers (see "EV Battery Recycling is Now a Thing," 26 Oct 2021).

KEY U.S. INFLATION MEASURE REACHES 39-YEAR HIGH

The U.S. Personal Consumption Expenditure Index, the U.S. Federal Reserve's key gauge of inflation, ran at 5.8 percent year on year in December, beating November's 5.7-percent rate to mark its fastest rise since 1982, Fox Business reported (see related stories in this issue).

December was the ninth consecutive month that inflation has ranged above the Fed's 2-percent target rate.

Inflation's brisk pace was set by energy costs, which shot up 29.9 percent in 2021; food prices added 5.7 percent through the year.

Excluding food and energy, the price index gained 4.9 percent over the 12 months.

The cost of services rose 4.2 percent and prices for goods swelled 8.8 percent.

Also, the labor cost index gained 4 percent last year, adding 1 percent in the final quarter and making a significant contribution to inflation.

"We are attentive to the risks that persistent real wage growth in excess of productivity could put upward pressure on inflation," Fed chair Jerome Powell said during a 26 January press conference, indicating that rising wages are a factor in the Fed's accelerated plan to boost interest rates, Fox noted.

"Inflation has persisted longer than we thought and we're prepared to use our tools to ensure that higher inflation does not become entrenched," he added.

TRENDPOST: *In December, consumers spent 0.6 percent less, especially on cars, clothing, and electronics as inflation ate into household budgets.*

Also, the Omicron hysteria inspired politicians to impose and renew government restrictions on social movement and businesses which slowed down spending.

And the fear among the general public that they would catch the virus, has kept them from going out in public and spending freely.

ONWARD AND UPWARD FOR GROCERY PRICES

In a recent letter to retailers, Kraft Heinz announced it will raise prices this spring by 6.6 percent on Velveeta cheese-like products to 30 percent on Oscar Mayer turkey bacon, with a similar range of price hikes across products from cold cuts and hot dogs to Maxwell House coffee and Capri Sun drinks.

For several months, food producers have been raising prices and warning of more hikes ahead, as we reported in "Food Companies Raise Retail Prices" (15

Jun 2021) and "Kraft Heinz Jacks Prices as It Scrambles to Meet Demand" (2 Nov 2021).

In November, the company announced a 9-percent boost in the prices of several products.

Since then, the company has been dealing with "constrained supply, logistic bottlenecks, and weather-driven crop losses," the letter said, increasing material and shipping costs and forcing yet more price increases on yet more products.

To ease the bite on consumers' wallets, the company is increasing some package sizes and adding more affordable price points for some products, it said.

In late January, Procter & Gamble announced 8-percent average price boosts on Bounce, Downy, Gain, and Tide laundry products. ConAgra, maker of Slim Jim jerky-like snacks and Marie Callender's frozen dinners, warned that price hikes will take effect later this year.

As prices have risen, many consumers have altered their habits to buy a smaller range of staple products, switched from national brands to cheaper house-label foods, or begun shopping at discount grocers, CNN Business reported.

TRENDPOST: *Consumers can make the most of their grocery budgets by not buying Velveeta, hot dogs, Slim Jims, and other factory creations that grow waistlines as well as prices.*

Investing in real, whole foods not only improves nutrition and controls weight but also safeguards health and longevity while giving you the best value for your food dollars.

Again, as we have greatly detailed, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, some 78 percent of those hospitalized for COVID were overweight. And, among the 1 to 17 year olds hospitalized for the virus, the CDC reports that 61 percent were obese.

In America, 72 percent of the population is overweight, and 40 percent obese.

Yet, there is never a word among the "health experts" for people to get in the best shape they can and strengthen their immune system to fight the virus. Instead, they pump the COVID Jab.

STEEL PRICES FALL BACK TO YEAR-AGO LEVELS

After peaking at $1,960 a ton in late September, spot market prices for rolled steel dropped to $1,270 a ton in January, a level not seen since March 2021.

U.S. steel production increased by 19 percent in 2021 to meet surging demand. That rise in output has now lofted supplies above demand, allowing prices to settle down, analysts told *The Wall Street Journal*.

"There's no longer a hunger to restock steel," CEO James Barnett of Grand Steel Products said to the *WSJ*.

Price will fall further this year, Barnett said, because new U.S. mills will begin to produce and more steel will be imported.

Nucor, the largest U.S. steel maker, is completing new mills in Kentucky and West Virginia. U.S. Steel is doubling production at an Arkansas plant. American steel output is expected to grow by 10 million tons this year, the *WSJ* reported.

Meanwhile, another three million tons from Europe will arrive in the U.S. duty-free under a trade deal negotiated by the Biden administration.

Steel has been a major driver of inflation; its high price has been reflected in products from cars to kitchen appliances.

Unquenchable demand during the economic recovery multiplied U.S. Steel's revenue by 20 times, zooming from $49 million in 2020's fourth quarter to $1 billion for the same period in 2021.

Nucor booked $2.25 billion in profits during last year's last quarter, compared to $399 million a year earlier, even though it shipped 6 percent less steel.

However, the current lower prices will not immediately drop the price of other goods.

Manufacturers typically buy steel through long-term contracts at fixed prices. Those contracts will need to run out or be renegotiated, either of which takes time.

Also, the current market's falling prices and rising supply may be temporary or seasonal conditions that will fade, according to Mark Millett, CEO of Steel Dynamics.

"We don't see any change in the underlying consumption of steel, nor do we see it happening over the months or quarters ahead," he told the *WSJ*.

Some analysts and executives expect steel prices to stabilize this year, but remain permanently higher.

American manufacturers underbuilt and underproduced for years," Jeremy Flack, CEO of Flack Global Metals, commented to the *WSJ*. "The price of steel is going to be higher for everything."

SPOTLIGHT: BIGS GETTING BIGGER

Each week, we report instances where the money junky hedge funds, private equity groups and the already big companies swallow another piece of the global economy. Here are some more examples of what the BIGS have been gobbling up and how the Bigs keep getting bigger and the rich keep getting richer...

AMAZON MAPS CAMPAIGN TO CONQUER BRICK-AND-MORTAR RETAIL

On 18 January, Amazon unveiled the newest iteration of its Go stores: a "multimission" convenience store suitable for the suburbs, with upscale food, possibly with wines and craft beers, and lounges with workstations and USB ports.

Customers will need an Amazon app on their phones to enter the store. They can drop their purchases in a bag and then walk out without having the inconvenience of dealing with a cashier. The store's technology will tote up their purchase amounts and bill their credit cards.

The company plans to open its first such store in Mill Creek, Wash., later this year and another one in Los Angeles at some future time.

The company has pondered opening as many as 6,000 of the suburban sites and is considering selling gas at them as well. British oil giant BP had contacted Amazon about installing and operating gas pumps at Go stores but the discussions ended without a deal.

An internal Amazon planning document suggested starting with five to 15 stores over two years to test ideas and work out bugs and said that selling fuel "would help a lot," Business Insider reported.

People buy gas not by brand loyalty but by proximity and convenience, the document noted, and said Amazon could gain extra revenue from ad screens on gas pumps.

Amazon also recently announced plans to launch clothing stores named "Amazon Style," also cashierless, and offering apparel ranging from cheap t-shirts to four-figure fashion.

Amazon also has opened physical small-format, automated convenience stores, "4-Star" stores stocked with home goods, toys, electronics, and other sundries, and a growing collection of grocery stores under the "Fresh" name.

It also owns the Whole Foods supermarket chain.

TRENDPOST: *Fewer and fewer companies—Amazon, private equity firms, oil and drug giants—are coming to own and control more and more of the U.S. and global economies.*

In the U.S., antitrust laws and enforcement are lax and not suited to the new world of Bigs; in emerging markets, governments welcome the influx of cash and jobs.

Bigs will continue to take more and more until popular uprisings force lawmakers to rein them in, a challenge made greater by the amount of money Bigs have to buy and control politicians.

TRIAN BUYS INTO UNILEVER

New York-based Trian Fund Management, with $8.5 billion under its wing, has bought shares in international food conglomerate Unilever after Unilever's $68-billion bid to buy drugmaker GlaxoSmithKline's consumer

products division failed, *The Wall Street Journal* reported.

The number of Unilever shares Trian has bought, and the price paid, were not disclosed.

Unilever has introduced no eye-catching innovations for some time and its sales stagnated through the COVID crisis while competitors did better.

The bid for Glaxo was an attempt to break into the relatively fast-growing health and beauty market to offset slow growth in the food industry, Unilever said, adding that if it had acquired Glaxo, it would have divested other parts of its business.

Both investors and analysts criticized the move. Several past Unilever acquisitions have not panned out. Some observers said the company should energize its existing businesses instead of adding yet another one in which it had limited experience, the *WSJ* noted.

The effort collapsed when Unilever's shareholders failed to support it and Glaxo held out for a higher price. Investors have called on the company to dump sluggish brands and re-energize core businesses.

Trian began buying shares of Unilever before the Glaxo misstep.

Nelson Peltz, Trian's chairman, has been active in food and consumer products businesses before, having held board seats with Procter & Gamble, Mondelez International, and H.J. Heinz.

In the past, Peltz has attempted to break up companies he believed were bloated or underperforming.

SPOTLIGHT: CHINA

IMF CUTS OUTLOOK FOR CHINA'S ECONOMY

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts China's economy will grow by 4.8 percent this year, not the 5.7 percent it had foreseen previously, the agency said in its annual outlook report.

China's 8.1-percent growth last year depended too heavily on exports and government investment while consumer spending sagged, the IMF said.

Also, the country's growth in 2021's fourth quarter slowed markedly, the IMF noted.

"Growth momentum has slowed considerably, with consumption lagging every other part of the GDP," Helge Berger, the IMF's head of mission in China, said in a statement quoted by *The Wall Street Journal*.

"The investment-driven recovery has reversed earlier, hard-won progress in rebalancing the economy [between manufacturing and consumption], adding to the challenges of achieving sustainable, high-quality growth over the medium term," IMF's analysis said.

The government's drastic restrictions meant to curb the spread of the Delta and Omicron viruses, coupled with Beijing's heavy-handed crackdowns on the real estate, financial, and tech sectors to control what are seen as "capitalist excesses," have sapped enthusiasm among businesses and individual investors, the *WSJ* said.

To goose the economy, the People's Bank of China has cut interest rates, continued quantitative easing, urged banks to lend more, and leaned on local governments to boost infrastructure spending.

China's government is likely to set a growth target of 5.5 percent for this year, according to economists who consult with government officials and spoke to the *WSJ*.

Xi Jinping, China's president, will bid for an unprecedented third term in office later this year. Part of his claim to leadership will be that the Chinese economy continues to outperform those of western nations, especially the U.S., a government-involved economist told the *WSJ*.

TREND FORECAST: *China's Lunar New Year which kicked off yesterday, is not off to a strong start. Its National Bureau of Statistics reported that the nation's manufacturing purchasing managers index fell to 50.1 in January, down from 50.3 in December. The 50 mark separates expansion from contraction.*

The Caixin China manufacturing PMI, which focuses on small private businesses, fell to 49.1 in January, its lowest level since February 2020 when the COVID War began.

Further highlighting the weakness heading into the New Year, the sub index which measures total new orders fell to 49.3 in January, export orders were at 48.4 in January and factory production was at 50.9.

To help juice its economy, while much of the world is raising interest rates, China is lowering theirs. Its central bank lowered its benchmark lending rates in December and January.

The government has urged banks to extend more home loans to push up the sagging real estate market, and encouraged banks to help bail out cash-strapped property developers with distressed assets.

And, when China relaxes its draconian lockdown mandates, it will dramatically drive up consumer spending which has been sluggish.

Therefore, while its economy will not have the 8.1 percent GDP growth rate it had last year, overall it will remain strong and grow in the 5 to 6 percent range.

CHINA MAY BREAK UP TROUBLED REAL ESTATE GIANT

The Chinese government is mulling a plan to dismantle ailing real estate giant China Evergrande Group, the ailing real estate conglomerate whose failure to make bond payments threatened to topple the country's overleveraged real estate sector.

The plan, formulated by officials in Evergrande's home province of Guangdong, calls for the company to sell almost all of its assets, with the proceeds going to pay creditors.

Unsold assets would be taken over by the China Cinda Asset Management Co., a large Evergrande creditor and state-owned operation that manages bad corporate debts.

Evergrande's property service and electric vehicle businesses, which are held separately from the property development business, would remain intact under the plan. The two units now are worth more than the rest of Evergrande, which has seen its market value fall below $3 billion.

Government officials have made it clear that Beijing will not bail out Evergrande and central bank officials scolded the company for its "blind expansion and diversification" and poor management as the housing market was slowing.

If China's government approves the proposal, a protracted struggle would follow to decide which creditors are paid how much.

The outcome would provide clues about how China plans to sustain economic growth while reducing recklessness and overborrowing, which has contributed to that growth while also damaging the larger economy.

The free-wheeling real estate sector also has been at odds with Chinese president Xi Jinping's announced goal of "common prosperity," an initiative to close a widening wealth gap in the country's fast-growing economy.

It will be a tricky balancing act; in mid-January, the International Monetary Fund warned that China's slowing housing markets are a risk to global economic growth.

Evergrande said in a 19 January statement that it will present a restructuring proposal within six months and begged offshore bondholders not to take dramatic legal action to collect what the company owes them.

Meanwhile, the company was officially designated "in default" after failing to make several bond payments in December.

Efforts to sell parts of the business have produced few results and a plan to sell the company's Hong Kong headquarters has stalled.

On 27 January, Los Angeles-based Oaktree Capital, an Evergrande creditor, seized a 2.2-million-square-foot Hong Kong property, valued at $1 billion, where Evergrande's founder and chairman had once planned to build a mansion.

TREND FORECAST: *Evergrande's woes have worried the global investment community, fearing that the company's implosion could spread through the world's second-largest economy, which depends on real estate for as much as 30 percent of its GDP.*

Under the direction of regulators, Evergrande is prioritizing payments owed to suppliers and migrant workers to quell any prospect of social unrest.

The company also is being pressured to complete homes for the 1.6 million buyers who have already made deposits and must repay retail investors who bought the bonds it sold to finance its building projects.

Evergrande's liabilities exceed $300 billion and include more than $19 billion owed to foreign bondholders.

While an Evergrande crash will rattle China, the government will control its fallout. We have detailed the ills of Evergrande and China's wobbly property development industry in "China's Real Estate Market Teeters on Evergrande's Debt" (21 Sep 2021), "China's Real Estate Troubles Ripple Across Emerging Markets" (26 Oct 2021) and "China's Real Estate Crisis Grows" (9 Nov 2021).

CHINA SALES DRIVE APPLE FOURTH-QUARTER REVENUE TO RECORD

In 2021's final quarter, Chinese customers bought $25.8 billion worth of Apple products, 21 percent more than a year earlier, the company said.

The company shipped 21.5 million units during the period, 40 percent more than a year earlier, data service Canalys reported.

Apple's fourth-quarter revenue reached $124 billion, up 11 percent year over year and its smallest annual quarterly growth in more than a year.

Apple's robust Chinese market is a reversal from January 2019, when the company cut its outlook for sales in the country.

At the time, iPhone sales in China were slumping as native Huawei Technologies was offering similar products that were cheaper at a time when the country's economy was slowing.

Apple bounced back in late 2020 with the iPhone 12, sporting 5G capability, and last September when the 1Phone 13 debuted and led smartphone sales in the country that month, Counterpoint Research reported.

That momentum lasted through 2021's fourth quarter, giving Apple 23 percent of the market, compared to 16 percent a year earlier, and the company's first market-leading quarter in the country since the final three months of 2015.

During the same period, China's overall smartphone market grew just three percent.

In 2021, the overall market remained 10 percent below 2019's pre-COVID level.

Meanwhile, Huawei plummeted from a 23-percent market share to 7, crippled by U.S. sanctions on the company that severely hampered its ability to buy chips or use the Android operating system.

On 27 January, Apple reported its fourth-quarter profit to be up 20 percent, setting a record at $34.6 billion. Sales rose 11 percent in the Americas, still Apple's strongest market with $51.5 billion in sales for the period.

TREND FORECAST: *We note this article to continue to emphasize, that despite all the western nations concern of a China/Taiwan conflict and/or China being accused of genocide against the Uyghurs, the business of business is business.*

And China, with 1.4 billion people and on track to overtake the United States as the world's largest economy, major international corporations will not sacrifice the bottom line for political or human rights purposes.

TESLA GOES KARAOKE IN CHINA, BEIJING SINGING ITS OWN TUNE

Tesla sold out of karaoke mics in China that will be compatible with a software update after losing some ground to rivals in the country's EV market.

The Wall Street Journal reported that the Austin-based company started selling the mics for $188 a pop. The idea is that occupants of the car will have the opportunity to turn their cabins into a karaoke bar that includes tracks and videos.

"I was quite jealous that BYD [a Chinese manufacturing company] owners get to sing karaoke in their cars," Jiang Xin, 49, a Tesla owner, told the paper. (See "IN CHINA, DOMESTIC BRANDS OUTPACE WESTERN ICONS.")

The *Journal* report pointed out how important karaoke singing is for the Chinese and said solo booths began popping up when bars were closed at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak. The paper, citing iiMedia Research Group, said about 500 million people in the country used online karaoke services last year.

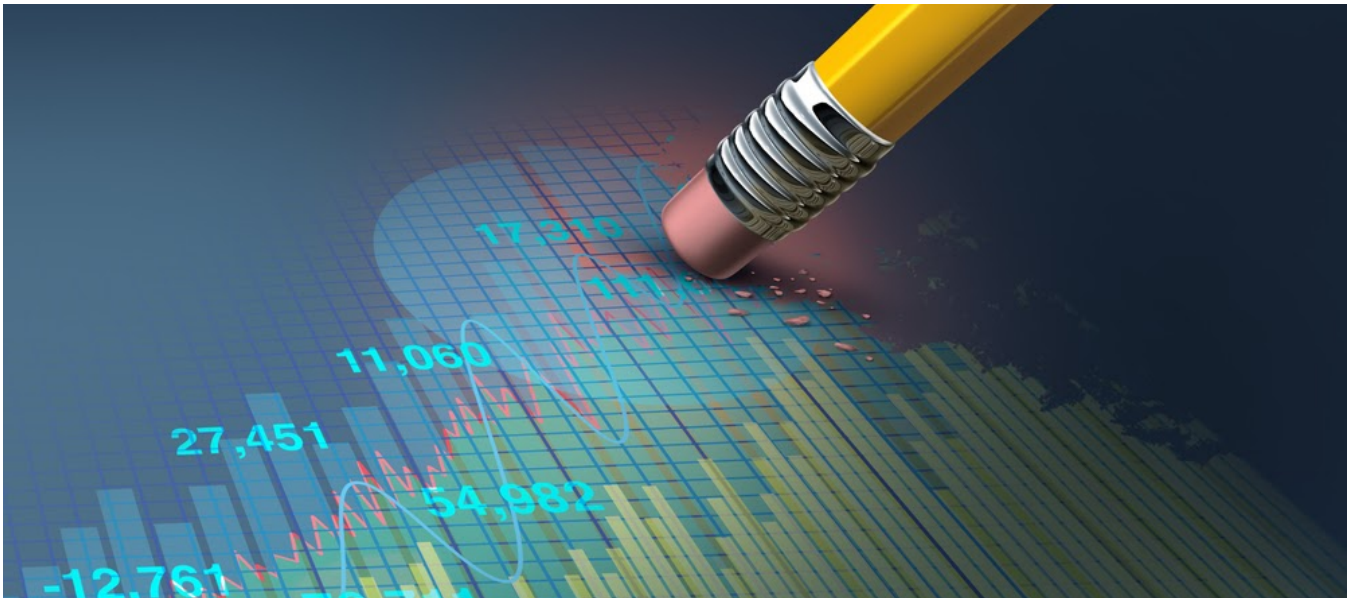
The TeslaMic—which sells for about $188, is only available in China and includes a companion app called Leishi KTV, The Verge reported. It was sold out within an hour. The company is not producing any new vehicle models in 2022, and will delay its Cybertruck.

TREND FORECAST: *China's blossoming domestic consumer economy and its challenge to western brands strengthens our Top Trend 2021—the rise of China. As we have long said, the 21st century will belong to China because the business of China is business and the business of the U.S. is war.*

Moreover, Americans, of which 70 percent are overweight and 42 percent obese and the majority of the population dressed down... the nation is no longer viewed as the "Exceptional's" and has lost its status as the global trend setter.

With a population of 1.4 billion and nearly a half million middle class and the government emphasizing a dual circulation policy which emphasizes a self-sustaining economy, the nation's focus will emphasize the "Chinese way" of elegance, grace, pop-culture and style.

TRENDS IN THE MARKETS



MARKETS: CRASH OR CORRECTION?

By Gregory Mannarino TradersChoice.net

The stock market IS NOT CRASHING.

Currently the stock market is in a corrective phase, something I have been saying that the market needed for months on my YouTube blog.

Here is a bit of information for you… markets do not always go straight up!

As obvious as that may seem, every time that the stock market gives back or "corrects"—people start to panic.

Just to put this into perspective… Last year, 2021, the S&P500 put on more record highs than ever before. Now, here we are just one month into 2022, and the market is experiencing a normal corrective phase. A corrective phase which will lead to more record highs not too far off.

People tend to fixate on what the stock market does, which is generally just a random walk with an upward drift however, what people SHOULD be looking at are market drivers.

I have outlined for many years that price action in the stock market derives value from what is occurring in the debt market. Understanding that the stock market derives value from action in the debt market, then the stock market itself can be considered a derivative—meaning it derives value from what is occurring in the debt market.

Key market drivers are:

1. The 10-year yield.
2. The yield curve itself.
3. The (DXY) or relative strength of the dollar.
4. Crude oil.
5. Risk, which can be quantified by looking at the **MMRI (Mannarino Market Risk Indicator)**. *The MMRI can be found, and is free for everyone, right on my website TradersChoice.net*
6. The balance sheet, or debt, being held by the Federal Reserve. The balance sheet of the Federal Reserve can be found right on the Federal Reserve's website.

The talk as of late is how Fed rate hikes will affect the market. I made a recent call prior to the last Fed meeting on monetary policy which was: *"If the Fed Does Not Raise Rates, The Stock Market Will Fall,"*—**my call was exactly right.**

However, I believed that the Federal Reserve WOULD raise rates though, as the market was pricing a hike in. My call on the Fed raising rates was wrong, but my call on the market reaction was spot on.

The Federal Reserve, despite the announcement of a "taper," has not tapered at all. (See the following chart of the Federal Reserve Balance Sheet).

In fact, since the Federal Reserve's announcement of a "taper," asset purchases continue unabated.

In my view, when the Fed does raise rates, most likely by March now, the stock market will respond in a positive way, that is go higher.

The REAL CRASH will begin with a meltdown/sell-off in the debt market- which is the driver of the stock market.

At the present time there are simply no red flags, which tells me that the current stock market action is nothing more than a normal corrective phase.

TRENDS IN SURVIVALISM

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN EVIL

By Bradley J. Steiner, American Combato

This is really a prelude to the next article on ruthlessness, which, despite our efforts at clarity, may be thought "too extreme" by some. Proof that a percentage (actually a too-damn-large percentage) of so-called "human" beings literally delight in being scum, may be seen even by those who are uninvolved in self-defense and combat studies.

Just look at the phenomenon of releasing computer viruses, and of hacking into others' computers solely for the purpose of wreaking havoc in those others' lives.

About twenty years ago, when we finally got and began to familiarize ourselves with a computer, we asked a student of ours who was a very highly expert computer specialist about the "virus thing" that, at the time, we had only just heard about. "How does that scam work?" we asked him. "Does it pull in big bucks for those who create the viruses?"

His answer momentarily surprised us, and then confirmed the conviction that we have had since childhood—i.e that the "human" species is somewhat of a failed experiment; that "humans" in far too many instances, are crap.

"No, Brad," he answered simply. "The people who create and send the viruses do it for fun. There's no money in it." "For fun." Seriously ruining others' records, businesses, personal communications, and documents, etc. is "fun" for that category of s—t who are responsible for computer viruses. Got that?!

Can you imagine what kind of pathetic, self-hating, despicable scum would derive fun from such an evil, anonymous activity?
Probably not. And that's a problem.

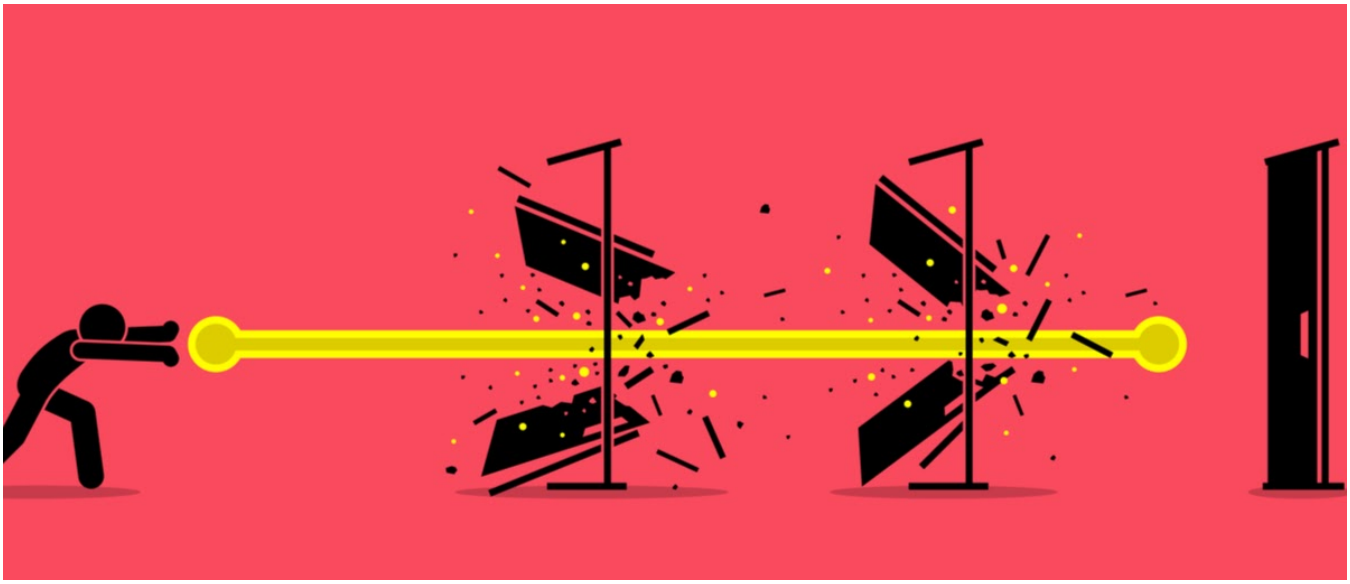
It is difficult to appreciate the utter lack of humanity, civility, decency, and even, in many cases today, even manners, that many live by. They are the threat.

We would propose merciless measures be leveled against them—like amputation of both arms for computer criminals—but no one would even regard that as acceptable for discussion.

The very sad thing is that, when you "up the ante" so to speak, and demand that both arms of all violent offenders be amputated (assuming that they have not permanently injured or killed anyone, in which case death is the obvious punishment) the idiot majority recoils in horror.

"Oh my God," they mutter. "That's ruthless!"

TRENDS IN TECHNOCRACY



By Joe Doran

ELITES ARE THE PROBLEM THAT MUST BE FACED

It's past time to go after monied elites.

Fueled by a stranglehold on modern technology and virtually all major institutions in society, their power is unprecedented in modern history.

And it's being corruptly leveraged to accrue more power, while undermining the will not only of average Americans, but of citizens in democracies all over the world.

If the COVID pandemic has proven anything, it's that those who can are likely to exploit (or even create) crises to gain advantage from them.

COVID has been an elite driven crisis. Popular will and opinion, repeated mass demonstrations against lockdowns and forced business closures and restrictions, and vaccine passes and mandates, have been opposed by a relatively tiny cabal of power-grabbing dictatorial leaders.

And of course, they haven't lived by the rules and rationales they've proscribed for others. A Twitter user Freespirit963 recently noted:

> "The elite class wears masks for photo ops.
>
> "The middle class wears masks on airplanes and on the walk from the restaurant door to the table.
>
> "The working class wear masks on the bus to work, all day at work, and on the bus home from work."

Whatever this is, It's not democracy.

By now, it has been thoroughly documented how mega rich billionaires virtually doubled their wealth from 2020 to the present moment.

That's right. Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, Elon Musk, George Soros, Mike Bloomberg and dozens of the world's richest made all the right moves as COVID pandemic profiteers.

But a class of rich below the very richest also gained disportionately during COVID.

All that profiteering reversed a trend during the Trump years up to the time that the COVID virus made its debut. According to factcheck.org, not exactly a conservative data clearinghouse, even counting 2020, all of the following benefited the middle and working classes under Trump (all numbers in comparison to the previous Obama administration):

- Median household income: up 6 percent
- Real Weekly Earnings: up 8.7 percent
- Home Ownership: up 2.1 points (especially important, given that home prices rose 27.5 percent)
- Poverty Rate: down 1.3 points

Considering the virtual grind to a halt of economic activity during most of 2020, those numbers, and others, are especially impressive.

The rich got richer during the Trump years. But the percentage gains of the "paycheck" classes were higher, and that, as much as anything, was a remarkable definer of what made Trump so popular with that group.

COVID—or more specifically, the policies enacted to deal with the virus—destroyed that dynamic, of course.

And of course, President Trump was fully responsible for those policies. He could've fired COVID czar Anthony Fauci as soon as he learned Fauci oversaw funding and research connections with the Wuhan lab that government intelligence knew was a possible source of the virus breakout.

Trump paid for disastrous COVID related decisions with his presidency. Of course, there were other miscalculations. The President focused on drawing big crowds compared to Biden's anemic public showings, thinking energizing his base would win the day.

Meanwhile, operators like Mark Zuckerburg, Jack Dorsey, Klaus Schwab and Laurene Powell Jobs were using their power and money to radically change voting laws and control and suppress the free flow of information during the election cycle.

Holding Elites To Their Own Lofty Woke Standards

It's time for leadership that targets elites as the highest priority, front-and-center issue and danger to the world that they are.

America needs a 21st century tech and politics savvy Teddy Roosevelt, if you will.

Whether from the political right, center, or left, an opportunity is there for someone to step up and start proposing how the bottom 90 percent can grab back some power from the world's richest.

Beyond guillotines and straight-up confiscations, there are all sorts of creative initiatives that crusaders can probably come up with that would have popular appeal, and be very hard for people who think of themselves as “progressive” and “woke” to resist.

Here are a few ideas, off the cuff:

A “Small and Start-Up Business COVID Recovery Fund”:
This would be paid for by confiscating money from the top 1000 wealthiest Americans. Or maybe the top 2000, or the top 5-percent, or 10-percent.
With spiraling inflation, being a millionaire isn’t what it used to be. Fine. Include “hundred millionaires” and up.

The legislation could include formulas determining how much these wealthy profited over the course of COVID, compared to their pre-COVID inflows, and take ALL of it, to fund recovery for small business.

Of course, the government will thoroughly screw up, and the program will be riddled with corruption.

But, having lost a considerable chunk of their wealth, perhaps elites choose to have their mouthpiece organs of social and traditional media to actually point out how corrupt and badly the program is going. Having oligarchs and politicians actually warring with each other, as opposed to colluding against the rest of us, would be a step in the right direction.

Transition of Critical Tech Infrastructure into the Public Trust (Ownership):
This could include sectors of the economy, like backbone internet companies. Heck, it could include Amazon, the de facto internet marketplace platform, with nearly half of all online buying, and Google, with a similar chunk of advertising control.

Throw in Meta and Twitter, with their duo monopoly on social communication.

No need to have the government actually run the companies.

Oversee an initiative to use blockchain technology to restructure these corporations into Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs) that benefit the American people, and not the elites who have thoroughly abused laws and political connections to build and grow their corporate empires.

Issue non-transferrable NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens) that pay out dividends to citizens. Sell it as that "Universal Basic Income" so near and dear to the stated aspirations of the woke.

These are companies that represent more wealth than virtually 3/4ths of the world's national economies. They have abused that tremendous power to render themselves largely unaccountable to government authorities.

It has to change.

"Power To People Voting Reform": George Soros made news this past week for donating 125 million dollars to the Democrat Party.

It's being called the largest political donation of its kind to date. That's arguable, considering the 500-plus million dollars Mark Zuckerburg spent co-opting the 2020 election cycle.

That kind of corrosive, distorting influence screams out for reform.

It's time to limit campaign contributions. For a given election cycle or year, maximum contributions to candidates or parties could be limited to some percentage of the median income Americans earned in the previous year.

In 2020, the median household income was $67,521.

Individuals could be limited to contributing no more than five percent of that overall median number to any one candidate, and to contributing only to candidates for whom they can directly cast votes.

As for donations from entities other than individual voters? End them. No donations allowed from corporations, unions, PACs, etc. Only individuals can vote. Only individuals can make a political donation.

Reform could go further. Only candidates run for an office. If only candidates, and not parties, could receive a donation. Parties would not necessarily wither away, though they would surely lose a huge amount of their current power.

They might be less partisan and more sustained by substantive policy ideas and beliefs. It could hardly be any worse for the country than it is now.

To those who read all this and think going after elites will devolve into a French, or even worse, a Russian Revolution, the answer is—that's a possibility and a risk.

Fortunately, the country has something that France and Russia lacked in their revolutions, that allows for real reform while making sure Americans retain equal protection under the law.

It's called the Constitution. Follow its letter and spirit, and the tyranny of monied tyrants, our present-day "kings," can be dealt with in a way that enlarges the franchise and the freedom of average Americans.

Elites are the problem. It's time for "We The People" to wield our own power to focus on and deal with the problem, and hopefully restore a balance to the Republic.

For more on issues touched on in this article, see:

- "ZUCKERBERG BOUGHT 2020 ELECTION WITH HALF A BILLION" (19 Oct 2021)

- "A MODEST TAX PROPOSAL FOR BILLIONAIRES" (3 Aug 2021)
- "PULL THE PLUG ON TECH POWER OR THE PLUG WILL BE PULLED ON YOU" (24 Aug 2021)
- "BILLIONAIRE TAX SCOFFLAWS PLOW SAVINGS INTO WEBS OF CONTROL" (15 Jun 2021)
- "PORTALS OF POWER: HOW MEGA BILLIONAIRES USURP ELECTIVE BODIES" (11 May 2021)
- "BILL GATES, PHILANTHRO-PREDATOR" (21 Sep 2021)
- "WEF LAUNCHES NEW ASSAULT AGAINST AMERICAN BILL OF RIGHTS" (13 Jul 2021)
- "HOW BIG TECH MAINTAINS ITS MONOPOLY" (17 Aug 2021)
- "AMAZON CAUGHT ILLEGALLY UNDERCUTTING COMPETITION" (19 Oct 2021)
- "TECHNOCRATS WIDEN WEALTH GAP THANKS TO PANDEMIC" (13 Apr 2021)
- "COVID WAR: RICH GOT RICHER, POOR GOT POORER" (21 Sep 2021)

THIS WEEK IN SURVEILLANCE

COVID SNITCHING ANOTHER BRICK IN SURVEILLANCE STATE WALL. Cell phones, computers, street cams and drones can't do everything.

Authorities have been promoting "human intelligence" gathering, in the form of people snitching on others, as a means of enforcing COVID dictates.

Workers and school attendees have been encouraged to report on violations including mask wearing, and even whether someone is sick with COVID or has not taken the gene level interventions deceptively being called vaccines.

Snitching usually connotes a negative aspect, as in betraying one's group by "telling" morally compromised authorities about a crime, or going out of one's way to report infractions of dubious rules.

But political masters roiling at pushback against their illegal and unconstitutional dictates have responded by attempting to condition people to participate as citizen enforcers in a soviet-style social system.

At many school campuses and workplaces, administrative and regulatory frameworks have been put in place to authorize and codify "reporting" and taking action against COVID violators.

Many universities have COVID hotlines where students can report others observed not abiding by rules including wearing masks, social distancing and gatherings.

How petty has the snitching gotten as a result? A student at the Yale library at 9:30 p.m. one Saturday, with no one within 150 feet of him, was confronted by a peer for not wearing a mask, according to the Washington Free Beacon.

He was notified by administration two days later that he had been reported for breaching the school's "Community Compact," a set of guidelines designed to "support the health and safety of all community members."

The student was given 24 hours to present the "Compact Review Committee" with "any relevant material" that he wanted it to take into account during the formal "assessment" of his behavior. He was convicted of a breach and warned that further violations could result in an end to his days at the university:

> "Should you continue to engage in behavior that violates the Yale Community Compact, you will be placed on Public Health Warning and may face more serious outcomes, including the removal of permission to be on campus."

For Delta and Omicron, Yale rolled out yet more social distancing and other rules—the sort of bizarre stuff Americans and average citizens around the world have come to increasingly accept, while fully being aware that the rules make absolutely no sense.

Yale pronounced outlawed "close contact greetings," including hand shakes, or high-fives during club sporting events that otherwise required contact. It advised students to "avoid" area businesses and even outdoor eateries, effectively instituting an open-ended campus-wide quarantine that would continue as long as “COVID-19 rates remain high."

Similar stories can be found at many other American colleges and primary education schools.

From Ad-Hoc Snitching To Formal Systems Of Surveillance And Control

Acts of COVID snitching are nothing new in themselves. Back in the spring of 2020, *Reason* magazine featured a story on how enthusiastic “see something, say something” citizens were flooding local authorities with reports of people violating”non-essential” activity dictates.

They were happily outing small businesses trying to keep the lights on to police, and ratting on neighbors standing too close together while talking.

The AP reported at the time:

> "Snitches are emerging as enthusiastic allies as cities, states and countries work to enforce directives meant to limit person-to-person contact amid the virus pandemic that has claimed tens of thousands of lives worldwide. They're phoning police and municipal hotlines, complaining to elected officials and shaming perceived scofflaws on social media."

Reason observed “as an epidemic, snitching seems to be competing with the virus itself in its spread.”

By now, many people have come to their senses. They've witnessed literally hundreds of political authorities caught violating their own COVID rules.

They've seen the "science" spouted by fake and frankly evil "experts" change from week to week, and even day to day.

They've watched small businesses fail by the thousands, as the world's wealthiest have doubled their fortunes in less than two years.

They've reaped threadbare shelves and spiraling inflation, by their acquiescence to the insanity.

In too many numbers, they've allowed their own children to be swept up in a nightmare that has stunted their social growth, education, and stolen their childhoods with fear.

In short, many are tired of what has been spawned via COVID, and are finally rejecting vaccine passports, mandated vaccines, and snitching on others about it all.

Unfortunately, the frameworks of citizen reporting, already formulated in fighting George Bush's "War On Terror," have been pivoted and beefed up as a result of the COVID War.

Many States and localities have erected systems of reporting COVID violators, which include punishments like fines and jail time, as well as rewards for citizen snitchers.

Washington state, one of those on the draconian forefront with COVID restrictions and dictates, provides a representative example.

The surveillance that Edward Snowden uncovered so sensationally in 2013 at least involved U.S. intelligence agencies, and not a house-by-house, neighborhood-by-neighborhood, pervasive citizen social system of granular human surveillance.

Once again, the desire for safety has reduced freedom by a half-life, and further empowered elites profiting off the progressive enslavement.

Those quaint days of 2013 are fast becoming a happy memory.

TRENDS IN CRYPTOS

SPORTS GAMBLING IN NEW YORK EASIER THAN BUYING CRYPTOS

The ads are impossible to get away from: BetRivers, Draft Kings, FanDuel, BetMGM.

The ads offer money and prize enticements, and make it sound like everyone's a winner. The websites are just as aggressive.

And they're already doing a great job of sapping money away from New Yorkers, most of whom lose money on betting "entertainment."

Sure, there's tiny print on the ads that might be readable for those with 100-inch flatscreens, offering hotlines for those who might be suffering from a gambling problem.

You can safely bet wiping away the debt isn't on the list of solutions at the other end of the line.

Meanwhile, New Yorkers can't invest in cryptos on some of the world's biggest and most cost effective exchanges, including BinanceUS and Crypto.com, which many other states allow.

New York has one of the most restrictive regulatory regimes in place regarding crypto investing.

It's so bad, NYC and state residents who want to buy into the city's own crypto coin have had trouble doing so, because some exchanges offering it have been barred from operating in the state.

Sports Gambling Winning in NY, Cryptos Not So Much

In just the first few weeks of legalized sports book gambling in the state, New York's mobile sports betting handle surpassed $1 billion, as reported by the state's Gaming Commission.

Caesars Sportsbook and FanDuel led the sports booking frenzy.

According to *Newsday*, the Empire State is already set to breaking New Jersey's $1.3 billion monthly record reached in October 2021.

Though more updated figures weren't available yet, heavy betting on the NFC and AFC Championship Games probably put New York over the mark, while sinking thousands of gamblers further underwater.

It's all perfectly legal, of course. The state assembly and governorship have said so. And of course, the state government, the not so silent partner for all those in-your-face gambling ads and enticements, is raking in the money.

Sportsbooks, which are taxed at 51% on gaming profits, have already brought in close to 47 million in revenue.

On the other hand, even a major crypto exchange like Crypto.com, which has been able to offer its services in 49 states, hasn't yet cracked New York.

CEO Kris Marszalek pointed to the state's onerous regulatory hurdles as the reason: "We don't have a date for New York. As you know, New York State is the most complicated state in the US to launch with the BitLicense and whatnot, so no immediate plans for New York."

There are many who consider crypto investing as something little better than throwing money away gambling.

And plenty of especially young crypto enthusiasts make no bones about the fact that they're looking to score big in the sector.

They take the associated risks, plowing money into obscure low market cap cryptos and hoping or calculating that the projects might see astronomical "to the moon" rises in valuation.

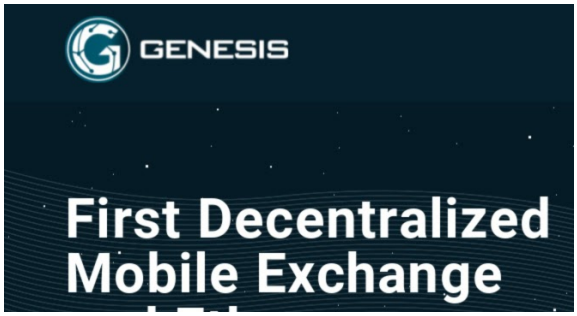
It happens. It's also exceedingly rare, and with the latest general downturn, the crypto sector has shed nearly one third of its peak 2021 valuation, or about one trillion.

But the fact is, many would-be crypto investors just want access to the top ten, or top 30, or top 100 crypto projects (see them all at coinmarketcap.com).

With such a limited selection of exchanges allowed in New York, it's hard to do even that, and trade with competitive pricing.

To sum up, there's something beyond seedy in pushing and profiting off wall to wall glitzy, slick sports betting promotion fantasies, while suppressing cryptos, which even naysayers agree could have a market cap valuation in ten years of 50 trillion or more.

MAJOR CRYPTO PLATFORM ACCEPTS NFTs AS COLLATERAL



Genesis Digital Assets, the world's biggest trading platform for professional crypto traders, according to the *Financial Times*, now accepts NFTs as collateral for loans and derivative transactions, the company has announced.

Genesis will allow traders to pledge NFTs to back a deal in the same way that someone taking a loan would pledge a government bond or block of stock.

The difference is that, unlike stocks and bonds, NFTs' value is determined by nothing other than collectors' whims and fancies.

However, Genesis is taking "a very conservative approach" and accepts only "blue chip" NFTs, Joshua Lim, the country's chief of derivatives, told the *FT*.

The market for NFTs, or unique digital collectibles, swelled to $40 billion last year, the *FT* reported, with sports-themed NFTs expected to do $2 billion worth of business this year.

Art, fashion, and wine brands are cashing in, creating their own array of NFTs.

From June 2019 through June 2021, the market for NFT-based derivatives multiplied by 700 percent, with $3.2 trillion worth traded in that month last year, according to data service CryptoCompare.

The value of derivative trades outpaced that of cash deals, accounting for more than half of all digital assets traded during the period, according to CryptoCompare.

The derivatives market has been especially attractive to banks and other financial institutions, which regulations bar from trading in crypto cash markets.

Clamor for the derivatives has persuaded the International Swaps and Derivatives Association to begin formulating a framework for products based on digital assets.

BIDEN ADVANCES PLAN TO REGULATE DIGITAL CURRENCIES

Some time in the next few weeks, president Joe Biden will issue an executive order directing federal agencies to assess the risks and opportunities that Bitcoin, cryptocurrencies, stablecoins, and NFTs present to their operations, according to Bloomberg.

“This is designed to… bring order to the haphazard approach that the government is now using to regulate crypto [and] look holistically at digital assets and develop a set of policies that give coherence to what the government is trying to do in this space,” an unnamed person familiar with the plan told *Barron’s*.

“Because digital assets don’t stay in one country, it’s necessary to work with other countries on synchronization,” the person said.

Currently, crypto is regulated in some ways by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and also by the Commodities Futures Trading Commission but with little coordination or coherence between them.

Key agencies involved in the analysis will include the state and treasury departments, the National Economic Council, the Council of Economic Advisers, and the National Security Council because digital assets have “economic implications for national security,” *Barron’s* said.

TREND FORECAST:*As we wrote in [“SEC Push to Regulate Crypto”](#) (7 Dec 2021), the SEC permitting Bitcoin ETFs, which it did last October, was the crucial step that legitimizes U.S. oversight and regulation of other cryptocurrencies.*

Before the end of this year, a regulatory structure to govern digital currencies will be ready for Congress to consider.

Despite objections from some Republican politicians, which we sampled in [“Regulator Calls for Few Rules on Cryptocurrencies”](#) (15 Jun 2021), the U.S. Congress will move toward enacting a regulatory framework.

Other nations that have not already done so will then follow the U.S. lead. And as we have forecast, the tighter the government restrictions on crypto’s the lower their prices will fall.

LATE BREAKING: INDIA ANNOUNCES CRYPTO REGS AND RUPEE CBDC

India, the world's second-largest economy, is on the verge of fully embracing and legalizing cryptocurrency, according to Yahoo Finance, cryptosrus.com and other news outlets.

The news comes as Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman declared a 30% tax on any revenue derived from the transfer of virtual digital assets, which is a first for the country.

The moves would effectively legalize cryptocurrencies in a nation that has lurched at times harshly against the sector.

The digital rupee, meanwhile, would most likely be released in the 2022-2023 time range, according to Sitharaman.

Sitharaman actually spoke positively cryptography in a speech, and noted the growth occurring in adoption:

> "There has been a phenomenal increase in transactions in virtual digital assets. The magnitude and frequency of these transactions have made it imperative to provide for a specific tax regime."

He said India needed to evolve its stance, since crypto is now "too big to be ignored."

As far as the equally significant news regarding a digital rupee, analysts were quick to comment.

Sumit Gupta, CEO of CoinDCX ,said the news was "forward-looking and inspirational," and added that legalizing and taxing crypto transfers is a "step in the right direction."

Another analyst said that "launching a blockchain-powered digital rupee is "phenomenal" as it will "pave the way for crypto adoption."

BLOCKCHAIN BATTLES

NFT GROWTH HITS ALL-TIME HIGH IN JANUARY. While the crypto space overall wallowed in the doldrums, extending a downturn that encompassed the whole holiday season, there have been bright spots.

Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs), which can convey unique ownership of digital and real-world assets, experienced their best month to date in terms of trade volume.

According to crypto outlet theblock.com, volume hit a new high of $6.13 billion.

That constituted a 129 percent increase compared to December. LookRare, the newest player on the NFT marketplace scene, contributed to the considerable gains. The marketplace has generated around $2 billion in volume since its January 10 inception.

With its LOOKS token, LooksRare presents a competitive challenge to OpenSea, the leading NFT marketplace, which boasts some 90 percent of overall NFT trading activity.

Users gain LOOKS tokens when they purchase or trade NFTs on the LooksRare, and they can earn even more rewards by staking tokens.

However, LooksRare is not without flaws, theblock.com noted. “Wash trading,” a practice where users exchange products to artificially push up volume and prices, accounts for a significant portion of LooksRare's trading activity.

The Solana blockchain network, whose native token has taken a beating during the prolonged crypto sell-off, also marked some good NFT related news.

Solana has been plagued by several outages, something against which decentralized blockchains are supposed to offer resilience. The network and its software development still operates in an official “Beta” status.

Overall NFT sales on Solana topped $1 billion in all-time volume, surpassing Ethereum-based NFT markets.

The **Trends Journal** has been covering the rapid rise of NFTs in articles including:

- “NFTs COULD BE “BIGGER THAN CRYPTO,” COINBASE CEO SAYS” (16 Nov 2021)
- “THE CRYPTO ‘AGE OF UTILITY’ HAS JUST BEGUN” (12 Oct 2021)

- "ONE OF A KIND: THE WORLD OF NFTs" (10 Aug 2021)
- "TIPPING POINT: AWARENESS" (22 Jun 2021)

CHINA TWISTS TRYING TO HAVE NFT CAKE WITHOUT CRYPTO TOO.
China, which has essentially banned crypto to foster its digital Yuan surveillance and control coin, knows its missing out on the blockchain revolution.

What to do? Try to direct and control the "innovation," top-down.

To that end, the communist country is attempting to separate cryptocurrencies and Non-Fungible Tokens.

The regime is pushing for development of a Blockchain-based Service Network (BSN), to let enterprises and people create platforms and applications to administer NFTs.

The news was reported by the *South China Morning Post*.

The project intends to enable the implementation of non-crypto NFTs by providing application programming interfaces for the building of user portals and applications that accept fiat money as the only form of payment.

Of course, the blockchains involved will be permissioned only, and controlled and surveilled by the State.

Yifan He, CEO of BSN's tech support provider Red Date Technology, emphasized that NFTs are legal in China as long as they are not used with Bitcoin (BTC) or other cryptocurrencies.

Red Date intends to establish a compliant NFT platform that is totally segregated from the ordinary profile of crypto by allowing a single authority, ie., the Chinese government, to oversee the infrastructure and intervene in the case of "illicit conduct."

“We will provide services to NFT companies in Hong Kong, which means if there is any international business involving issuing NFTs inside China, they definitely can choose to use the BSN-DDC network via our Hong Kong gateway,” Yifan He told cointelegraph.com.

BSN's NFT infrastructure is supported by state-owned China Mobile, China UnionPay, and the State Information Centre. According to Yifan He, the BSN-DDC will support ten blockchains, including an adapted version of Ethereum and Corda, as well as WeBank's Fisco Bcos.

The **Trends Journal** has previously examined how China’s system cannot allow the sorts of innovations that the crypto techno revolution are fast creating (see “THE GEOPOLITICS OF BITCOIN,” 27 Jun 2021 and “A PERVERSION OF CRYPTOCURRENCY,” 12 Oct 2021).

All they can do is follow and try to mimic and construct “state versions” which effectively silo them off from a wider and more productive ecosystem that is already flourishing around the world.

One way China is trying to win the game is by making other countries more like China. If the West can avoid that trap, the crypto revolution could help turn the tide on the current economic dynamic, and prove disastrous for a walled off Beijing.

IMF TRIES TO KICK EL SALVADOR WHILE BITCOIN IS DOWN. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is trying to use the current crypto downturn to pressure El Salvador to stop using Bitcoin as legal tender.

But Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele isn’t having it. He took to Twitter on Monday to predict Bitcoin will be seeing better days:

> “There are more than 50 million millionaires in the world. Imagine when each one of them decides they should own at least ONE #Bitcoin

> "But there will ever be only 21 million #Bitcoin. Not enough for even half of them. A gigantic price increase is just a matter of time."

The IMF cited risks related to financial stability and "consumer protection," and pointed out that BTC had lost some 20 percent of its value so far in 2022, or about 10 thousand dollars.

Of course, the IMF failed to note how many fiat currencies around the world are experiencing double-digit annual inflation.

The woes of the world's reserve currency, the U.S. dollar, is fast sinking Joe Biden's Presidency.

Unlike fiat, bitcoin can't be inflated by governments to pay their debts, devaluing the stored savings of average citizen fiat currency holders.

The IMF is used to orchestrating and manipulating world currencies, and cryptos are a clear danger to their power.

Little wonder that the IMF has tried to smother the sector, ever since it showed signs of moving from a tech nerd phenomenon, to a world game changer.

The **Trends Journal** has covered issues related to this write-up in:

- "CRYPTO NO LONGER A GOOD INVESTMENT HEDGE, IMF SAYS" (18 Jan 2022)
- "IMF CALLS FOR "GLOBAL" CRYPTO REGULATION" (14 Dec 2021)
- "EL SALVADOR RATTLES IMF WITH BITCOIN PASSAGE" (15 Jun 2021)
- "EURO THREATS NOT STOPPING CRYPTO MOVES" (22 Jun 2021)
- "EUROZONE NEEDS MORE STIMULUS SPENDING, IMF SAYS" (20 Apr 2021)
- "GOVERNMENTS CAN PILE UP HIGHER DEBT, IMF SAYS" (2 Feb 2021)

TRENDS IN THE COVID WAR

CANADIAN TRUCKERS FREEDOM CONVOY: MEGATREND DEFAMED BY MAINSTREAM MEDIA LIES

For lies and misinformation, tune into the mainstream media's coverage of the ongoing massive Canadian Truckers protest at the nation's capital, Ottawa.

The Presstitutes sell fear and hatred while ignoring the intent of the trucker's "Freedom Convoy": Brave human beings standing up against being forced by politicians to take the Operation Warp Speed gene therapy inoculation for cross-border trucking.

Here are some lies from Al Jazeera which labels the trucker's movement as "The so-called Freedom Convoy."

It is not a 'so-called' it *is called* the Freedom Convoy.

Doubling down on their lie campaign, and playing down the significance of the convoy, Al Jazeera opens the article with the bullshit line that "Hundreds of truckers have driven their rigs into the Canadian capital Ottawa to protest

against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's COVID-19 mandates required to cross the United States border."

NO, NOT HUNDREDS...TENS OF THOUSANDS! The last report was over 50,000 trucks.

Back in the State's, yesterday, Google up "Canadian Truckers," and here is the headline that jumps out on the Jeff Bezos owned *Washington Post*: **"Opinion | Canada must confront the toxic 'Freedom Convoy' head-on."**

No, the 'Freedom Convoy' is not "toxic." The arrogant Pressitute—the media whore who gets paid to put out by the corporate pimp and government whore master—is "toxic."

Doubling down on their hatred for Freedom, another Bezos *Washington Post* rag's headline googled up yesterday was: **"'Illegal' acts during Canada's Freedom Convoy trucker protests investigated by police."**

Again, ignoring the size, depth and width of the Freedom Convoy, dismissing the true numbers of people taking to the streets in sub-zero weather, this was the Associated Press(titutes) headline yesterday: **"Police in Canada investigate monument desecration in wake of trucker protest against COVID rules."**

Remember there are at least 50,000 truckers and tens of thousands of Freedom rally demonstrators. Yet, this is the opening sentence: "Police in Canada's capital said Sunday they are investigating possible criminal charges after anti-vaccine protesters urinated on the National War Memorial... ."

One person pissed on some statue? That's news? That is reflective of the Freedom Convoy?

Therefore, as we continue to detail, totally absent in the low-life mainstream media coverage are why people are fighting for their human rights. Instead, the Presstitutes are spreading lies, fear and hatred rather than a balanced approach.

This is not journalism, it is pure, selling their agenda and government propaganda.

Not a Peep

As for U.S. coverage of this massive event, not one line of coverage in yesterday's *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal.*

And for the Cartoon Network (CNN), ignoring the megatrend Freedom Convoy, their headline was that the coward of a clown playing Prime Minister of Canada—the silver spoon little Daddy's Boy born on third base and thought he hit a home run—who went into "isolation" as the truckers were heading into Ottawa was: **"Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tests positive for Covid-19."**

Yes, the triple jabbed PM got COVID according to the reports... which again confirms the 96 percent efficacy lie that Pfizer sold to the public some two years ago, and that two jabs would be all that was needed to beat the virus. But these facts are completely ignored by the Cartoon News Network.

Yesterday, the top story on Yahoo was (who gives a shit) : "Hoda Kotb and Joel Schiffman Break Up After 8 Years Together."

Zip coverage of the Freedom Convoy on Drudge who's big headline story was: **"FRESH FACE SUPER BOWL. LA HOST!"**

Overview

Reports from the city said that the trucks and protests have resulted in a virtual standstill for two-straight days and those taking part in the demonstration said there is no firm date on when the protest will end. The *Daily Mail* reported that one protester said they will stay in the capital as long as it takes for the government to back down from the new policy.

"Right now, yeah, it's really cold, but we hang in there, the days are going to get longer and we take this block party and put it into overdrive,' BJ Dichter, one of the organizers of the Freedom Convoy, said at a press conference, according to the paper. "We're in this one for the long haul. We don't have a time limit."

The protest was organized by Canada Unity, a group that has opposed Ottawa's COVID-19 mandates. The convoy that entered Ottawa on Saturday is a direct response to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government's decision to force all truckers who cross the border with the U.S. to be fully vaccinated to work.

History in the Making

The protest has attracted international attention. Gerald Celente, the publisher of The **Trends Journal,** called the truck convoy the opening salvo in the West's freedom-from-vaccine movement. He said the truckers cannot back down if they want to achieve their goals. He said they must tell the media that this is a PEACEFUL protest, and that any violence "will be that of the Trudeau Mob…agents provocateurs."

Elon Musk, the Tesla billionaire, also threw his support behind the truckers when he posted on Twitter Wednesday, "Canadian truckers rule." Musk told *Time* last month that he and his children were vaccinated from the virus, but told the news outlet that he was opposed to forced vaccinations.

"We've got to watch out for the illusion of freedom in America," he said.

Donald Trump, the former president, praised the protest during a Texas rally on Saturday and said these truck drivers are "resisting bravely these lawless mandates."

The Canadian government has put in place the tried-and-true response to the well-organized protest by attempting to portray the participants as dangerous elements from the right-wing fringe.

Ottawa police announced on Twitter that they were on high alert and were aware “of inappropriate and threatening language on social media related to this event.”

There were no incidents of violence or injuries on the first night, but the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that many of the streets in the downtown area were rendered impassable.

Ottawa police also said on Twitter that they had "several criminal investigations" underway and accused one protester of desecrating a National War Memorial and others for allegedly intimidating non-protesters.

In hiding, and refusing to meet with the protesters, Trudeau, as have the media pawns, denounced them, saying that "Freedom of expression, assembly and association are cornerstones of democracy, but Nazi symbolism, racist imagery and desecration of war memorials are not."

There were dozens of trucks in front of the Parliament buildings that blasted their horns on Saturday morning. Thousands of truckers were expected to attend the demonstration.

Truckers waved Canadian flags and held up signs that read, “FUCK TRUDEAU.”

Trudeau and his family were moved from Rideau Cottage to an undisclosed location on Saturday during the protest in Ottawa, which was about 2.5 miles from his home, UPI reported. Trudeau was moved because of the threat that some protesters could arrive at politicians’ homes.

The newspaper reported that Trudeau’s office said he was in the capital region and is continuing to “isolate.” (The prime minister, who is fully vaccinated and

boosted, announced last week that he would self-isolate after he was exposed to someone with the virus. Now he claims, as noted above, he has the virus.)

Trudeau brushed off the protests as a campaign by fringe activists that do not represent the feelings of the average Canadian. The Canadian Trucking Alliance, which represents about 50,000 carriers, said it is opposed to the protest, according to Reuters.

TREND FORECAST: *Confirming our forecast of the power of the Canadian Trucker's Freedom Convoy, a majority of Canadians now say they want COVID restrictions lifted, according to an Angus Reid poll. This a sharp increase from when the same question was asked in early January.*

The latest poll, taken by Angus Reid Institute when the trucker's convoy was spreading across Canada, Jan. 27-28, 54 percent said they want COVID restrictions lifted. Just two weeks earlier, only 39 percent wanted restrictions lifted.

Should other nation's truckers launch Freedom Convoys of this magnitude, people power will force politicians to end many COVID War restrictions. There are reports convoys will be launched in the U.S. and have already begun in some European nations and in Australia.

TREND-TRACKING LESSON*: Gerald Celente has long noted that one of the most important elements for protests to be successful is that they must continue unabated. For example, the Berlin Wall came tumbling down when people came to the wall and did not leave. And each day, more people came and did not leave until they greatly outnumbered the military.*

We most recently saw this truth demonstrated in November when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said lawmakers would repeal the agricultural laws that farmers in the country feared would leave them in financial ruin.
(See "MODI LOSES, FARMERS WIN. A MEGA-TREND BEYOND INDIA.")

And as with India's farmers, day after day, night after night, week after week, month after month, they took to the streets and did not leave until they got what they wanted.

Unlike India's farmers, who work with their hands and are strong and hearty, today's demonstrators in the Western world generally take to the streets one day, make a big deal about it, and they go home.

For success to be achieved, the resolve to protest must continue until demands are satisfactorily met.

*And as we noted in the **Trends Journal** last week, Serbia's government reversed the controversial Rio Tinto lithium mine that was planned for the western part of the country after weeks of massive protests claiming that the mine would lead to environmental ruin for neighboring towns.*

As we have been reporting, week after week, month after month thousands of demonstrators took to the streets blocking main roads and bridges used to access the mine site near Loznica.

These protesters, as with the current Freedom Convoy in Canada, also faced an intimidation campaign by authorities and police brutality. "We are not afraid of Rio Tinto," Ana Brnabić, the Serbian prime minister, said, according to the report. "We are here for our people and our country. They can do whatever they think they should do. This is the final decision of the government of the Republic of Serbia.

Need More Proof?

Immediately following one of the biggest anti-nuclear protests in American history, back in 1982, when nearly a million protesters gathered in New York City's Central Park, Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger said how useless and ineffective the event was in changing Washington's policy.

"The fact that a very large number of people turn out for a particular event is certainly something that people notice. But I don't think that anybody rushes back and says, 'We have to change our policy' . . . or something because there's been a rally."

LACK OF OFFICIAL CDC VAX GUIDANCE. COVID FREAKS IN CHARGE

Americans who were considered to be "fully vaccinated" after receiving their first two jabs of the COVID-19 vaccine and later came down with the virus, have expressed confusion as to when—if ever—they should sign up for a booster shot.

"There's no reason to rush out and get that booster dose if you've had a recent illness with COVID," Buddy Creech, an infectious disease specialist at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, told *The Wall Street Journal.* "You've got a period of at least 8 to 12 weeks when you're going to be highly protected."

David Dowdy, an epidemiologist at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, also told the paper that getting a booster shot too soon after infection could lead to the immune system failing to identify the vaccine from the previous infection. He also said that waiting could help the body further recover and lessen the chance of a side effect from the vaccine.

The paper reported that the federal government has left a lot to be desired when it comes to explaining its guidance to the general population, as the number of COVID-19 deaths in the country approaches 900,000.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released data that showed that there were more than three times as many breakthrough infections in December—while Omicron was spreading—compared to August, when Delta was the dominant strain.

The CDC is reportedly aiming to readjust its messaging after claims that the agency has lost its footing when it comes to directing the public's response to the outbreak. The *Journal* reported that one of the agency's first priorities is to improve its data collection effort "that has hobbled decision making" and to clear up its messaging.

The paper itemized some of the early missteps that the CDC had at the onset of the virus, including its backing of faulty COVID-19 tests "that put the U.S. months behind in instituting a proper surveillance system" and recently, the agency has appeared unclear on its self-isolation recommendation after being diagnosed with the Omicron variant.

The report, citing a survey by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, said public trust in the CDC fell to 72 percent in January. In November, 77 percent of the country had faith in the agency, the report said.

TRENDPOST: *"Experts" told the paper that the obfuscation could be tied to the "limited scientific data" that is out there on boosters. Yes, "limited scientific data," yet, we the people across the globe are being forced to be injected with the Operation Warp Speed mRNA jab. (See "BIDEN BOOSTER PLAN: VAX YOU!" "SELLING BOOSTER SHOTS, CDC'S WALENSKY SAYS 'FU' TO AGENCY ADVISERS," "THE VAX/BOOSTER MARKET: DRUG DEALER ON PARADE" and "VAX EFFECTIVENESS WANES EQUALLY FOR OLD AND YOUNG: 4TH JAB COMING.")*

The ***Trends Journal*** *has long reported on the data that has questioned the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccines, mask mandates, social-distancing guidelines, Plexiglas dividers, washing down surfaces, and devastating lockdowns because we knew that these important decisions were not science or data-based, but rather based on politics.*

In the race for the White House in 2020, Joe Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris' had the keen ability to make the former president appear even more

ill-informed and more cavalier than most Americans already thought. As we reported in 29 September 2020 ***Trends Journal****:*

> *"Americans seem to have reservations about being first in line for any approved vaccination for COVID-19, according to a recent Axios-Ipsos poll.*
>
> *"The poll showed only 13 percent of Americans would be willing to take the vaccine upon rollout. Joe Biden and his running mate, Senator Kamala Harris, have raised suspicions about the reliability of any vaccine rolled out before the election."*

Biden went to say, "I trust vaccines," he said. "I trust the scientists, but I don't trust Donald Trump," and his running mate Harris said she would not trust a vaccine the Trump administration was selling.

Yet, this is the same vax they have been imposing upon the American public and there is no outrage. In fact we had forecast back then that from nations' capitals across the globe to Wall Street, the word is that until a COVID vaccine is made available to the public, there will be no strong economic rebound.

Therefore, the faster the vaccine hits the Main Street, we forecast resistance to get vaccinated will decrease as the major media and politicians promote getting vaccinated as the only way to win the COVID War, with virtually no mention of building up one's immune system and getting healthy.

Governments will impose educational and other restrictions on all those who refuse to get vaccinated, just as they have done in many states and nations prior to the coronavirus. (See "HAVE THE ARCHITECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC LOST TOUCH WITH REALITY?" and "COVID-19 VACCINES ARE A GLOBAL SCIENCE EXPERIMENT.")

No Facts Needed

What the *WSJ* ignored in the lead of their story, we have been reporting for months: These first ever injected into a human body mRNA vaccines were rushed along under Operation Warp Speed and—despite assurances—were never tested on a large scale or long term.

Now the scale has reached a level that it will be impossible to discern what kind of future health maladies could be blamed on these shots.

The *Journal* reported, "Some CDC stumbles are understandable, people inside and outside the agency say. The CDC has been forced to make decisions—and explain them—based on limited knowledge in a fast-moving pandemic."

That does not instill confidence that the government is making an informed decision based on reliable and clear data.

The report pointed out that President Biden admitted that the messaging has been confusing because the scientists themselves are in the process of learning about this virus. So the policy in Washington seems to be: Lockdown first, ask questions later.

TREND FORECAST: *We still hear nothing from political leaders, their health "experts," or mainstream media about the most natural, self-controlling safety feature against any virus: Keeping one's immune system strong through healthy eating, exercise, and activities that bring joy and beauty into one's life.*

Moreover, the vaccines were promoted by politicians and the media as a passport to COVID Freedom, meaning if you got the vaccination, you were safe from catching the virus.

But that is no longer the message, meaning, as with the flu vaccine, there will be ongoing pressure each year to get re-vaccinated.

Also minus in their reporting of fighting the COVID War, is that those with pre-existing comorbidities who are most susceptible to getting the virus must be protected, rather than politicians forcing their draconian mandates on the general public.

AUSTRIA ENDING LOCKDOWN MANDATES, RESTRICTION AND FINES FOR UNVAXXED

The Austrian government on Wednesday said its November mandate to lock down unvaccinated residents will end a day before the countrywide vaccine mandate takes effect, citing the relatively low numbers of patients in ICUs across the country.

The rules that are in place that bar unvaccinated individuals from restaurants will also begin to be phased out, along with the need to show proof of vaccination or recovery to enter shops, Global News reported.

"Despite relaxations, caution is still required: I appeal to all 1.5 million unvaccinated to get vaccinated and not wait for mandatory vaccination to take effect," Karl Nehammer, the chancellor, said, according to the Associated Press. He told reporters that he received a lot of complaints about the order but rationalized it by saying it was an unavoidable health policy.

Austria reported 34,748 new cases on Friday, according to Global News. The country's 7-day rate of infections stood at 2,381 per 100,000 inhabitants, about 10 times as high as the rate at the start of January.

The country of 8.9 million has had 1.8 million cases and 14,077 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University's tracker.

The **Trends Journal** has reported extensively on vaccine mandates and how Vienna helped pave the way for other countries to mandate vaccinations. (See "AUSTRIA: IT'S THE LAW: NO JAB, NO FREEDOM," "ANTI-LOCKDOWN FIGHTERS GRAB SEATS IN AUSTRIA'S REGIONAL PARLIAMENT, AS PREDICTED BY TRENDS JOURNAL" and "ITALY, NO COVID-19 JAB, NO JOB.")

We've pointed out that the country's vaccine mandate takes effect on 1 February. After the rule takes effect, individuals in violation will face a 600 euros fine. These individuals can face fines of up to 3,600 euros each year. About 75 percent of the population is considered fully vaccinated.

Tens of thousands have taken to the streets in the country to voice their opposition to the COVID-19 mandates.

TRENDPOST: *There are a number of reasons why so many are hesitant to get the COVID Jab. One is that they were rushed along under a project called "Operation Warp Speed."*

Another is the fact that the disease is entirely survivable by most of the people it infects, and those who die from it are suffering from pre-existing comorbidities and/or the elderly, who are suffering from illnesses.

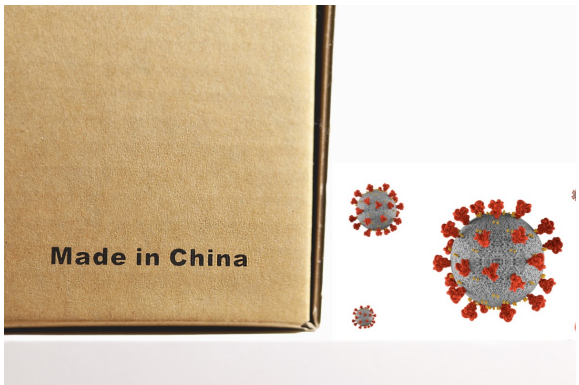
TREND FORECAST: *We maintain our forecast that the stricter the COVID War mandates that are imposed, the stronger and faster the formation of anti-vax, anti-establishment, anti-tax political movements. And when equity markets crash and the world sinks into deep economic decline, these movements will gain formidable strength.*

But again, as socioeconomic conditions deteriorate and civil unrest and government protests escalate, as Gerald Celente notes, and as the cover of last week's ***Trends Journal*** *illustrates: "When all else fails, they take you to war."*

And war is on the near horizon. While the global media and political focus is now on Russia and Ukraine, our sites are more closely aimed at the Middle East with

Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Yemen, United Arab Emirates targeted as flashpoint nations.

CORONAVIRUS: MADE-IN-CHINA. WHO KNOWS WHAT?



Does science know best?

NO!

They say what they believe when they believe what they believe based on data they create, and change their minds when they don't believe what they sold as scientific data... or are pressured to change their tune, as is obvious with the coronavirus.

Scientists that have been selling the line that COVID-19 emerged naturally, had expressed doubts of its origin in the early days of the outbreak.

Truth and Lies

Kristian Andersen, a virologist at California's Scripps Research Institute, emailed Dr. Anthony Fauci at the beginning of the virus and told him that the virus looked to be engineered.

Then there was a follow-up meeting and—mysteriously—the scientists involved spoke out publicly to call the lab-created idea a "crackpot" theory.

Andersen's initial email to Fauci pointed out that the virus' unusual features "make up a really small part of the genome (<0.1%) so one has to look really closely at all the sequences to see that some of the features (potentially) look engineered," he wrote. He admitted in the email that the research was in its early stages and his team needed more time to get a better grasp.

Three days later—with no explanation—Andersen flipped his perspective entirely and "began calling a theory you lent credence to" a crackpot theory, House Republicans wrote to him last July. (See "NO EVIDENCE FOR NATURAL ORIGIN OF COVID VIRUS, SAYS FORMER STATE DEPT OFFICIAL," "NEW REPORT: GENOME OF COVID-19 SUSPECT" and "WUHAN LAB: ANYTHING BUT UNIQUE.")

Dr. Robert Garry from Tulane's School of Medicine, in a February 2020 meeting that was recently released by House Republicans, said that he could not think of a "plausible natural scenario where you get from a bat virus … to nCoV where you insert exactly 4 amino acids 12 nucleotide that all have to be added at the exact same time to gain this function. Just can't figure out how this gets accomplished in nature. Don't mention a lab origin, as that will just add fuel to the conspiracists."

Fauci organized a call with dozens of these virologists, and, according to notes from the meeting obtained by Fox News, revealed that suspicions of the lab leak theory were suppressed over concerns of how the public would react to news of possible Chinese government involvement.

Dr. Francis Collins, the now-retired former director of the National Institutes of Health, also expressed fear at the time that "science and international harmony" could be harmed and "accusations of China's involvement could distract top researchers," the *New York Post* reported.

The State Department acknowledged in January 2021 the "United States government has reason to believe that several researchers inside the WIV [Wuhan Institute of Virology] became sick in autumn 2019." It found that they'd experienced symptoms consistent with both COVID-19 "and common seasonal illness."

TREND FORECAST: *True or false, as more information comes out that COVID-19 was created in a Chinese laboratory, already strong anti-Chinese sentiments will increase, and Asians of all nationalities will be targeted victims by ignorant people.*

TRENDPOST: *While many might think of China as being among the worst of the countries operating such facilities, it, along with about a third of the countries, is rated "medium," while South Africa, for example, is among the 41 percent rated "low."*

If one wanted to bet on which country would most likely have something go awry at a biology lab running high-risk experiments, the odds would probably still favor China, where increasingly more of such facilities are being built. Guangdong province alone plans to open one BSL-4 and 25 to 30 BSL-3 labs in the next five years.

RED WINE LINKED TO PREVENTING COVID-19 INFECTION

We'll drink to that.

Scientists from Shenzhen Kangning Hospital and Southwest Hospital in China have found that certain quantities of red wine, white wine, and champagne may reduce an individual's risk of contracting COVID-19.

The study was based on 473,957 subjects from a U.K. Biobank database. The average age was 69. The groups were divided up into drinking categories ranging from non-drinker to heavy drinkers. The study found that red wine—at any level of consumption—could play a protective role in preventing COVID-19 infection.

The researchers found that beer or cider intake contributed to a heightened risk of COVID-19 infection, "regardless of the frequency and amount of alcohol intake." These drinkers saw their risk of COVID infection increase 28 percent

compared to teetotalers. Those who enjoy spirits also saw their risk of infection jump compared to nondrinkers.

The study was first published in *Frontiers in Nutrition* and found that individuals who consumed five or more glasses of red wine each week were up to 17 percent less likely to contract the virus compared to nondrinkers. (See "THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM," "OBESITY GROWS IN STATES WHERE AT LEAST 35 PERCENT ARE CONSIDERED OBESE" and "COVID-19 & OBESITY: THE MORE YOU WEIGH, THE WORSE OFF YOU ARE.")

The Daily Record reported that scientists believe that red wine's high polyphenol content, which can inhibit the flu and other respiratory ailments may play a role. The report pointed out that white wine and champagne had to be imbibed at levels above the recommended levels for safe consumption to be effective in preventing the virus.

"The COVID risk appears to vary across different alcoholic beverage subtypes, frequency, and amount. Red wine, white wine, and champagne have the chance to reduce the risk of COVID-19," the study said.

TRENDPOST: *As Gerald Celente, a Warrior for the Prince of Peace says, "If Jesus Christ turned jugs of water into wine, you know it has to be the great drink of a lifetime."*

And Celente, who has a few glasses of vino a day with lunch and dinner, has been COVID-free for two years... despite having massive Freedom Festivals and attending large meetings unmasked, and unvaxxed.

PFIZER DRUG LORD PUSHING YEARLY COVID JABS. CALLS THOSE WHO WON'T SWALLOW BULLSHIT, 'CRIMINALS'

The COVID-19 War has been very good for Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla's bank account, but even he knows dreams of jabbing the world's population with a vaccine once every four months—as enticing as that likely sounds for him—is something that the public will never sign on to.

So, the CEO, who pulled in a cool $21 million in 2020, and won another $1 million in the Genesis Prize for leading the development of COVID Jab, said in an interview last week that he envisions a world where COVID-19 becomes manageable like the flu, and only requires one jab each year.

Bourla had to admit that the public does not have the appetite to take a new jab every four months (a CEO can dream). But he said an annual jab is beneficial for several reasons, especially because they are easier to sell to the public.

Bourla said that the virus will never be eradicated from society and will always kill some percentage of the public each year.

But he said he envisions a return to some sense of normal life within the next few months.

The vaccine business will continue to thrive, however, because there will always be some pesky variant that emerges "such as Omicron…that we will not be able to control."

Drug Lord

Bourla had strong words against those questioning the need and efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccine. He told Israel's Channel 13 news those disagreeing with his

beliefs are peddling misinformation about the vaccine's safety and efficacy are criminals.

“They know very well everything; they just make it a way of living to circulate this misinformation; they are criminals,” the drug kingpin said.

He claimed he was impacted by the spread of misinformation and said "anti-vaxxers" falsely claimed his wife died due to the vaccine and he was forced to call his in-laws and children to assure them that she was fine.

“But that’s the least of the damage. The biggest thing is because people believe those things… people who die are predominantly not vaccinated,” Bourla said. “Millions of people have died because of them, this small number of criminals.”

Bourla seems to be doling out his own misinformation when he claims that it is only a “sizable minority” that's hesitant to roll up its sleeve for the unproven messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) vaccines.

The only reason many of the 63.9 percent of Americans were vaccinated in the first place is because their jobs hung in the balance.

They would also be essentially barred from living a semi-normal social existence because indoor venues require the jab. (See “JAB KIDS WHO WON’T DIE OF THE VIRUS: THERE’S NO BUSINESS LIKE THE VAX BUSINESS,” “MORE VAX PROBLEMS: ALLERGIC REACTIONS & PFIZER VIOLATIONS,” “PFIZER’S COVID JAB: JOKESTER’S WILD” and “‘FIRST’ PILLS FOR COVID-19: MORE $$ FOR PFIZER, MORE BS?”)

TRENDSPOST: *We reported in our 9 November issue that the global COVID-19 war is entering its next phase and drug makers are adapting. Both Pfizer and Merck have announced antiviral drugs to improve survivability for patients. Pfizer—already the lead seller of the COVID Jab—has contracts to supply other countries and expects paxlovid to add $5 billion to its yearly sales; its stock rose 11 percent on news of the new pill, whereas Merck's stock price fell; see "DRUG*

COMPANIES CASHING IN ON COVID" (11 May 2021); "MORE COVID JABS, MORE BIG BUCKS FOR DRUG LORDS" (21 Sep 2021).

***TRENDPOST:** Why believe Pfizer? As we have reported in this and other **Trends Journal**s, their "miracle vaccines," are a fraction of the 96 percent efficacy which was sold to the public when they were launched last December.*

Yet, arrogant Presstitutes, "celebrities," politicians and bureaucratic flunkies keep telling the people, schools, businesses and institutions to demand mandatory vaccinations... or "Do Not Enter." (See "CDC VAX FACTS: IS THE TRUTH BEING TOLD?" 3 Aug 2021; "VAX EFFECTIVENESS: LIARS LIE, THE NUMBERS DON'T," 12 Oct 2021).

***TRENDPOST:** Remember when President Donald Trump declared a state of COVID emergency on Friday the 13th in March 2020, and when he compared his "Operation Warp Speed" jab to the U.S.'s race for the atomic bomb? Trump said he would employ "every plane, truck and soldier" to distribute doses.*

Then go back to November/December 2020 when the Drug Lords were selling their line that two jabs from the Operation Warp Speed COVID Jab would provide a 96 percent efficacy rate.

*However, as we wrote, what they promised did not happen: See "ISRAEL: COVID DRUG MUCH LESS EFFECTIVE THAN WHAT WE'VE BEEN SOLD," (27 Jul 2021) and our 12 October 2021 **Trends Journal** article, "NEW STUDIES PROVE: 96 VAX EFFICACY RATE WAS PURE BULLSHIT."*

TRENDS IN GEOPOLITICS

MALI JUNTA: DENMARK GO HOME

To fly from Copenhagen, Denmark to Bamako, Mali is about 5,000 km. So, why has Denmark sent troops to Mali? Is this called a foreign invasion?

No, not in the ongoing world of waging and fighting wars and flexing military muscle... which has been the way of the world since the beginning of “History of the World Part One.”

Denmark announced that it will pull out its forces in Mali after the military junta in control of the country spoke out publicly that these troops are not wanted there—a stinging rebuke from European leaders who have been colonists in the region for decades.

"We can see that the Malian transitional government, or the coup generals, last night sent out a public statement where they again reiterated that Denmark is not welcome in Mali, and we of course will not put up with that, so therefore we have decided to withdraw our soldiers home," Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod said at a press briefing in Copenhagen, last week.

France and other European countries urged the junta to allow special forces to stay in place.

Reuters reported that there has been friction between the junta and the European Union because there have been no countrywide elections since the coup. Copenhagen sent 105 military personnel to Bamako to join the counter-terrorism force in the Sahel called Takuba Task Force. France 24 reported that the task force was organized in March 2020 as a counter-terrorism operation.

Jean-Yves Le Drian, the French foreign minister, criticized the junta shortly after its call to Denmark to extricate the forces. Le Drian called the request an "irresponsible measure" from an "illegitimate" junta in the country.

"[This junta] bears full responsibility for the withdrawal of Danish forces and is further isolating itself from its international partners," he said.

The New York Times reported that in the past 18 months, the African continent has experienced six coups in five countries, including Mali, Chad, Guinea, Sudan, and Burkina Faso.

The paper pointed out that the coup in Mali unfolded in August 2020, which was spurred by public anger after "a stolen parliamentary election and government's failure to protect its people from violent extremists." There were two coups in the country in the last nine months.

Col. Assimi Goita, who became president after the second coup, stirred outrage in Europe by announcing that the country would delay its next election until 2026.

The move resulted in sanctions being leveled by European leaders. Mali's leaders say the elections cannot be held due to insecurity in the county.

TREND FORECAST: *As we reported when the United States and France led the overthrow of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, the situation in Mali and the region has significantly worsened as a result of the U.S.-led destruction of the nation. (See "MALI: FRANCE WANTS ITS COLONY BACK," "FRENCH AIR STRIKE IN MALI: MASS MURDER OF INNOCENTS" and "CHAD: MORE AFRICAN WAR DRUMS BEATING.")*

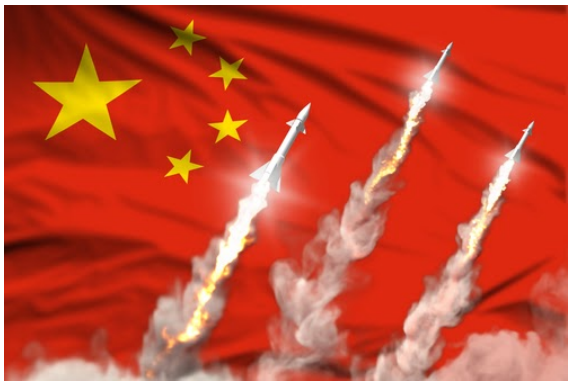
We have pointed out in previous issues that France has held a colonial-power relationship with Mali for 50 years in order to exploit its resources, particularly uranium.

This includes propping up government leaders who support the exploitation while opposing protesters in mining areas who are angered over environmental degradation and the outflow of resources to France. Paris has announced that it will also begin drawing down forces from Mali.

As economic conditions continue to deteriorate across the continent, civil wars will spread to regional war and the colonial powers of the past will again intervene in the name of bringing "Freedom and Democracy" to the war ravaged nations.

Also, as civil unrest escalates, so too will the migrant crisis as more people flee poverty, government corruption, crime and violence in their war ravaged nations. This in turn will intensify anti-immigration populist movements in safe-haven nations they are escaping to.

CHINESE AMBASSADOR: U.S. INTERVENTION ON TAIWAN'S BEHALF COULD LEAD TO WAR



A top Chinese ambassador said in a recent interview that if Taiwan somehow feels "emboldened" by support from the U.S. in its effort for independence, that position could eventually lead to war between the world's two superpowers.

Qin Gang, the ambassador to the U.S., made the remarks during an interview with NPR, according to the *Financial Times*.

Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the German Marshall Fund, told the *FT* that Qin's remarks were essentially in line with the position of other Chinese officials, including President Xi Jinping.

She said these officials have expressed their dismay over U.S. interference and the "trajectory of U.S.-Taiwan relations and Taiwan's policies."

TRENDPOST: *The* ***Trends Journal*** *has reported extensively on the tension between China and Taiwan and Washington's effort to thwart Beijing. (See "CHINA WON'T STOP AT TAIWAN, SO WHERE SHOULD AMERICA DRAW THE LINE?" "TAIWAN MILITARY RAMP-UP WILL NOT STOP CHINA," "BIDEN SAYS (AGAIN) U.S. WILL DEFEND TAIWAN IF CHINA INVADES" and "U.S. GENERAL DECLARES U.S. 'READY' TO DEFEND TAIWAN IF CHINA INVADES.")*

The paper reported that Qin stressed that it is China's hope that Taiwan, which Beijing has long declared as part of its territory under the "One China Principle," will reunify with the mainland peacefully.

Last week, a $100-million U.S. F-35C fighter jet crashed into the water in the South China Sea while attempting to land on the USS Carl Vinson. (The pilot survived after ejecting from the cockpit.)

There is fear that Chinese submarines will be able to get to the crashed jet at the bottom of the sea before a U.S. salvage ship arrives on the scene, *The Guardian* reported. The plane reportedly is one of the most technologically advanced in the world.

Zhao Lijian, the foreign ministry spokesman in Beijing, said the Chinese have no interest in finding the crashed plane.

"We have no interest in their aircraft," he said. "We urge the country concerned to do things that are conducive to regional peace and stability, rather than flex muscles in the region," he said.

TREND FORECAST: *Despite condemnations when they do so, there will be no military forces from other nations that will challenge Communist China's military might. Indeed, America, with the largest military in the world, has not won a war since World War II and cannot even win against third-world nations such as Afghanistan after invading that nation some 20 years ago.*

Apple's sales in China are booming and its market share for smartphones hit a record high, according to CNBC.

Apple had 23 percent of the market in China and sales grew 32 percent year-on-year in the last quarter, CNBC reported, citing market analysts Counterpoint Research.

(See our 16 November report: "U.S. FIRMS BOOST CHINA'S BID FOR GLOBAL DOMINATION.")

As we have written over the years in great detail in the Geopolitical section of the ***Trends Journal****, the business of China is business. And, the nation is on track to overtake the United States as the world superpower.*

Therefore, despite all the political bluster, the bottom line of the world of business is... business. And as we have detailed, across the spectrum the main

focus of all sectors of major firms and investment houses is, and will be, China for the distant future.

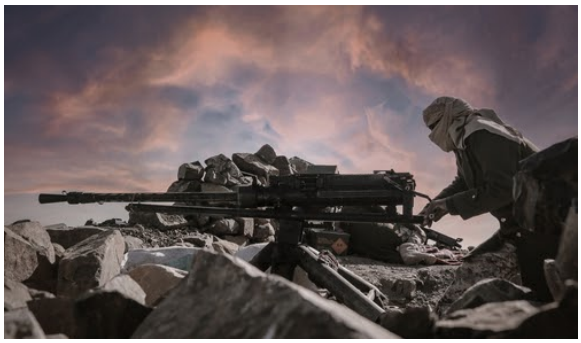
Should war break out between China and Taiwan, we forecast the Taiwanese military will not aggressively fight back, since doing so would result in millions of deaths and mass destruction.

Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, wrote in April that Taiwanese officials have told him that they expect American support even if their behavior, such as a declaration of independence, triggered Chinese action.

“And Beijing officials consistently express skepticism that Washington would act against its own interest, risking, as one Chinese general put it, Los Angeles for Taipei," he wrote.

Again, we maintain our forecast that China will take over Taiwan and no one will stop them.

U.S. FIGHTING YEMEN WAR



The U.S. came to the aid of the United Arab Emirates during a ballistic missile attack on Abu Dhabi by Houthi fighters seeking revenge after recent gains by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

The two missiles were intercepted by the U.S.'s Patriot missile system in the early morning hours last Monday and was seen as a significant escalation in the conflict.

Brett McGurk, the U.S. National Security Council’s coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa, placed the blame squarely on Houthi fighters who he claims are unwilling to negotiate a ceasefire.

“Over the last year, the Saudis have supported UN initiatives… to wind down the war,” McGurk said, according to Defense One. “The Houthis have answered those initiatives by launching a massive offensive inside Yemen. It takes two to get to a ceasefire and end the war and right now the onus is on the Houthis.”

TRENDPOST: *Why should the Houthis negotiate a ceasefire when they’re winning a war that was launched against them by Saudi Arabia?*

We reported last week that the Houthis have been on a roll and have reclaimed land lost in earlier conflicts. Those gains are seen to dissuade the Houthis from having an interest in negotiating.

Some social media users took to Twitter to post videos of the missiles being intercepted by the Patriot system. The Houthis have promised revenge for recent U.A.E./Saudi massacres and warned the Emirates will “no longer be safe for investments.”

Video clips showed the rockets intercepted by a battery of the anti-projectile defenses. Those who posted the video face legal problems for sharing the interception on these platforms.

Abu Dhabi said these clips “endanger vital and military installations, and can impact the security and stability of society.”

The threat came after the Saudis and U.A.E. conducted bombings that left dozens killed in Yemen, including a prison, where 82 people were killed.

The Economist pointed out that missile attacks on Saudi Arabia have become a weekly occurrence, but the recent increase in strikes against the U.A.E. is a clear escalation by the Houthis.

The magazine said Abu Dhabi finds itself in a precarious position: it can decide to back off the conflict and allow the Houthis to take control of important cities, or risk more attacks that “could inflict real damage on its economy.”

Abu Dhabi has made an effort to portray stability in the region.

The report said there are thousands of U.S. troops at al-Dhafra, an airbase near Abu Dhabi, and the Houthis' missiles cannot inflict serious damage due to the U.A.E. air defenses.

The war has destabilized the region and shows no signs of easing. As we have reported, the U.A.E. pulled most of its troops out of Yemen in 2019 but the Saudis and other members of the coalition were unable to keep the Houthis at bay, especially in the oil-and gas-rich Marib province.

Abu Dhabi sent its Giants Brigades back into Yemen on 15 November and the militia immediately made gains against the Houthis.

The Agence France-Presse reported that the militia is set to be pulled out of the country after delivering a series of defeats to the Houthis in Shabwa Province. But the Houthis tried to make up for losses on the ground by seizing a U.A.E.-flagged ship on 3 January and staging a deadly airstrike on Abu Dhabi two weeks later.

The deadly attack prompted the country to call on the Biden administration to re-blacklist the Houthis. President Biden told a news conference that the proposal is under consideration.

Biden was credited for removing the Houthis from the "terror" list after the Trump administration, but now seems to be reneging on the idea.

Iman Saleh, the general coordinator of the Yemeni Liberation Movement, told Al Jazeera that reapplying the Houthis to the list would "starve millions of Yemenis and he [Biden] knows that."

"A designation would make him no different from Trump," he said.

Protests broke out across Iran to voice solidarity with the people of Yemen. One person posted on Twitter, "There are more headlines about Joe Biden's new cat than his support for a genocidal war in Yemen."

TRENDPOST: *Yemen's civil war started in 2014, when the Houthis, who were ruling large sections of Yemen for over 1,000 years, overthrew the unelected president put in control by the Saudis. The Houthis eventually took control of Sana'a, and then seized the presidential palace.*

The Saudi-backed coalition is concerned that Houthi rule in Yemen would mean rival Iran would gain a foothold at the border with Saudi Arabia.

The war, the worst humanitarian crisis on earth, has been dragging on for seven years and has been blamed for 150,000 deaths and displacing millions. (See "SAUDI-LED YEMEN SLAUGHTER ESCALATES," "MURDEROUS YEMEN WAR: MILLIONS IN PERIL. WHO CARES?" and "YEMEN CRISIS WORSENS. IT'S NO NEWS.")

TREND FORECAST: *The* ***Trends Journal*** *has reported extensively on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen that is playing out due to Saudi Arabia's attack on the nation.*

Thus, we maintain our forecast that the Saudi/U.S. alliance will not defeat the Houthis, and the war will rage on, killing tens of thousands of innocent people while inflicting devastating and deadly hardship across the nation.

The war will continue to be ignored by the mainstream media and the vast majority of the world will be ignorant to the human suffering the United States and Saudi Arabia have inflicted upon the nation.

So what is the U.S. going to do now that the Houthis are gaining ground in the conflict?

According to Anti-War.com:

"Lebanese newspaper al-Akhbar has leaked details from a document on talks between Saudi officials and the US special envoy on their respective intentions in the Yemen War.

As the U.S. understands it, the Saudis are very keen to end the Yemen War and leave 'with dignity.' They are envisioning a step toward a transitional government in Yemen."

However, they note U.S. Special Envoy Timothy Lenderking made it clear that Washington, which has sold billions of dollars of weapon to the Saudis and its allies to fight the Yemen war, is not ready for peace, saying there is "the necessity of not leaving Yemen completely," and that they want the Saudis to remain involved in Yemen's government.

As for the Houthis in power, Anti-War.com notes, "The tragedy of such an end is that it could've avoided the war entirely, as all the Houthis ever wanted was a move toward free elections and a new government, and it was only the insistence to try to keep President Hadi in power beyond his term in office, which ended 8 years ago, that led to the Saudi-led invasion."

War and Misery

The United Nations said January will "almost certainly" be the bloodiest month for civilians in Yemen since the seven-year war started.

Hans Grundberg, the UN special envoy for the country, and David Gressley, the world body's humanitarian coordinator, blamed U.A.E. missile attacks on hospitals, telecommunication infrastructure, airports, and a school, Al Jazeera reported.

Eight million Yemenis have received reduced assistance from food agencies since the beginning of January, they said. Doctors Without Borders verified their claims and said frontline workers have been more active than ever.

“This year we thought the situation would be calmer, that there would be negotiations, and the Yemenis would be spared more agony. Instead, we have seen an escalation.”

The Al Jazeera report, citing the World Food Programme, reported that more than five million people in the country are on the brink of famine, and 50,000 were already living in famine-like conditions.

Human-rights groups have urged the Biden administration not to label the Houthis a “terrorist” group because it could further complicate the effort to get humanitarian aid to civilians. President Biden revoked the “terrorist” label in the early weeks of his presidency, but now says he is considering reapplying the label.

“It’s extremely disappointing that the Biden administration is considering this position when they know very well the humanitarian impact it would have,” Scott Paul, senior manager of humanitarian policy at Oxfam America, told Al Jazeera. “A year ago, the administration heeded our warnings—and nothing has changed since then to improve the outlook for what these designations would mean.”

Israeli President Isaac Herzog was welcomed by Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Sunday in Abu Dhabi.

> “This visit is an expression ... of the vision and dream of peace and the spirit of peace, which we bring to the entire region. We are two successful nations who started with very little in our hands, developed our lands into a successful paradise and in many ways set an example to the world of how to lead and develop a nation with a vision of the future,” Herzog said.

WAR MACHINE MAKING BILLIONS

The unrest faced in many parts of the world means good business for U.S. defense companies and a viable investment for stockholders, according to their CEOs.

The CEOs of Raytheon and Lockheed Martin are bullish on war and said the profits will follow.

Greg Hayes, the Raytheon leader, pointed to the deadly drone attack in the U.A.E. from earlier this month and tensions in Ukraine. He said “all of those things are putting pressure on some of the defense spending over there. So I fully expect we're going to see some benefit from it,” RT reported.

Jim Taiclet, Lockheed’s CEO, also pointed to the “renewed great power competition that does include National Defense and threats to it.”

TRENDPOST: *The* ***Trends Journal*** *has reported extensively on the simmering tensions and the role that the U.S. will play as the situations unfold. Washington has never concerned itself with military spending and just recently broke its own record on spending. (See “MILITARY SPENDING INCREASES AS ECONOMIES DECLINE,” “WAR CRIME GANG GETS RICHER” and “U.S. MILITARY TO GET MORE THAN $740 BILLION FROM CONGRESS.”)*

U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin is scheduled to meet with top CEOs from the hypersonics industry to talk about accelerating the development of these capabilities after rivals like China, Russia, and North Korea have all shown advancements in the field.

The purpose of the meeting is to "light a fire underneath the entire hypersonic industry" and "encourage industry to pick up the pace," two executives at two

defense companies who've been invited to attend the meeting which is scheduled for Thursday, told CNN.

Executives from Lockheed Martin, Raytheon Technologies, Northrop Grumman, Boeing, Leidos, Aerojet Rocketdyne, BAE Systems, L3 Harris, and about a half dozen other defense companies have been invited to attend, the report said.

The 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, which funds the Pentagon, included $3.8 billion for the development of offensive hypersonic weapons and $310 million for the development of defense against hypersonic weapons.

TRENDPOST: *The* ***Trends Journal*** *has reported on the U.S.'s absurd investment into its military, with nothing to show for it other than spending trillions to kill millions and make the military industrial and intelligence business gangs richer.*

Gerald Celente has pointed out that the American military has not won a war since WWII and has been stacking up defeats, including the recent retreat from Afghanistan. (See "DUH! PENTAGON SURPRISED BY CHINA'S TEST OF HYPERSONIC MISSILE," "PENTAGON: TARGET CHINA" and "U.S. 'ALREADY LOST' AI WAR WITH CHINA, PENTAGON'S FORMER SOFTWARE CHIEF SAYS.")

Money Down the Military Mafia's Drain

Commondreams.org reported recently that the increase in spending for the U.S. is almost laughable because we do not face a threat of invasion. We are not Poland, with a migrant invasion on our eastern border, or Ukraine, with Russian troops massing on our right flank. We are surrounded by allies to the north and south and abutted by the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

Taiclet told investors and analysts that it does not give him any joy to point out the problems playing out around the world, but said the "history of the United States is, when those environments evolve, we do not sit by and just watch it happen."

“So I can't talk to a number, but I do think, and I'm concerned personally that the threat is advancing, and we need to be able to meet it.”

The RT report mentioned that Brown University’s Costs of War Project found that the arms industry has spent $2.5 billion on government lobbying over the past two decades. The Pentagon has spent $14 trillion since 2001, and about one-third of the funding went to these companies.

Bryan MacDonald, a reporter for RT, took to Twitter to post a screengrab of a 1998 article in *The New York Times*—when relations between Russia and the U.S. were strong—that read, “Arm Contractors Spend to Promote an Expanded NATO.”

Part of the *Times*’ report read:

> “*American arms manufacturers, who stand to gain billions of dollars in sales of weapons, communication systems and other military equipment if the Senate approves NATO expansion, have made enormous investments in lobbyists and campaign contributions to promote their cause in Washington. The end of the Cold War has shrunk the arms industry and forced it to diversify*.”

MacDonald tweeted that the push for NATO expansion began in the 1990s—at a time Russia and the U.S. were close.

“As with most things, it was about $$’s. US arms makers were looking for new customers & lobbied heavily,” he posted.

TREND FORECAST: *As the saying goes, “Generals are always fighting the last war.” And America’s post WWII war track record is an unblemished failure. From their weaponry to tactics, the U.S. military have exemplified a common misconception and/or misunderstanding of technology and development in warfare... regardless of who they are fighting.*

And the U.S. Senate allocated $768 billion for the military in 2022, roughly $24 billion more than the White House even requested from Congress.

In addition, as we have forecast, war with China or Russia, it will be the War that ends all wars. As we have quoted Albert Einstein, "I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones."

TREND FORECAST: *The United States will not enter into a one-on-one military conflict with Russia or China. Indeed, they could not even beat the Taliban or win the "Mission Accomplished" Iraq war.*

Yet, as they have since the end of World War II, Washington and their Presstitutes will continue their fear and hysteria Cold War rhetoric to frighten its masses while enriching the military manufacturing mob.

Gerald Celente's forecast that America would lose the war when President George W. Bush launched it in October 2001—with 88 percent of Americans' support—was prescient.

The vast majority of the nation believed Bush's bullshit at the time and admonished Celente for his forecast.

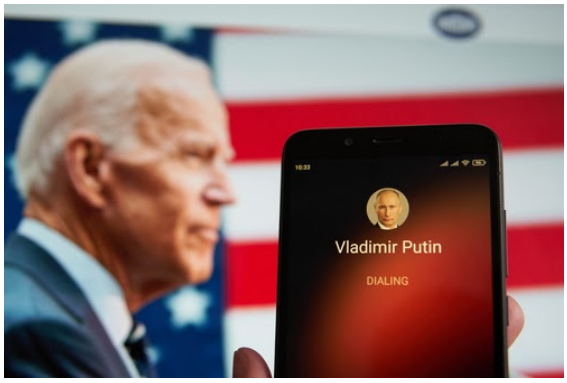
Indeed, as noted in the movie What Zizi Gave Honeyboy, after being a major media favorite, Celente was banned from the airwaves for telling the media America would lose the Afghan War.

Farhad Manjoo, a columnist in The New York Times, wrote about how Sen. Joe Manchin said he could not—in good conscience—vote for the Democrats' $2.2 trillion 10-year plan to address climate change and invest in child care, health care, and education because he could not "explain it" to voters back at home in West Virginia.

"Given all the challenges we face at home, does it make any sense to keep spending so many hundreds of billions on the Pentagon? And even just in terms

of fighting wars, can anyone be satisfied with the way the military is managing its funds? The Pentagon has never passed an audit and says it may not be able to until 2028," Manjoo wrote.

WASHINGTON AND NATO: NO CONCESSIONS TO RUSSIA



The Biden administration and NATO responded to Russia's list of demands last week and refused to offer any concessions to Moscow, which expressed its security concerns with the Alliance's expansion east.

"There is no change, there will be no change," Antony Blinken, the U.S. secretary of state, said. The Associated Press reported that Moscow's response could determine whether Europe will "again be plunged into war."

The Kremlin has already hinted at another possible missile crisis with the U.S. and warned Washington that it could deploy troops or other military assets to Havana or Caracas in response to the stalemate.

Kevin Whitaker, a former U.S. ambassador to Colombia who served as a diplomat in Venezuela, told The AP that Russia's threat is "pure misdirection" and "it's not fooling anyone."

"It's not real power projection," he said. It's a showpiece and nothing more."

TRENDPOST: *The U.S. and NATO allies have been working on the best response for Russia's troop buildup on Ukraine's eastern flank. Russia has insisted that it has no plans of invading, but President Biden has suggested that a confrontation is all but certain. (See "PUTIN PUTS PRESSURE ON UKRAINE," "KREMLIN BLAMES UKRAINE FOR STOKING TENSIONS AT BORDER" and "U.S. CONTINUES TO RAMP UP COLD WAR 2 RHETORIC.")*

As we have reported in recent issues, one of the main points of contention for Russian President Vladamir Putin is what he sees as NATO's reach into his backyard.

Putin started moving tens of thousands of troops to the Ukrainian border late last year and said they will not leave until there are "concrete agreements prohibiting any further eastward expansion of NATO."

Despite its bluster, NATO is not interested in taking on Ukraine as a member, and everyone knows this, so it is unclear why the Alliance is grandstanding on the matter.

France, Germany, and the U.K. do not want to get into a war with Russia over Kyiv, which is tarnished by corruption and a dysfunctional government. (See "POROSHENKO'S RETURN TO UKRAINE: FIRST CLASS FREAK SHOW.")

Reality Check

Ret. Col. Douglas Macgregor, a former senior adviser at the Pentagon, told Fox News that NATO "appears to be crumbling" under the pressure of a potential conflict. He joked that the Alliance's major response to Russia's military flex was—in part—the Dutch offering to fly two F-15s to Bulgaria in April.

NATO and Washington do not want a conflict with Russia and they also do not want the appearance of being backed into a corner by Putin. The first response to a Russian invasion would likely be in the form of sanctions.

Ned Price, the spokesman for the State Department, told NPR last week that the Nord Stream 2 pipeline linking Germany to Russia would not go forward if Russia invades—even though the project has already been completed and is just waiting on permits to start pumping gas.

"I'm not going to get into specifics," he said. " We will work with Germany to ensure it does not move forward."

Price's statement was significant because Berlin has been vague about Nord Stream 2's fate if there was an invasion. Even though Germany seems to be showing more teeth, the country seems to be noncommittal when it comes to the pipeline.

Annalena Baerbock, the German foreign minister, told Bundestag that there is a "broad bandwidth of responses at our disposal, including Nord Stream 2."

Emily Haber, Germany's ambassador to Washington, tweeted that "the U.S. and Germany jointly declared last summer: if Russia uses energy as a weapon or if there is another violation of Ukraine's sovereignty, Russia will have to pay a high price."

It should be noted that the European Union gets some 40 percent of its gas imports from Russia and Germany 50 percent.

Jens Stoltenberg, the secretary-general of NATO who has his resume out to become Norway's next central bank governor, appeared to miss the memo from the U.S. to keep the contents of the Alliance's response private.

Stoltenberg said the Alliance seeks to re-establish diplomatic ties with Russia and to "listen" to Russia's concerns. Stoltenberg has pointed out in the past that Ukraine is a NATO partner, not an ally. Under Article 5, only allies would benefit from a military response from NATO, so that means Russia will not be met with resistance after it conquers Kyiv and looks to Warsaw.

Putin has been successful in exposing fissures within the Alliance, which itself is a victory for the Kremlin. Germany has been mocked for offering Ukraine 5,000 helmets amid the crisis and reportedly told the U.K. to avoid using its airspace to deliver weapons to Kyiv.

Marina Weisband, a Ukrainian author, tweeted, "The plan is obviously for 5,000 Ukrainian soldiers to run across the border and head-butt the Russian troops deployed there."

Croatia's president also said he would withdraw his force from NATO if there war with Russia.

Putin told French President Emmanuel Macron that Moscow's demands were all but ignored by the U.S. and NATO, but said he will still seek a diplomatic solution for the stalemate.

He told Macron that his concerns about NATO missile systems along its borders have not been addressed. The *Financial Times* reported that Macron did his best Biden impression and told Russia that it needs to respect the sovereignty of states.

How close the world is to war seems to vary by the politician you ask. Biden has said a Russian invasion is all but certain and annoyed the government in Kyiv by requesting that staffers at the embassy exit the country. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky "suggested the White House was panicking about an imminent Russian attack," the *FT* said.

"There is a feeling abroad that there is war here. That's not the case. I am not saying an escalation is not possible…[but] we don't need this panic," he said.

The paper pointed to Bruno Kahl, the head of Germany's foreign intelligence service, who said Friday that he did not believe the Kremlin has decided on what its next moves will do. Any invasion would be met with strong resistance from Ukrainian forces.

TREND FORECAST: *As we have noted, petroleum exports account for about half of Russia's annual budget, and Russia currently provides Europe with more than 40 percent of its natural gas supply.*

Therefore, it is a lose, lose situation for the EU to keep putting sanctions on Russia, which will in turn shut off its gas flow to Europe. And it is a lose, lose situation for Russia to invade Ukraine and lose its biggest gas customers.

Therefore we maintain our forecast that absent a wild card or false flag event, there will be no Russian invasion of Ukraine, since they do not want their economy to further crash.

CHINA JOINS RUSSIA: URGES U.S. TO JETTISON COLD-WAR MENTALITY

Beijing's top diplomat told U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a video conference call that Moscow's concerns about NATO expansion in its own backyard seem legitimate and should be taken seriously, according to a report.

Wang Yi, China's foreign minister, warned Blinken against adopting a Cold-War mentality and said "regional security cannot be guaranteed by strengthening or even expanding military blocs."

TRENDPOST: *Wang's comments are not surprising given Washington's war of words with Beijing over several issues ranging from control of the South China Sea, Uyghur detention camps, and Taiwan. (See "CHINA WON'T STOP AT TAIWAN, SO WHERE SHOULD AMERICA DRAW THE LINE?" "CHINA/TAIWAN TENSIONS RISING: WAR ON THE HORIZON?" and "CHINA PUTS CHINA FIRST.")*

Ukraine, Again

The *Financial Times*, citing a U.S. readout of the call, reported that Blinken mentioned to Wang that "the global security and economic risks posed by further Russian aggression against Ukraine."

The U.S. urged Beijing to use its influence over Russia to help calm the situation along Ukraine's eastern border, Reuters reported.

Wang called for both sides to “refrain from doing things that agitate tensions and hype up the crisis.”

Bonnie Glaser of the German Marshall Fund of the U.S. told Reuters that China stands to potentially be a spoiler when it comes to countries trying to threaten Moscow with sanctions.

“It is unlikely that the U.S. can get China on board over Ukraine,” she said. Beijing won’t endorse the use of force, but it is sympathetic with Russian views of NATO.”

She said China is likely to step in and help “mitigate” any impact that sanctions could have on Russia.

TREND FORECAST: *America, with the largest military in the world, has not won a war since World War II, and just lost the 20 year Afghan War. Despite spending an estimated $2.3 trillion, it could not defeat some 80,000 Taliban fighters. Therefore, any war talk about the U.S. waging against Russia or China is nothing more than “talk.”*

TRENDPOST: *Under the agreement between U.S. Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush with then-Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, NATO would not expand its military presence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.*

Beginning with Bill Clinton and continuing under George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump’s regimes, the U.S. and NATO have violated that agreement, bringing troops and weaponry throughout Eastern Europe to the borders of Russia.

This fact is continually ignored by both American politicians and its mainstream media.

While considered fully appropriate for the U.S. and its allies to stage war games and pour billions of dollars of military aid to countries bordering Russia, China,

Iran, Venezuela, and other nations it is in conflict with, should any of these nations do the same on U.S. borders, it would be called an "Act of War."

TRENDS-EYE VIEW

LONGER ON CELL PHONE, LOWER SPERM COUNT

A South Korean study recently published in the *Environmental Research* journal found that radiofrequency electromagnetic waves commonly found in cell phones could hurt the health of male sperm.

StudyFinds reported that research from Pusan National University found that the low-level radiofrequency electromagnetic waves could damage sperm concentration, viability, and motility. The report pointed out previous research that tied the same waves to potentially damaging the brain, heart, and endocrine system.

“Male cell phone users should strive to reduce mobile phone use to protect their sperm quality,” Yun Hak Kim, the lead researcher, said.

The researchers released a press release that read, “Knowing that the number of cell phone users is most likely going to increase in the future, it's high time we start considering exposure to RF-EMW as one of the underlying factors causing a reduction in sperm quality among the male population.”

TRENDPOST: *(See past* ***TRENDS JOURNAL*** *reports****:*** *"SPERM DOWN FOR THE COUNT, PENISES FALLING SHORT," "THE FUTURE OF HUMAN REPRODUCTION: THE GRIM REAPER," "WHO'S IN CHARGE? PENISES SHRINKING, SPERM COUNTS DOWN.")*

Since there have been studies tying cell phone use to sperm quality since 2012, the researchers conducted what is called a meta-analysis of the data. Out of the 435 published studies looked at during the time period, researchers found 18 studies with 4280 samples that were suitable for statistical analyses.

The study did not find a link between the time spent on the cell phone and sperm quality, only that exposure to the cell phone itself was associated with reduced numbers, the press release said.

TREND FORECAST: *The* ***Trends Journal*** *reported in its 15 August 2018 issue, in an article titled "DEATH BY CELL PHONE", that despite their universal use, relatively little is known about their impact on the human body.*

Gerald Celente, who has a flip phone that he only carries when traveling, has warned for decades that despite scientific evidence showing cell phones to be a serious health hazard, even cancer-causing, the industry profiteers would deny it. In fact "Clean Phones" was one of our Top Trends for 2016.

He noted that just as tobacco industry leaders only admitted cigarettes caused cancer in the late 1990s despite the overwhelming proof, so too will profiteers deny the physical and mental risks of cell phones.

And even with the fact that 6 million people worldwide die annually from smoking—and for every death, 30 others deal with the horrific effects of tobacco-related cancers and disease—like the cell phone addicted, cigarette smokers can't, or won't, kick the deadly habit.

A study in 2017 by the National Toxicology Program (NTP), an initiative of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that a significant

percentage of rats exposed to doses of typical cell phone radio-frequency radiation either developed a form of brain cancer or susceptibility to related diseases.

A major study released in Italy was conducted in 2018 that replicated the results of the NTP research.

These join more than two dozen other studies over the past two decades indicating clear links between cellphone use and cancers, as well as other ills ranging from weakened memory to birth defects.

TREND FORECAST: *Therefore, as evidence grows and public awareness regarding health risks of chronic cell phone use increases, particularly among children, the same market segment that pays for clean food will swiftly gravitate to "clean phones." Thus, safer cell phone devices that are effective and marketed with a "clean phone" theme and brand will corner a market with rich and growing OnTrendpreneur® potential.*

BIDEN BANDITS? DIRTY DEALS OR ARE THEY LEGIT?

President Biden and his family have benefited through the years by securing business deals totaling $31 million with people who have direct ties to the highest levels of China's spy agency, according to a report in *The New York Post.*

Peter Schweizer, the author of the report, compiled a list of some of the bold names in China who have done business with the Bidens, and alleged ways the Bidens hid these dealings. He pointed to Hunter Biden's work with Bohai Harvest RST, a Chinese investment fund, that he resigned from in October 2019.

In 2013, the younger Biden introduced his father—who was vice president at the time—to two executives at the fund. American tax dollars paid for the trip.

Hunter and his father traveled to Beijing at the time aboard Air Force Two, the report said. Hunter's lawyers have done their best to downplay the financial ties and said he only had $420,000 in the fund, which Schweizer called an “absurd” claim.

“It is difficult to imagine, if not incomprehensible, that a 10 percent stake in those economics is worth only $420,000,” Steven Kaplan, a professor at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, told Schweizer.

> “The distinction they appear to be making is they capitalized the management company with $4.2 million even though the fund manages $2 billion. The value of that management company is likely far in excess of $4.2 if they are managing $2 billion.”

The report said Hunter Biden’s share was likely closer to $20 million.

The report, citing lawyers, said Hunter Biden sold his shares but did not disclose the amount. The report is the latest tying the Biden family to business dealings with a part of the world where U.S. influence has been controversial.

Ukraine

The media has done its best to muzzle any discussion of Hunter's work for Ukraine's Burisma H, a holding company for a group of energy exploration and production companies.

Biden called allegations of impropriety "a smear campaign" during the 2020 election. Former President Trump tried to use Hunter's dealing with the company as an example of the Bidens' effort to mooch off Joe, who was helping the White House at the time conduct the Obama administration’s foreign policy with Ukraine.

The New York Post, citing invoices on Hunter's abandoned laptop, reported that Burisma paid him $1 million a year while his father was vice president—or about $83,333 per month. The holding company cut his pay in half when his father exited office, the report said.

Schweizer said in an interview on Fox News that the "worst thing that stands out to me is that every single deal that the Biden family got in China when Joe Biden was vice president was involving an individual who had had links to the highest levels of Chinese intelligence."

Schweizer said that the family of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who is worth about $114 million, has also done a lot of business with China since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak. He pointed out that she has refused to allow a single congressional hearing to even discuss the origins of the COVID virus.

"Why on earth would the Speaker of the House take that position?" he asked.

TRENDPOST: *The* ***Trends Journal*** *had reported extensively on the Biden deals with Ukraine. Back in 2013, Vice President Joseph Biden's son, Hunter, and Devon Archer, a partner in Rosemont Capital, a private-equity firm he co-founded with Christopher Heinz, Secretary of State John Kerry's stepson, were both appointed to the board of directors of Burisma Holding, Ukraine's top private gas company: "Burisma Holdings reminds me of Exxon in its early days," Mr. Archer boasted.*

How did Hunter Biden and Devon Archer, two members of the White Show Boy Gang, who live over 5,000 miles away and know dick about shit about Ukraine energy, get an allegedly $50,000 a month each to sit on Burisma's board? Archer was convicted in 2018 in a securities fraud scheme that involved $60 million worth of bonds by the Oglala Sioux Indian tribe.

REI: UNIONIZATION TREND EXPANDS AS FORECAST

REI, the camping and outdoor retailer, is the latest company in the U.S. to face a unionization call by workers fed up with poor treatment, little pay, and no prospects for career advancements.

Employees at the REI location in New York City's SoHo, which includes about 115 workers, have expressed their desire to be represented by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, according to *The New York Times.*

An employee who has played a key role in the effort told the paper that there are several reasons at play for the push to unionize, including a "tangible shift in the culture at work that doesn't seem to align with the values that brought us here," and the struggle that they claim to face amid an ongoing "global pandemic."

TRENDPOST: *The* ***Trends Journal*** *has reported extensively on the impact that COVID-19 has had on workers in the U.S., who are tired of working dead-end jobs while their bosses' boss has never been richer. (See "UNIONIZATION TREND ON TRACK," "LABOR UNION COMEBACK" and "RECORD QUIT RATES: TAKE YOUR JOB AND SHOVE IT.")*

The shortage of workers and the desire of employed workers to organize and go on strike share a common root cause: people are far less inclined to perform menial, unfulfilling jobs for meager pay. (See "STARBUCKS STORE TO UNIONIZE, A TOP TREND FOR 2022?")

REI, for its part, offered the standard company reply. The company did not condemn the move—which would be a PR headache—but it also expressed confusion as to why these workers would want to form a union.

"We respect the rights of our employees to speak and act for what they believe—and that includes the rights of employees to choose or refuse union

representation. However, we do not believe placing a union between the co-op and its employees is needed or beneficial."

TRENDSPOST: *REI, the consumer cooperative, tries to bill itself as a progressive company that seeks the greater good for society by selling overpriced Yeti coolers and tents, but yet when unionization could get in the way of profits, the campfire song changes its tune.*

The retailer has 168 locations in the U.S. and employs 15,000 people. Jacobin magazine reported that Eric Artz, its CEO, earned $2 million in 2020 compared to entry-level jobs at these locations that start at about $15 an hour.

Kate Dedend, a worker at the store, told Motherboard's Lauren Kaori Gurley that the company prides itself on "being a great workplace, a leader of the outdoors, but why is it that none of us are making a living wage?"

"Why do you have to work 40 hours a week for 12 months to get health benefits? Why is there no guarantee of hours after the holiday season? These are very basic things that REI has gotten away with not doing, despite this facade of being a progressive, liberal company," she said.

TRENDPOST: *In the 1960s, a slogan (derived from a poem by Carl Sandburg and made popular by anti-war activists) asked, "What if they had a war and nobody came?" Now, in the 2020s, the question might be, "What if they had jobs available and nobody applied?"*

TREND FORECAST: *We maintain our forecast that with a severe shortage of workers despite a strong demand for them, and many workers feeling disheartened and underappreciated, labor unions, long in decline, will make a comeback; see "POLITICO JOURNALISTS FORM UNION. A TREND OF THE TIMES" (2 Nov 2021), "DEERE EMPLOYEES GO ON STRIKE: MORE STRIKES TO COME" (19 Oct 2021) and "SPOTLIGHT: WORKERS ON DEMAND" (26 Oct 2021).*

And, as unions continue to gain strength, and the stronger they grow, the greater the demands they will make; if those demands are not met, union workers will stage "actions" like slowdowns and/or strikes.

U.S. INFRASTRUCTURE: A ROTTING JOKE

President Biden on Friday visited Pittsburgh to tout the "remarkable economic progress" during his first year in office and passage of his $1.2 trillion infrastructure bill, which seemed all the more urgent after a bridge in the city collapsed just hours before his visit.

The 450-foot bridge in Frick Park, which was erected in 1974, collapsed while a Port Authority bus and multiple cars were on it, according to the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. Ten people were injured in the collapse—none seriously. The paper, citing PennDot, reported that the bridge was rated in poor condition prior to the incident.

Biden told reporters in the city that $1.6 billion in his infrastructure package has already been earmarked for bridges in the state. *The New York Times* reported that the president said he wants to avoid a headline saying someone was killed in a similar collapse.

"We are gonna rebuild that bridge and every other bridge… That's how we're going to build another America," Biden said.

Construction of bridges in the U.S. peaked in the 1960s and 70s, the *Times* reported, meaning that many bridges in the U.S. are at middle age.

Biden visited the scene and reiterated that his administration is going to fix all 43,000 bridges in the U.S. considered to be in poor condition.

"And by the way, we're going to give you guys more money too—the cops," Biden said, according to CNN.

While the U.S. contends with collapsing infrastructure and an ancient rail system, Beijing announced plans to extend the length of its high-speed rail networks to 31,070 miles by 2025, RT reported, citing a five-year plan from the State Council.

The report pointed out that the rail network in China will be so vast, it will stretch far beyond the combined high-speed rails in Spain, Japan, France, Germany, and Finland.

TRENDSPOST: *As we have forecast, the 20th century was the American century—the 21st century will be the Chinese century. The business of China is business; the business of America is war.*

While America spent countless trillions waging and losing endless wars and enriching its military-industrial complex, China has spent its trillions advancing the nation's businesses and building its 21st-century infrastructure.

And while America and Europe have outsourced their manufacturing to China and developing nations to increase profit margins, China's dual circulation/self-sustaining economic model is directed toward keeping jobs and trade and profits within the nation, thus relying less on global trade.

In 2019, about 230,000 bridges in the U.S. alone needed repair, and 47,000 were downright unsafe, according to the American Road and Transportation Builders Association. The number has only grown since then, yet politicians are unable to allot the money needed to fix them.

The United States will spend only $27 billion to rebuild America's bridges over the period of 5 years, or some $5.4 billion a year, while the Military Industrial Complex was awarded several hundred billion from the 2022, $768 billion Defense Budget.

And, Mr. Biden just spent over $10 trillion in COVID test kits to the American public, while chump change is being spent on rebuilding bridges and the nation's infrastructure. (See "$2.3-TRILLION INFRASTRUCTURE DEAL: WON'T FIX INFRASTRUCTURE, WON'T FIX ECONOMY" and "THE BUSINESS OF AMERICA IS WAR.")

DIRTY ADVERTISING DEAL. STATES SUE GOOGLE

Texas and a dozen other states joined a lawsuit claiming that Google, the search engine giant, misled online publishers about its pricing format and used the extra money to expand its digital monopoly by manipulating future auctions, according to a report.

"Our amended complaint details how Google manipulates the online display auction to punish publishers and blatantly lies to them about how they run the auction," Ken Paxton, the Texas attorney general, said, according to *The Wall Street Journal.*

An un-redacted lawsuit was filed on Friday in the U.S. District Court of New York. The paper said a redacted version was filed in 2020. The recently filed suit offers a glimpse into how the company allegedly used secret programs that lowered sales for some companies but increased them for buyers—which internal correspondence between employees called "insider information."

Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, is set to introduce a bill that would try to rein in the company's grip on the online ad supply chain, the *New York Post* reported.

His bill—which could also impact Facebook—would end the company's "ability to act as a broker for a buyer or seller of ad space while simultaneously owning

the exchange where ad space is traded," the paper, citing an unnamed source, reported.

The bill—if passed—could result in Google having to break up parts of its ad business that amounted to 80 percent of the company's revenue.

The lawsuit said Google's current position in the online ad market is essentially like Goldman Sachs owning the New York Stock Exchange, the *Post* reported.

Roger P. Alford, an antitrust law professor from Notre Dame, told the paper, "A $100,000 stock trade will cost you a few dollars in exchange fees paid to the NYSE."

"But a $100,000 ad campaign will cost you $20,000 in fees paid to Google's exchange," he said.

"It's hard to me to imagine a circumstance in which one can own the exchange platform and also be a buyer, seller, broker, dealer and whatever other positions they might occupy," Lee said during a Senate hearing last month, according to the *Post.* "It's hard for me to imagine how one firm can maintain all of those positions without something anticompetitive going on."

TRENDPOST: *John Wanamaker, one of the grandfathers of advertising, said a century ago, "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half."*

The ***Trends Journal*** *has reported extensively on online advertising fraud. See our 5 June 2017 detailed summary and analysis "Fake news? How about fake advertising?" We noted in that article the amount of wasted advertising dollars companies are spending:*

> *Moreover, earlier this year, major advertisers, with distinguished and well-established brands, became concerned that their digital ads were unknowingly and routinely appearing on so-called "fake news" or other*

sites that were contrary to the marketers' message, as well as YouTube video platforms that could tarnish their brands.
As such, JPMorgan Chase, apparently riled about this revelation, conducted an experiment with, for the digital marketing world, unexpected ground-shaking results. Again, reported one day, out of the news the next day.

As a March 30, 2017 headline in The New York Times read: "A Bank Had Ads on 400,000 Sites. Then Just 5,000. Same Results."
And as The Times reported the same day: "Now, as more and more brands find their ads next to toxic content like fake-news sites or offensive YouTube videos, JPMorgan has limited its display ads to about 5,000 websites it has pre-approved…"

And what happened? No detectable change in advertising-response metrics from 5,000 select websites to 400,000 automated digital-advertising posts.

*And, the **Trends Journal** has reported extensively on the reach of Big Tech. (See "SEARCH & BUY: GOOGLE & AMAZON BATTLE FOR DOMINANCE; "AS GOES GOOGLE TRENDS.")*

COVID ERA DRUG DYSTOPIA KILLING FAR MORE AMERICAN YOUTH THAN COVID

U.S. COVID czar and Wuhan biolab funder Dr. Anthony Fauci made the news rounds this past week, proselytizing for children four years and younger to receive three doses of so-called COVID vaccines.

But while media and politicians continue to push for big pharma COVID non-cures for children, they have been derelict on something actually ravaging the nation's youth.

Drugs.

Deaths from drug overdoses far surpassed COVID deaths for youth aged 18 and younger in the period from April 2020 to 2021.

A late November CDC bulletin noted:

> "Provisional data from CDC's National Center for Health Statistics indicate that there were an estimated 100,306 drug overdose deaths in the United States during the 12-month period ending in April 2021, an increase of 28.5% from the 78,056 deaths during the same period the year before."

Opioids accounted for about three out of four of those deaths. But synthetic drugs, primarily fentanyl, have accounted for a rising proportion of deaths.

Psychostimulants like methamphetamine, and even cocaine also saw increased use, with devastating consequences.

As drug deaths among young people have soared, youth COVID deaths, even by the CDC's dubious attribution standards, are currently tallying about a thousand total, as of January 2022:

Total Deaths⬇

Table Preview

View Data | Create Visualization

Data as of	Age group	COVID-19 De...	Indicator	Sex	Race or Hisp...	Start Week	End Week
01/26/2022	0-4 years	280	Age	All	All	01/04/2020	01/22/2022
01/26/2022	5-18 years	603	Age	All	All	01/04/2020	01/22/2022
01/26/2022	19-44 years	35,691	Age	All	All	01/04/2020	01/22/2022
01/26/2022	45-64 years	185,368	Age	All	All	01/04/2020	01/22/2022
01/26/2022	65-74 years	197,496	Age	All	All	01/04/2020	01/22/2022
01/26/2022	75 years and over	444,818	Age	All	All	01/04/2020	01/22/2022
01/26/2022	All ages	864,256	Age	All	All	01/04/2020	01/22/2022
01/26/2022	0-4 years	128	Sex	Female	All	01/04/2020	01/22/2022
01/26/2022	0-4 years	152	Sex	Male	All	01/04/2020	01/22/2022
01/26/2022	5-18 years	260	Sex	Female	All	01/04/2020	01/22/2022
01/26/2022	5-18 years	343	Sex	Male	All	01/04/2020	01/22/2022
01/26/2022	0-4 years	91	Race and Hispani...	All	Hispanic	01/04/2020	01/22/2022
01/26/2022	0-4 years	3	Race and Hispani...	All	Non-Hispanic Am...	01/04/2020	01/22/2022

Source: CDC

The **Trends Journal** has previously reported on the exponential rise in the China-driven fentanyl crisis, including "SADLY, AS FORECAST: FIGHTING THE COVID WAR = RECORD-BREAKING OPIOID DEATHS" and "FENTANYL: A KILLER OPIOID."

COVID and China Fueled Fentanyl Problem Only Growing

A story this week from Connecticut again highlighted the problem. A 13-year-old Hartford boy not only overdosed on fentanyl, but police recovered over 100 bags of the drug in his room.

"This fentanyl was packaged in the same manner as the bags located at the school, had the same identifying stamp, and tested at an even higher purity level (60% purity)," Hartford police noted in a statement.

Biden's first year as President saw inflows of the highly lethal drug rise more than 200 percent.

On 27 January U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) put out a tweet boasting about recent interdiction success:

> "CBP agents and officers seized more than 2,700lbs of fentanyl during the first three months of FY22 [which is actually Oct thru Dec of 2021—Ed.]
>
> "Check out additional agency drug seizure statistics by component, type, and location: http://go.usa.gov/xt5eQ"

It's a drop in the ocean compared to how much is getting past woefully lax borders. As CNN and others have pointed out, China has been at the center of a toxic "synthetic road" of designer drugs, mainlining huge amounts into America, via Mexican cartels and other drug lords.

Immigration policies have literally fostered the spread of the drug distribution infrastructure.

Anyone who says the problem is rooted in an American appetite for such drugs has no clue about the sordid and disgusting techniques these professional pushers use to hook mostly school-aged kids into addiction and death.

Joe Biden's grand plan for it all isn't about addressing the issue with China, stemming drug connected immigrant inflows, or beefing up enforcement against gangs and pushers.

Biden touted $4 billion in funding from the Covid-19 relief package, known as the American Rescue Plan, including "expanding services for substance use disorder and mental health."

In talking about the crisis, Biden also told reporters in November that his administration is "working to make health coverage more accessible and affordable for all Americans, so that more people who need care can get it."

But besides criminally inadequate enforcement and interdiction policies, the disruptions of lockdowns, masking and social distancing, a deteriorating

economy and educational calamity have fueled a COVID era drug dystopia that is especially harming youth.

As an MSN story on the Connecticut tragedy observed, the incidence of drug overdose fatalities using synthetic opioids other than methadone, such as fentanyl, rose from 11.4 per 100,000 in 2019 to 17.8 per 100,000 in 2020.

In other words, during the first year of the COVID pandemic, synthetic opioid deaths increased nearly 60 percent.

As the American medical establishment, governmental authorities and media continue to press for mRNA injections for toddlers and infants, the lie of their "caring" can be readily discerned by what they're NOT framing as a national emergency.

And that's the COVID fueled overdosing of the nation's youth.

DHS MAYORKAS ADMITS U.S. BORDER CRISIS WORST EVER

"Look, it's worse now than it, frankly, has been in at least 20 years, if not ever."

Those were the words of Alejandro Mayorkas, Biden administration Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, speaking to overwhelmed and frustrated border agents in Yuma this past week.

In remarks that were recorded on audio and obtained by townhall.com, Mayorkas admitted the relentless influx of immigrants over the southern border was making it impossible for agents to focus on their core responsibilities of protecting against criminal and national security threats.

Mayorkas acknowledged to agents:

> "The job has not gotten any easier over the last few months and it was very, very difficult throughout 2021. I know apprehending families and kids is not what you signed up to do. And now we got a composition that is changing even more with Cubans, Venezuelans, Nicaraguans, and the like, it just gets more difficult."

In the recording, an agent at the meeting can be heard pushing Mayorkas about how DHS could claim that border security is the primary purpose of Border Patrol, while agents are in fact unable to patrol the border due to regulations implemented by the Biden administration.

Agents have been forced into processing thousands upon thousands of illegals, essentially overseeing entry in the country and even disbursement to different states and localities.

Other agents complained about issues including politicians and others demonizing Border Patrol while they often rescue illegal immigrants from harm and death.

A sensational—and false—story of officials on horseback "whipping" persons illegally crossing the border in the Del Rio Sector prompted premature condemnation from the President and others at the time.

It was a piece that succeeded in the short-term in taking attention off Biden's badly failing reversals of Trump era immigration initiatives that had stemmed the inflow of illegals.

"I know the policies of this administration are not particularly popular with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, but that's the reality and let's see what we can do within that framework," Mayorkas admitted during the meeting.

More on Townhall's exclusive can be found here.

KID ROCK, GOLDIE HAWN AND EVANGELINE LILLY ROCKIN' IN THE FREE WORLD WHILE NEIL YOUNG COWERS

As Neil Young tries to get a new band together—not to play music, but to drive Joe Rogan off Spotify—some in entertainment are speaking up for freedom.

A trio of celebs made news this past week for taking stands against fear and dwindling liberties.

Goldie Hawn, perhaps the most gifted and gorgeous comic actress of her generation, felt compelled to speak out on behalf of children who she believes have been tragically failed by policy makers in the time of COVID.

In an Op-Ed for *USA Today*, Hawn said irrational fear, more than anything else, is scarring young people:

> "We all know how magical a child's imagination can be—the wonderful worlds they create in their minds. But there's a flip side to the joyful creativity that can turn a big cardboard box into a spaceship. A child's mind exposed to real-world fear, without the ability to properly process it, can go down dark passages leading to nothing less than existential dread."

Hawn compared the fear being instilled into children over COVID to her own experience as a child in the 1950's dealing with fears of nuclear and Cold War.

"The COVID era has changed our children's lives in far more real, tangible ways—social distancing, school closures, daily mask use," Hawn added. "Kids are afraid of people, spaces, even the air around them—a level of constant fear not seen in decades."

Known for movies including *Housesitter* (a personal favorite of this writer), *Private Benjamin*, and *Overboard*, which she appeared in with her husband Kurt Russell, Hawn won a Best Supporting Actress Oscar in 1969 for her performance in *Cactus Flower*.

Actress Evangeline Lilly, meanwhile, made news for attending a rally opposing vaccine mandates. While assuring everyone that she was a "loyal democrat," Lilly, known for her turns as "Antwoman" in Marvel blockbusters including *Avengers: Endgame* and *Antman*, spoke against mandates that many Democrat politicians have supported.

At the rally she carried a sign that read "Vaxxed Democrat For Medical Freedom."

"This is not healthy. This is not love," Lilly said about mandates. "I understand the world is in fear, but I don't believe that answering fear with force will fix our problems."

Neil Young Whines While Kid Rock's New Single Rocks It

Neil Young found out monthly streams of his music aren't as astounding as he apparently thought, when he gave the Spotify music service an ultimatum: drop the Joe Rogan Experience podcast, or lose his music catalog.

Young, a legend in rock music known for his time with CSN&Y, and for classics including "Heart Of Gold" and the 80's anthem "Rockin' In The Free World" has healthy monthly streaming numbers of about six million listens.

But Rogan, currently the biggest podcast in the world, averages close to that for a single podcast.

After being ridiculed for failing to get Rogan canceled—and for even trying—Young is now attempting to rally other music artists to join the anti-free speech pogrom against Rogan.

Joni Mitchell and Liza Minelli hopped on board Young's cancel choo-choo. It's likely others will follow suit.

Of course, these artists could reflect on the old days, when they professed the freedom of people to voice their thoughts and grievances against authority.

They could stop cowering behind their masks and go on *The Joe Rogan Experience* and hash it out with the host. But that's not how cancel culture rolls.

Kid Rock easily produced the most bombastic salvo of the week with a creative effort, debuting a new song "We The People." It's a rock-rap takedown that Yahoo News noted "pulls no punches in mocking people like President Joe Biden and Dr. Anthony Fauci."

The music artist, who hails from Detroit and once considered running for Governor of Michigan said of the new song:

> "[It's] about, well, all the craziness going on in our world in the last few years and the politics and the polarization and social justice. You know, constantly for just being a Trump fan attacked in the media day in day out."
>
> "I don't mind taking a punch, but I hit back mother f*er and I hit hard."

Rock also pointed out the song contains messages of unity, because everyone should be able to agree the country needs to move in a better direction.

"We The People" along with several other new songs have been put out to get fans excited for Kid Rock's upcoming "Bad Reputation Tour" that the 50-year-old has said might be his last major touring gig.

The song can be listened to on Youtube here. Out just a week, it's already approaching three million views.

For more on how celebrities have been used to sell COVID while enjoying personal privilege, see "CELEBRITY SELLOUTS SELL COVID."

THE ART OF TRENDS

“TANGLED UP IN MASKS” by Frank Dinsmore

See more about the artist at his Facebook page.

TRENDS IN HI-TECH SCIENCE

By Ben Daviss

BIOELECTRIC MINI-SCAFFOLD HELPS REGROW KNEE CARTILAGE

The loss of cartilage—the gristly protein pads that keep bones from rubbing on each other in our joints—is as common as aging. As it disappears, everyday movements become painful, especially in hands, hips, and knees.

Cartilage doesn't restore itself well because it contains no blood vessels to nourish it. When cartilage wears away, doctors usually try to stimulate new growth by scraping or drilling the adjacent bones, hoping that bleeding from the wounds will tell the remaining cartilage to grow.

Now scientists at the University of Connecticut have tried something new that seems to be working.

They started by making a tiny scaffold out of a nontoxic, biodegradable polymer called poly-L lactic acid (PLLA). The scaffold makes a place for cartilage cells and their building blocks, such as collagen, to collect.

The idea of using a scaffold to help cartilage self-regenerate isn't new. But past attempts have produced no more than mediocre results because the scaffolds tend to break down under the stress of joints' motion.

PLLA is different: it's piezoelectric.

A piezoelectric material creates an electric current from the pressures and stresses of motion—and tiny electric currents are well-known to stimulate cell growth in the process of healing wounds and bone fractures.

The idea: the steady electric current produced by routine activities such as walking, squeezing, or kneeling would constantly stimulate the production of new cartilage, leaving a new pad behind when the scaffold finally dissolves.

When the researchers tested their idea on rabbits with bad knees, after a month the rabbits' knees were growing a good crop of new cartilage. In contrast, rabbits implanted with scaffolds that weren't piezoelectric showed little new growth.

The developers are planning tests on larger animals.

TRENDPOST: *The healing effects of electricity and light inside the body (see "Tuning Up the Brain with Light," 25 Jan 2022) are only beginning to be harnessed and present a growth area for researchers, developers, and entrepreneurs over at least the next two decades.*

A WINDOW THAT'S ALSO A SOLAR PANEL

Engineers have been tinkering for years with the idea of transparent solar panels that could double as windows, making electricity without dimming or distorting the view.

Scientists at Michigan State University think they've finally got the knack of it.

The team has crafted a clear, plastic-like panel that draws off ultraviolet and near-infrared light and converts them to electricity. Those areas of the light spectrum are invisible to humans, so the loss of light doesn't affect what can be seen through the sheet.

Because the panels don't turn the full spectrum of light into power, their efficiency is rated at around 10 percent—not state-of-the-art but good enough to pay their way over the lifetime of a building.

The technology is being commercialized by startup Ubiquitous Energy, which recently drew $30 million in funding from backers including Andersen Windows and ENEOS, Japan's largest oil and gas company.

TRENDPOST: *Last month, we reported on exterior building panels that make electricity to run heat pumps that warm and cool the interior ("Buildings That Heat and Cool Themselves With Sun Power," 18 Jan 2022), a complement to windows that generate electricity.*

Instead of sucking in energy and spewing out carbon waste, buildings in the future will be able to generate much, and perhaps all, of their own power through innovative technologies now beginning to emerge.

Investors and entrepreneurs will create new industries applying these technologies to building design and materials.

Ubiquitous Energy's transparent window solar panel.

Credit: Michigan State University

SELF-DRIVING FREIGHT TRAINS? HOW ABOUT SELF-DRIVING FREIGHT CARS?

Parallel Systems, a startup founded by a pair of former Space X engineers, is testing an advanced prototype of its logistics innovation: a battery-powered flatcar that can go 500 miles on a charge, guide itself to its appointed destination, and replenish its battery pack in no more than an hour, ready to set off again.

The flatbed, which looks like a clunkier and stubbier version of a skateboard, can tote a load by itself or be paired with a sibling to handle a 40-foot cargo container while using 25 percent less fuel than a semi truck to move the same volume of goods and get there faster.

The developers also are perfecting software that can interact with railroads' current guidance systems to enable their flatbeds to steer themselves automatically to programmed destinations.

More broadly, the company hopes to reinvent railroads' freight service.

Conventional trains can be 200 cars long because the more cars that can gang together, the cheaper it is to move a unit of freight.

The downsides: long trains can regularly frustrate car traffic. In addition, they require giant freight yards and, often, a lot of time to disassemble a long train and reconfigure new trains to take loads to their final destinations.

Also, the locomotive pulling a train does the work while the freight cars are dragged along as dead weight.

In contrast, Parallel Systems' cars can travel by themselves or run bumper-to-bumper, with each pushing the one ahead of it, equalizing the power usage and boosting efficiencies.

Then, when it's time for cars to go their separate ways, they simply peel off from the conga line at the right junctions.

The electric flatbeds can be offloaded in ones or two at mini-terminals—no need for the tedious process of moving a long train car by car past a lift crane for unloading.

In addition, the cars have vision systems that can "see" a line of backed-up vehicles at a crossing. In those cases, the cars will break their train: some cars

will continue through the crossing while others wait on the tracks for drivers to cross, then start rolling again when the line of traffic has passed.

The same vision system can see obstacles on the rail track, such as a stalled vehicle, and can brake ten times faster than a conventional train, according to Parallel Systems.

After recently raising more than $49 million in second-round financing, Parallel Systems is refining its hardware and software on a closed-loop track in California while it continues talks with freight companies from truckers to ocean shippers.

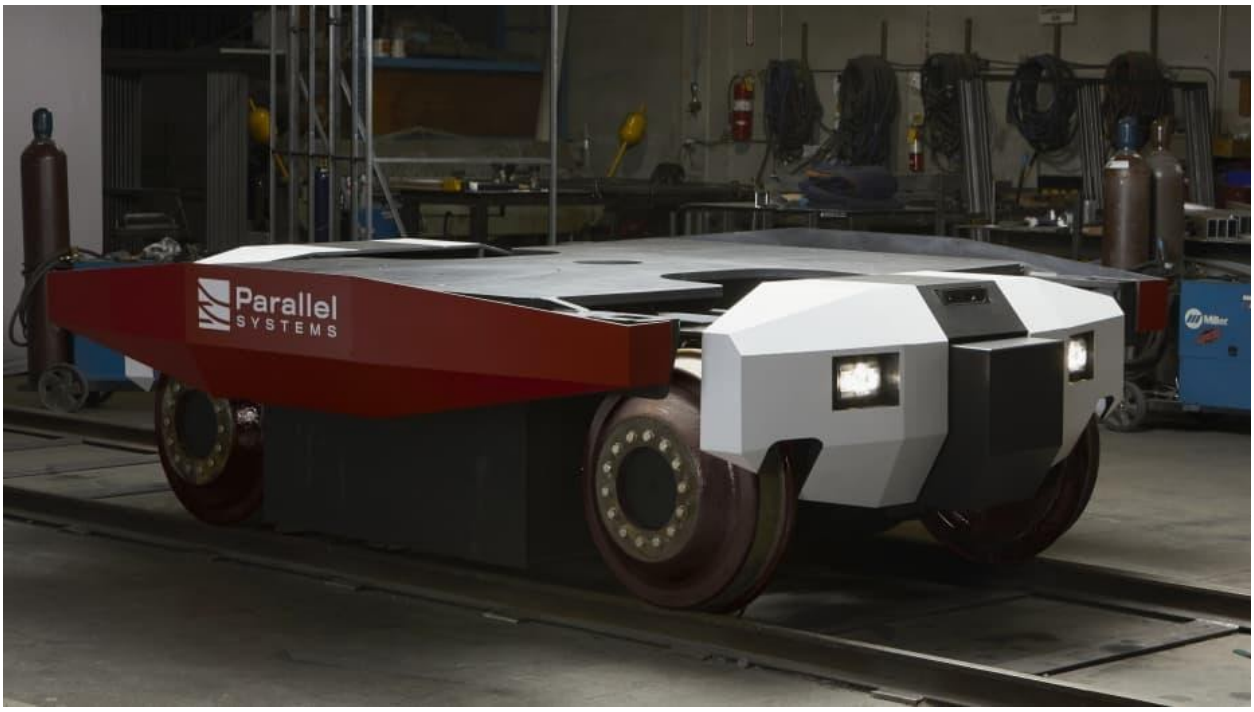
TRENDPOST: *All transportation is becoming "smart"—programmable, self-guiding, and able to make decisions.*

Trains are the best place to refine many elements of smart transportation because they're confined to tracks that are operated under tight controls. City buses will follow; they travel pre-programmed routes according to a fixed timetable. Today's autonomous shuttles that carry passengers around airport terminals are forerunners.

Vans and small trucks running specific, limited local delivery routes, such as from freight terminals to warehouses, likely will be the challenge to be conquered after that.

Long-haul trucks and passenger cars will be ready; they encounter more obstacles and are faced with more complex and spontaneous problems and challenges.

Driving a vehicle has long been the most common job for a man in the U.S. At the end of 2019, there were almost five million Americans making a living behind the wheel. By the middle of the century, more than half of those jobs will be gone.



Parallel Systems' flatbed rail trolley.

Parallel Systems' smart flatbed rail cars moving a cargo container.

Credit for both photos: Parallel Systems