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10 October 2023

Team Analysis

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# Strategic Intelligence and Foreign Affairs Initiative

## Monthly Newsletter

Liberty University

Helms School of Government Students



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# Ukraine Strikes Black Sea Fleet Headquarters

## BLUF

- **Ukraine's missile strike on the Black Sea Fleet headquarters will likely hinder Russia's military capabilities in Ukraine noticeably, which will advance US interests.**

## Analysis

- Ukraine likely handicapped BSF logistics and therefore combat capabilities. BSF is responsible for a large portion of Russia's war effort in Ukraine, covering both some ground and air forces as well as almost all naval forces in the war zone.
  - Russia's current naval superiority is plausibly weakened. If the right resources are (given and) used to properly exploit this weakness, then Ukraine can potentially significantly improve their naval situation.
  - A US ally increases their prospects of doing better in this war. A major setback in Russia's capabilities that could be caused by this would likely increase Ukraine's ability to do better.
  - This should boost US confidence in Ukraine's interdiction abilities, leading to continued support. Ukraine's effective use of foreign aid short range cruise missiles should lead to the US trusting that aiding Ukraine with short range cruise missiles is a wise support investment.
  - US interests are furthered with the likely advantage this gives a US ally in their war effort. This likely advantage will better enable Ukraine to carry out its war effort, which is a current US interest in the face of preventing Russia from becoming an increased border threat to NATO, which increases the likelihood of a conflict with Russia that the US would be drawn into.
  - Russian involvement in Crimea began shortly after the invasion in March of 2022 where operations were quickly established until an attack on the flagship cruiser, *Moskva*. This hindrance of Russian naval assets provided an entry point for Ukraine to impose another attack. On October 29, unscrewed surface vessels (USVs) and unmanned aerial vehicles deeply penetrated the Russian base. This caused the FSB to be called into action providing defense support.
  - On August 26, 2022, Russian naval forces were supplemented with 30 assets including 12 vessels for military defense. OSINT cannot confirm how these vessels appeared.
  - The non-renewable grain deal between Russia, Ukraine, and other European countries places significant emphasis on Russian presence in the Black Sea and Crimea. The Black Sea provides a strategic impact on trade between European countries, specifically Russian and Ukrainian policies affecting the war.
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# India-Middle East Economic Corridor (IMEC)

## BLUF

- **The US-backed India-Middle East Economic Corridor trade route will advance Middle Eastern stability and offer competition to China's Belt and Road Initiative.**

## Analysis

### *Overview:*

- A plan to establish the India-Middle East Economic Corridor was announced at the G20 Summit held in New Delhi last week. The corridor will connect India, the Middle East, and Europe via railways and shipping projects. The trade route will run through India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Israel, and the European Union.
- It is highly likely that the IMEC will be successful in bringing several Middle Eastern countries together. Creating economic dependence between countries is a strong form of conflict mitigation, bringing more stability to the region. This initiative comes at a time when the US is also currently negotiating a deal that would have Saudi Arabia recognize Israel. This new economic connection makes it more likely that this goal could be accomplished. Cooperation between US allies and partners in the region is significant for US interests in energy resources and countering China's influence in the region.
- While the IMEC likely does not pose an immediate threat to dethroning China's BRI due to BRI's expansiveness and the fact that it has already been in existence for 10 years. IMEC will likely offer competition in many ways that have the ability to develop into deeper threats to China over time. Italy has decided to leave the BRI in order to participate in IMEC, it is likely that other countries, especially countries that subscribe to a more Western ideology will follow this example. While 10 years behind, the value of new foreign contracted projects under the BRI has stagnated since its peak in 2019, which provides IMEC an opportunity to catch up faster. Saudi Arabia's participation is also significant due to some of its recent collaboration with China. IMEC provides the West as an alternative trading partner for debt trapped underdeveloped countries in the BRI. While it is likely China will offer leniency on debts in order to keep countries in the BRI, the status the US offers IMEC provides a compelling case for IMEC.

### *Collections Data:*

- IMEC will consist of railway lines and shipping lines that will pass through the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel
  - They said it will cut trade time between India and Europe by 40 percent
  - Absent from this announcement was China. It seems this is a clear plan to rival China's massive Belt and Road infrastructure initiative
  - It aims to link Middle East countries by railway and connect them to India by port, helping the flow of energy and trade from the Gulf to Europe, US officials have said, by cutting shipping times, costs and fuel use.
  - A memorandum of understanding on the corridor was signed by the European Union, India, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the US and other G20 partners.
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- Turkey opposes the project and feels alienated, “We say that there is no corridor without Turkey,” Erdogan told journalists accompanying him to a G20 summit
- Other trade corridors are attempting to be established, Turkey backs the Iraq Development Road Project, which aims to connect the Gulf to Turkey and Europe through a railway and highway via ports in the UAE, Qatar and Iraq. Estimated \$17B
- The new project would not necessarily undermine China’s global infrastructure project, which has its own independent existence
- India was not part of the Belt and Road Initiative
- Data reveals that the value of new foreign contracted projects under the BRI has stagnated since its peak in 2019, coinciding with China's domestic real estate debt crisis.
- Italy’s participation signals their inclination to abandon the BRI. Italy had been the first G7 country to join Xi Jinping's ambitious project in 2019.
- A fact sheet released by the White House outlined the new corridor's objectives, which include establishing railway and sea connectivity between Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.
- This ambitious initiative aims to connect commercial hubs, support the development and export of clean energy, lay undersea cables, expand energy grids and telecommunication lines, promote clean energy technology, and enhance Internet access for communities, ensuring stability and security.
- IMEC is expected to attract additional Asian countries, boosting manufacturing, food security, and supply chains within its sphere of influence.
- The New Delhi deal seeks to strengthen the Western alliance working to check China. It also gives a fillip to the United States President’s ambitious dream of normalizing ties between Arab Gulf nations and Israel.

*Analytical Techniques:*

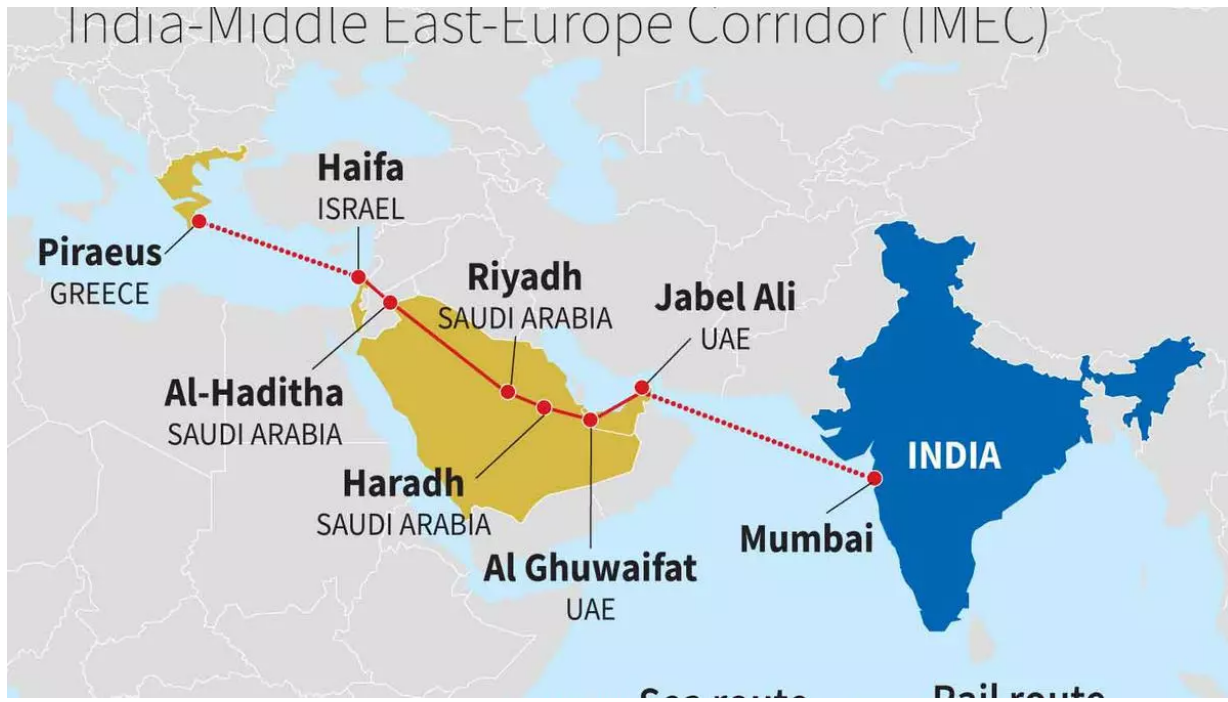
Who	What	When	Where	Why	How
US India UAE Saudi Arabia Jordan Israel EU Other g20 members	Trade routes Railroads Economic hubs undersea cables energy grids telecommunication lines clean energy technology	Proposed at G20 summit.  Details on the timeline pending	India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor	boost trade deliver energy resources improve digital connectivity enhance infrastructure economic growth bring Middle Eastern countries together <b>counter China’s Belt and Road Initiative</b> cutting trade time	Memorandum signed Countering China by converting countries from the bri to the imec  Timing: foreign contracted projects under the BRI has stagnated since its peak in 2019

Key Assumptions Check	Commentary	S	W/C	U
The IMEC will bring Middle Eastern countries together, bring stability to the region, and align the Middle East with The US over China.	Relying on each other economically and for the flow of trade routes will mitigate conflicts. It will also likely bring in other countries in the region and help the US establish better relationships.	X		
The IMEC will be able to draw countries that have previously been a part of the Belt and Road initiative.	IMEC has been able to secure participation from Italy, which was a participant in the BRI. It is also likely to draw other Asian countries. However, many developing countries that have been part of the BRI are dept trapped and will struggle to get away from what they owe to China.		X	
The IMEC has an established and executable plan to achieve its goals.	The IMEC has communicated clear goals which include establishing railway and sea connectivity between Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, connecting commercial hubs, supporting the development and export of clean energy, laying undersea cables, expanding energy grids and telecommunication lines, promoting clean energy technology, and enhancing Internet access for communities as well as an achievable broad plan, but specifics of execution and a clear timeline have not been made available yet.		X	
The IMEC will be able to compete with the Belt and Road Initiative.	It is an opportune moment; data reveals that the value of new foreign contracted projects under the BRI has stagnated since its peak in 2019. The IMEC connects India, the world's fifth-largest economy, while the BRI does not. The Middle East is incredibly resource and specifically energy dense.	X		



Maps:

### Map of Proposed India-Middle East Transport Corridor



### Map of BRI Progress



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# Vietnam Rare Earth Element (REE) Deposits

## BLUF

- **Despite the PRC's REE industry dominance, Vietnam's multi-alignment strategy and significant REE deposits allows the US to decrease dependence on the PRC while diversifying supply chains.**

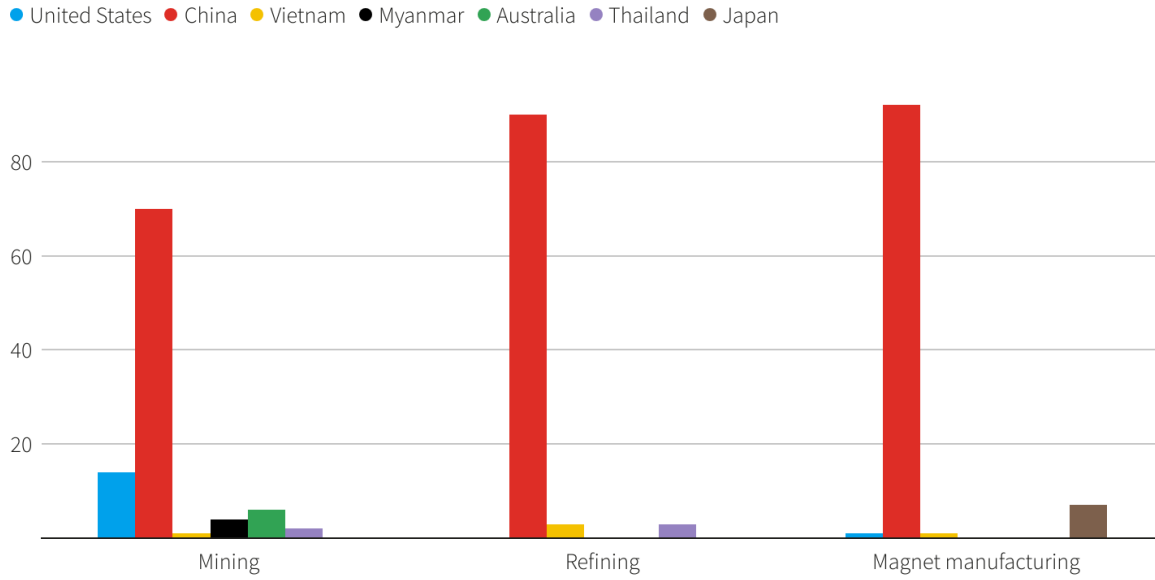
## Analysis

- Given the U.S.'s recent upgrade of relations with Vietnam to a comprehensive strategic partnership, opportunities for acquiring rare earth elements are increased due to Vietnam's significant deposits and increased willingness to develop in the rare earth elements (REE) industry.
  - The September 10 partnership upgrade was significant as it placed the U.S. and China on equal terms with Vietnam regarding partnership status. This is another sign of Vietnam's growing multi-alignment strategy to secure itself in an increasingly unstable region. This is further demonstrated by Vietnam's intent to pursue an extensive arms deal with Russia, which was recently revealed by the New York Times in a leaked Vietnamese government document.
  - Considering this shift in foreign policy for both countries. This creates opportunities regarding an important industry, rare earth elements, and their mining, refining, and manufacturing. REEs are vital to U.S. interests and any other modern economy as they are vital components in high-technology devices, including smartphones, digital cameras, and computer hard disks. Large quantities of REEs are used in defense technologies and nuclear power.
  - The PRC in 2011 accounted for 97% of total REE production. They dominate the mining and refining process as well, with little competition. Their REE deposits are also the largest in the world, with an estimated 44 million tons. Vietnam, however, has the second-largest deposits, with 22 million tons, and is demonstrating a renewed interest in bolstering their status in the industry.
  - The PRC has recently imposed export restrictions on gallium and germanium, both used in computer chips. This underscores the threat posed to U.S. national security and supply chains when an adversarial country has a de facto monopoly on a vital industry.
  - Vietnam possesses a large reserve of rare earth minerals which remains mostly untapped. In the wake of Geopolitical tensions between China and the United States, President Biden visited Vietnam and signed an agreement encouraging investment into the Dong Pao mine. Two major companies, VTRE and Blackstone, have begun reopening the Pong Pao mine in Dong Pao Province. These companies plan to begin mining rare earth minerals by the end of 2024 and hope to mine 60,000 tons of REE by the end of 2030. China currently produces around 210,000 tons of REE per year. This Vietnamese mining and refinement of REE would allow the US to diversify our acquisition of rare earth minerals and decrease our dependence on the PRC.
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Graphs:

### China's rare earths might

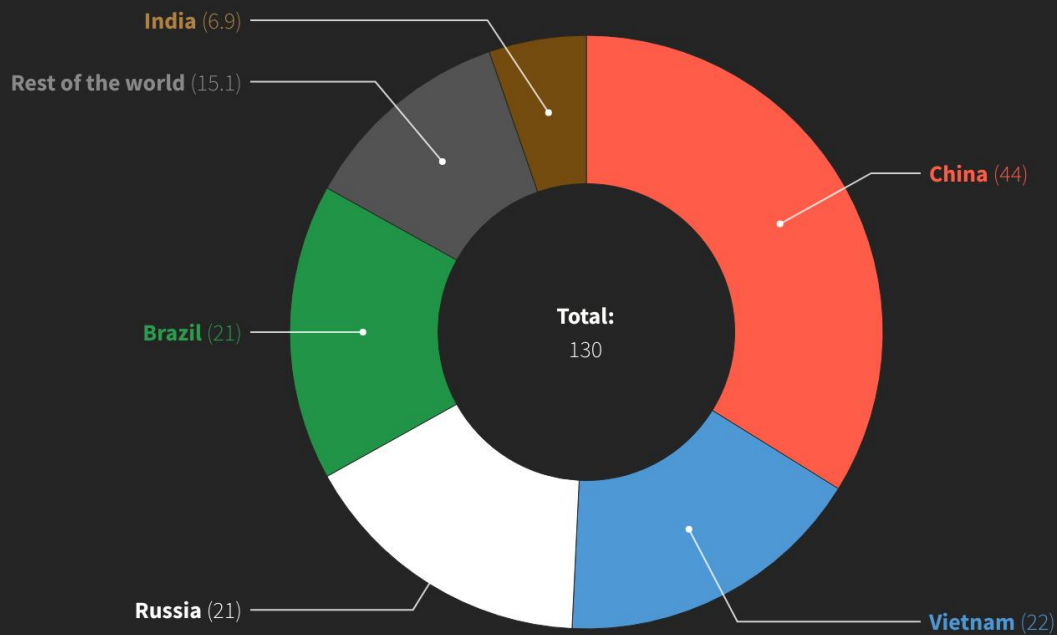
Market share in mining and refining of rare earths and production of rare earth magnets



Note: Thailand had in 2019 an 8% market share in the production of bonded magnetic powder  
 Source: U.S. Department of Energy; U.S. Geological Survey

### Global rare earths deposits

Estimates, in millions of tons of rare earth oxide equivalent



Note: Data include lanthanides and yttrium but exclude most scandium  
 Source: US Geological Survey, 2023 | By Francesco Guarascio | Reuters, 25 September, 2023

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# Earthquake in Morocco

## BLUF

- On September 8th, 2023, Morocco experienced a 6.8 magnitude earthquake causing many lives to be lost and leaving many more injured.

## Analysis

- The Structure Analytical Technique that is being used is the DIME model. In this DIME model it will discuss how morocco government if facing the aftermath of the deadly earthquake
- DIME
  - Diplomatic:
    - The United States dispatched a small team of disaster experts to Morocco to assess the situation, identify unmet humanitarian needs and work with the government of Morocco to identify additional support. A U.S. official said the team arrived on the ground on Sunday.
  - Information:
    - The earthquake, Morocco's deadliest in more than 60 years, struck at about 11 p.m. local time on Friday. The epicenter of the 6.8 magnitude quake was in the Atlas Mountains, around 70 kilometers (44 miles) south of the tourist capital of Marrakesh. It was shallow at a depth of 18.5 kilometers (11.5 miles), making it relatively more powerful.
  - Military:
    - In a sign of the huge scale of the disaster, Morocco's King Mohammed VI ordered the armed forces to mobilize air and land assets, specialized search-and-rescue teams, and a surgical field hospital
  - Economics:
    - Morocco's deadly earthquake that struck on Friday, killing around 2,500 people so far, could cost the economy as much as 8% of Morocco's gross domestic product, according to the latest estimates from the US Geological Survey.
    - According to the World Bank, the North African country's GDP was of \$134.18 billion for 2022. An 8% loss would be about \$10.7 billion.

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# Migrant Flows and U.S. Consequences

## BLUF

- Migrant flows from Latin America to the United States are overwhelming and contribute to both drug and human trafficking.

## Analysis

- Migrant flows
    - Over 2.2 million migrants have crossed the United States' southern border in 2023 alone with the largest points of entry being the Rio Grande Valley, El Paso, Del Rio, and Tucson. The people who come to America seeking asylum are from all different parts of Latin and South America including Mexico, Venezuela, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Recently, groups of up hundreds of migrants walk thousands of miles to Texas and surrender to the US Border Patrol. Border Patrol states that over weekends they might experience more than one thousand migrants. These amounts of immigrants place nonprofit migrant shelters or holding facilities above capacity. Because of this, migrants are released on parole into the city and are seen in court later.
    - Border Patrol has seen more migrants than they can account for as too many to be put into shelters or facilities while they are processed. In just January of 2023 over two thirds of border encounters were single adults, 41% were processed for expulsion. Encounters of unaccompanied children in 2023 have risen 73% according to federal statistics. Statements reveal that there are more than 10,000 unaccompanied children in the HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement custody.
      - Migrants are not just staying in or around border cities such as Laredo, El Paso, Del Rio, or Tucson, they go to different states as far north as Massachusetts who is paying to shelter around 11K new arrivals, as well as New York who are housing roughly 60K migrants.
  - Implications for Trafficking
    - Drugs/narcotics
      - Drugs coming into the United States is nothing new and as of August 23, 2023 CBP officers at the Nogales point of entry discovered approximately 14K fentanyl pills hidden in crutches being used by a pedestrian. In other sectors such as San Diego CBP seized over 230 lbs of fentanyl which was reported to have the potential to kill over 50 million people. In the past years the cartels
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and narcotic smugglers have found very creative ways to hide drugs including \$61 million worth of methamphetamines and marijuana in crates of limes and nopales as well as \$1.4 million worth of meth in green onion shipments. DEA has seen drugs smuggled in lollipops, furniture, wax candles, lawn ornaments, produce, inside people, cars, and pet food.

- While many people who smuggle drugs have US citizenship, not everyone is a willing participant. Around 52% of narcotics that are found or seized by officers are at the ports of entry while 48% are after they have been smuggled in, but those are only accounting for the drugs that are found.
  - Human trafficking goes hand in hand with drug smuggling and it is not uncommon for victims of human trafficking to be used as drug mules or they may suffer physical and psychological abuse. Some of the unwilling drug mules are forced to swallow balloons filled with drugs and conceal them in their body, risking serious injury or death.
  - Cartel/Triad
    - CJNG
      - o Act as a tax master and sometimes franchise licensor, taxing all local businesses, without seeking full control across the vertical chain. variety of criminal rackets like drug dealing/trafficking, and prostitution, but also legal sales of substances like tobacco, alcohol, and even tortillas.
      - o Takeover and domination are based on brazen violence
      - o MO is to be more violent than anyone else around. brutality and aggressive expansion are CJNG's signature approach at both the strategic and tactical levels (takeover and forced regular interactions with local communities and big businesses)
      - o Showcase public executions and frequent displays of firepower and weaponry
        - Assault weapons
        - Dramatic videos of weapons and capacity of mass fighters and vehicles seemingly without any opposition by the Mexican government
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- Attacking police stations, burning police vehicles and property, hunting down police in home
    - o Armed drone attacks on police stations, officers, and local communities
    - o Ruling allied local criminal groups
  - Sinaloa
    - o Strategic MO is seeking to take over the entire vertical chain of an economy and industry (legally or illegally)
    - o Much more behind the scenes
  - Sun Yee On
  - 14K
  - Humans
    - Trafficking vs smuggling
      - o Smuggler with ties to ISIS helped smuggle in from Uzbekistan and other countries
    - China/fifth column
      - o 900% increase in Chinese males coming across the border during a time where there were multiple threat indicators such as intense military overflights in Taiwanese airspace and war games around the island
      - o difficult to authorize Chinese to leave the country. CCP allowed and arranged for select Chinese to travel to Central/Latin America and Mexico with plans, maps to make their way into America and make a 'fifth column' presence
      - o undertake cyberattacks and place false information on social media
    - Human trafficking increased in the last fiscal year, arrests rose 50%, convictions soared by 80%. 72% of those trafficked in the US are migrants and most are here illegally
    - Coalition Against Trafficking in Women estimated ~60% of unaccompanied immigrant children are caught by cartels and exploited through child sex trafficking and drug smuggling
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- US Response
    - Non -governmental organizations received 500K lbs of food to be distributed among 17 different NGOs from the Church of the Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah.
    - The Biden administration announced it was giving Temporary Protected Status to an estimated 472K Venezuelans who arrived in late July. The administration also vowed to speed up the time it takes for migrants who are already eligible to work to get authorized.
    - Texas mayor says that the city of El Paso is at its breaking point [when it comes to migration] over 2K migrants come a day putting a strain on resources and overflowing available shelter space
    - Mexico agrees to deport some migrants to help ‘depressurize’ the border with the US
    - US CBP stated the agency’s top official has met with authorities in Mexico to work on ways to better secure border “urged coordination of efforts to diminish surging irregular migration, and continuation of lawful trade and travel while reiterating the need for coordinated engagement to include mirrored patrols with local mexican law enforcement agencies.”
  - Conclusion statement
    - Migration needs to slow down on the southern border in order for cities and ports of entry to be able to process everyone and correctly care for those who come into America. With migrant flows being as numerous as they are, it is difficult for CBP to account for everyone who arrives, who is seeking asylum, who is a criminal or part of a cartel, drug mules (both willing and unwilling), as well as who is trafficked and who is not.
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*“The question shouldn’t be what we ought to do, but what we can do” – Rory Stewart*

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