



A destroyed bridge in Bahkmut, Ukraine. Russian forces have been shelling the city for months, and are closing in on the east.

Race to Seize Two Key Cities In the Donbas

By THOMAS GIBBONS-NEFF and NATALIA YERMAK

UKRAINE REGION, Ukraine The Ukrainian soldier walked to the edge of the river, looked toward the sound of artillery in the distance and cast his fishing rod toward the murky green water below. His perchance on Ukraine's front line was telling: His comrades nearby were winning.

To the southeast, less than 30 miles away, a group of Ukrainian soldiers, rifles slung and helmets donned, moved cautiously to the wreckage of a destroyed bridge in the center of another city — Bahkmut. The high pitched whistles of a Russian artillery sound, followed by a plume of dirt and smoke nearby, sent just as telling a signal: The Russians were pounding away and getting close.

The battle for the critical Donbas region in Ukraine's east is now centered on these two strategically important cities; the fighting is fierce as both armies race to claim new ground before winter sets in.

In the broader war, momentum remains with the Ukrainians, whose sweeping victories in the country's northeast this month exposed ineptitude and glaring weaknesses in the Russian force. But the Donbas, which President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia considers his primary prize, is a different, more entrenched fight.

Ukraine is pushing hard to reclaim Lyman, a railway junction that serves as an important supply hub on the western edge of the Donbas. Russian forces control the city, but Ukraine is hoping to use it as a gateway to push farther east and maintain its momentum.

Bahkmut is an entry point to part of the region still held by Ukrainian forces. Capturing it would also give Russia a win after being routed in humiliating fashion in the north. The Russians have been shelling Bahkmut incessantly for the past three months.

The fight for Bahkmut and Lyman comes down to strategic positioning for both sides. The Ukrainians front lines stagnate in the cold weather. If the cities are under Ukrainian control, Kyiv's forces will be prepared to clear back the territory in the coming months. Under Russian occupation, and with reinforcements, they will help Russia put Donbas's two main

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Cost of Erasing Students' Debt Will Be Steep

\$400 Billion for Biden Plan, Report Says

By KATIE ROGERS and JIM TANKERSLEY

WASHINGTON — President Biden's plan to erase significant amounts of student loan debt for tens of millions of Americans could cost about \$400 billion, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said in a report Monday, making it one of the costliest programs in the president's agenda.

The C.B.O. said the price tag might rise even higher because of Mr. Biden's decision to extend a pause on federal student loan repayments through the end of the year, which could end up costing some \$20 billion. The report gauged the cost over a period of 10 years, though the bulk of the effects to the economy would be felt over the next decade.

Although the office called the figures "uncertain," they are generally in line with those that economists put forth after Mr. Biden announced the program in August. The report is certain to reveal the political debate over student loan forgiveness will increase before the midterm elections. Critics have cast the plan as a costly giveaway that would exacerbate inflation, while the administration argues that it will help millions of low- and middle-income Americans get their footing in a volatile economy.

Mr. Biden's plan cancels \$10,000 in debt for those earning less than \$125,000 per year and \$20,000 for those who had received Pell grants for low-income families. In its report, the C.B.O. said that of its 37 million borrowers with debt, 80 percent of those are eligible could be expected to take advantage of debt forgiveness once it becomes available.

White House officials have suggested that a far smaller share of eligible borrowers are likely to opt into the program than the budget office predicts, which would reduce its cost.

In a joint statement, Senators Chuck Schumer of New York, the majority leader, and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, two Democrats who pressured Mr. Biden to enact the policy, said the C.B.O. estimate makes clear that millions of middle class Americans have more breathing room thanks to President Biden's historic decision to cancel student debt.

Still, critics have accused the Biden administration of hiding the plan's true cost. Marc Goldwyn, the senior vice president for the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, said that the C.B.O. score did not take into account a significant part of

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G.O.P. Redoubles Efforts to Tie Democrats to High Crime Rates

By LISA KIRBY and JONATHAN WEISSMAN

In Pennsylvania, Republicans are attacking John Fetterman, the Democratic Senate incumbent, as "dangerously liberal on crime." Outside Portland, Ore., where years of protests have swayed protesters, and the police have captured national attention, a Republican campaign ad juxtaposes video of James McLeish-Skinner, a Democratic congressional candidate, protesting with footage of rioters and looters. Ms. McLeish-Skinner, an ominous-sounding narrator warns, a "one of them." And in New Mexico, the wife of Mark Rochetti, the Republican nominee for governor, tells in a DART, a speechcraft that launched in November and then reced

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A STRONG DOLLAR WILL INFLICT PAIN IN MANY NATIONS

DRIVING UP INFLATION

Fed Has Little Choice, but Consequences Are Far-Reaching

By PATRICIA COHEN

LONDON — The Federal Reserve's determination to crush inflation by raising interest rates is inflicting profound pain in other countries — pushing up prices, ballooning the size of debt payments and increasing the risk of a deep recession.

Those interest rate increases are putting up the value of the dollar — the go-to currency for much of the world's trade and transactions — and causing economic turmoil in both rich and poor nations. In Britain and across much of the Eurozone continent, the dollar's acceleration is helping feed raging inflation.

For the rest of the world, it's a double-edged sword. The pound touched a record low against the dollar as investors balked at a government tax cut and spending plan. And China, which tightly controls its currency, faced the risk of its lowest level in two years while taking steps to manage its decline.

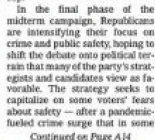
In Nigeria and Somalia, where the risk of starvation already lurks, the strong dollar is pushing up the price of imported food, fuel and medicine. The strong dollar is nudging debt-ridden Argentina, Egypt and Kenya closer to default and threatening to discourage foreign investment in emerging markets like India and South Korea.

"For the rest of the world, it's a no-win situation," said Eswar Prasad, an economics professor at Cornell University and author of a book on currencies. At the same time, he said, the Fed has not been as aggressive to control inflation. "An option could make things potentially even worse."

Policy decisions made in Washington frequently reverberate widely. The United States is a

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WEARINING CURRENCY



CBO: Biden debt relief plan costs \$400 billion

Extending student loan payment pause would add another \$20 billion

By JEFF STEIN and DANIELLE DOUGLAS-GABRIEL

A White House plan to cancel student loan debt for tens of millions of Americans will cost roughly \$400 billion, according to a new estimate by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, increasing federal budget deficits over the next decade and beyond.

The administration's plan to temporarily extend an existing pause on student loan payments would further increase the cost, the CBO found, by roughly \$20 billion.

The new cost estimate will add fresh fuel to the debate about President Biden's decision to cancel up to \$20,000 in student debt for eligible borrowers, a policy cheered by advocates as transformative for the middle class but assailed by Republican lawmakers as a wasteful and inefficient use of government funds.

The CBO estimate does not address a simultaneous move by the White House to lower the amount borrowers can be forced to repay each month on their student loans, from 10 percent of their current income to 5 percent. They had served together near lapses, when it was occupied by Russia, and while Ratsuhnyi had become accustomed to death and loss by this point in Russia's war against Ukraine, his mother could sense this time was different.

"I know my child," she said. "I know what sort of a cry from the heart it was. It was clearly a shock for him."

Seven months after Russia invaded, Ukraine's defense against a larger and better-equipped military has earned admiration at home and abroad. But it has come at a cost: Ukrainians are grieving.

Civilians die every day in Russian shelling and missile attacks, but most casualties are young military men who represented Ukraine's future

Family, friends and country mourn the loss of young soldiers who represented Ukraine's future



PHOTOS BY SERIY MARGARYTA FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

The immense reach of a single death

Family, friends and country mourn the loss of young soldiers who represented Ukraine's future

BY ISABELLE KHURSHUDYAN and SERIY MARGARYTA

THE last time Svitlana Povlyayeva saw her son alive was at a funeral. Roman Ratsuhnyi returned to Kyiv for a few days in May to say goodbye to his friend from the front line, a soldier with the call sign Achilles who had been killed when a Russian tank opened fire. They had served together near Izyum, when it was occupied by Russia, and while Ratsuhnyi had become accustomed to death and loss by this point in Russia's war against Ukraine, his mother could sense this time was different.

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PHOTOS BY SERIY MARGARYTA FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

GOP's election units in question

ARIZONA EFFORT FINDS LITTLE FRAUD

Integrity probes stoke baseless claims, distrust

By BETH REINHARD AND YVONNE WINGETT SANCHEZ

PHOENIX — Republicans across the country have embraced an aggressive tactic this year as they seek to test baseless claims that voter fraud is a serious threat: arming state agencies with more power and resources to investigate election crimes.

Virginia's Republican attorney general earlier this month announced a new election integrity unit staffed with more than 20 attorneys and investigators "to increase transparency and strengthen confidence in our state elections." Georgia legislators recently empowered the statewide police agency to launch election probes. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) last month described the arrests of 20 people for alleged illegal voting as the "opening salvo" of a new election

police force. But a Washington Post examination of an earlier endeavor in Arizona to systematically ferret out voter fraud found it has turned up few cases — and that rather than bolster confidence in elections, the absence of massive fraud has just fueled more bogus theories and distrust.

SEE ELECTIONS ON A1

British pound plunges to record low against dollar

By DAVID J. LUYCK and KARLA ABRAM

Fresh turmoil swept global financial markets Monday, as investors rejected the British government's bet on a risky economic strategy, sending the pound to an all-time low against the surging dollar and prompting the Bank of England to issue an unusual statement of reassurance.

The three major U.S. stock indexes fell, with the Dow Jones industrial average losing more than 1 percent and sinking into a new bear market. So far this year, the Dow has lost more than 20 percent of its value.

Humult in the U.K., by itself, is unlikely to push the weakening British economy into a recession, economists said. But the reaction to events in London reflects the fragility of investor sentiment amid pandemic, war and historic inflation.

"The global economy is very far out of equilibrium. So when you get a shock, the ramifications are

SEE POUND ON A18

THE COVID MONEY TRAIL

Helping a D.C. student on the 'bubble' soar

High school administrator uses federal relief funds to assist promising kids who fell behind

By PERRY STEIN

In September 2021, Milton Laurence called every sophomore at Dunbar High School into a small office, one-by-one, and asked them to read a passage about a monument dedicated to Hiroshima. With half-million dollars in federal pandemic relief aid, the assistant principal of the Northwest Washington school hoped to fund promising students who fell behind — and in the future, use to spend that money in a way that would catch them up.

In stepped Xavier Byrd, a quiet 15-year-old with an unremarkable



Xavier Byrd, a student at Dunbar High School who struggled during the pandemic, meets with teacher Anthony Alish, who is paid overtime with federal covid aid to staff a robotics club.

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