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Taliban Seize Power as U.S. Retreats



Taliban fighters drive through the streets of Kabul on Sunday after seizing the capital. Below, a helicopter evacuates the American Embassy.

Fighters take control of capital Kabul as president flees nation and concedes defeat

By YAROSLAV TROFIMOV

KABUL—Afghanistan's government fell after Taliban fighters took over the capital and President Ashraf Ghani fled abroad, as a U.S.-led military operation began to airlift Western diplomats, civilians and Afghans likely to be targeted by the country's new rulers.

Demoralized Afghan security forces offered no resistance as the insurgents, who seized most of the country in just over a week, appeared Sunday morning on Kabul's outskirts. While the Taliban initially said they wouldn't enter the capital while a transitional government is being formed, they reversed their stance by nightfall, saying someone needed to maintain public order after Afghan police deserted their posts.

"To prevent chaos and looting, the Islamic Emirate has ordered the mujahedeen to get control of the abandoned areas," the Taliban said. The Taliban fighters, the group added, won't bother any civilian or military officials of the former regime.

By evening, the main road to the Kabul airport—packed with Afghans desperately trying to escape and with thousands of U.S. troops protecting the evacuation effort—presented a bizarre scene of Taliban fighters mingling with uniformed Afghan troops.

Mr. Ghani, who fled the presidential palace and spent Sunday morning at the U.S. Embassy, left the Afghan capital in the afternoon. In a message posted on his Facebook page, he conceded that the Taliban had won and said he was left with no choice but to go.

"If I stayed there, countless countrymen would have been martyred and Kabul city would

Please turn to page A7

Biden Stands By Troop Withdrawal Despite Criticism

By MICHAEL R. GORDON

During the 2020 political campaign, President Biden presented himself as a globe-trotting leader who had helmed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, served as then-President Barack Obama's point man on complex international issues and who was determined to bring a steady hand to national security.

Yet the turmoil in Afghanistan, which has led Mr. Biden to send about 5,000 troops back to the country, roughly doubling the force he decided in April to take out, has confronted the White House with a

crisis that could have lasting humanitarian and national-security consequences, former officials said.

"We are not at the worst point yet," said Carter Malkasian, the author of a comprehensive history of the Afghan conflict who served as an adviser to former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Joe Dunford. "Now that the Taliban are moving into Kabul and overturning the democratic government we have been supporting for 20 years, it is highly likely they will seek to punish, and perhaps even execute, the Afghans who worked with us."

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Desperate Rush to Get Out Was 'Saigon on Steroids'

KABUL—The lucky few were already inside, crowded onto the last patch of government territory that hadn't fallen to the Taliban. Outside, as thousands of civilians surged to

By Yaroslav Trofimov, Dion Nissenbaum and Margherita Stancati

break through the perimeter of Hamid Karzai International Airport, security forces fired gunshots into the air to force them back.

Afghanistan was falling and desperate civilians were thronging the airport's main terminal to make their way

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Fall of Afghanistan

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What's News

Business & Finance

World-Wide

Repercussions from the Delta variant of Covid-19 are starting to ripple across companies, though it is unclear whether the highly contagious strain will be a momentary stumble in an improving global economy or something more serious. **A1**

◆ **Hyatt Hotels plans** to buy resort company Apple Leisure from its private-equity owners for \$2.7 billion. **B1**

◆ **BHP said it is considering** the sale of its petroleum business, which analysts estimate has a value of at least \$15 billion. **B1**

◆ **Small investors are piling back** into the cryptocurrency market, helping drive prices higher even as traders face uncertainty over proposed tax regulations in Washington. **B1**

◆ **High-yield bonds have become** the latest Chinese market to buckle under pressure from Beijing's wide-ranging

corporate crackdown. **B1**

◆ **Chinese authorities said** they found that a female Alibaba employee was sexually abused both by her boss and a business client, supporting many details of the woman's account. **B3**

◆ **Ford filed a legal motion** hitting back at GM in the auto makers' dispute over the names of their hands-free-driving offerings incorporating the word "cruise." **B3**

◆ **U.S. contractor BES sued** Huawei in a U.S. court, alleging the Chinese firm stole its technology and pressured it to build a back door into a sensitive law-enforcement project in Pakistan. **B4**

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◆ **Afghanistan's government fell** after Taliban fighters took over the capital and President Ashraf Ghani fled abroad, as a U.S.-led military operation began to airlift Western diplomats, civilians and Afghans likely to be targeted by the country's new rulers. **A1, A6-A8**

◆ **The turmoil in Afghanistan** has confronted the White House with a crisis that could have lasting humanitarian and national-security consequences, former officials say. **A1**

◆ **At least 1,297 people were killed** and some 5,700 injured by a powerful earthquake that struck Haiti, aggravating a crisis in the country. **A1**

◆ **Pelosi asked a top House committee** to look at moving forward on a \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill along with the \$3.5 trillion budget framework in an effort to balance the demands of her party's ideological factions. **A4**

◆ **A judge in Texas ordered** the Biden administration to reinstate the Remain in Mexico program for migrants seeking asylum in the U.S. **A4**

◆ **The DHS is considering** hiring private companies to analyze public social media for warning signs of extremist violence. **A4**

◆ **Canada's prime minister** called an early national election for next month. **A9**

JOURNAL REPORT
The New Workplace: Employee benefits in a hybrid office. **R1-8**

Haiti Death Toll Soars After Powerful Quake

At least 1,297 people were killed and some 5,700 injured by a powerful earthquake that struck Haiti, aggravating the

By José de Córdoba, Ryan Dube and Edver Serisier

crisis of an increasingly chaotic country whose president was assassinated last month and where a coming tropical storm threatens even more

devastation.

Most of the fatalities were in the nation's southern peninsula, where Saturday's 7.2-magnitude quake struck. Jerry Chandler, head of Haiti's civil protection agency, said. More than 13,000 buildings in the area had been destroyed, the agency said, including churches, hospitals and at least two hotels.

The death toll was expected to rise further as Haitians

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Delta Variant Leaves Mark On U.S. Business Comeback

By Theo Francis, Gwynn Guilford and Inti Pacheco

Repercussions from the Delta variant of Covid-19 are starting to ripple across companies, raising staffing costs in senior housing, disrupting production of potato chips and leading some companies to rein in profit projections.

Still unclear: whether the highly contagious strain of the virus will be a momentary stumble in an improving global economy—one that businesses and consumers are now better equipped to handle—or something more serious.

In recent weeks, Kellogg Co.

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◆ **Restaurants become vaccine enforcers**..... A3



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Eyes on the prize Hedge funds sense tide is turning back in their favour — PAGE 15

Taliban on brink of taking over Afghanistan as president flees

► Islamist fighters face little resistance as they enter Kabul

► US and other governments rush to evacuate embassies

► Washington's two-decade military project ends in chaos



Taliban fighters in Kandahar in the south of Afghanistan yesterday
SIPA/STC/ANSA/REUTERS

AMY KAZMIN — NEW DELHI

Afghanistan's president fled the country yesterday as the Taliban advanced on Kabul, effectively handing back power to the Islamist group almost 20 years after it was ousted by a US-led invasion.

Taliban fighters poured into the capital last night and sought to establish control, while US and other foreign governments scrambled to evacuate their citizens and Afghan allies.

Tumultuous scenes were reported at Kabul airport, as many panicked city residents sought to fly out of Afghanistan, and the US embassy warned of a deteriorating security situation.

A Taliban spokesman urged residents to stay calm. The Taliban's entry

into Kabul is the culmination of a dramatic week-long lightning offensive in which the Islamist group seized control of most of the country, often with little armed resistance.

The onslaught left Ashraf Ghani, Afghanistan's president, politically and militarily isolated.

Faced with a seemingly imminent Taliban attack, Ghani, who had long resisted calls for his resignation to pave the way for peace talks with the militia, finally bowed out.

Hamid Karzai, Afghanistan's former president, last night confirmed Ghani's departure, and said he was in talks with other Afghan leaders and the Taliban for a peaceful handover. Taliban fighters were already taking over abandoned police stations in Kabul.

Joe Biden, US president, had announced late on Saturday that Washington would increase its deployment to 5,000 troops to support the evacuation of diplomats, allied personnel and thousands of Afghans at high risk of retribution for working with the US. He also affirmed plans to withdraw troops by the end of the month.

As the US evacuation got under way, embassy staff were instructed to burn sensitive documents, while many Kabul residents thronged banks in a bid to withdraw their savings.

Though so far the takeover of Kabul has seen limited bloodshed, country specialists warn that Afghanistan, with its diverse mix of rival ethnic groups and fierce community rivalries, is heading towards a civil war.

"This is the end of Afghanistan as a nation," Sara Wahedi, a former Afghan government official who runs a security app for Kabul residents, wrote on Twitter. "No one will be able to lead the entire country."

The rapid disintegration of the Afghan National Army over the past week has stunned many in Washington who had expected the US-trained force to be able to put up stronger resistance to the Islamic insurgents.

However, analysts said that the abrupt pace of the US drawdown,

including abandoning the main US military facility at Bagram air base virtually overnight, had severely damaged morale among the Afghan forces, undermining their will to fight.

"What we've underestimated is the level of Taliban planning with regard to the withdrawal," said Rudra Chaudhuri, a war studies lecturer at King's College London.

Many Afghans also expressed fury at the US focus on evacuating its own citizens, leaving the local population at the mercy of the Taliban and its extremist ideology.

Afghan women, in particular, fear hardship under a Taliban regime, which severely restricted their freedom of movement and ability to work when it ruled the country in the 1990s.

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Former shareholder Union Investment, the German asset manager, has filed a suit for damages over the collapse of the payments group, threatening the compensation bondholders and banks are also seeking. — PAGE 6

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The island has been warned that tropical storm Grace will hit today, just as rescuers try to reach survivors of an earthquake that killed at least 724. — PAGE 2

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Police in Jinan, in eastern China, have detained a former manager on suspicion of sexual assault, renewing scrutiny on the e-commerce company. — PAGE 8

Datawatch



Fifty years ago US president Richard Nixon ended dollar convertibility to gold, calling time on fixed exchange rates. The move opened an era of global currency trading, valued at over \$6tn daily in 2019



Inflation imperils Biden's pricey spending plans

Rising inflation fears are threatening Joe Biden's spending ambitions as the two crucial bills head to the House of Representatives this month: the \$35bn budget plan and \$1tn infrastructure package. Reservations cross party lines. One Democrat said it was "simply irresponsible to continue spending at levels more suited to respond to a Great Depression or Great Recession — not an economy that is on the verge of overheating."

Analysis — PAGE 4

Investors flip to chips and biotechs in scramble to avoid China crackdown

MERCEDES RUEHL — SINGAPORE
HUDSON LOCKETT — HONG KONG

Investors are piling into Chinese chip, software and biotech groups at a record pace while paring their bets on e-commerce, as they try to align with Beijing's policy priorities and sidestep a broadening regulatory crackdown.

Xi Jinping, China's president, has led a regulatory assault on internet platforms this year, hitting those in food delivery, e-commerce, fintech, gaming and education. But the Chinese Communist party's desire to advance technologies such as high-end manufacturing has boosted other companies.

China's semiconductor sector has been supported by a multibillion-dollar government plan, partly to counter US determination to stifle its technology industry. Beijing wants the country to

make 70 per cent of its semiconductors domestically by 2025, up from a third today.

The value of venture capital investment into Chinese semiconductor companies increased 446 per cent in the second quarter compared with the first, to a record \$8.9bn, according to data from Preqin. In one deal, Chinese manufacturing group BYD Semiconductor raised Rmb1.9bn (\$295m) from investors including Sequoia China in May.

"When President Xi talks about the importance of technology, he has expressly elevated the manufacturing industry over digital goods," said Dan Wang, a Shanghai-based technology analyst at Gavekal Dragonomics.

Beijing has also encouraged investment in artificial intelligence. WeRide, an autonomous driving start-up, raised \$310m from investors, including

the Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi Alliance, in June. In contrast, investments in Chinese fintech groups fell 36 per cent to \$360m in the second quarter compared with the previous one, according to Preqin. The sector has been subject to a crackdown since regulators abruptly pulled the \$37bn initial public offering of Jack Ma's Ant Group in November.

Investments in gaming and e-commerce companies dropped 96 per cent and 54 per cent to \$121m and \$4bn, respectively, in the second quarter. Groups that operate in these spaces, such as Tencent and Meituan, have also been targeted by Chinese regulators.

The co-founder of one big Silicon Valley venture capital investor said it still planned to invest in China but only in biotechnology, software and other sectors deemed as "safe".
Clean-energy rally page 6

World Markets									
STOCK MARKETS			CURRENCIES			INTEREST RATES			
	Aug 13	Aug 6	%Week	Aug 13	Aug 6		price	yield	chg
S&P 500	4469.00	4436.52	0.71	\$ per £	1.179 1.176	US Gov 10 yr	149.69	1.31	-0.05
Nasdaq Composite	14022.90	14026.76	-0.09	\$ per €	1.285 1.281	UK Gov 10 yr		0.57	-0.03
Dow Jones Ind	35015.30	35020.51	0.07	€ per \$	0.851 0.848	Jpn Gov 10 yr		-0.47	-0.01
FTSEurofirst 300	1035.10	1011.52	1.30	¥ per \$	108.885 110.325	US Gov 30 yr	117.26	0.02	0.00
Euro Stoxx 50	4225.70	4174.54	1.32	Index	82.422 82.296	US Gov 2 yr	114.73	1.95	-0.06
FTSE 100	7218.71	7122.95	1.34	\$ per £	1.080 1.076	Ger Gov 2 yr	105.85	-0.74	0.02
FTSE All-Share	4144.47	4038.94	1.36	£ per \$	0.848 0.850				
CAC 40	6999.04	6916.96	1.16						
Nikkei	15077.44	15070.45	1.27						
Hang Seng	25917.15	27728.12	0.90						
MSCI World \$	3115.74								
MSCI EM \$	1290.91								
MSCI ACWI \$	734.75								
COMMODITIES									
	Aug 13	Aug 6	%Week				price	prev	chg
Oil WTI \$	67.05	66.01	-0.24						
Oil Brent \$	70.09	70.45	-0.51						
Gold \$	1747.40	1800.75	-2.96						

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TALIBAN CAPTURE KABUL, STUNNING U.S. AS A 20-YEAR EFFORT UNRAVELS IN DAYS



Taliban fighters Sunday in Kabul, Afghanistan, on a Humvee seized from Afghan forces. Eight days into a nationwide push, the insurgents took control of the country.

After Week Under New Rulers, Kunduz May Be Hint of Future

By CHRISTINA GOLDBAUM and NAJIM RAHIM

It was his first day as the Taliban-appointed mayor of Kunduz, and Gul Mohammad Elias was on a charm offensive.

A week ago Sunday, the insurgents seized control of the city in northern Afghanistan, which was in shambles after weeks of fighting. Power lines were down. The water supply, powered by generators, did not reach most residents. Trash and rubble littered the streets.

The civil servants who could fix those problems were hiding at home, terrified of the Taliban. So the insurgent commander-turned-mayor summoned some to his new office, to persuade them to return to work.

"I said that our jihad is not with the municipality, our jihad is against the occupiers and those who defend the occupiers," Mr. Elias told The New York Times by telephone.

But day by day, as municipal offices stayed mostly empty, Mr. Elias grew more frustrated — and his rhetoric grew harsher.

Taliban fighters began going door to door, searching for absentee city workers. Hundreds of armed men set up checkpoints across the city. At the entrance to the regional hospital, a new notice appeared on the wall: Employees must return to work or face punishment from the Taliban.

Just a week after the fall of Kunduz — the first in a series of cities that the Taliban seized with breathtaking speed — the insurgents are now in effective control of Afghanistan. And they now must function as administrators who can provide basic services to hundreds of thousands of people.

The experience of those in Kunduz offers a glimpse of how the Taliban

Continued on Page A8

For Biden, Images He Wanted to Avoid

By DAVID E. SANGER

Rarely in modern presidential history have words come back to bite an American commander in chief as swiftly as these from President Biden a little more than five weeks ago: "There's going to be no circumstance where you see people being lifted off the roof of an embassy of the United States in Afghanistan."

Then, digging the hole deeper, he added, "The likelihood there's going to be the Taliban overrunning everything and owning the whole country is highly unlikely."

On Sunday, the scramble to evacuate American civilians and embassy employees from Kabul — the very image that Mr. Biden and his aides agreed they had to avoid during recent meetings in the Oval Office — unfolded live on television, not from the U.S. Embassy roof but from the landing pad next to the building. And now that the Afghan government



Taliban militants displaying their flag after taking Jalalabad.

has collapsed with astonishing speed, the Taliban seem certain to be back in full control of the country when the anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks is commemorated less than a month from today — exactly as they were 20 summers ago.

Mr. Biden will go down in history, fairly or unfairly, as the president who presided over a long-brewing, humiliating final

act in the American experiment in Afghanistan. After seven months in which his administration seemed to exude much-needed competence — getting more than 70 percent of the country's adults vaccinated, engineering surging job growth and making progress toward a bipartisan infrastructure bill — everything about America's last days in Afghanistan shattered the imagery.

Even many of Mr. Biden's allies who believe he made the right decision to finally exit a war that the United States could not win and that was no longer in its national interest concede he made a series of major mistakes in executing the withdrawal. The only question is how politically damaging those will prove to be, or whether Americans who cheered at 2020 campaign rallies when both President Donald J. Trump and Mr. Biden promised

Continued on Page A9

Record Rise in Food Stamp Aid Aims to Stem Hunger's Spread

By JASON DePARLE

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration has revised the nutrition standards of the food stamp program and prompted the largest permanent increase to benefits in the program's history, a move that will give poor people more power to fill their grocery carts but add billions of dollars to the cost of a program that feeds one in eight Americans.

Under rules to be announced Monday and put in place in October, average benefits will rise more than 25 percent from pre-pandemic levels. All 42 million people in the program will receive

additional aid. The move does not require congressional approval, and unlike the large pandemic-era expansions, which are starting to expire, the changes are intended to last.

For at least a decade, critics of the benefits have said they were too low to provide an adequate diet. More than three-quarters of households exhaust their benefits in the first half of the monthly cycle, and researchers have linked subsequent food shortages to problems as diverse as increased hospital admissions, more school

Continued on Page A14

In Quake-Ravaged Haiti, Hordes of the Injured Seek Scarce Care

By MARIA ABI-HABIB



Tending to a woman in Les Cayes, Haiti, on Sunday. Thousands with grievous injuries swarmed badly damaged hospitals.

LES CAYES, Haiti — With broken bones and open wounds, the injured jammed into damaged hospitals or headed to the airport, hoping for mercy flights out. A handful of doctors toiled all night in makeshift triage wards. A retired senator used his seven-seat propeller plane to ferry the most urgent patients to emergency care in the capital.

A day after a magnitude-7.2 earthquake killed at least 1,300 people and injured thousands in western Haiti, the main airport of the city of Les Cayes was overwhelmed Sunday with people trying to evacuate their loved ones to Port-au-Prince, the capital, about 80 miles to the east.

There wasn't much choice. With just a few dozen doctors available in a region that is home to one million people, the quake aftermath was turning increasingly dire.

"I'm the only surgeon over there," said Dr. Edward Destine, an orthopedic surgeon, waving toward a temporary operating room of corrugated tin set up near the airport in Les Cayes. "I would like to operate on 10 people today, but I just don't have the supplies," he said, listing an urgent need for intravenous drips and even the most basic antibiotics.

The earthquake was the latest calamity to convulse Haiti, which is still living with the aftereffects of a 2010 quake that killed an estimated quarter-million people.

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NATIONAL A11-15

A Racial Shift, Visualized

Maps show a rise in the share of people of color in nearly every county across the United States. PAGE A12

The Future of Ballooning

A program in Washington State aims to introduce an aging sport to a new, more diverse class of aeronauts. PAGE A11



INTERNATIONAL A4-10

Hong Kong Opposition Retreats

A crackdown by Beijing is nullifying the landslide pro-democracy victories in local elections in 2019 as over 250 councilors quit to avoid reprisals. PAGE A4

Rising Toll in Turkey Floods

At least 59 people have died in the disaster, and more than 70 are still missing after almost a week. PAGE A4

OBITUARIES D7-8

An Inspiration for Generations

Donald Kagan, 89, one of the country's leading historians, was also renowned for his classroom style. PAGE D8

ARTS C1-6

Trying to Ignore the Noise

The director Leos Carax's movies often arrive amid a commotion, and his newest, "Annette," is no exception. PAGE C1



A New 'Threepenny Opera'

Barrie Kosky's production, above, for the Berliner Ensemble is at the theater where the work premiered. PAGE C1

BUSINESS B1-4

Making Lemonade on TikTok

Marissa Meizz became a meme after her friends excluded her from a birthday party. She decided to use the app to find new friends. It turns out she was far from alone. PAGE B1

From Marketing to Trust

Red Ventures, the biggest digital media company you've never heard of, is a quiet juggernaut based in South Carolina that has turned very specific advice into very big business. PAGE B1

OPINION A16-17

Eli Dourado



SPORTS D1-6

Skateboarders of New York

As the sport's appeal has grown, an inclusive community has become more visible. "It's just made me more OK with who I am," one skater said. PAGES D3-5



Afghanistan falls to the Taliban

Silence swallows a capital in chaos

Fearing the worst amid a surreal transfer of power, residents of Kabul hunker down.

BY MARCUS YAM AND LAURA KING

KABUL, Afghanistan — The day began with the cacophony of blaring traffic as Kabul's rushed headlong to attend to last-minute business: a frantic search for an ATM still dispensing cash, a fruitless journey to a shuttered shop, a harrowing trip to the airport in hopes of escaping an advancing foe.

And it ended, in this noisiest of cities, with near-silence — and with broadcast images of turbaned Taliban inside the Afghan presidential palace, the opulent, fortified compound in the heart of the capital whose name means "citadel."

Kabul, transformed over the last 20 years into a cosmopolitan city of bodybuilding gyms and burger joints, gaudy wedding halls and frozen-yogurt bars, had fallen to the insurgents in the same manner as much of the rest of the country: with hardly a fight.

That surreal defeat — as if a film was suddenly fast-forwarded — seemed to herald a return to darker, more repressive times.

Within hours of the first Taliban fighters appearing early Sunday on the city's outskirts, President Ashraf [See Kabul, A6]



FIGHTERS in the presidential palace, where the Taliban demanded the unconditional surrender of the Afghan government. The lightning conquest follows two decades' worth of U.S.-led efforts to remake the nation.

Isolated leader says he chose exile in bid to save lives

Ashraf Ghani quietly flees the sprawling palace with a small coterie of confidants. **WORLD, A4**

A return to harsh Islamic rule under militant group

Ordinary Afghans face a radically different government, and lifestyle, with Taliban. **WORLD, A6**

Growing concerns about renewed terrorist threats

U.S. officials may alter their assessments about how fast extremists might regroup. **WORLD, A6**



AFGHAN soldiers work to direct and clear traffic after civilians tried to rush to safety as word spread that the Taliban fighters were entering the capital, Kabul.

In a swift defeat, the president flees and militants take Kabul. Americans are flown out on helicopters.

BY MARCUS YAM AND TRACY WILKINSON

KABUL, Afghanistan — Their takeover of Afghanistan complete, Taliban militants moved into the capital, Kabul, on Sunday, occupied the presidential palace and demanded the unconditional surrender of the Afghan government against a steady thrum of helicopters ferrying Americans and other foreigners attempting to escape to safety.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, whose recorded message of encouragement to the public was aired the day before, fled the country, associates said. His departure leaves a vacuum that the Islamist insurgent group is expected to fill quickly.

The swift and humiliating defeat of two decades' worth of U.S.-led efforts to remake Afghanistan opened a new and uncertain chapter in which Afghans opposed to the Taliban hoped a return to its brutal medieval ruling style that eliminated civil rights, subjugated women and scorned education.

From the early hours Sunday, thousands of panicked Afghans stormed cash machines, pushed streets into massive gridlock complete with fistfights, and hunkered down in their homes as offices, including government agencies, emptied and shops were boarded up against looters. At night, the streets turned quiet, as if in terrified anticipation of what is to come.

But chaos at the Kabul airport, where thousands of desperate people trying to get out of the country, [See Afghanistan, A4]

Virus testing key as L.A. schools reopen

District plans to screen all students, teachers and staff — 500,000 people — once a week



RAIZAH TOUCH swabs her son Skyzell Touch, 6, for a coronavirus screening at Northridge Middle School. She had debated whether to send him back to school.

BY LAURA NEWBERRY, MELISSA GOMEZ AND HOWARD BLUME

The scene at Telfair Elementary in the days leading up to the Monday opening of the school year reflected what will be the new normal across the Los Angeles school district: students, teachers and staff in line for their coronavirus test.

Emilio Mendoza, 7, held a toy plane as he stood in the queue with his parents. At the check-in table, Emilio pumped hand sanitizer into his palms and rubbed them together. The technician showed him the swab and explained how it worked. She counted out loud to 15 as Emilio followed along on his fingers — and then it was over. In 24 hours Emilio's parents were tested the re-

sult: negative. "He's not vaccinated, so for us, it's always going to be a little bit of a concern, uncertainty, especially if there are outbreaks," said his mother Lilliana Curio, who is also a Telfair teacher. "But testing will help."

Emilio's nasal swab test is a starting point in L.A. Unified's colossal effort to screen every single student, teacher and staff member — more than half a million people — once a week for the foreseeable future. [See Schools, A8]

How exactly will school work?

Parents have questions, and The Times' education reporters have answers. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Recall fight heats up as voters get ballots

BY JOHN MYERS, ESHERALDA BERMEDEZ, FAITH E. PINHO AND JULIA WICK

California's recall election entered a high-octane phase Saturday, as Gov. Gavin Newsom joined Latino and organized labor leaders in hopes of sparking action by Democrats that would counter the effort and intensity of Republicans to remove him from office.

The surge in campaign

activity — exactly one month before election day — coincided with the arrival of the first ballots in mailboxes across Los Angeles County. Over the next few days, all of California's 22 million voters will receive a ballot for the monthlong election period that ends Sept. 14.

"I cannot impress upon you the consequential nature of this recall," Newsom told supporters at an event with Latino political leaders Saturday in El Sereno. [See Recall, A8]

Haiti death toll soars past 1,200

Displaced survivors of a magnitude 7.2 earthquake search for shelter as a tropical storm approaches. **WORLD, A3**

Martinez decries violence at rally

L.A. council leader denounces man's stabbing during anti-vaccination event. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather

Mostly sunny. L.A. Basin: 90/69. **B6**



EMPIRE STATE OF MIND Max Muncy, left, bumps fists with Justin Turner after hitting a two-run homer in the Dodgers' 14-4 win against the Mets in New York. **SPORTS, D1**

Racial disparity in city's homicide victims

Latino, Black residents account for nearly all deaths in L.A. surge since pandemic's start.

BY KEVIN RECTOR

The surge in homicides in Los Angeles since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic has played out almost entirely among Latino and Black victims, according to a Times analysis of Los Angeles Police Department data.

The figures reflect wide disparities in public safety across the city, experts say, as well as compounding trauma for communities of color hit hard by past gang violence and devastated at disproportionate rates by the economic and social upheaval of the last 18 months.

Police attribute much of the latest violence to gangs, but the impact has been felt by victims old and young, homeless and housed, sitting in their cars and working a shift.

"It speaks to the two Los Angeles," said Jorja Leap, a UCLA professor and longtime government consultant on L.A. gangs. "I am deeply concerned."

Kevin "Twin" Orange, a gang intervention worker for the city, said the pandemic is fully to blame, because it [See Homicides, A14]

BUSINESS INSIDE: American tourists are bringing the good times back to Hollywood. **A9**



Militants face little resistance as they overtake Kabul, concluding a surge that far outpaced U.S. estimates

Pentagon rushes additional troops to capital to aid chaotic effort to evacuate U.S. personnel and allies

Afghanistan falls to Taliban

Desertions, illegal deals accelerate military collapse

BY SUSANNAH GEORGE

KABUL — The spectacular collapse of Afghanistan's military that allowed Taliban fighters to walk into the Afghan capital Sunday despite 20 years of training and billions of dollars in American aid began with deals brokered in rural villages between the militant group and some of the Afghan government's lowest-ranking officials.

The deals, initially offered early last year, were often described by Afghan officials as cease-fires, but Taliban leaders were in fact offering money in exchange for government forces to hand over their weapons, according to an Afghan officer and a U.S. official.

Over the next year and a half, the meetings advanced to the district level and then rapidly on to provincial capitals, culminating in a breathtaking series of negotiated surrenders by government forces, according to interviews with more than a dozen Afghan officers, police, special operations troops and other soldiers.

Within a little more than a week, Taliban fighters overran more than a dozen provincial capitals and entered Kabul with no resistance on Sunday, triggering the departure of Afghanistan's president and the collapse of his government. Afghan security forces in the districts ringing Kabul and in the city itself simply melted away. By nightfall, police checkpoints were left abandoned and the militants roamed the streets freely.

The pace of the military collapse has stunned many American officials and other foreign observers, forcing the U.S. government to dramatically accelerate efforts to remove personnel from its embassy in Kabul.

The Taliban capitalized on the uncertainty caused by the February 2020 agreement reached in Doha, Qatar, between the militant group and the United States calling for a full American withdrawal from Afghanistan. Some Afghan forces realized they would soon no longer be able to count on American air power and other crucial battlefield support and grew receptive to the Taliban's approaches.

"Some just wanted the money," SEE COLLAPSE ON A10



ZABI KARIMI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

President flees, thousands clamor to board flights

BY SUSANNAH GEORGE, CLAIRE PARKER, JOHN HUDSON, KAREN DEYOUNG AND DAN LAMOTHE

KABUL — Taliban fighters took control of Kabul on Sunday, delivering the militant Islamist group the prize it has long sought: authority over all of Afghanistan as the Western-backed government collapsed. President Ashraf Ghani fled, and the long-dominant American presence appeared to be coming to an abrupt and chaotic end after nearly 20 years.

The takeover of the sprawling capital city had been years in the making but was ultimately accomplished in a single day. Insurgent fighters, fresh off their conquests in each of Afghanistan's provincial hubs over the previous week, faced little to no resistance as they entered the city through its major traffic arteries Sunday morning.

By evening, the Taliban was giving television interviews in the lavish presidential palace, just hours after Ghani had departed Afghanistan. A desperate exodus was underway at the airport, with thousands of people clamoring to board flights. And the Pentagon was speeding in additional troops to assist with the withdrawal of U.S. personnel after the American flag was lowered from a now-abandoned embassy.

The footage of rifle-toting Taliban fighters occupying the presidential palace and rolling up the Afghan national flag stood as a defining image of a failed U.S. effort to transform Afghan society at the cost of a trillion dollars and thousands of lives lost.

"Decades from now, these images will be invoked as a vivid example of the limits of U.S. power, and of its inability to fight modern wars effectively or to end them on favorable terms," said Michael Kugelman, an Afghanistan scholar at the Wilson Center.

Asked about comparisons to the United States' departure from Vietnam in 1975, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on ABC News' "This Week" that "this is manifestly not Saigon." But the frenzied rush to the exits exuded anything but the calm and orderly withdrawal the administration SEE AFGHANISTAN ON A9

Afraid for lives, rights activists plead for help

BY MISSY RYAN AND KAREEM FAHIM

Afghan activists, journalists and advocates for women's rights scrambled to identify escape routes on Sunday as international civil society organizations intensified a chaotic effort to evacuate local allies under threat following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan.

The stunningly swift collapse of the Afghan state injected a sense of desperation into a month-long effort by outside aid groups and religious and advocacy organizations to secure visas, flights or any kind of way out for Afghans seen as likely militant targets.

Human rights organizations in recent days have sent the State Department furies of emails with spreadsheets laying out the identities and per- SEE EVACUATION ON A11



RAHMAH GUL/ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOP: Taliban fighters assume control of the Afghan presidential palace in Kabul on Sunday, shortly after President Ashraf Ghani fled the country. ABOVE: A U.S. helicopter flies near the U.S. Embassy in the Afghan capital, where a frantic evacuation effort was underway.

A presidential legacy

Ashraf Ghani's ambitions were dashed by war and rivalry. A15

The first emirate

The last period of Taliban rule offers a grim reference point. A14

Resolute support?

Kabul's fall raises doubts about other U.S. promises abroad. A14

Recalling fall of Saigon

As militants enter Kabul, it feels like history repeating itself. A13

Tensions grow between DeSantis, local officials

BY TIM CRAIG AND MERYL KORNFIELD

MIAMI — Rick Kriseman, mayor of St. Petersburg, knows there are a lot of things he can't predict as part of his job running a sprawling waterfront city of 260,000 residents.

He never knows when violent crime will spike or a destructive hurricane will slam into Florida's fifth-most-populated city. But there is one thing Kriseman can pretty much count on — he won't be talking to Gov. Ron DeSantis (R).

"I have never spoken to Ron DeSantis," said Kriseman (D), who has been mayor since 2014. "He's never called me, and the

times I have tried to reach out to him and talk to him, whether by phone or when I was in Tallahassee, I have never been granted permission or an opportunity for an audience with him."

Kriseman's distaste from Florida's chief executive — a concern echoed by other mayors and county officials — highlights the tensions that have polarized the Sunshine State throughout DeSantis's tenure as he has steadily expanded the powers of his office while using it to blunt that of local officials.

The problem now, some say, is that his focus on concentrating control in the executive mansion is hurting their efforts to combat SEE DESANTIS ON A4

Haitian quake deaths near 1,300 as storm looms



JOSEPH COULIN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

A firefighter searches for survivors inside a damaged building after Saturday's 7.2-magnitude earthquake in Les Cayes, Haiti.

BY INGRID ARNESEN AND ANTHONY FAIOLA

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI — An anguished cry in Creole echoed across the battered south of Haiti on Sunday as a devastated people sought to rescue friends, neighbors and loved ones from the rubble left by the 7.2-magnitude earthquake.

Anpil anpil viktim.

Many, many victims.

The death toll from the earthquake that shook this Caribbean nation on Saturday rose to nearly 1,300, authorities said, as government officials sought aid from U.S. first responders. Adding to the woes of a country that suffers a seemingly endless supply of them, Tropical Storm Grace was bearing down with heavy rains forecast for Monday, threatening to fur-

ther complicate relief efforts.

Haiti's public works ministry dispatched 55 rescue teams, composed of military and civil protection personnel, for search-and-rescue efforts, but it was not enough. In some communities, residents reported a lack of relief workers and took it upon themselves to act.

"It's the people from the neighborhood using their own hands who have been digging and rescuing anyone they can save," said Jean-David Cassis, a 31-year-old farmer in the city of Torbeck on the southwestern coast.

He and a group of neighbors aided a 21-year-old woman whose foot they could see protruding from a collapsed house. They were able to get her out alive. But they were unable to save a 47-year-old SEE HAITI ON A7

IN THE NEWS

Betting on Nebraska A research center in Omaha is a brain trust for DHS's changing fight against violent extremism. A2

Inside game Pete Buttigieg is deftly using his position at the center of infrastructure talks to build a network, potentially laying the groundwork for his political future. A3

THE NATION The Biden administration approved a record increase for food assistance benefits. A5

THE WORLD Iceland, once praised for its coronavirus response and vaccination

rate, is now seeing its highest levels of infection since the pandemic began. A6

Ebola has resurfaced in Ivory Coast for the first time in 25 years, health officials said. As **Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau**

called a snap federal election for Sept. 20. A8

THE REGION Lawyers for a Maryland school system argued this summer that a locker room attack by football players wielding a broomstick and charged with rape did not constitute a sexual assault. B1

A clearer picture of what this school year will look like in D.C. is starting to emerge, and officials say they intend to provide a detailed plan in coming days. B1
In Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, some nurses are choosing termination over mandatory vaccination. B1

STYLE **Out with a whimper** Andrew M. Cuomo and Bill de Blasio's clash of egos draws to an unanticipated close. C1

More bad behavior After #MeToo, the timing of Cuomo's alleged sexual misconduct is galling. C1

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LOTTERIES...B3
OBITUARIES...B7
TELEVISION...C5
WORLD NEWS...A6

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Year 144, No. 254



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Boca volvió a perder y la punta le queda cada vez más lejos

Cayó en La Plata 1 a 0 frente a Estudiantes; fue por la sexta fecha y hasta ahora no ganó ningún partido; está a diez puntos de Independiente. **Deportes**



LOS IMPOSTORES, UNA BANDA CON LUJOS Y MEGAINVERSIONES

—seguridad

Cortaban servicios de cable e internet para entrar a las casas como falsos operarios; gastaron un botín millonario en viajes y negocios. **Página 26**

LAS UNIVERSIDADES SE DEMORAN CON LA PRESENCIALIDAD

—coronavirus

Recién se empiezan a preparar para un regreso gradual en las materias teóricas; todavía tienen protocolos pendientes de autorización. **Página 21**

LA NACION

LUNES 16 DE AGOSTO DE 2021 | LANACION.COM.AR



Combatientes talibanes toman el control del palacio de gobierno tras la huida del presidente Ghani

ZABI KARIMI/AP

Caos y temor en Afganistán: los talibanes tomaron el poder y el presidente huyó

OFENSIVA. Tras un imparable avance, entraron en Kabul y reconquistaron el país, a 20 años de su derrocamiento; EE.UU. y sus aliados iniciaron una masiva evacuación; alerta por Al-Qaeda

KABUL (AP).—A dos décadas de su derrocamiento, los talibanes coronaron ayer una ofensiva relámpago de tres meses al reconquistar la capital de Afganistán, donde, desde el palacio presidencial, anunciaron el renacimiento del emirato islámico.

"La guerra en Afganistán ha terminado", proclamaron los ins-

urgentes, mientras el presidente, Ashraf Ghani, huía del país y el gobierno se desmoronaba.

En medio de una fuerte conmoción mundial y de llamados a la moderación, Estados Unidos y otros países occidentales lanzaron una masiva evacuación de sus diplomáticos y colaboradores, en imágenes que

para muchos recordaron la caída de Saigón, tras la derrota en Vietnam.

El avance sorprendente de los talibanes sobre los talones de la retirada de las fuerzas extranjeras de Afganistán tras 20 años de guerra despertó temores, a su vez, sobre un eventual resurgimiento de la red terrorista Al-Qaeda. **Página 2**

Errores que anticipaban el final

David Sanger y Helene Cooper
Página 3

Europa, ante una nueva ola de refugiados

Página 7

EL ESCENARIO

Fernández cava el pozo del que busca salir

Claudio Jacquelin
—LA NACION—

La zozobra que cundió en el entorno presidencial durante los últimos días de la semana pasada solo es equiparable a situaciones precedentes más dignas de merecer semejante inquietud, como crisis económico-financieras, estallidos sociales o planteos militares. La mera divulgación de la foto de un negado festejo en la residencia oficial de los presidentes la provocó. Tal vez sea solo otra manifestación de la decadencia nacional y la banalización de la función pública. **Continúa en la página 13**

Cristina sale a respaldar al Presidente, pero sigue la convulsión interna

Jaime Rosenberg
Página 12

Triunfo de las listas del gobernador Sáenz en Salta

LEGISLATURA. Los frentes que lo apoyaron fueron mayoría; Pro, segundo en la capital. **Página 14**



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LOS ACCIONISTAS DE BANCO SANTANDER RÍO S.A. NO RESPONDEN EN EXCESO DE SU INTEGRACIÓN ACCIONARIA.

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Taleban comanda o Afeganistão

Grupo extremista volta ao poder 20 anos após ter sido derrotado pelos EUA, que retiraram suas tropas com Biden

O Taleban, grupo que virou sinônimo de radicalismo fundamentalista islâmico, derrubou o governo do Afeganistão e voltou ao poder duas décadas depois de ter sido expulso pelos Estados Unidos e seus aliados.

Após uma campanha militar de apenas duas semanas, as tropas do Taleban entraram ontem na capital, Cabul. A tomada da cidade ocorreu praticamente sem resistência. Há apenas relatos de tiroteios esporádicos.

"Queremos uma transição pacífica e evitar derramamento de sangue", afirmou à rede BBC um porta-voz taleban, Suhail Shaheen. O presidente do Afeganistão deixou o país, e seu governo foi desmantelado.

Os EUA refutam o discurso derrotista. "Isso não é Saigon. Nós simplesmente não quisemos mais ficar lá", disse o secretário de Estado dos EUA, Antony Blinken, defendendo a decisão de Joe Biden de retirar as tropas do país.

A invasão do Afeganistão foi justificada como uma punição ao Taleban por ter abrigado a rede terrorista Al Qaeda, que ordenou os ataques do 11 de setembro de 2001. Os EUA prometeram ajudar a saída de refugiados.

Apesar de o porta-voz taleban ter afirmado que nada mudaria em relação aos direitos das mulheres, muitas estudantes se despediram de seus professores porque temem não poder voltar às salas de aula. **Mundo A12**

Verba para parlamentar multiplica com Doria

Disposto a disputar a eleição presidencial, o governador de São Paulo, João Doria (PSDB), multiplicou os repasses de verbas políticas para atender a pedidos de parlamentares, inclusive deputados federais e uma senadora.

Até o fim de julho deste ano, foi liberado cerca de R\$ 1 bilhão, quase seis vezes o valor de todo o repasse de 2020. **Poder A4**

Para Senado, ação contra ministros do STF é inócua

A cúpula do Senado e líderes na Casa avaliam o pedido de abertura de processo contra ministros do STF anunciado por Jair Bolsonaro como uma ação com chances mínimas de prosperar e uma forma de ataque retórico. **Poder A8**

Omissão de Aras sobre urna destoa de histórico da PGR

Poder A10

Esporte B7
Ídolo do Bayern e da seleção alemã, Gerd Müller morre aos 75

Ilustrada B8
Série 'What If...?' mostra como Marvel pode se perder

Luiz Felipe Pondé
A misericórdia é essencial

Todos precisamos de alguém que tenha piedade de nós. Misericórdia é um pilar essencial, apesar de menosprezada pelas modas do mundo. **Ilustrada B11**

EDITORIAIS A2

A pior opção
Sobre proposta do governo de parcelar precatórios.

Escândalo democrata
Acerra de renúncia do governador de Nova York.



Homens do Taleban exibem armas na entrada de Laghman, província próxima a Cabul, capital do Afeganistão **AFP**



Centro de Exposições do Anhembi com atrações durante a Virada da Vacina **Bruno Santos/Folhapress**

Com virada, SP registra 98,5% de adultos vacinados

A capital paulista registrou 98,5% da população adulta com pelo menos a primeira dose, após 34 horas ininterruptas de imunização na Virada da Vacina. Ao todo, 500 mil receberam a aplicação durante o fim de semana. **Saúde B1**

Após terremoto, mortos no Haiti passam de 1.200

O número de mortos após o terremoto que atingiu o Haiti no sábado (14) subiu para 1.297, com 2.800 pessoas feridas. O governo do país agora está em alerta para possíveis impactos da chegada da tempestade tropical Grace. **Mundo A13**

ENTREVISTA DA 2ª Helio Santos Desigualdade racial precisa estar no plano de candidatos

Candidatos à Presidência sem propostas para reduzir as desigualdades que prejudicam os pretos e pardos não receberão o apoio do movimento negro na eleição de 2022, diz Helio Santos, presidente do conselho da Oxfam Brasil. Segundo ele, apesar do apoio que recebeu em 2018, Fernando Haddad não colocou a questão racial na agenda. **A14**

População com 18 anos ou mais*

	ao menos uma dose	totalmente vacinada
Brasil	73,9%	30,8%
MS	88,6%	50,7%
RS	79,0%	38,1%
SP	89,5%	35,8%

Totalmente vacinada



Estágios



Total de doses aplicadas

	1ª	2ª	Única
Brasil	114,9 mi	45,6 mi	4,0 mi
1ª SP	31,3 mi	11,8 mi	1,3 mi
2ª MG	11,3 mi	4,4 mi	466,3 mil
3ª RJ	8,8 mi	3,6 mi	300,2 mil

	Casos	Óbitos
Total	20,4 mi	569,2 mil
Méd. móvel	28,4 mil	860
Variação**	-20,4%	-12,6%
Em 24 h	13,8 mil	385

Números da pandemia

Brasil
Desacelerado
Dados das 20h de 15 ago *Ao menos uma dose: tomou dose única ou 1ª dose. Totalmente vacinada: tomou dose única ou 2ª dose **Em relação a 14 dias



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Dirigentes liberales no tienen nada que envidiar a sus pares del Partido Colorado

Opositores también tienen a familiares colgados del Estado

Mientras existe una acentuada crisis por la falta de empleo, en medio de una pandemia que golpea la economía, políticos de distintos colores copan las entidades públicas.

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**Exigen que Fiscalía impulse casos
Sociedad civil alerta
de peces gordos con
sus procesos trabados**

PÁGINA 7

**Ante paro de los camioneros
Productores reclaman
al Gobierno garantías
para seguir trabajando**

PÁGINA 12

**Acordó pago con 110 contribuyentes
La SET recuperó unos
G. 41.000 millones de
la última megaevasión**

PÁGINA 13

**Municipales serán plebiscito, admite
La unidad en la ANR
tiene idas y venidas,
según José Alderete**

PÁGINA 9

**Arzobispo: El interés
nacional está por
encima del particular**

RODRIGO LLAMAZOS



Mensaje. Monseñor Edmundo Valenzuela presidió la celebración religiosa por la fiesta de Nuestra Señora de la Asunción e instó a trabajar por tiempos mejores.

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CON ESTA EDICIÓN

STREET FOOD 2



COMPRA OPCIONAL 1



COMPRA OPCIONAL 2



**Salud tras nuevas variantes Covid
Recomiendan no bajar
la guardia con la vuelta
al trabajo presencial**

PÁGINAS 2 y 3

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« Sans la liberté de blâmer, il n'est point d'éloge flatteur » Beaumarchais

L'ÉTÉ
DU FIGARO
**L'ÉTÉ AVANT
LA PRÉSIDENTIELLE**
 2016: RIEN
NE SE PASSE JAMAIS
COMME PRÉVU
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JACQUES JULLIARD
 « LA FRANCE A BESOIN
D'UNE VOIX QUI SACHE PARLER
AU PEUPLE » PAGE 19

**EN QUÊTE
DU TROISIÈME TYPE**
 POUR LE CNES,
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SONT UN
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 Pour le 15 Août,
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avec ses pèlerins
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 Contre l'herpès,
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l'efficacité durable
 PAGE 11

**FIGARO OUI
FIGARO NON**
**Réponses à la question
de samedi :**
 Emmanuel Macron a-t-il
eu raison de suspendre
le contrôle technique
obligatoire pour
les deux-roues ?

OUI 33% NON 67%
 TOTAL DE VOTANTS : 104109

**Votez aujourd'hui
sur lefigaro.fr**
 Électricité, gaz : faut-il
interdire le démarchage
à domicile ?

 ILLUSTRATION FABIEN CLAIREFOND -
MEHDI FEDOUACH/APF - SÉBASTIEN
SORIANO/LE FIGARO

Kaboul aux mains des talibans


 Vingt ans après en avoir été chassés
par l'intervention américaine, les miliciens
islamistes ont repris la capitale afghane.

PAGES 2 ET 3

Électricité et gaz :
le démarchage à domicile
dans le collimateur
 Pour faire souscrire à leurs
offres les clients d'EDF et d'En-
gie, les nouveaux fournisseurs
d'énergie se livrent à une
concurrence effrénée. Ils vont
jusqu'à pratiquer un démar-

 chage à domicile très offensif.
Devant la hausse du nombre
de plaintes, le Médiateur de
l'énergie menace de faire en-
cadrer le porte-à-porte pour
éviter les dérapages. PAGE 22
Le gouvernement intensifie
sa lutte contre la drogue
 C'est, selon Emmanuel Ma-
cron, « la mère des batailles ». Des banlieues aux petites vil-
les, l'ensemble du territoire
est concerné par le trafic.
L'écosystème, estimé à 4 mil-
liards d'euros, fournit
900 000 fumeurs de cannabis,

 600 000 consommateurs de
cocaïne. Dans une interview
au Figaro, Gérald Darmanin
dévoile les détails de sa straté-
gie de harcèlement des deal-
ers. Il annonce une campagne
contre la drogue au volant.
 PAGES 6, 7 ET L'EDITORIAL

ÉDITORIAL par Yves Thérard ytheard@lefigaro.fr

Un long combat

 Il y a quarante ans, le juge Pierre Michel
était tué de trois balles dans le centre de
Marseille. Bête noire des héritiers de la
French Connection, cet homme était
alors la terreur des barons de la drogue.
Dans les rangs de la police et de la justice, le
souvenir de cet assassinat est encore très
présent. Depuis, les méthodes de travail des
enquêteurs ont changé, mais celles des trafi-
quants aussi, qui ne cessent de fabriquer de
nouvelles substances et d'inventer de nou-
veaux modes de commercialisation.
En France, le marché des stupéfiants a ex-
plodé : il est estimé aujourd'hui à quelque
4 milliards d'euros. Cette économie parallèle
fait vivre des pans entiers de la société, y com-
pris le terrorisme islamique. Et elle n'est plus
l'apanage des grandes villes, même si dix
jeunes Marseillais viennent, en deux mois,
de tomber dans des règlements de comptes
et des guerres de territoire. Décidément, la
Cité phocéenne ne parvient pas à se défaire
de sa réputation de plaque tournante.
Ce fléau est-il une fatalité ? Pas plus que l'in-
sécurité galopante, dont la drogue est l'un
des principaux moteurs. Les gouvernements

 passent et s'enorgueillissent, à intervalles
réguliers, de saisies spectaculaires dûment
médiatisées. Malheureusement, celles-ci
cachent mal la réalité. Le pouvoir actuel,
comme nombre de ses prédécesseurs, a mis
du temps à prendre la mesure de la calamité.
Avant son arrivée à l'Élysée, Emmanuel Ma-
cron n'était pas hostile à la légalisation du
cannabis. Il a changé d'avis et fait désormais
de la traque du trafic de stupéfiants un che-
val de bataille. Il l'a déclaré dans un en-
tretien au Figaro en avril dernier. Son mi-
nistre de l'Intérieur en dévoile à présent
le détail. Gérald Darmanin promet une
opération coup de poing toutes les deux
heures dans les endroits les plus « chauds ».
À huit mois de la présidentielle, le chef de
l'État est évidemment soucieux d'afficher sa
fermeté sur le front régalien. On doit, certes,
saluer l'initiative. Mais avec l'espoir qu'elle
dure plus que le temps d'une campagne
électorale. Car, ici, le succès ne peut être que
le fruit d'un long combat. ■

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The fall of Kabul

Taliban fighters at the presidential palace in Kabul last night after the Afghan president, Ashraf Ghani, fled the country

PHOTOGRAPH: ZABI KARIMI/AP



● Taliban gunmen pour into Afghan capital to seize back control

● President Ghani flees country saying he hoped 'to avoid bloodshed'

● West scrambles to evacuate citizens amid scenes of panic and fear of reprisals

Emma Graham-Harrison
Luke Harding

The 20-year western mission to Afghanistan collapsed in a single dramatic day as Taliban gunmen poured into the capital, Kabul, yesterday to seize back control of the country.

Amid scenes of panic, the Afghan president, Ashraf Ghani, fled the country and the US ambassador was evacuated to Kabul airport, abandoning the American embassy as diplomats frantically sought to destroy sensitive material before being airlifted out to safety.

Even before the Taliban announced plans to proclaim an "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan", it was clear a second era of its rule had effectively begun.

The group started the day so confident of victory that its fighters surrounded the capital, then ordered them to stay outside the city and wait.

"Our forces are not entering Kabul

city. We want a peaceful transfer of power," said spokesman Suhail Shaheen. But with surrender apparently inevitable, Afghan government forces melted away, looting broke out, and hours later the Taliban claimed their men were needed to restore order.

So they moved in not as fighters but as policemen, presenting themselves as a government in waiting. By evening the Taliban had seized Afghanistan's historic seat of power, and were expected to use it to declare a new Islamic emirate, more than two decades after the group had established its first one.

Outside, the city held its breath. The streets were mostly deserted, but the approach to the airport was crammed with people desperate to flee, and a steady succession of helicopters filled the sky.

In humiliating scenes for the Biden administration, less than a month before the

End to freedom 'All around are fearful faces of women'

One young female resident describes the terror gripping Kabul as the Taliban sweep in

Early on Sunday morning, I was going to university for a class when a group of women came running out from the women's dormitory. I asked what had happened, and one of them told me the police were evacuating them, because the Taliban had arrived in Kabul, and they will beat women who do not have a burqa.

We all wanted to get home, but we couldn't use public transport. The drivers would not let us in their cars because they did not want to take responsibility for transporting a woman. It was even worse for the women from the dormitory, who are from outside Kabul and were scared and confused about where they should go.

Meanwhile the men standing around were making fun of girls and women, laughing at our terror. "Go and put on your chadari [burqa]," one called out. "It is your last days of being out on the streets," said another. "I will marry four of you in one day," cried a third.

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