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Slow count pushes Biden close

A president sabotages his country



Nicholas Kristof

OPINION

In the end, the biggest interference in America's elections didn't come from Russia, or China, or Iran or North Korea. It came from the president of the United States.

As I write this, we still don't know for certain who won the election, although Joe Biden seems in a strong position to win the White House and Republicans to retain the Senate.

But we do know for certain that President Trump led to the public, early Wednesday morning when he

claimed victory and sought a judicial rescue from voters. His brazenness undermines our election system and the very idea of a peaceful transition of power.

It's hard to imagine that the Supreme Court, however politicized it may have become, would go along with such a charade. I don't believe that Trump, if he loses in a clear-cut way, will be able to remain in office; if he tries to barricade himself in the Oval Office, he'll be escorted out on Jan. 20.

Yet what Trump has already done is what the Russians have always tried to do: cast doubt on American elections and destabilize the United States. The 2018 federal indictment of Russian election hackers alleged that they were engaged in "information warfare against the United States of America," by fostering confusion and distrust that impact the integrity of elections and damage the legitimacy of the government that emerges.

That's precisely what Trump is now doing. He may hug and kiss American flags and pretend to be a great patriot, but this is a betrayal of our country.

If Biden wins after this poisoning of the election, he will inherit a badly divided country after an election that KRISTOF, PAGE 15

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



Clockwise from top: Election workers in Atlanta as votes were being tabulated painstakingly in Democratic-leaning areas of Georgia; a protest in New York that flared over as Republican-led demonstrators gathered outside; a protest in New York that was among several across the United States demanding that all votes be counted.

NOT THE SENATE DEMOCRATS PICTURED
Voters have stuck with Republicans down the ballot, even if they chose not to re-elect President. PAGE 4

THE MOMENT THE MOOD WENT SOUR
Fox News's early call on Arizona sent a previously upbeat Trump campaign into attack mode. PAGE 8



At the very least, he has 76 days left in office to use his power as he sees fit and to seek revenge on some of his perceived adversaries. Angry at a defeat, he may fire or sideline a variety of senior officials who failed to carry out his wishes, including Christopher A. Wray, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the government's top infectious diseases specialist in the middle of a pandemic.

SINGLE DISTRICT'S VOTE MAY BE PIVOTAL
Nebraska is one of two states that splits electoral votes, and its Democratic vote may turn the tide. PAGE 8

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE COUNTRY I KNEW?
Exhausted and anxious, many Americans feel the election results signify a profound split in national values. PAGE 7

White House in court as its options dwindle

Republican campaign casts about for a legal lifeline to stay in power

BY JIM RUTENBERG
AND NICK CORASANTI

With his political path narrowing, President Trump has turned to the courts and procedural maneuvers in a last-ditch effort to stave off defeat in the handful of states that will decide the outcome of the bitterly fought election.

The president's campaign intervened at the Supreme Court in a case challenging Pennsylvania's plan to count ballots received for up to three days after Election Day. The campaign said it would also file suit in Michigan to halt the counting there while it pursues its demands for better access for the observers it sent to monitor elections boards for signs of malfeasance in tallying bal-

lots. That effort is modeled on a similar suit it was pursuing in Nevada.

On Wednesday evening, Mr. Trump's team asked Georgia to its list of legal targets, seeking a court order enforcing strict deadlines in Chatham County after allegations by a Republican poll observer that a small number of ineligible ballots might be counted in one location.

In Wisconsin, which along with Michigan was called on Wednesday for his Democratic opponent, Joseph R. Biden Jr., the president's campaign announced it would request a recount.

The moves signaled Mr. Trump's determination to make good on his longstanding threats to carry out an aggressive post-Election Day campaign to undo any result not in his favor and to pursue his baseless allegations that the outcome was rigged.

Win or lose, influence that is unlikely to fade

NEWS ANALYSIS
WASHINGTON

Past defeated incumbents slipped into the shadows; probably not so with Trump

BY PETER BAKER
AND MAGGIE HABERMAN

If President Trump loses his bid for reelection, as looked increasingly likely on Wednesday, it would be the first defeat of an incumbent president in 28 years. But one thing seemed certain: Win or lose, he will not go quietly away.

Trailing former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., Mr. Trump spent the day trying to discredit the election based on invented fraud claims, hoping either to hang onto power or explain away a loss. He could find a narrow path to re-election among states still count-

ing, but he has made clear that he would not shrink from the scene, should he lose.

At the very least, he has 76 days left in office to use his power as he sees fit and to seek revenge on some of his perceived adversaries. Angry at a defeat, he may fire or sideline a variety of senior officials who failed to carry out his wishes, including Christopher A. Wray, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the government's top infectious diseases specialist in the middle of a pandemic.

And if he is forced to vacate the White House on Jan. 20, Mr. Trump is likely to prove more resilient than expected and almost surely will remain a powerful and disruptive force in American life. He received at least 68 million votes, or five million more than he did in 2016, and commanded about 45 percent of the popular vote, meaning he retained the

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PAGE TWO



A painting by Aydin Aghdashloo at the Tehran Auction last year. Tehran Auction said it may withdraw two paintings by Mr. Aghdashloo set for showing at a December sale.

#MeToo cloud over Iranian artist

After assault claims, art world steps back from prominent painter

BY FARNAZ FASSIHI
AND CATHERINE PORTER

A famous and well-connected Iranian artist who has been accused by at least 13 women of sexual misconduct is starting to see signs of repercussions in the art world that once exalted him, both in Iran and Canada, where he has dual citizenship.

The artist, Aydin Aghdashloo, whose work has been auctioned and shown around the world, is the most prominent figure to be accused in Iran's growing #MeToo movement. He has denied wrongdoing and taken legal action against at least one of the women.

But their accounts, detailed in an Oct. 22 New York Times article, have been widely shared in Iran and generated more criticism of the artist. Mr. Aghdashloo's Instagram account appears to have restricted comments since the Times article was published.

Through his lawyers, Mr. Aghdashloo has demanded a retraction of the article. The Times is standing by it.

A solo exhibition of Mr. Aghdashloo's work that had been planned for a Saturday opening at the Dastan art gallery in Tehran was canceled by the artist's representatives in late August, a few days after the first allegation surfaced on Iranian social media, Hormoz Hematiani, the founder of the gallery, said last week. Mr. Hematiani also said the gallery has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual misconduct that extends to artists it showcases.

Tehran Auction, an important annual outlet for Iran's art where Mr. Aghdashloo's work is prominently featured every year, said it was considering withdrawal of his two paintings set for showing at the auction tentatively planned for Dec. 11.

"I recommended to the team to pull the paintings out," said Homa Taraji, head of international relations for Tehran Auction. "We do care about these allegations. Including him in the auction is going to create a negative perception about Tehran Auction and affect our work internationally."

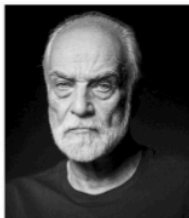
A documentary about Mr. Aghdashloo written and directed by his daughter, Tara, is also facing uncertainty. The film was described by the executive producer as part love letter, part confrontation between father and daughter. But the film's completion predated the allegations of sexual misconduct, said the executive producer, Mahyad Tousi, a writer and producer in Los Angeles who has mentored Ms. Aghdashloo.

"I believe women. Period. Ever since the allegations, my recommendation to Tara has been to find a way to include them," Mr. Tousi said. If the film is released as is, he said, "I would have to withdraw my name and affiliation with it."

Representatives of Mr. Aghdashloo and his daughter did not respond to emailed requests for comment. Mr. Aghdashloo's supporters, including some of his former students, have taken to social media to reject the allegations and recount positive memories of their experience in his workshops. On Oct. 28, his 80th birthday, they shared photographs of previous parties with Mr. Aghdashloo surrounded by female students and a birthday cake.

"I learned great lessons in life and art from you, my happy birthday dear teacher," Sanaz Barzgar, an artist, wrote on her Instagram page with a photo of Mr. Aghdashloo.

In Canada, a petition started by a handful of women in August has now



Mr. Aghdashloo, an internationally acclaimed artist, has been accused of sexual misconduct by at least 13 women.

garnered more than 800 signatures calling for the hugely popular Iranian-Canadian Tigran cultural festival, which drew 100,000 people last year, to announce publicly that it would no longer invite Mr. Aghdashloo.

The festival's chief executive and board have remained noncommittal about the accusations.

"Our board decided this has nothing to do with Tigran," said the chief executive, Mehrdad Arianejad. "We invite artists as we can to our gatherings and performances. Are they going to ask all the organizations, all the museums around the world, all the people that have been in contact with Mr. Aghdashloo to come out and take a position?"

In 2017, an interview with Mr. Aghdashloo at the festival was posted to the Tigran YouTube channel.

"I personally, definitely, condemn any violence against women. I've always

supported women's rights," said Mr. Arianejad, adding that he believed the accounts should be investigated by an independent judicial body before any conclusions are drawn. "You can't go out and condemn this person," he said.

Mr. Arianejad also co-owns an art gallery with one of Mr. Aghdashloo's former wives, Faye Athari, in Toronto. Known as the Art Gallery, it is considered the cultural heart of the city's small Iranian community, hosting book launchings, art shows and lectures.

In August, just as public accusations against Mr. Aghdashloo were coming out on Iranian social media, the gallery highlighted works by Mr. Aghdashloo and publicized art workshops with him over three days, stating, "Are you ready for a workshop with a legend?"

The workshops were canceled because of concerns around Covid-19, Mr. Arianejad said.

Contacted at the gallery, Ms. Athari said she had no comment, other than that she was "disappointed" by the Times article outlining the allegations against her former husband. Though divorced, they are regularly photographed in public together. She posted a photo of herself outside the gallery with him on her private Instagram account on Aug. 26.

Mr. Arianejad said the gallery would not do with Mr. Aghdashloo now, in the aftermath of the allegations. "We are not taking a position," he said. "But we try to avoid the noise."

Hajar Moradi, an Iranian-Canadian artist in Toronto who helped create the petition, said it was impossible for women to get justice in Iran, where they can be criminalized for simply reporting sexual assault, because extramarital relations are illegal. It was in Canada, she said, that she expected some kind of public support for the aggrieved women.

He wrote of unrest across the Mideast

ROBERT FISK
1946-2020

BY CLYDE HABERMAN

Robert Fisk, a dauntless journalist who was widely praised by colleagues and competitors alike for relentlessly chronicling the Middle East's many agonies, but who was also faulted by some critics as insufficiently tough at times on despots, died on Friday in a hospital in Dublin. He was 74.

He had what appeared to be a severe stroke, according to his editors at the British newspaper *The Independent*.

With muscular reporting and a pugilistic writing style, Mr. Fisk, who had British and Irish citizenship, covered wars both civil and resolutely uncivil in the Middle East and beyond — in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, Israel and its Palestinian territories, Northern Ireland, Algeria and Lebanon, where he long made Beirut his base.

"You cannot get near the truth without being there," he said in "This Is Not a Movie," a 2019 documentary about his work. Across nearly five decades, the last three for *The Independent*, Mr. Fisk was unquestionably there.

He made no pretense of adhering to conventional notions of journalistic objectivity, essentially arguing that there was no "on the other hand" in certain situations.

"I think it is the duty of a foreign correspondent to be neutral and unbiased on the side of those who suffer, whoever they may be," he said in a 2010 speech at the First Congregational Church in Berkeley, Calif. His dispatches earned him many accolades; seven times he was named the British Press Awards' international journalist of the year.

Among his coups were three interviews in the 1990s with Osama bin Laden. Mr. Fisk wrote in *The Independent* in 1993 that Bin Laden, then yet to be universally known as Al Qaeda's leader and the mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, "looks every inch the mountain warrior of majahedin legend."

But he stopped well short of being star-struck. In 1996, a Bin Laden functionary called and told Mr. Fisk to fly to Afghanistan for a meeting. Mr. Fisk, who spoke Arabic, later recalled having told the man, "Call me back in a week." He was not about to "let him slap his fingers, and then I come," he told *The San Francisco Chronicle* in 2003.

Mr. Fisk was hard on those he deemed the aggressors, though his critics said that he could be unduly harsh. Israel and its treatment of the Palestinians were frequent targets, as were the United States and its misadventures in the Middle East.

He did not spare the political class in Lebanon, either. Lebanon was "one of the most educated nations in the re-

gion," he wrote after the August port explosion that leveled much of Beirut. "And yet," he added, "it cannot run its currency, supply its electric power, cure its sick or protect its people."

His sympathy for the underdog, while genuine, struck some as oddly placed on occasion. One such instance came in December 2001 while he was reporting along Afghanistan's border with Pakistan. After he was beaten by Afghan refugees, Mr. Fisk, who often referred to himself in the third person, wrote that he had been in their situation, he would have done the same thing: "I would have attacked Robert Fisk. Or any other Westerner I could find."

During Syria's devastating civil war, Mr. Fisk found himself accused by his critics of siding with that country's president, Bashar al-Assad, by casting doubt on reports that the government had launched chemical attacks in a Damascus suburb. In the years after the 9/11 attacks, he speculated, without evidence, that the hijacked United Airlines Flight 93, which went down in a Pennsylvania field, might have been struck by a missile.

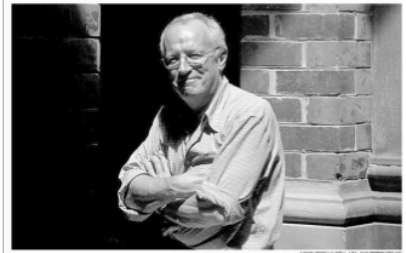
He interviewed Osama bin Laden three times.

Still, his judgment often proved on the mark. He observed correctly, for instance, that the 1993 Oslo agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization would not lead to true peace. And unlike many, though few others, he anticipated the quagmire that the 2003 American invasion of Iraq would become.

Robert Fisk was born on July 12, 1946, in the town of Maidstone, England, southeast of London. He was the only child of William Fisk, a town official and a World War I veteran who kept a diary of that conflict's horrors, and Peggy (Rose) Fisk, an amateur painter who later became a Maidstone magistrate.

When he was 12, Robert saw the 1940 Alfred Hitchcock film "Foreign Correspondent," and decided that this would be the life for him. He graduated from Lancaster University in northwestern England in 1968. Much later, in 1980, he received a doctorate in political science from Trinity College in Dublin, his thesis on Ireland's neutrality and relations with Britain in World War II.

Mr. Fisk worked for several small newspapers before joining *The Sunday Express* and then, in the early 1970s, *The Times* of London. He covered the Troubles in Northern Ireland, then moved to Beirut in 1976, soon after the outbreak of civil war there; it would become a decade-long stay. He left both *The Sunday Express* and *The Times* after disputes with editors and signed on with *The Independent*, then a fledgling newspaper, in 1989.



Robert Fisk in 2006. Over five decades he chronicled the Middle East's many agonies with muscular reporting and a pugilistic writing style.

Singer-songwriter for country music's outlaw movement

BILLY JOE SHAVER
1939-2020

BY BILL FRISKIS-WARREN

Billy Joe Shaver, the Texas singer-songwriter whose trenchant, vivid compositions helped start country music's outlaw movement in the 1970s, died Oct. 28 in Waco, Texas. He was 81.

His death, in a hospital, was confirmed by his friend Connie Nelson, who said he had recently had a stroke.

Mr. Shaver wrote songs for many of the major outlaw figures, including Willie Nelson, Bobbie Bare and Kris Kristofferson. Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash recorded his material, and Bob Dylan, in "I Feel a Change Comin' On," a song written with the Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter, sang admiringly of listening to Mr. Shaver's music. ("I'm hearing Billy Joe Shaver/And I'm reading James Joyce.")

Mr. Shaver's early reputation rested on his plain-spoken yet poetic contributions to Waylon Jennings's 1973 album "Honky Tonk Heroes," regarded as a quintessential expression of outlaw country's nonconformist spirit. "I've

Mr. Shaver wrote or co-wrote all but one of the 10 songs on "Honky Tonk Heroes," including the title track and "Willy the Wandering Gypsy and Me" — a tribute, its unusual spelling of his first name notwithstanding, to Mr. Nelson, his friend and fellow outlaw.

"Black Rose," a monument to self-reckoning and regret, featured one of Mr. Shaver's typically hard-bitten but also self-aware narrators. "The devil made me do it the first time/The second time I do it on my own," Mr. Jennings sang ruefully over a lean but steadily chugging rhythm section.

Three of Mr. Shaver's songs from "Honky Tonk Heroes" also appeared on "Old Five and Dimers Like Me," his musically unvarnished, autobiographical first solo album, produced by Mr. Kristofferson for the independent Monument label in 1973.

"Hell, I just thought I'd mention, my grandma's old-age pension/Is the reason why I'm standing here today," Mr. Shaver sang in a raspy drawl on "I Been to Georgia on a Fast Train." The neo-noir song recalled his hard-core childhood with dignity and pride: "I got all my country learning, milking and a-churning/Picking cotton, raising hell



Billy Joe Shaver's early songs were an expression of outlaw country's nonconformist spirit. His later music drew fans of alternative country music.

of the country chart. Mr. Jennings's version of "You Ask Me To," by contrast, became a Top 10 country hit.

Reflecting on this disparity in a 2014 interview with the NPR program

big for me," he said of the material he wrote during the heady early days of the outlaw movement. "I couldn't possibly get them across the way Waylon could."

Billy Joe Shaver was born on Aug. 16, 1939, in Waco, Texas. His biggest success in the

helped raise him; later, he and his older sister, Patricia, moved in with their mother and her new husband.

Mr. Shaver dropped out of school to work in his uncle's cotton fields before completing eighth grade. He sometimes accompanied his mother to the nightclub where she tended bar, sparking an early interest in music.

He joined the Navy at age 17 and, after completing his service, was working odd jobs back in Texas when he met, and later married, Brenda Joyce Wendell. The couple had a son, John Edwin, known as Eddy, in 1962.

At around this time Mr. Shaver took a job in a sawmill, where he lost the index and middle fingers of his right hand in a work accident and had to learn how to play the guitar. In 1968, after several more years of scuffling, including periodic visits to Nashville to pursue his fortunes as a songwriter, Mr. Shaver persuaded his mother to give him a songwriting job at his publishing company.

Success eluded him until five years later, when "Honky Tonk Heroes" elevated him to the ranks of unfettered, instinctive country tunesmiths like Mr. Kristofferson, Mickey Newbury and Guy Clark. His biggest success in the

Mr. Shaver recorded steadily, but with little commercial success, from the 1970s on. He eventually developed a following among fans of alternative country music with albums like "Tramp on Your Street" (1993) and "Unshaven: Live at Smith's Old Bar" (1995). Billed simply under the name Shaver, both albums reflected Eddy Shaver's increasingly prominent role in his father's band, with which he had been playing since he was a teenager.

In 1997, Mr. Shaver had a small part in "The Apostle," a feature film written and directed by and starring Robert Duvall.

Mr. Shaver's wife and mother both died of cancer in 1999. His son died of a heroin overdose the following year. Mr. Shaver confronted these losses, along with his struggles with alcohol and drugs and his immersion in the Christian faith, in "Honky Tonk Hero," a memoir, written with Brad Reagan, published in 2005. He was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2004, the same year "The Portrait of Billy Joe," a documentary about his life and music directed by Luciana Pedraza, was released.

In 2007, six years after suffering a heart attack onstage, Mr. Shaver was in-