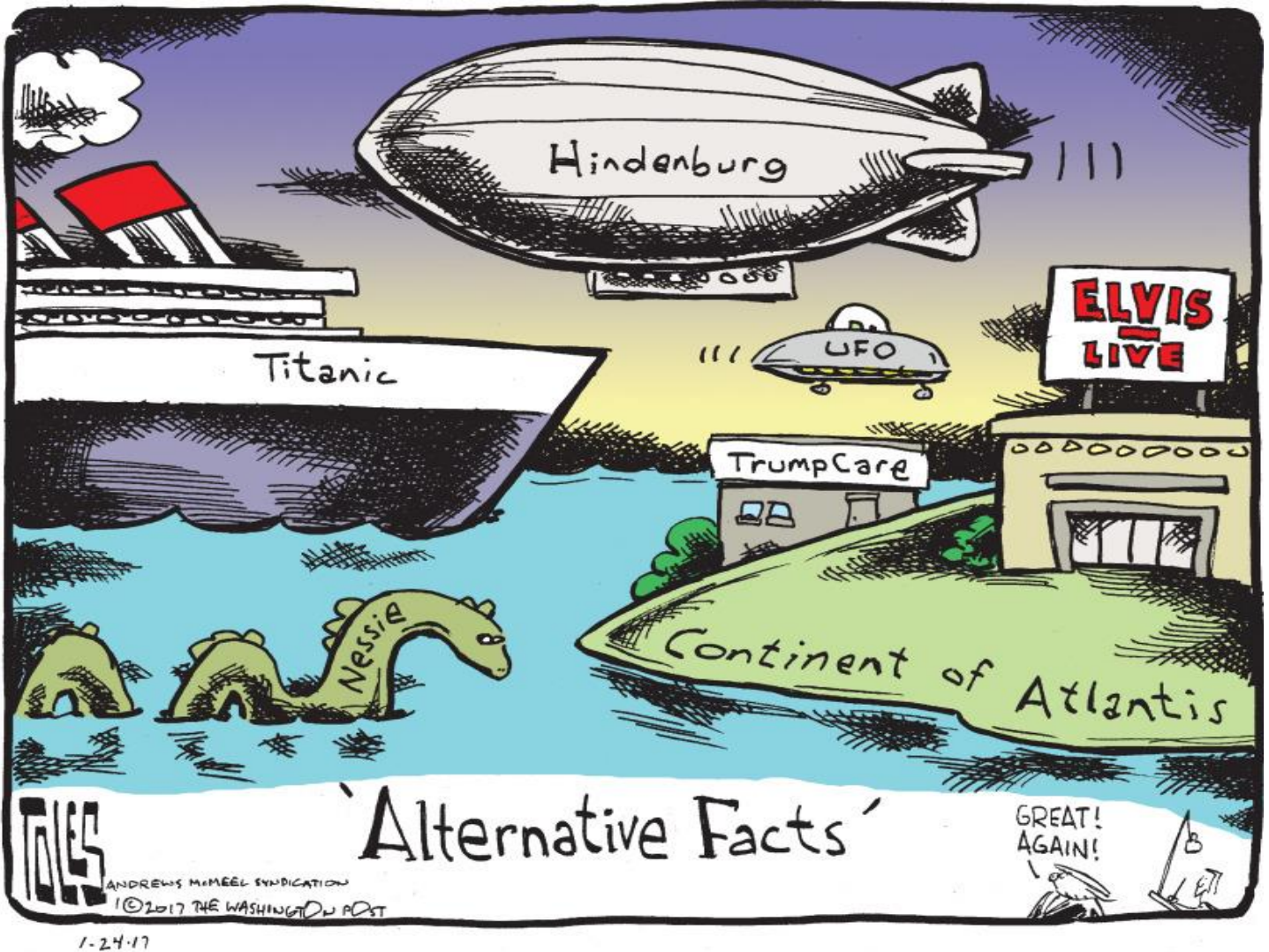


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FRANCE – EUROPE



French Candidate Fillon Faces Questions Over Wife's Work

ABC News

French presidential hopeful Francois Fillon's so far smooth campaign hit its first hurdle Wednesday after claims emerged that his wife was paid about 500,000 euros (more than \$535,000) with parliamentary funds.

Le Canard Enchaîné newspaper reported that Penelope Fillon earned the money over eight years as a parliamentary aide to her husband during his tenure as a lawmaker.

According to the weekly gazette, which said it had access to Penelope Fillon's pay slips, the candidate's wife was paid by her husband from 1998-2002 when he was lawmaker serving his native Sarthe region.

When Fillon was handed a minister position in 2002 under Jacques Chirac's presidency, Penelope Fillon became an assistant to Marc Joulaud, who replaced her husband at the French parliament. Le Canard Enchaîné said her wages went up during that period, earning between 6,900 and 7,900 euros a month before tax.

The newspaper claims that she was reemployed by her husband for at least six months in 2012 after Francois Fillon was elected Paris legislator.

It's not illegal for French legislators to hire their relatives as long as they are genuinely employed. Fillon, who has been championing transparency in his campaign, denied any wrongdoing.

Fillon, a former prime minister, has been designated as the conservative presidential nominee. Opinion polls suggest that he and far-right leader Marine Le Pen will advance to the second round of the election later this year.

During a trip to the southwestern city of Bordeaux, the conservative candidate hit back at the report, slamming the newspaper for what he perceives as a misogynistic approach.

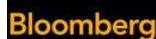
"I can see they are opening fire with stink balls," Fillon said. "I won't make any comment because there is nothing to comment on. But I'm outraged by the contempt and the misogyny in this story. Just because she is my wife she should not be entitled to work? Could you imagine a politician saying, as this story did,

that the only thing a woman can do is making jam? All the feminists would scream."

Fillon's spokesman Philippe Vigier earlier insisted that Penelope Fillon's work wasn't fictional.

Benoit Hamon, who is likely to win the Socialists' primary and to face Fillon in the presidential race, proposed that close relatives of politicians should not be hired and paid in parliamentary funds in the future.

"Lawmakers should not be allowed to hire their children, cousins, relatives or wives anymore," Hamon said in an interview with French public TV.



Valls's Last Chance to Stop Rebel Threat to His French Campaign

25 janvier 2017 à 00:00 UTC-5

- Former premier to attack Hamon plan for universal income
- Polls show Socialist nominee faces first-round elimination

Former Prime Minister Manuel Valls has one last chance to save his French presidential bid on Wednesday night when he tackles the party dissident set to claim the Socialist nomination in a televised debate.

Valls intends to hammer away at 49-year-old Benoit Hamon's proposal for a universal basic income as he seeks to turn around a five-point deficit in Sunday's run-off for the nomination. Hamon resigned from Valls's government in 2014, claiming it had abandoned Socialist principles. Valls, 54, used an interview with France Info radio Tuesday to paint his rival's platform as too leftist and unrealistic.

"Voters have a clear choice between two concepts of society, between a culture of work and credible

government finances, or a society that wants to abandon the dignity of work, a society of taxes and debts," Valls said.

Hamon took 36 percent of the vote in the first round last Sunday, with Valls second on 31 percent. Hamon was further strengthened by the endorsement of third-placed Arnaud Montebourg, who took 19 percent.

"Valls faces a very hard challenge," Bruno Cautres, a professor at Sciences Po Institute in Paris, said in an interview. "The momentum is clearly with Hamon."

Socialist Decline

Whoever wins is unlikely to be France's next president. Polls suggest the Socialist candidate will finish a distant fourth or fifth in the first round of the presidential election on April 23, with nationalist Marine Le Pen and Francois Fillon from the center-right Republicans going through to the May 7 runoff.

Valls would take 10 percent in the first round, according to an Ipsos Sopra Steria poll. Hamon would garner just 7 percent as more moderate Socialist voters defect to

independent Emmanuel Macron. Only 1.6 million voted in the Socialist primary, compared with 4 million in the Republicans' primary. Supporters were turned off by the record unpopularity of President Francois Hollande, who announced late last year that he wouldn't seek re-election.

Hamon's signature initiative is a basic income of 750 euros (\$800) a month for all citizens, which he says will help alleviate poverty and make up for a shortage of work as the economy progressively automates. His first-round victory elevated the idea from academic debate to make it a major issue in the French presidential campaign. It is already being tested in some limited areas of Canada and Finland.

Hamon says he would introduce the policy gradually, though he's been less clear on how to finance it -- one proposal is taxing robots used in factories.

A study by OFCE, an economics research unit linked to Sciences Po, said the measure would cost a net 480 billion euros a year, after

accounting for various existing welfare payments it would replace. That's equal to 22 percent of gross domestic product, in a country where taxes already account for 45 percent of economic output. Among 35 rich countries tracked by the OECD, only Denmark has a higher tax take.

"There is a certainly a rationale for replacing existing unemployment and poverty programs with one simple payment, but the big question is how is it financed," said Zsolt Darvas, a senior fellow at Bruegel, a Brussels-based research institute. "The taxes that would be required are just not feasible."

Divided Party

Hamon has also called for banning diesel cars and decriminalizing cannabis, and has been more accommodating than Valls about accepting pious Muslim practices. Valls's campaign has focused more on law and order, middle-class tax cuts, and controlling the government's budget deficit.

The two men don't get on. In his interview on Tuesday, Valls wouldn't even commit to endorsing Hamon

should he win, despite that being a condition of taking part in the primary. Hamon's campaign director Mathieu Hanotin said at press conference Tuesday that he'll endorse Valls should the former

premier pull off a comeback.

Some major Socialist figures are backing Macron, another former Socialist minister who quit the government last year to mount his

own run for president. Others are expected to follow.

Hollande didn't watch the final debate before the first round, going to the theater instead, and he wasn't

in France for the result, due to an official trip to Colombia and Chile.

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ABC News

The real winner of France's left-wing presidential primary may be a man who demonstrably shunned it: Emmanuel Macron.

The 39-year-old former investment banker and ex-economy minister with pro-free market, pro-European views has chosen not to take part in the Socialist primary. Instead, in recent days he has been drawing attention away from the campaign by traveling to the Mideast and pushing like-minded lawmakers to abandon the once-powerful, now-troubled Socialists and join his centrist movement.

Voters will choose Sunday between ex-Socialist prime minister Manuel Valls and Benoit Hamon, an ex-government member and hard-left candidate.

Whoever the winner is, polls show election prospects remain poor for the Socialist nominee in the April-May presidential race.

Meanwhile, Macron is ranked the third most popular choice for president, just behind the two top contenders, far-right leader Marine

Le Pen and conservative candidate Francois Fillon.

Macron announced his movement "In Motion" (En Marche) will present one contender in every electoral district for the parliamentary elections in June. He issued a call for candidates, saying applications will be examined "quickly" on a first come, first served basis.

This move puts pressure on lawmakers, especially those on the center-left who would like to be associated with Macron's popularity — which now appears to be much higher than the Socialist party's.

Meanwhile, Macron is also seeking to boost his international stature.

In Lebanon this week, he discussed the Syrian conflict, terrorism and refugee issues with the country's highest authorities.

"Today one cannot be a French official, one cannot pretend to take a role in the Republic, without being aware of the diplomatic and military situations which are part of our world", Macron said in Beirut.

Earlier this month, he visited Germany where he addressed a conference on the European Union in English — a language he can

Macron speak fluently, a rare trait among French politicians.

He also visited the United States in December and met with Antonio Guterres before he became Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Macron may also benefit from the Socialist party's deep divisions inherited from French President Francois Hollande's unpopular, troubled term.

If Hamon wins the Socialist nomination on Sunday over the more center-leaning candidate, former prime minister Valls, voters with moderate views could choose to support Macron in the presidential race.

Lawmaker Richard Ferrand, a Socialist who joined "In Motion" last year, said both Socialist finalists "will not be able to reconcile and create a dynamic. That's why we say for a long time people with progressive ideas must gather around Emmanuel Macron".

Macron is a former investment banker with Rothschild. He became President Francois Hollande's economic adviser at the Elysee palace in 2012 and two years later, economy minister.

He passed pro-business measures that have been criticized by many on the left, saying they undermined France's famous workplace protections.

He left the government last year after he launched his own political movement. He was never a member of the Socialist Party, and has never held an elected office.

As a presidential candidate, he suggests loosening some of France's stringent labor rules — especially the 35-hour workweek — to boost job hiring. Younger workers could do more hours than older ones, he said.

Sylvie Marchal, 37, a member of Macron's movement, used to vote for a right-wing candidate in previous elections.

She praised the "youthful, credible" candidate and a "realistic speech" enriched by his experience both in a private company and in government.

"The fact that he is placing himself outside the (political) parties is attracting many people, because we see a limit to the two-party system" alternating between a traditional left and a radical right, Marchal told the AP. "We feel like he's trying to pick up on good ideas from both sides."

The New York Times Will France Sound the Death Knell for Social Democracy? (online)

James Angelos

One afternoon in September, Franck Sailliot marched through the northern French city of Lille alongside a couple of thousand leftist trade unionists and students. The marchers waved union flags, blew whistles, bellowed slogans. "Enough, enough, enough of this society, where there's only unemployment and insecurity!" they yelled. "We don't want the law of the bosses! The only solution is to revoke it!" Sailliot, a 48-year-old trade unionist who had worked much of his adult life in a paper mill in a town about an hour's drive to the east, shuffled along, mostly silent, his hands in his pockets. As the demonstrators made their way through Lille's town center, passing the ornate 17th-century stock exchange, they shouted, "Fire the stockholders!" and "Everything they have, they stole it!" One man wielded a bloodied, severed mannequin head and waved a French flag emblazoned with the

silhouette of Robespierre, who presided over the Reign of Terror. It was a revolution of sorts, but Sailliot seemed a bit bored. The French left has long protested the encroachment of an unbridled free market, and despite some victories in halting its progress, the overall trend was one of demoralizing defeat. Sailliot debated peeling off from the crowd early and grabbing a beer.

He might have been forgiven for betraying a degree of protest fatigue. For seven months, he had participated, off and on, in a wave of large and angry antigovernment demonstrations that transfixed the country and at times paralyzed it. Chief among the objects of the protesters' ire was a labor law, conceived by President François Hollande's Socialist government, designed to loosen the country's impossibly dense network of job protections. The law lacked support in the French Legislature, so in July, Hollande's prime minister invoked

special constitutional powers to push it through without a vote. From the point of view of French leftists like Sailliot, this was the latest in a series of betrayals by an ostensibly left-wing government that backed one nonleftist measure after another. Hollande and his ministers were acting under immense pressure to improve the country's sluggish growth and chronically high unemployment, which now hovers at 9.5 percent (25.9 percent for people under 25). Everyone from the International Monetary Fund to the European Commission was urging Hollande to undertake a program of economic liberalization in order to remedy the problem. The argument for the labor law was the essence of free-market orthodoxy: If companies could more easily lay off workers in bad times, they would be more willing to hire them in good times.

The argument was unconvincing to many in Pas-de-Calais, the rural and industrial area in the northernmost tip of France, where Sailliot lives. In

the 1970s, France, like other industrialized countries, began a shift away from manufacturing to a services-based economy, and within a few decades, Pas-de-Calais came to epitomize industrial decline. It is now France's rust belt and coal country all in one. The working-class voters of Pas-de-Calais have long supported France's Socialists along with the French Communist Party. But as in the United States, where Rust Belt voters no longer embrace the Democratic Party, these workers have increasingly lost faith in the parties of the left.

Sailliot's union, the General Confederation of Labor, or the C.G.T., was among the most strident opponents of the new labor law. The C.G.T., formerly linked to the Communist Party, is one of the oldest and largest trade unions in France. Though its membership and stature, like those of other French unions, have declined considerably from their post-World War II height, the C.G.T. remains unmatched in its

ability to mobilize workers. And many of its members retain a far-left ideology and preference for militant tactics. After a draft of the labor law leaked last February, the C.G.T. demanded that it be scrapped and recommended alternative policies: Reduce the French workweek to 32 hours (from the current 35) and give workers raises.

The Socialist government tried to appease the C.G.T. and other unions by watering down the original draft of the law, but opposition to it remained fierce. The face-off ignited one of the most sustained and impassioned protest movements in France since the May 1968 demonstrations that nearly brought down the Fifth Republic a decade into its existence. Marches in Paris and cities across the country drew hundreds of thousands of protesters and often culminated in tear-gas-laden street battles between truncheon-swinging riot officers and anarchist groups. Nuit Debout, a French version of Occupy Wall Street, drew large gatherings of young people to nighttime meetings in the Place de la République in Paris. C.G.T. activists blocked highway lanes and oil refineries, creating fuel shortages. Labor strikes halted train travel and cut output at nuclear-power plants.

Sailliot had another reason to protest. The paper mill in Pas-de-Calais where he worked for three decades shut down in 2015, because of what the company called an “accelerating deterioration in market conditions for printing and writing papers.” Sailliot was still technically employed there — he was a C.G.T. delegate, he explained, so legally it was harder to lay him off — but it was an unsettling feeling, he said, to think he’d have to find a new industry to work in. He blamed the Socialist government. His resentment was aggravated by the fact that he voted for Hollande in the French presidential election of 2012, enticed by his leftist pre-election rhetoric. These new Socialist laws, Sailliot said, were even worse than what the right was proposing; as for Hollande personally, Sailliot raised his hand in a gesture, not uncommon among Frenchmen, to indicate his testicles’ springing up to his neck in anger. “He’s a traitor.”

All around his home and workplace in Pas-de-Calais, Sailliot told me, the far-right, anti-immigration National Front was filling the political void that working-class discontent had created. With national elections looming, the party depicted itself as the new defender of the French worker; as part of that effort, its leader, Marine Le Pen, joined France’s hard leftists in condemning the labor law as “social regression”

— the same term of disparagement used by trade-union leaders and the Communist Party. Le Pen’s economic rhetoric, in fact, is often hard to differentiate from positions normally held by the far left. She rails against free-trade agreements and “social dumping” — the practice of domestically hiring foreigners for lower wages than citizens earn — and her party has vowed to reindustrialize France and protect social benefits. The French newsmagazine *Le Point* reported that Hollande, when asked to explain the growing popularity of the National Front, often relays a story a former head of the C.G.T. told him: When the union leader read a National Front leaflet to his fellow union members without telling them what party it was from, the union members all approved of the message.

Sailliot, a committed Communist, referred to the National Front’s leaders as “impostors” — a word that C.G.T. leaders use when describing the party’s effort to appeal to their rank and file — and dismissed the notion that the far-right party, if elevated to power, would keep its leftist-sounding promises. But he could not deny the political effectiveness of the message. Among his disaffected colleagues, neighbors, even within his own family, the National Front was increasingly popular, he told me. Laid-off workers saw that mainstream parties hadn’t done anything for them, he said, “so they vote for Le Pen.”

In two rounds of voting this April and May, France will elect a new president to succeed Hollande. According to polls, as of this writing, Le Pen remains a viable contender. Her success — in the coming election and beyond — hinges in no small part on her party’s effort to supplant the left in places like Pas-de-Calais, and to make the National Front the new voice of France’s working class.

The 2008 financial crisis, which began in the United States but quickly spread to Europe with more enduring, destructive consequences, should in theory have been a boon to the global left. The vast scope of the collapse, after all, illustrated that free markets are far from unfailingly efficient. Governments across Europe stepped in to rescue banks, to save capitalism from itself. Both the origins of the crisis and the activism of the state in addressing it seemed to justify the social-democratic model that European nations traditionally championed: government intervention to tame the excesses of capitalism and harness its productive capacity for the greater good.

Recently, though, European social democrats have witnessed an extraordinary drop in support. In 2009, the Social Democratic Party of Germany suffered its worst election defeat in post-World War II history. In the British general election one year later, the Labour Party received its second-lowest share of the vote since 1918, the year that voting restrictions on women and non-property-owning men were relaxed. Even in Scandinavian countries — often cited as the apotheosis of social democracy — center-left parties are struggling. A recent analysis in *The Economist* showed that across Western Europe, support for social-democratic parties is at its lowest point in 70 years.

Franck Sailliot Credit Christopher Anderson/Magnum, for *The New York Times*

France appeared to be something of a holdout. Hollande’s ascension to the presidency in 2012 was seen as a rare bit of good news. Before his election, Hollande tapped into the sense of grievance on the left, declaring his “true enemy” to be the “world of finance,” calling himself the “candidate of justice” and vowing to impose a 75 percent tax on earnings over one million euros (a measure later enacted but allowed to expire in 2014). Hollande also declared his opposition to German-backed austerity policies applied in response to the eurozone debt crisis. But only months into his presidency, he began to anger the far left, supporting a German-led European Union fiscal compact that established stricter controls over national spending. By 2014, Hollande was emphasizing the need to reduce corporate taxes and trim public spending in order to increase growth and control deficits, and he replaced leftist cabinet members with more centrist ministers. Hollande’s prime minister, Manuel Valls, had previously suggested that the party drop the word “socialist” from its name; it was Valls who later muscled the labor law through Parliament. In part because of the disaffection of the leftists who once supported him, Hollande became perhaps the least popular president in recent French history; in one poll last October, only 4 percent of respondents said they were satisfied with him. In December, Hollande took the extraordinary step of announcing that he would not run for re-election, making him the first sitting president in recent French history not to seek a second term.

For many French leftists, Hollande’s presidency did not represent the first betrayal at the hands of the Socialist Party. The only other Socialist president of the Fifth Republic, François Mitterrand, was an even greater disappointment. When he

was first elected in 1981, Mitterrand ran on an anticapitalist platform, vowing to nationalize industry, raise wages and reduce the retirement age. His victory was met with jubilation on the left, and some supporters believed Mitterrand would end French capitalism. But outside France, political winds were blowing in the other direction. The 1980s were the era of deregulation and economic liberalization, the age of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Europe was advancing toward a single market. Mitterrand’s policies couldn’t contain inflation, threatening the country’s place in the coming monetary union. He was forced to choose between his revolutionary agenda and European integration. By 1983, Mitterrand chose Europe and implemented spending cuts, a move referred to in France as the *tournant de la rigueur*, or the austerity turn. Today, French leftists compare Hollande’s shift to Mitterrand’s U-turn and ask now, as they asked then, Is socialism dead?

The answer, at least in today’s Europe, is probably yes. In the 1990s and early 2000s, leaders like Tony Blair in Britain, Bill Clinton in the United States and Gerhard Schröder in Germany led a center-left resurgence. Yet in their fight for the political middle ground, they pulled their own parties away from shrinking labor constituencies and toward a fuller embrace of the free market. In Europe, the demise of the old left has been cemented by the strictures of E.U. membership, which sets in stone practices that were once anathema to socialists: free trade, limits on national spending and monetary policies that subordinate employment to price stability. There is no more blatant example of the European left’s inability to be leftist than Greece, where in 2015 voters elected Syriza, a “radical left” party that promised to thwart E.U. austerity policies. Since its victory, however, Syriza has been compelled, under threat of expulsion from the eurozone, to adopt an agenda that is anything but leftist: privatizations, pension cuts and stringent fiscal targets. In a recent interview in the French journal *Le Débat*, Hollande was asked about his own rightward drift: Will he be the president who presides over “the end of the socialist idea”? Hollande replied that it was impossible to be socialist in isolation, before going on to frame the left’s challenge. “What is at stake is whether the left, rather than socialism, has a future in the world, or whether globalization has reduced or even annihilated this hope.”

As center-left parties become more indistinguishable from their center-right opponents, the classical liberal vision — a well-informed polity

making democratic choices along a left-right continuum — has blurred. The left-right dichotomy has its roots in the French Revolution, when members of the National Assembly physically divided themselves according to their view on the king's authority: Those members in favor of more royal power stood on the right side of the chamber, and those opposed stood on the left. While the meaning of the left-right divide has since evolved and the concept has often failed to encapsulate complex political movements, it has since come to define democratic politics. Increasingly, however, voters perceive their democratic choices along a different axis, not from left to right but from a fill-in-the-blank centrist party to a populist, radical one, as a choice between parties that wish to tweak the prevailing order and those that seek to overthrow it.

Far-right parties are not the only ones offering revolution. Far-left parties remain on ballots across Europe, and in France, the Left Front, an electoral coalition that includes the French Communist Party, has sought to take advantage of the Socialists' troubles. The Left Front was popular among many of the trade unionists I met, yet as of now, its support has remained limited. With notable exceptions like Greece and Spain, where far-left parties have surged in the face of economic misery, voters in Europe often perceive these parties to be discredited by history, even irrelevant. And now, in countries like France, the far left faces growing competition from the far right.

Many believe that the consequences of this political scrambling will be profound. Dominique Reynié, a political-science professor at Sciences Po in Paris, described "the end of the story of the democratic-socialist model" as "very bad news," even though he does not identify as a socialist himself. "If we consider the invention of pluralistic democracy in Europe at the end of the 19th century, it was founded on the possibility of making a choice between the right and the left," he told me. "If we have lost this duality, we have probably lost the mechanical principle of democracy."

The defunct paper mill Sailliot worked at is in a small town called Wizernes, a worn-looking cluster of red-roofed homes surrounded by marshy parkland and intersected by the Aa River, which runs through the mill and other factories along its serpentine course to the North Sea. One morning, I found Sailliot and his colleagues sitting inside a prefabricated shed outside the mill, a base of resistance marked by a red C.G.T. flag planted in a rusty barrel. Sailliot and other union

members had maintained a round-the-clock vigil since the mill's closing, to draw national attention to their plight and also, they said, to ensure that the company did not secretly send trucks to disassemble the mill. The idea was to keep it ready for production in the event that another buyer came along. (Sequana, the company that owns the mill, said it would take it apart this year.) A pile of tires lay next to the shed, ready to be ignited if a blockade was deemed necessary. One of the men pointed out the scorched asphalt where he had set tires alight — ostensibly to prevent suspicious trucks from entering, but surely good theater too — and, with a devilish smile, expressed hope that he would soon get a chance to do it again. Inside the shed, posters covered the walls. One, with an image of a worker's hand holding a hammer, called for a "dictatorship of the proletariat." Another, picturing Hollande, was captioned "the gravedigger of the left."

I struck up a conversation with Bruno Evrard, a 49-year-old whose father had worked at the mill, as had his grandfather. Evrard worked at the plant for three decades and hoped to spend his working life there. Instead, he was now employed at a nearby cardboard factory on a week-to-week basis. Given the growth in online shopping, Evrard said, cardboard was a relatively good business to be in. Still, he didn't want to get his hopes up. "They use temporary people like Kleenex," he said.

Evrard asked me how American workers protected their jobs. "Eat or be eaten," I said, trying to draw a laugh. But this seemed only to confirm the unionists' view of America's grim reality. "Are there a lot of 'insecure' jobs?" Evrard asked, meaning jobs with no protections from layoffs. Pretty much all private-sector jobs in America are insecure, I said, explaining that it was common for people to change employers many times over the course of a lifetime.

"That's what they're trying to do in France," Evrard snapped. "The same kind of stupidity."

"That's the labor law," Sailliot chimed in.

"It's American," Evrard said in perturbed agreement. "It's American."

Evrard told me that his opinion of the French Socialist Party, which brought this American idea to France, was "zero." I asked him if that meant he would consider voting for the National Front. He came from a staunchly communist family and maintained his allegiance to the left, he told me. But it was an

increasingly lonely position. All Evrard ever heard from his new co-workers was how the government took care of foreigners, not French workers. "I'm never on the right side of the conversation," he said. The National Front has become "too big of a phenomenon."

A paper mill in Wizernes, France. Christopher Anderson/Magnum, for The New York Times

Sailliot then gave me a tour of the expansive grounds, walking me past the brick chateau next to an apple orchard that was built, he said, by the wealthy family that once owned the place, and then over to the mill itself, where he pointed out the virtues of the giant machines. Afterward, we walked over to a nearby restaurant for lunch. At our table, not far from a television that blared out the progress of a horse race, we were joined by Jérôme Lecoustre, a reticent man with a bulldog tattoo on his neck. Lecoustre works with Sailliot's wife at a nearby glass factory that, he said, had shed thousands of employees since he started working there two decades ago. His own wife worked at a school cafeteria, part time and on a short-term contract. They had two children, 11 and 14. I asked him if he was worried about losing his job. Lecoustre hesitated to answer, taking a gulp from a glass of red wine.

"No," he said finally.

Sailliot shot him a look of disbelief. "Come on, you know you're afraid of the future."

Lecoustre paused, then gave his explanation: Workers with more menial jobs were at greater risk of losing them. But he worked on a machine, and this gave him more security.

Sailliot didn't press the issue. The two men remained friendly, despite glaring political differences. Lecoustre was a supporter of the National Front. I asked him why.

"People are fed up," he said. "So maybe we can try to change something."

"Fed up about what?" I asked.

"A bit of everything," he said.

Lecoustre brought up the thousands of African and Middle Eastern migrants and refugees that had set up a sprawling camp, widely referred to as the Jungle, in Calais, a French port city near the Channel Tunnel. Their attempts to stow away on ferries, trains and trucks bound for Britain had become a nuisance to drivers and travelers. The solution, according to Lecoustre,

was to take greater control of the national borders.

"The left forgot its tradition. It's up to us to appropriate it."

The National Front has, in recent years, become more popular in many rural areas and small towns like Wizernes, places that are often relatively homogeneous and have few immigrants. Many people, of course, wish to keep it that way and therefore happily embrace the National Front's nativist message. Yet immigration is also intertwined with broader anxieties that fuel support for the party — fear of terrorism, fear of economic collapse — and so the issue becomes an easy, tangible target, even if it remains an abstraction.

I asked Lecoustre if immigration had changed his life in any direct way. He thought for a moment. "No," he said.

Sailliot interjected. This was the absurdity of it all, he said. There were hardly any migrants in the area, and yet somehow, immigration was everybody's biggest problem. How could that be? Sailliot went on: Politics ought to be about putting all people first, ahead of global markets, ahead of the bottom line, not about getting some people out of the country. Lecoustre listened, but he did not appear convinced.

The suspicion that immigrants are taking something they don't deserve, the conviction that native citizens are being supplanted by foreigners, the growing sense that mainstream political parties serve the interests of privileged global elites rather than working people — all of this will be perfectly familiar to Americans who just lived through the last election. President Donald J. Trump's campaign in many ways embodied the nativist, anti-establishment rebellion sweeping much of the West. In doing so, it replicated aspects of an older French model, in which the far right adopted the rhetoric of the far left to surprising success.

In the mid-1990s, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the National Front's founder, began to push the party's economic platform away from its original free-market ideology and toward protecting the working class. (Observers coined the term *gaucholepénisme* to describe his growing appeal to traditional leftists.) In 2002, he stunned France by coming in second in the first round of the French presidential election, ahead of the weak Socialist candidate. In France, the winner must obtain an absolute majority of votes, so the top two finishers compete in a second round. In that runoff, Le Pen lost overwhelmingly to the center-right candidate, Jacques Chirac, as

many leftists joined center-right voters to form a “republican front,” uniting forces to thwart the National Front.

When Jean-Marie’s youngest daughter, Marine, took over the party in 2011, she redoubled the leftist economic message and shunned her father’s blatantly anti-Semitic statements — a so-called *dédiabolisation* of the party intended to make it more palatable to the mainstream. Her economic rhetoric is now often indistinguishable from that of far-left European leaders. In 2015, Hollande and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany jointly addressed the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France. Le Pen, a member of that Parliament, stood to make a reproach to Merkel. The terms on which she did so — German economic domination of Europe, the “vassalization” of European nations and the imposition of austerity policies that led to mass unemployment — could just as well have come from Greece’s former finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis, Le Pen’s ideological opposite in every other way.

‘People are fed up. So maybe we can try to change something.’

Le Pen has adopted an old-left economic message at a time when the center-left has largely abandoned it. Across much of Europe, in fact, far-right parties are increasingly presenting themselves as guardians of workers and of the welfare state for native citizens, promising to preserve it from the threat of foreign newcomers. The consequences are proving particularly drastic for the European Union. Britain’s vote to leave the E.U. was propelled by an unusual alliance of conservatives and working-class voters who have traditionally supported the Labour Party — many of them in England’s industrial north. Le Pen promises that if she wins the presidential election, she, too, will call for a referendum on whether France should remain in the E.U., and she hopes a similar alliance of voters will yield the same result. France is a founding member of the E.U. and is far more economically and politically entwined with the bloc than Britain, which was never a fully committed member. While Brexit was a blow to the E.U., France’s departure could signify its end. An eventual French exit, though unlikely, is not unimaginable. French voters rejected a European Constitution in a 2005 referendum, and French attitudes toward the European Union since then have only grown more skeptical. A pre-Brexit Pew Research Center survey found that 61 percent of the French held an unfavorable view of the E.U.; the

same survey found that 48 percent of Britons did.

Presidential-election polls in France, as of this writing, show Le Pen likely to make it to the runoff, to be held in May. The pressing question in France now is: Will the “republican front” once again hold? Given the unpopularity of the Socialists, Le Pen’s chief opponents are now François Fillon — a center-right, market-oriented social conservative who has promised to cut public-sector jobs and was recently depicted on the front page of the left-wing newspaper *Libération* with a Margaret Thatcher hairdo — and Emmanuel Macron, a young former investment banker who served as the economy minister under Hollande but has now split to form his own neither-of-the-left-nor-of-the-right political movement. This, bewilderingly, makes the far-right Le Pen the only leading candidate with a traditionally leftist economic message, and it leaves many leftists who remain opposed to her hard-pressed to vote for her opponents.

Sailliot told me that he would support the Left Front candidate in the first round, but that if he was forced to choose between Le Pen and one of the other probable candidates in the second round, he would not vote at all. Some of his leftist colleagues, many of whom voted for Chirac in 2002 in order to foil Jean-Marie Le Pen, told me the same thing. Ultimately, Marine Le Pen isn’t expected to win; enough left-leaning voters, it is believed, will join center-right voters to defeat her. But this is an era in which political prediction may seem like a fool’s game. The day after Trump’s election, Le Pen was clearly heartened by his unexpected victory. “What happened last night wasn’t the end of *the world*,” Le Pen said. “It’s the end of a world.”

One morning, I visited Grégory Glorian, the 41-year-old head of the C.G.T.’s Pas-de-Calais office in the city of Lens, a former coal town in the heart of the region’s mining basin, where coal extraction began in the 18th century. Glorian, a thin, hospitable man, told me that his grandfather had worked in a mine just down the road; he still remembered how his grandfather’s blue eyes peered out at him from a coal-blackened face at the end of a shift. That mine shut down when Glorian was 11; in 1990, the last mine in the area closed. While the government supported programs to place miners in other industries, some of those suffered, too.

The mining life, despite its hardships, had provided security. Miners lived in rowhouses built by the mining company. Their children went to schools built by the

company. Coal, electricity and health care were all provided by the company. Now all that remains of the industry in the basin is a collection of mining pits, slag heaps and workers’ estates so archaic that Unesco, in 2012, added the region to its World Heritage List of unique global treasures. The site “illustrates a significant period in the history of industrial Europe,” Unesco noted. “It documents the living conditions of workers and the solidarity to which it gave rise.”

Glorian’s working life is emblematic of the new uncertainty. For a time, he worked at Metaleurop-Nord, a smelter that produced zinc and lead, then at a textile factory that produced carpet thread. Each of those factories closed. The shuttering of the smelter in 2003 was a particularly hard blow to the region, leaving several hundred workers without jobs. The National Front sensed electoral opportunity. Marine Le Pen has run repeatedly for the French Parliament in the area around Lens, narrowly missing a seat in 2012. At the same time, National Front candidates have steadily chipped away at the left’s power, making significant gains in local elections.

Laurent Dassonville Christopher Anderson/Magnum, for The New York Times

Glorian acknowledged that the National Front was attracting some C.G.T. members in Pas-de-Calais; in one case, he said, a prominent C.G.T. delegate from a nearby tire shop ran for office on a National Front ticket. The delegate, Glorian added, was kicked out of the union. When C.G.T. members openly expressed sympathy for the National Front, Glorian told me, union leaders tried to “educate” them about the errors in their thinking. If that didn’t work, they kicked them out, because the union doesn’t tolerate overt racism and nationalism. Glorian said he was afraid that some of his peers hid their favorable feelings about the National Front from him, knowing they wouldn’t go over well. “The left is to blame,” he told me of the party’s success. “They didn’t do their job.”

The C.G.T. delegate turned National Front politician, I soon found out, was not an isolated case. A number of National Front politicians in the area claim to come from unions and other traditionally leftist organizations. The party, it appears, often seeks out members with such credentials as part of its strategy to supplant the left. In Méricourt, a town a few miles from Lens that is overshadowed by a volcanic-looking slag heap, the Communist mayor is holding together an alliance of leftists who are battling a rising

challenge from National Front politicians like these.

On the morning of my visit to Méricourt, an outdoor market was set up on the main street, with stalls selling cheap clothes, cleaning supplies, sandwiches. In a bar, I met a foreman named Laurent Dassonville who described himself as a former Communist. Now he is the president of the town’s chapter of the National Front. Dassonville and I moved toward the pool table, where his 12-year-old son sat next to him, playing Pokémon Go. Dassonville told me that his father had been a Communist, and so had his grandfather. Years ago, he switched allegiance because, he said, the National Front is the only party that still defends workers. Dassonville ran for local office in 2015 on a National Front ticket. He virtually tied his leftist opponents in the first round of voting but came up short in the second round. After his loss, Dassonville published an angry letter in a local magazine, accusing his leftist opponents of siding with “the big bosses” in order to prevail over the National Front. “You followed the instructions of the haves and the powerful,” he wrote. A National Front politician was denouncing the area’s hard leftists as if they were neoliberal capitalists.

Dassonville sipped his coffee and lit a Marlboro. He called over a man he introduced as a National Front activist, a retiree who presented a new party membership slip to Dassonville. New members were signing up all the time, Dassonville told me. “Look, this one’s a truck driver,” he said. “Someone from the working world.”

I couldn’t help wondering if this interaction was being staged for my benefit. “They say we are an extreme-right party,” Dassonville said. “But when you look closely at the words of Marine Le Pen and at the program we are now building, there’s a big part of the left in it. The left forgot its tradition. It’s up to us to appropriate it.”

I asked Dassonville if he would call the National Front an extreme-right party or an extreme-left party. Like many in the National Front, he objected to the designation “extreme.” “It’s a normal political party,” he said. “Why would you say extreme? What does the word ‘extreme’ even mean?”

Dassonville thought the whole left-right spectrum was finished anyway. “For me,” he said, “it has no value.”

Quartz : The French are hosting “intellectual rave parties” in 30 cities around the world

Could it be more French?

Between Jan. 26 and Jan. 29, French consulates in 30 cities around the world will be hosting free, all-night “intellectual rave parties” to wrestle with today’s most pressing matters. The Night of Philosophy and Ideas (*La Nuit des idées*) is a festival of philosophical debate, film screenings, readings, and musical performances. From Dakar to Kiev to Brooklyn, attendees will dialogue with thinkers and artists on topics from language, politics, robots, and love.

Mérim Korichi, a philosopher who studied at the Sorbonne and Harvard University, started Night of Philosophy in Paris in 2012. Korichi explained during a 2015 interview that the nocturnal “happening” is founded on the premise that our best thinking often happens at night. “It induces a slowing down where you enter a different temporality—that moment in the evening when

you just let go,” she said. “Perhaps then you have a better quality of thinking because you feel free from exterior pressure. This event is about creating this kind of parentheses, where good thinking can happen.”

If the large crowds from previous Night of Philosophy events in Paris, London, and New York are any indication, the age of social media is hungry for a respite from fast clicks, swipes and speedy transactions. The theme for the Brooklyn edition is “slow down.” “This is an occasion to think deeply,” says Bénédicte de Montlaur, cultural counselor of the French Embassy in New York City. The study of philosophy is an essential part of French life that Americans—particularly those in New York City who voted against the current US president—may find it particularly useful amid the political upheavals of late, Montlaur said. “I think it comes at a moment when everyone’s a bit

puzzled with what’s going on. It’s a good opportunity to come and take the time to think,” she explains.

You don’t have to be a student of philosophy or particularly well-read to attend, Montclair said. People can schedule a one-on-one session with a philosopher to toss around ideas or simply have a person-to-person intellectual conversation.

Laurie Anderson. (EPA-PHOTO/DPA/Bastian Parschau)

Night of Philosophy will take over the expansive Brooklyn Public Library adjacent to Prospect Park. László Jakab Orsós, the library’s vice president of arts and culture, said the larger venue will accommodate a greater variety of lectures and performances. Among the program’s highlights is a talk by Cameroonian political theorist Achille Mbembe, rumination by avant-garde artist Laurie Anderson about her exploration into the

Tibetan book of the dead via her relationship with her dog, and a talk by philosopher Frédéric London about the French version of Occupy Wall Street. There will also be virtual reality stations, dance performances by the Trisha Brown Company, and a mini-concert organized by the popular Williamsburg concert venue National Sawdust.

In the library’s grand lobby a handwriting station with calligraphy teachers will lead attendees to rediscover that so-called “anachronistic” art of penmanship. “When you write shorthand, you write differently—not just in the way it looks but how you formulate sentences,” said Orsós, who is the former curator of the literary festival, PEN World Voices. “We can’t lose that.”

A list of Night of Philosophy events convening around the world this weekend is available here.

F A Michelin-Starred French Masterpiece at Restaurant Ryuzu, Tokyo

Lady Barbara Judge
CBE

One of the nicest parts of my frequent visits to Japan is having an opportunity to visit many of the wonderful French restaurants popping up all over Tokyo.

I know that the whole world loves Japanese food these days, but, after all, how much delicious raw fish can you eat - and although I love sashimi, my palate isn’t sophisticated enough to discern the difference among “good”, “better” and “best.” I do understand and appreciate gradations in French cooking, however, which I have been lusting after since the 70’s, when I was travelling on my stomach to the great three-star establishments on the Michelin Map of France.

So, imagine my delight to find when I first started going to Tokyo frequently - about four years ago -

that Japan is as star-studded a country as France, and that most of those stars shine in Tokyo, where I now go once a month to participate as a director of LIXIL, the global construction company, and also as Deputy Chairman of the Tepco Nuclear Reform Committee. Both of these very serious jobs afford me time to do some very serious eating as well.

It was for a Tepco meeting this past autumn that I arrived half a day early, and was fortunate to be taken to Restaurant Ryuzu - which although it sounds Japanese, is definitely very French. The chef, Ryuta Iizuka, was trained by Joël Robuchon, and, after a stint at the Okura Tokyo Bay hotel, moved to France where he apprenticed at two and three-star restaurants. He returned to Japan and led for five years the two-starred Robuchon restaurant in Iizuka that I have been fortunate to visit a few times.

In 2011, Ryuta Iizuka opened his own restaurant under the name of Ryuzu, and four years later had his own two Michelin stars. Interestingly, he explains that the word Ryuzu is also the term for the knob that winds a wristwatch. It is, he says, unassuming, yet ever so important, in its role.

Restaurant Ryuzu is conveniently located in the Roppongi area of Tokyo. (AP Photo/Greg Baker)

Ryuzu has three set dinner menus, as well as an a la carte menu; we chose the shorter dinner menu because it was four courses (often one too many). This lovely menu consisted of fondant of crab and mussels lightly perched on a coulis of tomatoes, which was beautiful and light - just the way to begin a meal with more courses to come. Lovely poached bass with calamari and summer vegetables followed; this was petite and perfect, rather

than overwhelming. This was so beautifully presented that you were not sure that you wanted to take a bite and ruin the picture on your plate.

The main course was one of my favourite dishes - *côte de veau rôti* with champignons, or roast veal with mushrooms. In any cuisine this is a standout dish, and here it was executed with such a sure hand that the delicate pink veal fairly melted on one’s tongue. This kind of veal is rarely found, and almost never in England - where for some reason the English find eating baby cows more offensive than the birds they shoot or the older cows they breed. The French, on the other hand, love veal, and perhaps that is why I spend my holidays in France - often with much time in the local butcher shop.

The Week : What American liberals could really learn from the French

Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry

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Among the philosophically inclined, a common criticism of conservatism is that it’s an incoherent and contradictory political philosophy:

What is the link between, say, free-market economics and social conservatism? And doesn’t the free market undermine traditional institutions?

What so many people view as inconsistency is actually a major reason I enjoy being a conservative: We’re a disputatious bunch. You can find conservatives on either side

of practically every major disagreement. There are pro- and anti-immigration conservatives; pro-marijuana and anti-legalization conservatives; pro- and anti-same-sex marriage conservatives; and so on. Maybe sometimes this makes us a circular firing squad. But at any rate, it makes being an intellectual conservative great fun.

Viewed from the outside, the world of progressive left thought seems much more uniform and, frankly, dreary. Not that there aren’t camps or disputes - between more establishmentarian, “neoliberal” progressives and more straightforwardly socialist progressives, for example. But even then, most of the disputes seem to be more about means rather than

ends. For example, Jonathan Chait, a writer at *New York* magazine, is somewhat infamous for being a punching bag for more progressive lefties. But there's little doubt that Chait would like America to look pretty much like what Bernie brot want it to look like: basically Sweden. They just disagree about how to get there, and which fights it is important to prioritize and pick first.

Here, the contrast with my own country of France is pretty striking.

Take an idea that's buzzy among progressives on both sides of the Atlantic: universal basic income. In the primary election for France's Socialist Party, which just had its first round, the debate about basic income was promoted by the most left-wing candidate, Benoît Hamon. In the U.S., I don't think I've ever seen a progressive writer dispute this issue on its merits; if they ever do debate it, their argument has to do with feasibility, either technical or political.

By contrast, Hamon's unimpeachably socialist opponents attacked him for his proposal on much more profound grounds.

Arnaud Montebourg, his equally left-wing opponent, expressed outrage along the following lines: A basic income (financed, in Hamon's plan, by a tax on robots) presents basically a surrender to the late-capitalist vision of a technological capitalism that just leaves less-skilled workers jobless. Reminding his opponent that socialists are supposed to be the party of *workers*, Montebourg instead pushed a vision of robust public investment and trade barriers that would provide well-paying jobs to everyone, making the issue of the basic income moot. Put aside the merits of who's right; the point is that there is a greater diversity of views on display here, and they are animated not by technocratic questions but by profound philosophical differences. What's more, Montebourg's criticism was not a form of "triangulation" but was indeed framed in left-wing philosophical premises.

The same approach applies to social issues. The French philosopher Sylviane Agacinski is pretty close to a doyenne of French feminism. And yet she's comfortable being idiosyncratic. In a recent interview with the French right-of-

center daily *Le Figaro*, while endorsing same-sex marriage, she expressed reservations about same-sex adoptions and mused about the right of children to be brought up by parents of both sexes. She criticized surrogacy for submitting women's bodies to the marketplace. On campus and school rules meant to deter harassment and sexual assault, she mused, in what will probably strike readers as a delightfully French train of thought: "It would be really sad to go on a witchhunt against seduction under the pretext of fighting harassment. The two have nothing to do with each other: In one case, one tries to spark the other's desire, while in the other one ignores and offends it."

There's little doubt that taking any of those positions, let alone all of them, would have an American feminist philosopher angrily protested, denounced, and written off the movement. To be sure, many disagreed with Agacinski publicly, which is the point: The French left, by contrast to the American left, has intramural debates, and they are not just debates about means, but *philosophical* debates. On the American left, I can only think of one

similar bomb thrower: Camille Paglia, and she's distinguished by precisely how lonely she is in this role, and how little the vast mainstream progressive left listens to her.

Perhaps one reason why you don't see this sort of debate within the American progressive left is simply that the American progressive left doesn't care much about culture at all. As my colleague Damon Linker pointed out, there's much more interest in the intellectual life on the right than on the left. In France, having at least a veneer of high culture is still mostly a requirement for entry into the battlefield of ideas. But too many on the American progressive left see philosophy and history as holding little interest since the only lesson of the past is that it must be transcended.

And, hey, you know, maybe that's right. But it makes being a liberal sound just so *boring*. If you're looking for me, I'll be over there with my Leo Strauss and my Aquinas, throwing bombs at my comrades.

Vogue : The French Girl's Guide to Winter Beauty

Lilah Ramzi

Photographed by Christian MacDonald, *Vogue*, March 2014

As couture confections rotated down the Paris runways last week, Parisians and Fashion Week habitués alike are finding themselves exposed to the elements while traversing the town for shows and fetes. The broad Haussmanian boulevards of the city, though romantic, only amplify the effects of an icy winter breeze. And while windswept hair is a coveted look, a windswept face is anything but—and only exacerbated by the crank of arid indoor heat.

But legendary French pharmacies offer the best possible ways to arm oneself with a battalion of cold-weather lotions and potions for replenishing moisture stolen by the winter chill. Whether their focus is on hydrating skin ahead of a day of shows, repairing dryness après ski, or simply prepping for some forest bathing in the Bois de Boulogne, here, five fresh-faced *filles* share their wintertime beauty regimens.

"In the winter, I try to drink twice as much as water as I normally do because my skin gets so dry in the cold. I do a deep-hydration face mask twice a week while reading at home, and use Eucerin cream on the daily. In the morning, I make myself a soy/parsley/green powder/banana milkshake, and the

rest of the day I just eat normal French comfort food to stay warm!"

Ophélie Guillermand

Photo: Courtesy of Ophélie Guillermand / @opheliegulliermand

"My 'hate wintertime less' remedies: I usually never exfoliate, as I think it does more harm than good, but my skin is dryer in winter. Once a week, I do a gentle scrub/polish, then leave a hydration mask on for about 30 minutes. I bought a room humidifier, which is really good for you! I add a few drops of essential oils into a small personal humidifier, and put my face right in front of it to directly moisturize my skin. It feels amazing. I use Embryolisse Lait-Crème Concentré every morning. The formula is a little bit heavy, so it's great for winter, and it's also an amazing makeup primer. Also, I use Neal's Yard Remedies Wild Rose Beauty Balm every night, which acts like a mask on your skin (and it's organic!), and Aesop eye serum."

Mimi Thorisson

Photo: Courtesy of Mimi Thorisson / @mimithor

"I massage my face with L'Occitane's Divine beauty oil for a few minutes in the morning and night to stimulate and add extra radiance and moisture. Once the oil is absorbed, I apply my moisturizer. For my hands, I use L'Occitane's Shea Butter hand cream. I have

tried so many hand creams and this one really works so well. It's so rich and buttery and most importantly, natural. As I spend a lot of time cooking, I use it all day long, and my hands are nourished and soft. Also, in the winter months, I take a starflower oil supplement. It nourishes your skin and hair from the inside. I also drink ginger infusions and ginger tea all day long. Just slice fresh ginger and add it to hot boiling water. Ginger is anti-inflammatory and keeps the heat in your body, exactly what I need in winter. And to get a lovely glow and radiant skin before a special occasion, I apply a big tablespoon of honey mixed with 1/2 teaspoon of cinnamon and leave it on my face for 15 minutes."

Lola Rykiel

Photo: Courtesy of Lola Burstein-Rykiel / @lolarykiel

"My skin is supersensitive and gets really really dry during winter. I need to take the time twice a day to moisturize my whole body, especially my legs. I always use Rogé Cavaillès shower and bath gel (it's a shower gel without real soap, which dries out the skin, and you can find it in any French pharmacy!). After, I like to spend time applying some nourishing oil (I like it better than body cream, which sticks too much). I recently discovered La Sultane de Saba's Body Oil and it smells divine. They also have a

shop in Paris where you can do body treatments, steams, exfoliations, and massages. The more you take time to do it, the better the skin feels. I also use Eight Hour Cream by Elizabeth Arden when my lips get dry and chapped. I once heard that you either love or hate the smell of this product. I personally love it!"

Laure Hériard Dubreuil

Photo: Courtesy of Laure Hériard Dubreuil / @thewebster

"My beauty routine becomes quite regimented throughout the winter months. Traveling nonstop from December through March and living in New York City really takes a toll on my skin, so my daily approach gets amplified! Growing up, I was surrounded by women who were very loyal to classic French lines including Clarins, La Roche-Posay, and Embryolisse, many of which I still use today, but I have definitely found new classics that I cannot part with! My key products include Bioderma Micellaire, which I use every single night to cleanse and restore my skin; Sisley Buff and Wash Facial Gel, a very light cleanser that gently exfoliates and polishes; Embryolisse Lait-Crème Concentré—my mother introduced me to this classic when I was a teenager and I have been using it ever since; Chanel Sublimage La Crème Yeux, the most luxurious and effective eye cream I have ever

used; La Roche-Posay SPF 30 sunscreen; Sisley Black Rose oil or La Mer The Renewal Oil under my

moisturizer, both morning and night; Clarins Beauty Flash Balm; Lancer Lift and Plump Sheet Masks; Leonor

Greyl pre-shampoo oil treatment once a week that I apply before going to sleep; and Klorane eye

patches and Bleuet water after a long day of fashion shows and appointments."

The New York Times

Roman Polanski Won't Preside Over César Film Awards in France

Rachel Donadio

The film director Roman Polanski in 2015. Lionel Bonaventure/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

PARIS — After protests from French feminist groups, the director Roman Polanski will not preside next month over the César awards ceremony, the French equivalent of the Academy Awards, his lawyer said on Tuesday.

Mr. Polanski, 83, fled the United States for Europe in 1978 while awaiting sentencing for a conviction of having sex with a 13-year-old girl, and the announcement that he would preside over the awards ceremony had prompted outrage, including from a high-ranking French official.

"In order not to disturb the César ceremony, which should be centered on

cinema and not on whom it chose to preside over the ceremony, Roman Polanski has decided not to accept the invitation," Hervé Temime, a lawyer for Mr. Polanski in Paris, said in a statement.

The uproar, which Mr. Temime said was "based on false information" and had "deeply saddened" the director and his family, came at a time of heightened awareness of women's issues worldwide. On Saturday, millions of women took to the streets around the world, including in Paris, to highlight women's issues and to protest the presidency of Donald J. Trump in the United States.

Last week, the French minister for families, children and women's rights, Laurence Rossignol, called the decision to invite Mr. Polanski to preside over the Feb. 24 ceremony "shocking and surprising."

Feminist groups backed Ms. Rossignol, the hashtag #BoycottCesars gained popularity on Twitter and a petition on Change.org calling for Mr. Polanski to be dismissed of his César duties received nearly 62,000 signatures.

In December, the Polish Supreme Court rejected an extradition request from the United States for Mr. Polanski. The filmmaker is a dual citizen of Poland and France, which does not extradite its citizens.

In his statement on Tuesday, Mr. Temime noted that Switzerland and Poland had rejected extradition requests for the director and that the woman at the center of the legal case against Mr. Polanski, Samantha Geimer, had long called for it to be dropped.

"This polemic arose in a totally unjustified way," Mr. Temime said,

adding that Mr. Polanski has received other cinema awards and served as president of the jury of the Cannes Film Festival in 1991.

The Académie des César, which oversees the César awards, did not respond to requests for comment. In inviting Mr. Polanski to preside over the ceremony, it praised him as an "insatiable aesthete" whose film artistry had constantly evolved over the years.

Emmanuelle Seigner, Mr. Polanski's third wife, posted a video of a forest on Instagram on Tuesday that appeared to express support for her husband. "I woke up in the forest far from human nastiness and stupidity," she wrote.



Judge approves \$1.2 billion cash settlement for Volkswagen dealers

The Christian Science Monitor

January 24, 2017 —Volkswagen franchise dealerships across the United States will receive an average cash payout of \$1.85 million apiece as part of a \$1.2-billion cash settlement granted final approval Monday by a federal judge in California.

The settlement puts to rest a class action lawsuit filed last fall against the German automaker, but it is not the only costly court case to stem from a revelation 16 months ago that VW had intentionally dodged emissions standards, in what has since been dubbed the "dieselgate" scandal. Admitting that it installed "defeat device" software in about 475,000 vehicles, VW agreed to one of the largest consumer settlements in history, and several executives

have been prosecuted.

Authorities in the European Union similarly began pushing late last year for potential enforcement actions against VW and other automakers who try to sidestep inconvenient policies designed to protect the environment.

Steve Berman, lead attorney for the dealerships in the class action lawsuit, said the settlement finalized Monday represents another step toward holding VW accountable for duping not only individual drivers but also franchise dealers "who, like consumers, were blindsided by the brazen fraud that VW perpetrated."

Of the 651 dealers eligible for the settlement, only seven opted out, US District Judge Charles Breyer in the Northern District of California wrote in his order. Most of the participating dealers already received the first half of their cash

payout last month, and the second half will be paid out over the coming 18 months, he wrote, deeming the settlement to be "fair, reasonable, and adequate."

Eight dealers objected to the specific terms of the settlement, several taking issue with how their cash payout was calculated, but Judge Breyer overruled the objections.

In addition to the cash, VW agreed also to continue making volume-based incentive payments and to allow the dealers to defer capital improvements for two years. Conservative estimates value these ongoing payments at \$172.8 million, court records state.

In total, the company has now agreed to spend as much as \$22 billion to address US claims from car owners, dealers, state governments, and environmental regulators after

its vehicles were discovered to be emitting up to 40-times the legal limit of pollution.

Hinrich Woebcken, chief executive of VW's North American operations, said earlier that the company believes the agreement with the dealers is "a very important step in our commitment to making things right for all our stakeholders in the United States," as Reuters reported.

Mr. Berman's law firm, Hagens Berman, said in a statement that the total settlement is valued at more than \$1.6 billion for the dealers, counting the \$1.2 billion in cash payments and other provisions.

This report includes material from Reuters.

The New York Times

'Brexit' Ruling Reveals Cracks in Britain's Centuries-old Institutions

Katrin Bennhold

LONDON — It remains unclear whether Prime Minister Theresa May's plans or timetable for taking Britain out of the European Union will be altered by the Supreme Court's ruling on Tuesday that she must secure Parliament's approval before beginning the process. Most analysts, even those who opposed "Brexit," as the departure from the bloc is known, doubt that it will.

And Mrs. May had already said in her speech on Brexit last week that Parliament would have a vote on whether to accept the final deal negotiated with the European Union.

But the ruling Tuesday — which included a decision to deny the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish legislatures a veto in the matter — has brought to the fore some ancient tensions in Britain's democracy, which has somehow

made it through the centuries with an unequal union of four nations, an unelected upper house of Parliament and without a written constitution. These tensions may ultimately have far greater impact than a ruling that was widely anticipated.

"There are some fairly serious questions about how the U.K.'s constitutional settlement operates, not least the lack of democracy at

the heart of the houses of Parliament," Stephen Gethins, the Scottish National Party's spokesman on Europe in the British Parliament, said in an interview. "All this raises quite substantial questions about the future of the union."

The strongest words of protest arose from the nations of the United Kingdom whose voters opposed Brexit. In Scotland, the first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, said Tuesday that

the case for a second referendum on independence was growing ever stronger.

"It's becoming clearer by the day that Scotland's voice is simply not being heard or listened to within the U.K.," Ms. Sturgeon said.

In Northern Ireland, where the fragile 1998 Good Friday Agreement that ended decades of sectarian conflict is predicated on membership in the European Union and an open border with Ireland, the decision not to give its Parliament a vote risks aggravating the sectarian divide, officials said.

"Brexit will undermine the institutional, constitutional and legal integrity of the Good Friday Agreement," said Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein, which represents the Catholic nationalist community in Northern Ireland. "Our stability and economic progress," he said, "are regarded as collateral damage."

In its ruling, which upholds an earlier decision by the High Court in London, the Supreme Court noted that Parliament had approved the 1972 legislation that enabled the country to join the European Union and incorporated European law into British law. Leaving the bloc would take away from British citizens a number of rights that had been granted by the bloc.

As a result, "the government cannot trigger Article 50 without an act of Parliament authorizing that course," David Neuberger, the Supreme Court's president, said in announcing the decision, which was approved, 8 to 3.

Although a majority of lawmakers had campaigned to stay in the

European Union before the referendum last year, most political observers said it was unlikely that legislators would reject the will of the voters.

The prime minister's office is expected to submit a tightly worded bill to Parliament as early as this week, and if all goes well Mrs. May will begin a two-year, irreversible process of exit negotiations with the European Union by the end of March.

"There's no going back," David Davis, the British official assigned to oversee the withdrawal, told Parliament later Tuesday. "The point of no return was June 23," he said, referring to the date of the referendum.

That is not going to stop some from trying. The Scottish National Party is likely to vote against the measure, and has vowed to submit 50 "serious and substantive" amendments in an effort to slow the process and, if possible, soften or reverse the outcome.

But with the leader of the opposition Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, pledging not to stand in the way, and the Conservatives holding a majority in Parliament, Mrs. May is widely expected to prevail.

Some expect a little more pushback in the House of Lords, not enough to stop the bill's passage but possibly enough to delay it, surely enraging the most vocal cheerleaders for Brexit — the tabloid press and English nationalists, from the right wing of the Conservative Party to the U.K. Independence Party.

That the Lords could intervene in the process stems from another ancient quirk of the British political system.

Unelected, overcrowded and with an age profile similar to that of many retirement homes, Britain's upper chamber of Parliament has survived a century of debate over its purpose, while becoming the largest legislative assembly in the world outside of China. Unlike the elected House of Commons, members of the House of Lords are mostly appointed, and many were named by the Labour governments in power from 1997 to 2010. At the least, they could throw sand in the legislative gears on Brexit.

Prime Minister Theresa May has already outlined her vision for a clean break with the European Union single market. Matt Dunham/Associated Press

The court case has also underscored the generally polarizing nature of the June referendum, in which 52 percent voted to leave the European Union.

One of the plaintiffs, Gina Miller, an investment fund manager, has said she was threatened with murder and rape by Brexit supporters, who have accused her of trying to sabotage the withdrawal. A lawyer by training, Ms. Miller has said she was merely standing up for the rights of Parliament.

"This case was about the legal process, not about politics," Ms. Miller said in a news conference outside the Supreme Court, where she thanked her law firm, Mishcon de Reya, for fighting her case.

Ms. Miller said she was "shocked by the levels of personal abuse that I have received from many quarters over the last several months for simply bringing and asking a legitimate question."

At times it felt that the judges themselves were on trial. Members of the High Court who ruled against the government in November, setting the stage for the Supreme Court decision, were described by one tabloid newspaper as "enemies of the people."

But lawmakers from across the political spectrum have made clear that they want to be involved from the start.

"I and many others did not exercise our vote in the referendum so as to restore the sovereignty of this Parliament only to see what we regarded as the tyranny of the European Union replaced by that of a government," Stephen Phillips, a member of Mrs. May's Conservative Party, said when the case was first brought.

There is still an outside chance that Parliament will reassert control of Brexit talks, said Simon Tilford, a Britain and Europe specialist at the Center for European Reform in London.

"What this does is it opens the way for much greater parliamentary scrutiny of the whole process," he said. "But we're only going to get this if the Labour Party is willing to push back. That is not likely, but not impossible."

"It opens up the way for a kind of democratization of what is happening, for Parliament to hold the government to account," he added. "So far we had a vote to leave the E.U., but it certainly wasn't a vote to take Britain out of the single market, out of the customs union and to make people poorer."

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

U.K. Supreme Court Rules Theresa May Must Consult Parliament Before Starting Brexit

Jenny Gross

Updated Jan. 24, 2017 12:11 p.m. ET

LONDON—Britain's Supreme Court ruled Prime Minister Theresa May must seek approval from Parliament before formally triggering the country's withdrawal from the European Union, potentially complicating her path out of the bloc.

The government said Tuesday's decision wouldn't delay Mrs. May's plans to start Brexit negotiations by the end of March. The opposition Labour Party said it wouldn't seek to block Britain's departure from the EU, but would try to use the legislative process to influence the shape of a deal with Brussels.

David Davis, the minister overseeing Brexit, said the government would send legislation to Parliament within days.

"There can be no going back," Mr. Davis said. "Parliament will rightly scrutinize and debate this legislation, but I trust no one will seek to make it a vehicle for attempts to thwart the will of the people, or frustrate or delay the process of exiting the European Union."

Mrs. May has outlined a plan for a definitive break from the EU, saying she intends to take the country out of the EU's single market for goods and services, while working to negotiate the best possible trade deal.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn pledged not to frustrate the Brexit process, but said his party would seek to ensure Britain's "full, tariff-free access to the single market" and prevent the government from turning the country "into a bargain basement tax haven off the coast of Europe."

Delivering the court's 8-3 decision upholding a High Court ruling, Lord David Neuberger said leaving the EU, a course approved by 52% of voters in a June referendum, also requires an act of Parliament. "To proceed otherwise would be a breach of settled constitutional principles stretching back many centuries," the court's president said.

The court said Mrs. May needs parliamentary consent because EU law is embedded into U.K. law and therefore can't be revoked without lawmakers' approval.

But it also ruled that Mrs. May didn't need to consult with the regional governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland before triggering Article 50, weakening their influence over the process.

The pound fell 0.5% to \$1.2449. The currency has in the past climbed on perceived barriers to the government's plans to trigger Article 50, but the ruling on parliamentary approval was widely expected.

Over four days of hearings before the Supreme Court in December, the government said it had the right

to start Brexit under the principle of royal prerogative, which gives executive authority to ministers so they can govern on the monarch's behalf.

The case, brought by a group of British citizens opposed to Brexit with the help of some of the U.K.'s top constitutional lawyers, was one of the most politically charged in decades.

Brexit supporters condemned the November ruling by the High Court of England and Wales that a parliamentary vote was needed as an attempt to overturn the popular will. The Daily Mail newspaper said the three High Court judges who ruled on the case were "enemies of the people."

But the landscape has shifted. In a December vote, lawmakers said they wouldn't try to hinder or delay Mrs. May's Brexit efforts after she promised to give lawmakers an opportunity to review her plans for the deal. She has also promised a vote on the final deal.

Mrs. May appears to have the backing of a majority of lawmakers, who have little appetite to try to stop

Brexit given the popular vote.

The government is expected to introduce a brief piece of legislation intended to pass through Parliament quickly. Once the legislation is introduced and debated, lawmakers can put forward amendments. While it can take months for some pieces of legislation to be passed, lawmakers can speed up the process if needed.

A small number of lawmakers said they would defy the party line and vote against the bill in an effort to stop Mrs. May from taking Britain out of the single market, which will create uncertainties for U.K. businesses that rely on trade with Europe, particularly financial markets, auto makers and aerospace.

Ben Bradshaw, a Labour member of Parliament, said leaving the common market would be calamitous for farmers who face the prospect of major tariffs being slapped on their exports to the EU, where nearly half of U.K. exports are sent.

"I cannot in all conscience knowingly vote to destroy the jobs and

prosperity of my constituents," Mr. Bradshaw said.

But Kelvin Hopkins, a Labour lawmaker, urged his party not to complicate the process.

"My colleagues in the House of Commons need to realize that if we are seen to frustrate the will of the British people, by opposing or delaying Brexit, we could find ourselves in a position where we will never see a Labour government again," he said.

In spelling out her vision for Brexit, Mrs. May has said the U.K. wouldn't be subject to the bloc's immigration rules or be under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice once it leaves. While she said the U.K. would seek a free-trade agreement with the EU, European officials have said they won't grant the U.K. free access to the single market if it doesn't abide by the bloc's rules.

Margaritis Schinas, European Commission spokesman, said he wouldn't comment on issues pertaining to legal and constitutional order of member states. "This was a judgment decision for the U.K. Supreme Court to take, it's now up to the British government to the

United Kingdom to draw the consequences from that decision," he said.

The Scottish National Party, which strongly opposes leaving the single market, said it would attempt to sway the path of Brexit by lodging 50 amendments to the government bill.

Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said the U.K. government was politically obliged to consult the Scottish Parliament about Brexit even though the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that Mrs. May doesn't legally need its consent.

"It is becoming clearer by the day that Scotland's voice is simply not being heard or listened to within the U.K.," Ms. Sturgeon said. She said the government's comments about Scotland being an equal partner "are being exposed as nothing more than empty rhetoric."

—Nicholas Winning in London and Laurence Norman in Brussels contributed to this article.

Write to Jenny Gross at jenny.gross@wsj.com



Editorial : Parliament Is Back in the Brexit Game

The Editorial Board

Prime Minister Theresa May in London on Tuesday, when the British Supreme Court ruled that Parliament must have a say in Brexit. Will Oliver/European Pressphoto Agency

The British Supreme Court's ruling that Parliament must have a say in starting the process of leaving the European Union is unlikely to block it. A majority of lawmakers, even some who would rather see the country remain in the union, have shown a reluctance to challenge the result of the June referendum in which voters chose Brexit. But the court ruling at least restores some order to the process.

That is important, because many of the potentially costly consequences of withdrawing from the European Union were lost in the contentious and often demagogic referendum campaign, which focused largely on

emotional objections to the free movement of people within the union. Much has changed since then, most notably the recognition — acknowledged in Prime Minister Theresa May's speech last week — that Britain cannot pick and choose among the central tenets of the E.U. Closing Britain's doors to European citizens, it is now clear, means rejecting other facets of the union, like the elimination of barriers to trade and to the movement of goods, services and capital.

Mrs. May had initially hoped to keep Parliament out of the separation process, partly because a majority of members had been against Brexit. But in a case brought by private citizens, a three-judge High Court panel ruled in November that since it was Parliament that originally voted in 1972 to join the predecessor of the union, the government could not withdraw unless Parliament voted to do so.

That raised a storm of protest from Brexiters and was appealed to the Supreme Court. But even before Tuesday's decision, Mrs. May had dampened some of the passions on both sides by pledging that she would send the agreement to both houses of Parliament for approval, but only after it was finished. The court blocked another potential problem for Mrs. May by ruling that the government does not need separate approval from the regional legislatures of Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland to invoke Article 50, which officially begins the process of separation.

The Supreme Court insisted that the issue before it had "nothing to do with whether we should exit the E.U., or the terms or the timetable." Yet by ruling that Parliament was sovereign in deciding whether to make a break, the court effectively undermined the argument of the Brexiters that a referendum was

the most democratic expression of the will of the people.

The referendum was called by the previous prime minister, David Cameron, on the presumption that it would be defeated and close off demands to leave the union. The spectacular failure of his gambit confirmed the disdain for referendums held by one of his predecessors, Margaret Thatcher, who believed that they sacrificed constitutional protections and parliamentary authority to political expediency.

What members of Parliament do with their newly affirmed power is the next big question. Most likely, the stage is set for some fierce debates over the next two years, which will not make Mrs. May's job of negotiating an exit easier. Given the stakes, what's important is that elected representatives of the British people have been restored to a process from which they had been foolishly excluded.



Editorial : Theresa May's Brexit Challenge Hasn't Changed

The Editors

Britain's Supreme Court has given U.K. members of Parliament the power to stop Brexit. Unfortunately, it's a power they don't seem to want.

In its ruling, the court said that an act of Parliament is necessary to

authorize Theresa May's government to invoke Article 50, the European Union's exit clause. MPs will almost certainly approve the enabling act and allow Brexit to proceed.

That's because even MPs who opposed Brexit consider themselves bound by the results of last year's referendum. They're not: The job of parliamentarians is to exercise their best judgement, not meekly channel popular opinions they disagree with. The honorable thing for Remainers

in the House of Commons would be to vote against Brexit, explain that decision to their constituents, and face the consequences at the next election.

Theresa May's Brexit Vision

This isn't going to happen. Conservative MPs will support May's plans for Brexit out of partisan loyalty. The Labour Party and its unpopular leader fear a crushing defeat at the next election: They've said they won't challenge voters' distaste for the EU. A bill to trigger Article 50 could come before Parliament within days, and seems likely to sail through.

If Brexit is going ahead, the challenge for the U.K. is to minimize its costs. This requires an orderly two-part process: a transition that avoids abruptly interrupting current arrangements, followed by a longer-term deal on

trade and other matters. May has made clear that the U.K. will insist on control of its borders, laws, and trade relations with non-EU countries -- meaning it cannot remain a member of Europe's single market. But as the government emphasizes, this does not preclude close and friendly relations, serving the interests of both sides.

However, the EU is reluctant to encourage other defections by seeming to reward the U.K. for its rebellion. If May and her ministers are to negotiate effectively, dissenters inside and outside Parliament need to avoid weakening her hand by second-guessing,

erecting procedural obstacles, or legislating red lines that diminish her room to maneuver.

The court has lifted one such burden, by ruling that Brexit is a decision for the Parliament of the whole U.K. -- the devolved Scottish and Northern Irish assemblies don't have a veto. Accommodations with both will of course have to be found. And at the end of the negotiations, Parliament will have to vote on any new arrangements. In the meantime, working through these difficulties won't be helped by further procedural delays and complications.

Whatever happens, exiting the EU will be hard -- but methodical planning and effective negotiation will make a difference. If Parliament won't use its power to stop Brexit, it can at least resolve to make the best of it.

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**THE WALL
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ECB's Lautenschläger 'Optimistic' Exit of Bond-Purchase Program Is Near

Tom Fairless

Updated Jan. 25, 2017 3:59 a.m. ET

A top European Central Bank official signaled on Tuesday that the ECB should soon start to wind down its €2.3 trillion bond-purchase program, a much anticipated move that is expected to trigger volatility in financial markets.

"I am...optimistic that we can soon turn to the question of an exit" from easy-money policies, said Sabine Lautenschläger, who sits on the ECB's six-member executive board, at an event in Hamburg.

The ECB "must get ready for better times," Ms. Lautenschläger said.

The euro fell about four-tenths of a cent against the dollar after the comments, which were released after European markets had closed.

It is the first time that an ECB board member has indicated that the days of the bank's so-called quantitative-easing program may be numbered.

Last week, ECB President Mario Draghi said the issue of tapering, or winding down, the bank's controversial stimulus program hadn't even been discussed by officials at a policy meeting.

Joerg Kraemer, chief economist at Commerzbank in Frankfurt, said Ms. Lautenschläger's comments were justified.

"QE should end as there are too many negative side effects," Mr. Kraemer said, pointing to potential asset-price excesses and reduced

pressure on southern European governments to reform their economies.

The comments come amid signs of strength in the eurozone's €10 trillion economy after years of weak growth, and a wave of criticism of the ECB's easy-money policies in Germany, Europe's largest economy. A recent jump in German inflation, to 1.7% in December, has rekindled political concerns over the impact of low interest rates on the nation's savers.

Ms. Lautenschläger, a former Bundesbank official who is the only German-born member of the ECB's executive board, previously has expressed skepticism about the bank's bond purchases.

She warned on Tuesday that the ECB shouldn't wait too long before starting to wind down the program.

"All preconditions for a stable rise in inflation exist," Ms. Lautenschläger said. The ECB shouldn't wait "until the last doubt about the return of inflation has been dispelled."

The ECB has launched an unprecedented series of stimulus measures in recent years in an effort to reinvigorate an economy that has flirted with deflation. By pushing interest rates below zero and buying tens of billions of government and corporate debt each month, the ECB hopes to drive down borrowing costs across the region, and spur growth and inflation.

Recently, signs have started to emerge that that is happening.

Business activity has risen close to a five-year high, according to a closely watched business survey, while unemployment is at a seven-year low.

Inflation in the 19-nation eurozone jumped to 1.1% last month, the highest level in three years, due largely to a rebound in energy prices.

But it is still short of the ECB's target of just below 2%.

Crucially, core inflation—stripping out volatile energy and food prices—has remained stubbornly low.

Mindful of that gap, Mr. Draghi last week pledged to continue the ECB's bond-purchase program through the end of the year. The purchases are due to slow to €60 billion from €80 billion a month in April.

Ms. Lautenschläger's words indicate she may favor an end to the bond purchases before December. If so, she would be supported by her countryman Jens Weidmann, who heads Germany's Bundesbank and has opposed the QE program from the start.

Still, a large majority of the ECB's 25 governing council members supported a half-trillion euro extension of QE only last month.

Howard Archer, an economist at IHS Markit in London, said the latest comments—from a known inflation hawk—may not ultimately signal a change in policy from Frankfurt.

"I suspect the ECB will stick to its current course for some time to

come," possibly until after German national elections in late September, Mr. Archer said.

German politicians and economists have been lining up in recent weeks to call for an end to the ECB's QE program, which was launched nearly two years ago and has been repeatedly expanded.

Clemens Fuest, a top German economist who is president of the Ifo economic think tank, says the ECB should start to wind down the program as soon as April, if eurozone inflation hits 1.5%.

Ms. Lautenschläger warned that the risks and adverse side effects of QE were mounting the longer the program was in place.

While it is "important to stop taking the medicine as soon as possible," it shouldn't be withdrawn too early, she said.

"You shouldn't abruptly stop loose monetary policy but slowly cut the dose—such a policy has to be reduced gradually," she said.

Any formal signal that the ECB's bond-purchase program will end is expected to trigger a major repricing of financial assets, as investors price in higher future interest rates. When then Federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke signaled in 2013 that the Fed's own QE program would be wound down, U.S. Treasury yields surged and the dollar rose substantially, an episode known as the Taper Tantrum.

Write to Tom Fairless at tom.fairless@wsj.com

TIME
AP

The E.U. Wants China to Act on Its Pro-Trade Rhetoric

Joe McDonald / AP

BEIJING (AP) — The European Union ambassador to China

welcomed its endorsement of free trade in the face of U.S. President Donald Trump's promise to restrict imports and appealed to Beijing on Wednesday to make good on that

sentiment by lowering its own market barriers.

Hans Dietmar Schweisgut also said it was too early to know how

Trump's rejection of an Asian trade pact this week might affect a similar proposed U.S.-European agreement.

Schweisgut's comments reflected the potentially global repercussions of Trump's promises of sweeping change in U.S. trade, climate and foreign policy. That has prompted questions about whether Beijing, which relies on the United States for technology and export markets, might move closer to Europe as a political and commercial partner.

In an implicit criticism of Trump, President Xi Jinping said in a speech last week a "trade war" would harm all sides and called on other governments to reject protectionism. That was despite complaints by trading partners that China is the most closed major economy.

"We appreciate this commitment by China not only to open up its own market but also to very much support and champion an open international trading system" said Schweisgut at a news conference.

Making Trump Masks in China

Donald Trump says he will crack down on US companies manufacturing in China, but his election has led to a boom in business for at least one factory



Google Privacy-Policy Change Faces New Scrutiny in EU (UNE)

Natalia Drozdik and Jack Nicas

Updated Jan. 24, 2017 6:51 p.m. ET

Alphabet Inc.'s Google faces new scrutiny of how it handles users' web-browsing, search and email data, as regulators examine recent policy changes Google made to build more-robust user profiles and better sell advertising.

Software giant Oracle Corp. said it briefed European antitrust regulators late last year on the changes to Google's privacy policies, in hopes of compounding its rival's already complicated regulatory challenges.

U.S. privacy advocates filed a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission about the changes in December.

A European Union official said they were taking Oracle's claims about the policy change "seriously." The FTC said it would carefully consider the privacy groups' complaint.

In June, Google asked users to accept a new policy that would allow them to more easily see—and delete—the information Google holds about them. But the change also enabled Google to combine users' browsing data from third-party websites with the individuals' Google search and email data.

That reversed a nearly decade-old policy at Google to separate data

Xi's gave no details of possible changes in his speech at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland, but Schweisgut expressed confidence the comments will lead to "concrete progress" in market opening. He said that is necessary because China has "no level playing field" for foreign companies while Europe is "the most open market in the world."

U.S., European and other foreign companies complain they are barred from or sharply restricted in telecoms, information technology, finance and other promising industries in violation of Beijing's free-trading pledges.

European companies are frustrated that they are blocked from acquiring Chinese assets at a time when China's companies have bought major global brands including German robot maker Kuka.

U.S. companies express similar frustration. In a report last week, the American Chamber of Commerce in China said 81 percent of companies that responded to a survey feel "less welcome in China" than they did in the past. It said most believe China's

business environment "discourages investment."

and how it is used, while allowing Google to show you more relevant ads," the privacy-policy agreement said.

Oracle argued in its presentation that Google's plan to combine browsing and search data wasn't clear to users. Some privacy analysts disagree.

Google's requiring that users choose either to opt-in or out "is a really big deal," said Michelle De Mooy, a director at the Center for Democracy & Technology, a nonprofit focused on internet privacy. Google "did seem to go above and beyond in letting users know about it," she said.

Oracle has lobbied regulators against Google since losing a high-profile court case in May to the search giant over software copyrights.

Oracle is a member of FairSearch, a coalition of Google rivals that has filed a formal complaint to the EU over Google's alleged anticompetitive behavior in other business areas.

business environment "discourages investment."

The American chamber said U.S. companies want Trump to take a tougher stance with Beijing on market access but to proceed carefully.

Read More: *Donald Trump Could Be Starting a New Cold War With China. But He Has Little Chance of Winning*

Asked what impact Europe expected on its proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership with the United States following Trump's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, Schweisgut said, "I cannot give you an answer at this stage. It is too early."

The ambassador gave a similar reply when asked whether European exporters of aircraft, autos and other goods might benefit if Trump raises tariffs on Chinese goods and Beijing retaliates by cutting purchases of Boeing jets and other U.S. imports.

Schweisgut said Europe expects to develop closer relations this year with Beijing on trade and climate, but acknowledged they have

disagreements, especially on human rights.

Asked about last year's detention of lawyers who handle human rights and other sensitive cases, the ambassador said European envoys planned to raise those and other cases with Chinese authorities.

"We have an obligation to speak up and we will do so," he said.

Regarding Beijing's move this week to restrict use of virtual private networks that allow users to bypass filters blocking access to many foreign websites, Schweisgut said Europe was "very concerned" about any restrictions that weren't based on "very plausible and concrete security concerns."

"We are obviously against restrictions on the internet because we think a free and open internet serves all countries," he said.

European regulators examined similar claims about the potential for Google to merge data with DoubleClick back when Google acquired the ad company in 2008, and concluded other internet companies could purchase browsing data similar to DoubleClick's.

During the U.S. regulatory review, Google said it hadn't decided whether it would merge the data sets. Doing so would be difficult because of DoubleClick's contracts with advertisers, Google told regulators at the time.

Many internet companies gathers user data ranging from their interests, location and online activity to better target ads.

Oracle itself operates what it calls "the world's largest audience data marketplace," selling companies "\$3 trillion in consumer transaction data" and "two billion global consumer profiles."

Oracle said it isn't pushing the EU to issue fresh competition charges against Google, which already faces formal EU charges that it abuses its dominance with its shopping and advertising services and Android smartphone software. Oracle said it briefed regulators to provide context and speed up decisions on existing cases.

European Union antitrust chief Margrethe Vestager in December said she expected privacy issues to

play a bigger role in future competition cases, in part because of the lock a few companies have on huge amounts of personal data.

News Corp, owner of The Wall Street Journal, has also formally complained to the EU antitrust regulators about Google's behavior.

a, so they know what it takes.

In December, two U.S. privacy groups, Consumer Watchdog and Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, complained to the FTC that Google's change violates U.S. law prohibiting "unfair or deceptive acts," as well as a 2011 order from the FTC that requires Google to not misrepresent its users' privacy.

Google said in response that "if users do not opt-in to these changes, their Google experience will remain unchanged." The company added that it told regulators across the world about the change and incorporated their feedback, though it declined to say

which regulators and what feedback it received.

INTERNATIONAL

THE WALL
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Iraqi Military Seizes Control of Eastern Mosul From Islamic State: Prime Minister

Tamer El-Ghobashy

Updated Jan. 24, 2017 3:32 p.m. ET

MOSUL, Iraq—The military seized control of eastern Mosul from Islamic State, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said, a significant step toward retaking the entire city.

Fighting in Western Mosul, which remains under control of the terror group, will resume after a brief pause, Iraqi commanders said. Mr. Abadi indicated that the next phase of the more-than-three-month battle would begin shortly.

"Now I call upon these heroes to quickly move to liberate the rest of Mosul," he said at a press conference in Baghdad on Tuesday, speaking of his military and allied forces.

Eastern Mosul is the largest territory Islamic State has lost since taking over nearly one-third of Iraq in 2014. Mosul, bisected by the Tigris River, is the group's remaining major stronghold in Iraq and the country's second-largest city.

The battle for Mosul has been the most complex

fight against Islamic State in Iraq, involving some 80,000 government-allied troops backed by U.S.-led airstrikes. The vast majority of the battle has been executed by Iraq's elite Counter-Terrorism Service, a relatively small U.S.-trained force.

The fight has been characterized by halting advances in the crowded city of 1.2 million residents.

The Iraqi government urged civilians to remain in Mosul in the hope of avoiding a mass exodus, which aid organizations operating crowded refugee camps near the city wouldn't have been able to handle.

But their presence has prevented Iraqi forces from using heavy weaponry against the militants, who have sent waves of suicide car bombs at advancing troops.

The United Nations said this month that civilians represent 47% of all casualties in the battle, compared with a 15% rate in previous fights against the terror group. Islamic State first took root by appealing to Sunni Muslim grievances against Iraq's Shiite-dominated government.

The fighting has displaced some 120,000 Mosul residents, while 700,000 others are believed to be living under increasingly difficult conditions in the city's western side, the U.N. said.

The U.N. and residents said civilians are often caught in the crossfire between militants and government forces. Other times, Islamic State fighters target them.

Coalition airstrikes razed the bridges connecting east and west Mosul before and after the official Oct. 17 start of the operation. Their destruction prevented Islamic State from resupplying, significantly reducing the group's ability to deploy car bombs, Iraqi commanders have said.

Coupled with a shift in Iraqi troop deployments in late December, the fight quickly picked up pace as army and police divisions were moved to better support counterterrorism forces.

Mosul has been spared the wholesale destruction of some cities once occupied by Islamic State, including Ramadi. In the east, large-scale damage has been limited to

blocks rather than entire neighborhoods as residents there largely remained in their homes.

The relatively low destruction level has quickly allowed areas of east Mosul to return to a semblance of normalcy, with shops reopening and the resumption of services including electricity and clean running water.

Basic services have proved difficult and time-consuming to restore in Ramadi and in Fallujah, which was cleared of militants in June.

The U.N. on Tuesday said it had helped reopen 30 schools in east Mosul, allowing 16,000 students to return to their studies. Parents said they had kept their children out of school during more than two years of Islamic State rule, as curricula centered on the group's brutal ideology.

"Just a few weeks ago, these neighborhoods were gripped by violence," said Peter Hawkins, Unicef's representative in Iraq. "Today, girls and boys are heading back to class."

The
Washington
Post

Eastern side of Mosul recaptured from Islamic State, Iraqi prime minister says

<https://www.facebook.com/lovedaymorris?fref=ts>

BAGHDAD — Iraqi forces have recaptured the entire eastern side of Mosul, the Iraqi prime minister said Tuesday, marking a midpoint in a grueling battle for the Islamic State-held city.

The news comes three months after Iraqi forces, backed by a U.S.-led coalition, launched an offensive for the city, a fight that has stretched on longer than officials predicted. The operation to retake the northern city

from the Islamic State is the largest and most complex the country has seen since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. Army and police forces, militia fighters, Kurdish peshmerga soldiers and elite counterterrorism troops are all participating in the effort.

The forces initially were met with hundreds of car bombs, waylaying their progress and inflicting heavy casualties. The presence of civilians also slowed their efforts, and it soon became clear that Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's vow to recapture

the city by the end of 2016 was impossible to fulfill.

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In recent weeks, however, with the city's bridges all bombed, militants on the eastern side of the Tigris River have been besieged and unable to resupply.

"We have seen a major collapse in the ranks of the enemy," Abadi said in a televised news conference. He said many militants had tried to flee in recent days.

Abadi urged Iraqi forces to "move quickly" to recapture the western part of the city. But the Islamic State has had a year and a half to build up there, and Iraqi forces are expected to face another fierce battle.

[I thought, this is it: One man's escape from an Islamic State mass execution]

Mosul's western side is more densely packed with civilians — some 750,000 according to Iraqi military estimates — and Iraqi forces have been trying to keep people in their homes to avoid a humanitarian crisis. The United Nations on Tuesday warned that civilians on the western side were at “extreme risk.”

“We hope that everything is done to protect the hundreds of thousands of people who are across the river in the west,” Lise Grande, U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Iraq, said in a statement. “We fear for their lives. They

can be killed by booby-traps and in crossfire and could be used as human shields.”

Reports of soaring food prices and intermittent water and electricity supplies were “distressing,” Grande said.

The fight for the western side will be the Islamic State's last stand in the city and one of great symbolic importance for the group. It was the capture of Mosul by the militants in 2014 that prompted the Islamic State to declare its caliphate. In a sermon in the city's Great Mosque, the Islamic State's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, urged Muslims around the world to follow him.

“The west is going to be challenging just like the east was,” Maj. Gen.

Joseph Martin, head of ground forces for the U.S.-led coalition, said in an interview earlier this month. “We have an enemy that has had over two years to prepare.”

Older parts of Mosul, where streets are narrower, make the terrain more complicated than in the east, he noted. “They've got to clear thousands of kilometers of streets, hundreds of thousands of rooms in excess of 100,000 buildings, and they've got to do that while discriminating between the enemy and the civilians,” he said of the fight ahead for Iraqi forces.

Some Iraqi commanders are hopeful that the militants have already expended much of their firepower trying to hold on to the

east. “They used all their leaders and suicide bombers on the eastern side,” said Brig. Gen. Yahya Rasoul, a spokesman for Iraq's joint operations command.

Much of the fighting inside city limits has been led by Iraq's elite counterterrorism troops, who said they had finished clearing their sector last week. Since then, the army has been battling to retake a few remaining neighborhoods in the northeast. Those neighborhoods were cleared of booby traps and explosives Tuesday, Rasoul said.

Morris reported from Jerusalem.

**The
New York
Times**

Iran, Russia and Turkey Agree to Enforce Syria Cease-Fire, but Don't Explain How

Anne Barnard and Hwaida Saad

ASTANA, Kazakhstan — Two days of talks over the Syrian civil war concluded on Tuesday with an agreement by Iran, Russia and Turkey to enforce a fragile partial cease-fire. But neither the Syrian government nor the rebel fighters — who briefly met face to face for the first time in nearly six years of war — signed the agreement.

While the three powers agreed to establish a mechanism to monitor and enforce the nearly month-old cease-fire, they did not say what the mechanism should look like, deferring that issue for now.

The statement, at least on paper, brought Iran on board with recent new cooperation between Russia and Turkey, and it strengthened Turkey's commitment to separating rebel groups it supports from jihadist groups.

But representatives of the Syrian delegations — both from the government and opposition — immediately expressed reservations. They emphasized that they had not signed on to a document that had been brokered by the main sponsors of the warring sides in the country, but not by Syrians themselves. Russia is the most powerful backer of the Syrian government, which is also closely allied with Iran, while Turkey has been among the main supporters of rebel groups.

Despite the supposed cease-fire, new clashes were reported in Wadi Barada, a besieged rebel-held area and source for most of the drinking water for Damascus, the Syrian capital. Water supplies have been cut off for weeks, and the

government and rebel sides have blamed each other.

The agreement among Iran, Russia and Turkey was announced a day after the Syrian factions exchanged harsh words at the start of the talks, held in Astana, capital of Kazakhstan.

A main result of the meeting was to firm up Russia's growing role in the Syria diplomacy, establishing the Astana talks as a part of, but not a replacement for, the Geneva process that has been spearheaded for years by the United Nations and the United States. The new document said meetings in Astana, a capital five time zones east of Geneva with close ties to Turkey but firmly within Russia's sphere of influence, would be a forum to discuss specific issues that come up within the Geneva framework.

There had been tentative hopes among some rebel negotiators that Russia might be ready to take on a more active role in seeking a political compromise. But there was no concrete progress on political issues, which were excluded from the narrowly focused talks.

Syrian Rebels Want Peace First

The Syrian opposition delegation has yet to see a draft of an agreement for a cease-fire in Syria's civil war, a spokesman, Osama Abu Zeid, said Tuesday, and will not agree to anything until violence ends on the ground.

By REUTERS. Photo by Sergei Grits/Associated Press. Watch in Times Video »

Iran, Russia and Turkey affirmed their commitment “to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian

Arab Republic as a multiethnic, multireligious, nonsectarian and democratic state,” and their conviction “that there is no military solution to the Syrian conflict and that it can only be solved through a political process.” Those sentiments echo principles that the United Nations Security Council has laid out.

The countries also reiterated “their determination to fight jointly” against the Islamic State and against Al Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, formerly known as the Nusra Front, pledging to “separate” them from armed opposition groups. That could be an important provision, since the Syrian government led by President Bashar al-Assad tends to classify all the opposition fighters indiscriminately as terrorist groups, and many have been unable or unwilling to separate themselves from forces of the former Nusra Front on the battlefield.

The agreement did not specify how such a separation might occur, however.

In Astana, government representatives said that they still considered the rebel fighters to be terrorists and were waiting to see if Turkey followed through on the agreement. Rebel negotiators said the meetings had given them hope that Russia might be open to hearing rebel concerns and become more willing to press the Syrian government for a political resolution, but such optimism did not extend to Iran, which had stuck to a harder line.

Staffan de Mistura, the special United Nations envoy for Syria who had been invited to the Astana talks, said in an interview after the joint statement was issued that in

the interactions he had watched between Russia and opposition commanders, “The body language was of people who were seriously talking to each other and taking each other seriously.”

At the same time, rebels are concerned that the new agreement puts Iran in the position of taking part in a cease-fire that its own militias have been accused of violating.

The next round of talks between the Syrian government and the opposition will occur on Feb. 8 in Geneva, according to the announcement by the three countries. But diplomats in Astana said it was unclear if that date was firm.

Bashar al-Jaafari, the Syrian ambassador to the United Nations who led his government's delegation to the talks in Astana, said an offensive by the government and its allied troops would continue, arguing that Qaeda-linked “terrorist groups” controlled Ain al-Fijeh, a town in Wadi Barada. Residents in Wadi Barada say that some fighters from the former Nusra Front are present there, but that they are at most a tiny minority.

Also on Tuesday, United Nations officials appealed for more than \$8 billion in funding this year to help millions of people displaced by the Syrian conflict.

The United Nations refugee agency is asking for \$4.6 billion to help at least 4.8 million people who have fled abroad, mainly to Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and around \$3.4 billion for an estimated 13.5 million internally displaced Syrians.

Russia leaves Syria talks with tentative plan. Up next: get US involved.

The Christian Science Monitor

January 24, 2017 Moscow—Russia appears to have at least partially succeeded in its bid to kick-start a viable Syrian peace process without the participation of the United States.

But as negotiations between warring Syrian parties, sponsored by the new "troika" of regional powers Russia, Iran, and Turkey, ended Tuesday, no one appeared to be congratulating themselves.

While the results lay the groundwork for more comprehensive talks next month that would involve the US – a key Russian goal – many pitfalls remain, including some rooted within the troika's individual competing visions for the region.

The two-day meeting took place in the Kazakh capital of Astana, and brought together the Syrian government and some elements of the armed opposition for the first time in five years (though they refused to talk directly to one another). It saw all sides agree to prolong and strengthen a shaky cease-fire established last month, and the creation of a "trilateral commission" – Russia, Iran, and Turkey, to enforce it.

A final statement included pledges to continue the war against irreconcilable jihadist forces such as the Islamic State and Syria's one-time Al Qaeda affiliate Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly called Jabhat al-Nusra). The signatories also vowed to move forward to sketch outlines of a wider political settlement that could be brought to UN-sponsored talks in Geneva, slated for Feb. 8. Those talks would be attended by

major outside powers such as the US, the European Union, and Saudi Arabia.

Neither the rebels nor the Syrian government signed the final statement.

"Previous Geneva conferences [on the Syrian war] were a failure. This Astana process was not conceived as a way to circumvent Geneva, but to bring it back on track. It looks like a good partial success," says Vladimir Sotnikov, a Middle East expert with the official Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow. "Nobody was expecting a big breakthrough, but there is a solid hope that the Astana meeting could lead to the resumption of real talks."

For Moscow, the appearance of progress is critical, because one factor underlying its intervention in Syria in September 2015 was a desire to recalibrate its troubled relationship with the US, to win American acceptance of Russia as an indispensable player in forging any Syrian settlement. Despite several hopeful starts over the past year, prospects for a joint US-Russia led peace effort basically crashed and burned amid last fall's brutal Russian-led assault on rebel-held east Aleppo. But the Kremlin remains keen on a Syrian peace deal with the US involved.

Thanks to an unexpected rapprochement between Russia and Turkey, which had previously backed armed overthrow of Syria's Assad regime, Moscow was able to put together the "troika" that sponsored the Astana talks, and which might play a strong future role in framing and enforcing a peace settlement.

"It's clear that the battle for Aleppo changed the equation in crucial ways. It was hard, even cruel, but it created preconditions" for a peace process, says Fyodor Lukyanov, editor of Russia in Global Affairs, a leading Moscow-based foreign policy journal. "The deal with Turkey was another decisive change, because the Turks are able to bring a big part of the militant opposition to a bargaining table."

For the moment, at least, this puts Moscow in the catbird seat. "Russia is now the leading outside player in search for a settlement in Syria," says Mr. Sotnikov. But it's a shaky and perhaps temporary position, he admits.

Syrian government representative Bashar Jaafari hailed the outcome at Astana as a "success," adding that important obstacles have been overcome. Only a fraction of the hundreds of armed rebel groups in Syria were represented in Astana – mostly those backed by Turkey – but even they complained that the cease-fire was being violated by Syrian forces, and objected strenuously to the Shiite power Iran and its Lebanese Hezbollah allies being named as cease-fire enforcers.

Iran, which has a large military presence in Syria, is opposed to widening the process to include the US or its regional Arab allies such as Saudi Arabia. Russia's relationship with the other "troika" partner, Turkey, has been so mercurial over the past two years that it does not inspire much long-term confidence, Russian experts say.

They add that no lasting solution for Syria will ever be cemented without

the blessing of at least one large Arab state, probably Saudi Arabia. Though demands for the immediate removal of Bashar al-Assad have abated, his continued long-term leadership in Syria remains as bitter a bone of contention as it has been for the past six years.

Much will depend on the attitude of Trump administration, which agreed to send the US ambassador to Kazakhstan to observe the Astana talks after Moscow issued a belated invitation to the US to attend last week.

Mr. Trump has hinted that he may abandon the Obama policy of supporting regime change in Syria, and cooperate with Russia to fight the agreed-upon main enemy: the Islamic State and extreme Islamist forces in general. Yet Russian experts say they are certain the US will insist on a major role in any final settlement in the region.

"The US basically exited the process because not only Russia, but all the main players on the ground had trouble understanding what Obama wanted to achieve in Syria," says Mr. Lukyanov. "Trump has hinted that his policy will be different, but he has not articulated what it will be. So, we hope Astana could be an important moment for finding a path to peace in Syria, and maybe a start to repairing the US-Russia relationship." But now everyone is waiting for Trump, he suggests.

Iran's Rouhani Sees Support Slip in Poll

Asa Fitch in Dubai and Aresu

Eqbal in Tehran

Jan. 25, 2017 12:01 a.m. ET

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is losing some public support ahead of a May election, according to a new opinion poll, potentially signaling a shift toward his hard-line opponents within the ruling clerical establishment following the country's historic nuclear deal.

The survey results paint a picture of an Iranian public wary of the trust Mr. Rouhani placed in the U.S. and other world powers when his

administration negotiated the deal, and skeptical about the economic benefits they thought it would bring.

Conducted in December for the University of Maryland, the survey is based on telephone interviews with 1,000 Iranians and provides a gauge of public opinion in a country where independent polling is rare.

Some 69% of Iranians surveyed said they viewed Mr. Rouhani either very favorably or somewhat favorably. That represents a significant decline from the roughly 82% who saw him very favorably or somewhat favorably in a June poll from the university. The share of

respondents who view him very favorably has fallen steadily from 61% in August 2015 to 28% in the new poll.

"Rouhani's popularity is taking a hit primarily because he is perceived to have failed to deliver on his campaign promises," said Amir Farmanesh, the president and chief executive of Toronto-based IranPoll.com, which conducted the survey on the school's behalf.

About 51% said the country's economic conditions were worsening, up from 43% in June. Almost three-quarters of the Iranians surveyed said the deal

hadn't improved people's living conditions.

Yet Mr. Rouhani has maintained considerable popularity in part because he has successfully cast himself in a different mold from his predecessor, hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

"People are emotional," said Ali Pakzad, the editor in chief of *Asr Eqtesad*, an economic newspaper. "They remember the experience of 40%-plus inflation and the economic crisis of 2009 that dragged into 2013. They are critical of Mr. Rouhani, but if they see any

approach similar to Ahmadinejad's, they will turn back on it."

IranPoll is a subsidiary of People Analytics, which specializes in polling in countries where it is challenging to operate. IranPoll has conducted polls of Iranians since 2006.

The latest poll has a margin of error of 3.2%.

"The economy is perceived as getting worse," Mr. Farmanesh said. "The [nuclear deal] is perceived to not be delivering the promised benefits. The cherished nuclear program is perceived to have been gutted, and there have been little perceived gains on civil liberties."

Yet the practical effects of Mr. Rouhani's apparent fall in popularity remain difficult to gauge within Iran's opaque political system, overseen by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Mr. Khamenei, a hard-liner who has final say in most matters of state, has broad sway over the Guardian Council, a body that supervises elections and must approve political candidates. The council has excluded prominent candidates before, although there has been no suggestion that Mr. Rouhani won't be certified.

Mr. Rouhani won the presidency in 2013 on a platform of improving economic fortunes by opening the country to the world after an eight-year financial decline under Mr. Ahmadinejad. Around the time Mr. Rouhani took office, the value of Iran's currency had fallen sharply, and inflation had been skyrocketing at above a 40% annual clip.

Mr. Rouhani's aims coalesced in the nuclear deal struck with the U.S. and five other world powers in 2015, under which Tehran agreed to place curbs on its disputed nuclear program in exchange for relief from

international sanctions that isolated its economy.

Inflation has been tamed under Mr. Rouhani and economic growth prospects are reasonably strong—the economy is expected to expand by 4.1% this year, according to the International Monetary Fund.

But Iranians said in the poll that they haven't seen much of an economic improvement since the deal took effect last January.

Benefits stemming from the deal could prove even more elusive under new U.S. President Donald Trump, who vowed during his campaign to prioritize dismantling the deal, which had been a foreign-policy cornerstone for the Obama administration but was opposed by many Republican lawmakers.

In another setback for Mr. Rouhani, one of his most vocal political supporters, former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, died of a heart attack this month.

A close companion of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Islamic Republic's founding figure, Mr. Rafsanjani had been uniquely able to straddle lines between hard-liners and the moderates he came to favor later in life.

Mohammad Reza Aref, a parliament member and leading ally of Mr. Rouhani, said Tuesday that Mr. Rafsanjani's absence was a challenge, but the president's priority should be securing a high turnout in May.

Mr. Rouhani's hopes for reelection are bolstered by the absence of a popular hard-line opponent. While conservatives' favorability ratings have improved in recent months, when IranPoll asked whether likely voters would favor the president over two potential conservative candidates, he won handily.

Write to Asa Fitch at asa.fitch@wsj.com



Trump Can Have This Iran Deal or No Iran Deal

Robbie Gramer | 44 mins ago

Ever since Donald Trump told the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) that his "No. 1 priority is to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran," the nuclear agreement has faced frequent predictions of its demise. Trump's election was seen as heralding the death knell of the deal: On the campaign trail, after all, he said the Islamic Republic was the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism, a threat across the Middle East, and a country that has covert cells ready to inflict carnage around the globe. Allowing Iran access to billions of dollars in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program, he argued, was not in America's or the world's interests.

Opponents of the deal have clung to the AIPAC speech ever since Trump delivered it in March. But their hopes that he will abolish the agreement, or at least pare it back, always rested on shaky ground. Trump was unable to sustain his own argument during the speech, shifting dramatically just six minutes after he'd promised to scrap the agreement. "At the very least, we must enforce the terms of the previous deal to hold Iran totally accountable," he said.

Confirmation hearings for senior officials in the incoming administration have laid bare the gulf between Trump's campaign rhetoric and realistic policy options. His new defense secretary said at his confirmation hearing that America must honor the deal, and

his nominee for CIA director placed the emphasis on enforcement, saying the agency must be "rigorously objective" on Iran. Neither spoke of a renegotiation.

International inspectors say Tehran is complying with the agreement.

International inspectors say Tehran is complying with the agreement. The one technical breach — excess production of heavy water that can be used to produce plutonium, a possible route to a bomb — was quickly rectified when Iran shipped it out of the country last November. Officials in Tehran said they had seen the heavy water restriction as a guideline, not a hard target. Iran has its own grievances, blaming U.S. banking restrictions for making it hard for European money to reach Tehran. Iran's argument that this amounts to a breach is difficult to sustain. Such financial restrictions have long been in force under sanctions imposed for non-nuclear reasons, such as human rights or terrorism, which fell outside the nuclear deal.

There is no doubt that initial hopes for a broader Iran-U.S. détente withered in 2016. In Tehran, the regime's opinion of the United States remains defined by the 1979 revolution: Just days before Trump's electoral victory in November, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said the campaign had proved what he referred to as the moral shortcomings of the United States. The one communication channel that Khamenei allowed — between Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad

Zarif and his U.S. counterpart, John Kerry — has also expired, with no signs of a replacement. The U.S. Navy and ships from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps continue to skirmish around the Strait of Hormuz. A serious clash seems possible.

The debate surrounding the Iran deal's future under Trump, however, has largely ignored one salient fact: The nuclear agreement was never between Washington and Tehran. It involves five other major partners — Britain, China, France, Russia, and Germany — none of which are interested in renegotiating the "better deal" that Trump has said he can get. The agreement has also been enshrined in a U.N. Security Council resolution, which if violated by the United States would enrage not only Tehran but also the other signatories.

"If unreasonable moves are made by Trump, and Iran continues to abide by the nuclear commitments, Europe, Russia, and China are highly likely to side with Iran, and the unified stance on sanctions in pre-2013 days will be broken," said Ellie Geranmayeh, a policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

The fracturing of this international consensus would make any multilateral effort, akin to the past sanctions regime that brought Iran to the negotiating table in the first place, impossible. Iran has already begun to open its doors to foreign investors: It has increased its global oil exports to pre-sanctions levels and signed major business

contracts with foreign companies, including multibillion-dollar orders with Airbus and Boeing to replace its civilian air fleet. The latter contract was Iran's first deal with a U.S. aviation firm since the Islamic revolution of 1979, marking a concrete sign of change within the regime.

Europe's desire to do business has been led by Germany — though the gains have been smaller than anticipated. European banks, which were previously fined by U.S. regulators for breaching sanctions, remain wary of doing business in Tehran. Russia, China, and increasingly Turkey have endeavored to fill the gap, seeking to make deals in local currencies rather than the dollar.

The quest for investment explains Iran's determination to stick to the nuclear deal. Khamenei, who has the final word on all policy matters in the Islamic Republic, backed the accord for economic reasons. The 77-year-old supreme leader wants Iran to overtake Saudi Arabia as the Middle East's dominant economic power, adding to Tehran's political and military strength. Insiders in Tehran say this was the biggest factor in his decision to support President Hassan Rouhani's government in the nuclear talks. Despite his skepticism of diplomacy, Khamenei conceded that Shiite Iran could never supplant Sunni Saudi Arabia economically unless sanctions were lifted.

The nuclear deal has already served as a catalyst for economic growth in Iran. When Rouhani was

elected in 2013, the economy was in a deep recession. For the six-month period ending in September last year, it grew at 7.4 percent. No wonder Rouhani wants to keep the deal in place.

"Renegotiation is out of the question," the Iranian president said last week.

"Renegotiation is out of the question," the Iranian president said last week.

But there remains one way Trump could unilaterally sabotage the agreement. As president, he could allow waivers of past Iran sanctions, signed by former President Barack Obama under executive order, to lapse. Doing so would reinstate penalties against non-Americans for dealing with Iran in banking, insurance, energy, shipping, and many other industries. This would unwind the whole agreement, according to Geranmayeh. "If Trump fails to renew these [waivers], sanctions snap back, essentially," she said.

Refusing to sign the waivers would seem to go against the advice of

retired Gen. James Mattis, Trump's choice for secretary of defense and a frequent critic of Iran. At his confirmation hearing on Jan. 12, Mattis pointed out the undesirable consequences of the United States going rogue.

"It is an imperfect arms control agreement; it's not a friendship treaty. But when America gives her word, we have to live up to it and work with our allies," he said.

Trump's pick for CIA director, Rep. Mike Pompeo, is also outspoken on Iran, but he struck a different note in his confirmation hearing. The Kansas congressman named Russia, China, North Korea, and the Islamic State when asked to list the biggest threats to the United States, omitting Iran from the category. "While I opposed the Iran deal as a member of Congress, if confirmed, my role will change," to verifying that Iran was complying with its terms, Pompeo said. The Iranians, he added, are "professionals at cheating."

In Tehran, the biggest concerns are Trump's general unpredictability,

the "Iranophobia" of his cabinet appointees, and that pressure from Congress could derail the deal. On Jan. 21, one day after Trump's inauguration, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he intended to discuss Iran with the new president. The Iranian government isn't sanguine about Trump, and both Khamenei and Rouhani have become increasingly bellicose about the United States since November.

But it's also true that Iran no longer feels isolated. Under the anti-Western presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran was not considered a worthy diplomatic partner by many countries. Rouhani was elected to change that — and he has. The president, who faces a re-election race in May, still aims to stop Tehran and Washington from slipping toward confrontation, but he and other Iranian officials believe they are better positioned to respond to a hostile U.S. administration than before.

"Iran has the option of restarting its nuclear program if it is forced to do so," said Foad Izadi, a U.S.-

educated professor at the University of Tehran.

For all of Trump's barbs, his stance on Iran has been littered with as many contradictions as in other policy areas. He has said he is not interested in regime change in other countries and argued that Iran and Russia are fighting terrorism in Syria and Iraq more effectively than the United States. Such statements, combined with his "Make America Great Again" slogan, suggest that as president he will place greater emphasis on domestic policy than on international affairs.

If he tries to reverse the Iran deal, however, he could very well find himself disappointed. Trump admitted in the AIPAC speech that he was a "newcomer to politics." Managing relations with Tehran will certainly be a challenging introduction.



Israel plans West Bank settlement expansion amid policy shifts in Washington (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/william.booth.5074?fref=ts>

JERUSALEM — Israel announced a bold plan on Tuesday to construct 2,500 housing units in Jewish settlements in the West Bank, a decision made by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu just two days after he spoke with President Trump.

The move appears to be a clear sign that the Israelis no longer fear American criticism of settlement construction, which is condemned by most of the world.

For eight years, Netanyahu and his right-wing allies bristled at the harsh condemnations of settlement growth by the Obama administration, which referred to the Israeli communities as "illegitimate" and "an obstacle to peace."

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Trump, however, has signaled a more accommodating stance toward Israel. He has called for moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, a city claimed as the

capital of both Israel and a potential future Palestinian state. Trump's pick for U.S. ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, is a hard-line opponent of the two-state solution and a supporter of the settlement enterprise in the West Bank.

The Jewish settlements have grown to house more than 400,000 Jewish residents in the West Bank and more than 200,000 in East Jerusalem. The settlers believe that they are living on land granted to them by God and won in military victories against Arab armies hostile to the Jewish state.

Just days after President Trump entered the White House, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has lifted a ban on construction of new settlements in East Jerusalem. Just days after President Trump entered the White House, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has lifted a ban on construction of new settlements. (Reuters)

(Reuters)

"We're building — and will continue to build," Netanyahu said Tuesday.

[In video, Jerusalem's mayor lauds Trump and chides Obama]

Netanyahu's promise to grow the settlements comes a little more than

a week after diplomats from 70 countries met in Paris and criticized settlement building as a threat to a two-state solution. In December, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution condemning the settlements, and Secretary of State John F. Kerry spoke out against them in a speech after the U.N. vote.

Asked at his daily briefing whether Trump supported the newly approved construction, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said that "Israel continues to be a huge ally of the United States," and Trump "wants to grow closer with Israel to make sure it gets the full respect that it deserves in the Middle East."

Referring to a Monday announcement of a February meeting with Netanyahu, Spicer said, "We'll have a conversation with the prime minister."

Lior Amihai, a leader of the Israeli watchdog group Settlement Watch, said the 2,500 units represented the largest expansion since U.S.-led peace negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel broke down in April 2014.

Amihai cautioned that the announcement of future homes for

the settlers did not guarantee fast-track construction. For the units to be built, the government needs to publish tenders and accept bids from builders.

But the potential sites could carry deep political resonance in the United States.

About 100 of the possible new units are in Beit El, a West Bank settlement supported by Friedman. The family of Trump's son-in-law and newly appointed White House adviser Jared Kushner has donated to the charities that support Beit El.

Palestinians called the Israeli move a possible sign of more vigorous settlement construction.

"It is evident that Israel is exploiting the inauguration of the new American administration to escalate its violations and the prevention of any existence of a Palestinian state," said Hanan Ashrawi, a leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

A spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said the Israeli plans undermine efforts to bring peace to the Middle East and will promote extremism.

The spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, called on the

international community to take a "real and serious position" against Israel's plans.

Jordan's information minister, Mohammed al-Momani, said the settlement plan "deals a tough blow to efforts to revive the peace process."

The Europeans also expressed their concern. "It is regrettable that Israel is proceeding with this policy, despite the continuous serious international concern and objections, which have been constantly raised at all levels," the European Union's diplomatic service said Tuesday.

[Israeli settlements grew on Obama's watch. They may be poised for a boom on Trump's.]

During the Obama administration, settlement construction announcements came under increasingly bitter criticism, with the State Department suggesting that the moves undermined Middle East peace and raised

questions about Netanyahu's true commitment to a two-state solution with the Palestinians.

"We are returning to normal life in Judea and Samaria," Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said in a statement announcing the plans, using the biblical terms for the West Bank.

In the same announcement, Lieberman approved the construction of a Palestinian industrial park outside Hebron in the West Bank.

"It will be one of the largest industrial zones in the West Bank, in which we are planning to set up warehouse and fuel storage infrastructure, along with other elements," Lieberman said.

The announcement of 2,500 housing units comes just two days after a Jerusalem planning committee approved the construction of 560 housing units in mostly Arab East Jerusalem, on territory that most of the world

considers occupied. Israel disputes this.

Israeli officials stressed that most of the 2,500 new units in the West Bank would be built in what they call "settlement blocs," densely populated lands that leaders here say will always remain in Israel, regardless of any future peace deal with the Palestinians.

Jeremy Ben-Ami, head of the liberal Washington-based group J Street, called the lack of swift American condemnation "unprecedented" in 50 years of U.S. foreign policy on the issue.

"It may really feel good for Israel's government not to feel the sting of an American rebuke in the wake of this latest announcement," said Ben-Ami, whose group supports a two-state deal between Israel and Palestinians. "But it doesn't change the fact that the world has made it very clear that these actions have no legal validity."

The settlers disagreed.

"We hope that this is just the beginning of a wave of new building across our ancestral homeland after eight very difficult years," said Oded Revivi, foreign envoy for the Yesha Council, which represents Israeli settlers living in the West Bank. "We hope to continue building a peaceful future with the blessing of the new Trump administration."

The number of new units approved is large, but not unprecedented. During Kerry's nine months of ultimately failed negotiations between Israel and Palestinians, Israel agreed to release Palestinian prisoners. After Israel freed 26 Palestinians in October 2013 — many of them convicted of murder — Israel announced plans to build and market 3,500 units in the West Bank as a way to quell fierce criticism from Netanyahu's hard-line right flank.

Carol Morello and Karen DeYoung in Washington contributed to this report.



David Ignatius : What does Israel want from America?

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TEL AVIV

President Trump's embrace of Israel poses an unlikely dilemma for leaders of the Jewish state: They have to decide what they want from America, and on that question, there's sharp disagreement.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu moved to seize the Trump moment Tuesday by announcing that Israel plans to construct 2,500 housing units in West Bank settlements. Just two days before, he and Trump had what the new president called a "very nice" phone conversation. "We're building — and will continue to build," an emboldened Netanyahu proclaimed Tuesday.

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But Netanyahu's quick move angered some other Israeli officials, who argue that more settlements will push Israel toward annexation of the West Bank that would mean the end of the two-state solution. Isaac Herzog, head of the largest opposition bloc, said his supporters would resist a pro-settlement agenda that they see as a threat to Israel's status as a Jewish democratic state.

Trump's election offers what many Israelis have dreamed of — a

relaxation of U.S. pressure on Israel to make concessions to the Palestinians. But for some, it's a case of "be careful what you wish for." Israel's views may now be decisive — but the country remains conflicted 50 years after the West Bank was seized in the 1967 war.

(Reuters)

Just days after President Trump entered the White House, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has lifted a ban on construction of new settlements in East Jerusalem. Just days after President Trump entered the White House, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has lifted a ban on construction of new settlements. (Reuters)

A panoramic view of the puzzles facing Israel in the age of Trump was presented this week at a conference hosted by the Institute for National Security Studies. The gathering was attended by nearly every top Israeli official other than Netanyahu. The voices were sharply divergent.

"Israel must make a choice between separation and annexation," argued Tzipi Livni, a parliament member who is one of the strongest advocates for a peace deal. "With a new administration, there is no longer the same pressure from Washington that Israel experienced previously. Israel now has the opportunity — indeed, the obligation — to decide what kind of future it seeks."

Proposals for what Israel should request from Trump ranged across the spectrum. Naftali Bennett, who heads the right-wing Jewish Home party, used Trump's signature line, "You're fired," to describe what he would say to Israeli officials who advocate what he described as a failed peace process. He presented a plan to formally declare Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank.

Herzog, in sharp disagreement, told the conference that Israel should start moving toward an eventual Palestinian state. He outlined a 10-year transition plan that would conclude with resolving "final status" issues such as Jerusalem and the rights of refugees. The alternative to such a separation process, he said, was Israel's "suicide" as a democratic Jewish nation.

Israeli public opinion is divided, but according to a poll presented at the conference, 59 percent of Jewish citizens favor a two-state solution and more than 60 percent support withdrawal from at least some settlements. Most Israelis, including peace advocates, favor retention of large settlement blocks around Jerusalem in any final deal.

Americans attending the conference urged Israel to be cautious in its requests to Trump. "It's hard to say what Donald Trump will do, because I'm not sure he himself knows," said Martin Indyk, a former U.S. ambassador to Israel who was the Obama administration's special envoy during its push for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

Bloomberg

Leonid Bershidsky : The Trump-Putin Parallels Pile Up

Reports that President Donald Trump travels with a claque -- a group of supporters that creates the impression of support for him at functions like a recent meeting with Central Intelligence Agency staff -- have added to a growing list of ways his administration resembles Russian President Vladimir Putin's.

The parallels began in earnest with Trump's pre-inauguration news conference, when Alexei Kovalev, known for debunking Russian government propaganda, compared the event to Putin's circus-like annual meetings with the press. The piece resonated with Western journalists, who are not used to being denied questions by the president and also expect that he will be nice to them. It also resonated with their Russian colleagues, who have been dealing with carefully staged press appearances and punitive access restrictions since Putin's first term in power.

Over the weekend, Trump press secretary Sean Spicer all but invited comparisons to his Russian counterpart by offering "alternative facts" about the inauguration crowd's size. With a straight face, Putin's spokesman, Dmitri Peskov, has denied the involvement of Russian troops in Crimea and eastern Ukraine and claimed that a \$620,000 watch he wore was a present from his wife, an Olympic figure skater.

Trump's preference for inviting his supporters to potentially tough rooms is shared by Putin as well. Earlier this month, Russian-language social networks throbbed with reports that several people kept reappearing in various meetings between Putin and "ordinary Russians." One of them, Larisa Sergukhina, was revealed to be a small-business owner working on government contracts. Even if, as Putin loyalists argued, the same people were legitimately invited to several meetings in a particular region, Putin's travels are carefully staged in a time-honored Russian tradition that dates back -- at least -- to Prince Grigory Potemkin. No group of people allowed to come close to Russia's leader is ever random, and you'll never see anyone heckling or berating Putin on television there. Everybody's always happy to see him.

The budding resemblance between Trump and Putin is, of course, unsettling to Americans. They are not used to a leader behaving like a czar. But Putin doesn't do his czar act because he likes it.

He is an introvert who doesn't enjoy the crowds and takes hours of preparation, in the swimming pool, the gym and generally on his own, to face the day. In large audiences, Putin often looks like he's suffering, with a grimace of tiredness and irritation. He's not a showy public speaker, and his greatest pride and pleasure when speaking or answering questions clearly comes from an almost supernatural grasp

of numbers and minutiae. And in meetings with "ordinary people," Putin is often wooden, hiding behind an uncomfortable grin and trying to simplify and roughen his speech. He is uncomfortable and awkward about touching flesh.

Few leaders have been so careful to hide his family from the limelight as Putin. His two daughters have lived under assumed names, and the Kremlin has cracked down on media attempts to report on their life and projects.

Putin's idea of a break is a hunting or fishing vacation in a remote area, with as few people around him as possible. But the czar routine includes the constant presence of an entourage. Although Peskov's credibility is usually low, he once provided a plausible explanation for the much-lampooned images of topless Putin fishing and riding a horse:

If you think he posed deliberately before the camera with a naked torso, you are mistaken, it's not so. In fact, Putin is often accompanied by his personal photographer and cameraman. And the president just lives his life -- he either works or has fun. Sometimes we persuade him to publish certain photos and videos. We have far more than has been published.

The new American president, by contrast, is gregarious. He is clearly drawn to the energy of crowds, and is an accomplished schmoozer. Unlike Putin, who is known to be

uncomfortable in the Kremlin's vast gilded interiors, Trump revels in all things gold. Trump's pride in his wife and children is always on full display. Trump is a showman, living a televised life and relishing the attention.

Perhaps the best way to describe the difference between grimly functional Putin and showy Trump is through wrestling videos.

Here's Trump at a World Wrestling Entertainment event:

And here's Putin giving a judo demonstration:

Putin operates in a bubble in part to protect a retiring, inward-looking man from unwanted interactions. It's essentially a shell.

Trump is creating a bubble because he wants to be admired, to win, always to be the best. He doesn't shrink from unnecessary contact as Putin does -- just from any reality in which he is not Number One. His bubble is an aquarium.

The striking difference between the two men doesn't preclude dictatorial tendencies in both. A flamboyant dictator, however, is likely more vulnerable than a reticent one -- something that should concern those who will help Trump prepare for inevitable negotiations with Putin.

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Frida Ghitis: Putin wants Yalta 2.0 and Trump may give it to him

Updated 7:53 AM ET, Wed January

and human rights around the world, she writes

25, 2017

Source: CNN

Trump on relations with Russia 00:32

Story highlights

- Russia's leader may have the stronger hand in a negotiation that could give him greater sway over eastern Europe while the U.S. gets little of strategic value in return, says Frida Ghitis
- The Trump-Putin relationship compromises the spread of democracy

Frida Ghitis is a world affairs columnist for The Miami Herald and World Politics Review, and a former CNN producer and correspondent. The views expressed in this commentary are her own.

(CNN)When Americans elected Donald Trump president, they unleashed a political earthquake whose magnitude the entire world is urgently trying to gauge. The list of concerns is far reaching, but for many, the most pressing is whether Trump will keep the United States as an advocate and defender of democracy, freedom, and self-determination. The question comes down to whether Trump is about to carry out a grand betrayal, known to many by the shorthand "Yalta 2.0."

The term refers to a historic meeting held in 1945, the final days of World War II between the Allies. Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill met in the Black Sea resort of Yalta, in Crimea, to decide the fate of post-war Europe. They carved out the continent for what was supposed to be a period leading to democracy.

What came out of Yalta, however, was a divided Europe, with the Soviet Union imposing repressive Communist regimes throughout its sphere of influence -- Eastern Europe and the Soviet Republics -- for nearly half a century.

Can Trump talk to the world like he's talked to America?

Eastern Europeans felt betrayed and abandoned, and the United States has been trying to atone for Yalta ever since the end of the Cold

War by backing efforts to develop democratic institutions, pledging to defend the new countries from aggression, and opening the doors of NATO to independent nations wishing to strengthen ties with the West.

That policy, along with America's overall commitment to the spread of democracy, human rights, and free markets, appears in doubt since Trump's election. After all, Trump has vowed more than a reset in relations with Moscow. He has vaguely drawn the outlines of what looks potentially like the wholesale demolition and reconstruction of America's post-war foreign policy.

Talk of a "New Yalta," has been floating for years. In fact, Russian President Vladimir Putin himself declared he seeks a "New Yalta" during a speech he gave in Crimea

in 2014, after Russia invaded and annexed the Ukrainian peninsula.

Mike Flynn: Trump team's weakest link (opinion)

After the annexation, Europe and the United States rejected Russia's unilateral move as a violation of international law and imposed economic sanctions. But Trump appears prepared to lift sanctions in exchange for yet-to-be-explained concessions.

Some in Trump's team, it's worth noting, seem unpersuaded by prospects for a new relationship with Moscow. Defense Secretary James Mattis noted that, "Since Yalta [meaning 1945] we have a long list of times we've tried to engage positively with Russia," with a "relatively short list of successes."

But earlier efforts have never come as part of a policy overhaul of the magnitude that Trump may envision. Previous presidents wanted resets with Russia, but not at the cost of abandoning America's fundamental policies and beliefs

In Trump's America, will Putin come first? (opinion)

Since 1945, while the USSR curtailed all manner of freedoms for people living in its sphere of influence, the U.S. crafted what is known as the liberal international order, a network of institutions and like-minded nations grounded on the pursuit of

democracy, national sovereignty, and personal and economic freedoms. The practice was far from perfect, but the ideal was always a guiding principle. That's why the US president is known as the "leader of the free world." But it is unclear whether that term should still apply.

After 1989, most Soviet republics and Eastern European countries tried to follow this path. Even Russia did for a time, until it started deviating towards autocracy.

Putin has chafed under NATO's expansion, and he doesn't want former satellites defying Russia's will. When the former Soviet Republic of Georgia got out of line, he didn't hesitate to use military force. When Ukraine looked set to sign an economic agreement with the European Union, Russia warned against the "suicidal step."

Russia's aggressive moves against Ukraine, its repeated taunts and warnings to other countries, and its muscular military, cyber, and propaganda moves beyond its borders have raised alarm, particularly in the Baltic States, which were sold out to the Soviet Union even before Yalta.

Can Trump talk to the world like he's talked to America?

Just before Trump took office, NATO deployed forces in Poland to deter Russia. Poland's defense minister declared the move meant

that "Yalta is over." But within a week Trump was the new president.

The fear of a Yalta 2.0 is so palpable that Poland's Foreign Minister traveled to Washington before the inauguration and tried to reassure his people, telling them he spoke with Trump advisors and -- "there will not be a new Yalta."

But nobody really knows what exactly Trump has in mind -- or how much he knows about the original Yalta and its consequences.

It's clear what Putin wants. His vision of Yalta 2.0 is an agreement in which Russia regains an old-fashioned sphere of influence, keeping the former Soviet Republics (Russia's "near abroad") on a short leash without US or NATO interference, and perhaps extending a version of that power over former Eastern European satellites. He wants NATO to stop expanding and become weaker; he wants the US and NATO and the US to relinquish their protective umbrella over Russia's sphere of influence. He wants the sanctions lifted. He wants the US to recognize Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. In short, he wants the U.S. to turn a blind eye on many of its values, commitments, and international law.

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What is less clear is what exactly the US would obtain in return.

Trump boasts of being a great negotiator, so perhaps he has another "secret plan," but it all remains achingly vague. His recent suggestion that Russia give up some nuclear weapons in exchange for lifting the sanctions indicated he's still trying to figure out what to ask in return. Russia, incidentally, seems uninterested in the disarmament idea.

The entire Trump-Putin relationship is clouded in controversy. But as far as we can tell Trump wants Russia's cooperation fighting ISIS, which is hardly a concession by Russia since Russia also wants to get rid of ISIS and, in fact, cooperation along those lines was already approved by the US.

The United States might also receive greater access to Russian natural resources, which would make American companies happy. Russia could presumably also provide backing on other issues, perhaps Iran. On the whole, however, it looks like a one-sided deal, like the kind Trump criticized Obama for making.

Of the many looming unknowns in Trump presidency, few have the potential to alter the course of history more than a possible Yalta 2.0

The New York Times Trump Injects High Risk Into Relations With China

Jane Perlez and Chris Buckley

BEIJING — For China, President Trump's scrapping of the American-brokered Pacific trade agreement is a chance to extend Beijing's economic and political influence. And it is an opportunity to deepen ties with its neighbors in Asia.

But with a cooling economy at home and a looming leadership shake-up, the last thing President Xi Jinping wants is a trade war, though officials are girding for that possibility. Rather, China's leaders crave stability and predictability.

Early signs indicate they may not get their wish. The Chinese fear that if Mr. Trump was willing to toss aside years of delicate negotiations with allies and decades of American trade policy, he could also go his own way on issues he has staked out with Beijing, including Taiwan and the South China Sea.

As if to bolster that point, on Monday — the same day that Mr. Trump withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the 12-nation trade agreement — his spokesman

said the United States would prevent China from accessing islands it claims in the South China Sea, a threat that one nationalist Chinese newspaper had already warned would mean war.

"This shows that Trump might act on his words," Deng Yuwen, a public affairs commentator in Beijing, said in an interview. "With previous presidents, their election promises weren't taken so seriously."

He added, "That means China must take his other warnings more seriously, especially about the South China Sea and Taiwan."

Mr. Trump's goal in squelching the trade agreement was to protect American jobs and businesses. His trade officials have argued that the deal does not do enough to help the United States or to contain China, which was not invited to join the agreement.

But in killing an agreement designed to limit China's vast economic reach in Asia and anchor America's presence in the world's fastest growing region, analysts

said, Mr. Trump created a void that President Xi was already practicing to fill.

President Trump signed presidential memoranda in the Oval Office on Monday, including an executive order ending America's leading role in the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. Doug Mills/The New York Times

Only last week, Mr. Xi was trying on the mantle of global leadership at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, suggesting that with the United States in retreat, China was prepared to step up as a champion of free trade and protector of the global environment.

Mr. Xi has kept China's economy behind high walls, and China remains the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, but inconsistencies have never ruffled the president.

"This is indeed a big win for China in the struggle for global leadership," said Zhang Baohui, director of the center for Asia Pacific studies at Lingnan University in Hong Kong. "Trump is surrendering

this opportunity to prove the continuing relevance of American primacy."

The death of the trade agreement is likely to accelerate Beijing's push for its alternative trade agreement, the China-centered Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

That agreement would exclude the United States and would reduce or eliminate tariffs on trade among China, Southeast Asian nations, Australia, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand. It includes few of the features of T.P.P. that would have been most awkward for Beijing, such as protections for independent labor unions and the environment, and requirements that state-owned enterprises behave more like commercial enterprises.

The agreement has stalled on rifts between Southeast Asian nations and the others, but Thailand's minister of commerce, Apiradi Tantraporn, said Monday that the talks "are expected to be expedited" without the T.P.P.

But the end of the T.P.P. will not be Mr. Trump's last word on trade with China.

His trade officials say they expect greater access to the Chinese market in exchange for the easy access Chinese goods have to the United States. And they appear prepared to risk a trade war, an expanding tit-for-tat contest of tariffs and other trade restrictions, to get it.

Mr. Trump's trade officials have threatened to impose high tariffs on Chinese goods, starting with heavily subsidized products such as steel and aluminum, imported into the United States. "It's a little weird that we have very low tariffs and China has very high tariffs," Wilbur Ross, the nominee for commerce secretary, said at his Senate confirmation hearing last week.

Jiujiang steel and rolling mills in Qianan, China. Mr. Trump's aides have said they are prepared to start a trade war, imposing high tariffs on Chinese goods the United States imports, starting with heavily subsidized products such as steel and aluminum. Ng Han Guan/Associated Press

Last week, China proposed allowing greater foreign investment in certain sectors, but there was little confidence the recommendations would be carried out in the foreseeable future, and American businesses said they felt less welcome in China than before.

While Mr. Trump's advisers say that China has more to lose than the United States in a trade war, Chinese officials told visiting American businessmen last week that Beijing was prepared. They had developed lists of punitive options they would take against the United States if Washington took the initiative, they said.

"The signals are very clear: If this is going to be a

trade war, China will reduce imports of American aircraft from Boeing and agricultural products," said Wu Xinbo, director of American studies at Fudan University in Shanghai. "We can turn to Europe, Australia and Canada for those products. And we know that 20 to 30 of the states in the United States with big agricultural lobbies and Boeing plants will be putting pressure on Congress."

A long-serving American trade expert in China agreed, saying China was prepared to go to the mat.

"Trump's trade team would be wise to shelve 'The Art of the Deal' and focus on the 'Art of War,' if they really want to know what's ahead in U.S.-China trade relations," said James Zimmerman, a managing partner of the Beijing office of the law firm Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton who has worked in China for 19 years. "China views Trump as a paper tiger that will likely back down on the complicated, thorny issues that are not negotiable. The Chinese also know that Trump won't risk a trade war lest the business community will be up in arms."

Others, though, detect anxiety, and read China's outward confidence as bluster. Bilahari Kausikan, ambassador at large for Singapore, said China had "a real insecurity about a trade war."

Both sides are likely to lose, he said, but China stands to lose more "since the U.S. domestic political order is not at stake in the same way as the Chinese Communist Party rule may be at stake."

The next few months, as Mr. Xi focuses on choosing new members of the ruling Standing Committee for his second five-year term, will be a particularly tense political period, and economic instability is the last

thing he needs. Similarly, he will try at all costs to appear strong to his domestic, nationalistic audience in the face of challenges from Mr. Trump on Taiwan and the South China Sea.

Mr. Trump has suggested that the One China policy, under which the United States recognizes the government of Beijing and not Taiwan, is not sacrosanct, a major concern for Mr. Xi.

Mr. Xi toured the Boeing assembly plant outside of Seattle in 2015. In a trade war, China could reduce imports of American aircraft from Boeing and agricultural products. Pool photo by Jason Redmond

"In a year of political transition, Xi cannot afford to come across as weak," said Paul Haenle, the director of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy in Beijing, who served as China director for the National Security Council under President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama. "Taiwan is the core of core issues for China — a bottom line. Many Chinese stress that it is nonnegotiable."

But for now, at least, the increased contention with Washington is likely to strengthen Mr. Xi's political hand at home by rallying public and elite support against a foreign threat, said Minxin Pei, a professor at Claremont McKenna College in California who studies Chinese politics and Chinese-American relations.

"Short term, it will almost certainly give the Chinese government a boost in its public support," Dr. Pei said in a telephone interview. "It helps Xi, because whenever there is such pressure from outside, Chinese officials tend to rally around the top leader."

Mr. Trump has also threatened China on control of territory it claims in the South China Sea. The

comments by Mr. Trump's press secretary, Sean Spicer, on Monday echoed those made by his nominee for secretary of state, Rex W. Tillerson, at his Senate confirmation hearing.

While Mr. Trump has not explained how he will keep China off islands where it has built airstrips and installed weapons, the comments by his appointees suggest the possibility of an American blockade. While Mr. Obama tried unsuccessfully to leverage American allies in the region to compel China to back down, Mr. Trump seems willing to abandon them and face China on his own.

That go-it-alone attitude has raised alarms at the Pentagon and among American Navy experts, who said such a blockade would be tantamount to war. The idea has also alarmed America's allies.

Australia, Washington's staunchest ally in the Asia Pacific region, would not participate in such a venture, its defense officials said, adding that a blockade could not be successful and could serve to persuade disenchanted American friends in the Asia Pacific to pivot toward China.

With Mr. Trump portending divisive action on many fronts, Mr. Xi was calm and prepared, his foreign minister, Wang Yi, suggested.

"Serene under the tumultuous clouds," Mr. Wang said, quoting a line from a poem by Mao Zedong, the founder of Communist China.

No one knows how long that will be the case.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Trump Places Tall Order on Trade

John Lyons and William Mauldin

Updated Jan. 24, 2017 5:31 p.m. ET

For President Donald Trump, quitting the already moribund Trans-Pacific Partnership may be the easiest part of his pledge to remake global trade relationships and protect jobs. His vows to confront China and renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement will be harder to fulfill.

Upending existing trade rules risks hurting U.S. firms that depend on sales to Canada, China and Mexico, the top three buyers of U.S. goods and services. Moreover, global

trade is anchored in regulations layered on since the end of the World War II, making it difficult to change terms without setting off a domino effect of unintended consequences. That will likely complicate the Trump administration's efforts to wrest economic concessions from existing trade partners.

"I don't think they have a realistic sense of what it takes," said Douglas Irwin, a Dartmouth College professor and historian of U.S. trade policy, referring to Trump administration officials. "It's going to take time and be very complicated, with the risk being making sure that

what you do is not completely disruptive to the U.S. economy."

Mr. Trump formally quit the 12-member TPP on Monday, killing a proposed trade agreement the Obama administration had already abandoned hope of getting ratified in Congress. During his campaign Mr. Trump decried the pact as an emblem of how U.S.-negotiated trade deals benefit low-wage nations in the developing world at the expense of U.S. manufacturing.

For the new president, the next step appears to be meeting leaders of Canada and Mexico and kicking off a high-priority renegotiation of Nafta, the two-decade-old trade

agreement that became a center of criticism in the 2016 campaign.

"Nafta is obviously first up, and that will be their trial," said Gary Hufbauer, senior trade expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, which backs trade liberalization. "It will be a while before you have this template that you're then going to apply to other countries."

Mr. Trump made it clear in Monday's withdrawal from the TPP that he prefers negotiating trade deals with one country at a time. Supporters of multinational deals say they make it easier to raise labor and other standards, and that

larger trading areas can attract reluctant countries to enter—a big reason why Japan, long protective of its agriculture and retail sectors, agreed to open them to join TPP.

Many conservatives prefer bilateral pacts out of concern that multilateral deals can reduce the sovereignty of individual states. Mr. Trump's aides have also suggested they see a negotiating advantage in bringing maximum leverage to bear on one partner at a time.

Republican lawmakers appear to have accepted Mr. Trump's bilateral approach, a clear shift from Mr. Obama's focus on broad regional talks that sought to achieve overlapping economic gains among the countries involved.

Mr. Hufbauer said it was even possible that what we now know as Nafta could devolve into a pair of bilateral deals, one with Mexico and another with Canada.

Mr. Trump and his advisers have also signaled they want to change the rules of origin for cars and perhaps other industries and establish rules that could punish countries blamed for manipulating their currencies. They also say they want to address taxes applied at the border—including Mexico's value-added tax, or VAT—that they say tilt the balance against American manufacturers.

Each of those goals could generate controversy within the U.S. or more broadly in the North American bloc. A fight between Mexico and Japan over rules of origin for cars, which dictate where parts can be sourced, almost stopped the TPP in its tracks in 2015.

Currency manipulation divided U.S. lawmakers that year and nearly sank trade legislation that gave Mr. Obama—and now Mr. Trump—greater authority

to enact deals. Disagreements over taxes at the border could bring the Trump administration to a clash with the World Trade Organization, lawyers say.

Even if the negotiations with Ottawa and Mexico City go quickly—as fast as, say, the speedy U.S. trade talks with Australia in 2003-2004—the new Nafta would barely emerge in time for the 2018 congressional elections.

Mr. Trump could try to apply new Nafta provisions to renegotiating an existing deal with South Korea, trade lawyers say, to new bilateral pacts with Asian countries such as Japan and Vietnam, or even to the U.K., which is seeking to leave the European Union.

To help navigate the potential crosscurrents, Mr. Trump is establishing a team of trade advisers steeped in international policy and Chinese business affairs.

They include Wilbur Ross, who was approved as commerce secretary by a Senate committee Tuesday, and his nominee for U.S. Trade Representative, Robert Lighthizer, a high-powered trade lawyer whose nomination has been welcomed by members of both parties on Capitol Hill.

Some analysts following Mr. Trump's policy say the administration's tough stance toward China and other major exporters could help wring some economic concessions or even lead to new deals.

Still, given the overwhelming backlash against trade agreements that brought Mr. Trump to power in 2016, the new president is likely to face political opposition to major deals that don't meet the often disparate goals of domestic lawmakers, regardless of the

international rationale for the agreements.

He will have one advantage: So-called fast-track authority, special trade powers Congress passed under Barack Obama that guarantee a timely vote on trade agreements, with no chance for amendments or procedural delays.

More broadly, the TPP withdrawal symbolizes a U.S. shift away from promoting free-trade blocs as a path to growth. A one-paragraph "America First Trade Policy" now inhabits the website of the U.S. Trade Representative. "USTR is working to reshape the landscape of trade policy to work for all Americans," it says.

To keep jobs in the U.S., Mr. Trump and others have floated ideas that include ripping up existing trade deals like Nafta, erecting trade barriers, and prioritizing bilateral deals with individual nations over multilateral accords with trade blocs—a strategy adopted by the administration of George W. Bush.

The true test of how effective Mr. Trump can be in remaking U.S. trade will come when the administration takes on the economies it accuses most of taking U.S. jobs: China and Mexico. Together they account for more than \$1 trillion in U.S. merchandise trade, or 30% of total U.S. imports and exports.

Mr. Trump has threatened a 45% tariff on Chinese goods unless the country stops practices such as subsidizing steel. While Mr. Trump has leeway to raise tariffs, such an across-the-board tariff could put the U.S. in violation of WTO rules, opening up the U.S. to retaliatory measures from China and other nations.

Mr. Trump also vowed to declare China a "currency manipulator,"

referring to Chinese policies in past years that kept the yuan weak. That designation would allow the U.S. to hit China with more tariffs. But the administration may have trouble making the case, since China has recently sought to prevent its currency from weakening too much.

Tariffs could also trigger a trade war with the world's No. 2 economy. That would affect U.S. firms doing business in China and hurt U.S. allies, such as South Korea and Japan, that supply China with many components used in its exports. Such an outcome could be a blow to U.S. security interests in the region.

Mr. Trump's meeting with leaders of Canada and Mexico may shed light on the changes he will seek to Nafta. To get concessions from those countries—the No. 1 and No. 3 U.S. trade partners—the U.S. must have something to offer. For example, the Obama administration, which also criticized Nafta, sought to upgrade some aspects of the deal in the TPP talks, which included Mexico and Canada.

If the U.S. scraps Nafta, trade with Mexico and Canada would revert to WTO rules, which also tend to promote open trade. The 0% tariffs on cars under Nafta, for example, would only be allowed to rise to 2.5% under WTO rules.

"This is the kind of minefield that Trump is standing in the center of," said Matt Gold, a Fordham University adjunct law professor and former deputy assistant U.S. Trade Representative. "You can't step in any direction without setting off a chain reaction."

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**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

A U.S.-China Role Switch: Who's the Globalist Now?

Andrew Browne

Updated Jan. 24,

2017 5:24 p.m. ET

SHANGHAI—A parody making the rounds on Chinese social-media sites distills the key messages of Donald Trump's inauguration speech into slogans that echo Mao, Deng Xiaoping and current leader Xi Jinping.

"Struggle to Realize the Great Rejuvenation of the United States!"

"Vigorously Carry Forward the Spirit of Patriotism!"

"Overthrow Bourgeois Authority, Establish a People's Government!"

The irony of a U.S. president seeking to stir the public, and define America's place in the world with stridently nationalist and populist language—the staple of the Communist Party's propaganda machine—isn't lost on China's vast army of internet users.

Nor on Mr. Xi, who is making the most of it. China's authoritarian head of state sees a historic opportunity to brand his nation as the standard-bearer of globalization, and remake his own image as an enlightened internationalist, in stark contrast to Mr. Trump.

We are in a topsy-turvy world. The leaders of the U.S. and China,

retorically at least, appear to have switched roles.

At Davos last week, Mr. Xi delivered a paean to free trade heavily embroidered with phrases about inclusion more usually associated with American statesmen who built the liberal global order after World War II and sustained it with their magnanimous vision.

"We will open our arms to the people of other countries," Mr. Xi intoned, no doubt with Mr. Trump's anti-immigrant stance in mind.

"Pursuing protectionism," he went on "is like locking oneself in a dark room."

This was clearly a campaign-style speech aimed at winning over an international audience profoundly disturbed by the prospects of an inward-looking, "America First," Trump presidency, and fearful Mr. Trump will try to secure a U.S. manufacturing renaissance by erecting tariff barriers and unraveling global supply chains.

The Trump team is defiant; it seems not to fear this contest but to relish it. Steve Bannon, the new White House chief strategist who co-wrote Mr. Trump's inaugural address, told the Washington Post that "I think it'd be good if people compare Xi's speech at Davos and President Trump's speech in his inaugural." In

doing so, he said: "You'll see two different world views."

Not exactly. Mr. Xi is an unlikely apostle of globalization. The "global connectivity" he lauded only goes so far at home, where a towering internet firewall keeps out subversive Western doctrines. Censors have just added a few more digital bricks to the barrier by announcing a new crackdown on virtual private networks that help users get around the restrictions, or in popular parlance "climb over the wall."

Meanwhile, the "investment liberalization" Mr. Xi urged flies in the face of Chinese efforts to quarantine swaths of its markets for technology to protect homegrown corporate champions. Last year, Apple Inc. had to pull its iBooks Store and iTunes Movies.

Still, China is treating Mr. Trump as a heaven-sent opportunity. On Monday, a Foreign Ministry official said China is prepared to take the helm of the global economy "if it's necessary." A few hours later, Mr. Trump handed the controls to China in Asia by formally pulling the U.S. out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a giant free-trade deal. China will push even harder now on its own trade arrangements.

The move prompted fresh online satire. One post cheekily suggested that Mr. Trump's "true identity" was as a member of the Chinese Communist Party.

As the Trump administration purges the White House website of references to climate change—and picks a global-warming skeptic to head the Environmental Protection Agency—Beijing's leaders are loudly proclaiming fidelity to the Paris climate-change agreement. They came around, reluctantly at first, to the need to get serious about curbing greenhouse-gas emissions after prodding by the Obama administration.

Underlying Beijing's PR operation is a simple message: China, unlike America, is a responsible global citizen. The timing of China's recent announcement to shut down its ivory trade—and save the African elephant—was no coincidence.

Air China said it is halting shipments of shark's fin. Environmentalist NGOs cheered.

Expect more planet-friendly pledges in the coming months, along with a variety of market-opening moves, overseas-aid packages and international investments. Money spent now will go further diplomatically. Already, China is becoming the locus of international development funding through bodies like the Beijing-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Others in the Trump camp are calling out China for hypocrisy. In his Senate committee hearing, Wilbur Ross, the billionaire commerce secretary nominee, called China the "most protectionist" country and grumbled that Chinese officials "talk much more about free trade than they actually practice."

Yet this is an era of "post-truth politics": Facts are malleable, perception is everything. Mr. Trump spoke darkly of "American carnage" with "rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones."

Mr. Xi took the opposite tack. "History is created by the brave," he said. "Let us boost confidence, take actions and march arm-in-arm toward a bright future."

China sees an America squandering its most precious global asset—soft power. The party propagandists, so often the target of scorn on the Chinese internet, can hardly believe their good fortune.

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Yan Xuetong : China Can Thrive in the Trump Era

President Xi Jinping of China. His country could benefit from the Trump presidency if it opens itself to the world politically and economically. Denis Balibouse/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

BEIJING — President Trump and the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, are in a bind. Mr. Trump's slogan is to "Make America Great Again," while Mr. Xi's motto is "Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation." The phrases have the same meaning: Each leader suggests his country has declined and claims that he will restore it to the top position in the world. But the triumph of one country is built on the failure of the other. It's a zero-sum game.

Mr. Trump's move on Monday to abandon the Trans-Pacific Partnership — an Obama administration trade proposal meant to strengthen America's economic power at China's expense — leaves little doubt that the president will follow through with his campaign promises to upend American trade policies, including those toward China. Taken with Mr. Trump's postelection telephone chat with the leader of Taiwan, Tsai Ing-wen, a major break with diplomatic protocol, we can expect a jolt to United States-China relations.

But while a trade war, military skirmishes in the South China Sea or Taiwan Strait, or other diplomatic crises could cause a hiccup in China's rise, the Trump era will offer plenty of opportunities for Beijing. China has a chance to become a full-fledged superpower if it responds to the Trump presidency by opening up more to the world economically and politically.

China has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of globalization, which helped bring hundreds of millions of Chinese people out of poverty in the past three decades. And as much as Mr. Trump would like to freeze the forces of free trade, the world will keep globalizing.

Mr. Trump's scrapping of the Trans-Pacific Partnership is a chance for Beijing to strengthen its position as the economic leader of East Asia by bolstering regional trade. China is party to a free-trade agreement with Southeast Asian nations, and Beijing should encourage South Korea and Australia to join that pact. Japan is reluctant to become part of a trade group that includes China, so Beijing should leave Tokyo behind.

The Chinese leadership should also end its long-held policy of avoiding formal alliances. As the Trump administration signals it may ignore Beijing's One-China policy and treat Taiwan as an independent country, potentially upending the bedrock of American-Chinese relations since 1979, Beijing should establish military alliances with as many neighbors as possible. China has so-called strategic partnerships with most of its neighbors, but only Pakistan is a traditional military ally.

If China were to form meaningful bilateral military pacts with Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia and especially the Philippines, America

would have more difficulty joining a potential war in the Taiwan Strait — a very real possibility given Mr. Trump's threats to the status quo.

An East Asian trade agreement and a raft of new formal alliances would help Beijing take the position as the leader of East Asia and make the region safer.

Mr. Trump's antidemocratic tendencies in the domestic arena, along with his threats to build a wall across America's border with Mexico, offer another opportunity for China in immigration policy.

An illiberal turn in the United States could drive talented Americans to seek careers abroad, while skilled workers the world over may start looking somewhere other than the United States to make a better life. By adopting a more open policy toward immigrants — including the creation of a path to citizenship for some categories of immigrants — China could expand its economy while improving its moral standing globally. In doing so, Beijing could greatly reduce America's soft-power advantage.

On the bilateral front, a trade war between China and the United States seems likely under Mr. Trump. Still, Beijing should be considering ways to reduce its trade surplus with the United States and avoid a battle. Meanwhile, if the Chinese bought fewer American bonds, the Trump administration would find it harder to pay for its plans to rebuild domestic infrastructure.

There are signs that the Chinese leadership is already stepping in to fill the leadership void developing under Mr. Trump's presidency. Last week, Mr. Xi spoke at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, recommitting China to globalization and free trade. China is also poised to take a leading role in environmental policy, given Mr. Trump's hostility toward climate agreements.

Relations between China and the United States will inevitably deteriorate with Mr. Trump at the helm. The nuclear deterrent should still prevent an all-out war, but confrontation will be the core of these two giants' relationship for the foreseeable future.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Alastair Gale

Jan. 24, 2017 10:40 p.m. ET

Japan Trade Surplus Follows Trump's Criticism of Tokyo's Advantage

Takashi Nakamichi and

TOKYO—Japan recorded its first trade surplus in six years in 2016, which comes at a sensitive time following President Donald Trump's

recent criticism of Japan for its trade advantage against the U.S.

Japan's \$60 billion trade surplus with the U.S. last year was its largest with any nation, lifting its

overall trade balance to a surplus of \$36 billion, finance ministry data released Wednesday showed.

Japan's biggest category of exports was autos and auto parts,

accounting for about 40% of Japanese shipments to the U.S. last year.

Mr. Trump has singled out the Japanese auto industry in his criticism. He said Japan has put up non-tariff barriers to U.S. auto makers, while benefiting from strong sales of its cars in the U.S.

"We sell a car into Japan and they do things to us that make it impossible to sell cars in Japan," Mr. Trump said in a meeting with U.S. business leaders on Monday.

Japanese officials say there are no barriers to U.S. autos in the local market.

Mr. Trump's criticism has stoked fears of a trade war in Tokyo and prompted government officials to emphasize the jobs and investment created by Japanese companies in the U.S.

Japanese business leaders have also responded by highlighting their commitment to building operations in the U.S. On Tuesday, Toyota Motor Corp. said it would invest \$600 million and add 400 jobs at a plant in Indiana, part of the \$10 billion the auto maker plans to invest in the U.S. over the next five years.

The announcement comes after Toyota was called out recently by

Mr. Trump on Twitter for its plans to build an assembly plant in Mexico.

Mr. Trump has also unnerved officials in Tokyo with his call for a weaker dollar. A decline in the dollar against the yen cuts into the profits of Japanese exporters sending goods to the U.S.

A fall in the yen at the end of last year helped lift the value of Japanese exports for the first time in 15 months in December. Robust exports help Japan offset a sluggish domestic economy.

While Japan's trade surplus with the U.S. remained strong in 2016, it fell 5% from a year earlier. Auto exports to the U.S. rose 8% to 1.75 million

vehicles in 2016, the finance ministry data showed.

Officials in Tokyo say Japan has been unfairly targeted by Mr. Trump when compared with other nations that have larger surpluses with the U.S. The U.S.'s trade deficit with China in 2015 was \$367 billion, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

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'America First' Doesn't Mean United Nations Last

The Editors

Not surprisingly for a president whose slogan is "America First," Donald Trump has expressed deep skepticism about the United Nations. Nevertheless, his appointment of a skilled and popular politician as the new U.S. permanent representative stands to help make the UN a more effective forum for advancing U.S. interests.

It will be South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley's job to work with the widely acclaimed incoming secretary-general, former Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres, to see that U.S. interests are consistently respected.

In her confirmation hearing last week, Haley pointed out that the UN

"is often at odds with American national interests and American taxpayers." One of the most stunning examples of that dissonance has been the institution's bias against Israel, America's democratic ally in the Mideast. Haley lambasted the Obama administration's misguided abstention on a UN resolution condemning Israeli settlements, and pledged to prevent a recurrence.

At the same time, she pushed back against legislation in the Senate that would cut off U.S. funding for the UN until it reverses the resolution, because that would jeopardize many other important UN efforts, including the push for sanctions against North Korea, enforcement of the nuclear agreement with Iran,

and efforts to cope with various humanitarian crises around the world.

One of the UN's most important projects has been the Paris accord to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. Climate change is already under way, after all, and already fueling instability — conflicts over water supplies in the Middle East, for instance. On this, Haley waffled: Climate change will "always be on the table," she said, but emissions restrictions should not burden American industries. That not only ignores climate change's exorbitant economic costs but also threatens to undermine U.S. leadership on a critical issue.

It is true that the U.S., as the UN's biggest funder, should have powerful leverage to advance its interests and values and to push for needed reforms. Haley is right to question, for example, why taxpayers should pay for peacekeeping missions that don't keep peace.

That said, American public support for the UN has been growing steadily for a decade — contrary to what Haley told Congress. Her job is not to drastically change the relationship, but simply to make it work better.

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Jonah Goldberg : What Trump Means When He Says, 'America First'

From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land. From this day forward, it's going to be only America first, America first.

— *President Trump, inaugural address, January 20, 2017*

President Trump is something of a paradox. He roots himself in nostalgia for yesteryear — "Make America great again!" — but is remarkably unconcerned with history. He ransacks the past for rhetorical baubles but declines to carry their historical baggage too.

In 2015, a *Washington Post* reporter had to remind Trump that his use of the phrase "silent majority" had Nixonian "overtones." "Oh, is that why people stopped using [the phrase]?" Trump replied. "Nobody thinks of Nixon. I don't think of Nixon when I think of the silent majority."

He invented the "forgotten man" as if he invented the term, never indicating that it was one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's central themes.

His inaugural address made almost no reference to American history. His populist rejection of the status quo and the establishment suggests that he thinks the country is starting over at Year Zero. Indeed, he repeated a standard campaign line that at least some historians might quibble with: that he was elected by a "historic movement, the likes of which the world has never seen before."

Which brings us to "America first," a slogan the president seems to have first absorbed from a *New York Times* reporter trying to characterize the candidate's positions. As with "silent majority," Trump refuses to accept what that term means to many of the people who hear him use it.

Granted, it's more complicated than mainstream journalists would have you believe.

The America First Committee was founded in the spring of 1940 by isolationist students at Yale University and quickly became a major national movement — though it was never the purely right-wing phenomenon many claim. Many Republicans and conservatives supported it (including a then-15-year-old William F. Buckley, who as an adult repudiated isolationism and barred isolationists from the pages of *National Review*).

But other allies in the isolationist or "non-interventionist" cause included American Socialist party leader Norman Thomas, liberal journalist Oswald Garrison Villard, and such progressive icons Charles Beard, John Dewey, Joseph Kennedy, Bernard Baruch, and Progressive party hero Robert La Follette.

Though it's true the German-American Bund had opposed war, so did American pacifist organizations (until the Soviets told them to change their position). Isolationism is a bipartisan American tradition, and its defenders can claim George Washington's farewell address as proof of its pedigree.

The entire purpose of the America First Committee was to keep FDR from dragging the U.S. into another European war. Given the still fresh memory of the horror — both at home and abroad — of World War I, this always struck me as a defensible if, in hindsight, wrong position.

That Trump could so easily adopt 'America first' without being hobbled by its negative connotation was a political coup.

The isolationists had largely fought FDR to a political standstill until Pearl Harbor, which ended all debate. After the war, with the full knowledge of Nazi crimes and years of domestic patriotic fervor, the term “America first” took on a more sinister reputation in retrospect than it deserved (influenced by FDR’s political vendettas against the isolationists during the war). Some Jewish groups to this day unfairly consider it vague code for “America should have let the Holocaust run its course.”

That Trump could so easily adopt “America first” without being

hobbled by its negative connotation was a political coup. He insists that it’s just a catchphrase for prioritizing American interests. Even though the term is both catnip and dog whistle to some of his more unsavory fans, I think he’s sincere.

Still, my problem with Trump’s version of “America first” isn’t his desire to do what is in America’s best interests — who could oppose that? It’s how he defines America’s best interest — and its best self. With his blind eye to the past, he’s stumbled into old-fashioned nationalism.

Up until very recently, American exceptionalism — i.e., we are a creedal nation dedicated to certain principles reflected in our founding documents — largely defined the conservative understanding of patriotism.

Trump, however, sees America more as an identity than an idea. He promised that America’s example “will shine for everyone to follow,” but he defined that example not in terms of our liberties or ideals, but in terms of unity. We will rebuild “our country with American hands and American labor” following “two simple rules: buy American and hire

American.” We will shine through our success at building infrastructure, walling off our economy, and crushing our enemies.

All in all, this is no “new vision” — though it is arguably new for an American president.

— *Jonah Goldberg is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a senior editor of National Review. ©2017 Tribune Content Agency, LLC*



Oscar nominations: The diversity is impressive. Now time for a long-lasting reset. (UNE)

Hornaday

Janelle Monáe, left, Taraji P. Henson, center, and Octavia Spencer in “Hidden Figures.” (Hopper Stone/AP)

Ashton Sanders in “Moonlight.” (David Bornfreund/A24)

Redemption — or at least a whiff of it — was in the air on Tuesday when nominations for the 89th Academy Awards were announced.

Whether in the form of records being broken or milestones being reached, the prevailing mood was one of forward progression for an industry that loves nothing more than a great comeback story — especially its own.

That sense of cockeyed optimism propelled the day’s most recognized movie, “La La Land,” which with 14 nominations tied “All About Eve” and “Titanic” for a record number of nods. It’s no surprise that Damien Chazelle’s musical — about a couple of ambitious kids trying to make it in Hollywood — would be catnip to members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences who understandably gravitated toward its homage to old-school musicals, the perennial showbiz values of grit and determination, and cinema as an endangered art form.

[Oscar nominations: Complete list of nominees]

But the most obvious sign of karmic evolution was a dramatic uptick in nominations of people of color, from the seven actors and five directors who received nods for their work to groundbreaking — if shamefully overdue — “firsts” in the cinematography and editing branches.

In contrast with recent years, when actors and filmmakers of color were

barely represented or erased outright, this year’s list of nominations showcases an encouragingly inclusive spectrum of artists, genres and stories, ranging from lively fact-based history to contemporary drama and documentary. In 2014, “12 Years a Slave” and Steve McQueen made Oscar history with wins for best picture and best director. Three years later, another plateau seems to have been reached in terms of styles, stories and characterizations that are available to artists — and audiences — eager for movies that reflect the culturally varied, multifaceted world outside the theater.

The supporting-actress category offers one case in point: Viola Davis broke her own record by becoming the first African American actress to be nominated for three Oscars in the course of her career. She was nominated for best supporting actress for her fierce portrayal of a long-suffering wife in “Fences” and will complete alongside Octavia Spencer, who played a brilliant mathematician in the ‘60s-era NASA drama “Hidden Figures,” and Naomie Harris, who delivered a searing turn as a crack-addicted mother in “Moonlight.”

Denzel Washington and Viola Davis in “Fences.” (David Lee/AP)

Ruth Negga in “Loving.” (Ben Rothstein/Focus Features)

“Moonlight,” Barry Jenkins’s tender portrait of a young gay man coming of age amid poverty and crime in Miami, was just one of many films by and about people of color to be nominated many times over (Jenkins was nominated for best director and for his script, and Mahershala Ali was nominated for best supporting actor for his role as an improbably paternal drug dealer). Jenkins’s film — which

earned him first-time status as a black filmmaker nominated for both writing and directing — will compete for best picture alongside “Lion,” “Fences” and “Hidden Figures.” All have done well at the box office; in fact, “Hidden Figures” has become something of a sleeper hit, its story of the African American women who played crucial roles in the United States’ early space program offering exhilarating proof that audiences are hungry for a wide range of narratives that have as yet gone untold.

Because of their visibility, the best-picture and best-acting categories have taken on outside importance at Oscar time (Ruth Negga and Dev Patel were also nominated for their lead performances, in “Loving” and “Lion,” respectively). But history was made in other craft categories as well. Joi McMillon became the first African American woman to be nominated for editing, for her work on “Moonlight.” And Bradford Young became the first African American cinematographer to be nominated for his contribution to a movie, in this case to the science-fiction drama “Arrival.” A graduate of Howard University, Young is one of a long line of gifted cameramen who have come out of the school, including Ernest Dickerson, Arthur Jafa and Malik Sayeed, none of whom have been recognized by the academy, despite groundbreaking work on films such as “Do the Right Thing,” “Daughters of the Dust” and “Belly.”

Please provide a valid email address.

[Viola Davis gets historic third Oscar nod. We might be in for an epic speech.]

Happily, Young will be joined on the red carpet by Ava DuVernay, whose documentary “13th,” about the legacy of racism within the criminal-

justice system, was nominated for best documentary (Young shot DuVernay’s 2014 civil rights drama “Selma”). Four out of the five films nominated for best documentary were made by filmmakers of color, including Roger Ross Williams’s “Life, Animated,” Raoul Peck’s “I Am Not Your Negro” about James Baldwin, and Ezra Edelman’s “O.J.: Made in America,” a sprawling, 71/2-hour film about O.J. Simpson that started out as a conventional sports project for ESPN Films and became an epic, compulsively engaging tutorial in race, history, policing, celebrity and identity.

It’s clear that, unlike recent years when the red carpet looked lily white, this year’s Oscars will resemble the outside world much more vibrantly. And, despite assumptions to the contrary, this development most likely isn’t a direct response to public awareness efforts such as the #OscarsSoWhite Twitter campaign or efforts by the academy’s president, Cheryl Boone Isaacs, to recruit a more inclusive membership. (After last year’s outcry over lack of representation, the academy invited 683 new members to join the organization, 46 percent of whom were female and 41 percent of whom were people of color.) “Moonlight,” “Fences,” “Hidden Figures” and their co-nominees have all been in the pipeline for at least two years, probably more, suggesting that the pluralism on display isn’t a reactive flash in the pan but an indication of more-enduring — and encouraging — structural change.

Still, it bears noting that Chazelle was able to make his passion project directly after his breakthrough film “Whiplash,” while eight years elapsed between Jenkins’s “Medicine for Melancholy” — an early film just as assured and promising as “Whiplash” — and “Moonlight.” In its usual one-step-

forward, two-steps-back fashion, the film industry has clearly made some headway in reflecting the larger culture it purports to serve, but its gatekeepers lag far behind their counterparts in television. (Where is the movie version of “Jane the Virgin,” one might ask, or “Fresh off the Boat” or “Transparent”?) Authentic inclusion covers a wide

expanse of ethnicities and experiences.)

The best news out of Tuesday's Oscar headlines is that none of these actors or filmmakers are going anywhere — and, if a few are lucky enough to take home an Oscar on Feb. 26, they will be that much more empowered to initiate and produce projects that tap into

the riches to be found outside the still-dominant monochromatic paradigm. Considering Hollywood's troubled history of racist imagery, professional exclusion and blinkered solipsism, redemption can never be found in award nominations, no matter how plentiful. But a real and long-lasting reset will do.

ETATS-UNIS

**The
New York
Times**

Sanger and Maggie Haberman

WASHINGTON — President Trump on Wednesday will order the construction of a Mexican border wall — the first in a series of actions this week to crack down on immigrants and bolster national security, including slashing the number of refugees who can resettle in the United States and blocking Syrians and others from “terror prone” nations from entering, at least temporarily.

The orders are among an array of national security directives Mr. Trump is considering issuing in the coming days, according to people who have seen the orders. They include reviewing whether to resume the once-secret “black site” detention program; keep open the prison at Guantánamo Bay; and designate the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization.

According to a draft, the order on detention policies would start a review of “whether to reinstate the program of interrogation of high-value alien terrorists to be operated outside the United States, and whether such a program should include the use of detention facilities operated by the C.I.A.” But one section of the draft would require that “no person in the custody of the United States shall at any time be subjected to torture, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as describe by U.S. or international law.”

The proposed orders could lead to sweeping and controversial changes in the way the United States conducts itself at home and around the globe in the name of security, potentially leading to the reinstatement of policies that have been repudiated by much of the world.

Trump to Order Mexican Border Wall and Curtail Immigration (UNE)

Julie Hirschfeld
Davis, David E.

“Big day planned on NATIONAL SECURITY tomorrow,” Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter on Tuesday night. “Among many other things, we will build the wall!”

Mr. Trump will sign the executive order for the wall during an appearance at the Department of Homeland Security on Wednesday, as Mexico's foreign minister, Luis Videgaray, arrives in Washington to prepare for the visit of President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico. Mr. Peña Nieto will be among the first foreign leaders to meet the new president at the end of the month.

The border wall was a signature promise of Mr. Trump's campaign, during which he argued it is vital to gaining control over the illegal flow of immigrants into the United States.

President Trump prepared to sign three presidential memoranda in the Oval Office on Monday. Doug Mills/The New York Times

Mr. Trump is also expected to target legal immigrants as early as this week, White House officials said, by halting a decades-old program that grants refuge to the world's most vulnerable people as he begins the process of drastically curtailing it and enhancing screening procedures.

In the draft of a separate executive order now being circulated inside the administration, Mr. Trump would examine the question of whether the Central Intelligence Agency should reopen its so-called black sites, secret interrogation and detention centers that it operated overseas. Former President Barack Obama ordered the closings of all in the first week of his presidency in 2009.

The black sites were a highly classified program, so their mention in an executive order would be highly unusual.

The draft of a second executive order would also order a review of the Army Field Manual to determine whether to use certain enhanced interrogation techniques.

Another executive order under consideration would direct the secretary of state to determine whether to designate the Muslim Brotherhood a foreign terrorist organization. That designation has been sought by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

The refugee policy under consideration would halt admissions from Syria and suspend it from other majority-Muslim nations until the administration can study how to properly vet them. This would pave the way for the administration to slash the number of displaced people who can be resettled on American soil, and would effectively bar the entry of people from Muslim countries — including Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Syria — at least for some time.

The plan is in line with a ban on Muslim immigrants that Mr. Trump proposed during his campaign, arguing that such a step was warranted given concerns about terrorism. He later said he wanted to impose “extreme vetting” of refugees from Syria and other countries where terrorism was rampant, although the Obama administration had already instituted strict screening procedures for Syrian refugees that were designed to weed out anyone who posed a danger.

The expected actions drew strong criticism from immigrant advocates and human rights groups, which called them discriminatory moves that rejected the American tradition of welcoming immigrants of all backgrounds.

“To think that Trump's first 100 days are going to be marked by this very shameful shutting of our doors to

everybody who is seeking refuge in this country is very concerning,” said Marielena Hincapié, the executive director of the National Immigration Law Center. “Everything points to this being simply a backdoor Muslim ban.”

For Mr. Trump, whose raucous campaign rallies frequently featured chants of “build the wall,” the directive to fortify the border was not unexpected, although it may not be enough by itself to accomplish the task. Congress would need to approve any new funding necessary to build the wall, which Mr. Trump has insisted Mexico will finance, despite its leaders' protestations to the contrary. The order would shift already appropriated federal funds to the wall's construction, but it was unclear where the money would come from.

The Government Accountability Office has estimated that it could cost \$6.5 million per mile to build a single-layer fence, and an additional \$4.2 million per mile for roads and more fencing, according to congressional officials. Those estimates do not include maintenance of the fence along the nearly 2,000-mile border with Mexico. Representative Nancy Pelosi of California, the Democratic leader, said she thought even Republicans might balk at spending what she said could be \$14 billion on a wall.

Mr. Trump has said immigration will be on the agenda when he meets with Mr. Peña Nieto.

The order to build the wall is likely to complicate the visit of Mr. Videgaray, who has a history with Mr. Trump. It was Mr. Videgaray, then Mexico's finance minister, who orchestrated Mr. Trump's visit to Mexico before the election, a move seen by many Mexicans as tantamount to treason. He was forced to resign because of the fallout, but his reputation was

restored after Mr. Trump's victory, and he was given the job of foreign minister, in part to capitalize on his relationship with the new American leader.

It is unclear whether Mexican officials were informed of Mr. Trump's decision to sign the

executive order during Mr. Videgaray's visit.

Mr. Trump's refugee directive is expected to target a program the Obama administration expanded last year in response to a global refugee crisis, fueled in large part by a large flow of Syrians fleeing their country's civil war. Mr. Obama

increased the overall number of refugees to be resettled in the United States to 85,000 and ordered that 10,000 of the slots be reserved for Syrians. He set the number of refugees to be resettled this year at 110,000, more than double the 50,000 Mr. Trump is now considering.

By the end of last month, more than 25,000 refugees had been resettled, according to State Department figures, meaning the plan Mr. Trump is considering would admit only 25,000 more by the end of September.

**The
Washington
Post**

Trump to sign executive orders enabling construction of proposed border wall and targeting sanctuary cities (UNE)

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(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

President Trump is turning his focus to immigration, and is planning to sign executive orders on Jan. 25, to allow construction of his proposed border wall and to target sanctuary cities. President Trump is turning his focus to immigration on Jan. 25. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

President Trump plans to sign executive orders Wednesday enabling construction of his proposed wall on the U.S.-Mexico border and targeting cities where local leaders refuse to hand over illegal immigrants for deportation, according to White House officials familiar with the decisions.

The actions, part of a multi-day focus on immigration, are among an array of sweeping and immediate changes to the nation's immigration system under consideration by the new president. The moves represent Trump's first effort to deliver on perhaps the signature issue that drove his presidential campaign: his belief that illegal immigration is out of control and threatening the country's safety and security.

Trump's immigration blitz this week is widely seen inside the White House as a victory for the self-described populist wing of his inner circle — which includes chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon, attorney general nominee Jeff Sessions and top policy adviser Stephen Miller.

Checkpoint newsletter

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But discussions were ongoing Tuesday about just how far to go on some policies, in particular the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, known as DACA.

The 2012 initiative has given temporary protection from deportation to hundreds of thousands of people who arrived in the United States as children. Trump vowed during the campaign to reverse it.

It was not yet clear late Tuesday whether DACA would be addressed as part of Trump's immigration actions, according to a White House official, because of differing views among Trump's advisers and associates about the timing, scope and political benefits of ending the program or suspending it for new entries.

How sanctuary cities work and what might happen to them under Trump

"Many options are being worked through on DACA," the official said.

Officials are considering, but have not decided yet, whether to indefinitely shut down the program that allows refugees from war-torn Syria into the United States. Trump may also put the entire refugee program for all countries on hold for four months, according to an administration official familiar with the options under discussion.

This official said that Trump will also potentially bar for 30 days the issuance of U.S. visas to people from Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen — all Muslim-majority countries — until new visa procedures are developed. Residents from many of these places are already rarely granted U.S. visas. Trump may ask DHS and the director of National Intelligence to evaluate whether immigrants are being adequately screened for potential terrorist ties.

On Wednesday, Trump plans to speak to a town hall of employees at the Department of Homeland Security's headquarters in Washington, where he is expected to sign the orders relating to the wall and "sanctuary cities." The effort to crack down on these localities will resonate with the Republican base, which has long criticized local

officials who refuse to cooperate with federal immigration authorities.

Several people familiar with the discussions emphasized that the week's actions are intended to start fulfilling Trump's campaign promises on immigration and bring Republicans behind Trump on the issue, one day before he speaks at Thursday's congressional GOP retreat in Philadelphia. These people spoke on the condition of anonymity because the executive orders were still being finalized.

White House aides said Trump planned to meet Wednesday with several parents of children who were killed by immigrants who are in the country illegally. These activists, who refer to themselves as "angel moms," were frequently featured during Trump's campaign rallies and during the Republican National Convention.

Any immigration measures announced by the president will set up a fierce battle in Trump's first week between the White House and advocates for immigrants, who were reacting with alarm Tuesday as word spread that immigration was on the table.

President-elect Donald Trump has repeatedly asserted that "Mexico will pay" for his proposed southern border wall — but he's also said the U.S. will be reimbursed by Mexico after building it with taxpayer funds. Who is really going to pay for Trump's border wall? (Peter Stevenson/The Washington Post)

(Peter Stevenson/The Washington Post)

The planned visit to DHS will be Trump's second to a security agency since he took office Friday. He spoke to employees at the CIA's headquarters in Northern Virginia on Saturday.

The presidential visit to DHS would symbolize some of the more controversial parts of Trump's agenda. He centered his campaign to some degree on his proposal to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico

border to keep out illegal immigrants, a plan that has been vehemently opposed by Democrats and immigrant advocates.

Trump's proposed wall is perhaps his most famous and disputed campaign proposal, and he feels so strongly about it that he told The Washington Post in an interview last year that building the structure "is easy. . . . It's not even a difficult project if you know what you're doing."

Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto will visit the U.S. next week to meet with Trump. The Mexican government has said that it would not pay for Trump's border wall despite Trump's insistence that the country would provide funding at a later date.

House Republicans have said they plan to fund the barrier, which some experts have estimated will cost more than \$20 billion. But experts say the wall would face numerous obstacles, such as environmental and engineering problems and fights with ranchers and others who would resist giving up their land.

Trump has also promised to beef up immigration enforcement along the border and inside the United States — including a tripling of the number of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents — in an expensive and logistically difficult operation to remove millions of people from the country.

Perhaps most in dispute were Trump's campaign comments on Muslims. He called at one point for a ban on all Muslims entering the United States as a counterterrorism measure and said he would halt immigration from Syria and deport Syrian refugees already in the country.

It is unclear how this week's executive actions, orchestrated from the White House, will sit with the man who would enforce them: Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly. Kelly, a retired Marine general who was confirmed Friday, struck a markedly different tone

from the president during his confirmation hearing, saying the controversial southwest border wall might not "be built anytime soon."

Kelly noted that when he was a Marine officer in Iraq, his forces secured stability in part by reaching

out to clerics and other Muslim leaders. He vowed to promote "tolerance" and said he didn't think it was appropriate to target any group of people solely based on religion or ethnic background, including through the development of a registry.

DHS declined to comment on Tuesday. But people familiar with the matter said Kelly, known for his blunt manner, is already under intense pressure from the White House to enforce the immigration crackdown on which Trump built his campaign.

Karen DeYoung, Ashley Parker and David Nakamura contributed to this report.

**The
Washington
Post**

Trump seeks to revive Dakota Access, Keystone XL oil pipelines (UNE)

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directs the Army Corps of Engineers to "review and approve in an expedited manner, to the extent permitted by law."

Trump said that both pipeline projects would be subject to renegotiation. His order for the Keystone XL project "invites" the company to "re-submit its application."

In an Oval Office signing before reporters, the president hinted at a possible new wrinkle. He said he would want any new projects to make use of American steel, though that requirement is not mentioned in his executive order.

"I am very insistent that if we're going to build pipelines in the United States, the pipe should be made in the United States," he told reporters.

The orders will likely have an immediate impact in North Dakota, where the pipeline company Energy Transfer Partners wants to complete the final 1,100-foot piece of the 1,172-mile pipeline route that runs under Lake Oahe. The pipeline would carry oil from the booming shale oil reserves in North Dakota to refineries and pipeline networks in Illinois.

The Standing Rock Sioux tribe and other Native American groups have been protesting the project, which they say would imperil their water supplies and disturb sacred burial and archaeological sites. The Army Corp of Engineers called a halt to the project in December to consider alternative routes.

The tribe is expected to return to court in a bid to block the project. Last week the tribe asked remaining protesters — about 500 to 700 of whom were still in the main camp near the pipeline site — to leave and return to their homes. The camp is in a flood plain, and heavy snow could pose dangers when it starts melting.

[Voices from Standing Rock: Six views from the angry prairie standoff over the pipeline]

The executive order from Trump on the Keystone XL pipeline threatens to undo a major decision by Obama, who said the project would contribute to climate change because it would carry tar sands

crude oil, which is especially greenhouse gas intensive because of the energy it takes to extract the thick crude. Obama's announcement followed a similar finding by the State Department, which has reviewed applications for cross-border pipelines.

TransCanada, the Calgary-based project owner, has said it would be interested in reviving the pipeline. But it was unclear what Trump's caution about renegotiation would mean for TransCanada's plans. Originally, TransCanada had planned to get about 65 percent of the steel pipe from U.S. manufacturers but other supplies from Canada.

President Trump signs executive orders on the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines saying, "we are going to renegotiate some of the terms." (Reuters)

President Trump signs executive orders on the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines saying, "we are going to renegotiate some of the terms." President Trump signs executive orders on the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines saying, "we are going to renegotiate some of the terms." (Reuters)

On Tuesday, Trump said: "From now on, we're going to be making pipeline in the United States. We build the pipelines, we want to build the pipe. We're going to put a lot of workers, a lot of skilled workers, back to work. We will build our own pipeline, we will build our own pipes, like we used to in the old days."

[On White House website, Obama climate priorities vanish, replaced by Trump's focus on energy production]

Speaking to reporters Monday, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said the president supported energy projects "like Dakota and the Keystone Pipeline, areas that we can increase jobs, increase economic growth, and tap into America's energy supply more, that's something that he has been very clear about."

Referring to comments Trump has made during the campaign and after the election, Spicer said: "He was

talking about that being a big priority. That's one of those ones where I think that the energy sector and our natural resources are an area where I think the president is very, very keen on making sure that we maximize our use of natural resources to America's benefit."

"It's good for economic growth, it's good for jobs, and it's good for American energy," Spicer added.

President Trump signed executive orders Tuesday to revive the controversial Dakota Access and Keystone XL oil pipelines. During the daily briefing, White House press secretary Sean Spicer discussed the timeline for the Keystone XL pipeline project. (Reuters)

President Trump signed executive orders Tuesday to revive the controversial Dakota Access and Keystone XL oil pipelines. During the daily briefing, White House press secretary Sean Spicer discussed the timeline for the Keystone XL pipeline project. During the daily briefing, White House press secretary Sean Spicer discussed the timeline for the Keystone pipeline project. (Reuters)

As news of the move surfaced Tuesday morning, oil industry officials hailed it as overdue.

"Making American energy great again starts with infrastructure projects like these that move resources safely and efficiently," said Stephen Brown, vice president of federal government affairs at Tesoro Companies.

"We are pleased to see the new direction being taken by this administration to recognize the importance of our nation's energy infrastructure by restoring the rule of law in the permitting process that's critical to pipelines and other infrastructure projects," said Jack Gerard, president of the American Petroleum Institute.

Many lawmakers, including House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) and Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.), backed the president's bid to revive the pipelines.

Environmentalists, by contrast, vowed to continue to fight the two pipelines.

Anti-pipeline protesters rallied outside the White House on Jan. 24, after President Trump signed executive orders to revive the Dakota Access and Keystone XL oil pipelines. Many activists traveled to Washington, D.C., from Standing Rock, where they had been camping out for months in opposition to the Dakota Access pipeline. (Zoeann Murphy/The Washington Post)

Anti-pipeline protesters rallied outside the White House on Jan. 24, after President Trump signed executive orders to revive the Dakota Access and Keystone XL oil pipelines. Many activists traveled to Washington, D.C., from Standing Rock, where they had been camping out for months in opposition to the Dakota Access pipeline. (Zoeann Murphy/The Washington Post)

President Trump signed executive orders Tuesday to revive the controversial Dakota Access and Keystone XL oil pipelines, another step in his effort to dismantle former president Barack Obama's environmental legacy.

He also signed an executive order to expedite environmental reviews of other infrastructure projects, lamenting the existing "incredibly cumbersome, long, horrible permitting process."

"The regulatory process in this country has become a tangled-up mess," he said.

It remained unclear how Trump's order would expedite those environmental reviews. Many are statutory and the legislation that created them cannot be swept aside by an executive order. Indeed, Trump's order on the Dakota Access pipeline left some ambiguity. The executive order

Greenpeace Executive Director Annie Leonard noted in a statement that a broad coalition of opponents — “indigenous communities, ranchers, farmers, and climate activists” — managed to block the projects in the past and would not give up now.

“We all saw the incredible strength and courage of the water protectors at Standing Rock, and the people around the world who stood with them in solidarity,” she said. “We’ll stand with them again if Trump tries to bring the Dakota Access Pipeline, or any other fossil fuel infrastructure project, back to life.”

“We will resist this with all of our power, and we will continue to build the future the world wants to see,” she added.

Bill McKibben, founder of the activist group 350.org, which has fought both the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines, said the decision to allow the projects to move forward ignores the massive opposition expressed both through public protests and in comments to government agencies.

“The world’s climate scientists and its Nobel laureates explained over and over why it was unwise and immoral,” McKibben said in a

statement. “In one of his first actions as president, Donald Trump ignores all that in his eagerness to serve the oil industry. It’s a dark day for a reason, but we will continue to fight.”

Americans have tended to favor the Keystone XL project even as Obama rejected it. According to an October 2015 Washington Post-ABC News poll, 55 percent wanted the next president to support building the Keystone oil pipeline, while 34 percent wanted the new leader to oppose it, with majorities of Republicans and independents supportive. Earlier Post-ABC surveys found that Americans

widely expected the project to create a significant amount of jobs, but that they were divided on whether it would pose a significant environmental risk.

Brady Dennis, Joe Heim and Scott Clement contributed to this report.

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Trump tells leaders of U.S. automotive industry he’ll ease rules to bring back jobs

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President Trump told executives from the country’s largest automakers Tuesday that he would ease environmental rules and other regulations to encourage the return of manufacturing jobs to the United States, a pledge that some analysts question will be as effective as promised.

Just the day before, Trump told business leaders he would cut regulations by 75 percent and “massively” cut corporate taxes. When meeting the chief executives of General Motors, Ford Motor Co. and Fiat Chrysler, he specifically targeted environmental regulations, which he called “out of control.”

Though Trump spoke often on the campaign trail about the need to revive manufacturing across the economy, he narrowed in on the automotive industry in particular in the weeks following his election. He separately criticized Ford, GM and Toyota for plans to build certain cars in Mexico and then sell them in the United States.

But even the positive overtures Trump offered during the White House meeting — which came after weeks of taunting the automotive industry over Twitter — may not compensate for the fact that automakers can produce vehicles more cheaply in Mexico and will probably see softening demand for cars in the coming years, analysts say.

“No matter how many incentives you offer automakers or [whether you] give them tax breaks, you still have the labor issue to deal with,” said Michael Harley, an executive analyst at Kelley Blue Book. “And you’re never going to be able to meet that on a one-to-one basis.”

Trump called himself an environmentalist when he sat down with the leaders of General Motors, Ford and Fiat Chrysler and said his administration will focus on “real regulations that mean something” while eliminating those that he finds inhospitable to business.

Executives declined to answer questions after the meeting, including whether the president cited any specific regulations he would cut. Only a portion of Tuesday’s gathering was open to the news media.

Industry leaders contend that complying with increasingly stringent fuel economy standards increases the cost of making cars, which must then be passed on to buyers or compensated for with job cuts. Those regulations were introduced during President Barack Obama’s first term to reduce pollution and encourage investment in eco-conscious technology. The Environmental Protection Agency upheld them in a review concluded two weeks ago.

Safe Climate Campaign Director Daniel Becker said job creation doesn’t need to come at the expense of regulations that have a positive impact on the environment.

The fuel economy standards, in particular, help to save consumers money at the gas pump and reduce the country’s dependence on oil, he said.

“Despite the rhetoric, there is often reason behind regulations, and in this case there is overwhelming evidence of how beneficial they are for consumers, the industry and overall Americans,” Becker said.

Analysts have speculated that Trump could ease those regulations or others that impact the industry as a reward for companies creating more jobs in the United States.

“There is a huge opportunity working together as an industry with government that we can improve the environment, improve safety, and improve jobs creation and the competitiveness of manufacturing,” General Motors chief executive Mary Barra told reporters after the meeting.

Ford chief executive Mark Fields and Fiat Chrysler chief executive Sergio Marchionne also attended Tuesday’s meeting.

Vice President Pence, Chief Strategist Stephen K. Bannon, Chief of Staff Reince Priebus and Senior Adviser Jared Kushner attended on behalf of the administration.

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Though regulatory changes could make it more appealing to manufacture in the United States, companies will still find there are significant economic and trade advantages to building in Mexico, including cheaper labor and fewer export restrictions, said Kelley Blue Book’s Harley.

The big automakers also make investments knowing they will outlive any single president, regardless of what policies or regulations are put in place, said Kristin Dziczek, director of the industry, labor and economics group at the Center for Automotive Research.

“This industry has been around for 100 years, and plants last for 40 or 50 years or more,” Dziczek said. “They can’t be swerving left and right every time there is a political change.”

Trump has threatened automotive companies that build abroad with a 35 percent tariff on goods imported to the United States for sale. Whether Trump has the power to impose such a tax on select companies has been called into question.

Trump met Monday with business leaders from a smattering of industries, including Fields and Tesla chief executive Elon Musk. The automotive leaders were told to devise a “series of actions” that will boost U.S. manufacturing and submit those plans to Trump within the next 30 days.



Trump hiring freeze could turn out to be less sweeping than it seems

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President Trump vowed as a candidate to take a sledgehammer to the federal bureaucracy, put a workforce full of “waste, fraud and

abuse” on notice and “cut so much, your head will spin.”

But the “across the board” hiring freeze he put in place Monday could

be a more symbolic, less forceful first step toward shrinking government than the sweeping order it appears to be, federal personnel experts said Tuesday. In

fact, the memorandum regarding the 2.1 million civilians in the federal workforce leaves plenty of room for exceptions.

Federal offices in many corners of government could continue to hire, as long as the job has — or can be construed to have — a national security or public safety mission. Individual Cabinet secretaries and agency heads have broad leeway to decide on exemptions.

And the hiring ban is scheduled to last 90 days, after which the Office of Management and Budget is slated to come up with a long-term plan to shrink the federal workforce through attrition.

A more permanent approach would still constitute a freeze of sorts but would resemble more of a selective slowdown, experts said.

"This is not an ironclad freeze," said Jeffrey Neal, former personnel chief at the Department of Homeland Security and now a senior vice president at ICF International. "It's sending a message to get everybody's attention that they don't want government to keep growing while they figure out how to reduce its size."

Yet the language of the memorandum instituting the freeze is so vague that a day after Trump signed it, agency officials were scrambling to determine whether and how the move will affect them.

The biggest question — about which employees the freeze covers at the Department of Defense — seems to have been answered late Tuesday night. A Pentagon spokesman said the department had determined that the freeze, which does not apply to uniformed military personnel, does indeed include the 750,000 civilian workforce that supports the military.

"Regarding the question of whether the hiring freeze

affects civilian personnel, the answer is yes," said spokesman Johnny Michael in an email. "The presidential memorandum places a freeze on the hiring of federal civilian employees, and applies to all executive departments and agencies, including civilian employees within the DoD."

Other blurry areas include whether agencies can continue to hire temporary employees such as seasonal rangers to help sustain big crowds at national parks during the high season.

The lack of clarity could cause havoc at agencies as they deliberate over whether they can hire for certain kinds of jobs, said Max Stier, president and chief executive of the nonprofit, nonpartisan Partnership for Public Service.

"At the end of the day, it's going to be very hard to address all of the potential holes," he said.

(Claritza Jimenez/The Washington Post)

In his first full working day at the White House, President Trump signed an executive order freezing federal hiring, except for military personnel. This is how the freeze works. In his first full working day at the White House, President Trump signed an executive order freezing federal hiring, except for military personnel. (Claritza Jimenez/The Washington Post)

Trump's directive applies to agencies regardless of whether their funding comes from fees or appropriations by Congress. It also tells agencies that they cannot backfill vacancies by increasing the number of outside contractors.

But it does not apply to the thousands of political appointees the new administration is likely to hire in the coming months to fill out its leadership teams. And Trump

gives his agency heads broad latitude to implement the hiring ban, letting them decide when to grant exemptions for national security and public safety jobs. The Office of Personnel Management also can grant waivers for hires whose missions are not related to national security or public safety.

"If I'm an agency head, I'm going to interpret this very broadly," said John Palguta, a retired senior executive at Merit Systems Protection Board and a longtime federal personnel expert.

"If I'm the newly confirmed head of the Department of Defense, I would say, 'That's what we do — we're all about public safety and national security,'" Palguta said. "They could use the exception widely."

There were also questions about whether the freeze affects the Department of Veterans Affairs, the second-largest federal agency, with 312,000 employees.

Those employees usually are considered "essential" in any shutdown of the federal government. But to many observers' surprise, the agency appears to be covered by the freeze, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said at a media briefing Tuesday.

"Right now, the system's broken," Spicer said of VA, explaining that a halt to hiring is meant as a "pause," in part until Trump's nominee to lead the agency, David Shulkin, can settle into the job.

"And I think the VA in particular, if you look at the problems that have plagued people, hiring more people isn't the answer," Spicer said. "It's hiring the right people, putting the procedures in place that ensure that our veterans — whether health care or mortgages or the other services that VA provides to those who have served our nation — get the services that they've earned."

Shulkin has said that one of his top goals is to fill hundreds of vacancies of doctors and nurses.

But the biggest question revolves around who the freeze applies to at the Pentagon.

The Defense Department's civilian workforce makes up about 35 percent of the government's civil servants. These employees are a massive base of support for the military, in jobs that include budget analysts, procurement, logistics and acquisition specialists, administrative staff, researchers and hundreds of other positions. Trump has pledged to boost the size of the military, but broadly speaking, it is not clear whether that mandate will apply to civilians.

[Trump freezes hiring of all federal workers]

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Even though the halt to hiring apparently applies to civilians, there is potentially a way for the agency to get around it by using the national security or public safety exemptions. That means that many, if not all, Pentagon civilians could be excluded from the freeze because their jobs help secure the nation, according to some interpretations.

Palguta pointed out that President Ronald Reagan's freeze on federal hiring, enacted on his first day in office, eventually fell apart because agencies waived it for so many positions.

Palguta predicted that because of these loopholes, the freeze "is not going to cripple government."

Missy Ryan contributed to this report.

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The New York Times

Thomas Friedman : Smart Approaches, Not Strong-Arm Tactics, to Jobs

LONDON — I've actually been watching the early Trump presidency from London. (I would have gone to the moon, but I couldn't get a ride.) Even from here I have vertigo.

My head is swirling from "alternative facts," trade deals canceled, pipelines initiated, Obamacare in the Twilight Zone and utterly bizarre rants about attendance on Inauguration Day and fake voters on Election Day. Whatever this cost Vladimir Putin, he's already gotten his money's worth — a chaos president. Pass the vodka.

But moderate Republicans, independents and Democrats who opposed Donald Trump need to beware. He can make you so nuts — he can so vacuum your brains out — that you can't think clearly about the most important questions today: What things are true even if Trump believes them, and therefore merit support? And where can Democrats offer smarter approaches on issues, like jobs, for instance — approaches that can connect to the guts of working-class voters as Trump did, but provide a smarter path forward.

Where Trump's instinct is not wrong is on the need to strike a better long-term trading arrangement with China. But I worry about his pugnacious tactics. I would be negotiating with Beijing in total secret. Let everybody save face. If he smacks China with "America First," China will smack him with "China First," and soon we'll have a good ol' trade war.

Where I think Democrats should focus their critique, and fresh thinking, is how we actually bring back more middle-class jobs. A day barely goes by without Trump

threatening some company that plans to move jobs abroad or build a factory in Mexico, not America.

President Trump with congressional leaders at the White House on Monday. Doug Mills/The New York Times

If Trump's bullying can actually save good jobs, God bless him. But what Trump doesn't see is that while this may get him some short-term jobs headlines, in the long-run C.E.O.s may prefer *not* to build their next factory in America, precisely because it will be hostage to Trump's Twitter lashings. They also

may quietly replace more workers with robots faster, because Trump can't see or complain about that.

"Trump wants to protect jobs," explained Gidi Grinstein, who heads the Israeli policy institute Reut. "What we really need is to protect workers."

You need to protect workers, not jobs, because every worker today will most likely have to transition multiple times to multiple jobs as the pace of change accelerates. So the best way you help workers is by ensuring that they are flexible — that they have the skills, safety nets, health care and lifelong learning opportunities to make those leaps and that they live in cities open to innovation, entrepreneurship and high-I.Q. risk-takers.

The societal units protecting workers best are our healthy *communities* — where local businesses, philanthropies, the public school system and universities, and local government

come together to support a permanent education-to-work-to-life-long-skill-building pipeline.

Businesses signal to schools and colleges, in real time, the skills they need to thrive in the global economy, and philanthropies fund innovative programs for supplemental education and training. Schools also serve as adult learning and social service centers — and local and state governments support them all, including reaching out globally for investors and new markets.

Eric Beinhocker, executive director of the Institute for New Economic Thinking at Oxford, calls this the "new progressive localism." For too long, he argues, "progressives have been so focused on Washington, they've missed the fact that most of the progress on the issues they care about — environment, education, economic opportunity and work-force skills — has happened at the local level. Because that is where trust lives."

Trust is what enables you to adapt quickly and experiment often, i.e., to be flexible. And there is so much more trust on the local level than the national level in America today.

When Trump strong-arms a company to retain jobs, but kills Obamacare without a credible alternative, he is saving jobs but hurting workers, because he is making workers less secure and less flexible.

Another of Trump's jobs fallacies is that regulation always holds companies back. In some cases it does, and thoughtful deregulation can help. But Trump's argument that we must ignore climate science because steadily upgrading clean energy standards for our power, auto and construction companies kills jobs is pure nonsense.

Fact: California has some of the highest clean energy standards for cars, buildings and electric utilities in America. And those standards have kept California one of the

world's leaders in clean-tech companies and start-ups, and its jobs and overall economy have grown steadily since 2010.

"The Golden State has more than half a million advanced energy jobs," says Energy Innovation C.E.O. Hal Harvey. "That's 10 times more — in this state alone — than total U.S. coal jobs." Trump's strategy is to "make America last" on clean energy and to double down on coal. Insane.

In sum, Democrats should and can take the language of "strength" away from Trump and own it themselves. They should be for strong workers, not strong walls; for building strong communities, not relying on a strongman to strong-arm employers; and for strong standards to create strong companies. Those would be my fightin' words.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Holman Jenkins : Corporate America Taken Hostage

Jan. 24, 2017

7:15 p.m. ET

Donald Trump made a lot of sweeping promises in his inaugural that no president could deliver, and he can't deliver. Yet he's the can-do businessman.

Mr. Trump calls his election a landslide. He uses a lot of other superlatives he knows don't apply. As a detailed account by Politico reveals, he understands exactly what a close-run thing his race was. Hillary botched her campaign. He eked out an Electoral College victory by the barest of margins while losing the popular vote.

He knows his legitimacy is under attack by the media, street protesters and Democrats who boycotted his inauguration. He needs victories to fill out the mandate the electorate so patchily gave him. And, Corporate America, in case you haven't figured it out by now, this is where you come in.

If you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail. Mr. Trump's experience is negotiating with other businesses, and using his public persona and brand to advance his interest in those negotiations. That's what he brings to the presidency. He can't end the social "carnage" of America's postindustrial countryside, but he can take credit for creating jobs—especially factory jobs—of the sort his "forgotten men

and women" regard as the path to middle-class security.

Never mind the PR fudge, the auto industry has cottoned on. Ford, GM, Chrysler and Toyota rolled out big new job-creation announcements. They showed up willingly to White House dog-and-pony meetings. Only the media quibble that these plans were already in place and are fluffed up so the new president can take credit.

In several cases, CEOs also underlined an expected quid pro quo. The president will enact tax reform and deregulation to make the American economy a more profitable economy in which to invest.

In the happy scenario, Mr. Trump and a GOP Congress deliver. Finally, good-enough growth starts providing wage gains to go along with the modest but steady employment rises of recent years. Mr. Trump's presidency becomes a four-year, bombastic exercise in credit-taking.

Mr. Trump, though, won't strike many as a leader to eschew foreign scapegoating if and when things start going badly at home.

If the Trump economy hits a wall, Mr. Trump's wall with Mexico will become a showy priority. The man himself will be on the scene directing the bulldozers, strutting in a hardhat, poring over plans.

He has an ever-ready supply of actionable complaints against

America's trade partners. They are currency manipulators, job stealers, hackers, trade-secret perps.

The dark side of his inaugural persona will become apparent: "We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies and destroying our jobs."

Contrary to what you hear in some quarters, it isn't racist to be in favor of trying to prop up the wages of low-skilled workers by reducing competition provided by imports and immigrants.

It is, however, unavailing economics. Low-skilled workers are the biggest beneficiaries of low-wage production, which keeps down the prices of the goods and commodities they disproportionately consume.

Trying to boost wages of low-skilled workers by reducing competition for their jobs has other perverse effects. It increases their incentive to remain low-skilled. It increases the incentive, meanwhile, of businesses to replace them with automation.

Worse, behind tariff barriers and cut off from international competition, the domestic manufacturing industry evolves slowly. In a decade or two, U.S. companies are technologically obsolete and inefficient compared with companies that operate in competitive world markets.

One irony is that, as technology allows more factory output to be produced with fewer workers, the political incentive to treat certain privileged factory workers as a protected class, like farmers, becomes irresistible. This is not exclusively a U.S. phenomenon: It lies at the bottom of the VW scandal in Germany.

While we might guess that today's mostly open international trading order is sturdier than many think, the Trumpian threat should not be ignored.

If Europeans are paying attention, they should remember the inordinate fuss Mr. Trump made in claiming credit for a recent NATO decision to expand its terrorism-fighting efforts. More such decisions would be wise. China would be smart to order Boeing jets and prosecute a few highly-placed domestic business leaders for intellectual-property theft.

If other nations value the trading order from which they've so much benefited, they will need to take a hand in maintaining it.

As for Mr. Trump, there are many ways to be president. He has a good cabinet. The bright but brittle animal spirits reflected in the stock market are not without weight. But whether Mr. Trump is any kind of a solution, or just a new kind of disaster, is still a big question mark.

Editorial : Closing doors on trade isn't smart negotiating

<https://www.facebook.com/washingtonpostopinions>

THE TRANS-PACIFIC Partnership trade agreement was already politically dead by the time President Trump buried it Monday, via a formal notification that the United States would withdraw. After Mr. Trump's victory in November, Congress made no attempt to ratify the 12-nation tariff-slashing pact when President Barack Obama, the TPP's intellectual author, was still in office. Mr. Obama argued, correctly — and consistently with post-World War II American foreign policy — that the United States had much to gain, economically and strategically, from thickening the network of connections with friendly countries such as Japan, Australia and Mexico.

China, which would have been left out of the TPP, is the immediate winner from Mr. Trump's move; it is already acting to fill the gap that Mr. Trump blithely created without

offering any plausible alternative. Beijing must be doubly pleased that the same result might have occurred even if Hillary Clinton had been elected, since she backed off her previous support of the TPP in the face of a simplistic Democratic backlash led by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.). Several Democratic senators, joined by the president of one of their party's most powerful interest groups, the AFL-CIO, hailed Mr. Trump's decision. Unfortunately, the formerly bipartisan consensus in favor of international engagement and responsibility is morphing into a bipartisan consensus against them.

Mr. Trump now turns his attention to the North American Free Trade Agreement, under which the flow of goods and services among the United States, Canada and Mexico has multiplied many times over since the pact took effect in 1994. Mr. Trump talks endlessly and extravagantly of jobs "stolen" by Mexico under NAFTA, and much manufacturing work has migrated from American factories to Mexican

ones. A renegotiation of NAFTA, which Mr. Trump claims to want, beginning with upcoming conversations with the leaders of Mexico and Canada, is not inherently a bad idea. What relationship wouldn't benefit from a tuneup after a quarter-century? Specifically, there may be a need to revisit NAFTA's "domestic content" rules to make sure products that flow tariff-free among the three countries truly originate within one of them.

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That assumes Mr. Trump comes to the table in good faith and with a balanced view of relevant facts. His fixation on high-profile automobile plant sitings in Mexico — coupled with his repeated threats of a "border tax" on firms that exercise

their rights to produce there — does not inspire confidence.

Automation, not trade, is the real culprit in manufacturing job loss. And while NAFTA has surely created winners and losers within the United States, overall it has not been the horrific deal Mr. Trump suggests. The combined trade deficit with Mexico and Canada was \$73.4 billion in 2015 (the most recent full year for which data exist). Subtract petroleum and it shrinks to \$13.9 billion, a rounding error for the \$18 trillion U.S. economy. Chances are that the deficit will shrink as American oil producers crank up for exports.

A smart negotiator would take all that into account before risking trade wars that might do far more damage to American companies, workers and consumers than the status quo allegedly does.

FBI Director James Comey to stay on in Trump administration (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=7291710>

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President Trump shook hands with FBI Director James B. Comey during a law enforcement reception at the White House on Jan. 22. Trump joked that Comey has "become more famous than me." President Trump shook hands with FBI Director James B. Comey during a law enforcement reception at the White House on Jan. 22. (The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

FBI Director James B. Comey was among the senior U.S. officials who had the unpleasant task of traveling to Trump Tower last month to inform the president-elect that Russia had interfered in the election process to help him win office.

Then Comey asked his colleagues — including the CIA director — to step outside so that he could discuss something even more awkward: a dossier in wide circulation in Washington that alleged that Moscow had gathered compromising financial, political and personal material about the incoming U.S. president.

That Comey was asked after that encounter, described by U.S. officials briefed on its details, to stay on as FBI director speaks to his survival instincts and ability to inspire confidence. But the meeting

may also have provided a preview of the perilous position he occupies serving in the Trump administration while his agents pursue investigations that seem to lead to the president's associates.

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The news that Comey would stay in place became public Tuesday, some time after he began informing senior FBI officials around the country that he had been asked to continue.

Under normal circumstances, the revelation might have been unsurprising: Comey is less than four years into a 10-year term, and it is extremely rare for a president to remove an FBI director. But President Trump had notably declined to say whether he would keep the FBI director, telling "60 Minutes" in an interview after his election that he wanted to meet with Comey first.

[A brief history of President Trump's comments about FBI Director Comey]

The FBI and White House declined to comment on Comey's retention. The New York Times was the first to report on the developments.

Comey has come under fire from both sides of the political aisle in recent months, especially for his handling of the Hillary Clinton email investigation. Many Democrats still blame him for Clinton's loss, and his decisions to discuss the probe publicly in the final months of the race are being investigated by the Justice Department inspector general.

His greatest looming challenge, however, will be presiding over ongoing investigations whose dimensions and direction are unclear, but which involve Russia's hacking and interference in the presidential election as well as nebulous ties between Trump associates and Moscow.

Those alleged entanglements continue to expand.

U.S. officials said this week that the FBI has scrutinized communications between Trump's national security adviser, Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn, and Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak. The two traded texts and phone calls in late December just as the Obama administration was imposing new sanctions on Moscow, raising suspicion that Flynn and Kislyak were improperly discussing the penalties. U.S. officials, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation, said they have seen no evidence of wrongdoing.

The FBI for several months has been investigating allegations that Trump associates or acquaintances, including his former campaign manager Paul Manafort, might have had improper contact with Russian officials or intermediaries, U.S. officials said.

The bureau is also still examining allegations in the dossier that Comey discussed with Trump in New York last month, according to a U.S. official. The document was assembled by a former British intelligence officer who had been hired by a Washington investigations and political research firm.

The contents of the dossier have been in wide circulation among news organizations and law enforcement entities since mid-2016, but it is unclear if any of its potentially damaging allegations have been substantiated by intelligence agencies.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) deemed the document troubling enough that he said he had it delivered to Comey. U.S. officials have said that the author of the document is a respected former spy who has helped the FBI on unrelated cases.

Comey, former CIA director John Brennan and former director of national intelligence James R. Clapper Jr. agreed that they should discuss the dossier with Trump

even if the allegations were unproven.

The task of having that conversation fell exclusively to Comey, officials said, in part to empty the room of officials, aides and advisers who had taken part in the broader briefing about Russian hacking, but were seen as having no compelling need to be involved in the discussion of the dossier.

The ensuing conversation came with seemingly unavoidable conflicts. It is not clear whether Comey told Trump that the FBI had or was still pursuing allegations made in the dossier, but doing so would have involved telling an incoming president with significant power over the FBI that his associates were potential investigative targets.

At a news conference Monday, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said that Trump "has not made any indication that he would stop an investigation of any sort."

Trump has railed at the decision by the nation's intelligence chiefs, including Comey, to attach a copy of the dossier to a report released last month by U.S. spy agencies that concluded that Russian President Vladimir Putin had ordered a cyber-

campaign to disrupt the election and help Trump.

Trump accused the spy agencies of orchestrating a Nazi-like smear campaign against him. The CIA has been the main target of Trump's hostility in recent months, but he has also been sharply critical of Comey and the FBI.

In October, Trump implied that Comey was corrupt for saying publicly that the bureau had not found any incriminating information in a belatedly discovered batch of Clinton emails.

But Trump has also praised Comey at times, telling "60 Minutes" that "I respect him a lot."

At times, it has seemed Comey has few friends in politics. When he announced in July that he was recommending that the Clinton email investigation be closed without charges, Republicans lambasted the FBI director for, in their view, coming to the wrong conclusion on the facts he himself laid out.

Months later, when Comey revealed to Congress that the probe was back on less than two weeks before the election, Democrats excoriated the FBI for violating long-standing Justice Department policies about

taking overt steps in an investigation so close to the day when voters would go to the polls.

Even Justice Department officials had advised against Comey taking the actions he did, and Justice Department Inspector General Michael Horowitz is investigating Comey's conduct in the case. Comey has said he welcomes the review.

The criticism of Comey, though, is not limited to the Clinton investigation. After a recent closed-door briefing from intelligence officials about Russian hacking, some House Democrats called for Comey to resign. They claimed that the FBI director was not treating the Trump-related and Clinton-related investigations the same, particularly in his willingness to discuss the matters publicly.

"He should pack his things and go," said Rep. Hank Johnson (D-Ga.).

Senate Intelligence Committee leaders have said they will explore for themselves alleged links between Russia and the 2016 political campaigns as part of a wide look at the intelligence community's report on Russian hacking, and some on the left have called for a special prosecutor to be appointed.

Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.), Trump's pick to be attorney general, said in a recent response to a questionnaire that he was "not aware of a basis to recuse myself from such investigations," though if a "specific matter arose where I believed my impartiality might reasonably be questioned, I would consult with Department ethics officials regarding the most appropriate way to proceed."

A spokeswoman for Sessions declined to comment for this article.

The law would allow Trump to remove Comey, though a president rarely takes such a step out of respect for the independence of the FBI director's position. President Bill Clinton removed Director William S. Sessions in 1993 amid allegations of ethical improprieties, making him the only director to be removed from his post by the president since 1972.

Trump greeted Comey warmly at a White House reception on Sunday, shaking the FBI director's hand, patting him on the back and remarking, "He's become more famous than me."

Sari Horwitz contributed to this report.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Donald Trump Narrows List of Supreme Court Nominees

Jess Bravin

Updated Jan. 24, 2017 9:34 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump has culled the candidates to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court to a handful of federal appellate judges admired in conservative circles, people close to the selection process said Tuesday.

The list includes Neil Gorsuch of the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver, Thomas Hardiman of the Third Circuit in Philadelphia, Raymond Kethledge of the Sixth Circuit in Cincinnati, and William Pryor of the 11th Circuit in Atlanta, the people said.

Mr. Trump said he would make his nomination next week, quickly fulfilling his campaign pledge to replace the late Justice Antonin Scalia with a like-minded conservative.

People close to the White House caution that the process is still fluid, however, and that other candidates could come into last-minute contention.

Signaling the final stages of the selection process, Mr. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence met Tuesday afternoon with the four

senators who will determine how smoothly his nominee advances: the Senate's majority and minority leaders, Sens. Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) and Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.), and the Judiciary Committee's Republican chairman and ranking Democrat, Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley and Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California.

"As I've said many times, I believe the president should pick a mainstream nominee who could earn bipartisan support for the vacant Supreme Court seat," Mr. Schumer said. "I reiterated that view in our meeting today, and told him that Senate Democrats would fight any nominee that was outside of the mainstream."

During his campaign, Mr. Trump turned to leaders of conservative organizations such as the Heritage Foundation and the Federalist Society to compile a list that ultimately numbered 21 candidates, including federal judges, state supreme court justices, and a U.S. senator. Since winning the election, he has continued to consult with leaders of those groups, and also sought advice from his sister, Judge Maryanne Trump Barry of the Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia, the people close to the process said.

Leonard Leo, who is advising Mr. Trump on the nomination, said that despite his own business background, the president wasn't focused on a nominee's approach to business issues before the court.

"That's less important to him," Mr. Leo said. Instead, Mr. Trump is seeking a nominee who, like himself, "makes forceful decisions and sticks with them," regardless of criticism, said Mr. Leo, who also is executive vice president of the Federalist Society. "That's how his business background fits into this."

Their status as finalists illustrates the long game played in judicial politics; all are among a crop of promising young conservatives long groomed for a Supreme Court vacancy. Appointed to the circuit courts by President George W. Bush, they have had years to develop their craft as legal writers—and, more critically, to demonstrate their ideological consistency to a partisan base sometimes frustrated when judges appointed by Republican presidents depart from the party line.

That scrutiny may have doomed the chances of once-rising members of that conservative class, such as Sixth Circuit Judge Jeffrey Sutton and Judge Brett Kavanaugh of the

District of Columbia Circuit, both omitted from the initial Trump lists. Like Chief Justice John Roberts, both filed opinions that many conservatives found too receptive toward the Affordable Care Act.

Judge Pryor may likewise fail the purity test. Some evangelical leaders say they are troubled by two 2011 decisions he joined involving gay and transgender rights. In one, Judge Pryor voted against a state university student who objected on religious grounds to the school-counseling program's curriculum requiring sensitivity to gay, lesbian and transgender students. In another, he sided with a transgender woman who alleged sex discrimination after being fired from a job in state government.

"I always expected him to be attacked by the left. I never expected that he would be attacked from the right," said John Malcolm, who directs a legal studies center at the Heritage Foundation.

Indeed, Judge Pryor, who has characterized *Roe v. Wade* as "the worst abomination of constitutional law in our history," was to some liberals the worst potential choice. Democrats filibustered Judge Pryor's initial circuit court nomination, prompting President

Bush to install him temporarily with a recess appointment before winning confirmation later.

The top names now circulating—all white men—won't add to the Supreme Court's ethnic or gender diversity. But with every current justice holding at least one Ivy League degree, most on Mr. Trump's list

would shake up the court's academic profile.

Judge Pryor, previously the Alabama attorney general, attended Northeast Louisiana University and Tulane Law School. Judge Hardiman was the first in his family to attend college—at Notre Dame—and paid his way through Georgetown University Law Center

by driving a cab. Judge Kethledge, who clerked for Justice Anthony Kennedy, earned undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Michigan.

The exception is Judge Gorsuch, who brings establishment credibility. Son of the late Anne Gorsuch Burford, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency

under President Ronald Reagan, he holds degrees from Columbia, Harvard and Oxford where, like Justice Stephen Breyer, he was a Marshall Scholar. Judge Gorsuch clerked for Justices Byron White and Anthony Kennedy.

Write to Jess Bravin at jess.bravin@wsj.com

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Stephanie Armour

Updated Jan. 24, 2017 7:47 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Rep. Tom Price, selected by President Donald Trump to lead the Department of Health and Human Services, told senators Tuesday that Congress—not Mr. Price—would determine any repeal and replacement of the Affordable Care Act.

The Georgian used his second confirmation hearing to send conciliatory signals to Capitol Hill about Mr. Trump's approach to striking down the 2010 health law. He spoke four days after Mr. Trump signed an executive order that raised the prospect of side-stepping lawmakers by having agency heads do whatever they could on their own to unwind the law.

The Republican-controlled Senate and House have taken their first procedural steps toward repealing the law, passing a budget that directs legislators to start drafting bills to dismantle much of the law. But Republicans still have to agree on several divisive issues, including what health policy they want to enact.

Mr. Price's appearance, which included questions about his stock trading, came on a day that the full Senate confirmed Nikki Haley, the Republican governor of South Carolina, to be ambassador to the

HHS Nominee Says Congress Will Determine New Health System

Louise Radnofsky and

United Nations.

Ms. Haley had won approval by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee earlier Tuesday. During her confirmation hearing, she said the U.S. should be cautious when working with Russia and stressed the importance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Mr. Trump has adopted a more welcoming stance toward Russia and said recently that NATO is obsolete.

Ms. Haley was the fourth of Mr. Trump's nominees to win Senate confirmation, all of them in national-security or foreign-affairs positions.

At least four other nominees have won approval in Senate committees and are awaiting confirmation votes by the full chamber. They include Rex Tillerson, the former Exxon Mobil Corp. chief executive who is Mr. Trump's choice to be secretary of state.

The three others won approval in Senate committees Tuesday. They were Wilbur Ross, the nominee to lead the Commerce Department; Elaine Chao, who would lead the Transportation Department; and Dr. Ben Carson, the choice to be secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Mr. Trump has sent sometimes conflicting messages about the stamp he intends to place in shaping the debate over repealing the ACA, urging Congress to act quickly but also saying he has his own plan that he intends to release soon.

Mr. Price declined to say whether he would hold back on acting on Mr. Trump's executive action until Republicans had coalesced around any replacement for the law.

Asked by Democratic Sen. Michael Bennet of Colorado if Republicans' proposals to repeal the ACA also included repealing the law's expansion of Medicaid, he replied: "I, if I'm fortunate to serve as the Secretary of Health and Human Services, will carry out the law that you pass. That's a decision that you all will make."

Democrats criticized Mr. Price's answer. "What do you believe in?" asked Missouri Sen. Claire McCaskill. "You're going to be influential. What you really believe matters, and you want to run away from that.... You've been chosen for your beliefs."

Mr. Price offered general defenses of his party's approach to health care, which he had previously taken an active role trying to shape. He said he believed any GOP plans to enact their own health policy would include mechanisms to cover everybody regardless of their medical history, though the ways of doing that could differ from the ACA.

"Nobody ought to be priced out of the market for having a bad diagnosis. Nobody," Mr. Price said.

Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, the top Democrat on the committee, said he was troubled by the day's hearing, and had concluded from Mr. Price's remarks that "America will end up

with health care that works for the healthy and wealthy."

GOP senators are expected to green-light Mr. Price's nomination. "If we keep going the way we are going, there won't be any health care for anybody," said the panel chairman, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R., Utah).

Mr. Price, a doctor, also defended his past stock trades. Democrats have said his trades in medical companies while he sponsored legislation that could have benefited those companies amounted to an abuse of his position in Congress. They said at the hearing that he undervalued his purchase and value of stock in Innate Immunotherapeutics Ltd., an Australian biotech firm.

"The reality is that everything I did was above board, ethical and transparent," Mr. Price said, saying the valuation discrepancy was due to a clerical error.

Mr. Price, 62 years old, has said he didn't personally direct most of his stock trades and asserted that he had no access to nonpublic information on the companies involved.

—Felicia Schwartz contributed to this article.

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THE HILL

Jonath an Easley

President Trump's chief strategist, Stephen Bannon, is dipping into Breitbart News to staff the White House.

The hires give Bannon more loyalists in Trump's West Wing, and also raise Breitbart's profile and power.

It comes as the conservative news organization, led by Bannon until last year, seeks to expand its

Breitbart's influence grows inside White House

influence in Washington and the world.

One of Breitbart's biggest stars, Julia Hahn, is expected to join the White House as an aide to Bannon. Breitbart's national security editor, Sebastian Gorka, will also relocate to the White House, likely with a spot on the president's National Security Council, Business Insider reported on Tuesday.

The Breitbartization of the White House comes as no surprise to

people at the conservative news site.

"I'm surprised it took this long," one Breitbart reporter told The Hill. "There are a number of people on staff who clearly have resumes that would lend themselves to the administration. These two are ideologically in line with Bannon. They're people he can trust. It makes sense."

Hahn, 25, is said to be a favorite of both Bannon and Trump's senior adviser for policy, Stephen Miller, a

veteran of the campaign and attorney general nominee Sen. Jeff Sessions. Breitbart's influence grows inside White House as Schumer emerges as new champion to left Lawsuit filed to get information on Sessions MORE's (R-Ala.) office.

She worked for Laura Ingraham at a time when the radio host led the charge to oust former House Majority Leader Eric Cantor. Breitbart's influence grows inside White House as Ryan reelected Speaker in near-unanimous GOP

vote Financial technology rules are set to change in the Trump era MORE (R-Va.). Soon after, Hahn joined the office of Rep. Dave Brat (R-Va.), whose surprise victory over Cantor shook Washington and put GOP leaders on notice.

At Breitbart, Hahn has had Speaker Paul Ryan Paul Ryan Trump to ask for 'major investigation into voter fraud' GOP lawmakers set for packed schedule at Philly retreat Breitbart's influence grows inside White House MORE (R-Wis.) in her crosshairs, writing mocking stories about him being a closeted supporter of Democrat Hillary Hillary Rodham Clinton Sanders rips Trump voter fraud claims McCain: 'I obviously have seen no evidence of illegal voting' Secret Service agent under fire for anti-Trump Facebook posts MORE and pumping up his long-shot primary challenger.

Like Miller, 31, Hahn's allies describe her as a policy wunderkind who positioned herself at the vanguard of the national populist movement even before Trump came along.

Her focus has been on immigration, trade and economic populism, three issues at the center of Trump's agenda.

Gorka's primary focus at Breitbart has been the threat of radical Islam. He has been a fierce critic of what he describes as the Obama administration's weak response to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and other international terror groups.

Hahn and Gorka would give Bannon two allies who buy wholesale into the issues that

were central to Trump's rise.

"Julia has been a champion for Trump's anti-establishment base and understands the issues that helped get Donald Trump Donald Trump Sanders rips Trump voter fraud claims Midnight regulations: Poster children for regulatory reform Oil pipelines are the backbone of US economy MORE elected as well as anyone," Breitbart Editor-in-Chief Alex Marlow told The Hill.

"Dr. Gorka has an encyclopedic knowledge of the Islamic State and caught on to it as a threat early on. They are huge hires for the White House on issues that are essential to Trump's coalition and the policies he hopes to affect as president."

They will join Bannon's team at a time when there is intense media focus on the possible rival power centers in Trump's White House between conservative and more establishment forces within the GOP.

Bannon and White House chief of staff Reince Priebus, a former Republican National Committee (RNC) chairman, are seen as rival influences, though White House officials say there is no tension.

Priebus has had early success in bringing in key allies including press secretary Sean Spicer and Katie Walsh, the former finance director and chief of staff at the RNC who will act as deputy chief of staff at the White House.

Now, Hahn and Gorka will add to Bannon's stable of trusted allies in the West Wing, although one source familiar with Bannon's thinking dismissed the notion that he is staffing up for a fight.

"Steve is bringing in people he trusts on the issues that were central to Donald Trump's success," the source said. "Of course it's good for him to have committed allies, but that's not the motivation. The motivation is he's trying to make sure there are talented people around him at the White House that know what they're doing."

The hires are also significant for Breitbart.

The website will soon be opening bureaus in France, Italy and Germany, where the outlet believes Brexit-style insurgencies could be on the cusp of developing.

Breitbart has begun a hiring spree meant to capitalize on the forces that turned it into a juggernaut on the right. That means picking off reporters from more mainstream news outlets like John Carney, a former Wall Street Journal reporter who will edit the website's business page.

"There will always be this 'Fight Club' element where we look to punch the establishment when they deserve it," Marlow said. "But we have a lot of reporting to do and will recruit and hire the most well-rounded and sophisticated and sharpest minds in Washington to build the best team, period. We're not going to follow any prescription that the media wants."

Still, the movement from Breitbart to the White House has given ammunition to the media outlet's critics, who say it is nothing more than a propaganda arm of Trump's White House.

"There is no line of separation between the White House and Breitbart — they are one in the same," Kurt Bardella, a former Breitbart spokesman who has since disavowed the media outlet, told The Hill. "They effectively are a state-sponsored/controlled platform designed to advance the administration's propaganda."

Breitbart disputes that reading and has prided itself on holding Trump accountable for his campaign promises.

In the weeks since Trump has been elected, Breitbart has run stories whacking Trump for declining to hire a special prosecutor to investigate Clinton and for continuing former President Obama's policy of issuing work permits to young people in the country illegally.

"The one perception we're always battling is that we're joined at the hip with Trump, and that's just not the case," a Breitbart editor told The Hill.

"We've had no problem writing it up when he's been wrong and we'll continue to do that. It's what journalists are supposed to do. But we'll do it without the contempt and hatred that others in the media have for him."



Trump tries to pave the way for development by accelerating environmental reviews

By Darryl Fears

President Trump signed an executive order Tuesday to fulfill his goal of "expediting environmental reviews and approvals" to fast track an effort to "fix our country, our roadways and bridges."

The order said that too often, big government and commercial projects are snagged by agency processes and procedures that costs jobs and money. Under the order, agencies that undertake environmental and other analyses before greenlighting development should work with "maximum efficiency and effectiveness" to complete them.

As part of the order, the chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality will decide

whether a project should be given national priority within 30 days of a request, triggering an expedited approval process. If an agency fails to meet the deadline for review, an agency head will have to explain the tardiness to the chair.

Trump's move came a day after placing a freeze on all grants and contracts from the Environmental Protection Agency, possibly suspending efforts to improve local air quality in some parts of the nation.

[Trump administration tells EPA to freeze all grants, contracts]

The actions caused alarm in the environmental and academic communities, with environmental groups and university professors expressing deep concern. Food and

Water Watch, a nonprofit group, said Trump declared "war on the environment" in his first week on the job. "All our fears about the Trump presidency are being confirmed this week," said Wenonah Hauter, the group's executive director.

Trump's order was vague on exactly how agencies will expedite analyses of projects, but the order said it will be done within existing legal frameworks.

The largest hurdle to fast development is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It calls for extensive analysis of development to determine its impact to public health and the environment, including whether it might hurt air quality or foul water.

Legal experts said Trump could easily maneuver around NEPA to proceed with other executive orders he signed Tuesday that would revive the Dakota Access and Keystone XL oil pipelines. The Obama administration rejected plans for the Keystone XL pipeline in 2015, and last month it blocked the final leg of the Dakota Access pipeline project, which Native American groups have been protesting.

[Trump seeks to revive Dakota Access, Keystone XL oil pipelines]

The experts said that in 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed an executive order requiring a review for projects such as pipelines that cross the U.S. border. Executive Order 11423 covered bridges, tunnels, roadways,

rail, livestock and even bicycle crossings. The State Department used its authority to undertake the NEPA review of the Keystone pipeline.

Trump could lift it with his own directive, effectively revoking Johnson's order. "I don't think there's a real way to challenge that," said Jim Murphy, senior counsel for the National Wildlife Federation. "That would remove a very meaningful federal review process for cross-border pipeline construction."

The NEPA review "was the main reason the process dragged on for so many years," said Brett Hartl of the Center for Biological Diversity. As Hartl read the new order, he said it appears an analysis of Keystone will be left to the State Department, but it must complete within 60 days a process that once took up to a year.

"NEPA is the Magna Carta of the environmental world," said Scott Edwards, co-director of Food and Water Watch's legal division. "It's not surprising that [Trump] would begin his presidency by attacking

the blueprint for environmental protection in this country."

Energy and Environment newsletter

The science and policy of environmental issues.

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In a defiant stance, Edwards said he hopes the administration scuttles environmental review processes and plows ahead. "It allows us to sue the agency for shoddy analysis under NEPA. Trump thinks he's the CEO of America. He can't ignore the legal process."

The basic principle of democracy is what NEPA is all about, said Sharon Buccino, director of the Land and Water program for the Natural Resources Defense Council. The NEPA process includes public notice, participation, comment on project proposals and environmental review.

But the president has discretion, she said. He has the authority to expedite the process so that all those considerations can be completed as quickly as possible, as long as agencies "justify their decisions with a reasonable basis. They can't be arbitrary."

the Atlantic Thanks to Trump, Scientists Are Planning To Run For Office

Ed Yong

For American science, the next four years look to be challenging. The newly inaugurated President Trump, and many of his Cabinet picks, have repeatedly cast doubt upon the reality of human-made climate change, questioned the repeatedly proven safety of vaccines. Since the inauguration, the administration has already frozen grants and contracts by the Environmental Protection Agency and gagged researchers at the US Department of Agriculture. Many scientists are asking themselves: What can I do?

And the answer from a newly formed group called 314 Action is: Get elected.

The organization, named after the first three digits of pi, is a political action committee that was created to support scientists in running for office. It's the science version of Emily's List, which focuses on pro-choice female candidates, or VoteVets, which backs war veterans. "A lot of scientists traditionally feel that science is above politics but we're seeing that politics is not above getting involved in science," says founder Shaughnessy Naughton. "We're losing, and the only way to stop that is to get more people with scientific backgrounds at the table."

Naughton, a chemist by training and a former breast cancer researcher, ran for Congress herself in 2014 and 2016, but lost both times in Pennsylvania's Democratic primaries. She puts those losses down to her inexperience with politics and her outsider status, which locked her out of traditional donor circles. In creating 314 Action, she hopes to provide other scientists with the money and mentorship that would have helped her. "Partly, we're making the case for why they should run—and Donald Trump is really helping us with that," she says. "Then, we're showing them how to run, and

introducing them to our donor network."

Early signs are promising. In just two weeks, more than 400 people have signed up to the recruitment form on the organization's site. They include Jacquelyn Gill from the University of Maine, who studies how prehistoric climate change shaped life on the planet. "If you'd told me a year ago that I would consider running for office, I would have laughed," she says. "I always fantasized about serving an administration in an advisory capacity, but we now have explicitly anti-science people in office and in the Cabinet. Waiting passively for people to tap me for my expertise won't be enough."

"What I really want to know is: Can I do this without abandoning my career in science?"

Since the election, many scientists have made forays into politics, from signing open letters to marching in open protest. "I think most scientists view their work as pure and noble, and politics as a dirty game. It's almost like selling out or going to the dark side," says Frances Colón, who until recently was Deputy Science and Technology Adviser to the Secretary of State. But, since Trump's victory, "many more scientists are realizing why their voices are needed. I've had numerous coffees with people who are considering ways to run."

Even if only a few are successful, they would significantly bolster the limited numbers of Congressional representatives with scientific backgrounds. A few have undergraduate degrees in science, including Seth Moulton (D-MA; physics), Jacky Rosen (D-NV; computer science), and Louise Slaughter (D-NY; microbiology). Others have doctoral degrees: mathematician Jerry McNerney (D-CA), psychologist Timothy Murphy (R-PA), and physicist Bill Foster (D-IL), who once said that he "inherited

the family's recessive gene for adult-onset political activism."

"I think government works better when we have people with lots of professional backgrounds," says Kate Knuth, who trained in environmental science and served three terms in the Minnesota House of Representatives between 2006 and 2012. "Scientists bring a unique perspective in how they look at data and think about problems. They're trained to value evidence, and to change their minds in the face of evidence. Right now, in a lot of our governance, we have people who just say this is the way it is, in the face of huge evidence to the contrary. That makes it hard to make good policy."

"If you believe that the scientific method alone is going to solve the world's problems, I don't think you're going to be a good politician."

It is perhaps unsurprising that scientists are so poorly represented in government. Younger researchers—perhaps the demographic most eager to leave the ivory tower for the halls of congress—also face the steepest costs for abandoning academia. Scientific careers are built on continuity and perseverance: Years as a graduate student give way to years in postdoctoral positions, which bleed into professorships. If you step away, it can be hard to step back.

"My role models did good science, rose up the ranks, and *then* went to serve our country," says Gill, referring to people like Jane Lubchenco, who was Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration under Barack Obama. "In an ideal world, I'd do this from the comfort of being a full professor. And yet, it's not something I feel can wait. What I really want to know is: Can I do this without abandoning my career in science?"

Even if scientists do decide to run, they face an intense culture-shock. "In science, your colleagues want to know you have expertise and approach problems through legitimate methods," says Knuth. "In politics, people first want to know that you care about them and their problems before they care about whether or not you have realistic answers. Those are very different values."

"They seem to be some of the least likely people to be thinking about running for office," adds Joe Trippi, a political strategist and campaign manager. "They haven't been spending the last 16 years planning their run for Congress. You have to help them understand how you run a campaign, get seed money, find a campaign manager, put a team together."

That's where 314 Action comes in. With over 80,000 donors and mentors including Trippi and climate scientist Michael Mann, Naughton hopes that it will help scientists to make good on any newfound political ambitions. To start, they are scheduling a webinar for March 14th—Pi Day, naturally—to go over the basics of successful campaigning. Following that, they'll focus on boosting particular strong candidates.

"In my interactions with them, I've had my eyes opened," says Gill. "There's all this insider knowledge. And to be told that if you decide to run, you'd have support and financial backing, is tremendously empowering."

For now, 314 Action will only back Democratic candidates. I wonder if that risks turning science into yet another partisan issue, but Naughton argues that it is already on that road. "When we're talking about climate change, there's a clear distinction between the two parties," she says. Knuth agrees. "It's hard to say if it would politicize science even more than it already

has been," she says. And at the very least, if 314 Action succeeds, it would expose congressional representatives from both parties to a scientific mindset.

Knuth also argues that this shouldn't just be about shoving science into government, as if the former will save the latter. It works in reverse too. "When I ran, I spent

two to four hours a day, five to six days a week, knocking on doors and listening to people," she says. "I never felt like I knew more about how people were thinking about the problems in their community, what they wanted from government, and their hopes and dreams for the future. Is that scientific information? No. Is it vetted through peer review? No. But it was invaluable. Scientists

need to learn and appreciate the value of other ways of knowing about how the world works."

"If you believe that the scientific method alone is going to solve the world's problems, I don't think you're going to be a good politician," she adds. "A politician's job is to understand how the world works and then make hard decisions

about how we should move forward together. Evidence can make those decisions better and it helps us to understand the consequences of different decisions. But it doesn't tell us what the right decision is."

**The
Washington
Post**

Todd Stern : Trump can make the deal of the century on climate

By Todd Stern

Todd Stern, a visiting lecturer at Yale Law School, was U.S. special envoy for climate change from 2009 to 2016.

As President Trump takes the reins of power, anxiety and uncertainty are the order of the day for those concerned about the threat of climate change. Trump has ranged from disbelieving (climate change is a Chinese "hoax") to dismissive (we should "cancel" the 2015 Paris agreement) to open ("I'm looking at it very closely. ... I have an open mind to it") on the issue.

The truth is that the climate challenge Trump faces is large and the stakes are high, but he has been dealt a very good hand if he is willing to play it.

The challenge is that achieving the climate goals endorsed by all the countries in Paris — especially holding the increase in global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius compared with preindustrial levels — will take a concerted commitment centered on rapidly transitioning from a high- to a very-low-carbon global energy system. A global economy that currently runs more than 80 percent on fossil fuels will have to cut that habit dramatically by 2050 and eliminate or capture all carbon emissions by the 2060s or 2070s.

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Nor can the Paris goals be shrugged off as an excess of zeal that we can comfortably revise

upward. With average temperature having risen by only 0.9 degrees Celsius so far, we already see rapidly accumulating evidence of rising sea levels, stressed water supplies and "100-year" events such as extreme droughts, floods and storms. As these and other effects worsen, we will face risks to health, safety, economic well-being and national security that we have never tolerated in any other context. If you doubt this, just consult the published views of the Pentagon, the intelligence community and any number of major corporations, not to mention the leading lights of the U.S. and global scientific establishment.

The good news, though, is that while meeting the challenge of transitioning to clean energy is formidable, it is also doable as a matter of innovation, policy and financing. We know what we need to do, and we can do it — if the political will is there.

Which brings us back to Trump and those good cards he has been dealt. First, he has the Paris agreement itself. Climate change is a global problem, so it can't be solved without a global regime to drive joint action, and the landmark Paris accord finally delivered that regime, after 20 years of trying. It is built to work both for the United States and for others. It has a bottom-up structure based on countries devising their own climate plans and targets; it applies to all, including China and India; it renews itself every five years as countries update and augment the ambition of their efforts; and it includes binding commitments for full transparency, so all countries can have confidence that others are acting.

(Daron Taylor/The Washington Post)

Donald Trump will enter the White House with an environmental policy agenda opposed to that of the Obama administration and many other nations that have pledged support to the Paris climate agreement. The Washington Post's Chris Mooney breaks down what a Donald Trump presidency will mean when it comes to climate change. Donald Trump will enter the White House with an environmental policy agenda opposed to that of the Obama administration. (Daron Taylor/The Washington Post)

Second, we have entered a period of explosive growth in clean energy, led by the genius of U.S. innovation both in technology and in business models, and by the massive markets being created worldwide for pollution-free energy. The costs of wind and solar generation have been plummeting and are already near the cost of fossil fuel, and sometimes cheaper. More than 60 percent of new electricity capacity in the United States in the past two years has come from these sources.

And innovation is blossoming all over the clean-tech landscape, from storage technology to open the door for expanding use of renewables, to electric vehicles, to a smarter grid that will enable more work to be done with less energy.

Plus, there are jobs — for example, more solar jobs now in the United States than in the oil, gas and coal extraction industries combined. And clean energy is hugely popular with both Democratic and Republican voters.

We still, crucially, need strong policy support and research and development, but the change is gathering speed.

Globally, the economic potential of the clean-energy transition is staggering, amounting to trillions of dollars. No one has more to gain than the United States by jumping into this new "great race" with both feet, given our unparalleled culture and infrastructure of innovation. It's the deal of the century, and a presidential dealmaker should pursue it with gusto.

None of this would prevent generous treatment for those, such as coal miners, who helped build the industrial backbone of our nation. Or, indeed, for full-on R&D and other support for technologies such as carbon capture and storage.

Is it plausible that Trump could recognize the climate challenge and embrace this opportunity? The key lies in that "open mind" of his. If it is open, then he will listen to knowledgeable advisers — from the military, big business, Wall Street, the scientific community — and he'll come quickly to understand the risk of climate change and the reward of taking it on.

With an open mind, Trump can make history. He has a Nixon-to-China capacity to bring Congress, the American public and the rest of the world with him on climate. He should seize it.

**The
Washington
Post**

White House says Trump's false claim of voter fraud is his 'long-standing belief'

<https://www.facebook.com/PhilipRuckerWP>

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

The Post's Michelle Ye Hee Lee explains why White House press secretary Sean Spicer's claims on

Jan. 24 about voter fraud in the presidential election don't add up. The Post's Michelle Ye Hee Lee explains why White House press secretary Sean Spicer's claims about voter fraud in the presidential election don't add up. (Video: Bastien Inzaurrealde/Photo: Matt McClain/The Washington Post)

The White House on Tuesday reiterated President Trump's false contention that he lost the national popular vote because of 3 million to 5 million illegal votes, as yet another untruth swelled into a distraction that threatens to undermine his first week in office.

Trump repeatedly has claimed there was widespread voter fraud in the November election, most recently telling congressional leaders Monday night that he thinks it is why he lost the popular vote to Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. Although the president's theory has been broadly

discredited, White House press secretary Sean Spicer held up debunked research Tuesday to support it and left open the possibility of a federal investigation.

"The president has believed that for a while based on studies and information he has," Spicer said. When pressed, Spicer would not state whether he personally agrees with Trump, only that it is the president's "long-standing belief."

As a candidate, Trump played fast and loose with the facts, frequently exaggerating and peddling falsehoods — or in some cases lying — to promote himself and undermine his adversaries. As president, Trump's behavior has not been much different. He is alleging voter fraud on such a large scale that, if true, it would amount to a massive scandal. He and Spicer also overstated the size of Friday's inauguration crowd despite clear evidence to the contrary.

Trump has been fixated on his public image and preoccupied with doubts about his legitimacy as president, which advisers say he has found frustrating and demoralizing.

If Trump is worried whether losing the popular tally by nearly 3 million votes could snarl his legislative agenda, his allies say he need not be concerned: His party controls Congress, and Trump's legislative agenda is being treated by Republicans as if he had won a sweeping mandate and enjoyed high approval ratings.

But Republican strategists argue that Trump has not psychologically adjusted to becoming president and that he risks eroding his stature and damaging his credibility if he continues to assert falsehoods under the microscope of the White House.

"You don't want to be a president whose word trades at a discount rate — and when it comes to measures of his personal popularity, President Trump's words seem to trade at a discount rate," said Ari Fleischer, a White House press secretary under President George W. Bush.

[Fact Checker: Spicer uses repeatedly debunked citations for Trump's voter fraud claims]

On Monday night at a White House reception for congressional leaders, Trump privately told lawmakers that he would have won the popular vote had it not been for 3 million to 5 million illegal votes, according to people familiar with the conversation.

But elections officials in most states — many of them Republican — have reported no instances of widespread election problems, including fraud.

Despite Trump's repeated claims, his own campaign's attorneys stated in a recent court filing: "All available evidence suggests that the 2016 general election was not tainted by fraud or mistake."

Democrats fear that Trump's allegations of voter fraud are about more than his personal ego. They say he might be signaling support for a systematic Republican effort in the states to suppress voting rights.

"When Trump talks about 3 [million] to 5 million people voting illegally, he is sending a message to every Republican governor in this country to go forward with voter suppression," said Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), who caucuses with the Democrats.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), when asked about Trump's claims, would not say whether he agrees, only that he believes voter fraud is a problem generally around the country.

"Most states have done a better job on this front, but the notion that election fraud is fiction is not true," said McConnell, who like many Republicans has voiced support for voter ID laws.

Michael Waldman, president of the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, accused Trump of pushing "fake news about our democracy."

"It is unprecedented in the country's history for the president and the White House spokesman to push a lie of this magnitude about voting," Waldman said in a statement. "These are not random conspiracy theorists on the Internet. These are the highest officials in the land."

[The first days inside Trump's White House: Fury, tumult and a reboot]

Trump's fact-challenged brush fires are creating awkwardness for his supporters on Capitol Hill, where many Republicans are unwilling to second his unsubstantiated claims but also are taking pains to not be seen as rebuking the president.

On Tuesday, lawmakers were visibly uncomfortable when asked whether they agree with Trump's theory.

"I can't tell Donald — uh, President Trump how to speak or what he wants to focus on," said Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), catching himself being too casual with titles. "I don't agree with that. And if there's evidence of that, it should be investigated."

Other senators refused to engage on the subject.

"I don't think about it," Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.) said. "It's not important to me."

A few took Republicans took a harder line. Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.), long a thorn in Trump's side, told CNN that the

president's allegations were undermining faith in the democratic system.

"I would urge the president to knock this off," Graham said. "This is the greatest democracy on Earth. We're the leader of the free world. And people are going to start doubting you as a person if you keep making accusations against our electoral system without justification."

Today's WorldView

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From the earliest days of his campaign, Trump has been infatuated by his crowd sizes. He tweeted Tuesday that he would hang a panoramic photograph of his inaugural crowd, given to him by a supporter, on a wall of the West Wing.

Trump's focus on numbers is a holdover from his decades as a marketer and businessman, when he would toss around figures for his personal wealth or the value of his buildings or the ratings of his television shows as validations of the power of his brand.

"It's a combination of ego and a successful track record of always marketing everything he's done in his business as 'the biggest,' 'the best,' 'the superlative,'" Fleischer said. "It's just ingrained in him."

Fleischer likened Trump to the dragon in "The Lord of the Rings" fantasy trilogy. It flies around and is all-powerful, nearly covered in armor save for one unarmored patch. Trump's unarmored patch, he posited, is his obsession with proving his personal popularity.

"One well-placed arrow can take him down," he said.



Trump's disregard for the truth threatens his ability to govern (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Karen-Tumulty/1410916925870676>

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

Donald Trump, having propelled his presidential campaign to victory while often disregarding the truth, now is testing the proposition that he can govern the country that way.

In the first five days of his presidency, Trump has put the enormous power of the nation's highest office behind spurious — and easily disproved — claims.

He began with trivial falsehoods about the size of the crowds at his inauguration but has since escalated a more grave claim that

undermines the trustworthiness of the nation's electoral system. In a White House reception Monday night for congressional leaders, Trump alleged that as many as 5 million illegal votes were cast in the 2016 election, denying him a popular-vote majority.

It was a claim that Trump had made in the aftermath of the election, with no evidence to back it up. As unsettling as that was in a president-elect, the implications are far greater when something clearly untrue is spread by a commander in chief — and when the weight and resources of his administration are

brought to bear in amplifying such information.

White House press secretary Sean Spicer, whose own credibility has been undercut during his first week on the job, offered no verifiable evidence Tuesday to back up the president's claim.

"The president does believe that," Spicer said. "He has stated that before. I think he's stated his concerns of voter fraud and people voting illegally during the campaign, and he continues to maintain that belief based on studies and evidence that people have presented to him."

The Post's Michelle Ye Hee Lee explains why White House press secretary Sean Spicer's claims on Jan. 24 about voter fraud in the presidential election don't add up. The Post's Michelle Ye Hee Lee explains why White House press secretary Sean Spicer's claims about voter fraud in the presidential election don't add up. (Video: Bastien Inzaurrealde/Photo: Matt McClain/The Washington Post)

Beliefs, however, are not the same as facts. Pressed to produce that evidence upon which Trump bases his assertion, Spicer said that a 2008 study by the Pew Charitable Trusts "showed 14 percent of people who voted were noncitizens. There's other studies that have been presented to him. It's a belief he maintains."

Pew made no such finding. Its study, it has noted, was issued in 2012 and dealt with inaccurate, outdated voter registration rolls. It did not address large-scale voter fraud.

Trump's attraction to conspiracy theories and his contempt for facts that tarnish his pride may have serious implications for his ability to govern.

At the California State Capitol on Tuesday, Gov. Jerry Brown (D) used his annual State of the State address to criticize the new president for his refusal to tether himself to the facts.

"Above all else, we have to live in the truth," Brown said. "When the science is clear or when our own eyes tell us that the seats in this chamber are filled or that the sun is shining, we must say so, not construct some alternate universe of non-facts that we find more pleasing."

Trump allies — and adversaries — had hoped that with his inauguration, he would leave behind the hyperbolic reality-show culture that made him a celebrity. In the late stages of his presidential campaign, Trump had disavowed his years-long promotion of the racially tainted falsehood that

Barack Obama, the nation's first African American president, was born outside the United States and therefore an illegitimate president.

During the daily briefing, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said that widespread voter fraud is a belief President Trump has "maintained for a while." Spicer: Trump believes millions of people voted illegally (Reuters)

(Reuters)

But the first days of his presidency show that, for Trump, old reflexes are hard to change.

Veterans of previous White Houses say they can recall no precedent for what Trump and his top aides are doing. They worry about the implications of this untethering from the truth when big decisions must be made about dealing with terrorism or charting the course of the economy.

"The degree to which they are creating their own reality, the degree to which they simply make up their own scripts, is striking," said Peter Wehner, a Trump critic who was a top strategist in the George W. Bush White House. "It's a huge deal, because in the end you really can't govern, and you can't persuade people, if you do not have a common basis of fact."

Former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee, who was a stalwart Trump supporter, told Fox Business Network on Tuesday that he was mystified by Trump's claim about illegal voters — and by his motivations for bringing it up.

"I have no evidence whatsoever, and I don't know that anyone does, that there are that many illegal people who voted," Huckabee said. "And frankly it doesn't matter. He's the president, and whether 20 million people voted, it doesn't matter anymore."

Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) said that Trump's claim "undermines faith in our democracy. It's not coming from a candidate for office. It's coming from the man who holds the office. So I am begging the president, share with us the information you have about this, or please stop saying it."

What made Trump's claim more exasperating to fellow Republicans was that it had come as his new administration seemed to be getting back on track after a set of embarrassments during its first weekend.

On Saturday, the new president stood at CIA headquarters, before a wall of stars memorializing slain officers, and said that a dishonest media had refused to report the true size of the crowd on the Mall for his inauguration. Trump offered his own estimate of "a million, a million and a half people."

Later that day, he dispatched Spicer to the White House briefing room, where the press secretary — in his first formal encounter in that setting with the reporters who cover the president — rattled off another round of unproved figures and contended that the crowd represented "the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period — both in person and around the globe."

On Sunday, White House counselor Kellyanne Conway compounded the damage in a contentious interview with NBC's "Meet the Press" in which she said: "Sean Spicer, our press secretary, gave alternative facts."

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Show moderator Chuck Todd responded: "Alternative facts aren't facts. They are falsehoods."

Until Trump's comments Monday night about illegal voters, it had appeared that the new administration might be regaining its footing after that wobbly start.

During the day, Trump signed a set of executive orders and stayed on message during meetings with leaders from business and organized labor. Spicer had handled his Monday briefing with aplomb, taking questions from reporters for more than an hour.

The failure by Trump and his team to maintain that discipline will do long-term damage, said Matthew Dowd, who was the chief strategist for George W. Bush's 2004 reelection campaign. "I don't think he realizes how much he is hurting himself."

Then again, Trump may well believe that this is the style which brought him to the White House, in defiance of every expectation. Americans knew what they were getting when they elected him.



Trump is going after Republican orthodoxy. How will Paul Ryan adapt?

<https://www.facebook.com/paul.kane.3367>

what would have been the world's largest trade deal.

Throughout 2016, Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) signaled that support for the deal had collapsed in both chambers — in large part because presidential candidates including Trump and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) had successfully portrayed it as a bad pact for American workers.

Still, Trump's actions demonstrate his seriousness about reversing decades of Republican orthodoxy on globalism — a pledge he renewed during Friday's inaugural address, when he committed to an "America first" agenda.

These actions also show the rocky road that may lie ahead for congressional Republicans on a range of policy issues. On Thursday, Trump and Vice President Pence will join their

Republican brethren at an issues retreat in Philadelphia to talk about getting on the same page.

If past is prologue, Trump won't be asking for the Hill's help. He'll be telling his fellow Republicans to get on board or step out of the way. They, in turn, will be figuring out how to stick to their principles while also positioning themselves to play a role in Trump's success.

The abandonment of the TPP came a short time after Trump's meeting with business executives, during which he again voiced support for tariffs or a border tax on U.S. companies that build products with cheap foreign labor and ship them to the United States. That policy has already caused friction between the new president and traditional conservatives such as Ryan.

Trump then met with several labor leaders, whose unions had backed

Democrat Hillary Clinton in the presidential race to tout his infrastructure agenda. And White House press secretary Sean Spicer told reporters that more executive actions on trade are likely to come later this week.

It's a stunning reversal for a party that, just two summers ago, continued to support a free-trade agenda.

[TPP trade deal is dead until a new president revives it, McConnell says]

Ryan, who was chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee at the time, played the lead role in legislation granting special fast-track rules for trade deals for the last months of Barack Obama's presidency and the first few years of the new administration. The measure won support from 194 Republicans in the House and 48 in

the Senate; that's nearly 80 percent and 90 percent, respectively, of the GOP caucus in each chamber.

It was one of the most important pieces of legislation Ryan ever shepherded into law, as his emotional response on the House floor indicated. It reflected an ideology that has been part of the Republican bedrock since at least the presidency of Ronald Reagan.

Throughout the Obama years, Ryan became the public face of that brand of conservatism, projecting faith in U.S. leadership in open, global markets. "It gives America credibility," Ryan said during final debate over the 2015 fast-track bill. "And boy, do we need credibility right now."

That period created a deep rift among Democrats who bitterly fought their president on the issue, particularly those in the Midwest, where the manufacturing sector has been crushed by the movement of jobs overseas and automation in the plants that remain here. In an odd twist, Democrats provided some of the biggest

applause to Trump's formal withdrawal from the trade treaty.

"It's a pleasant surprise to me. I'm glad that we have a president that's joining us," Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), a leader of the opposition to TPP, said Monday evening. She shook her head at the work that McConnell and Ryan put into passing the fast-track legislation intended to lay the groundwork for passing the Pacific trade deal.

"I think their heads must be spinning right now," Stabenow said.

Ryan's advisers say the opposite, that the politics of trade had shifted long before Trump won the presidential election — an election in which Clinton, who helped negotiate the initial contours of TPP, reversed course and became an opponent of the deal.

"President Trump is wasting no time acting on his promises," Ryan said in a statement Monday after the new president issued a string of executive orders. On trade, Ryan noted: "He has followed through on

his promise to insist on better trade agreements."

[*It's mostly kumbaya so far for Trump and GOP in Congress*]

Republican advisers are quick to say that the bulk of GOP lawmakers still believe in negotiating trade deals. Except now the focus is on smaller, bilateral deals with one nation at a time, as opposed to the more sweeping multilateral deals involving many nations.

Wilbur Ross, a billionaire financier who is Trump's nominee for Commerce secretary, voiced support for that approach during his confirmation hearing last week.

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This reorientation on trade is one of several key policy areas that the Ryan and Trump wings of the party must work through in the months ahead. In his address Friday, Trump

returned to his dream of pushing a massive new infrastructure bill for roads, bridges and airports — the kind of largesse that House Republicans have furiously fought in the past.

And all sides within the party are struggling to explain the process and details of how they're going to replace the Affordable Care Act, which Republicans have promised to repeal.

On Monday evening, Trump met privately with Ryan after a larger, bipartisan huddle at the White House with congressional leaders. The speaker's aides said the meeting focused on every major policy issue of the moment.

What they didn't say is what the two men agreed on — and what they didn't. Which leaves a burning question for Ryan: Will he get on board or step out of the way?

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

William Galston : Donald Trump vs. James Madison

William Galston

A.

than American? Not really part of the people?

Jan. 24, 2017 7:13 p.m. ET

President Trump's unflinching inaugural address erased all doubts: He meant what he said during the campaign and he intends to put it into practice as fast as he can. So it behooves us to take his words seriously.

Along with all populists, Mr. Trump's guiding vision is dyadic: a virtuous people on one side, a corrupt elite on the other. The elite uses power to promote its own self-interest. To set things right, the people must (re)gain control of the instruments of power, starting with the government. Partisan differences pale by comparison: "What truly matters," Mr. Trump declared, "is not which party controls our government, but whether our government is controlled by the people."

However inspiring this vision of a unified, victimized people may be to the president's ardent supporters, it is misleading and—if pushed too far—dangerous. It is perfectly true, as Mr. Trump says, that they "came by the tens of millions to become part of an historic movement." But if the 63 million Americans who voted for him are "the people," what are the 66 million Americans who voted for Hillary Clinton? The elite? Less

The truth of the matter is that the people are not united against the elites; they are divided against themselves, along lines of race, class, geography and religion, among others. If you are a white evangelical Christian living in a small town, you are very likely to have voted for Mr. Trump; if you are a white American with an advanced degree living in an urban center, you are very likely to have supported Hillary Clinton; if you are an African-American, the odds are 10 to 1 that you backed Mrs. Clinton; and so forth.

In James Madison's America, as opposed to Donald Trump's, there is no unitary "people." As Madison wrote in *Federalist No. 10*, Americans are divided in myriad ways, into what he called "factions" and modern students of politics call interest groups. The causes of these divisions, Madison insisted, was "sown in the nature of man." This is why the "causes of faction cannot be removed." Conflict among the people is endemic and ineradicable, but all the combatants are equally part of the people.

So President Trump is not the tribune of a united people doing battle against the elites; he is the leader of a faction of the people to whose interests and convictions he has given effective voice. With

some justice, he calls them the "forgotten men and women of our country." They are the people who worked in the manufacturing sector that provided more than a quarter of all jobs in 1960 but today, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, provides less than 10%. Many of them have seen their standard of living decline; most of them fear that their children will do even worse; few have confidence that continuing on our current course offers any hope whatever. This is why they supported Mr. Trump in the states that turned out to be decisive this past November.

And now the president is determined to help them. "From this day forward," he declared, "it's going to be only America First. . . . Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs will be made to benefit American workers and American families." In one sense, there is nothing radical about this proposition. Barring the sort of corruption that the Emoluments Clause of the Constitution was designed to prevent, every American president looks first to the interests of his country and its people.

The question is what this means in practice. For example, according to the Agriculture Department, American farmers and growers export about 20% of what they produce, including more than 50%

of rice and wheat and more than 70% of nuts and cotton. Policies designed to protect our manufacturing sector could easily end up harming our farmers. Mr. Trump received strong support from both the Rust Belt and the agricultural heartland, but their interests will be harder to reconcile in policy than in campaign rhetoric.

Another example: The American leaders who built the system of global alliances after World War II were not engaged in a charitable venture. They saw what had happened when the United States shrank back from active engagement after World War I. They remembered how dangerous the America First movement of the early 1940s had been to our national security. They believed that a world led by the United States would be safer, freer and more prosperous—for the U.S. as well as other countries.

Mr. Trump challenges this proposition, as he has every right to do. But insisting that it represents the interests of only a self-serving elite leads us astray. We are really arguing about the policies that best balance the long-term interests of a diverse nation.

Editorial : The Trump team can't even keep its own excuses straight on his broken tax promises

<https://www.facebook.com/washingtonpostopinions>

ON SUNDAY, a senior aide to President Trump flatly asserted that the newly installed president is not going to release his tax returns because nobody cares about them. By the next morning, Kellyanne Conway had amended her story with a "#nonews" tweet that resurrected the flimsy excuse that it was an audit that was holding up release of Mr. Trump's tax information. It was but the latest in a string of changing explanations and broken promises from Mr. Trump and his surrogates.

What has remained unchanged is Mr. Trump's refusal to adhere to the long-standing tradition of presidential nominees and presidents releasing their financial information. By withholding information about his income, taxes

and charitable giving, Mr. Trump fuels suspicions that he has something to hide and invites questions about what interests are being served by his presidency. That hurts both him and the country.

It was startling to hear Ms. Conway declare on ABC's "This Week" that "the White House response is that he's not going to release his tax returns." She cited Mr. Trump's victory in November and said, "People didn't care." That she felt the need to backpedal the next morning suggests she might realize that this is not the case. Hundreds of thousands of people have signed a WhiteHouse.gov petition calling for Mr. Trump to release his returns. A recent Post-ABC News poll showed that 74 percent of Americans, and 53 percent of Republicans, believe he should release the documents.

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Indeed, Mr. Trump used to be one of those who believed that candidates for the country's highest office had this obligation. Before deciding whether to run for president, Mr. Trump in 2014 said he would "absolutely" release his tax returns if he decided to run for office, something he had urged Republican candidate Mitt Romney to do in 2012. Once in the race, Mr. Trump promised there would be a release of the information "probably over the next few months," attributing delay to the size of his returns, before latching on to what he said was an audit by the Internal Revenue Service. It has never been established that Mr. Trump is under

audit, but if he is, tax experts have said that is not a bar to him voluntarily releasing the information. The fact that President Richard Nixon, not exactly a paragon of transparency, released his returns while under audit should embarrass Mr. Trump.

Release of Mr. Trump's returns is especially critical given how complex — and unprecedented — his private business empire is. His tax returns hold the key to questions of whether there are potential conflicts of interest, particularly from foreign sources. Mr. Trump should end the delay in releasing his past tax returns and promise that when he files his returns for 2016, he will make them public without delay.

Donald Trump Pledges to Send 'Feds' to Chicago if City Can't Stop 'Horrible Carnage' (UNE)

Shibani Mahtani

Jan. 24, 2017 11:18 p.m. ET

CHICAGO—President Donald Trump, continuing a rhetorical assault on Chicago's problem with violent crime, said on Twitter that he would "send in the Feds" if the city can't fix "the horrible carnage."

The tweet from his personal account said the city had 228 shootings in 2017 and "42 killings (up 24% from last year)," higher than the official tally kept by Chicago police.

The numbers appear to match those included in a Chicago Tribune article from Monday with data as of that day. The news outlet keeps its own tally of homicides in the city through tracking police scanners and other sources, but the number is often higher than official Chicago Police Department figures, including homicides ruled justified by police and other killings not included by the police.

Fox News anchor Bill O'Reilly also aired a segment on the city's violence problem Tuesday night,

citing the same figures.

According to the Chicago Police Department, 182 shootings have taken place as of Tuesday, exactly the same as the same period of 2016, and 38 homicides compared with 33 in the first 20 days of 2016, a 15% rise.

A police spokesman had no further comment on the tweet. A spokesman for Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel didn't immediately comment.

Homicides rose 58% in Chicago in 2016, leaving more than 760 people dead. More than 4,000 shooting incidents were reported in the city last year.

The surge happened as the city grappled with the fallout over the release of a video showing the killing of Laquan McDonald, a young black man shot 16 times by a white officer. A Justice Department investigation into the Chicago Police Department found that a lack of trust between community and the police has meant few violent crimes are being solved, with a clearance rate of 26% for murders, compared with 36% in 2015 and 44% in 2014.

Though Chicago's rise in violent crime has been among the most pronounced of any major American city, homicides rose in most major cities last year but have fallen to historic lows in cities including New York, Philadelphia and Los Angeles. Chicago's murder rate of 27.8 per 100,000 people in 2016, while more than seven times that of New York's, is also lower than that in other cities including St. Louis, Detroit and Baltimore.

Mr. Trump has painted a grim picture of crime in America over his campaign, and in his inauguration speech last week said that the "carnage stops right here and right now." Shortly after his speech, an updated WhiteHouse.gov website singled out crime fighting as a priority, though it cited erroneous statistics regarding crime in Washington, D.C.

During the campaign, Mr. Trump repeatedly used Chicago as a symbol of a Democratic city with an out-of-control crime problem.

The city has announced plans to add 1,000 police officers and has sought to institute changes, including a new system for

disciplining officers and an effort to hire more minority officers.

As a result of the Justice Department probe, the city also has entered an agreement in principle committing Mayor Emanuel to enacting more changes at the police department, aimed at winning back community trust.

Mr. Trump has said he could solve Chicago's violence problem quickly by returning to tough-on-criminals efforts like stop and frisk, a method that has been ruled unconstitutional by a federal judge in New York.

It is unclear what Mr. Trump meant by sending in "the Feds." The president can mobilize the National Guard to respond to civil unrest, or a governor can call for the National Guard to be sent in as was done in Ferguson, Mo., in 2014 when riots broke out after the shooting of Michael Brown. But day-to-day policing is largely localized, with cities and individual police departments having jurisdiction over tactics and strategy.

Donald Trump Sticks to Voter-Fraud Claim

Peter Nicholas, Carol E. Lee and Kristina Peterson

Updated Jan. 24, 2017 10:36 p.m. ET

President Donald Trump has quickly advanced a number of top policy initiatives in the opening days of his

administration, placing an emphasis on creating the jobs he promised on the campaign trail.

But the president's insistence that his November vote total and inaugural-crowd size were bigger than all evidence suggests have proved a distraction, overshadowing early moves to fulfill his campaign pledges and unnerving some of the Republicans he needs to turn his promises into policy.

On a day when Mr. Trump took action to ease regulatory burdens and persuade car makers to keep jobs in the U.S., the White House faced Tuesday a barrage of questions about the president's assertion the day before that millions of people voted illegally on Nov. 8th.

Press secretary Sean Spicer defended Mr. Trump, telling reporters that Mr. Trump's "belief" that large-scale voter fraud infected the election results is unshaken.

"I think he's stated his concerns of voter fraud, and people voting illegally during the campaign, and he continues to maintain that belief based on studies and evidence that people have presented to him," Mr. Spicer said.

Independent experts say there is no evidence backing up Mr. Trump's assertions about voter fraud. Mr. Trump's fellow Republicans also weren't rushing to defend the new president. House

Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) said he has "seen no evidence" buttressing Mr. Trump's claims.

The controversy erupted on the same day Mr. Trump signed executive memorandums meant to minimize regulatory hurdles for a \$1 trillion infrastructure package that he said will modernize the nation's roads and ports and lay the groundwork to approving the Keystone pipeline.

He has been meeting with CEOs and car companies, using the presidential bully pulpit to stanch the flow of jobs overseas. On Monday, Mr. Trump pulled out of a 12-nation Pacific trade deal that he said would have been harmful to U.S. workers, and the White House said Tuesday that he will submit a nomination to fill a vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court next week.

At the same time, the president is using precious political capital on issues dealing with his popularity and public image.

This weekend, Messrs. Trump and Spicer both criticized media outlets for reports on the crowd size at the inaugural address. Side-by-side aerial photographs show Mr. Trump's crowd was smaller than that of then-President Barack Obama's 2009 inaugural.

"I would urge the president to knock this off," Sen. Lindsey Graham (R., S.C.) said Tuesday. "This is going to erode his ability to govern the country if he does not stop it."

Mr. Trump won the presidency on the strength of his Electoral College victory—the only measure that counts. He lost the popular vote to Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton by about 2.8 million ballots.

Meeting privately with congressional leaders at the White House Monday, Mr. Trump spent the first 10 minutes telling them how he would have beaten Mrs. Clinton in the popular-vote tally if not for the ballots cast by up to five million illegal immigrants, people familiar with the conversation said.

On Tuesday, Mr. Spicer brushed off the president's remarks as something he mentioned "in passing."

Asked if Mr. Trump wants an investigation into whether the election was marred by voter fraud, Mr. Spicer said that "we'll see where we go from here."

Researchers at Dartmouth College looked into Mr. Trump's allegations of widespread voter fraud in the 2016 election and found no evidence that it happened. One of the authors of the report, Michael

Heron, said research "implies that it is very, very rare."

"Many of these allegations of voter fraud were based on concerns that massive numbers of noncitizens would cast ballots in the election; however, my co-authors and I found no evidence that there was rampant voter fraud in the 2016 presidential election," Mr. Herron said in a statement.

On a separate front, the bipartisan National Association of Secretaries of State put out a statement Tuesday saying: "We are not aware of any evidence that supports the voter fraud claims made by President Trump, but we are open to learning more about the administration's concerns."

Saul Anuzis, a former Michigan GOP chairman, said Mr. Trump's freewheeling style "worked well for him politically but now he has to lead, so people are going to be holding him more accountable with numbers, facts and figures. He probably needs to be a little more cautious."

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**The
New York
Times**

Editorial : 'We the People' Demand Mr. Trump Release His Tax Returns

The Editorial Board

Pete Gamlen

One of the features on the White House website that didn't vanish when President Trump took the oath of office on Friday is the "We the People" page, which allows ordinary Americans to petition their government to address an issue of importance to them. The Obama White House, which created the feature, responded to petitions that received at least 100,000 signatures within 30 days.

It should come as no surprise that that threshold was easily reached over the weekend after someone created a petition calling on Mr. Trump to release his tax returns. "The unprecedented economic conflicts of this administration need to be visible to the American people, including any pertinent documentation which can reveal the foreign influences and financial interests which may put Donald Trump in conflict with the emoluments clause of the Constitution," the petitioner, identified as A.D., wrote. The emoluments clause bars the president from receiving gifts and payments from foreign

governments. The petition had garnered more than 310,000 signatures by late Tuesday afternoon.

The administration dismisses these pleas for honesty, arguing that only journalists care about Mr. Trump's tax returns and conflicts of interest — a claim that a recent Washington Post-ABC News poll disproved. It found that 74 percent of Americans, including 53 percent of Republicans, believe that Mr. Trump's tax returns should be made public.

Kellyanne Conway, counselor to Mr. Trump and his chief obfuscator, told ABC News on Sunday that "he's not going to release his tax returns," adding that the election showed that "people didn't care." On Monday, she pulled back a tad, tweeting that "POTUS is under audit and will not release until that is completed." Of course, even that comment is a ruse. The Internal Revenue Service has made clear that being under audit wouldn't preclude Mr. Trump from making his returns public.

Yet, the Trump campaign used that excuse over and over, and now Mr. Trump has carried it into the White House. White House officials are probably hoping that the longer they

stonewall, the more likely that public demands on this matter will be pushed aside as torrents of controversial policies and statements from Mr. Trump dominate the news cycle. Even so, voters and members of Congress who care about ethics in the nation's highest office should not let up.

Releasing the returns would provide important insight into Mr. Trump's finances and businesses. They would reveal if he is as wealthy as he claims to be, what his effective income tax rate is (he said during the campaign that not paying taxes meant he was smart) and how much he gives to charity. The documents would also identify the sources of his income and debt, helping to answer questions about his links to businessmen, banks and governments in places like Russia and the Middle East, and putting a spotlight on potential conflicts of interest.

Presidential candidates have voluntarily disclosed their tax returns since the Watergate scandal ushered in an era of greater transparency. Mr. Trump, whose checkered past as a businessman includes a string of bankruptcies and a \$25 million settlement

compensating students who said they had been defrauded by Trump University, has chosen to buck this trend, perhaps because he has something to hide.

Congress can force his hand by supporting a bill that Senators Ron Wyden of Oregon and Chris Murphy of Connecticut introduced this month. It would require the current and all future presidents to release their tax returns. State lawmakers could also head off this problem in the future by forcing presidential candidates to disclose their tax returns to get on the ballot. There is one such bill pending in New York.

Mr. Trump's refusal to release his returns was deeply suspicious during the campaign, and it's indefensible now that he's in power. The only logical conclusion is that the candidate who pledged to clean up Washington is hiding damaging information about his past.

Frank Bruni : The Wrong Way to Take On Trump

President Trump in the Oval Office on Tuesday. Doug Mills/The New York Times

You know how Donald Trump wins? I don't mean a second term or major legislative victories. I'm talking

about the battle between incivility and dignity.

He triumphs when opponents trade righteous anger for crude tantrums. When they lose sight of the line between protest and catcalls.

When a writer for "Saturday Night Live" jokes publicly that Trump's 10-year-old son has the mien and makings of a killer.

"Barron will be this country's first home-school shooter," the writer, Katie Rich, tweeted. I cringe at repeating it. But there's no other way to take proper note of its ugliness.

That tweet ignited a firestorm — and rightly so — but it didn't really surprise me. It was just a matter of time. This is the trajectory that we're traveling. This, increasingly, is what passes for impassioned advocacy.

Look elsewhere on Twitter. Or on Facebook. Or at Madonna, whose many positive contributions don't include her turn at the microphone at the Women's March in Washington, where she said that she'd "thought an awful lot about blowing up the White House," erupted into profanity and tweaked the lyrics to one of her songs so that they instructed Trump to perform a particular sex act.

What a sure way to undercut the high-mindedness of most of the women (and men) around her on that inspiring day. What a wasted opportunity to try to reach the many Americans who still haven't decided how alarmed about Trump to be. I doubt that even one of them listened to her and thought: To the barricades I go! If Madonna's dropping the F bomb, I *must* spring into action.

All of this plays right into Trump's hands. It pulls eyes and ears away from the unpreparedness, conflicts of interest and extreme conservatism of so many of his cabinet nominees; from the evolving explanations for why he won't release his tax returns; from his latest delusion or falsehood, such as his renewed insistence that illegally cast ballots cost him the popular vote; from other evidence of an egomania so profound that it's an impediment to governing and an invitation to national disaster.

There's so much substantive ground on which to confront Trump. There are acres upon acres. Why swerve into the gutter? Why help him dismiss his detractors as people in thrall to the theater of their outrage and no better than he is?

And why risk that disaffected Americans, tuning in only

occasionally, hear one big mash of insults and insulters, and tune out, when there's a contest — over what this country stands for, over where it will go — that couldn't be more serious.

After Rich's tweet, "Saturday Night Live" suspended her, and she was broadly condemned, by Democrats as well as Republicans, for violating the unofficial rule against attacks on the young children of presidents. Chelsea Clinton, on her Facebook page, urged people to give Barron space and peace — something that wasn't always done for her, for George W. Bush's daughters or for Barack Obama's.

But the treatment of presidential progeny isn't the real story here. And that's a complicated saga anyway, because so many presidents and candidates try to have things both ways, putting family on display when it suits them and then declaring them off limits when it doesn't.

The larger, more pressing issues are how low we're prepared to sink in our partisan back-and-forth and what's accomplished by descending to Trump's subterranean level. His behavior has been grotesque, and it's human nature to want to repay him in kind. It feels good. It sometimes even feels right.

Many people I know thrilled to the viral footage a few days ago of the vile white supremacist Richard Spencer being punched in the head during a television interview. But that attack does more to help him than to hurt him.

Many people I know thrilled to BuzzFeed's publication of a dossier with unsubstantiated allegations about Trump. But that decision bolstered his ludicrous insistence that journalists are uniquely unfair to him. It gave him a fresh weapon in his war on the media.

If Trump's presidency mirrors its dangerous prelude, one of the fundamental challenges will be to respond to him, his abettors and his agenda in the most tactically prudent way and not just the most emotionally satisfying one. To rant less and organize more. To resist taunts and stick with facts. To answer invective with intelligence.

And to show, in the process, that there are two very different sets of values here, manifest in two very distinct modes of discourse. If that doesn't happen, Trump may be victorious in more than setting newly coarse terms for our political debate. He may indeed win on many fronts, over many years.



Kevin Aldridge, Cincinnati Enquirer : The problem isn't Trump, it's us

After taking the oath of office to become the 45th president of the United States, President Trump addressed the nation, pledged to "rebuild our country and restore its promise for all our people." USA TODAY NETWORK

Graffiti in Wellsville, N.Y., on Nov. 9, 2016.(Photo: Brian Quinn, Brian Quinn, Wellsville Daily Re)

"America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves." — Abraham Lincoln

I'm worried about the future of America. Not because of President Trump or his policies, or Russia, or the Islamic State.

I worry because of us.

Racist, homophobic graffiti was spray painted at Withrow University High School this past weekend.

"We the People" seem to have forgotten how to treat one another like, well, people. Hostility and meanness seem to be the order of the day, and I find myself wondering, when did America's citizens become one of America's enemies? Our political

discourse has become so corrosive, so divisive that its primary casualty has been common decency and respect.

We excel at dehumanization these days and have stopped looking at one another as fellow countrymen wanting to create a more perfect union. Instead, we view one another with suspicion and contempt, reducing our neighbors to a label: Republican, Democrat, conservative, liberal, libtard, tea bagger, alt-right. I often scratch my head about how I, a black, middle-class pastor born in a blue-collar steel mill town in the middle of the Rust Belt, could be labeled a "coastal elite." It would be funny if it weren't such a serious problem.

It's easy to blame President Trump or Barack Obama for the divisions in our country, but that lets each of us off the hook way too easily. We play a part in this too — a bigger one than any president. (After all, who elects them?) While Trump controls his personal Twitter account, he doesn't have access to your social media. Each of us decides what message we want to send out to the world, and if we don't like the tone we're hearing from our country, then perhaps we need to check our own.

Luke 6:45 says, "A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart, for the mouth speaks what the heart is full of." Whether you're a believer or not, it's hard to argue the truth this passage of scripture contains. What comes out of our mouths reveals what is truly in our hearts. And if this is true, then based on the rhetoric that is being spoken on all sides, it is safe to say America has a serious heart problem.

Each of us must do an honest assessment of ourselves and the words we are speaking to one another. Words contain power. I fear that we are killing one another and our country with thoughtless, careless and destructive language that is pushing us farther apart rather than bringing us closer together. We seem to care more about the number of LIKES on our snarky Facebook and Twitter posts, than engaging in real conversation or gaining true understanding.

However, there are two things I believe each of us can do to help our country correct course. The first thing is learn to listen more. This is not just simply hearing someone else's words, but actively listening

to those words, feelings and thoughts. Many of us enter conversations to win the debate. Many of us don't actively listen, we just wait for our turn to speak. Many of us only like to hear points of view that support our own.

I've engaged with a number of *Enquirer* readers whom I disagree with politically, but through our dialogue I've gained perspective. Sometimes, these readers and I even discover there are more things we agree about than we disagree about.

The second thing we can do is make sure our words matter. It's not how much you say, but it's making what you say count. Are your words making an impact or is it just chatter? Are you contributing to the conversation or trolling? Right now, there is a lot of noise out there that, unfortunately, is drowning out real, constructive conversations. Political correctness is dead and has been replaced by a spare-no-feelings, tell-it-like-it-is attitude. I'm not a fan mainly because, as a communicator, I understand that it's not so much what you say as how you say it. Being politically correct doesn't mean that you can't or shouldn't speak truth, it is just the recognition that I need to take other

people's feelings and dignity into account when I speak. I value frankness as much as anyone, but our words carry more impact if they are not weighed down by rudeness and baseless stereotypes.

POLICING THE USA: A look at race, justice, media

We absolutely should stand up and speak in favor of our beliefs, but we don't have to say something about everything. And when we do open our mouths, we should endeavor

to be thoughtful and solution-oriented. It's easy to finger-point and highlight flaws; its often much more difficult to fix them.

Swastikas, racial slurs and the word "Trump" were spray painted around Withrow's campus this weekend. The graffiti was painted on sidewalks, signs, benches and high up on the school itself.

So let's not allow ugly words and acts such as the painting of swastikas on buildings in our

community define us. This really isn't about Trump or any other elected official. This is about us, We the People. Say what you will about President Trump's inaugural address, but he got a few things right in his remarks.

"We must speak our minds openly, debate our disagreements honestly, but always pursue solidarity," he said. "When America is united, America is totally unstoppable."

Most importantly, he said this: "Everyone is listening to you now."

Kevin S. Aldridge is The Cincinnati Enquirer's associate opinion editor, where this piece was first published. He is also pastor of St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church in Milford. He can be reached at kaldridge@enquirer.com. Follow him on Twitter @Kevaldrid.



Democrats Incensed at U.K. Prime Minister's 'Partisan' Visit to GOP Retreat

Britain's leader hasn't scheduled a parallel meeting with Democrats.

Calling it a "partisan visit" and a "breach of standard protocol," top Democrats in the House and Senate are upset about British Prime Minister Theresa May's decision to meet with congressional Republicans in Philadelphia for their biannual retreat, without similar plans to meet Democrats, Foreign Policy has learned.

"Given the special relationship, this is a very big mistake for the prime minister," said a senior Democratic aide.

On Thursday, May will become the first foreign leader to join the Republican huddle in Pennsylvania as they devise their 2017 agenda. The announcement of the visit with House and Senate Republicans surprised Democratic leaders in both chambers because it's normal practice for a foreign leader to coordinate with both parties.

"A partisan visit is a breach of standard protocol," said the aide.

Still, Republican leaders in Congress are eager to make her feel welcome.

"We are grateful for her visit and look forward to hearing her vision for the United Kingdom as we strengthen this important bilateral relationship with our new Republican-led government," said

Washington Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, the House Republican Conference chair, and South Dakota Sen. John Thune, her Senate counterpart, in a joint statement.

The trip comes as May scrambles to shore up ties to President Donald Trump and top Republicans after getting caught flat-footed by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the first head of state to visit Trump after the election, and Nigel Farage, the former Brexit leader who enjoys a better relationship with Trump than anyone in the British government.

Democratic lawmakers declined to publicly comment on their frustrations about the trip, but leadership aides in both chambers said the snub wasn't taken lightly. A Senate aide said Democratic leaders are currently weighing whether to invite May to their own party retreat, but "no decision has been made."

An official at the British Embassy in Washington said "the program is still being finalized," leaving open the possibility of a last-minute meeting with Democrats.

May is scheduled to visit Trump on Friday, the day after she meets with both the House and Senate Republican conferences.

As leader of the Conservative Party, May has had to compensate for a series of public broadsides leveled at Trump during the 2016 election campaign by her foreign minister, Boris Johnson, and Britain's former ambassador to the United States, Peter Westmacott.

Johnson previously called Trump "clearly out of his mind" and accused him of "quite stupefying ignorance," a tenor that has radically shifted since Trump assumed the most powerful office in the world.

Fiona Hill, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, said May is trying to make up for lost time.

"Nigel Farage dashed off to meet Trump first while May and no one else in the British government had much of any contact. And Boris Johnson was completely rude to him. So they probably felt completely on the back foot," she told FP. "I'm not even sure that the president-elect even knew who Theresa May was."

May succeeded David Cameron in July after he resigned in the wake of shocking referendum vote by British voters to leave the European Union. In her meeting with Trump, May is expected to begin laying the groundwork on a new U.S.-Britain trade deal. That's increasingly important for both countries, especially as Britain decided to cut

itself off from the EU's common market. But EU officials warn any U.S.-U.K. trade deal will have to wait until the so-called Brexit is finalized, which could take years.

May also told the *Financial Times* last week that she hopes to impress upon Trump the benefits of the NATO alliance and the EU, two institutions he has repeatedly denigrated.

On the day of Trump's inauguration, May expressed optimism about working with Trump to broaden the special relationship between the two countries, even though he spent much of his campaign attacking America's overseas obligations.

"From our conversations to date, I know we are both committed to advancing the special relationship between our two countries and working together for the prosperity and security of people on both sides of the Atlantic," she said in a statement.



Liberal effect: Liberals press Democrats to thwart Trump nominations, but to little

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ed-OKeeffe/147995121918931>

Twelve hours after Virginia's two Democratic senators, Mark R. Warner and Tim Kaine, voted to confirm Michael Pompeo, President Trump's nominee to run the CIA, the protests began.

On Tuesday morning, more than 100 protesters gathered outside

Warner's constituent offices in the Virginia suburbs of Washington. Amanda Lynch, a mother and writer near Manassas, took two of her sons to Kaine's office there, where they played with pocket Constitutions, and she pledged to return every week.

"I was disappointed by Pompeo, and I'm not going to pretend otherwise," said Lynch, 34. "He's defended the use of torture even

though it's been proven that it doesn't work. I'm disappointed in the selection of [education secretary nominee] Betsy DeVos. Apart from Gen. [James] Mattis, it's hard for me to feel anything but perturbed by these Cabinet choices."

Senators have confirmed four of Trump's Cabinet nominees and voted a few more out of committee. Republicans have criticized Democrats for slowing down

Pompeo's nomination, delaying several others and voting in a bloc against secretary of state nominee Rex Tillerson at the committee level on Monday.

But none of it has earned them many points with a fast-growing liberal protest movement that is asking Democratic senators to wage a blockade on nominees they have deemed unacceptable.

"They need to do anything they can to defeat or delay the seating of Senator Sessions, Mr. Tillerson and Mr. Price," said Maggie Godbold, 62, a retiree and Democratic activist from Fairfax County, Va., who helped organize the protest at Warner's office, one of 200 across the country Tuesday. "They're unqualified."

The senators, however, appear unwilling to do what their base is asking. On Tuesday, the full Senate voted 96 to 4 to confirm Nikki Haley, Trump's nominee to be ambassador to the United Nations. Earlier in the day, they voted Haley and three other nominees out of committee — Ben Carson to lead the Department of Housing and Urban Development; Wilbur Ross to serve as commerce secretary; and Elaine Chao to lead the Transportation Department. That followed full Senate votes for Pompeo on Monday and for Defense Secretary James Mattis and Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly on Friday.

"There are clearly going to be some Trump nominees that give me pause, but there are some I'm going to be supporting," Warner said in an interview on Capitol Hill Tuesday. "I argued strenuously, both as a governor and under President Obama, that you give the president, or the governor, the chance to put his team in place."

[Nikki Haley confirmed as new U.S. envoy to the United Nations]

The reality, too, is that thwarting Trump's nominees is a goal that is largely out of reach for Democrats, thanks to their own party's 2013 reform of filibuster rules, continued by Republicans ever since; it now takes just 51 votes to confirm a nominee for office lower than the Supreme Court.

Democrats, with no leverage, are left fighting nominees without really hoping to stop them.

"We're getting lots of calls on lots of the nominees," said Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), a liberal from a safe seat who voted to confirm Pompeo. "They want us to fight, but elections have consequences. We don't have the votes in many instances, so in order to stop any nominee, we need three profiles in courage on the Republican side. Those are just the facts. And people understand that — but I think there's nothing to be satisfied about, and there's lots to be concerned about."

That's one reason Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) has continued to tout his caucus's decision to continue delaying votes on nominees —

even if blocking any of them is unlikely.

Schumer said the Senate would "move with relative speed" on nominees who are "not controversial."

Raising his voice and gesticulating more than usual at a weekly briefing with reporters, Schumer insisted: "We're going to vet these nominees thoroughly. We're not being dilatory, but we're not going to just rush them through. These are all very important nominees. And to have a few days discussion on them? That makes sense. They're going to be in power for up to four years with tremendous say on what affects Americans."

Cue the Republican outrage.

Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Tex.) said Tuesday that "party-line votes on things like secretary of state" were breaking the comity of the Senate. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, successfully guided Tillerson to a confirmation vote, then bemoaned how no Democrats joined him.

"All of a sudden, because the election outcome is what it is, it's like everything has changed," Corker said. "I just want us to get back into the middle of the road and get back to realizing the importance of these positions."

The delays are noteworthy when compared with past administrations; George W. Bush and Barack Obama entered their first day in office with at least seven nominees confirmed. The relative sluggishness of the Trump team's confirmations, in contrast, has led to dozens of critical national security, financial, public health and other domestic policy positions sitting vacant, with most federal agencies temporarily under the management of career civil service managers or holdovers from the Obama administration who could sit in place for months to come.

The modest progress on Pompeo and Tillerson came as top congressional leaders met with Trump at the White House on Monday night for a social gathering that included talk of persuading Democrats to move along quickly with votes on some of the president's top picks. On Tuesday, Senate leaders met with him again at the White House to discuss his Supreme Court nominee — which Trump said will be announced next week.

But the Democratic Party's base expects senators to move nominees along as slowly as possible.

This is not the first time a restive left has demanded resistance and blamed Democrats when little arose. In 2005, the active and angry Democratic "Netroots" shamed senators who voted to confirm George W. Bush's nominees, including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales. Barack Obama, then a freshman senator, wrote a diary on the liberal Daily Kos blog explaining why he and other self-identified progressives had not filibustered every nominee they could.

"How can we ask Republican senators to resist pressure from their right wing and vote against flawed appointees like John Bolton if we engage in similar rhetoric against Democrats who dissent from our own party line?" Obama wrote.

A final vote on Tillerson, the former CEO of ExxonMobil whom Democrats have labeled as part of Trump's "Swamp Cabinet," won't occur until Tuesday at the earliest. Other nominees, including Carson and Chao — the wife of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) — remain in limbo. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee also scrapped plans on Tuesday to hold votes to recommend former Texas governor Rick Perry to lead the Energy Department and Rep. Ryan Zinke (R-Mont.) to lead the Interior Department. Aides said that "a miscommunication" between the parties forced the panel to reschedule to a later date — further delaying the formation of Trump's government.

"We'll, in a more fulsome way, move into approving Cabinet appointments, both controversial and noncontroversial, beginning next week," McConnell told reporters.

Schumer cited Carson as a nominee who has split Democrats, saying Tuesday that he had fresh concerns about the former brain surgeon's nomination to lead HUD because of Trump's decision last week to sign an executive order that overhauled federal housing policy.

Carson had been unanimously approved by the Senate Banking Committee on Tuesday — including by liberal leaders such as Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.). Under pressure from supporters on social media to explain her vote, Warren's office said in a statement that she was backing Carson despite his inexperience with federal housing policy because of commitments he made at his hearing to work with her to expand "fair housing rights to all Americans" and to combat

unacceptable lead levels in public housing.

Other Trump nominees sat for confirmation hearings on Tuesday, including Rep. Tom Price (R-Ga.), tapped to lead the Department of Health and Human Services. Amid several questions about his personal finances and disclosures to the Senate Finance Committee, Price would not commit during his confirmation hearing that no Americans will be worse off under Trump's executive order to ease rules under the Affordable Care Act.

Price also declined to confirm whether Trump is indeed nearly finished with a plan to replace the health-care law.

Republicans defended Price, broadly criticizing Democrats for undermining the Senate by continuing to attack Price's views and ethics instead of embracing his qualifications for the job.

Meanwhile, Rep. Mick Mulvaney (R-S.C.), Trump's choice to lead the Office of Management and Budget, defended his support of cuts to popular entitlement programs that Trump has vowed to keep intact.

During his hearing with the Senate Budget Committee, Mulvaney also faced questions about the Trump administration's claims that turnout for the new president's inauguration was larger than previous swearing-in ceremonies.

Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) brandished side-by-side images of the Mall from Obama's 2009 inauguration and Trump's on Friday.

"I'm not really sure how this ties to OMB," Mulvaney said before conceding that images from Obama's inauguration showed a bigger crowd.

Merkley explained that he raised the issue "because budgets often contain buried deceptions. . . . This is an example of where the president's team, on something very simple and straightforward, wants to embrace a fantasy rather than a reality."

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Mulvaney assured the committee that he is "deadly serious about giving you hard numbers — I intend to follow through on that."

In the coming days, progressive groups are planning to organize more rallies, building on Saturday's Women's March on Washington as well as the political unpopularity of

Trump. Tuesday's protests in Virginia were part of a National Day of Action against the "Swamp Cabinet," organized by the progressive group MoveOn. They supplemented the ongoing "Trump Tuesdays" that other progressive groups are

organizing to keep protesters in the field and attention on the Trump administration.

"The millions of people that took to the streets on Saturday are not going to give up because Ben Carson will be confirmed to run

HUD," said Ben Wikler, the Washington director of MoveOn. "People want to see evidence that Democrats will stand up and fight, but they increasingly get that they can't stop everything. Democrats are just going to have to get used to their constituents being angry if they

don't use every tool at their disposal."

Paul Kane contributed to this report.

Read more at PowerPost

POLITICO How Sean Spicer Wins by Losing

By Jack Shafer

He's only broadcast from the White House briefing room three times, but on each occasion presidential press secretary Sean Spicer has been asked to do the impossible: square President Donald Trump's screwball view of the world with what both Spicer and the press corps know better comports with reality.

On Saturday, Spicer was sent to the briefing room on a suicide mission to present his no-questions-will-be-asked claim that the Trump inauguration's "in-person" attendance was the largest ever, when it obviously wasn't. On Monday, a less shrill and almost self-effacing Spicer returned to the ring to spar in a more conventional manner with reporters, attempting to make jokes but fumbling when he said, "I think sometimes we can disagree with the facts"—when what he obviously meant was, "I think sometimes we can disagree about the facts." Even so, Spicer sought—against all good evidence—to restate his boss' dearly held position that Friday's inaugural was "the most watched," when it obviously wasn't. On Tuesday, Sean invited another beating when he insisted that a Pew study supported the president's assertion that great numbers of non-citizens could have voted in the election, when they obviously *didn't*, as the primary author of the study tweeted in real time.

Story Continued Below

NATIONAL
REVIEW
ONLINE

Ben Shapiro : Memo to Media: It's Not about You

On Saturday, Trump press secretary Sean Spicer created a media firestorm by fibbing about sizes of inauguration crowds. After calling a press conference to claim that Trump's inauguration had the largest audience in history, both "in person and around the globe," Spicer tore into the media for their supposed falsehoods; Spicer specifically referenced D.C. Metro figures, fencing and magnetometer placement, and floor coverings that highlighted empty spaces on the

In a conventional administration, Spicer would have been shredded by now and recycled to the American Beverage Association to serve as its spokesman. But this is not a conventional administration, and Spicer is not the conventional press secretary. In his first days on the job he has resembled Patrick Ramsey, the Washington Redskins quarterback who served as the sacrificial beast for coach Steve Spurrier's stupid "Fun 'n' Gun" offense in the previous decade. Mauled by defenses, Ramsey became a walking concussion by season's end, a fine athlete tortured by a sadistic boss.

Trump hasn't required Spicer to submit to physical punishment—yet. It's the job of every presidential press secretary to finesse the misstatements and gaffes made by the boss. But no podium-pounder in recent memory has been asked to do what Spicer has been asked to do—apply a gloss to baseless conspiracy theories that have already been debunked—and retail it to reporters.

Reporters are onto the Spicer gambit already, none more so than NPR's Mara Liasson. On Monday, she slyly asked him to name the unemployment rate, a frequent subject of Trump's trutherism. On Tuesday, she again toyed with Spicer when she asked in a slightly exaggerated manner whether Trump's allegation of massive voter fraud by 3 million to 5 million people doesn't necessitate an investigation. "Maybe we will," Spicer said, before drifting off into a free-associationland comment about

Trump's focus being more about "putting Americans back to work."

"It was a comment he made on a longstanding belief," Spicer added, attempting to close the door on the issue. The press corps may not have audibly snickered at him, but you could sense their mirth in the thought balloons floating like soap bubbles in the press room.

You'd be right to think that Spicer can't go on like this, cleaning up one Trump mess after another but only making them messier. But you'd also be wrong, because, as we've noted, this is not your conventional administration. To return to the sports metaphor, Sean Spicer doesn't suit up in a champion's uniform. He dons the shorts and jersey of the Washington Generals, the klutzy team that played fixed exhibition matches against the Harlem Globetrotters, and almost always lost. Like Spicer, the Generals won by losing. After losing, the Generals would go to bed, wake up, and win again the next day by losing even more disastrously.

How did the Generals win by losing? For one thing, nobody expected them to win. Their defeat was integral to the greater game plan, part of their service to a higher power, specifically the Globetrotters. Their job was to put on a good show and be abused by the Globetrotters until the buzzer sounded. Nobody who understands Trump expects Spicer to beat the press in the briefing room as he defends his boss' latest nutbag idea, only to keep the ball in plausible play until time is called

and the cameras dim. Like the Generals, Spicer must put up a fight that's good enough to deflect attention from the president, so he can skate on to his next demonstration of nutbaggery.

This doesn't mean the press briefings are a waste of time. It's important to record Trump's positions and statements and to expose them to the same scrutiny dished out to previous presidents. But Trump's casual—some would say malicious—approach to the truth makes Spicer's job different than that of press secretaries before him, most of whom weren't asked to sacrifice their dignity on a daily basis. Spicer's disposition, his willingness to take guff from both his boss and sarcastic reporters without cracking, may reduce his daily briefing to a gladiatorial spectacle. People who don't like Trump will watch the show and say, "Oh, Spicer took a thrashing!" Trump's supporters will cheer and say, "Spicer stuck it to them again!"

At the next press briefing, look for a Washington Generalsesque twinkle in Spicer's eye as reporters ask their Trump-related questions. He knows that reporters are going to score on him, and he knows that it isn't going to be pretty. But he also knows that it isn't his job to beat the press, only to occupy the court with stoic courage—to "disagree with the facts" as long as he can. His ultimate job isn't to serve the press. It's to satisfy the man who lives in the high golden castle, who watches his every televised move.

National Mall. None of his claims were true.

NBC's Chuck Todd asked Trump top adviser Kellyanne Conway about Spicer's routine. "I'm curious," he said, "why President Trump chose yesterday to send out his press secretary to essentially litigate a provable falsehood when it comes to a small and petty thing like inaugural crowd size. I guess my question to you is, Why do that?" Conway futzed about for an answer, variously misdirecting to the press's willingness to ignore President

Obama's widespread lies, Trump's executive actions, and a *New York Times* reporter's quickly retracted tweet about a bust of Martin Luther King Jr. being removed from the Oval Office.

Todd's question is the right one: What would drive President Trump to spend mental energy on a question as silly and meaningless as inaugural crowd size? There are dozens of excellent reasons his crowd size didn't match Obama's; the best reason is that the inauguration takes place in a

Democratic stronghold, Washington, D.C. (Trump won 4.1 percent of the vote there.) Nonetheless, Trump chose to gloat on to media coverage of crowd size. Why bother?

But Todd's question wasn't that of the media at large. Their question quickly turned from one of presidential focus and temperament to a far more self-centered one: Why would Trump send out his press secretary to lie to them? Why would Trump want to establish such an adversarial relationship with the

press? Why would Spicer attack *the media*?

That personal umbrage from the media drove the coverage throughout the weekend. On CNN with Brian Stelter, former Hillary Clinton press secretary Brian Fallon called Spicer's comments "an affront to anybody who is on our side of the wall and works in this business." CBS's Major Garrett complained, "I've never seen anything like this, where it was so intense, so harsh and passionate right off the beginning."

This is why Trump wins every time he attacks the media: because the media are so consumed with themselves, they don't seem to care about the public interest. When Spicer returned to the podium on Monday, he gave the first question to the *New York Post* rather than the Associated Press. This sent the collective media into spasms of apoplexy — how *dare* Spicer violate protocol this way? Why did he give questions to the Christian Broadcasting Network before CNN?

Then, finally, when the more Trump-unfriendly press *did* get a shot at Spicer, they made the entire crowd-size debacle into a firefight over media relations. "Before I get to a policy question, just a question

about the nature of your job," said Jon Karl of ABC News. "Is it your intention to always tell the truth from that podium, and will you pledge never to knowingly say something that is not factual?"

This is the way Team Trump *wants* to portray the media: as completely obsessed with their own mistreatment at Trump's hands rather than with mistreatment of the truth and, by extension, of the American people. By dividing the media from the American people, Team Trump conquers.

If Obama fibbed, the media glossed over those fibs — they weren't upset on behalf of Americans, because they weren't upset in general.

The media have been complicit in their own demise for years. For nearly a decade, they swallowed lie after lie from the Obama administration. Why? Didn't they have an obligation to ask Jay Carney the same question Karl asked Spicer, particularly after Carney was trotted out day after day to claim that Americans could keep their doctors under Obamacare? Why didn't the media take *personal umbrage* when Barack Obama fibbed about Benghazi or about the IRS? Why

did they seem wildly untroubled when Obama national-security adviser Ben Rhodes peddled absolute fiction about the Iran nuclear deal — and then bragged about it?

Because they agreed with Obama. So they weren't affronted. After all, Obama wasn't really lying to *them* — he was merely lying to the American people! And was that so bad? The American people didn't know enough to understand the complexities of Obamacare or the foreign-policy rationale behind the Iran deal or the details of the Benghazi attack. If Obama fibbed, the media glossed over those fibs — they weren't upset on behalf of Americans, because they weren't upset in general.

Now, in the age of Trump, nothing has changed with respect to the veracity and credibility of the president's press secretary. The media are angry that they're being treated as the enemy rather than as the representatives of truth. But they handed over that title years ago.

How can they restore their credibility? By treating personal slights as immaterial, and lies as slights to Americans, rather than vice versa. Who cares who gets to

ask the first question at a press conference? Is it really important to a truck driver from Michigan whether Jim Acosta at CNN is upset because Trump called him "fake news" wrongly? Or is it more important that Trump lied to the American people when he said he would turn over his IRS records?

In the end, Trump can fib about crowd size, and few people will care. They see the issue as just another food fight between Trump and his media antagonists. If the media want to police honesty in the Trump administration, they'll have to assess themselves honestly first: Are they interested in a story because it affects them, or because it affects the American people?

— Ben Shapiro is the editor in chief of the Daily Wire.