Opinion

News



Taliban fighters stand outside the Interior Ministry in Kabul, Afghanistan, Aug. 16. (CNS/Reuters)



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A very provocative piece at Politico magazine by Anatol Lieven, a journalist who has covered events in Afghanistan since the late 1980s when it was the Russian empire collapsing in the snows of that country. He notes that then, as now, rival factions negotiate "arrangements" that are opaque to the occupying Western governments but that explain why the U.S.-trained Afghan military collapsed so quickly.

In The Washington Post, a deep dive into some of the demographic trends revealed in the new U.S. Census data. The interactive maps allow you to check on the changes in specific counties and the text provides a context for the data as a whole. The most significant fact is that the country is becoming more and more racially and ethnically diverse, mostly due to the increase in the Hispanic population, with the number of Asian Americans increasing a lot as well. For the first time in the history of the census, the number of white Americans actually declined.

At Bloomberg, Francis Wilkinson argues that, drought conditions notwithstanding, California might have enough water to avoid the kind of calamities people warn about, especially regarding agricultural crops. He notes that Los Angeles County has been doing fine because of its far-reaching water policies and that the right mix of good policy and technological innovation should be able to stave off disaster. I do not know if he is right or not, but it is nice to read a story about the climate that is hopeful.

At the Texas Politics Project, at the University of Texas at Austin, Jim Henson makes the case that the political system in the Lone Star State is "on fire" — all three branches, both parties, and the relationships between the state and local government, all on fire. And the vastly different ways Republicans and Democrats view a host of issues make compromise unlikely.

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From the Catholic Labor Network, a reminder about the history of Catholic labor schools, which are one of the reasons union leaders like Richard Trumka were so deeply learned about Catholic social teaching. It is time to bring these back, especially in places like Las Vegas and Orlando, Florida, where Catholic Latino workers are filling the ranks of unions.

At the Journal of the American Revolution, John Ruddiman looks at the early military career of James Monroe during the American Revolution. Like many at the time, personal ambition mixed easily with patriotism in the Continental Army, and the thing that always strikes one when reading about the era is just how young the American patriots were: At the time the Revolution began, half of the population was under the age of 16! Monroe usually gets less attention than his predecessor James Madison or his successor John Quincy Adams, but his was a remarkable life also.

In The New York Times, Holland Carter reviews an exhibition of paintings — "Titian: Women, Myth & Power" — at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. The show is built around the Gardner's prize Titian painting, "The Rape of Europa," and Carter brings the art into dialogue with the #MeToo movement, and I am not sure it works as art criticism. But the Titians are amazing.