

Summer Assignment

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September 5, 2018

1 Political Issues

The most important political event of the summer this year was the United States withdrawal from the United Nations Human Rights Council. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley announced the decision. Nikki Haley told the media, "I want to make it crystal clear that this is not a retreat from human rights commitments. On the contrary, we take this step because our commitment does not allow us to remain a part of a hypocritical and self-serving organization that makes a mockery of human rights." This decision was predictable considering the fact that the Trump administration has been criticizing the U.N. for several perceived failures. They have complained the loudest about their "chronic bias against Israel" in particular. I disagree with this decision, when we joined the council in 2009, the Obama administration joined knowing that problems existed inside of the council. However, they continued to join instead so that they could "make the council a more effective forum to promote and protect human rights" by making changes from within. As Representative Eliot Engel said when describing the issues with the human rights council, "the way to deal with this challenge is to remain engaged and work with partners to push for change." I believe that in order to fix the problems that contaminate the Human Rights Council, we must penetrate it from within and push its members to focus on actual human rights issues and move past debating the legitimacy of Israel as a nation.

Notes:

- 2018 North Korea and US summit held in Singapore. First summit between US President and North Korean leader. (June 12)
- Greece and Republic of Macedonia reach a deal to end a near 27-year old naming dispute between both countries. Macedonia is officially renamed the Republic of North Macedonia. (June 12)
- **US announces it will withdraw from the United Nations Human Rights Council. (June 19)**
- Canada legalizes cannabis for recreational use. This will take effect October 17. (June 19)
- Eritrea and Ethiopia declare and end to their twenty-year conflict. (July 9)

- 2018 Brussels NATO summit held in Belgium. (July 11-12)
- US reimposes sanctions in Iran. (August 7)
- Arizona Senator John McCain passed away at the age of 81 (August 25)

2 Cultural Events

The most important Cultural Event of the summer was Saudi Arabia allowing women to drive on July 24, 2018. Leaders decided to in-act this change because they believed that the change would help the economy. Before, woman had to spend large amounts of money in order to pay for male drivers to transport them to work. Rights groups in Saudi Arabia have long fought for the ban to revoked. Some women have been arrested and jailed for driving in protest of the ban. I believe this is the most important Cultural Event of the summer because it marks a progressive change in Saudi Arabia. Unfortunately, Saudi Arabia is known for its patriarchal laws and sexists policies. Hopefully, this change will spark a progressive push in Saudi Arabia's society.

Notes:

- More than 109 people are killed by the eruption of Guatemala's deadliest volcano. (June 3)
- 2018 FIFA World Cup is held in Russia and won by France. (June 14-15)
- Seventeen people die in Caracas, Venezuela after the El Paraiso stampede after a tear gas canister is detonated in a crowded club. (June 16)
- 2018 Mediterranean Games are held in Tarragona, Spain. (June 22 - July 1)
- **Saudi Arabia allows women to drive. (June 24)**
- Aum Shinrikyo leader Shoko Asahara and six other main members who led the 1995 Tokyo subway sarin attack are executed by hanging. (July 6)
- Scientists report the presence of a subglacial lake on Mars, 1.5 km below the southern polar ice cap (July 25)

3 Economic Conditions

The most important economic event that happened in the U.S. this summer was Facebook 20% drop. On July 26, Facebook lost about \$120 billion in market capitalization after the market close. This occurred after it missed expectations on revenue and demonstrated a decrease in the rate of user growth. Investors undid all of Facebook's 2018 gains during this loss. This event has been the "ugliest single-session decline since the company went public in 2012." I believe that this event is the most important economic event of the summer because, it demonstrates Facebook's decline in popularity over recent years. In my own experience, many of friends and younger family don't use Facebook and instead opt to use more modern social applications like Instagram and Snapchat. The major reason behind using these programs is due to their built in privacy features. For example,

Snapchat automatically removes messages that are sent to individual people immediately after they are read. Also, Snapchat warns users when someone else decides to take a screen shot of a post or message. Along with this, Snapchat is automatically configured so that only friends are allowed to view posts to the "story". Because of these many built in privacy features, both Snapchat and Instagram have been widely used amongst young people today, replacing Facebook.

Notes:

- Lithuania becomes 36th member of OECD. (July 5)
- EU-Japan Economic Partnership is signed, which is the world's largest bilateral free trade deal, creating an open trade zone covering nearly one-third of global GDP. (July 17)
- **The share price of Facebook drops by almost 20 percent after company warns investors that user growth has slowed following the data leak scandal. Over \$109 billion is wiped from its market value. (July 26)**
- Apple becomes the world's first public company to achieve a market capitalization of \$1 trillion. (August 2)