

THE COLUMNS

by pupils; for pupils

HSD's Newsletter: Issue 118



Well I think it's safe to say that it's been a turbulent few weeks in the world recently. It's hard to avoid after all, when there's an impulsive bully at the head of the political table. I'm sure we're all exhausted of seeing some new unbelievable headline on the news everyday, and all of our writers are exhausted of having to edit their articles every 10 seconds due to changed information.

However, ironically, despite our exhaustion we've put together a political edition trying to make sense of the recent events in the world. In lighter news, congratulations to all of those who performed in the jazz soiree, and to the hockey sevens who have been competing in tournaments.

Editors, Megan, Meagan and Roena

NO MORE TRUMP

Jack Mitchell, F3

What is the point? My words when I began to write about President Trump's most recent spat with President Zelensky. Because then that spat became with the country of Ukraine and then with Europe. Recent articles I have written have had to be edited again and again and again. Very rarely have I ever had to do this in the past. And so I gave up. I decided not to write it, because within days - or even hours - the majority of my information would be incorrect.

And so I have decided - with little sorrow - to try to not write about his antics in and out of the White House. From a content point of view, it wasn't easy - there's now not a boring day in the news and won't be for a while - but I have decided to challenge myself to write about something else. Media coverage has been huge on every single thing the man has said, sane or particularly otherwise. Did you know that Israel has blocked humanitarian aid going into Gaza? When was the last time you heard anything about Sudan and its civil war which claimed tens of thousands of lives last year and will likely do the same this year? These are hugely important issues that aren't getting the coverage they deserve because the space and airtime they would occupy in media outlets is taken up by one Donald J Trump.

And so I will not be encouraging this by doing the same; I am challenging myself to keep Donald Trump out of my headlines as far as possible.

POLITICAL SPECTACLE

Charlie Grewar, F5

Last Thursday, Kier Starmer met with president Trump. The meeting was successful. Full of spineless pandering, but successful and the UK will be exempt from US tariffs among other things.

On Friday, Volodymyr Zelensky met with president Trump with the intention of signing a deal to allow the US access to Ukraine's mineral deposits. I'm sure many of us know just how badly it went. After a heated exchange the Ukrainian president was asked to leave the Whitehouse and the deal was not signed. Now the USA's military support for Ukraine has been suspended. How did it come to this?

Well two weeks ago there was a significant war of words between Trump and Zelensky, with the US president calling the latter a dictator, and the Ukrainian president saying Trump was living in a disinformation space, but this had largely been washed over by the time of Friday last week.

The trouble really started at the press conference in the Oval Office, where vice president JD Vance made some abrasive statements about Zelensky being 'disrespectful' before pivoting to Ukraine having 'problems' getting people to fight, and there was something about propaganda tours (that's rich coming from the Trump administration). Zelensky replied that, yes Ukraine has had problems in the war, but said that all countries would feel problems in wartime, even the United States, even with the ocean protecting them. This seems to have struck a nerve with Trump, who I've noticed has a habit of taking national matters a little too personally. He angrily responded that Zelensky did not get to tell them how they were going to feel.

A problem that needs to be at least considered is the language barrier. Zelensky speaks English well, but it's not his first, or even second language, something Trump and Vance seemed not to have thought about in the debate. The two men spoke angrily and quickly, often changing topic halfway through a sentence. All the while Zelensky sat patiently, vainly trying to get a word in edge ways. The art of diplomacy is a fine one. Trump has a book called the art of the deal, which I've been reliably informed is a good guide of how not to negotiate as it centres on bullying your rival into giving in. Diplomacy died in the Oval Office on Friday and the whole world was watching. Trump has now said that Zelensky doesn't want peace and that America won't 'put up with it for much longer'.

Kier Starmer has said that British troops could be deployed as peacekeepers if there is a deal and that mineral guarantees are not enough of a security guarantee. And on Monday the commons was united in its support for Ukraine. The difference between the UK and USA (though there are many) is that the government can change and foreign policy can largely stay the same.

Elon Musk, the arsehole of the hour, agreed on social media that it was time for the US to leave NATO. As Lib Dem leader Ed Davey said, the USA has abandoned its democratic allies for tyrants such as Putin. The American leadership has increasingly showed that it has little grasp on reality, from accusing Europe of threatening free speech, to saying that Ukraine started the war.

Now the USA has suspended its military support for Ukraine, which made up 49% of its foreign support. Somewhere Putin is laughing like a hyena. Vance accusing Zelensky of having a 'sense of entitlement'. Because you know, it's so unreasonable to want help when your under attack from one of the military powers of the world.

The thing that Trump doesn't seem to understand is that Ukraine is the victim. Russia is the clear aggressor. Zelensky is calling for help. Now that he has withdrawn his support, Ukraine is unlikely to win this war. Did people blame Poland for its invasion by the Nazi's? No. Zelensky has also been accused of not being ready for peace. I think he wants peace. I think he wants Russia out of his country. It's not unreasonable to want assurances that they won't invade again. This does not seem to be what Trump thinks. The minerals deal was always going to screw over Ukraine, whether it was financially or militaristically. Zelensky probably wanted the security guarantees because he didn't think that having America mining in his nation was enough to secure the peace. And what happened when they left? America had made it clear that it is only concerned for its own interests and no one else. If they think partnering with Russia will help them, they will.

But the fact is that Ukraine can no longer rely on the USA for support. And the nations of Europe will have to step up to ensure that Ukraine can continue to make a fight of it. A victory for Russia in this war would be catastrophic, but the USA can no longer see that. No wonder Trump was so offended when Zelensky said they would feel the effects of the war. He thinks their isolated from the world just because there's a couple of oceans in the way. America is not isolated but Trump acts like it is.

It's hard to fathom that Donald Trump has been in office for just over a month. One down, 47 to go. Its been a busy first month for the president, insulting Europe, threatening his allies, making claims on land America has no business getting involved in, discarding his friends and cosyng up to his enemies, all the while his patsy Elon Musk is busy behind the scenes making endlessly brutal cuts to government spending with his 'department of government efficiency,' and now this.

There are many words I could use to describe Trump, most of which are unprintable.

In one month, Trumps presidency has changed the state of the world. It's a brave new world out there, one where America seems to come first. And I don't like it.

Presidents Day: Fun Facts



Maisey Lafollette, F4

America, they celebrate their Presidents on the 17th of February, because it was George Washington's Birthday, and he was the first President. As it was recently President's Day, and there isn't much to celebrate or any facts that can be labeled has fun about the current one, here are ten facts about previous Presidents.

1. The White House wasn't originally called the White House, it wasn't given the name until 1901, when President Roosevelt took office. The White House was originally called the President's Palace or the Executive Mansion.
2. President Gerald Ford was a model who worked for the Harry Conover agency until 1941.
3. President Lincoln, was a bartender and wrestler before he became President.
4. President Bill Clinton went to Oxford University, where he played rugby.
5. President Eisenhower who was a five star general, went to West Point Academy where he was a cheerleader.
6. President Grant made the first National Park which was Yellowstone.
7. President Buchanan was the only President to be a Bachelor.
8. President Hoover allowed his son to own pet alligators while they lived in the White House.
9. Nixon loved bowling and during his Presidency he installed a one lane alley.
10. During the American Revolutionary War, President Washington created the Culper Ring, which was a group of spies who helped the Americans win the war. Many believe the Culper Ring was what inspired the modern FBI.

Master and Commander: Movie Review

Alastair Forbes, F1

Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World is an exciting and well-made historical adventure film set during the Napoleonic Wars. It follows Captain Jack Aubrey (played by Russell Crowe) and his ship, the HMS Surprise, as they pursue a powerful and fast French warship. Throughout the journey, the crew faces intense battles, dangerous storms, and difficult decisions, making for a thrilling and engaging story.

One of the film's greatest strengths is its action. The naval battles are incredibly well-shot and realistic, with cannons firing, ships being damaged, and the crew working hard under pressure. These scenes are intense and exciting, keeping you on the edge of your seat. At the same time, the movie takes time to show the quieter, more thoughtful moments between battles – like the friendship between Captain Aubrey and Dr. Maturin, the ship's doctor. Their discussions about leadership, science, and duty add depth to the story and show different sides of life at sea.

My favourite characters are the midshipmen. These are teen boys (some around my age) who lead the firing squadrons. I find it inspiring that such young people have such an important role on the ship.

The attention to detail in this movie is impressive. The ship feels like a real, living place, and the costumes and special effects make everything look authentic. The music, especially the violin pieces played by the captain and doctor, adds a unique and emotional touch to the film.

While the movie is mostly exciting, there are some (as my dad would call it) 'slower' moments focused on strategy and exploration. However, these scenes help build tension and show the challenges of command. The ending leaves some questions unanswered, but it also keeps you thinking about the story long after the movie is over.

Overall, Master and Commander is a fantastic film with great action, strong characters, and (another father phrase) a realistic look at life on a ship'. I'd definitely recommend it to anyone who enjoys adventure, history, and stories of bravery and friendship. I'd rate it 9 out of 10

THE ROAD TO PEACE IN UKRAINE: THE BACKGROUND ON PEACE TALKS

Jack Mitchell, F3

We've all heard a great deal more about Ukraine than we ever thought we would in the past three years after its invasion by Russia, and now it has continued to dominate the headlines across the West, but now for a different reason: the potential for peace.

However, the mood certainly seems more downbeat than we might have thought. Negotiations for an end to fighting should surely be a cause for celebration and optimism, not anxiety and concern for the future. But the latter is how it seems to have turned out. We have seen seemingly better relations with Russia from the United States, and a turn on Europe in an unexpected twist.

Even as I write this, more and more articles are popping up, talking about what someone has said or announcements from the peace process, so my facts may be a little off by the publishing date. That shows in itself how much faster things are now happening in regards to Ukraine than in years gone by. We've seen, after nearly three years of nonstop fighting, a huge number of recent developments in the Russo-Ukrainian War. Most of us will remember President Trump's outlandish claim on the campaign trail that he would stop the war in just 24 hours, and although he hasn't done that, he has certainly pushed it on for better or worse.

The United States has decided to initiate peace talks with its former – and supposed current – enemy Russia, on behalf of its ally which it has been militarily supporting for years, behind its back and without any contribution from any European power. Not one. Take a moment to read that over and take in what that means. The leader of the free world decided to speak not with any of his country's best and longstanding allies, but with the authoritarian dictator of his country's long-time enemy Russia.

A lot of Trump's reasoning has to do with low defence spending among the European nations, something he has bemoaned for a long time both in and out of office.

However, his unprecedented actions have prompted European leaders to come together. President Macron of France called together the leaders of the UK, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy, – surprisingly, as Prime Minister Meloni has been one of Trump’s few best friends in politics and was among a handful of world leaders invited to his inauguration – Poland, Denmark and the Netherlands, as well as the Secretary General of NATO Mark Rutte and the Presidents of the European Council and Commission António Costa and Ursula von der Leyen to address the challenges facing Ukraine and discuss measures to help the war-torn country.

It was a perhaps unexpected show of defiance to the United States as the leaders of. In the meeting, leaders including British PM Sir Keir Starmer brought up the need for increased military spending and aid to Ukraine. As well as this, he has recently expressed that he would be happy to serve as the link between the United States and Europe during this difficult time.

European relations with the United States that had been strained already were made downright fractured following Vice President JD Vance’s surprise ideological attack on Europe last Friday in his speech at the Munich Security Conference that could have been an opportunity to heal relations. His odd political attack that included his concerns about free speech and migration across the continent instead of defence, which the conference was supposed to address, was filled with simply untrue statements and generalisations about countries from Scotland and Sweden to Germany and Romania. To add to this, his boss President Trump said that Ukraine was to blame for its invasion. Ukraine. Not Russia. To add to the rubbish he’d said only a day before, Trump on Wednesday called Volodymyr Zelensky a dictator. As well as this, the leader of the free world also said that there should be an election in Ukraine, which so far hasn’t taken place due to the martial law imposed on the country. Many have expressed concerns that a pro-Putin candidate would become president of Ukraine as part of a peace plan that so far is favouring Russia.

At this vital moment for Ukraine, we can only look at the tensions of political leaders from not just Russia and Ukraine, but also the United States and Europe, and whether ideological differences prove even more divisive than they seem to have already. When the language used by your ally about you sounds like how they used to talk about your enemy, are they really your ally anymore?

PROBLEM OF THE WEEK

Haoqi Liu, F3

The problem of the week has now moved to its own Firefly page, which can be found at <https://hsd.fireflycloud.net/senior-years/potw> or by scanning the QR code. The firefly page could have more information depending on the problem!

How many four-digit numbers have all three of the following properties?

- **The ones digit is 9.**
- **The number is 1 less than a square number.**
- **The number is the product of exactly two prime numbers.**

As always, email solutions to me at liuH@highschoolofdundee.org.uk



Have a
good
weekend.

The Columns
Team