

BEYOND A GAME
THE N.B.A. PLAYER
VS. A PRESIDENT

PAGE 12 | SPORTS

'CHOIR BOY'
DISCOVERING HIS
STRENGTH IN SONG

PAGE 34 | CULTURE



AUSTRALIAN OPEN PREVIEW
IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT
RAW POWER ANYMORE

PAGE 6 | SPECIAL REPORT

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How Israel secures its tense border



Bret Stephens

OPINION

ON THE ISRAELI-LEBANON BORDER: Other than the Hamas-Palestinian Doha, there's probably no border in the world as fraught with the potential for war as the 100-mile-long, 100-year-old Blue Line. Since 2000, Israel has built a border security system in the form of a concrete wall, topped with razor wire, and a 100-foot-deep trench. It's a security system that's been built in a very short time.

What I can't see while traveling along the Blue Line wall is a fence. A fence is added with sensors in the sand, but to no great effect.

For the last 10 years, it was all the fencing Israel's thought was necessary

to secure the side of the Blue Line. That started to change in December, after Israel announced that it was conducting an operation to destroy Hamas

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An industrial complex in Uganda run by Daqing, a Chinese hydropower and mining company. Loans from Chinese state banks have financed a boom in such sites across Africa.

A new era as U.S. pulls away from Middle East

BY RUFUS LEBRON

Regional stagnation, Russia and Iran are stepping in to fill the void

BY BENJAMIN SVETKEY

When Turkey, Iran and Russia meet to talk about the end of the war in Syria, they do so without the United States. There's talk in Syria of the Assad-Putin deal, but it's been years since the United States has had any say in the region. And now, despite decades of American intervention, the region is still a mess. The United States is not in a position to help Syria.

The withdrawal of the military and heavy equipment occurred on Friday, in just the latest evidence of a broader American disengagement from the Middle East that could have lasting effects on one of the world's most volatile regions.

As the United States steps back, Russia, Iran and regional powers are increasingly stepping in to fill the region's vacuum.

"It is not correct," said Richard D. Klausner, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, "to think that the United States is withdrawing from the Middle East."

Inspired volumes

Collectors, a biography and a graphic novel

BY NAZANIN LANKARANI

Watches inspired four volumes published in recent months: Two offer looks at real or ideal collections, one tells the story of a watchmaking legend and the fourth applies the illustrated genre to timepieces.

"Rolex: The Impossible Collection," by Fabienne Reybaud
Assouline, 194 pages, \$845

Tackling the subject of Rolex for Assouline's "Impossible Collection" series posed a twofold challenge for Fabienne Reybaud, editor of watches and jewelry at the French daily *Le Figaro*. Rolex would not collaborate, and none of the owners wanted to be identified. Still, Ms. Reybaud succeeded in tracking 87 Rolexes that she considered rare enough for the book.

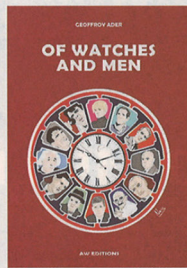
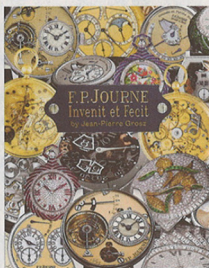
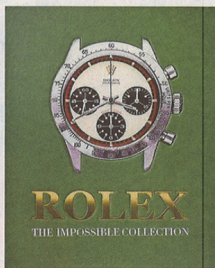
It makes clear that all the timepieces are objects of desire, although all are not created equal. On the cover, for example, is the most coveted of all Rolexes: the Cosmograph Daytona Ref. 6239, also known as "Paul Newman's Paul Newman." This watch made headlines in 2017 when it sold at auction for \$17.8 million. The buyer's identity remains a well-guarded secret — and for those who may wonder whether Ms. Reybaud uncovered that information, the cover image was provided by Phillips, the house that handled the auction.

"The ultimate fantasy of any Rolex collector," Ms. Reybaud said in an interview, is the Ref. 413 Split Seconds Chronograph, which features the first complication ever created by Rolex. Of the 12 pieces that were made, the locations of only eight are known; in 2016, Phillips sold one at auction for 2.4 million Swiss francs.

"Another rare and wonderful model is the 'Pan Am' GMT-Master commissioned by the airline," Ms. Reybaud said. (The watch's bicolor bezel, in red and blue, earned it the nickname "Pepsi-Cola.") A new GMT-Master II, also featured in the book, was introduced last year.

The book also touches on a lesser-known chapter in Rolex history: Its experiment with quartz technology in the shape of the Datejust Oysterquartz Ref. 17000, proof, according to Ms. Reybaud, that Rolex has been both an industry leader and a follower.

"My Time," by Sandro Fratini, co-edited by Christie's
FAM Publishing, 688 pages; there are four versions of the limited-edition book, priced from \$750 to \$1,600
"My Time" highlights 650 timepieces



from the collection of Sandro Fratini, an Italian watch fan whose family founded the Rifle jeans brand in 1953. The book's photographs show the watches against blue denim backgrounds, a tribute to Mr. Fratini's family enterprise. The text is in Italian and English.

"My story is a love story of watches," Mr. Fratini said during an interview in Geneva. "I love the harmony they have inside; they have a soul." He fell in love with watches at the age of 8, when his father gave him a steel Longines wristwatch for his First Communion. At 20, he started buying. Today, in his 60s, Mr. Fratini owns more than 2,000 exceptional timepieces, mostly by Rolex, Patek Philippe, Cartier and Audemars

Piguet.

"When I started buying 40 years ago, it was easier to find interesting watches," Mr. Fratini said. "I looked for them around the world and I always caught them."

On the cover is a Patek Philippe World Time Ref. 1415HU, a very few of which were made between 1939 and 1954. Mr. Fratini also owns not one but two of the Rolex Ref. 413 Split Seconds.

His favorite, however, is a stainless steel Patek Philippe Ref. 1518, a watch introduced in 1941 and the world's first perpetual calendar with chronograph. That reference has fetched over \$10 million in auction. Mr. Fratini says he owns two.

made it," is the house's motto.) Few probably know that Mr. Journe, who was born in Marseille, France, in 1957, was an unruly teenager who struggled in school. Showing promise at watchmaking school, Mr. Journe honed his skills by restoring antique clocks in his uncle's Paris atelier. He produced his first handcrafted tourbillon pocket watch in 1982, and broke out on his own in 1985.

"Success is not easy even when you have talent," he said. "You need both luck and wisdom to make the right decision at life's crossroads."

Jean-Pierre Grosz, a longtime friend of Mr. Journe's, includes engaging sections about Mr. Journe's fascination with the 18th-century master clockmaker Antide Janvier; relationship with the British horologist George Daniels and long-time collaboration with the watch specialist Jean-Claude Sabrier, whose own extensive horological library is kept at Mr. Journe's atelier.

"Of Watches and Men," by Geoffroy Ader and illustrated by Neils
AW Editions, 71 pages (in French); English version to be published in March, 20 euros (\$22)

In this book, the watch expert and auctioneer Geoffroy Ader traces important episodes in the lives of 12 influential figures of the 20th century through the watches that they owned and loved. (A sequel, dedicated to famous women and their watches, is planned.)

The illustrations, which add a comic-book dimension to the narrative, are the work of Ines Ader, Mr. Ader's wife, known professionally as Neils.

Mr. Ader himself has brought the hammer down on a few historical timepieces, including the gold Rolex Datejust that Hans Wilsdorf, the founder of Rolex, gave to Konrad Adenauer, the first chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany after World War II. "It was only natural that I would want to tell the story of historical watches," Mr. Ader said.

They include the Rolex Oyster Perpetual that Sir Edmund Hillary wore during his 1953 ascent of Mount Everest, the extra-thin Omega that John F. Kennedy had at his presidential inauguration and the Omega Speedmaster that landed on the moon in 1969 with Buzz Aldrin. There also is the story of Mahatma Gandhi's beloved Zenith pocket watch, a gift from Indra Nehru, that was stolen shortly before India's independence but returned by the remorseful thief several months later.

"This is a simple book, but you will learn a lot of things," Mr. Ader said.

Time to read
Clockwise from top left, "My Time," which shows watches against blue denim backgrounds; the illustrated "Of Watches and Men"; "François-Paul Journe, Invent et Fecit," a biography; and "Rolex: The Impossible Collection," the story of 87 rare watches.