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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Benoît Hamon Takes Lead in France's Socialist Primary in Setback to Party Moderates

William Horobin

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PARIS—Candidates from opposing wings of France's Socialist Party emerged as the top two vote-getters in the first round of the country's leftist primary, reflecting the divisions hobbling the party's attempt to select a successor to President François Hollande.

In a setback for the pro-business wing of the party loyal to Mr. Hollande, Benoît Hamon, a lawmaker from the Socialists' left flank who has centered his campaign on a plan to create a universal basic income, took the largest share of Sunday's vote with 36.1%, according to a partial count.

Mr. Hollande's former prime minister Manuel Valls —who helped lead the government's shift to more business-friendly policies to the consternation of traditional leftists—came in second with 31.2%

"By putting me in first, you've sent a clear message of hope and renewal, the desire to write a new page in the history of the left," Mr. Hamon said.

Mr. Valls suffered a further blow from third-place finisher Arnaud Montebourg, a firebrand leftist and former economy minister. Mr. Montebourg, who received 17.7% of the vote, called on his supporters to back Mr. Hamon in the runoff vote on Jan. 29.

"The people who voted have massively and seriously condemned the [Hollande] presidency," Mr. Montebourg said.

The resurging divisions between leftists and reformists in the Socialist Party helped to dampen turnout in the primary. Between 1.5 million and 2 million people voted in the first round on Sunday, compared with 4.3 million in the first round of the center-right primary in November.

While polls have shown that either Mr. Hamon or Mr. Valls would be knocked out in the early stages of the general election, the outcome of the Socialists' runoff still has the potential to scramble the math of the two-round presidential vote April 22 and May 6.

If the Socialist Party selects Mr. Hamon—a former education minister in Mr. Hollande's government who has a narrow appeal among the general electorate—the opening widens for Emmanuel Macron , the former economy minister and investment banker who is running outside of the primary on a center-left program similar to Mr. Valls'.

Mr. Macron, who is branding himself as a bipartisan candidate, could garner 21% of the first-round vote in the general election if Mr. Valls is out of the race, according to a poll of 10,986 voters by Ipsos Sopra Steria in mid-January. That would put him in striking distance of the front-runners, National Front leader Marine Le Pen, who led the survey with 26% of the projected vote, and center-right candidate François Fillon , who scored 25%.

But if Mr. Valls is the victor of the Socialist primary's second round, the center-left vote would be split, reducing Mr. Macron's first-round score to 19%, the poll shows. Late Sunday, Mr. Valls urged Socialist voters to back him in the second round as the party's best shot in the general election.

"We have the choice between guaranteed defeat and possible victory," Mr. Valls said.

The campaign for the leftist primary has highlighted deep splits on the French left that were only briefly overcome when Mr. Hollande was elected in 2012.

The unity that Mr. Hollande built around his 2012 campaign fell apart two years later when Mr. Hamon and Mr. Montebourg clashed with the president over economic policy. Mr. Hollande ejected them both from the government, and Mr. Valls remained with the task of pushing through pro-business measures.

Mr. Hollande's unpopularity, though, continued to grow, reaching record levels for a French president. In December, he said he wouldn't run for re-election.

Mr. Valls quickly announced he would run, but had little time to prepare a program and repeatedly clashed with Mr. Hamon and Mr. Montebourg during the debates.

The New York Times

With French Socialists in Crisis, Manuel Valls and Benoît Hamon Head to Runoff

Alissa J. Rubin

Mr. Valls came in second out of seven candidates in a primary of left-wing parties on Sunday. With about 31 percent of the vote counted, Mr. Valls trailed the top vote-getter, Benoît Hamon, a former education minister in Mr. Hollande's government, who took about 36 percent of the votes. More worrisome for the left was that turnout was roughly 50 percent lower than it was in 2011, when the the left-leaning parties last held a primary.

Few analysts believe that any of the Socialists have a real shot at retaining the presidency in the April general election.

The collapse of the establishment left in France is hardly a unique phenomenon. Across Europe, far-right populist parties are gaining strength, including in France, while the mainstream left, which played a central role in building modern Europe, is in crisis. From Italy to Poland to Britain and beyond, voters are deserting center-left parties, as leftist politicians struggle to remain relevant in a moment when politics is inflamed by anti-immigrant, anti-European Union anger.

"Wherever you look in Europe the Socialists are not doing well, with the exception of Portugal," said Philippe Marlière, a professor of French and European politics at University College London. He added that the left lacked "a narrative that tries to unite the different sectors of the working class."

Each country has its distinctive dynamics, but one common theme is the difficulty many mainstream left parties are having in responding to the economic and social dislocation caused by globalization. In Italy, constituencies that used to routinely back the center-left Democratic Party are turning to the new anti-establishment Five Star Movement, which is Euroskeptic and anti-globalization — just as some working-class, left-wing voters in France are now looking at the extreme-right National Front.

"We have a population cut in half by globalization," said Thomas Guénolé, a political science professor at Sciences Po in Paris and the author of "Unhappy Globalization," who sees the winners and losers of globalization as the axis of European politics.

A breakdown of voting patterns in the December referendum in Italy, which resulted in the fall of the center-left government, revealed that urban centers, the southern half of the country and young, unemployed workers overwhelmingly rejected the reform measures put forward by Matteo Renzi, then the prime minister.

"Those very voters who were traditionally represented by the left in this case, veered to the Five Star Movement," said Marco Damilano, a political commentator for the newsmagazine L'Espresso. He added that the new party had built on popular anger even though it did not offer answers for the malaise.

The coalition of Poland's two biggest left-wing parties, the Democratic Left Alliance and Your Movement, suffered a humiliating defeat in 2015. Not only did the conservatives win an absolute majority in Parliament for the first time since the collapse of communism, but the left garnered so little support that not a single left-wing politician represents those interests in Parliament.

In Britain, the Labour Party is in tatters with a leader who appeals to

activists but has failed to build a broad-based coalition.

Across Europe, the old Socialist blocs have fractured into smaller parties, partly because their voting bases have changed but also because rampant inequality and the decline of the middle class have created fertile ground for more extreme parties.

“On the left they are trying to stand up for their old core group, industrial workers,” said Steve Coulter, who teaches political economy at the London School of Economics. “But then there’s another group on the left, who are pro-free trade, L.G.B.T., flat-white drinking, bearded hipsters — and that’s the middle-class part of their support.”

The result in France is that the National Front, led by Marine Le Pen, “has moved into the old traditionalist, protectionist precincts of the authoritarian left,” Mr. Coulter said.

In Limousin, a relatively poor area of central France best known for the succulent beef from its cattle industry, its yellow apples and its elegant Limoges porcelain, these broader economic forces are evident. Mr. Ducourtioux said that he had voted for Mr. Hollande in the last election, but that this time he was looking toward the National Front, although he stopped short of naming it.

“You have Trump — who do you think I am going to vote for?” Mr. Ducourtioux said.

For years, the regional economy was built on agriculture, manufacturing and small businesses that were subcontractors to larger enterprises like the automakers Renault and Peugeot. And for most of the last 100 years it was a left-leaning stronghold.

The Socialist mayor of Limoges, Alain Rodet, served multiple terms until he was toppled in 2014 by a well-known psychiatrist, Émile-Roger Lombertie. He had no government experience and ran as an outsider (although on the eve of the election he became a member of the mainstream conservative party, now known as the Republicans).

In those same local elections, National Front candidates won an unprecedented 17 percent of the votes in the first round, a high figure given the leftist traditions of the area, which was the birthplace in 1895 of France’s leading trade union.

In a small storefront office, Vincent Gérard, a representative of the National Front in the region, said the party’s growth was telling because the left was so entrenched there. His own story is typical of many people in the region. His small electrical supply business once had five employees but now has two, including himself. “Eighty percent of my clients were industrial, and in five years I lost all of them,” he said.

“The markets are no longer local,” he said. “They have gone to Romania, or the Czech Republic, I don’t know exactly. They’re in Europe, but in Eastern Europe.”

Compounding the sense of a changing world, even a modest wave of immigration disturbed many local residents. Beginning about six years ago, a small number of sub-Saharan Africans arrived in Limoges, soon followed by bigger numbers of Eastern Europeans.

“So, here in our street, we had principally Bulgarians, afterwards Romanians and then Albanians,” Mr. Gérard said. “Why? This I know, because Europe no longer has any borders.”

At the same time, many affluent people began moving to the suburbs for bigger houses and left the city center to older people and newcomers, many of whom were migrants.

Mr. Rodet, the mayor who was toppled, said that just weeks before the election, there had been a rumor that an abandoned military base near the center of Limoges would become a home for “3,000 Kosovars.”

“It was not true, but I did not respond quickly enough,” he said, and by then the idea had gained currency.

Not all traditional centrist voters are concerned about immigration or dwindling manufacturing jobs. Alexis Mons, a high-tech entrepreneur, has a digital marketing firm, Emakina, which does branding worldwide for companies, many of them high end.

His worry is the politicians and citizens who want to turn back the clock and stop the pace of change, so he is looking closely at the policies of Emmanuel Macron, the former economy minister under Mr. Hollande. Mr. Macron is running for president as an independent, favors international trade and is rising in the polls.

“You have an old industrial base that is very much intertwined with the political milieu in some fashion,” Mr. Mons said. “All this little world talks to each other, it has its customs, it does business and then a new economy is born, a new economy with start-ups, with people coming from the internet, and that no one foresaw.”

There are now more than 100 high-tech firms just in Limoges, Mr. Mons said, yet few people in the area know about the business park where the companies are.

“I have the impression that a good part of the establishment lives wearing the spectacles of the 20th century,” he said. He added that politicians were manipulating the picture so that “in the working-class neighborhoods, there has been a sense of abandonment that pushes people into the arms of the National Front.”

“The world has changed,” he said, “and a certain number of people do not want to see that.”

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Upstart Emmanuel Macron Unsettles French Presidential Race

William Horobin and Stacy Meichtry

Updated Jan. 22, 2017 6:12 p.m. ET

PARIS—France’s ruling Socialist Party narrowed the field of candidates Sunday vying in a primary to succeed its unpopular president, but a former investment banker boycotting the race is already laying claim to its votes.

For months Emmanuel Macron, who quit President François Hollande’s government after launching his own political party in April, languished a distant third in the presidential race. But recent feuding among Socialists vying in Sunday’s leftist primary has produced an unexpected shift in the polls, propelling Mr. Macron into contention with the front-runners, Marine Le Pen of the anti-immigrant National Front and conservative François Fillon .

Mr. Macron, a pro-business progressive who has criticized France’s 35-hour workweek and wants to make it easier for companies to hire and fire workers, has emerged from the wreckage of France’s mainstream left. Former Prime Minister Manuel Valls , once the leading contender among the Socialists, has been dragged down by rivals who have little chance of winning the general election in May, despite their popularity with party hard-liners.

Benoît Hamon, a lawmaker who hails from party’s leftwing and who centered his campaign on a call for a universal basic income, took the largest share of Sunday’s vote with 36.1%, according to a partial count. Mr. Valls placed second with 31.2% while the third-place finisher Arnaud Montebourg received 17.7% of the vote.

In conceding defeat, Mr. Montebourg called on his supporters to back Mr. Hamon, damping Mr. Valls’s chances of a comeback victory in the primary’s Jan. 29 runoff.

As support for Mr. Valls sinks, Mr. Macron’s star is rising. One nationally representative survey conducted by Ipsos Sopra Steria in mid-January showed first-round voting intentions for Mr. Macron rose four points in a month to 19%, while Mr. Valls fell two points to 10%. If Mr. Hamon wins Jan. 29, Mr. Macron would stand to take an even larger share of the vote, scoring 21% and putting him within striking distance of Mr. Fillon at 25% and Ms. Le Pen at 26%, the poll shows.

The shift shows how France’s 2017 election isn’t adhering to the traditional rules of French politics, echoing last year’s Brexit vote and the U.S. election of Donald Trump. In an interview with The Wall Street Journal last month, Mr. Macron warned the Socialist primary would be “a big, crazy debate about the last five years, and the constant question—who is the ‘right’ leftist?”

Mr. Macron said he aimed to blur political boundaries and capture the support of voters fed up with establishment parties. “My bet is that a strong, progressive view will gather voters from left, right and center,” he said.

The 39-year-old is an unusual standard-bearer for antiestablishment politics. Though he has never before run for office, he was groomed for leadership at the country’s elite École Nationale d’Administration. At investment bank Rothschild & Cie, he was a major deal-maker. And unlike Ms. Le Pen, who is campaigning on overthrowing elites and retreating from the European Union, Mr. Macron is firmly in favor of strengthening the EU.

It was as Mr. Hollande’s economy minister that Mr. Macron gained his reputation as a gadfly. He railed against what he considered France’s real establishment: public- and private-sector workers protected by rigid laws that he says exclude younger people from the labor market.

Socialist backbenchers seethed as Mr. Macron passed pro-business measures and criticized the 35-hour workweek, held up by many in the party as a cornerstone of economic policy.

Since then, some Socialist heavyweights have begun to gravitate toward Mr. Macron, citing his reputation for defiance as an asset in a political season in which mainstream parties have hemorrhaged support to Ms. Le Pen.

"Breaking with codes and being outside of structures is something we should listen to more," said Environment Minister Ségolène Royal, the mother of Mr. Hollande's children and the Socialist candidate for president in 2007.

In the interview, Mr. Macron blamed his former boss, the least popular French president on record, for succumbing to party politics and refusing to shake up the job market.

"He wasn't clear on his objectives, and he compromised with the left," Mr. Macron said.

In view of his own unpopularity, Mr. Hollande decided not to run for re-election, but a large part of the public's ire over stubbornly high unemployment is being redirected at his former prime minister. Mr. Valls was recently doused with flour while on the stump, and on Tuesday cameras caught a young man slapping the candidate in the face.

Dropping in on a morning radio show the next day, Mr. Valls fielded a caller who praised the slap, adding: "Millions of French people dream they could have done it too."

Mr. Macron, meanwhile, is drawing large crowds of young people at rallies across the country. He has scheduled a rally for early February in Lyon, where the National Front is due to hold a convention the same day to formally launch Ms. Le Pen's candidacy.

In one sign of how Mr. Macron is looming large, candidates who competed in Sunday's leftist primary were asked in a recent debate about the former banker's popularity.

Mr. Hamon responded that the winner of the Socialist primary and Mr. Macron should hold talks over who should stand in the general election.

"Resigning ourselves to division is resigning ourselves to defeat," Mr. Hamon said.

Mr. Macron, however, refuses to make alliances with political parties, even as he invites lawmakers of all stripes to join his political movement, En Marche or On the Move. The movement, which has existed for less than a year, will field candidates in every constituency for the legislative elections that follow the presidential vote, he said on Thursday.

"Our political parties are no longer able to respond to the challenges of our country," Mr. Macron said.

The Washington Post

Britain's May prepares to become first foreign leader to meet President Trump

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LONDON – British Prime Minister Theresa May will become the first foreign leader to hold White House talks with President Trump when she travels to Washington on Friday, Downing Street confirmed Sunday.

The visit was aggressively sought by British officials as a symbol that the "special relationship" between the United States and the United Kingdom endures, after Britain voted to leave the European Union and America elected a president who is reviled across much of Western Europe.

British politicians — May included — were sharply critical of Trump during his campaign. But since his election, Britain has gone out of its way to emphasize solidarity with the new administration, even as other European governments have been more cautious.

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In an appearance on the BBC on Sunday, May said she "will be talking to Donald Trump about the issues we share and how we can build on the special relationship."

A government statement said the agenda would include "a number of the most pressing global issues, notably tackling terrorism, Syria, relations with Russia and cooperation in NATO."

But perhaps of highest priority for May will be to sound Trump out over prospects for a U.S.-U.K. trade deal. With Britain leaving the European Union, May is under pressure to show that countries are eager to cut new deals with the United Kingdom.

Britain already does more than $180 billion worth of trade with the United States annually, and America is the biggest source of inward investment to the United Kingdom.

Trump has been highly critical of many trade deals but has signaled a willingness to reach an agreement with Britain. Analysts have cautioned that any negotiations are likely to stretch on for years.

Asked about Trump's vow in his inaugural address to pursue protectionist policies under the slogan "America first," May said Sunday that she was unconcerned.

"If you think about it, any leader, any government, as we do here in the United Kingdom when we look at any issue, we ensure that we're putting the U.K.'s interests and the interests of British people first," she said.

But opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn said May was fooling herself if she thought Britain would get a good deal from Trump.

"There were no signs of any special relationship in Donald Trump's inauguration speech," Corbyn told Sky News on Sunday. "It was quite the opposite. It was America first, America only, America inward-looking."

The Labour Party leader urged May to tell Trump that his "misogyny during the election campaign" was "simply not acceptable."

May demurred when pressed on whether she would raise Trump's comments about women during her meeting with the president.

A day after women's rights rallies drew huge crowds in cities worldwide, she said that being a female leader meeting Trump on equal footing was the "biggest statement" she could make about the issue.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Theresa May's Delicate Mission to Washington

Simon Nixon

Jan. 22, 2017 2:01 p.m. ET

When Theresa May visits President Donald Trump in the Oval Office on Friday, she will engage in arguably the most sensitive trans-Atlantic diplomatic mission by a British prime minister since Winston Churchill met President Franklin Roosevelt in 1941 to persuade the U.S. to join the U.K. in its lonely war against Germany.

Back then, President Roosevelt was sympathetic but felt unable to overcome strong domestic resistance from the America First movement championed by Charles Lindbergh and other noninterventionists. Now it is Mrs. May's turn to try to persuade the U.S. to come to the aid of a British government that fears post-Brexit isolation in Europe. But this time, it is the U.S. president himself who has adopted the slogan of America First.

For Mrs. May, this visit is hugely important. Last week, she gave a landmark speech in which she acknowledged for the first time that she plans to lead the U.K. out of the European Union's single market and customs union, raising the prospect of new barriers to trade emerging between the U.K. and EU, reversing 44 years of economic integration. Mrs. May hopes to soften the Brexit blow with a new comprehensive free-trade deal with the EU that will minimize cross-border trade frictions.

But she has also warned that if she can't secure a satisfactory trade accord in two years, she will walk away from the European bloc without any negotiated agreement and can compensate for lost EU trade with new bilateral trade deals. Mr. Trump is crucial to Mrs. May's bluff: she needs his support both to convince her European colleagues and reassure her domestic base that she does indeed have options.

Yet Mrs. May's visit also carries risks. One problem is that she and Mr. Trump appear to have different views on globalization. Mr. Trump regards Brexit and his own election victory as twin manifestations of the same political phenomenon: populist uprisings by marginalized voters against globalization and out-of-touch elites.

Yet Mrs. May, who opposed Brexit in the referendum, has chosen to interpret Brexit differently, claiming it as a vote in favor of further globalization, with the U.K. cast as a

global leader in free trade. Mrs. May envisages Britain at the heart of a revitalized global, rules-based trading system, rapidly agreeing on ambitious new trade deals with all the world's major economic powers. That vision is potentially threatened by Mr. Trump's protectionist instincts and his promise of a trade policy based on "buy American, hire American."

That points to Mrs. May's second problem: Although her threat to walk away from the EU without a deal was necessary for domestic political purposes, this threat in reality lacks credibility. As things stand, almost any deal is better for the U.K. than no deal. The U.K., with a budget deficit of 3.5% of gross domestic product, the second largest in the EU, is in a poor fiscal position to withstand the disruption of a sudden imposition of tariffs and customs checks. Nor is it in a position to turn itself into a Singaporean-style offshore tax haven without politically unpalatable welfare cuts.

What's more, the U.K. faces formidable legal and bureaucratic challenges if it is to ready itself for a sudden shift to trading under World Trade Organization rules in two years' time. If it quits the EU without a negotiated agreement, it would face years of litigation as it tried to untangle its relationship through the international courts. That in turn would complicate the U.K.'s efforts to establish its own tariff schedules at the WTO, the crucial first step toward establishing a basis for future free-trade deals, since these require recognition by all 163 WTO members.

The U.K. would also face a race to put in place the body of laws necessary to ensure that every sector—particularly those such as aviation, chemicals, medicines, food and data storage, which are currently regulated by European bodies—had a solid legal basis and the appropriate authorizations from internationally recognized agencies to continue trading after a chaotic Brexit in 2019.

When Mrs. May meets Mr. Trump, she will therefore be treading a fine line. If she is to make a success of Brexit as she has promised, she needs to ensure that the U.K. emerges from Brexit firmly embedded in a global rules-based trading system with the freest possible trading relationship with a strong and successful EU.

For that, she needs more than just the offer of a post-Brexit free trade deal from Mr. Trump, politically helpful as this would be. She also needs his commitment not to pull the rug on the global rules-based trading system, nor to undermine Europe's unity or collective security. The worst-case scenario for Britain would be to find itself isolated in a crumbling world order disintegrating into protectionist blocks. In 1941, it took a major shock in the form of the attack on Pearl Harbor to bring U.S. public opinion around to Britain's point of view. Mrs. May must hope that it won't require a shock to convince Mr. Trump.

The New York Times

Theresa May Is Grilled Over U.K. Missile Test Failure

Steven Erlanger

LONDON — Prime Minister Theresa May of Britain refused to comment on Sunday about the reported failure of an unarmed British Trident missile that was test-fired from a submarine off the coast of Florida in June.

Mrs. May said in a television interview with the BBC that she had "absolute faith in our Trident missiles." But she would not say whether she had known about the failure or whether, as The Sunday Times of London reported, it had been covered up by Downing Street under her predecessor, David Cameron, shortly before the referendum on Britain's exit from the European Union.

Mrs. May did not mention any missile failure in her first major speech to Parliament on July 18, when she persuaded Parliament to spend up to 40 billion pounds, or about $53 billion then, on four new submarines to keep Britain's nuclear deterrent up to date.

"There are tests that take place all the time, regularly, for our nuclear deterrence," she said on Sunday. "What we were talking about in that debate that took place was about the future."

The Sunday Times reported that the Trident II D5 missile, which was designed to carry a nuclear warhead but was unarmed for the test, had veered off course after being fired from HMS Vengeance, one of Britain's four aging nuclear-armed submarines.

The British Navy had not performed such a test for four years because of the expense of the missile, but had carried out tests in 2000, 2005, 2009 and 2012, all of which had been successful and publicized by the Ministry of Defense. The current test took place after the submarine had been refitted with new missile launch equipment and upgraded computer systems.

Replacing Trident has been controversial because of the cost and because the current leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, long an antinuclear campaigner, is opposed to retaining Britain's nuclear deterrent, while his party's official position has been to retain and renew it.

"It's a pretty catastrophic error when a missile goes in the wrong direction, and while it wasn't armed, goodness knows what the consequences of that could have been," Mr. Corbyn said on Sunday.

Speaking to Sky News, he said, "We understand the prime minister chose not to inform Parliament, and instead it came out through the media." He repeated his belief that Britain should commit to nuclear disarmament.

Kevan Jones, a Labour member of Parliament and a former defense minister, called for an inquiry into the failed missile test. "The U.K.'s independent nuclear deterrent is a vital cornerstone for the nation's defense," he said. Parliament is likely to ask Defense Secretary Michael Fallon to answer questions about the report.

Separately, Mrs. May confirmed that she would meet with President Trump in Washington on Friday in the first visit of a foreign leader to the new president, a traditional prize that Britain has been seeking avidly. She said she would emphasize to Mr. Trump the importance of the NATO military alliance, calling it a "bulwark" of the West, and would say that Britain favors the progress and cohesion of the European Union, even though the country plans to leave the bloc.

Trade will be an important topic, she said, with Britain wanting new free-trade agreements with key countries, including the United States, after it leaves the European Union. Mr. Trump, a supporter of "Brexit," as Britain's departure from the bloc is known, has said that he is open to early talks on such a deal with Britain. Legally, no new deal can be made until Britain formally leaves the European Union, which is unlikely for at least two years.

Mr. Trump's slogan of "America First" and his protectionist comments may mean that a trade deal will be difficult to negotiate despite the good will expressed by both sides.

Mrs. May was asked about Mr. Trump's attitudes toward women. "I've already said that some of the comments that Donald Trump has made in relation to women are unacceptable, some of those he himself has apologized for," she said.

When she meets Mr. Trump, she said, "I think the biggest statement that will be made about the role of women is the fact that I will be there as a female prime minister."

Bloomberg

Bershidsky : Germany Is Growing More Tolerant of Extremism

Leonid Bershidsky

The values of modern Germany -- and its ability to return to a global leadership role in recent years -- have been based on a blanket rejection of the country's totalitarian past, both Nazi and Communist. That rejection is now being tested as higher tolerance for both left-wing and right-wing extremes begins to emerge.

Two episodes have illustrated this in recent days. One is the acrimonious battle over the exit of one-time Stasi trainee Andrej Holm from the city government in Berlin as well as Humboldt University. The other is a decision by the German constitutional court against banning the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party (NPD).

In 1989, when Holm was 18, the German Democratic Republic was just months away from its inglorious demise. Not knowing the end was near, Holm faced the same old life choices, ones that led him to begin to follow his father's footsteps as a Stasi (East German secret police) officer. During high school, he applied to the agency and signed an obligation to cooperate. At 18, he did five months of training -- as a paper-pusher in one of the vast organization's departments, he says, service that counted toward his mandatory military service. Once finished, he would be required to train as a journalist and then go into Stasi service, perhaps under cover.

That never happened. Holm, who is also the grandson of a prominent communist and Nazi regime victim, went on to become a sociologist and a university professor. He stuck to his leftist views and evolved into one of Berlin's most prominent gentrification opponents -- a serious achievement in a quickly gentrifying city that's full of them.

Last year, leftist parties did well in the state election -- Berlin is a German federal state -- and the the Social Democratic Party (SPD) won a plurality, returning Michael Mueller to the mayor's post. On the national level, the SPD is the junior partner in the governing coalition with Chancellor Angela Merkel's center-right Christian Democrats. In Berlin, however, it forged a different alliance -- with Die Linke, the successor party of East Germany's ruling communists, and the Green Party. Such a coalition would have been unthinkable just a few years ago -- Die Linke was considered beyond the pale for serious politicians, despite its persistent popularity in the former East. Now, however, the party participates in three state governments including the Berlin one, and last year its member Bodo Ramelow became the party's first post-unification regional prime minister.

Protecting long-time residents in working-class areas from developers and affluent newcomers is the key issue on the party's agenda, so Die Linke tapped Holm to become state secretary for housing policy. But then, in December, a local newspaper revealed his Stasi past and it emerged that he'd lied about it on a questionnaire when Humboldt University hired him. If he hadn't, he might have been disqualified from teaching altogether.

The revelations strained the "Red-Red-Green" coalition. Such scandals are what center-left politicians are afraid of when they negotiate alliances with Die Linke. Such an alliance on a federal level may be the only way to topple Merkel after the September 24 parliamentary election, if the SPD, Die Linke and the Greens together win more than half the votes (current polls give them a combined 40 percent or so). But the SPD doesn't want the Stasi taint: It would be deadly in the Western states. So Mueller called for Holm's resignation, and the professor quit the city government so as not to hurt his party any further.

The university fired him, too -- a decision he is appealing in court. But though that's in line with previous practice of intolerance toward Stasi collaborators, a few things are different. University President Sabine Kunst says she wouldn't have fired Holm had he expressed regret about quibbling on the questionnaire. And students occupied the building where Holm, a popular lecturer, had taught, decorating it with signs that say, "Holm Must Leave? Then We Stay." They don't care about his Stasi gig: It was too long ago, in another country. So perhaps Holm's career isn't over yet despite his adolescent determination to join the East German version of the KGB. His fight for the rights of poor tenants will certainly continue and perhaps even gain momentum: The sudden notoriety has boosted Holm's popularity among his target audience.

At the other end of the political spectrum, the NPD -- the party that fiercely clashes with Die Linke supporters when both demonstrate for opposing causes on the immigration issue -- has gained a lease on life from Germany's constitutional court. German state governments had sued for the party to be banned, but the court returned a curious decision: It said that while the far-right party rejected democracy and pursued anti-democratic goals, which resembled those advocated by the Nazis, "there are no specific and weighty indications that suggest that the NPD will succeed in achieving its anti-constitutional aims."

"It appears to be entirely impossible that the NPD will succeed in achieving its aims by parliamentary or extra-parliamentary democratic means," the court said, arguing, in effect, that the party doesn't have enough of a following for a strong electoral performance or an uprising. Indeed, it's not represented in state governments, and it only won 1.3 percent of the vote in the last national election, far from enough to get into parliament.

Though a previous attempt to ban the party, in 2003, had also failed, the reasons had been different then: The court said that since the party had been infiltrated by government agents, it was unclear whether its true activists or the agents were responsible for the party's ideological face and actions. Now, the court showed a willingness to tolerate a real Nazi-like organization as long as it has no chance at seizing power.

The NPD, of course, no longer even has to try. A different, far milder but still strongly nationalist party, the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) is doing great in local elections and polls. It is now represented in 10 of Germany's 16 state parliaments and poised to get into the federal one this fall. Last week, Bjoern Hoecke, head of the AfD's Thuringia branch, criticized the Holocaust memorial in the center of Berlin as a "memorial of shame" and called on Germans to stop apologizing for Nazi crimes. Though AfD co-leader Frauke Petry condemned Hoecke's remarks, it's clear that he's not the only party member with such thoughts.

Though other parties have called on Germany's domestic intelligence to monitor AfD as an extremist organization on the strength of Hoecke's comments, that's unlikely to happen, if only because of the party's strong popular support -- 13 to 15 percent in recent polls.

Far-right and far-left ideology caused no end of suffering in Germany in the 20th century. In the 21st, however, both are not-so-marginally acceptable. This could be a sign of normality: After all, Germany has proven that it is more immune to excesses than many other European countries, where extreme parties have come to power, narrowly failed to do so or come dangerously close. But it could also signal the end of the relatively tame German politics that have allowed Merkel to win three elections in a row. It's getting hotter here now.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Boosted by Trump, Europe's Anti-EU Parties Unite

Anton Troianovski

Jan. 21, 2017 8:16 a.m. ET

KOBLENZ, Germany—Europe's leading anti-immigrant and antiestablishment politicians rallied in the Rhineland on Saturday to launch an election year they hope will topple the European Union, displaying a new level of ambition and organization and casting U.S. President Donald Trump as their inspiration.

It was the first time that Marine Le Pen, the French nationalist leader vying for the presidency, campaigned alongside Frauke Petry, the most prominent of Germany's anti-immigrant politicians. Leaders from Austria, the Netherlands and Italy joined them in ridiculing German Chancellor Angela Merkel and congratulating Mr. Trump—echoing or even directly quoting from his inaugural address.

"My friends, this year will be the year of the people—the year in which the voice of the people is finally heard," said Geert Wilders, who is seeking to become the prime minister of the Netherlands in March elections, despite having been found guilty by a Dutch court in December of inciting discrimination.

Polls show that all of the politicians face long odds in this years' elections, but after the U.K.'s Brexit vote and Mr. Trump's win, they are hoping to ride a global wave of antiestablishment sentiment. While the parties gathered in Koblenz have divergent economic agendas, they all deploy anti-immigration and anti-Islamic rhetoric, slam Ms. Merkel's acceptance of refugees, and want to weaken or destroy the EU.

Mr. Trump has signaled support for anti-EU parties, praising Britain's decision to exit from the bloc and predicting other countries would follow suit.

"2016 was the year the Anglo-Saxon world awoke," Ms. Le Pen said to the crowd of several hundred in a convention hall. "2017, I am sure, will be the year in which the peoples of the European continent awake."

The rise of the anti-EU parties represents a serious economic threat, some analysts say. Mr. Wilders, Ms. Le Pen, and Italy's Matteo Salvini have all raised the prospect of a referendum on EU membership along the lines of Britain's vote last year. But unlike the U.K., their countries all use the EU's common currency, the euro, making an exit by one of them from the bloc potentially far more disruptive to the financial system.

"Looking ahead to this year and next, the biggest risk I see is another referendum in the EU," said Marcel Fratzscher, president of the German Institute for Economic Research in Berlin. "Such a referendum won't simply be about EU membership but, in the end, about the euro."

This year's first electoral test will come in March in the Netherlands. Mr. Wilders's anti-EU and anti-Islam Party for Freedom is projected to become the first or second largest, according to recent polling, but the fragmented political landscape would still make it hard for him to form a governing majority.

Later in the spring, Ms. Le Pen is likely to make it into the runoff round of the French presidential election, according to polls. In the fall, Ms. Petry's Alternative for Germany is likely to become the first party to the

right of the mainstream conservatives to enter German Parliament in decades. It now polls as high as 15%.

Mr. Salvini, whose Northern League party has been polling at around 13% in recent weeks, wants Italy to hold a referendum on EU membership. The Northern League and the more popular, antiestablishment 5 Star Movement pose a threat to Italy's political mainstream ahead of elections, which are due in 2018 but could be brought forward to this year.

Speaking Saturday in Koblenz, Mr. Salvini broke into English to quote directly from Mr. Trump's inaugural speech: "We'll bring back our jobs, our borders, our wealth," Mr. Salvini said. "We'll bring back our future and our dreams."

Ms. Le Pen said Mr. Trump's inauguration speech featured "similarities to that which some of us have been saying for months, and some of us for years." Harald Vilimsky of the Austrian Freedom Party said his party's chairman, Heinz-Christian Strache, missed the Koblenz event because he was holding meetings with U.S. senators and members of Congress on the sidelines of the inauguration.

The euroskeptic politicians' praise of Mr. Trump underlined concern among pro-EU politicians that the new U.S. president will seek to weaken or split the EU, similar to aims they say Russian President Vladimir Putin has pursued for years.

"Trump and Putin are both pursuing policies seeking to divide or even destroy the European Union," German lawmaker Niels Annen of the Social Democrats, Ms. Merkel's junior governing partners, said in a newspaper interview published Friday. "We're used to this from Putin. But that our most important ally is now pursuing these policies represents a serious danger for the European Union."

German Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel and the regional prime minister, Malu Dreyer, came to Koblenz to join a counterprotest. Several dozen protesters sat down to block the street leading to the convention hall, and hundreds of police, some armed with automatic weapons, were deployed to secure the area.

The conference participants, however, said the momentum was on their side.

"Just as there is a Europe of the establishment in Strasbourg and Brussels, we must build a Europe of the antiestablishment," said Johannes Dietrich, 60 years old, an Alternative for Germany politician from the Frankfurt region. "We want a little bit of a revolution."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Global Uncertainty Gets Brushed Off in the U.S. and Europe

Paul Hannon

Updated Jan. 22, 2017 8:28 p.m. ET

Economists warned for months that the U.K.'s vote to leave the European Union could shake household and business confidence and hurt the economy, but it hasn't played out that way.

That's part of a wider trend across the rest of Europe and the U.S. Consumers and businesses appear to be undaunted by the prospect of profound political change on both sides of the Atlantic and may even be encouraged by it. If it lasts it's a plus for a still underpowered global economic recovery.

The conventional wisdom among economists is that people don't like uncertainty and the unknowable. Faced with the prospect of upheaval and change with unpredictable outcomes, they become less confident about their prospects and more cautious about making big decisions on spending.

If that conventional wisdom were to be correct, higher than usual levels of uncertainty should be acting as a drag on growth. That would be bad news for a global economy that has struggled to grow at its precrisis pace.

But there are few signs that the fact and prospect of political change is denting what are known as animal spirits, a term coined by John Maynard Keynes to describe the emotions that drive economic behavior.

"Extremely uncertain public policy should be a drag that constricts growth," said Eric Lascelles, chief economist at RBC Global Asset Management. "It clearly has not been in the U.K. It simply seems not to be a powerful variable."

Surveys of sentiment point to a strengthening of confidence in both the U.S. and the U.K. over recent months, while a similar rise in optimism is under way in Europe, which faces a number of elections in 2017 that could lead to big changes in policy.

The U.K.'s June decision to leave the European Union has been the biggest test of how uncertainty affects confidence and investment. The vote to end a deep and complex relationship with 27 other nations that had built over more than four decades raised many questions for consumers and businesses about what the future might hold.

After a dip in the immediate aftermath of the vote, optimism has returned even as uncertainty about the shape of Britain's future relationship with the EU remains high. That resilience has surprised the Bank of England, which admits its growth forecasts for 2016 were more gloomy than has proved warranted.

In August, the BOE said it expected "little" economic growth in the second half of the year. Instead, its momentum was unaffected by the vote, and figures to be released Tuesday are expected to show the economy expanded by around 2% during 2016, which could make it the fastest-growing of in the Group of Seven large advanced countries.

"If you look at how the British consumer performed during the course of last year, it's almost as though the referendum had not taken place," BOE Chief Economist Andy Haldane said in a recent interview.

Donald Trump's victory in the U.S. presidential election was another surprise. His views on trade, taxes, regulation, immigration and other issues mark a significant change from President Barack Obama. Uncertainties about the specifics and their impact abound. So far, at least, households and investors appear to be embracing the idea of potentially radical change in the tax code and regulatory environment.

U.S. consumer confidence has risen over recent months. According to the Conference Board's measure, it reached its highest level in December since August 2001.

The same trend is evident in Europe, which faces key elections in the Netherlands, France and Germany during 2017. Victory for one or a number of nationalist parties in those votes could once again raise questions about the survival of the eurozone in its current form, since they are hostile to the single currency and the wider EU.

Opinion polls suggest nationalist victories would be a surprise, but the victories for Brexit campaigners and Mr. Trump in 2016 mean uncertainty about the outcomes will remain high.

And yet the main eurozone-wide measure of business and consumer confidence in December reached its highest level since March 2011, with the national measures for the Netherlands, France and Germany also reaching peaks last seen more than five years ago.

Although there is no consensus among economists about the exact nature and strength of the relationship between confidence and economic activity, rising optimism has often presaged a pickup in growth. If that relationship holds, 2017 could see an acceleration from a weak 2016.

With uncertainty appearing to be high, policy makers at central banks are taking a closer look at what has until recently been a little-considered corner of economics. In November, the Bank of England's Kristin Forbes delivered a speech on the topic, and that was followed by a December paper by economists at the European Central Bank.

"There is much uncertainty about uncertainty," Ms. Forbes said. What appears to be true at the moment is that either there is much less uncertainty confronting households and businesses in 2017 than is generally thought, or the unknowable isn't as troubling as economists had come to believe.

INTERNATIONAL

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Syria Talks in Kazakhstan Will Test Russia-Turkey Cooperation

Raja Abdulrahim, Nathan Hodge and Margaret Coker

Updated Jan. 22, 2017 9:02 p.m. ET

Russia and Turkey, which for years have backed opposing sides in Syria's civil war, say they will work to map the outlines of a peace agreement during negotiations this week, the first major test of whether the powers' newfound cooperation can achieve a breakthrough to end the conflict.

The Trump administration has said it won't be sending a delegation to the talks—which begin Monday in the Kazakh capital, Astana—despite being invited to attend alongside Syrian rebels and envoys from Iran, and will be represented instead by the U.S. ambassador to Kazakhstan.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the talks are aimed at building on a recent cease-fire deal and would include Syrian rebel commanders. Mikhail Bogdanov, Mr. Lavrov's deputy, said 14 rebel groups have agreed to take part and that Moscow hopes more will join.

The fractured range of rebel groups fighting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad—and each other—could undermine the success of any deals struck. Some of the biggest groups have said they won't take part in the Kazakh meetings.

Since the summer, Turkish and Russian officials have been discussing the outlines of what Ankara describes as a pragmatic interim political solution in Syria while working to achieve a consensus on a longer-term future for the fractured country.

More than 400,000 people have been killed since the Syrian war started six years ago and half the country's population of 22 million has been displaced by the fighting. The conflict also spawned a wave of refugees that poured into Europe, raising terror fears and roiling politics across the Continent.

Turkey's deputy prime minister, Mehmet Simsek, said on Friday during an appearance at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, that "facts on the ground have changed dramatically" in Syria.

He said Turkey believes that a permanent political solution to the crisis in Syria cannot include a role for Mr. Assad. But he said the fact that rebels and other opponents have failed to remove him from power is a reality that can't be ignored.

Russia, which has backed the Syrian leader, in part to ensure its ability to maintain a naval base in the country, has expressed a willingness for Mr. Assad to eventually be eased from power, though it casts his military as the only real bulwark against extremists.

Yasser al-Youssef, a political leader of Nour al-Dine al-Zinki, a rebel group based in Aleppo province, said the group wouldn't participate because Russia's "efforts are not in pursuit of a real political settlement but in pursuit of maintaining the survival of the regime."

The rebels have been seriously weakened by last month's fall of the city of Aleppo, Syria's former commercial capital, which was retaken by government forces backed by Russian airstrikes and assisted by Iranian, Lebanese and Iraqi Shiite militias.

Under President Barack Obama, the U.S. took an increasingly measured approach to the struggle between Mr. Assad and the rebel forces arrayed against him, offering some support to so-called moderate groups, but focusing more on fighting extremist group Islamic State.

President Donald Trump has called for intensifying the fight against Islamic State, but hasn't spelled out plans on deploying military forces or backing combatants in Syria.

Despite the recent cease-fire deal, rebels say Moscow and the Syrian government continue to launch airstrikes on opposition-held areas. Several rebel leaders said Thursday that their main objective in Astana is establishing a real cease-fire rather than discussing political settlements.

"The most important tasks of the delegation will be to talk about the cease-fire and the humanitarian situation, because these are the priorities and things that have not yet been accomplished," said Zakaria Malahifji, a political leader of the Fastaqim Kama Umirt rebel faction.

Another round of talks is already planned next month in Geneva and hosted by the United Nations.

Bloomberg

Feldman : Turkey's New Constitution Would End Its Democracy

Noah Feldman

With all eyes on the U.S. as it inaugurates a new leader, Turkey is preparing to amend its constitution to make its president even more powerful than the American executive.

There's nothing inherently wrong with replacing parliamentary government with a presidential system. The problem is timing and context: Turkey's proposed changes, which will go to a national referendum after being approved by parliament, follow the unsuccessful coup against increasingly autocratic President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

QuickTake Turkey's Divide

In practice, a revised constitution would make it much easier for Erdogan to consolidate power entirely, taking Turkey out of the democratic column and making it into a dictatorship, pure and simple.

The proposed constitutional revision has lots of moving parts. But the most important is to transform Turkey's modified parliamentary system into a presidential one. The president's powers now are, in principle, much more limited. He governs alongside a prime minister chosen by the parliamentary majority, who in turn appoints a cabinet that's responsible to parliament. An important practical and symbolic mechanism of parliamentary oversight of the government is the right of parliament to demand that cabinet ministers appear before it to answer inquiries -- a right known as "interpellation."

The new draft would shift the basic structure of the system by abolishing the office of prime minister and giving the president the authority to appoint the members of the cabinet. As part of this change, the parliament's right to interpellate cabinet ministers would be removed.

Americans would find that aspect of the change unremarkable. The U.S. president appoints his own cabinet, albeit with the advice and consent of the Senate. Cabinet secretaries appear before Congress by courtesy, not by an inherent congressional right to question them.

But the proposed Turkish Constitution goes further still in allowing the president to be the head of a political party. That means the president could exercise direct control over what candidates his party runs for office. Erdogan could handpick parliamentarians from his own party, who would be extremely unlikely to exercise a check over him, because he could also kick them out of the party.

In practice, of course, the U.S. president is also the head of the party to which he belongs. But in the U.S. system, that doesn't give him the authority to pick congressional candidates. That power lies with primary voters, donors and party leaders.

Under the changed system, Turkish presidential elections would take place at the same time as parliamentary elections, every five years. That would make it difficult for voters to express dissension at the national level during the president's term, because there would be no midterm elections.

A further proposed change sought by Erdogan's AK Party is to give the president power over the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors. Erdogan has already effectively taken control by purging that body in the aftermath of the coup. The proposed amendments would make that control permanent.

In the U.S. presidential system, of course, the executive appoints federal judges and senior federal prosecutors. As long as they subsequently serve their terms on good behavior, they can function relatively independently. The trouble is that, as Erdogan's purge shows, there's no similar long-term guarantee of de facto independence in the Turkish system. Erdogan's judges and prosecutors would be seen as political functionaries, and might well actually be subordinate to the executive. A proposed nominal guarantee of judicial and prosecutorial "impartiality" is only as good as political reality makes it.

Perhaps the most clever and pernicious element of the proposed change is that it limits the president to two terms -- but only starting with ratification and new elections. That would allow Erdogan to remain in power until 2029, when he'll be 75. By then he would have been running Turkey as prime minister or president for a whopping 26 years. That's not a recipe for democracy, to put it mildly.

The entire reform package must pass the parliament with 330 votes out of 550. The ruling AK Party doesn't have enough votes on its

own, but it can reach the threshold by getting the votes of the nationalist, far-right MH Party. Then the package would go to a referendum.

In 2010, Turkish voters approved constitutional reforms pushed by the AK Party, by 58 percent to 42 percent. The vote is unlikely to be so lopsided this time. In practice, the vote will be a referendum on Erdogan himself.

Absent the failed coup, it seems conceivable that Erdogan could have lost a bid to make Turkey into a presidential system designed to maximize his power. But the coup unfortunately provides ammunition for the argument that he needs greater authority to run the country.

If the presidential change prevails in Turkey, and is used to subvert democracy still further, it will contribute to the perception in many places that the presidential form of government is simply a prelude to autocracy. Traditionally, the U.S. system has stood as a bulwark against those arguments. Whether it remains so is the most significant question of Donald Trump's presidency that has just begun.

Bergen and Sterman : Will President Trump restart the drone war in Pakistan?

Peter Bergen and David Sterman

Peter Bergen is CNN's national security analyst, a vice president at New America and a professor of practice at Arizona State University. He is the author of "United States of Jihad: Investigating America's Homegrown Terrorists." David Sterman is a policy analyst at New America's International Security Program. The opinions expressed in this commentary are theirs.

*(CNN)*The American drone war in Pakistan effectively ended nearly eight months ago when the US conducted its last drone strike, killing the Taliban's leader, Mullah Akhtar Mansour.

After using CIA drones regularly for 7 years in Pakistan -- a country where the United States is not waging a traditional war, such as in Iraq -- the Obama administration has now presided over the longest cessation of strikes since President Obama took office, according to

data

collected by New America.

It is in Pakistan where the majority of CIA drone strikes have occurred under Obama, resulting in the death of a minimum of 1,904 people and perhaps as many as 3,114, according to New America's research.

The drone program has continued in other countries outside of traditional war zones, such as Yemen and Somalia, but at relatively small levels, compared to the 122 strikes in one year that occurred in Pakistan at the height of Obama's drone war there.

On Friday, Donald Trump took the oath of office. He has a key decision to make as commander in chief: Will he re-start the drone strikes?

That decision should be guided by the scope of the real threat emanating from Pakistan, rather than simply a desire to do something other than what the departing administration has done, which is often the impulse of an incoming administration.

The threat from al-Qaeda in Pakistan has receded and the need for "force protection" of US troops in Afghanistan has much diminished with the significant withdrawals of American forces in the past years.

There is also a widespread perception in Pakistan that drones kill too many civilians -- according to a

2014 Pew poll

, two thirds of Pakistanis believe this to be the case.

Any decision to reactivate the drone campaign in Pakistan should take into account that the program and the United States are quite

unpopular

in the country, which has a population of more than 180 million people.

The Trump team on drones

The incoming Trump national security team has not laid out a clear policy on drone strikes, but it has made general statements suggestive of a coming escalation.

During the campaign, Trump stated, "The other thing with the terrorists is you have to take out their families," and called President Obama's war on ISIS a

"politically correct war."

Trump brings with him appointees who have long supported the drone war.

In 2013, Mike Pompeo, Trump's nominee for Director of the CIA,

stated

: "I believe the president needs a lot of space to maneuver," adding, "He should have a lot of authority to make decisions about when they've identified someone who is trying to kill Americans, to be able to go in and get them."

In 2011, General James Mattis, who at the time was Commander of Central Command, which directs American military operations stretching from Egypt to Pakistan, and is now Trump's Defense Secretary nominee, was among those who

pushed for an escalation

of air strikes in Yemen.

On the other hand, members of Trump's circle have also criticized the drone war.

Despite his role in pushing for an escalation of strikes in Yemen, Mattis has

warned

that drone warfare can give a false impression that war is manageable.

In January 2016, Michael Flynn, who is slated to be Trump's National Security Adviser,

told

Al Jazeera, "When you drop a bomb from a drone ... you are gonna cause more damage than you're gonna cause good," adding that "there should be a different approach."

Flynn, however, refused to condemn Trump's comments regarding killing terrorists' family members,

commenting

instead: "I would have to see the circumstances of that situation." He added, "These are very difficult political decisions." He has also

criticized the current restraints

on strikes that are meant to limit collateral damage.

The Trump team on Pakistan

Trump and his team have also not laid out a clear policy on U.S. relations with Pakistan.

Trump has at times taken a conciliatory tone. Shortly after being elected, he told Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, "You are a terrific guy," and offered, "I am ready and willing to play any role that you want me to play to address and find solutions to the outstanding problems," according to a Pakistani readout of a

call

he had with Sharif.

In his answers to

questions

from the Senate Armed Services Committee before his confirmation hearing last week, Mattis cautioned that conditioning aid to Pakistan has had a "mixed history" and that the casualties Pakistan has suffered fighting terror is a "sign of its commitment," but warned he would "review all options."

Yet in 2012 Trump

tweeted

a demand that Pakistan apologize for the fact that Osama bin Laden had been hiding there, commenting, "Some 'ally.'"

Why did the strikes in Pakistan halt?

There are two explanations for the halt, which are not mutually exclusive: either the Obama administration made a decision to refrain from strikes or the cessation derives from a lack of need or opportunity to conduct strikes.

The number of strikes in Pakistan has consistently

declined

since their peak of 122 strikes or about ten per month in 2010. In an October interview, President Obama said he was

"troubled"

early in his presidency by "the way in which the number of drone strikes was going up."

Yet beyond Pakistan, there is little evidence that the Obama administration has reined in its air wars against terrorist groups. In Yemen, the United States conducted more drone strikes in 2016 than any year except 2012, the peak of the campaign in the country, according to

data

collected by New America.

In Somalia, the United States has conducted more

strikes

in 2016 than during any previous year, according to New America's research.

In 2016, Washington and its coalition partners conducted more than

7,000 strikes

in Iraq and Syria.

And in Libya, the United States has

conducted

more than 350 air strikes since August as part of its military campaign against ISIS there.

Alternatively, it is possible the Obama administration decided that it is not worth antagonizing Pakistan with further strikes. Though Pakistan has criticized American strikes before — publicly, at least — the strike on Mullah Mansour may have generated a more significant reaction as it occurred in the province of Balochistan, violating an

agreement

that restricted American strikes to Pakistan's tribal areas. Pakistan

called

the strike "totally illegal, not acceptable and against the sovereignty and integrity of the country."

Such protestations have not prevented previous strikes.

Another potential explanation for the cessation is that the United States is running out of targets in Pakistan. At the peak of the drone war in Pakistan, the United States had around 100,000 soldiers in Afghanistan, while today the United States has fewer than 10,000 soldiers there, reducing the need to conduct "force protection" strikes. The

rise and fall

in drone strikes in Pakistan closely mirrors the rise and fall of American troop numbers in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's military operation to secure its northern tribal areas along the Afghan-Pakistan border in 2015

resulted

in an influx of militants into Afghanistan as they fled Pakistan, further reducing the number of targets.

The United States has killed more than 50 al Qaeda and Taliban leaders in Pakistan since the beginning of the CIA drone campaign. In 2011, before he was killed in a US Navy SEAL raid, bin Laden was

considering

moving al Qaeda's key figures out of Pakistan to avoid the strikes.

Even the Taliban's leadership council, which has long been able to find shelter in Pakistan's cities, may now have

moved back to Afghanistan

in recent months.

According to General John W. Nicholson, the commander of US forces in Afghanistan, the United States has killed or captured

50 key al Qaeda leaders

and facilitators in Afghanistan in 2016 alone.

Given his rhetoric, Trump may well escalate the drone war in Pakistan and there isn't much to stop him if he chooses to do so. A decade and half ago, Congress authorized the war in Afghanistan, which was extended to Pakistan first by George W. Bush and then Obama.

Under Obama, the drone war in Pakistan reached its height, and Trump, should he choose to do so, can easily bring that war back.

The Washington Post

Trump speaks with Netanyahu (UNE)

By Karen DeYoung

In calls and statements on his first two full days in office, President Trump moved to flesh out what he has described as his “America first” foreign policy, with at least symbolic steps toward goals he expressed during his campaign.

Trump invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to visit him at the White House in early February, during a brief telephone call Sunday that Trump described as “very nice.”

A White House statement said the two agreed to consult closely on regional issues, “including the threats posed by Iran.” It said Trump emphasized the close relationship between the two countries, promised to work toward Israeli-Palestinian peace, and stressed that countering the Islamic State “and other radical Islamic terrorist groups” will be an administration priority.

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Netanyahu, in a statement released by his office, called the conversation “very warm.” He said he had “expressed his desire to work closely” with the administration, “with no daylight between” the two countries.

Trump has not yet made contact with Russian President Vladimir Putin, of whom he has spoken admiringly, and who U.S. intelligence said covertly tried to tilt the presidential election in Trump’s direction.

A Kremlin spokesman said Saturday that Putin was ready, but that a meeting between them would probably happen in months, not weeks. Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told the BBC that it would be “a big mistake” to think that U.S.-Russian relations under Trump would be free from controversy.

Speaking at the White House ceremony to swear in his senior staff, Trump said that he would meet soon with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto, both of whom he spoke with by telephone on Saturday. A Mexico meeting may come as early as the end of this month, White House officials said.

“We’re going to start renegotiating about NAFTA and immigration and security on the border,” Trump said. “Mexico has been terrific . . . I think we’re going to have a very good result.” NAFTA is the North American Free Trade Agreement, which Trump has said is unfair to the United States; both Trudeau and Peña Nieto have said they are willing to discuss its terms.

Trump’s first face-to-face meeting with a foreign leader, however, will come Friday, when he receives British Prime Minister Theresa May at the White House.

In a statement Sunday, May’s government said the meeting would “primarily be an opportunity to get to know one another and to establish the basis for a productive working relationship.” The statement said May would also address a weekend meeting of Republican lawmakers that Trump is scheduled to attend.

May, who is struggling to implement her country’s vote to leave the European Union, is seeking a strong bilateral trade relationship with the United States as she prepares for E.U. negotiations.

Earlier on Sunday, Netanyahu tweeted that “Stopping the Iranian threat, and the threat reflected in the bad nuclear agreement with Iran, continues to be a supreme goal of Israel.”

Netanyahu also met with his security cabinet on Sunday, telling members that he would allow continued construction of Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem, according to Israeli media accounts.

Those settlements are considered illegal by most of the world. The Obama administration called them “illegitimate” and “obstacles to peace.” Israel disputed this.

On Sunday, Jerusalem’s construction committee approved 566 housing units in East Jerusalem settlements.

Meanwhile, Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat said that Trump was a “true friend” to Israel, referring to a reported statement by Trump press secretary Sean Spicer that the administration was at the “very beginning stages” of discussing a move of the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

“We will offer them all the assistance necessary,” Barkat said in a statement. “The U.S. has sent a message to the world that it recognizes Jerusalem as the united capital of Israel.”

No country in the world has its Israel embassy in Jerusalem, which is also claimed by the Palestinians as their capital. While Congress long ago passed a resolution ordering the move, both Republican and Democratic presidents have repeatedly waived the order on national security grounds.

Trump pledged during his campaign to move the embassy, and his designated ambassador to Israel, New York bankruptcy lawyer David Friedman, has called the move a “big priority” for the new administration.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas met with Jordanian King Abdullah II on Sunday to discuss what to do if Trump follows through. Jordan plays an important role in Jerusalem as a caretaker of the holy Muslim sites on the eastern side of the city.

Abbas said in a statement after his meeting with the king that the Palestinians want the Trump administration to stop talks about moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem and to “get involved” in conducting serious political negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel.

In his confirmation hearing, secretary of state nominee Rex Tillerson called Israel "our most important ally in the region," and said that former president Barack Obama had undermined Israeli security, but did not directly address the embassy question.

Tillerson's confirmation was all but assured on Sunday, when a pair of Republican senators who had expressed concerns about him announced that they will vote to confirm him. Sens. John McCain (Ariz.) and Lindsey O. Graham (S.C.), two traditional GOP hawks who have voiced skepticism about Tillerson's ties to Russia, released a joint statement saying that after much thought, they have decided to back him.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee plans to vote Monday afternoon on Tillerson. Regardless of the outcome, his nomination will move to the full Senate floor for a vote, Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) said last week.

Although much of the drama about Tillerson's fate has faded, there is still the question of how Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) will vote in the committee. Rubio grilled Tillerson about Russia during the confirmation hearing and seemed dissatisfied with some of his responses.

In appearances on Sunday talk shows, both McCain and Graham made clear that they remain uncertain about Trump's foreign policy intentions, and that they hope to work with those they approve of in the Cabinet, some of whose ideas have contrasted with those expressed by Trump.

"I don't know what 'America first' means," Graham said, adding that Trump should not "be weak on Russia."

McCain, speaking on ABC's "This Week," echoed concerns about Russia, and Trump's call for warmer relations, adding that Putin was "a war criminal."

He said that Defense Secretary James N. Mattis, Trump national security adviser Michael T. Flynn, newly confirmed Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly, and Daniel Coats, named as director of national intelligence, shared his view that Russia is "our major challenge."

"I couldn't have picked a better team," McCain said. "And so I'm confident that [Trump] will listen to them and be guided by them."

Asked whether he had similar confidence in Trump, McCain said, "I do not know, because he has made so many comments that are contradictory."

Sean Sullivan, David Nakamura and Carol Morello, and William Booth in Jerusalem, contributed to this report.

The New York Times

To Secular Bangladeshis, Textbook Changes Are a Harbinger (UNE)

Ellen Barry and Julfikar Ali Manik

That religious organizations now have a hand in editing textbooks, a prerogative they sought for years, suggests that their influence is growing, even with the Awami League party, which is avowedly secular, in power.

It is a shift that, increasingly, worries the United States. Bangladesh broke away from Pakistan in 1971, and in the decades that followed, it defined itself as adamantly secular and democratic.

For years, this ideology seemed to serve as an insulating force. Transnational jihadist networks that flourished in Afghanistan and Pakistan found little purchase in Bangladesh, despite its dense, poor Muslim population and porous borders.

But over the last several years, as extremist attacks on atheist bloggers and intellectuals became commonplace, secular thought was also fast receding from Bangladesh's public spaces.

Islamist organizations, analysts say, are so skilled at mobilizing that it has become harder for the government to ignore their demands, especially with a general election coming in 2019.

Hefazat-e-Islam, a vast Islamic organization based in Dhaka, the capital, first called for changes to the textbooks during huge rallies in 2013.

"We went to the higher-ups in the government," Mufti Fayez Ullah, the group's joint secretary general, said. "The government realized, 'Yes, the Muslims should not learn this.' So they amended it. I want to add that all the political parties, they consider their popularity among the people."

A spokesman for the Education Ministry would not comment on the changes. Narayan Chandra Saha, chairman of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, said the revisions were routine and not made at anyone's request.

"If Hefazat claims the changes were made per their demand, I have nothing to say in this regard," he said.

A protest against the changes, held outside the textbook board's offices on Sunday, drew a few hundred students and political activists. But there has been no criticism from the country's main opposition party, the Bangladesh National Party, which typically pounces on any controversial move by the Awami League.

"It's like there is perfect consensus between the ruling party and the opposition on these issues," said Amena Mohsin, a professor of international relations at the University of Dhaka. "In a majoritarian democracy, you give in to populism."

The divide between Islamist and secular Bangladeshis came into sharp, sudden focus in 2013, when tens of thousands of activists — mostly students at provincial madrasas — flooded into the center of Dhaka with a list of demands: punishment for "atheist bloggers," the destruction of sculptures and mandatory Islamic education, including changes to textbooks.

The government, alarmed, put forward its own education overhaul. Beginning in 2014, education officials required the country's 10,000 government-registered madrasas to use standardized government textbooks through eighth grade, in the hope of better integrating young people from conservative backgrounds.

Siddiqur Rahman, a retired educator leading the effort to revise government textbooks for use by madrasas, said the goal was "pushing them into general education."

"There was a wide gap in beliefs and thinking and attitude," he said. "We are trying to change the attitudes of people on the street. It is difficult, but not impossible."

It has required many compromises with religious leaders.

Madrasa leaders, in written recommendations to education officials, requested that "beautiful Islamic names" replace Hindu, Christian or foreign-sounding names in textbooks used in madrasas, saying this was "the concrete right of the people of Islamic monotheism." They also requested the omission of any conversation between boys and girls, saying, "It's a great sin in Islam to talk to a young girl for nothing."

The authorities, apparently, were quite receptive. In English textbooks for use in madrasas, all Hindu, Christian or foreign-sounding names have been replaced by Muslim names. Conversations between boys and girls have been omitted. Illustrations of girls with bare heads have been edited out. The word "period" was removed from a section on girls' physical development. The name of the chairman of the textbook board, a Hindu professor, does not appear.

"The government was a little flexible in that regard," Mr. Rahman said. "I think that for achieving the greater good, some sacrifice should be made."

But the officials who oversaw the editing initially refused Hefazat's demand to omit the 17 poems and stories from the general textbook, used in 20,000 secondary schools as well as madrasas, according to two officials on the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to reporters.

Mufti Fayez Ullah, of Hefazat-e-Islam, said he had been compelled to go over those people's heads to high-ranking officials.

"If the government is willing to address this demand, bureaucracy cannot be that much of a hurdle," he said. "We went to the Education Ministry. We went to the higher-ups in the government."

Rasheda K. Choudhury, an activist who served as a government adviser to the Education Ministry under the previous administration, said it was unclear who made the decision to accept the Islamists' changes.

"Nobody knew about it. Nobody is taking responsibility," she said. "Parents are asking me, 'Should we start teaching our children at home?'"

The leaders of Hefazat-e-Islam, meanwhile, are eager to suggest the next round of changes. Arts and crafts courses should not instruct children to depict anything living, which is proscribed by Islam, and should instead offer instruction only in calligraphy, said Abdullah Wasel, a member of Hefazat's central committee. The group also wants to eliminate physical education textbooks that depict exercise by girls or young women, Mr. Fayez Ullah said.

"What boys do, girls cannot do," he said. "I can climb a tree, but my wife and sister, they cannot. It is not

necessary to have pictures of girls doing exercise."

But the larger goal, he said, goes far beyond textbooks. He hopes to push through a full separation of boys and girls beginning in the fifth grade. Mixing of sexes in the classroom, he said, results in young men and women who "prefer to live together, prefer to have physical relations before marriage."

As for the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, Hefazat has petitioned the government to remove every current member, starting with the board's chairman, Mr. Saha, who is Hindu, Mr. Fayez Ullah said.

"I would like to raise the question — and I am not saying I am against him — but is there not any Muslim that can be a chairman of the textbook board in this country?" he said. The group, he said, has requested that Mr. Saha be replaced with "a patriot who understands the sentiment and spirit of the population of Bangladesh."

He added, "You cannot expect to grow jackfruit from a mango tree."

The New York Times

'Gambia Is Back Again,' but Its New Leader Is Still in Senegal

Dionne Searcey and Jaime Yaya Barry

Bleary-eyed after having awakened late in the morning, the unassuming president sank into a giant couch that seemed to absorb him, and spoke of his hopes for his administration.

"Gambia is back again," said Mr. Barrow, who wore a shiny brown traditional gown and leather sandals. "We have been isolated for so many years, and we want Gambia to be very active again in this world."

Mr. Jammeh, who took office after a 1994 coup, imprisoned numerous journalists and political opponents during his tenure, some of whom died in jail. His rule was erratic, and made headlines for his claim to have cured AIDS with herbs, a prayer and a banana; he also called for beheading gay people. His actions prompted thousands of Gambians to flee the country, and the nation's weak economy prompted hundreds more to try to make the dangerous trek across the desert and the Mediterranean to look for work in Europe.

More recently, an estimated 45,000 Gambians had rushed across the border to Senegal, fearing violence if Mr. Jammeh were forcibly removed from office, and causing the United Nations to worry about a humanitarian crisis. On Sunday, many of those Gambians began to return home.

Officials released a joint declaration by the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States on Sunday that "assures and ensures the dignity, respect, security and rights" of Mr. Jammeh, his family and his loyal supporters, so that "there is no intimidation, harassment and/or witch-hunting of former regime members and supporters."

The document, which refers to Mr. Jammeh by his preferred honorifics — H.E. (for "his excellency") Sheikh Professor Alhaji Dr. Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh — goes on to say that the organizations that issued the report are committed to preventing the seizure of assets of Mr. Jammeh and his family and loyalists.

And it says the organizations will work to ensure that in whichever countries offer "African hospitality" to Mr. Jammeh and his family, they do not "become undue targets of harassment, intimidation and all other pressures and sanctions."

Mr. Barrow said he had planned to create a truth and reconciliation commission to look into the Jammeh government. He said he would wait for the commission's recommendations before taking action.

"It's a resolution; it's not an agreement," Mr. Barrow said of the document.

Until last fall, Mr. Barrow ran a real estate agency in Gambia and was a fairly low-level member of an opposition party. But Mr. Jammeh began to jail the party's leaders, and Mr. Barrow found himself rising from the vacuum, assuming the party's candidacy for president and winning a surprise victory over the authoritarian Mr. Jammeh.

Mr. Barrow said on Sunday that his chief priority would be to work on improving the economy in Gambia, where there is widespread unemployment. But he offered no specifics, saying instead that he would assemble a team of experts to figure out how to get the economy back on track.

He said he had planned to release anyone imprisoned in Gambia for political reasons, a hallmark of Mr. Jammeh's presidency and one that alienated him from human rights groups and many Western democracies.

"Political prisoners will be freed immediately when I get home," Mr. Barrow said. "All political prisoners."

While a great many people in Gambia will welcome Mr. Barrow when he finally returns, Mr. Jammeh still has supporters. Many turned out in tears Saturday night to bid him farewell at the Banjul airport, where he arrived in his Rolls-Royce. Mr. Barrow said he did not think Mr. Jammeh's loyalists would present problems for his administration.

On Sunday, some Gambians were appalled at the pomp that accompanied Mr. Jammeh on his way out. A military band showed up at the airport to play for him as he walked along a red carpet to a waiting airplane.

"That man should have left this country in handcuffs," said Alpha Gaye, a taxi driver in Serekunda, just west of the capital. "I will be very angry if Yahya Jammeh goes without punishment. He should die in jail."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Gambia's Political Standoff Ends, but Nation's Problems Linger

Matina Stevis

Updated Jan. 23, 2017 8:14 a.m. ET

BANJUL, Gambia—The new government is waking up to challenges ahead after this weekend's dramatic finish to Gambia's first-ever peaceful democratic transition.

Chief among them: reconciling a population's desire for justice for alleged abuses committed by the former regime with maintaining peace in a country whose institutions were for 22 years dominated by one man.

Yahya Jammeh left Gambia Saturday night on a Guinean government plane bound for Equatorial Guinea, concluding a drawn-out power struggle with political newcomer Adama Barrow, who won a Dec. 1 presidential election, only to see Mr. Jammeh refuse to cede power. Mr. Jammeh's departure came only after troops from the Economic Community of West African Countries had marched into the former British colony and two of the bloc's presidents spent almost two days with the longtime leader, urging him to step aside.

But once Mr. Jammeh's plane left Banjul International Airport and thousands of Gambians had stormed the capital's streets in wild celebrations, it didn't take long for the costs of his exit to become clear.

The deal Ecowas leaders reached with Mr. Jammeh makes it harder for the incoming government of Mr. Barrow to prosecute the former president and his supporters for alleged widespread human-rights abuses. It also guarantees that his "lawfully acquired assets" won't be seized.

Mai Ahmad Fatty, a special adviser to the new president, on Sunday alleged Mr. Jammeh stole millions of dollars in his final weeks in power, the Associated Press reported.

More soldiers from neighboring countries entered Gambia on Sunday night, a step officials said was necessary to ensure the new president's safety. Mr. Barrow, who was sworn in at Gambia's embassy in Dakar on Thursday, remained in the Senegalese capital, with a spokesman for his coalition insisting he would return within days.

Even though many men, women and children happily posed for selfies with the armed troops as they searched Mr. Jammeh's former residence, the soldiers' presence underlines the tough road ahead for the nation of fewer than two million people.

Gambia is one of the world's poorest nations, with an economy valued at less than $1 billion. Thousands of young Gambians try to migrate to Europe each year in search of jobs and a better future.

In a press conference on Sunday, the coalition spokesman was at pains to explain the deal given to Mr. Jammeh, insisting Gambia's constitution grants immunity to all former presidents and that no government had the right to seize legitimately acquired assets.

"Too much looking into the past may not serve the national interest," Halifa Sallah said.

Asked about Mr. Barrow's plans to return to Gambia and the need for foreign soldiers, Mr. Sallah pointed to the risks the new leader faces from remaining Jammeh supporters, especially in the country's security services.

"The State House [Mr. Jammeh's official residence] needs to be sanitized. There may be explosive devices," he said.

The dilemmas Mr. Barrow faces in his first days in office point to the issues involved when longtime dictators cede power to democratically elected leaders.

"The new government and the international organizations have chosen to prioritize democratic transition, and peace and reconciliation in the country," said Stephen Cockburn, a researcher for Amnesty International.

Not everyone agreed with that decision. "Letting Jammeh go without trial or at least formal questioning will deepen the scars of 22 years of brutalities and gross rights violations," said Sheriff Bojang Jr., a Gambian journalist who had fled to Dakar after being threatened by the regime in 2007. He returned last week to see the longtime leader go. "He has to face justice," Mr. Bojang said.

Human-rights organizations have accused Mr. Jammeh and his regime of arbitrarily detaining journalists and dissidents and using torture to force false confessions.

Mr. Barrow plans to establish a truth-and-reconciliation commission to bring potential crimes to light, Mr. Sallah said. Meanwhile, he said, civilians arrested during the election period for their political activity were released over the weekend. Amnesty International confirmed a number of such releases had taken place.

The role played by Gambia's neighbors in removing Mr. Jammeh peacefully through negotiation and military threats shows that many African democracies are becoming less patient with dictators clinging to power, Mr. Cockburn said.

"When it came to power and a democratic transition [Gambia's neighbors] mobilized extremely quickly, and that's because these issues have become so important in the continent," he said.

On Banjul's streets, residents relished their newfound freedom of openly discussing politics. "I have never before talked about Jammeh so much like this," said Abduli Jah, who owns a money-exchange bureau. "Before it was not possible to sit here on the street and call him bad and mad."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Trump Presidency Is Already Altering Israeli-Palestinian Politics

Ian Fisher

"I hope the American administration will act on two levels: one, to not discuss moving the embassy to Jerusalem, and second, for the administration to lead negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis with the aim of achieving a political settlement," Mr. Abbas said.

The Israeli news media was filled with speculation on Sunday that the Trump administration would immediately announce the embassy move — as a de facto recognition of Israel's annexation of predominantly Arab East Jerusalem, which it captured from Jordan during the 1967 war.

On Sunday, Mr. Trump spoke by phone with Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. While Mr. Trump called the talk "very nice," he did not address the embassy move — a promise repeatedly made but left unmet by American presidential candidates since the 1970s.

The White House seemed to seek to stifle speculation of any immediate announcement.

"We are at the very beginning stages of even discussing this subject," Sean Spicer, Mr. Trump's spokesman, said in a statement.

Mr. Netanyahu called the talk a "very warm conversation" in a statement, but he did not mention the embassy. He said the men discussed peace with the Palestinians and Mr. Netanyahu's planned visit to Washington in February.

Amid the lack of clarity on Mr. Trump's embassy intentions, Mr. Netanyahu engaged in a day of furious political positioning.

On one hand, he is happy to have someone in the White House seemingly more like-minded on the Palestinian question than Mr. Obama was. But on the other, Mr. Trump's advisers and his designated ambassador, David M. Friedman, a supporter of Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank, are in some ways in closer political step with Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing rivals.

The prime minister is also besieged by what appears to be a series of serious investigations, from whether he improperly accepted gifts like cigars and pink champagne to whether he conspired with a newspaper publisher for more favorable coverage.

As such, Mr. Netanyahu tried to tamp down his rivals by positioning himself both as Mr. Trump's main interlocutor as well as the champion of Jewish settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

He declared that he opposed any limits on building in East Jerusalem, a major point of contention between him and the Obama administration. On Sunday, the city announced approval for 566 housing units that had been delayed over Mr. Obama's objections.

But at the same time, Mr. Netanyahu blocked the initiative of a chief rival, Naftali Bennett, the education secretary and leading voice on the hard right, by persuading him to table proposing a law with potentially explosive consequences: the annexation of Ma'ale Adumim, a settlement of 40,000 people just northeast of Jerusalem. Mr. Bennett agreed to hold off on any such legislation until Mr. Netanyahu meets with Mr. Trump in February.

Ma'ale Adumim is considered by many Israelis now to be a suburb of Jerusalem, and is one of the settlements that Mr. Netanyahu and Middle East experts expect to remain in Israel in any peace deal. But any annexation could ignite major protest among Palestinians and other Arab leaders because of its strategic location, linking the north and south of the West Bank, and as the symbolic start of annexation outside Jerusalem.

Meir Turgeman, the deputy mayor of Jerusalem, said his city had entered a new era, in which American objections to building across the so-called green line of 1967 that divided Jerusalem were in the past.

"Trump is the one who said the minute he is president there will be no disagreements about building in Jerusalem or about moving the embassy to Jerusalem," he told Israeli Radio. "I'm just implementing his vision."

The Washington Post

Russia's new influence may limit Trump's scope in Middle East

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ASTANA, Kazakhstan — At a time of widespread global anxiety about President Trump's foreign policy goals, the Middle East stands almost alone in its optimism about his presidency.

The United States' traditional Arab allies are hoping he reengages in the region after years of what they perceive as neglect by Barack Obama's administration. U.S. rivals are hoping he becomes an ally and aligns with their interests.

But after eight years of steady disengagement by his predecessor, Trump may find his room for maneuver constrained by the expanded influence of Russia and Iran, analysts say.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

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"Even if Trump wants to have a more assertive policy, he will not be able to bring America back as the strongest regional player," predicted Ibrahim Hamidi, the chief diplomatic correspondent of the pan-Arab newspaper Al-Hayat. "The Americans can't go back to being the only superpower anymore."

That Trump does intend to pursue a more assertive Middle East policy has been evident from some of the more consistent of his often contradictory statements, including his inauguration pledge to eradicate what he called "radical Islamic terrorism . . . from the face of the earth."

Although the president and some of his foreign policy nominees appear to have opposing views on some issues — such as the importance of NATO and whether Russia can be trusted — they seem to agree on the need to do more to fight the Islamic State and to push back against Iran's widening influence, making the Middle East one of the few areas on which there appears to be some level of foreign policy consensus.

[As Obama leaves the world stage: Criticism, nostalgia — and concern over his successor]

It is also one of the areas where the Obama administration's policies have most noticeably eroded the once unchallenged U.S. role.

Russia now holds sway in Syria, has forged a close relationship with Turkey that could threaten Ankara's ties with NATO and has been courting traditional U.S. allies such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Most

recently, Russia has been exploring relationships in Libya, dispatching its aircraft carrier to the waters off Libya and inviting the erstwhile U.S. ally Khalifa Hifter on board for a video conference with the Russian defense minister this month.

Trump's repeated promises to forge closer ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin could facilitate the kind of alliance in the Middle East against terrorists that the Obama administration sought but failed to achieve, said Vladimir Frolov, a columnist with the Moscow Times. But Russia would not want such an alliance to come at the expense of the role it has already carved out for itself in the region.

"The U.S. has been exiting the Middle East under Obama for a while, and with Trump talking about an America First agenda, that creates even more opportunities for Russia to fill the vacuum. We may see a situation where the U.S. actually empowers Russia to do the dirty work in the Middle East," he said.

The constraints are most immediately apparent in Syria, where Russia has taken the lead in promoting a peace initiative that includes Turkey and Iran as co-sponsors but offers no role for the United States. Russia and Turkey have coordinated the agenda and preparatory negotiations for the talks that will begin Monday in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, Western diplomats say.

Turkish, Russian and Iranian officials, U.N. and European diplomats, Syrian rebels and representatives of the Syrian government arrived in Astana for the talks on Sunday. The Trump administration will not be sending a delegation, and instead the United States will be represented by its ambassador in Kazakhstan.

Russia will welcome offers of help from Trump to bomb terrorists and perhaps provide funding for reconstruction, but it doesn't want the United States becoming involved in crafting the terms of a settlement, Frolov said.

The Syrian regime is also unlikely to want the United States playing any significant role in the country, which has a long history of fraught relations with Washington, said Salem Zahran, a Beirut-based media entrepreneur who runs media outlets in Syria and has close ties to the Syrian regime.

Trump's statements in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad have come as a relief to the Syrian government, signaling an end to the Obama administration's mantra that Assad should eventually step aside, Zahran said. But the Syrian regime is hoping mostly that the United States stays away, by halting support for the rebels, lifting sanctions and ceasing the calls for Assad to be removed.

"Trump is a businessman and if Syria were a company, he would see it as a losing company. Why would anyone invest in a losing company?" Zahran asked.

"Syria just wants Trump to be neutral," he added. "Now that they have Russia, they don't need America."

[Iran nuclear deal may not survive the Trump administration]

Iran has more reason to fear the tough anti-Iranian rhetoric that has emanated both from Trump and his foreign policy nominees. But any attempt to push back against Iran would contradict the goals of allying more closely with Russia and Syria — which are, at least nominally, allied with Iran — and also run the risk of confrontation.

"Why would Iran respond to anything other than military pressure?" asked Tobias Schneider, a German analyst based in Washington. "Iran has won right now. It's represented everywhere; it's aligned with the winners everywhere."

Iran has been instrumental in helping Assad survive, sending money and militias to fight on the front lines and securing in the process vast influence over the country. Last week, Tehran signed a series of contracts with Syrian government officials that included giving Iran control over Syria's largest phosphate mine and a license to operate a mobile telecommunications network.

Since the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, Iran has also secured its place as the most influential power in Iraq, said Ryan Crocker, a former U.S. ambassador to Iraq who is now with Texas A&M University. Reviving the U.S. role there would not be impossible, he said, but "it would be very, very difficult."

The United States does have staunch allies. Israel is counting on Trump to fulfill his promise to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, which has made Palestinians one of the only groups vociferously opposed to his presidency. The Kurdish regions of Iraq and Syria are hoping his pledges to fight the Islamic State will translate into more military assistance for them.

[After a slow and bloody fight against ISIS, Iraqi forces pick up the pace in Mosul]

The United States also still holds important levers in the Middle East, notably its big military presence in the Persian Gulf and its economic might, neither of which Russia can match, said Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Arab allies such as Saudi Arabia that blame Obama for the rising power of Iran are looking forward to an administration that might more closely mirror their priorities, he said.

"The Gulf states need the United States as a counterbalance to Iran. You need to reestablish confidence that you are really going to back your allies," he said. "This is not something that needs radical change, but it does need a steady, patient, consistent effort."

But whether Trump is a leader who will provide patience and consistency is a concern for some in the region, Hamidi said.

"The scary thing is that to pave a way for an American role in the upcoming years needs vision and imagination," he said. "If you don't have this vision, you might find yourself in confrontation. Or, completely giving up and handing it all to Russia."

The New York Times

Benjamin : Russia Is a Terrible Ally Against Terrorism

Daniel Benjamin

It's often said that the United States practices counterterrorism with a scalpel while Russia uses a chain saw. That has been made clear in Syria, where Airwars, a London-based monitoring group, estimates that Russian airstrikes cause civilian deaths at a rate eight times that of United States-led coalition missions. While Mr. Trump was pilloried during the campaign for suggesting that the United States murder the families of terrorists, that has long been standard practice in Russia, along with "disappearing" and extrajudicially killing suspects. Consequently, the Muslim-majority Russian republics of Dagestan and Chechnya still smolder after decades of rebellion and oppression; other Russian Muslim communities seethe.

The experience in the Caucasus and the rest of Russia underscores the dangers of Moscow's approach. President Vladimir V. Putin's tactics have led to jihadist violence at home and the export of thousands of terrorists to Syria, where they make up one of the largest cohorts of foreign extremists, alongside Tunisians and Saudis. Russian citizens have also been a major presence in Afghanistan, Iraq and around the world. A Chechen-led cell is believed to be responsible for killing 45 people in an attack on Istanbul's airport in June. Numerous smaller attacks against Russians at home have been carried out and jihadist calls for violence against Russia have been escalating worldwide.

Mr. Trump, it seems, is oblivious to these trends.

Embracing Russia and its brutal tactics has the potential to stoke anti-American sentiment and encourage radicalization among Muslims around the world. The thought that we would run that risk, particularly when the United States' Muslim community is one of the best-integrated, least radicalized in a predominantly non-Muslim country, is simply foolish.

Joining forces with Russia in Syria would also damage American relations with Sunni governments. These governments rightly consider Russia the patron of President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, the ally of Iran and de facto partner of Hezbollah — all of whom are seen as responsible for the butchery of Syria's Sunnis. They also understand, as Mr. Trump does not, that Russia's military engagement in Syria has been aimed at helping the Assad government survive, not targeting the Islamic State.

For now, Sunni governments from Cairo to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, are exuberant about Mr. Trump's victory. They expect that they will no longer face American criticism for committing human rights abuses. Those high spirits will quickly fade if the United States is seen to be abetting the Damascus-Tehran-Moscow axis. This, in turn, will impede the work of America's fight against terrorism. The United States relies on Sunni countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for much of the most valuable intelligence on jihadists. By contrast, we receive little of value from Russia.

That points to the final reason such a partnership with Moscow is a terrible idea. The United States has labored to improve its

counterterrorism cooperation with Russia since the attacks of Sept. 11. As coordinator for counterterrorism at the State Department, I, like my counterparts in other agencies, sought to engage the Russians on many occasions. Though we pointed to the counterterrorism work as a modestly successful part of an otherwise volatile relationship, in truth there was little to boast about.

In areas where we should have been able to cooperate, like transportation security, safeguarding special events like the Olympics and countering terrorist propaganda, Russia's sclerotic bureaucracy and general lack of interest (especially with issues like deradicalization) made progress impossible. In more sensitive areas, like intelligence cooperation, some information routinely changes hands. But there is profound mistrust on both sides.

Russian and American intelligence agencies see one another not so much as potential allies but as persistent threats. In the wake of Russia's meddling in the presidential election, it is utterly — and rightly — inconceivable that the American intelligence community would change its position. Mr. Trump might ponder that.

The Washington Post

U.S. Eyes Michael Flynn's Links to Russia (UNE)

Carol E. Lee, Devlin Barrett and Shane Harris

Jan. 22, 2017 8:29 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—U.S. counterintelligence agents have investigated communications that President Donald Trump's national security adviser had with Russian officials, according to people familiar with the matter.

Michael Flynn is the first person inside the White House under Mr. Trump whose communications are known to have faced scrutiny as part of investigations by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency and Treasury Department to determine the extent of Russian government contacts with people close to Mr. Trump.

It isn't clear when the counterintelligence inquiry began, whether it produced any incriminating evidence or if it is continuing. Mr. Flynn, a retired general who became national security adviser with Mr. Trump's inauguration, plays a key role in setting U.S. policy toward Russia.

The counterintelligence inquiry aimed to determine the nature of Mr. Flynn's contact with Russian officials and whether such contacts may have violated laws, people familiar with the matter said.

A key issue in the investigation is a series of telephone calls Mr. Flynn made to Sergey Kislyak, the Russian ambassador to the U.S., on Dec. 29. That day, the Obama administration announced sanctions and other measures against Russia in retaliation for its alleged use of cyberattacks to interfere with the 2016 U.S. election. U.S. intelligence officials have said Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the hacks on Democratic Party officials to try to harm Hillary Clinton's presidential bid.

Officials also have examined earlier conversations between Mr. Flynn and Russian figures, the people familiar with the matter said. Russia has previously denied involvement in election-related hacking.

In a statement Sunday night, White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said: "We have absolutely no knowledge of any investigation or even a basis for such an investigation."

Earlier this month, Sean Spicer, then spokesman for the Trump transition team and now White House press secretary, said the contacts between Messrs. Flynn and Kislyak dealt with the logistics of arranging a conversation between Mr. Trump and Russia's leader.

"That was it," Mr. Spicer said, "plain and simple."

U.S. officials have collected information showing repeated contacts between Messrs. Flynn and Kislyak, these people said. It is common for American officials' conversations with foreign officials to surface in NSA intercepts, because the U.S. conducts wide-ranging surveillance on foreign officials. American names also may surface in descriptions of conversations shared among officials of foreign governments.

The Senate Intelligence Committee is also looking into any possible collusion between Russia and people linked to Mr. Trump, top senators have said. That is part of the committee's broader probe into Russian election interference. Counterintelligence probes seldom lead to public accusations or criminal charges.

In the counterintelligence inquiry, activities of former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort and advisers Roger Stone and Carter Page have come under scrutiny due to their known ties to Russian interests or their public statements, people familiar with the matter said.

The line of inquiry related to Mr. Manafort grew out of a probe into people associated with the collapsed government of Russia-backed Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych, who counted Mr. Manafort as an adviser before being ousted by pro-Europe street protesters in early 2014.

As U.S. investigators aided Ukrainian prosecutors hunting for funds pilfered from Mr. Yanukovych's government, they have tried to determine if any conduct also involved violations of U.S. law by Mr. Manafort or others, the people said.

Mr. Manafort denied any wrongdoing. He said his work in Ukraine focused on moving the country toward the West. He denied any relationship with the Russian government or Russian officials.

"Anyone who takes the time to review the very public record will find that my main activities, in addition to political consulting, were all directed at integrating Ukraine as a member of the European community," Mr. Manafort said in an emailed statement.

"I have never had any relationship with the Russian [government] or any Russian officials," Mr. Manafort added. "I was never in contact with anyone, or directed anyone to be in contact with anyone."

Of alleged Russian cyberhacking, he said: "My only knowledge of it is what I have read in the papers."

Mr. Stone is a longtime Republican political operative who left Mr. Trump's campaign in mid-2015 and previously worked with Mr. Manafort at a lobbying firm.

Mr. Stone drew scrutiny after hinting in August that Mrs. Clinton's campaign manager John Podesta would soon be in trouble. In October, WikiLeaks began releasing emails stolen from Mr. Podesta.

U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded that his account was hacked on behalf of Russian spy agencies.

Mr. Stone denied collusion with Russia or WikiLeaks. He said he hadn't spoken to anyone in Russia "in many years." He accused U.S. government officials in the "deep state" who oppose Mr. Trump and are angry about his election victory of peddling the theory that Mr. Stone and other Trump advisers have ties to Moscow.

"This is nonsense," Mr. Stone said in a phone interview. He said he hadn't been contacted by the FBI or other government officials, including Congress, about ties to Russia.

Mr. Stone said he has a conduit to Julian Assange through "an American journalist," who he said communicates with the WikiLeaks founder, now living in the Ecuadorean embassy in London. Mr. Stone declined to identify the journalist, whose job could be jeopardized by the association with Mr. Assange, according to Mr. Stone.

Mr. Page, a businessman whom Mr. Trump identified in March 2016 as one of his foreign-policy advisers, has drawn attention for his meetings in Moscow during the presidential campaign.

An unsubstantiated dossier of opposition research compiled by a former MI6 officer said Mr. Page held meetings with Igor Sechin, a longtime aide to Mr. Putin and current head of Russian state oil giant Rosneft, as well as a top Kremlin political operative Mr. Page denied the allegations.

In a text message to The Wall Street Journal, Mr. Page said he was giving a speech at a Russian university at the time the dossier placed him at the meetings. Mr. Page said he spoke with university officials, think-tank scholars and a few businesspeople.

—Paul Sonne and Damian Paletta contributed to this article.

The New York Times

Cubans Newly Blocked at U.S. Border Place Hopes in Trump (UNE)

Frances Robles

Now, the many Cubans stranded in Mexico — and potentially thousands more plodding up the migrant trail through the Americas — are hoping for a reprieve: that President Trump, who was elected on a promise to build a wall along the Mexican border, will let them through.

"I have faith that Trump will change it," said Ms. Barbier, 44, who arrived at the Texas border right after President Barack Obama announced the end of special rights for Cubans. "To take away a law at the last minute like that, it's so unjust."

Some of the Cubans stuck in limbo here at the Texas border arrived on Jan. 12, the same day the Obama administration eliminated the so-called wet foot, dry foot rule. The rule, which dated to 1995, allowed Cubans who reached the United States to enter the country.

About 150 Cubans are parked only 50 steps from the pedestrian bridge that connects Nuevo Laredo, in Mexico, to Laredo, Texas. Bewildered and deflated, they are being fed by Mexican strangers, and they pray.

"Everybody was racing to get here before the inauguration on the 20th," said Yamila González Cabeza, 44, a teacher from Cuba, saying many migrants thought the Trump administration would be the one to shut the border. "The reverse was true. We did not expect this surprise on the 12th."

The Cuban government has long abhorred the special immigration privileges, saying the policy bleeds the island of its citizens and lures waves of migrants into dangerous journeys by land and sea.

In striking down the rule, Mr. Obama said it was "designed for a different era" during a period of hostilities before the United States restored diplomatic relations with the Cuban government. By taking away their privilege to enter, Mr. Obama said, the United States would treat Cuban migrants "the same way we treat migrants from other countries."

That decision could now put Mr. Trump in an awkward position: He campaigned on an anti-immigration platform, vowing not to let migrants slip through American borders. But he has also threatened to overturn Mr. Obama's executive orders and get tough on the Cuban government.

Mr. Trump has in the past said the wet foot, dry foot policy, which sent back Cubans caught at sea but allowed those who reached land to enter, was unfair. Still, the Cubans here hope he will show humanitarian compassion for people who undertook arduous voyages to escape Communism and extreme poverty.

Ms. Barbier said she had spent all of the $8,000 she made from the sale of her house in Cuba to make it this far. "That money is gone, gone, gone," she said.

About 41,000 Cubans made similar trips across the Americas last year. But because she got to the border a little too late, Ms. Barbier and other Cubans like her may be sent back unless they can prove they endured individual persecution, not just poverty or lack of opportunity, on the island.

"I certainly have sympathy for them, but the policy has been changed, and the moment they changed it, the policy was eliminated," said Representative Henry Cuellar, a Democrat who represents Laredo. "They didn't say anyone in the pipeline can come in. By luck, some got in and some did not."

Eliannes Matos Salazar, 32, said she had been at the border station here all day on Jan. 12, and had already been photographed and fingerprinted, when she was forced to leave after the announcement. Yet her husband got through and is now in Las Vegas, she said.

"They can check their surveillance camera footage, because they will see me on it," said Ms. Matos, who came from Guantánamo, the Cuban city where the American naval base is.

Alberto Ramírez Balmaseda said he had turned back because border agents told him that he would face long periods of incarceration for a chance at presenting proof of persecution to a judge.

"What evidence do we have? That there's been a Castro regime in power for about 60 years?" Mr. Ramírez said. "If you are a political prisoner in Cuba, they don't put 'political prisoner' on your criminal record. They say you stole a pig."

Several of the Cubans interviewed said that even if they had not had political problems before they left, they would if they were sent back.

Yenier Echevarría González, 31, who worked as a baker in the tourism industry, said state security agents had seen a photo he posted from Brazil on Facebook, so they showed up at his house in Cuba and demanded that his wife sign his employment resignation papers. He had been gone just a week and had not officially emigrated.

"First of all, if I'm deported I will probably have to serve two months in jail," Mr. Echevarría said. "And I will never again have a job, a car or a house — ever."

The Cuban government promised in the 1995 migration accords with Washington not to retaliate against Cubans who were turned back, said Holly Ackerman, a Duke University librarian who studies Cuban migration. To qualify for residency in the United States, Cubans will now have to show they would be personally persecuted back home.

"Being pinched and limited and controlled by the Cuban government isn't enough to satisfy the U.S. authorities any more," she said. "Cubans who are thinking about exiting will undergo a profound reframing of their identity as a result of these changes."

Silvia Pedraza, a sociology professor at the University of Michigan, argued that while the prior policy had been flawed, it was naïve to treat Cubans as economic immigrants.

"One has to distinguish people who leave totalitarian countries," she said. "For sure, the weight of the economic circumstances is very strong in their lives, because the daily stuff of life in Cuba is so difficult that when Cubans talk, that's what they begin talking about. But it does not seem right not to recognize the political nature of this."

José Martín Carmona Flores, who runs a state agency in Mexico that offers humanitarian assistance to migrants, said that about 200 Cubans were currently in Nuevo Laredo, and that an additional 1,100 were waiting in other cities until they decided what to do.

According to the International Office of Migration, about 250 Cubans were being processed at the southern Mexico border when the announcement was made. Scores who arrived since then are being sent back to Cuba.

More than 11,000 Cubans arrived in Mexico in just the last three months of 2016, meaning that thousands more along the migrant route across the Americas could still flood Mexico in the weeks to come. On Friday morning, the Mexican government deported 91 of them who had entered along the southern border.

"I am very worried for them," Mr. Carmona said. "They have no plan. They have no backup plan if their original plan fails. They are truly vulnerable to illness, an epidemic, extortion. In many ways they are much more vulnerable than the Central American migrants we are accustomed to dealing with."

Mr. Carmona's agency was created after 78 migrants were massacred in his state by a drug cartel in 2010. Central Americans are regularly kidnapped and extorted, a fate Cubans have largely escaped in the past because they did not linger long.

"I think they are going to have to reach some kind of amnesty or truce and be returned to their country; Mexico will have to do it, because they are here," Mr. Carmona said. "Who is going to be the executioner? Who is going to return these people to a place where they are likely to be 'sanctioned' — to put a friendly word to it?"

The Washington Post

Samuelson : The dealmaker in chief in a dangerous world

Those seeking to extract meaning from Donald Trump's foreign policy declarations usually land on the idea that he's planning to make himself dealmaker in chief. The tough tweets aimed at China, the sweet come-ons directed toward Vladimir Putin, the threats of sky-high tariffs to be imposed, along with the sky-high wall, on Mexico — it's all part of the setup for the quite sensible bargains Trump intends to drive. The capper will be "the ultimate deal," as Trump put it in one interview: an Israeli-Palestinian peace.

It's comforting to consider this theory, as it suggests that some of Trump's far-fetched rhetoric, which has appeared to presage war with North Korea, a rupture with Beijing over Taiwan and the dissolution of NATO, need not be taken seriously. There are just two problems: The deals Trump has been hinting at are wildly unrealistic; and attempting to make them happen could be dangerous as well as futile.

Start with China. In his tweets since winning the election, Trump has lambasted the regime of Xi Jinping for devaluing its currency, "heavily tax[ing] our products going into their country," building "a massive military complex in the middle of the South China Sea" and "taking out massive amounts of money & wealth from the U.S. in totally one-sided trade" while refusing to "help with North Korea." He has, meanwhile, taken a phone call from the Taiwanese president and suggested he is not wedded to the one-China principle that has been the foundation of U.S. relations with Beijing since 1972.

Please provide a valid email address.

From this it might be intuited that Trump will eventually offer Beijing a back-down on Taiwan in exchange

for concessions on trade, North Korea, the South China Sea or maybe all three. What a deal! Except that Xi has no intention of conceding on any of these issues, and the United States — as well demonstrated by the Obama administration — lacks the leverage to compel him to do so.

Tariffs Trump imposes on China will be quickly answered; in fact, Beijing appears to have started imposing retaliatory duties preemptively. Xi has already shown himself unable to stop North Korea's nuclear buildup, short of measures that would bring down the regime. And perhaps most seriously, a change in the status quo of U.S. relations with Taiwan, or an attempt to prevent China from continuing its buildup on islets in the South China Sea, could quickly lead to a military confrontation that Trump would be poorly prepared to manage.

What about Russia? Curiously (or maybe not), Trump's approach to Moscow has been the opposite of that to Beijing. Rather than threats or accusations, he has repeatedly dangled concessions, starting with the possibility of lifting U.S. sanctions. But in exchange for what? Until recently, Trump seemed to have nothing to suggest. Then, in an interview with the Times of London last week, he suddenly offered that the quo could be a reduction in nuclear weapons since "I think nuclear weapons should be way down."

Never mind that Trump said just a month ago that "the United States must greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability," and that Putin flatly rejected a further cut in nukes in 2013. The real trouble is that Trump lacks the capacity to deliver what Putin really wants, which is not the lifting of sanctions but U.S. acceptance of a Russian sphere of influence in Eurasia, starting with Ukraine.

Trump may well be open to such a deal — but as Radio Free Europe's Brian Whitmore recently pointed out, it's a practical impossibility. Regardless of what Washington and Moscow agree, Ukrainians and Georgians, among other Russian neighbors, would strongly resist any reassertion of Russian dominion. Any Trump-Putin grand bargain, Whitmore says, would merely be "a recipe for conflict and instability on Europe's doorstep."

Trump's other would-be bargains look even more far-fetched. He's already tacitly acknowledged that Mexico won't be paying for a wall anytime soon. As for the idea that he and son-in-law Jared Kushner can broker the Middle East peace that eluded John Kerry, Condoleezza Rice, Bill Clinton, James Baker and dozens of others . . . enough said.

If there is a positive model for Trumpian bargaining, it might be the faux deals he struck during the transition, in which several U.S. corporations reported they were adding U.S. jobs and Trump claimed dubious credit. Diplomats imagine scenarios in which European governments similarly re-announce the defense spending increases they have already planned, and Trump proclaims NATO renewed; or Mexico grandly accepts a cosmetic tweak to NAFTA.

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The Washington Post

Diehl : The dealmaker in chief in a dangerous world

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Los Angeles Times

Boot : Will Trump be the end of the Pax Americana?

Max Boot

With the "America First" emphasis in his truculent inaugural address, Donald Trump has signaled that a radical reorientation of American foreign policy may be in the offing. For more than 70 years, the United States has been the world's leading champion of free trade, democracy, and international institutions, particularly in Europe and East Asia. But for how much longer?

In his interview last week with the Times of London and the German newspaper Bild, Trump called NATO "obsolete," promoted the breakup of the European Union and suggested that German Chancellor Angela Merkel, leader of one of America's most important allies, is no more trustworthy than Russia's anti-American dictator, Vladimir Putin. In an interview with the Wall Street Journal, Trump sent the dollar tumbling after he said he favored a weaker dollar so as to reduce the trade deficit, abandoning our traditional policy.

Trump's other pronouncements and, even more strongly, his protectionist personnel picks, indicate that he may be gearing up for a trade war against nations such as China and Mexico that he views as unfair competitors. "Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength," he claimed in his inaugural address, turning the lessons of the 1930s on their head.

Thus, coming after eight years of President Obama's "lead from behind" foreign policy, we may finally be seeing the long-predicted breakup of the Pax Americana — not because of external pressures but because of an internal decision that the burden of global leadership is no longer worth shouldering.

Putin is licking his chops, heaping praise on Trump and preparing to do "great" deals with the new president that will allow Russia to escape the sanctions imposed after its invasion of Ukraine. But the Russian strongman will never be a reliable American partner in endeavors such as fighting Islamic State; he is pursuing his own agenda of trying to reassemble the empire that Russia lost in 1991.

European leaders, by contrast, are palpably nervous, wondering how to cope with a post-American world. Merkel says, "I think we Europeans have our fate in our own hands," but there is little reason to think the fractious and disjointed European Union can get its act together to replace the role played for decades by the United States as the guarantor of international order.

Germany, while the strongest country on the continent, remains shackled by its post-World War II pacifism and isolationism. The United Kingdom is distracted by its negotiations to leave the EU. France is led by a deeply unpopular president (François Hollande has an approval rating of roughly 4%) who is likely to be replaced either by a pro-Russia extreme right-winger (Marine Le Pen) or a pro-Russia mainstream conservative (François Fillon). No other country in Europe is even capable of vying for leadership.

In East Asia, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan has been trying to take up some of the slack with a round of visits to nations such as the Philippines and Vietnam, attempting to rally them to stand up to Chinese aggression. But Japan, like Germany, has not fully escaped its postwar shackles, and its attempts to exert influence will probably be resisted not just by China but also by South Korea.

China senses the opportunity, and it is not being shy about its desire to fill the vacuum that America may leave behind. While warning of the consequences of American-launched trade wars, Chinese President Xi Jinping is positioning himself as a born-again champion of a rules-based international order. His attempt to remake China's image is hardly convincing, given that Beijing routinely flouts international law by claiming much of the South China Sea for itself, engaging in massive intellectual property theft and blocking its own population from getting unfettered access to the Internet. That Xi would even try such a feat of rebranding is an indicator of how markedly the coming Trump presidency is shaking up long-held international assumptions.

Unfortunately we are about to discover that no other country, whether friend or foe, is capable of filling the role played by the United States in the post-1945 international system. If we put down the burden of leadership, no one else will pick it up. Rather than a bipolar or tripolar world, with Russia and China emerging as American equals in the project of maintaining global order, we are likely to see a chaotic, multipolar landscape, with various states and even nonstate actors such as Islamic State vying to accrue for themselves power that had once been exercised by the United States.

We've seen such a world before, in the pre-1914 period, and it wasn't pretty. World War I finally erupted over the assassination of an Austrian archduke in 1914, but there were plenty of now-forgotten diplomatic crises in the preceding years — the Samoan Crisis of 1887-1889 involving Britain, Germany and the United States; the two Moroccan Crises of 1905-1906 involving Britain, France and Germany; the Dogger Bank Incident of 1904 involving Britain and Russia — which could have resulted in open hostilities. And that was in the days when the most powerful weapon on Earth was a naval gun capable of hurling a high-explosive shell a few miles. Imagine the dangers inherent in today's world, given the spread of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

The United States, still the world's richest state, has the most to lose from the collapse of international order. Let's hope President Trump realizes that before it's too late to undo the damage that his rhetoric is already causing.

Max Boot is a contributing writer to Opinion and a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Tamkin : Trump Promises 'America First' in Defiant and Divisive Inaugural Speech

Emily Tamkin | 2 days ago

Under dark skies and drizzling rain, Donald Trump vowed after being sworn in as the 45th president of the United States on Friday to make a radical break with decades of U.S. policy, pledging to dump free trade, block immigration, and focus above all on "America first."

Taking the oath of office after a bitter election campaign exposed a country riven by deep political divisions, Trump offered no olive branch to his political opponents and instead reached back to his divisive campaign rhetoric. Trump lost the popular vote by nearly 2.9 million votes, the largest margin ever for the winner in the Electoral College.

The real estate tycoon and former reality television host blamed Washington's political leaders for neglecting ordinary Americans and said his movement "will determine the course of America and the world for many, many years to come."

Trump's 16-minute address, a mashup of his campaign stump talks and the ominous doomsday speech he gave at the Republican National Convention, lacked the customary eloquence and unifying tone of previous inaugural remarks by his predecessors. Instead, he again painted a dark picture of the country, where empty factories are "scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation" and inner cities are engulfed in violence and poverty.

"This American carnage stops right here and stops right now," said Trump, wearing a red tie and a dark overcoat.

Trump signaled no retreat from his populist agenda on trade, immigration, and on scaling back commitments overseas. Apart from a passing mention of retaining old alliances, he painted a picture of a hostile world that would no longer be permitted to take advantage of America. Unlike other presidents in the modern era, he offered no pledge to preserve America's global leadership in promoting peace, protecting human rights, or encouraging democracy and open markets.

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

"Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs will be made to benefit American workers and American families. We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs," he continued.

The Trump White House announced right after his speech that the United States will withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a planned Asian trade pact that was the centerpiece of former President Barack Obama's pivot to Asia but which was doomed in Congress.

The crowd was markedly smaller than the throngs that came out for Obama's inaugural ceremonies in 2009 and 2013. A sea of "Make America Great Again" hats and "45" winter caps extending to the Washington Monument gave the subdued crowd gathered on the National Mall a reddish hue.

The U.S. Marine Band played patriotic music in a familiar ceremony carried out with precision. But the pomp could not hide the deep political divisions inside the Capitol building and across the country, aggravated by disturbing questions hanging over Russia's interference in the election itself.

Trump took the oath after U.S. spy agencies found that Russia had meddled in the election to try to tip the scales in his favor and as reports emerged that law enforcement and intelligence agencies were investigating Trump's aides and associates for alleged links to Moscow.

That alleged connection has some Americans worried. A protester from Chicago named Christopher stood near the Washington Monument, where he held a sign reading "Nyet My President." He wasn't planning to come to Washington, he said, until one man changed his mind: Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"I came to make my voice heard. He wouldn't be here without Putin. I don't want to see my country run by the next Putin," Christopher said.

The contrast in Washington between those jubilant at Trump's inauguration and those defiant was stark. The Mall, packed to the gills four years ago, was nearly empty, and many city streets were ghostly, save for sporadic clashes between police and rioters who smashed storefronts and bus stops. After Trump's speech, police and rioters continued to battle it out, with cops launching percussion grenades just blocks from the White House.

The Women's March on Washington, slated for Saturday and which has evolved into a vehicle for discontent at the new president, is expected to draw numbers that could dwarf the inauguration crowd.

In some parts of the city on Friday, thousands of protesters peacefully marched, carrying signs calling for "resistance." Red-hatted Trump supporters and chanting protesters squared off, peacefully for the most part, in scattered corners of town.

Randy "Dog" Dugey and his wife, Karen "Flea" Dugey, rode their motorcycles down from Pennsylvania, two of dozens of "Bikers for Trump" celebrating the new president. The two had never been to an inauguration before but said that, given the shambles they felt America had become, it was time to attend.

"I've worked my whole life to have the government take half my paycheck," Dog said. Trump, he hoped, wouldn't give the American people a "handout but a hand up."

Flea, who said she was a Democrat and briefly supported Hillary Clinton, registered this spring to vote for the first time — for Trump. Dog said he didn't support Trump in the primaries but decided he was the "right person for the job."

While Trump extolled the movement he created, others who feel threatened said they were galvanized with new energy. "Donald Trump doesn't worry me as much as the people who follow him. The really extremist ones, who might take strong actions," said Juan Bruno Avilo Jimenez, who came to the United States from Mexico in 2003 and advocates for immigrant rights.

"He made people wake up. Now we are going to reorganize ourselves, with many organizations fighting for rights," he said.

In a speech that hardly touched on foreign policy and America's global role in the world, Trump did not refer to the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan, where nearly 10,000 troops are deployed, or to the U.S.-led air war against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, where thousands of U.S. military advisors are on the ground. But he repeated his vow to take on Islamist extremists, promising to "unite the civilized world against radical Islamic terrorism, which we will eradicate from the face of the Earth."

In the days leading up to the inauguration, there were signs that anxious allies were coming to terms with a new American president they had dreaded.

In November, France's U.S. ambassador, Gérard Araud, had reacted to Trump's victory with an ominous tweet, stating that the world as we know it is "crumbling before our eyes."

On Thursday, Araud hosted an inauguration party with hundreds of guests, including Trump loyalist Richard Grenell, pictured beaming alongside the senior French diplomat.

Israel offered Trump a warm welcome. "A true friend of Israel will enter the White House today," said Israel's U.N. envoy, Danny Danon.

Britain and others offered perfunctory congratulations. "Look forward to continuing strong UK – US bond," British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson wrote in a tweet to Trump.

The head of NATO reminded Trump of the alliance's importance. NATO's "strength is as good for the United States as it is for Europe," Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said in a statement released shortly after Trump's inauguration on Friday.

Newspaper headlines around the globe reflected the anxiety about where President Trump will lead the United States, from a possible shake-up of NATO to a reversal on climate commitments and a potential trade war with China.

"Take a deep breath, this is really happening," the Buenos Aires *Herald* proclaimed. "'We have no idea what this guy's gonna do,'" fretted a headline in Britain's *Guardian* newspaper.

In Moscow, Putin couldn't find time to watch the ceremony, his spokesman said, but will read about it in the news.

Alexey Pushkov, the head of the foreign-policy committee in the lower house of the Russian parliament, called Trump's swearing-in a momentous occasion. "After Mr.Trump inauguration his meeting with President Putin will be the most important event in world politics," he tweeted. "A defining moment in history."

Former Presidents Jimmy Carter, George W. Bush, and Bill Clinton attended the ceremony, in keeping with tradition. Hillary Clinton, whom Trump defeated in his upset November election victory, also was on hand, wearing an elegant white pantsuit and smiling, despite the angry tone of the campaign, in which Trump had called for her to be locked up in prison.

Trump arrives in office after a disorganized and chaotic transition effort, with many key senior positions still vacant and amid infighting over who should be appointed to hundreds of jobs across the government.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said Friday that his Democratic caucus would not stand in the way of confirming the first two of Trump's cabinet picks later Friday: retired Marine Gen. James Mattis as defense secretary and retired Marine Gen. John Kelly as homeland security secretary.

The failure to fill other key jobs — including senior deputy posts — at the White House, State, Defense, and Homeland Security departments has raised fears in Congress that the Trump administration could be blindsided by adversaries or unexpected crises. As a result, Trump spokesman Sean Spicer said Thursday that about 50 officials from the former Obama administration would be asked to stay on temporarily due to the crucial nature of their jobs.

Trump's populist appeals to put "America first" echoed the same slogan that appeared at the outbreak of World War II, with isolationists arguing against America entering the conflict in Europe. That movement was tinged with anti-Semitic overtones, including from its chief spokesman, the famed aviator Charles Lindbergh.

With Trump's antipathy to free trade, his skepticism of traditional alliances, and his affinity for Putin, many around the world began looking to German Chancellor Angela Merkel to defend the post-World War II liberal order — a role typically played by an American president.

Merkel was the last foreign leader that Obama spoke to in his final hours in office. In a phone call Thursday, Obama and Merkel agreed that "close cooperation between Washington and Berlin and between the United States and Europe are essential to ensuring a sturdy trans-Atlantic bond, a rules-based international order, and the defense of values that have done so much to advance human progress in our countries and around the world," the White House said in a statement.

Obama noted that "it was fitting that his final call with a foreign leader was with Chancellor Merkel, and he wished her the very best going forward."

ETATS-UNIS

Bloomberg

Hunt : Nope, the Oval Office Won't Change Trump

Albert R. Hunt

The hope of the many people who harbor reservations about Donald Trump is

that the presidency will change him. That's also what his hardcore supporters fear.

Trump's inaugural address showed why those hopes and fears won't materialize. It was harsh, nationalistic, lacking in civility or generosity, reflecting his dark view of politics. It had some of the same themes that Ronald Reagan offered 36 years earlier, but with none of the uplift that the 40th president radiated.

Presidents don't grow to become new people. They can rise to occasions, alter perspectives, turn to different advisers for counsel. But the Oval Office hasn't changed the basic compass or persona of any modern president.

"The character of the president remains the same as it was before he was president," said Shirley Anne Warshaw, a political science professor at Gettysburg College. "The values, personalities and character do not change. What changes is the awesome responsibilities they will face. And how they will handle that, we don't know."

Reagan-watchers like the journalist and historian Lou Cannon, for example, didn't know what the ex-California governor would face or how he would react. But they knew he would be an optimist whose conservatism was tempered by pragmatism, whose oratory often was to the right of his policies and who generally enlisted capable people. He was that way in Sacramento and would be the same in Washington.

Bill Clinton's voracious appetites, political brilliance and roguish personality were evident before and after he entered the White House on Jan. 20, 1993. It was no surprise that he was able to turn critics like the Republican congressional firebrand Newt Gingrich inside out, or that he simultaneously embraced curfews and midnight basketball as government policies to help poor communities.

Barack Obama 10 years ago was a cerebral, sometimes inspiring, policy-centric progressive, far more pragmatic than his conservative critics charge. As president it has been the same. Obamacare is not a government-run, single-payer health insurance plan. He didn't nationalize banking in the financial crisis or push massive new spending programs. Throughout, he was no-drama Obama.

This isn't to suggest that the job doesn't affect the occupant. Sometimes it happens in small ways, as with the graying of Obama's hair. Sometimes the change is bigger -- Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon left their troubled presidencies in torment.

There is no way to predict how Trump would react if the North Korean dictator, Kim Jong-Un, acts provocatively, hoping to go mano a mano with the president of the United States. Nor is it clear how far he will try to pull the Republican party into a protectionist and isolationist posture. An angry populist speech is only the roughest guide to policy priorities after promises to cut taxes, rebuild infrastructure and replace the Affordable Care Act with an undefined substitute that covers everyone at lower cost.

What we do know are the values and character traits he'll bring to the table: a bullying bluster that he considers central to his success, a compulsion to strike back when criticized, a reliance on gut instincts, little regard for protocol or propriety, an elastic view of ethics and few ideological moorings.

For clues to the way Trump makes decisions, watch to see where he turns for advice and whom he consults last. Too much focus has been put on policy differences between the new president and his designated cabinet members. Focus instead on the White House staff. In the modern presidency, power gravitates to those who work at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

At times, this influence has been constructive: Reagan relied heavily on the decisive and capable White House Chief of Staff James Baker and his deputy Michael Deaver. National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft was a trusted and experienced guide for George H.W. Bush. John Podesta was a steadying influence as staff chief in the turbulent final Clinton years.

Others have caused problems. George W. Bush's confidant Karl Rove pursued a failed Republican realignment strategy that left the administration in tatters. Hillary Clinton hurt her husband politically in his first few years with a secretive style and flawed approach to health-care reform. Nixon's Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman and domestic-affairs aide John Ehrlichman played to their boss's worst instincts, eventually going to prison for obstructing justice during the Watergate scandal.

Who will be Trump's most important confidant? Maybe his daughter, Ivanka, and her husband Jared Kushner. Or possibly his alt-right consigliere Steve Bannon, whose fingerprints were all over the inaugural address. It could turn out to be Chief of Staff Reince Priebus. None have any governing experience. The belligerent Michael Flynn, a retired general who is national security adviser, is another contender.

One safe bet: There won't be calls to let Trump be Trump. As he showed on Friday, Trump is already Trump. And always will be.

The New York Times

Rocky First Weekend for Trump Troubles Even His Top Aides (UNE)

Peter Baker, Glenn Thrush and Maggie Haberman

New presidents typically find the adjustment from candidate to leader to be a jarring one, and Mr. Trump was not the first to get drawn into the latest flap in a way that fritters away whatever political good will comes with an inauguration. Former President Bill Clinton got off to a tough start by engaging on issues that were not central to his agenda, most notably gays in the military, and took a while to learn how to focus on his highest priorities.

But Mr. Clinton showed none of the combativeness and anger of Mr. Trump.

"The adjustment from private citizen to running the country is unbelievably hard," said Dan Pfeiffer, a longtime adviser to former President Barack Obama. He said that what people, even new presidents, often fail to fully understand "is that after you stand out there in the weather and take the oath of office in front of an adoring crowd, you walk into that building and you are in charge of the free world."

At first, at least, Mr. Trump seemed to be resisting the notion that he should adjust his approach now that he is in office. After all, his pugilistic style was a winning formula, one that got him to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in the first place. Many of his supporters cheer him taking on the establishment. And some allies said any blowback would not matter long anyway.

"Ultimately this is about governing," said former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who has advised Mr. Trump. "There are two things he's got to do between now and 2020: He has to keep America safe and create a lot of jobs. That's what he promised in his speech. If he does those two things, everything else is noise."

"The average American isn't paying attention to this stuff," he added. "They are going to look around in late 2019 and early 2020 and ask themselves if they are doing better. If the answer's yes, they are going to say, 'Cool, give me some more.'"

That is the long view and ultimately perhaps the most important one. The short view from many political professionals is that Mr. Trump's debut was not a success. The president himself seemed to be trying to find a way forward as the weekend proceeded. He danced to "My Way" on Friday night and did it his way on Saturday, but by Sunday he seemed to be trying something different.

A day after waves of opponents gathered in Washington and cities around the nation and world to protest his presidency, Mr. Trump began Sunday still in a mood to push back.

"Watched protests yesterday but was under the impression that we just had an election!" he posted on Twitter in the morning. "Why didn't these people vote? Celebs hurt cause badly."

Kellyanne Conway, his counselor, contributed to the combative mood in an interview with NBC's Chuck Todd when she described the falsehoods that the White House press secretary, Sean Spicer, had told reporters Saturday night as "alternative facts" — an assertion that lit up Twitter.

However, Mr. Trump later adopted the more above-it-all demeanor that presidents typically take. "Peaceful protests are a hallmark of our democracy," he wrote on Twitter. "Even if I don't always agree, I recognize the rights of people to express their views."

Mr. Trump faces a challenge few of his predecessors have confronted. Having won an Electoral College victory but not the popular vote, he entered office with less public support in the polls than any other president in recent times. After a transition in which he did relatively little to reach out to his opponents on the left and they hardly warmed to him, he found hundreds of thousands of protesters chanting just a few blocks from his new home on the first morning he woke up there.

That has left the new White House feeling besieged from Day 1, fueling the president's grievances and, in the view of some of his aides,

necessitating an aggressive strategy to defend his legitimacy. “The point is not the crowd size,” Reince Priebus, the White House chief of staff, said on “Fox News Sunday” before the mood began to soften. “The point is that the attacks and the attempts to delegitimize this president in one day — and we’re not going to sit around and take it.”

Mr. Trump grew increasingly angry on Inauguration Day after reading a series of Twitter messages pointing out that the size of his inaugural crowd did not rival that of Mr. Obama’s in 2009. But he spent his Friday night in a whirlwind of celebration and affirmation. When he awoke on Saturday morning, after his first night in the Executive Mansion, the glow was gone, several people close to him said, and the new president was filled anew with a sense of injury.

He became even more agitated after learning of a pool report by a Time magazine reporter incorrectly reporting that a bust of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had been removed from the Oval Office. (The reporter, Zeke Miller, did not see the bust and, after realizing the error, quickly issued a correction and apology.)

While Mr. Trump was eager to counterattack, several senior advisers urged him to move on and focus on the responsibilities of office during his first full day as president. That included a high-stakes trip to the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency, where he had been coached to demonstrate support of the agency and criticize Senate Democrats for delaying confirmation of his nominee to lead it, Mike Pompeo. The advisers left thinking he agreed.

But Mr. Spicer, who often berated reporters for what he called biased coverage during the campaign, shares Mr. Trump’s dark view of the news media and advocated an opening-day declaration of war.

After racing through his words of reconciliation at the C.I.A. in Langley, Va., Mr. Trump launched into a rambling, unscripted discussion that drifted to the topic of crowd size, making a series of verifiably false claims. Mr. Spicer then went to the White House briefing room for his first turn at the lectern and issued a blistering attack on reporters, made his own false claims and then stormed out without taking questions.

Some of the president’s supporters found the first weekend troubling. L. Lin Wood, a prominent libel lawyer who was a vocal defender of Mr. Trump’s on Twitter during the campaign, said that he considered it a dangerous debut.

“To someone who believed we might have a good opportunity to change, it’s just a terrible start. Because he’s got a long way to go,” Mr. Wood said. “This is going to go downhill quickly if it’s not changed, and that’s not good for any of us.”

POLITICO

Trump struggles to shake his erratic campaign habits

By Josh Dawsey

That Donald Trump chose to spend the first 48 hours of his presidency feuding with the news media over crowd sizes, crowing about his win in front of a wall of killed CIA agents, spreading inaccurate information and firing off tweets didn't shock his supporters or critics.

But it showed two likely hallmarks of the Trump administration, according to interviews with people involved in and close to his government.

Story Continued Below

First, his team will be very combative, even when the facts are not on their side, trusting that their political base dislikes the news media and will believe them no matter what. Sometimes, they are likely to muddy the water or throw a hand grenade into a political debate just to change the headlines.

"What you're seeing with the press secretary is what the administration is going to do, they are going to challenge the press," said Rep. Tom Reed, a New York Republican on Trump's executive committee. "A lot of people in the Beltway forget that the news media doesn't have much credibility. This is the way he ran his campaign, and it worked."

And second, when Trump grows angry, he will usually want the strongest response possible, unless he is told no, and that he will often govern or make decisions based off news coverage.

"Most of the people around him are new to him. One of the things they don't understand about him is he likes pushback. They are not giving him the pushback he needs when he's giving advice. He's a strong guy. He's intimidating to a lot of people," said Christopher Ruddy, a Trump friend who talks to him often and is the CEO of Newsmax. "If he doesn't have people who can tell him no, this is not going to go very well."

He added: "They got off to a very rocky start because they see everyone as adversaries. They haven't moved out of campaign mode into White House mode."

Trump's inauguration was largely an as-expected affair, and he sounded many of the right notes, said political observers, historians and people close to him. But news coverage soon fixated on the protesters across the country Saturday that far outnumbered his supporters the day before. Trump was increasingly angered by it, sending his press secretary out to fuzz up the situation and to brag about Trump’s support, in the face of knowable facts that contradicted what he said about record crowd sizes.

"The truth of the matter is he had a successful inauguration with a respectful crowd. The transition of power went off without a hitch. His supporters were amiable by and large," said Douglas Brinkley, a presidential historian. "But then he can never let go and stop watching cable TV. Now he's off to the worst start of a presidency in a very long time."

That Trump wanted Sean Spicer, the press secretary, to go out with props in the White House briefing room — two large pictures of the crowd — was trademark, people who know him say. Trump loves props.

One person who frequently talks to Trump said aides have to push back privately against his worst impulses in the White House, like the news conference idea, and have to control information that may infuriate him. He gets bored and likes to watch TV, this person said, so it is important to minimize that.

This person said that a number of people close to him don't like saying no — but that it has to be done.

"You can't do it in front of everyone," this person said. "He's never going to admit he's wrong in front of everyone. You have to pull him aside and tell him why he's wrong, and then you can get him to go along with you. These people don't know how to get him to do what they need him to do."

Several people who are close to Trump were aghast by the briefing. "It's surreal. We finally have the White House, and it's this," one GOP strategist close to Trump's top aides said.

"The president has a modus operandi: He hits back, he strikes back, he's very impulsive at times. He likes to be authentic. It's worked for him for decades, his reputation, his brand, his candidacy," Ruddy said. "The problem is he's moved into a different position and that hasn't fully sank in yet. He's not speaking for Donald Trump and his company. He's speaking as the leader of the free world."

Among his more conservative backers, they said Trump still had done plenty of good things. Ruddy said he was heartened by the tone of the speech, which he called "a terrific start and a very high bar." Reed, the New York congressman, said he was pleased with the early executive orders, freezing regulations and beginning the reversal of the Affordable Care Act.

Tim Phillips, president of Americans for Prosperity, the Koch brothers-backed group, said he was pleased with the administration's alignment on corporate tax reform and health care — and he expects them to make drastic changes soon. "There just isn't much daylight between us," he said.

Like Sen. John McCain did earlier in the day, Phillips shrugged off the chaos. "I don't have any opinion on it," he said.

Some mocked the Central Intelligence Agency speech, where Trump bragged on Saturday about his own prowess in front of a wall of dead CIA employees — former director John Brennan said he was “deeply saddened and angered” by the remarks, and Brinkley, the presidential historian, said it was "a disgrace to himself and his country." But his supporters noted that the agents cheered, and that his political base likely loved it.

"One thing we know about Donald Trump is he generally does not use prepared notes. He does digress from time to time. It makes it a little more folksy. I love it, and many of his supporters do," said Rep. Chris Collins, a New York Republican.

Rep. Mark Sanford, a South Carolina Republican, said Trump had assembled a strong Cabinet, filled with conservatives. But whether his aides can contain Trump — and whether he can control his worst impulses to get things done — remains unclear.

"It's unconventional at best and disastrous at worst," Sanford said of Trump's tactics. "These distractions have the capacity to sink his entire administration, and they're not representative of the quite serious people he's assembled."

He added: "If he's responding to one reporter's view of crowd size

every time, this is going to be the most unusual four years."

The New York Times

‘Alternative Facts’ and the Costs of Trump-Branded Reality

Jim Rutenberg

It was chilling when Mr. Trump’s assertion that reporters were “among the most dishonest people on earth” became an applause line for the crowd gathered to hear him speak in front of the memorial to fallen agents at C.I.A. headquarters.

Still more chilling was when the White House senior adviser Kellyanne Conway appeared on “Meet the Press” on Sunday to assert that Mr. Spicer’s falsehoods were simply “alternative facts.”

Ms. Conway made no bones about what she thought of the news media’s ability to debunk those “alternative facts” in a way Americans — especially Trump-loving Americans — would believe.

“You want to talk provable facts?” she said to the moderator, Chuck Todd. “Look — you’ve got a 14 percent approval rating in the media, that you’ve earned. You want to push back on us?” (She appeared to be referring to a Gallup poll figure related to Republicans’ views.)

And really, there it was: an apparent animating principle of Mr. Trump’s news media strategy since he first began campaigning. That strategy has consistently presumed that low public opinion of mainstream journalism (which Mr. Trump has been only too happy to help stoke) creates an opening to sell the Trump version of reality, no matter its adherence to the facts.

As Mr. Trump and his supporters regularly note, whatever he did during the campaign, it was successful: He won. His most ardent supporters loved the news media bashing. And the complaints and aggressive fact-checking by the news media played right into his hands. He portrayed it as just so much whining and opposition from yet another overprivileged constituency of the Washington establishment.

But will tactics that worked in the campaign work in the White House? History is littered with examples of new administrations that quickly found that the techniques that served them well in campaigns did not work well in government.

And if they do work, what are the long-term costs to government credibility from tactical “wins” that are achieved through the aggressive use of falsehoods? Whatever they are, Mr. Trump should realize that it could hurt his agenda more than anything else.

There’s a reason George W. Bush’s adviser Karen Hughes told the newly promoted Bush press secretary, Scott McClellan, in 2003, “Your most important job, in my view, will be to make sure the president maintains his credibility with the American people.”

“‘It’s one of his greatest strengths,’” Mr. McClellan quoted Ms. Hughes as saying in his autobiography, “What Happened.’’

Mr. McClellan’s book chronicles how Mr. Bush staked that credibility on the false rationale for the Iraq invasion — that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction — and ultimately lost the confidence of Americans, hobbling him for the rest of his presidency.

But the damage wasn’t isolated to Mr. Bush’s political standing. To this day, the American intelligence community must contend with lingering questions about its own credibility — to wit, taunts from Moscow (not to mention from Mr. Trump) that assessments pointing to Russian meddling in the presidential election are questionable. After all, wasn’t it wrong about Iraq?

There’s a big difference in importance between the size of Mr. Trump’s inaugural audience and the intelligence that led to war, no question. And, as the former Bush White House press secretary Ari Fleischer noted in a conversation with me on Sunday, it’s way too early to say whether Mr. Spicer’s weekend performance will be the norm.

The Trump team’s emotions were raw over the weekend, Mr. Fleischer noted, after a mistaken pool report was sent to the rest of the White House press corps, claiming that Mr. Trump had removed a bust of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. from the Oval Office. Zeke Miller, the Time magazine journalist who had written the report, quickly corrected it and apologized when the White House alerted him to the error.

“It rightly leaves the people inside feeling that ‘reporters were opposed to us all along for being racist and the first thing they did was imply we were,’” Mr. Fleischer said.

Still, the weekend’s events did not arrive in a vacuum. There was the report last week in The Washington Post that the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History, known for high standards of accuracy, was selling a commemorative book about Mr. Trump riddled with questionable notions, such as that Hillary Clinton deserved more blame than Mr. Trump did for the so-called birther campaign questioning Mr. Obama’s citizenship. (After that report, the museum said it was removing the book pending an investigation into whether it met standards for accuracy.)

The administration’s decision to eradicate nearly any reference to “climate change” on the White House website could be expected given Mr. Trump’s promises to overturn his predecessors’ climate policies. But it set off concerns among climate scientists that it would extend to valuable government data — fears that also apply to the sanctity of other administration-controlled data. (Mr. Fleisher, for one, noted that career bureaucrats would blow the whistle on any moves to manipulate government data.)

Then there is the central information center of any White House: the pressroom.

On Thursday, Jim Hoft, the founder of The Gateway Pundit, said the White House was giving his site an official press credential. The Gateway Pundit promoted hoaxes such as one alleging that protesters in Austin, Tex., were bused in by the liberal donor George Soros. (The originator of that story told The New York Times that his assertions were not supported by fact.)

The White House has not confirmed that it will credential Gateway Pundit, but Mr. Hoft’s announcement stoked anxiety among traditional reporters that the new administration will pack the pressroom with sympathetic organizations willing to promote falsehoods — or, perhaps, “alternative facts.” It’s one thing if that creates a false feedback loop about the size of an inauguration crowd — and quite another if it does so about a more important national security matter, as the CNN chief national security correspondent, Jim Sciutto, said over the weekend.

Mr. McClellan, the Bush press secretary, warned in an interview with me on Sunday that Mr. Spicer might come to regret it if reporters started to doubt the veracity of what he told them.

“There will be tough times ahead — there are for every White House — and that’s when that credibility and trust is most important,” Mr. McClellan said. But more important, he said, when you’re at the White House lectern, “you’re speaking for the free world to some extent, and what ideals are you holding up for that free world?”

There’s nothing exceptional about the ones that aren’t true.

The Washington Post

As Cold War turns to Information War, a new fake news police combats disinformation (UNE)

https://www.facebook.com/anthony.faiola

PRAGUE — The target of high-stakes Kremlin power plays during the Cold War, the Czech Republic is again on the front lines of a contest with Russia and its sympathizers — this time in the Information Wars.

Inside a mustard-yellow stucco building in northwest Prague, Benedikt Vangeli is a commander in that fight — leading a new SWAT team for truth. Armed with computers and smartphones, the freshly formed government unit is charged with scouring the Internet and social media, fact-checking, then flagging false reports to the public.

“Truth is important to a democratic state,” Vangeli said.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

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Following the fake news barrage during the U.S. presidential race, the worried Czechs are not the only ones suddenly breaking into the fact-checking business. Nations including Finland and Germany are either setting up or weighing similar

operations as fears mount over disinformation campaigns in key elections that could redefine Europe's political map this year.

The stakes are high: If pro-Kremlin politicians win in an anchor nation like France, it could potentially spell the end of the European Union.

Here in the Czech Republic — a nation that was once a Cold War hub for the KGB — intelligence officials are charging Moscow with rebuilding its spy operations and engaging in "covert infiltration" of Czech media ahead of elections later this year. And the new government truth squad will pay special attention to a proliferation of opaque, pro-Russian websites in the Czech language that officials say are seeking to gaslight the public by fostering paranoia and undermining faith in democracy and the West.

Using methods reminiscent of Soviet-era propaganda, such sites offer a vision of a world where no Russian soldier set foot in Ukraine, German Chancellor Angela Merkel is a Muslim-hugging menace and the United States is behind Europe's refugee crisis.

Some are running the same disproved stories that tainted the U.S. election — including false allegations that Hillary Clinton's campaign dabbled in child trafficking and the occult. But they are also curated for local audiences. Pro-Russian Czech politicians, for instance, are exalted, while Moscow's critics are torn down. The E.U., such stories suggest, is power grabbing and inept.

There is some evidence the assaults may be having their desired effect — with opinion polls showing the number of Czechs who trust the E.U. slipping to just 26 percent.

"We have no ability or political will to close all these websites," said Ivana Smolenova, a fellow at the Prague Security Studies Institute. "The only thing we can do is work on our self-defense."

Yet the new unit's creation has brought countercharges of state-sponsored spin from the sites and their supporters, who argue that the government is picking sides in a nation still divided between pro-Russian and pro-Western sympathies.

"Nobody has the monopoly on truth," said Czech President Milos Zeman, a pro-Russian politician who fills a largely ceremonial role and is at odds with the Czech government over Russian sanctions he wants lifted. He maintains a special adviser with financial links to Russia's energy giant Lukoil, and Zeman's interviews frequently appear on pro-Russian websites.

"If you have some views, for instance, Russians have some views, and you want to formulate it publicly in the media, it is not misinformation, it is not propaganda," Zeman said.

In the Czech Republic, the tug of war for influence between Moscow and the West has lurked just below the surface since the fall of the Iron Curtain. But it reemerged, officials say, following the 2014 Russian incursion into Ukraine — denied by the Kremlin — that led the West to impose sanctions on Moscow.

A Czech intelligence report issued last year asserted that Moscow's embassy in Prague — with staffing far higher than those of other nations — has become a beefed-up den of spies. It also warns that Russian covert use of Czech-language media and its state-sponsored propaganda are "exerting influence on the perceptions and thoughts on the Czech audience" and promoting a "relativity of truth."

It cites no smoking gun linking the Kremlin to the 40 or so pro-Russian websites published in Czech. But the Russian government, for instance, backs the Sputnik News Agency's Czech-language service. Smolenova said she has also identified at least one other site as being funded and directed by Russian citizens.

But most of the pro-Kremlin websites here have opaque operations and complex ownership structures. At least some appear to have adopted a favorable stance on Russia after years of publishing conspiracy theories and bizarre news. The extent to which they are actively doing Moscow's bidding, or simply trafficking in echo chamber economics, remains unclear.

Jan Koral, the publisher of one pro-Russian site — www.nwoo.org — said half of his revenue comes from digital ads and the other half from reader donations. Some of those donations, he noted, are made anonymously.

Many of the stories he publishes — such as a recent piece alleging that the pro-Western government in Kiev is leaving war veterans to die in the snow — are simply translations from Russian-language news sources. He said he does not try to "verify" the stories he runs.

Koral, a 39-year old former Web designer, also said he has attended events at the Russian Cultural Center — an extension of the Russian embassy in Prague. But he insisted that he is not on Moscow's payroll.

"I would be happy if Russia finally paid us," he said.

Yet there is also a darker side to the pro-Russian sites. Ondrej Kundra, a local journalist who is investigating Russian influence in the media, said Koral stopped him last month as he was exiting a speaking engagement.

"'You'll come to a bad end,'" Kundra said Koral warned him.

In an interview, Koral did not deny the incident, saying mainstream journalists had it coming.

"The nature of our nation is not violent, so they will not hang in the streets," he said. "They should. They are liars. They are criminals."

The new "fake news" unit is still in the midst of hiring its full contingency of 15 agents and has only begun preliminary operations. Among the false claims flagged in test trials so far: a Facebook post asserting that the perpetrator in last month's attack on a Berlin Christmas market was based in the Czech Republic, and one from a Russian news outlet claiming Moscow's agents had already managed to penetrate the Czech Republic's elections system.

The unit responded using some of the same social media techniques deployed by fraudsters.

"We just tweet them to the public as false reports," Vangeli said. "That's how we fight back. We don't take them down. We don't censor."

Yet critics — including free speech activists — call it a fine line. More often than not, offending stories are simply spun and twisted rather than entirely fabricated. And it is potentially dangerous, some argue, to have a government — even a democratic one — deciding on recommended reading for its public.

"This would put the government in the position to act as a media outlet, which should be the task of classical journalism," said Markus Beckedahl, a prominent German Internet activist and blogger.

Vangeli said his unit will pursue fake news regardless of its source, operating out of offices he described as looking like a "poorly funded newsroom." Some politicians here say the new unit needs to act fast given that national elections will be held later this year.

Ivan Gabal, a senior lawmaker politician, for instance, has been routinely attacked in the pro-Russian media for his tough line on Moscow. Last year, his emails to the prime minister on Europe's refugee crisis were hacked. They were then published on a white supremacist website, and portrayed as evidence of his pro-migrant bent in a country resoundingly against taking in Muslim asylum seekers.

There is no hard evidence, he concedes, that the Russians were behind it.

"The Russians have learned that it's better to sway elections than to spy on our tanks," he said.

Katerina Santurova in Prague and Stephanie Kirchner in Berlin contributed to this report.

Neal Urwitz : Don't panic about 'alternative facts'

Since Donald Trump upended everything we thought we knew about politics, hands have been wrung and ink has been spilled about the "post-factual age." How could the candidate with the worst Politifact rating in the 2016 campaign come out on top? How could fake news cause a man to shoot up a pizzeria in a quiet Washington neighborhood? How could the Trump administration claim its new press secretary was using "alternative facts"?

Do facts still matter — and if they don't, will real journalism stay relevant? Or is the "lamestream" media a relic?

We shouldn't overreact. Now that President Trump has taken the oath of office and the business of governance has begun, the impact of fake news and "alternative outlets" will be revealed as vastly overblown. "Traditional" media will still control the national conversation. Policymakers will still have to build their days around what the mainstream media reports. The scandals, conflicts and reality checks the mainstream press unearths will dominate the headlines, as they did just before the inauguration. Those of fake news sites will not.

Let's start with the numbers. *Infowars*, which received tremendous attention as a haven for conspiracy theories during the campaign, has about 6 million unique monthly visitors.

Breitbart had roughly 19 million in October 2016 when interest in the presidential campaign was peaking.

The USA TODAY NETWORK, on the other hand, had more than 122 million unique visitors in November. CNN's monthly average is about 105 million. *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times,* meanwhile, rose to about 100 million apiece just before the election. It is hard to deny that mainstream media outlets reach a huge swath of America's news consumers.

It's not just the sheer numbers, though — it's also who reads which outlets. *Politico* polled congressiona l staffers and lobbyists on what they read, and the results were no surprise. Among the most read were *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Hill*, *Roll Call* and, of course, *Politico* itself. Most congressional offices also read their hometown papers religiously.

People working in Washington's other policymaking centers — like the Department of Defense or the Department of Education — read large national publications. They also read outlets that focus on their respective industries, such as *Defense News* and *Education Week*, and those mainstream trade publications matter. *Education Week,* for instance, has 1.1 million unique monthly visitors, and you can bet the people crafting federal regulatory interpretations take their stories seriously.

As for sites like *Infowars, "*credible" people cannot cite them and remain credible, at least not with policymakers. Former Georgia congressman Jack Kingston, for instance, tweeted a link to an *Infowars* story. A reporter from the mainstream *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and conservatives from across the country lambasted him for it, and Kingston deleted the tweet in an hour. If citing an outlet can shame a former member of Congress, let alone a current one, it is fair to say that outlet's impact on the national policy conversation will be limited at best.

Finally, few things control the national conversation like a scandal, but the scandal must have some grounding in fact in order to matter. Fact-based scandals dominated the conversation around the campaign, whether it was Clinton's emails or Trump's "locker room talk" aboard the *Access Hollywood* bus. That is all the more true while a president is in office. Consider how the Clinton administration's legislative agenda ground to a halt during the Monica Lewinsky scandal, or how the George W. Bush Administration's political capital evaporated following the botched response to Hurricane Katrina.

POLICING THE USA: A look at race, justice, media

The "scandals" unearthed by alternative outlets don't have the same impact. For instance, when Alex Jones "reported" that Hillary Clinton was a devil worshipper, the Clinton campaign, to put it mildly, did not feel compelled to offer a denial. The next four years will doubtlessly see unreliable news outlets produce hundreds of "scandals," none of which will have much effect on America's governance.

Yes, people are sharing fake news through Facebook and Twitter. People are increasingly using social media platforms to receive news through a "filter bubble," where they will only end up reading the news and opinions they already agree with, regardless of whether those "facts" are actually true. In the long run, that will be poisonous to our nation, convincing everyone that their own opinions are infallible and the opposition is at best stupid or at worst evil.

None of that, however, precludes the traditional media from playing a critical role in the governance of the United States. Even in the post-factual age, when fake news proliferates and fringe conspiracies creep into online interactions, the "lamestream" media will still control the national conversation. Facts still matter.

Neal Urwitz *is director of external relations at the Center for a New American Security.*

The New York Times

Editorial : Donald Trump and a Sea of Empty Desks

"Our job is to be ready on Day 1," Vice President Mike Pence said in Washington last week. "The American people can be confident that we will be."

The American people have little cause for such confidence. Given that President Trump thinks, as he said in his inaugural speech, that the country is in desperate straits, it's peculiar that he didn't assemble a crack team in record time. Instead, he assumed office on Friday with the most incomplete team in recent history. Since then he's seemed to focus more on his inaugural crowd size than on the immense job at hand.

An incoming president is expected to fill about 4,000 positions. Nominees for more than 1,100 of them must be confirmed by the Senate. It is impossible for any president to fill all these positions by Day 1. But transition veterans recommend that a new president have a White House team assembled — 450 people who don't require Senate confirmation — and have nominees for the top 100 positions that must be Senate-confirmed.

Mr. Trump is not even in the ballpark. There are no nominees for three-quarters of the top 100 jobs. His White House staff, some 30 of whom were sworn in on Sunday, is light on governing experience. Yet many of those, like the former "Apprentice" and "Celebrity Apprentice" contestant Omarosa Manigault, the assistant to the president and director of communications for the Office of Public Liaison, carry the titles that rank highest.

Mr. Trump completed his cabinet roster of 21 people only on Thursday, and there's still a long road ahead for most. He named them without vetting them first, and an unusual number are wealthy individuals whose extensive holdings have taken the Office of Government Ethics longer to screen for potential conflicts of interest. Such conflicts or sheer unfitness may yet doom some of them. Mr. Trump's transition team said last week that it expected the Senate to confirm seven cabinet nominees on Friday, which would be the same number as George W. Bush and Barack Obama had on Inauguration Day. The Senate cleared only two: Gen. John Kelly for homeland security secretary and Gen. James Mattis as defense secretary.

Sean Spicer, Donald Trump's new press secretary, says there's "a lot of work going on beneath the surface to have a lot of these positions ready to go as soon as possible" in the coming days. Meanwhile, Mr. Trump's team has had to ask some 50 essential officials to stay on, most of them national security and diplomatic professionals.

So much for the old canard about a businessman knowing how to run government more efficiently than people with, you know, experience in government. Clearly, Mr. Trump could have spent more time on the transition and less on Twitter. But why, in a federal government of more than two million employees, many with deep experience, must the president appoint 4,000 people, and the Senate weigh in on 1,100? Moving a dozen cabinet nominees through the pipeline has thrown the Senate into near-chaos. Now, multiply that by 100. "This huge number of presidential appointees are a vestige of the spoils system, no way to run a railroad and certainly no way to run our government," says Max Stier, head of the Partnership for Public Service, which advocates for government employee effectiveness, and assists transition teams of both parties.

One way to lighten the load is to reduce the number of jobs requiring Senate confirmation. The Senate should weigh in on the president's defense nominee, obviously, but why should scores of lesser Pentagon jobs, like the nine part-time members of the Board of Regents for the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, endure that laborious process? The Partnership for Public Service identified nearly 700 of the most important Senate-confirmed jobs; confirmation could be dispensed with for the rest, which are board positions and the like.

In 2012, the Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act created a list of 169 jobs that are appointed by the president but would no longer need Senate confirmation. Mr. Trump could push Congress to add more to this list. But he needs to pull his own act together first and get his administration in place and up to speed.

Will Marco Rubio defy President Trump on his pick for secretary of state? (UNE)

By Karoun Demirjian and Sean Sullivan

Republican Sens. John McCain and Lindsey O. Graham said Sunday that they will back the nomination of Rex Tillerson, clearing the way for the oil executive to become secretary of state and leaving just one drama unresolved: What will Marco Rubio do?

The Republican senator from Florida made clear during Tillerson's confirmation hearing earlier this month that he had significant reservations, chastising the ExxonMobil chief executive for refusing to call Russia's bombing campaign in Aleppo a war crime and declining to condemn Saudi Arabia and China as human rights violators.

"In order to have moral clarity, we need clarity. We can't achieve moral clarity with rhetorical ambiguity," Rubio told Tillerson. "We need a secretary of state who will fight for these principles."

Since then, Rubio has come under significant pressure from Republican party leaders to back Tillerson and avoid a split within the GOP on one of President Trump's most high-profile picks, according to those close to him. Rubio held an unannounced meeting with Tillerson last week, according to two people with knowledge of the get-together, although it was unclear whether Tillerson was able to alleviate Rubio's concerns.

Now-Vice President Pence and now-White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus were also in the meeting, according to a Rubio adviser familiar with the gathering. It lasted 90 minutes and was a blunt conversation not just about Tillerson's answers at the hearing, but also about Rubio's overall concerns about Russia and other matters, said the adviser, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the private talk.

(Reuters)

Sen. Marco Rubio had a tense exchange with secretary of state nominee Rex Tillerson during Tillerson's confirmation hearing on Jan. 11 at the Capitol. Rex Tillerson's full exchange with Sen. Marco Rubio (Photo: Matt McClain/The Washington Post/Reuters)

The Rubio adviser said the senator had not planned to decide on his vote until he received written responses to the more than 100 questions he submitted to Tillerson, which he got back from the nominee on Thursday.

The White House did not respond Sunday to a request for comment on the meeting.

The Tillerson decision is a potentially pivotal one for the former presidential candidate, who during the campaign challenged President Trump on foreign-policy differences that have since been reflected in concerns Republicans have voiced about Tillerson.

Many in the party are leery of Trump's friendly approach to Russia and its leader, Vladimir Putin, with whom Tillerson frequently interacted as the head of ExxonMobil. Putin awarded Tillerson the Kremlin's Order of Friendship in 2013, and Tillerson has criticized sanctions the United States imposed on Russia over its annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in eastern Ukraine in 2014.

"Marco exposed a tension between kind of where a lot of Republicans are on Russia," said Lanhee Chen, who served as an adviser to Rubio during his 2016 campaign. "He's got a great opportunity to kind of lead this wing of the national security establishment that believes the long-standing orthodoxy on Russia."

Politically, however, several people in Rubio's circle said they see no upside to defying Trump, especially now that Tillerson is on the path to being confirmed. Rubio is aware that the backlash from the new White House would be intense, according to those close to him.

George Seay, a Dallas-based investment manager who was a major Rubio donor during his presidential run, said that many people close to him have been texting, calling and writing Rubio to urge him to support Tillerson "in very blunt fashion."

"I think this is the wrong fight. I think it's the wrong position to make a stand," Seay said.

Rubio spokesman Alex Burgos did not respond to multiple inquiries Sunday about Rubio's thinking on Tillerson or his meetings.

Seeming uncertainty is a familiar position for Rubio. During the 2013 debate over immigration reform, Rubio initially joined with Democrats to push for a comprehensive bill before backing away from the effort when conservative ire reached a boiling point. The fallout would follow him into his presidential campaign, where he took heat from the right for being part of the effort and criticism from the left for backing away from it.

During his presidential campaign, Rubio had a pattern of articulating two positions on some politically sensitive topics: his personal view, and what he considered to be politically doable.

This mirrored how he campaigned against Trump, as well. Early on, Rubio avoided attacking Trump, even when he clearly disagreed with him. When the primaries heated up, Rubio switched his strategy and launched a forceful — at times awkward — attack, calling Trump a "con man" and a "fraud." After Trump won the nomination, Rubio switched again and supported his party's nominee.

On Sunday morning, McCain (Ariz.) and Graham (S.C.) — Tillerson's two other most vocal GOP critics — released a statement announcing they would support him for secretary of state when the full Senate votes on it. Citing additional conversations with Tillerson, the pair expressed "confidence" that Tillerson "can be an effective advocate for U.S. interests," despite continued "concerns about his past dealings with the Russian government."

Of all the Republican senators, only Rubio, McCain and Graham's support for Tillerson has ever been seriously in doubt. Of the three, Rubio's complaints have been the most broad, centering on his fear that as secretary of state, Tillerson might not be a strong-enough defender of human rights.

Rubio warned Tillerson that being too soft "leads to people to conclude . . . America cares about democracy and freedom as long as it isn't being violated for something else."

McCain and Graham's support all but guarantees that Tillerson will easily win the simple majority he needs to be confirmed as secretary of state by the full Senate.

But if Rubio votes against Tillerson's nomination in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee — where Republicans outnumber Democrats by only one vote — it could throw a wrench into plans to move Tillerson's nomination to the floor smoothly.

The Daily 202 newsletter

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"I recognize the partisan split on the committee and what it would all mean," Rubio told reporters after Tillerson's hearing, asserting that he was "prepared to do what's right."

If Rubio opposes Tillerson, GOP leaders are prepared to use a variety of procedural options to get his nomination to the floor.

"I expect him to come out of the committee on Monday," Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) said following Trump's inauguration Friday, although he admitted "the votes are still in flux."

If committee members do not vote to report Tillerson's nomination to the floor with a favorable recommendation, they can vote to send it to the floor with caveats, such as an unfavorable recommendation, or with no recommendation at all. If those efforts fail, a senator can file a discharge motion to circumvent the committee's review authority entirely and send Tillerson's nomination straight to the floor.

Top committee Democrat Benjamin L. Cardin (D-Md.) said Friday that while he believes "our committee's recommendation's extremely important," he does "recognize the fact that confirmations are by the Senate, not by committee."

Donald Trump Embarks on His First Week With a Heavy Slate (UNE)

Michael C. Bender, Natalie Andrews and Andrew Ackerman

Updated Jan. 22, 2017 8:21 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump starts his first week with a packed schedule—from pushing through his slate of cabinet nominees to a raft of executive orders and setting the direction on foreign trade.

Mr. Trump is planning executive actions early in the week on immigration and trade, two White House officials said, and will have a chance to lay the groundwork for a trade deal during a meeting Friday with British Prime Minister Theresa May , the first foreign leader to visit the new president in the White House. He also will meet with congressional leaders on Monday and attend a lawmakers' retreat later in the week, where he could discuss his legislative agenda.

The president's pick to run the Central Intelligence Agency, Kansas Rep. Mike Pompeo, is scheduled for a confirmation vote in the Senate on Monday, and White House officials expect at least three more cabinet nominees—Ben Carson for Housing and Urban Development, Nikki Haley as United Nations ambassador and Rick Perry for energy secretary—to face votes by week's end. Rex Tillerson, meanwhile, on Sunday cleared a key hurdle on his path to become secretary of state.

Mr. Trump was optimistic about the beginning of his presidency despite a rocky first weekend that saw mass anti-Trump protests across the nation and world and his representatives' repeated falsehoods about media reporting of verifiable events.

White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus said Sunday on Fox that Mr. Trump would have a "full week," adding, "I've never seen anyone work harder and have more energy than this president."

Clearing Mr. Trump's nominees is a top priority because he is starting his presidency with a much thinner cabinet than his predecessor. On Barack Obama's first day in office in 2009, the Senate approved six members of his cabinet. A seventh, Defense Secretary Bob Gates, was a holdover from the George W. Bush administration. The Senate that day confirmed an eighth nominee, Peter Orszag, to lead the Office of Management and Budget.

The retreat for Republican House and Senate lawmakers, in Philadelphia, is set for Wednesday evening through Friday and will tighten this week's schedule for voting on cabinet picks.

Republican Sens. John McCain and Lindsey Graham said Sunday they would support Mr. Tillerson's nomination for the State Department after the lawmakers had expressed concerns about the former Exxon Mobil Corp. chief's ties to senior members of the Russian government. That increases the likelihood that Senate Republicans will confirm most, if not all, of the president's cabinet nominations, as Mr. Tillerson was seen as the nominee drawing the most GOP opposition.

A third Senate Republican, Florida's Marco Rubio, had shared those concerns and is widely seen as the key vote on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where Republicans hold a one-vote majority. But even if the committee doesn't approve Mr. Tillerson for the State Department post, the full Senate can still vote on his nomination—a rare procedural tactic.

"After careful consideration, and much discussion with Mr. Tillerson, we have decided to support his nomination to be Secretary of State," Messrs. McCain and Graham said in a statement. "Though we still have concerns about his past dealings with the Russian government and President Vladimir Putin, we believe that Mr. Tillerson can be an effective advocate for U.S. interests."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell on Sunday predicted the Senate would confirm all of Mr. Trump's cabinet picks, over Democratic lawmakers' objections to some of them.

On Friday, the Senate confirmed retired Gen. James Mattis as secretary of defense and retired Gen. John Kelly as Homeland Security secretary.

Cabinet nominees need a simple-majority vote to win confirmation, a threshold Republicans, who hold 52 seats, will likely meet. But Democrats have some say in the timing of floor action and can stretch out the process by forcing debates on the Senate floor.

Senate leaders haven't indicated which nominees could come up next. Confirmation votes are possible for former Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, Mr. Trump's choice to lead the Transportation Department, and Rep. Ryan Zinke (R., Mont.), who would head the Interior Department. Both are expected to win confirmation whenever those votes occur.

Many of the Senate committees holding hearings on the nominations haven't voted on them yet, a key step in the confirmation process.

Mr. McConnell on Sunday blamed Senate Democratic leader Charles Schumer and others in his party for delays in the nomination process.

"What's been unfortunate is that all I asked for of my colleague, Sen. Schumer, was to treat President Trump the same way as we treated President Obama," he said on Fox News.

Mr. Schumer said paperwork delays and a tight hearing schedule have prolonged the confirmation process.

"Over the last several weeks, Republicans have made a mockery of the cabinet hearings process, trying to jam through nominees in truncated hearings, with serious conflicts of interest and ethical issues unresolved, and without giving senators and the American people a fair chance to question and hear from these nominees," Mr. Schumer said Friday on the Senate floor.

Delays from Mr. Trump's nominees in filing paperwork resulted in holding up several initial confirmation hearings until last week. Education Department nominee Betsy DeVos's hearing was held last Tuesday without her ethics paperwork having been turned in—though it has since been filed. The committee plans to vote Jan. 31 on her nomination.

Fast food executive Andy Puzder, Mr. Trump's pick for labor secretary, also hasn't filed all his required paperwork. His committee hearing has been scheduled for Feb. 2.

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

Knox Beran : Trump & Establishment Washington -- Who Is Co-Opting Whom?

President Trump looked out over the Mall last week and declared: "For too long, a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost. . . . The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country."

TV pundits thought the speech unprecedented in its divisiveness, yet it was nothing new under the sun. Students of Anglo-American history are familiar with the recurring antagonism between the "court" (the establishments of the metropolis) and the "country" (all those who feel left out of those comfortable and lucrative arrangements).

When, in 18th-century England, an intimacy grew up between the government at Westminster and the financiers of the City of London, a party of self-styled "country" patriots arose to denounce the new "monied interest," one that in their view was growing parasitically rich by repackaging the national debt and fobbing it off on the naïve. To add insult to injury, the new elite was entrenching its power through public-sector patronage.

The result, the historian J. H. Plumb opined, was the growth of a court oligarchy in Britain. Its interlocking establishments were viewed with special trepidation by Britishers across the ocean in America, who wildly imagined that the luxuriant self-dealing of London foretokened an age of slavery, in which virtuous yeomen would be subjugated by a decadent metropolitan elite. The colonists' fear that the corruption of the court was "sapping the foundations" of liberty, the historian Bernard Bailyn wrote, was an underlying cause of that aboriginal Brexit, the Revolution of 1776.

America obtained her independence, yet the innocence was short-lived. Sophisticated banking and credit machineries, thought even by the enlightened Jefferson to be a form of monarchical corruption, proved to be essential to the young Republic's growth.

But useful things may be abused. When the self-dealing of American insiders has grown too blatant, "country" parties have risen against it, rallying to the banner of some plausible charlatan who yet, for all his faults, was alive to the abuses of the court.

Thus General Jackson led the struggle against the Second Bank of the United States; William Jennings Bryan, the populist crusade for free silver; and Franklin Roosevelt, the war on "economic royalists." Half a century after FDR launched the New Deal, Ronald Reagan took on the entrenched liberal establishment, declaring in his first inaugural address that "an elite group" in Washington had hijacked the country.

Donald Trump, in denouncing America's "rigged" system, is the latest figure to ascend to power on a wave of country-party revulsion against the court. Like his predecessors, he has inspired much doom-saying. (Jackson was charged with being not merely a vulgarian and a criminal but "one of the six beasts spoken of in

Rev[elation] and Daniel.") Yet Trump won anyway, in part because none of his competitors so astutely fingered the complacency of self-satisfied establishments or challenged policies that seem disproportionately to benefit a favored few.

But is it a pose? Is Trump another Duc d'Orléans, the French aristocrat who during the French Revolution rechristened himself Philippe Égalité? After all, Trump is, in his personal and professional avocations, closer to the courtiers whose policies he questions than to the country folk he champions. Senator Rand Paul has deplored the president's "Bilderberg" cabinet, and it is hard to tell, from a distance, whether Trump is co-opting the Davos club or being co-opted by it.

Assume, for the sake of argument, that his conversion is genuine. Will it do any good?

Trump's country patriots chant 'Lock her up,' seeking a vengeance against Mrs. Clinton that will hinder the realization of their most important policy goals.

The country philosophy is so far true: Elites really do grow complacent and self-indulgent, and periodic house cleanings, properly managed, are a good thing. But country patriotism is also a phenomenon of mass civilization, a civilization that works to undo older, locally rooted consolations and mechanisms of assuaging popular frustration. Such a civilization entices people to invest their emotions in the world at large, to identify with distant celebrities whom they will never meet, to live fantastically in a celluloid or plasma universe remote from their own hearths. Rival cults of personality emerge and attract fanatical followings.

This mass fervor is cathartic, yet also, when tinged with hysterical righteousness, ominous. Trump's country patriots chant "Lock her up," seeking a vengeance against Mrs. Clinton that will hinder the realization of their most important policy goals. On the other side, adherents of the court faction as luridly paint Trump as a blood-and-soil fascist who has, somewhat contradictorily, sold his soul to Moscow.

Much depends on how Trump manages his rebellion. He can kick the court all he likes, but if in implementing his program he fails to bring along others outside his country base, his reforms will be as flimsy, and almost certainly as ephemeral, as many of Barack Obama's are proving to be.

Obama never succeeded in emulating Reagan, who communicated the rationale for his policies with a force, a precision, and a dramatic clarity that brought a good number of Democrats and independents along with him: He moved the center. Obama was never able to do that: He never succeeded in building a durable consensus for his most controversial acts.

If Trump's country-party revolution is to succeed, he can't simply preach to the converted or rely on stump-speech dogmatism to justify his program: Like Reagan before him, he must find novel and convincing ways to explain not only what he wants to do, but how he intends to do it, and why he thinks it will work.

— Michael Knox Beran *is a lawyer and author of* Pathology of the Elites*,* Forge of Empires, 1861–1871*, and* Murder by Candlelight*, among other books.*

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Editorial : Trump at the CIA

Jan. 22, 2017 6:06 p.m. ET 370 COMMENTS

President Trump made a smart move in visiting the CIA on his first full day on the job, but he and his staff are going to have to raise their game if they want to succeed at governing. This was not a presidential performance.

The visit made sense to repair any misunderstandings from the campaign and transition when Mr. Trump sometimes seemed to attack the entire intelligence community for the leaks that Russia tried to help his campaign. Those leaks were almost certainly put out or authorized by the Obama White House or senior intelligence officials appointed by President Obama. The rank and file didn't do it.

"I believe that this group is going to be one of the most important groups in this country towards making us safe, towards making us winners again," Mr. Trump told employees assembled in front of the CIA's Memorial Wall for those have died in the covert service. "I love you. I respect you. There's nobody I respect more. You're going to do a fantastic job, and we're going to start winning again and you're going to be leading the charge." So far so good.

But Mr. Trump also couldn't resist turning the event into an extended and self-centered riff about the size of his campaign rallies, the times he's been on Time magazine's cover and how the "dishonest" media misreported his inaugural crowds. He all but begged for the political approval of the career CIA employees by suggesting most there had voted for him.

Such defensiveness about his victory and media coverage makes Mr. Trump look small and insecure. It also undermines his words to the CIA employees by suggesting the visit was really about him, not their vital work. The White House is still staffing up, but was it too much to ask National Security Adviser Michael Flynn's staff to write up five or 10 minutes of formal remarks that had something to do with the CIA?

Mr. Trump may think he's succeeded by breaking the normal rules of politics and that he can keep doing it. But he's now President, and Americans expect a level of seriousness and decorum that is consistent with the responsibility of the office. He should meet their high expectations, not live down to the media's.

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

On Inauguration Day, Washington offers portrait of a polarized America

The Christian Science Monitor

January 20, 2017 Washington— "We all want the same thing," President Donald Trump said Friday to members of Congress and other dignitaries. "We're all good people, whether you're a Republican or Democrat, it doesn't make any difference. We're going to get along."

President Trump's message of goodwill at the traditional post-inaugural congressional luncheon seemed more an expression of hope over reality, in a political system that has grown increasingly polarized over the years.

And as violence broke out on the streets of Washington Friday – away from the inaugural festivities but aimed at marring an otherwise orderly transfer of presidential power – it was clear that words alone will not be enough to heal the nation's divisions.

Protesters threw rocks, smashed windows, and lit small fires; police deployed tear gas and flash bangs. Six officers were injured, and 217 protesters were arrested. The last time there was large-scale unrest at an inauguration was in 1969, when antiwar protests led to dozens of arrests.

In all, it made for moments of anger and frustration, but violence didn't typify the day. Groups of people wearing "Make America Great Again" caps walked by anti-Trump groups wearing pink knitted hats – the headgear of choice for Saturday's big women's march – and seemed to largely ignore each other.

Inauguration Day, of course, brings many who wish to celebrate and support the man they sent to Washington. Theirs were expressions of joy on a day meant to celebrate a hallmark of American democracy – the peaceful transfer of power.

From left, Amy Kelash, Ann Kelash, and Jeb Strehlo call family members from National Mall after arriving on a bus from Gilman, Minn., for the 58th Presidential Inauguration on Friday in Washington.

Ann Hermes/The Christian Science Monitor | Caption

The Graham family – mom, dad, and college student son – drove in overnight from Bristol, Tenn., to show their support for the new president, waving Trump flags and wearing Trump hats and T-shirts.

None had ever attended an inauguration before. So why now?

"Because I'm a huge supporter of Donald Trump, and I think he'll make America great again," said Steve Graham, an electrician.

How? Mr. Graham has a ready list: fixing the economy, securing the border, strengthening the military. "I think he's a man of his word, and he'll hold true to it."

His wife, Darlene Graham, a realtor, says her No. 1 reason for

supporting Trump is “his stand with Jesus Christ and his support for the state of Israel.”

Mr. Graham expects quick action, and quick results. Ms. Graham gives Trump a year to improve the nation. And son Justin says he’ll assess Trump’s performance by the midterm elections in 2018.

Everybody, it seemed, was eager to express their opinions – with both supporters and detractors expressing outsize views about the man and what he can accomplish.

Polarized opinions

Mary Moga did not vote for Trump. Nor did she vote for Hillary Clinton. And yet, standing before the festooned Capitol as the seated inaugural audience began to break up, she described the experience as “electric” and “surreal.” She came, she said, because “it’s about the US.”

But she also came to march. Ms. Moga, who is from Seattle, and her cousin, Debby Burger of San Diego, both plan to take part in the Women’s March on Washington Saturday. Ms. Burger campaigned for Hillary Clinton.

Just as a reporter asked what they thought of the speech, Moga’s daughter – one of five children she’s raised – passed by answering, “It was a joke.”

Cousin Burger chimed in. “He’s promising all these things he never could do.”

“I just hope and pray he surrounds himself with quality people,” added Moga.

Spectators wait in the rain on the National Mall in Washington Friday before the presidential inauguration of Donald Trump.

Chad Suenram, standing rows away from where Donald Trump had just given his inauguration speech, came away feeling completely the opposite.

He says he was “blown away.” What he really liked was Trump’s message about “the positivity of the US prospering, of everyone growing together and just bringing back America.”

The promise of prosperity was the main reason Mr. Suenram, who has four kids, voted for Trump.

The Kansan, wearing an “All Lives Matter” button on his sweatshirt, says he came from “a struggle,” growing up in a trailer park. He started his own business in landscaping and has combined it with a foreclosure business. Through that, he’s seen a lot of families get kicked out of their homes.

“Like Barack Obama said, ‘It’s time for change,’ ” Suenram grinned. The businessman, who jumped on a plane at the last minute to get to Washington, echoed much of what Trump said in his inaugural speech. His greatest hope for the years ahead is that America prosper, “and for the wealth to come back to the common people.”

For Gordon Swanson, a retired Boeing employee from Everett, Wash., who flew in two days ago to celebrate, the joy of watching Trump came with a bitter note. He hadn’t put on his crisp, red “Make America Great Again” cap until he arrived at Union Station that morning, when inauguration revelers began to arrive.

“I knew I potentially would be challenged by somebody” who didn’t agree with Trump, he said. “It didn’t used to be this way,” he lamented, saying that the country had turned too far to the left under President Obama, whom he described as “negligent.”

This day was about the future, he said.

“I hope his nominee for the Supreme Court will have a big effect. I’m not so worried about myself, but I’ve got three grandkids,” he said, perched on a stool beside an eatery at Union Station, Washington’s main train station.

Beyond the pageant

Outside the secure inauguration area, the scene was dramatically different. By early afternoon, thousands of protesters walked down I Street toward Franklin Square waving posters for Black Lives Matter, Dakota Access Pipeline resistance, and lesbian, gay, transgender, and bisexual rights.

The march seemed orderly enough – thousands of people sticking to the streets while pedestrians took pictures from the sidewalks, some of them wearing "Make America Great Again" hats. But an undercurrent of hostility eventually broke through.

A nearby Starbucks and Bank of America ATM station had their glass windows shattered by protesters. Armed guards stood nearby to prevent looting, and stores put up makeshift “closed” signs – though customers were still inside.

Pro- and anti-Trump chants sprang up, with one protester telling a young man in a red hat, "Join us. We are doing this for you, too."

Protesters burn trash outside the offices of The Washington Post as they react to the swearing in of President Donald Trump in Washington Friday.

James Lawler Duggan/Reuters | Caption

Eventually, some of the demonstrators began throwing rocks and bottles at police officers. Newspaper vending machines outside The Washington Post were tipped over and set on fire. At other locations around the city, protesters tried to block access to various inaugural events, though there were no other reports of violence.

Beneath the tension was a sense of determination.

Hillary Klein was at the protests with her sister, who was dressed as Lady Liberty with a red sash reading “RESISTANCE.” To her, the day reinforced a sense of community.

“The one thing that has given me a real sense of hope since the election is the real sense that we do have each other's backs – people saying that to me, and me saying that to other people. [We’re] saying, 'I've got your back, and I've got *your* back, and we're going to get through this together,” Ms. Klein said. “It’s about making sure nobody feels alone in these moments.”

Everyone – “black people, white people, women, men, Muslims, old people” – wanted to take a picture with her sister, Melissa, dressed as Lady Liberty.

“She is a symbol of welcoming of immigrants. Wearing a costume of this kind helps people smile and feel a little togetherness,” Melissa said. “I think it is important to come out and be connected to other people today.”

The New York Times — After Success of Women’s March, a Question Remains: What’s Next? (UNE)

Susan Chira and Jonathan Martin

But the leaders believe that the common thread — revulsion and contempt for the man who is now president — may be powerful enough.

“Trump is the cure here,” said Senator Jeff Merkley, an Oregon Democrat and supporter of Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont during the Democratic primary who was invited to Mr. Brock’s conference. “He brings everybody together.”

Cecile Richards, the president of Planned Parenthood, a sponsor of the marches, saw another rallying cry: “Women in America are not going back.”

Ai-jen Poo, the director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, one of many partner groups of the march, said that organizers intended to study the protests in all 50 states to identify issues and recruit volunteers to gear up for the 2018 midterm elections. In Washington at the post-march panel, Planned Parenthood held a mass call-in event, where participants called their senators and urged them to protect their access to health care.

Even before the march, the left was seizing on panic over Mr. Trump to rally voters who were not so easily roused during the election.

In Macomb County, Mich. — the well-chronicled home of the Reagan Democrats and a county Mr. Trump decisively won — about 6,000 Democrats braved frigid temperatures on Jan. 15 to hear Mr. Sanders and Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, among others, defend the Affordable Care Act. It was one of dozens of similar rallies across the country.

The day before, so many constituents of Representative Mike Coffman, Republican of Colorado, packed an Aurora library to confront him over his support for repealing the health care law that he had to leave through a back door.

Yet it was telling that women galvanized the largest protests. Hillary Clinton’s defeat prompted soul-searching about why appeals to feminism did not carry the day. Now a wide range of groups that advocate for women are trying to capitalize on the momentum to turn an event into a sustained movement.

Todd Gitlin, a former president of Students for a Democratic Society and a scholar of political movements, noted that the civil rights and antiwar movements succeeded because of the organized networks that preceded and followed any single mass protest. “The march on Washington

in 1963 was the culmination of years of local activism, including civil disobedience, registering voters, protecting civil rights workers and voter education movements," he said. "Organizations need to be ready to receive the protesters when they're ready to take the next step. You need to be a full-service movement."

That effort, the organizers say, is already underway. At the panel Saturday night, representatives from the partner groups made 90-second pitches to the marchers, urging them to sign up for any of the organizations that appealed to them. The key, Ms. Poo said, was to build a continuous relationship with voters and volunteers so that they are not only approached before elections.

Tresa Undem, a partner in the polling firm PerryUndem, said that several years of convening focus groups had convinced her that women's issues can translate into political momentum. When she showed focus groups a list of specific restrictions on abortion and health care that had been passed on the local level, she said, they immediately began talking about how men were making those decisions. A poll she conducted that was released this month found that outrage at Mr. Trump's remarks was the primary predictor of whether women would take specific political actions.

Still, the women's movement faces several potential obstacles.

Leaders believe the only way to mobilize is to sweep in many disparate groups, which risks diluting their message. And the wounds inflicted by the election still run deep. Minority women in particular say they are concerned that the new attention to the white working class might mean de-emphasizing issues of race for fear of alienating white voters.

"The coalition for Obama was never sustained after the election," said Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, a professor of law at Columbia University and the University of California, Los Angeles. "There's been a failure to engage the base."

Democrats continue to debate strategy. A former governor of Michigan, Jennifer Granholm, urged the conference in Aventura to continue competing for white Rust Belt voters because, she later told reporters, the assumption that "demography is destiny" has "not helped us."

But at the panel on Saturday in Washington, organizers passionately endorsed the new demographic majority. They argued that without including the needs of minority, immigrant, Muslim and marginalized women, feminism would not rally a broad enough coalition, and Democrats would lose the presidency again.

They also noted that the march itself brought to prominence a multiracial, younger generation of potential leaders. "The rank and file of the women's movement has not looked like the leadership for a long time," Ms. Crenshaw said.

Ms. Poo argued that feminism, and the Democratic Party, should not have to choose. "There are so many women who are suffering and disenfranchised in rural communities, the Rust Belt," she said. "We want this movement to be fully inclusive."

Finally, attention to specific causes has not always translated into votes on the local level, where Republicans have won statehouses and governorships. Democrats need look no further than the past eight years to find a cautionary tale about what happens when the excitement over a national movement — Barack Obama and his historic presidency — is not sustained in midterm elections.

"In many parts of the country, the Democratic Party is a shell," Mr. Gitlin said.

Concern over this atrophy is what is prompting so many Democratic officials — including Mr. Obama himself and Eric H. Holder Jr., his former attorney general — to urge donors and activists to direct their time and money toward unglamorous causes such as redistricting and statehouse races.

The urgency of the Trump presidency, the organizers say, may help bridge the party's divides. "We together have to have the resources and creativity enough to solve problems for all of us," Ms. Poo said. "There's a lot of work to do to get there."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

O'Connor : Women March for Everything Under the Progressive Sun

Cori O'Connor

Jan. 22, 2017 3:42 p.m. ET

Washington

'You're so vain, you prolly think this march is about you," read a sign at Saturday's Women's March on Washington. I thought to myself: This *is* about him, isn't it?

I put that question to Breanne Butler, the march's global coordinator, who insisted the answer was no: "This isn't a march on Trump," she said. "It's a march on Washington," including Congress, the Supreme Court and "any other representatives." The message, according to Ms. Butler: "Hear our voices, we've been silenced. You need to take us into consideration. . . . We are America."

That sounded a lot like the message voters were sending when they made Donald Trump president: They felt marginalized and voiceless. Ms. Butler, a 27-year-old New Yorker on sabbatical from her job as a pastry chef, said she hopes progressives and Trump voters can acknowledge their differences and find common ground, although she later called Mr. Trump's election "a symptom of a bigger disease," namely "complacency."

Complacency didn't seem to be a problem for the self-proclaimed "nasty women"—and men—who made the pilgrimage to the capital. They numbered perhaps half a million. And if Ms. Butler's title, global coordinator, seemed grandiose for a march "on Washington," it wasn't. She had a hand in organizing more than 600 marches in every state and on all seven continents—yes, even Antarctica.

In Mr. Trump's hometown, an estimated 400,000 people marched down Second Avenue. Women in Japan marched for higher education; in Ethiopia, for clean water. The Antarctic march took place aboard a boat.

The marchers in Washington seemed to have a million messages. One big theme was reproductive rights. "Get your policies out of my exam room," read one sign defending Planned Parenthood. Others read "Save ACA, live long, and prosper," "My body my business," and "Reproductive rights are human rights." Many women carried signs depicting the female anatomy or wore crocheted pink cat ears—a pun on a vulgar term Mr. Trump once uttered.

There were plenty of other pet causes. "Racial justice = LGBTQ issues," read one sign. A popular poster featured a woman in an American-flag hijab and the words "We the people are greater than fear." Forty-year-old Pablo Rosa, who immigrated to the U.S. when he was 13, carried a sign that said "Mexico owes US nothing." Other posters called Mr. Trump "the Kremlin candidate" and "Putin's pawn," pleaded to "protect our planet," and proclaimed: "Public education is a civil right."

The mood on Saturday was upbeat—surprisingly so, given the divisions that emerged during the march's planning. Leading up to the march several posts on the organization's social media pages erupted in controversy. ShiShi Rose, a social media administrator for the march, wrote an Instagram post titled "White Allies Read Below." She instructed that "no ally ever got very far without acknowledgment of their privilege daily" and informed white women that they "don't just get to join because you're scared too. I was born scared."

The comments exploded. "This makes me not want to go now," one woman wrote. "This is all for all women! Not just black, white but brown, Muslim etc." Another observed that "women were suppressed throughout history. This is an event about women banding together, not tearing each other apart because you're bitter."

When I asked Ms. Butler about such exchanges, she said they had concerned her initially. But after reading one of the posts, she concluded its author had a point: "We aren't taking your history into consideration, and we need to."

It's clear that Mr. Trump's presidency is galvanizing progressive voters. A community organizer from New York told me that watching Mr. Trump choose his cabinet reminded her of playing "the opposite game," nominating "the worst people who could possibly run these departments."

Saturday was a comfort for many of the protesters, a succor for their Trump fears. But what will come of it? Organizers like to compare this protest to other women's marches, and reporters have even likened it to the civil-rights movement. But the difference between #WhyIMarch, which could be followed by any reason under the progressive sun, and women advocating for the right to vote is their ability to articulate their mission and gather behind a single goal.

"If we can all agree that we need to secure the rights of these people that have been silenced," Ms. Butler said, "I really see hope for our

country's future." But it remains unclear what single accomplishment, short of President Trump's removal from office, would give these protesters the feeling Susan B. Anthony would have had if she'd lived to see nationwide women's suffrage.

Ms. O'Connor is an assistant editorial features editor at the Journal.

Democrats see hope in women's marches — but wonder what comes next (UNE)

https://www.facebook.com/daveweigel?fref=ts

Alex Ellison, a senior at Boston's Emerson College, was thrilled by what she saw at the women's marches. She called her uncle, and Rep. Keith Ellison listened as the niece he'd struggled to get involved in the 2016 campaign described how inspiring it was to be surrounded by women, fighting for a cause.

"I was like — oh, *now* you're interested?" Ellison (D-Minn.) remembered with a laugh.

The scale of Saturday's marches, in Washington and elsewhere, surprised even the most optimistic boosters. Democrats who had tried and failed to generate enthusiasm for Hillary Clinton saw crowds conquering cities, as well as small towns she'd badly lost.

But after a day of massive protest, the party, and liberals more generally, are left to wonder what comes next.

Just as Republicans once adapted to the emergence of the tea party movement, Democrats are trying to figure out what a new — and much larger — mobilization will mean for the fights against Trump and congressional Republicans. Saturday's marches, which featured speeches from many leading Democrats, were not explicitly Democratic events. Ellison, like all but one leading candidate to run the Democratic National Committee, spent the hours around the march at a donor meeting in Florida.

At that meeting, talk of the march and viral photos of the crowd sizes and witty signs brightened up what had been conceived as a Democrats-in-the-wilderness summit. "People recognize the dangers Trump represents and they're energized to take back our country," said David Brock, who organized the Democracy Matters event in Florida. "We must channel yesterday's energy into action and I have no doubt we'll be successful. What the world saw yesterday was only the beginning of our resistance."

That resistance belongs to no one group. Women's March organizers created an intersectional event, its manifesto imagining a world where women "are free and able to care for and nurture their families, however they are formed, in safe and healthy environments free from structural impediments," but saying nothing about electoral politics.

Many Democrats agreed with Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, who said that Trump's election had "woken a sleeping giant." In 2014 and 2016, he'd watched Democrats in Maryland, then the Rust Belt, lose seemingly gift-wrapped elections as their base stayed home and the Republicans made gains. On Saturday, after he spoke to marchers, he joined them in a crowd that was too big to march through the city. The enthusiasm gap seemed to be vanishing before his eyes.

"There were a lot of people saying, 'We wish we had this in November,' " Van Hollen said. "We need to harness that energy in the weeks and months ahead. The Senate's going to be the main battleground; we need people to sustain what we saw on Saturday and fight the battles."

Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-Va.), who attended the march with his wife and daughter and opened his Capitol Hill office for the day, said his last experience with a protest that big was the counter-inaugural to President Richard Nixon's election.

"The next stop is organization," he said. "We need to correct the cracks in the political structure that didn't work as well as it should have in the last election and that means organization in every town and every small place and big space in the country. I sensed a certain fervor and determination in that regard that was very heartening."

Connolly urged the anti-Trump masses to set their sights on the 2018 midterms as a chance to put a real check on the administration and test "the ability of those who have a different point of view to organize and deliver."

If the past is any guide, he said, the contrast could be striking. In 2009, in the only gubernatorial races in the country, Virginia and New Jersey installed Republicans Robert F. McDonnell and Chris Christie. The year before, both states favored Barack Obama for president.

Rep. Jamie B. Raskin (D-Md.), who hosted 1,500 at a pre-march breakfast in Silver Spring, Md., said the outpouring of support for progressive politics at the march could change the political dynamics in Congress.

"The political environment is going to be much more hospitable to Republicans who break ranks with Trump rather than those who toe the party line," he said. "We know that the GOP places emphasis on party discipline. It will put a number of them in a tough spot."

Raskin said that if he were head of the Democratic National Committee — a job he does not want, he noted — he would launch a program to put the young people who attended their first big march Saturday to work.

"In terms of the Democratic Party, I think that our strategic pathway is clear," he said. "We have got to go on a consultant and pollster fast for a while. And we should put that money into organizing."

Rep. Don Beyer (D-Va.), who like Connolly and Raskin represents a heavily Democratic district, urged people to direct their discontent into "good and noble" causes, like Big Brothers Big Sisters and Meals on Wheels, and run for precinct-level offices.

"If we can channel all of that action into political action and specifically precinct action," he said, Democrats could take back the GOP-controlled Virginia House as well as the U.S. House and win the governor's race. Though Beyer said he wasn't predicting any outcomes, he said the steep drop-off in voter participation in a nonpresidential year presents the party with a clear challenge — one that amounts to a 98,000-vote difference in his Northern Virginia district alone.

"I deeply believe the world works by invitation," he said. "Something to be exploited from these rallies around the country is to turn them into political activists."

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Neera Tanden, the president of the Center for American Progress, who marched in Washington, predicted that "many of those women are calling congressional offices and will go to town halls. And all of them will vote in 2018. The energy is growing, not diluting. Every day, Trump builds the opposition."

Melissa Byrne, a candidate for DNC vice chairman, said that the larger-than-expected crowds showing up for protests will encourage even more people to become activists. But having organized for Obama's 2008 campaign and for the Occupy D.C. movement, she saw how the new activists would be tested even if the rallies grew in size.

"People are going to get frustrated, because you want your wins to come quickly," she said. "For people who are new to this, it takes a while to get that."

But the size of the rallies, and the speed with which they were put together, seemed like an early win to their participants. In the campaign, Trump had promised to blow up not just the Obama legacy but a long liberal consensus on issues such as immigration and consumer protection.

"It doesn't feel early to me," said Leigha LaFleur, 42, an Oregon delegate for Sen. Bernie Sanders (Vt.) who came to the march in Washington and knitted 13 pink pussyhats for friends. "I think people were wanting this on November 10. And even though he's been president since Friday, he's already been doing things that affect people's lives."

Women's marches: 'This is just the start'

The Christian Science Monitor

January 21, 2017 Washington—The sea of pink hats said it all.

Across the National Mall and surrounding streets Saturday in

Washington, a mass protest march by women (and men) far surpassed the expected crowd of 200,000. The message for President Trump, one day after his inauguration, was unmistakable: Women's rights and civil rights will not be forgotten.

All told, millions marched in solidarity at more than 600 events across the United States and around the world, amplifying the sense of alarm many feel about the controversial new president. But the dominant mood, at least in the nation's capital, was one of enthusiasm and camaraderie, as kindred spirits linked arms and held their protest signs high.

In Washington, high-profile speakers – from feminist icon Gloria Steinem to filmmaker Michael Moore to actress Ashley Judd – rallied the crowd with exhortations to step up their activism. Marching in Washington is great, they said, but more is needed: Volunteer for progressive groups, donate money, call members of Congress, run for office yourselves. Attendees, many wearing the pink knit hats that came to symbolize the protest, echoed that view.

"This is just the start," says Susan Linderman of Delaware, who took part in civil-rights protests in the 1960s.

Ms. Linderman says she has started contributing to such organizations as the American Civil Liberties Union and Planned Parenthood. But she wants to do more than just write checks. "I'll call Planned Parenthood on Monday to see if they need volunteers," she says.

What started as a call to action for women in a Facebook post the day after Mr. Trump's election last November caught fire into a larger protest movement that encompasses not just reproductive rights and gender equality, but also racial, ethnic, and religious prejudice, health care, climate change, immigration, and gay, lesbian, and transgender rights.

But at its core, it was a women's march, spurred on by Trump's rhetoric during the campaign, including disparaging comments about women journalists and politicians – including his election opponent, Hillary Clinton, whom he called a "nasty woman" – and the infamous video in which he bragged about sexually aggressive behavior.

After the election, as planning for the march took off, controversy ensued when organizers rejected the involvement of anti-abortion groups. This sparked debate over the meaning of modern-day feminism. Some women, too, rejected the idea of marching as a feel-good exercise that won't accomplish anything.

But around the world, the marches themselves amounted to something unique. In New York, as many as 400,000 people took to the street, according to the mayor's office. Los Angeles was "well past" 100,000, according to the police. Boston hit 175,000, the mayor's office said. Elsewhere, independent tallies were not available, but marches in Washington and Chicago were apparently in the hundreds of thousands with no reports of unrest or mass arrests.

"I participated in the Ferguson protests," said Peyton Galloway, a freshman at Northeastern University who attended the Boston event. "But this is the biggest and most organized I've ever joined. I've knocked on doors before, done stuff like that, but this is a first step in getting involved in such a big and thoughtful way."

Emily Crowley from Vermont knits a pink hat for protesters at the Women's March on Washington on Saturday.

Ann Hermes/The Christian Science Monitor | Caption

Here in Washington, the march was both cathartic and a potential catalyst for collaboration. Women came from all over the country, and welcomed the chance to meet fellow marchers and brainstorm ways to keep the energy alive. Some brought husbands, boyfriends, children, and grandchildren. Young couples pushed babies in strollers.

Humor was everywhere. "Look who the Russians Put In," said one sign, an allusion to charges that Russia meddled in the election. "Sad!" said other signs, mocking Trump tweets. Other signs were more serious. "Rest of the world: We are sorry," said one.

Saturday's marches may also be a gift to a demoralized Democratic Party, badly in need of energy and new candidates to fill its depleted bench. Some analysts suggest the marches could spark a "tea party of the left."

Some who gathered here weren't even Democrats. Connie of Greenwich, Conn., who declined to give her last name, was a registered Republican until last summer, when she changed her registration to independent. She fled the GOP after Trump won its presidential nomination, but she also didn't much like Mrs. Clinton (and voted for her anyway).

"I cried when Trump won, then the next day I heard about the march, and immediately booked a hotel room," says Connie, who came down with several busloads of women from Connecticut.

She hopes this march helps people understand something important: voting matters. "People didn't think their one vote makes a different, but it does," she says. "They add up."

Her friend Ingrid, also from Greenwich, has been thinking, too, about the meaning of Saturday's march. "I told my husband, 'It can't stop here. You think of ways, I'll think of ways to continue this,'" she says. "We need to get involved in local government, get involved with a women's group. Something. But you have to keep the mission moving forward. This can't be the end of it."

Saturday morning began with an air of anticipation. In northwest Washington's tony Friendship Heights neighborhood, the metro station was overflowing with women in pink hats. But passengers welcomed more onto the car at each stop.

"This is great," said one man. "People are alive, they are awake."

Crowds gather next to the National Mall in Washington Saturday.

Ann Hermes/The Christian Science Monitor | Caption

By 11 a.m., the National Mall in front of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum was chaotic. Thousands walked in different directions, unsure of which way to go. But regardless of the pushing, big crowds, and long lines for Porta-Potties, people took time to say hello to strangers, complimenting them on clever signs.

A group of Latina women carried a sign and shouted in Spanish.

"Viva la chicas Latina!" yelled a white woman nearby. The group of girls laughed at her broken Spanish but gave her a high-five.

Near the Washington Monument, a black man rode a bike with an egg crate filled with mini water bottles roped to the back. He offered a bottle to anyone who walked by. One woman insisted on paying.

"I don't want any money!" he exclaimed. "Really! Give that money to another organization that needs it."

At the march, people vowed to be bolder about their beliefs.

Melissa Mack Maruska says she will stop hiding her political beliefs in her small town in northeast Pennsylvania. ("Trump country," she says.) She also plans to donate to a different organization, such as the National Resource Defense Council, the Children's Defense Fund, and the Southern Poverty Law Center, every month for the next year.

After the election, "my Trump-supporting friend told me that I need to just move on, put on my big-girl pants," says Ms. Maruska. "And I said, 'All right. I'm putting my big-girl pants on and these pants are going marching.' "

Manique Beckman shows off her protest sash at the Women's March on Washington Saturday.

Ann Hermes/The Christian Science Monitor | Caption

Wanda McLendon, who lives in the D.C. area, also marched, but her followup plan doesn't involve money.

"I plan to keep marching on with kindness and love toward others," said Ms. McLendon, who hopes the positive spirit at the march will carry forward.

"Just like all those signs that people have that say 'Love Trumps Hate,' well, you got to put that into practice," she says. "So when you see someone that is not like you – like when I see someone that is not black doing something mean – I need to trump up some love…. Love is an action word. A lot of times that is a hard thing to do. Hate … is the easy thing to do."

Brian Yoder of Charlottesville, Va., is thinking about his young son Andre's future. He says he brought Andre to the march, because he wants him to respect women and not assume that the president's behavior is acceptable.

"He is going to meet people that share some of the same values that our president does and I want him to understand that some of the things he has done are inappropriate," says Mr. Yoder. "I'm an educated white male, I don't have anything to worry about. Trump has my back, but he doesn't have everybody else's. So it is on me and everybody else to have everybody else's backs."

Arjuan Sharaf, Abrar Bazara, and Noor Kabbani, three young Muslim women from northern Virginia, want to keep disproving stereotypes about Islam.

"We have to go out and show the world what we have in our hands. And what I mean by that is our religion. People have the wrong idea of our religion and how it suppresses women," says Ms. Bazara.

"And in fact it really doesn't," adds Ms. Sharaf. "So we came out to show people that we are all equal,

regardless of race, religion, sexuality – everything."

Staff writer Amelia Newcomb contributed to this report from Boston.

Blow : We Are Dissidents; We Are Legion

Charles M. Blow

The Wall Street Journal reported that the speech was partly written by Steve Bannon, Trump's white-nationalist chief strategist and senior counselor. At one point in the speech, Trump delivered the bewildering line: "When you open your heart to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice." Patriotism does not drive out prejudice; to the contrary, it can actually enshrine it. No one was more patriotic than our founding fathers, and yet most of the prominent founding fathers were slave owners.

Trump set forth a portentous proposition on Friday. Saturday's Women's Marches across the country and around the world answered with a thundering roar.

The marches, whose participants vastly outnumbered inauguration attendees, offered a stinging rebuke to the election of a man who threatens women's rights and boasts of grabbing women's genitalia.

And the marches, which included quite a few men and boys as well, also represented more than that. They were a rebuke of bigotry and a call for equality and inclusion. They demonstrated the awesome power of individual outrage joined to collective action. And it was a message to America that the majority did not support this president or his plans and will not simply tuck tail and cower in the face of the threat. This was an uprising; this was a fighting back. This was a resistance.

Members of Congress, laboring under the delusion that they operate with a mandate and feeling compelled to rubber-stamp Trump's predilections, should heed well the message those marches sent on Saturday: You are on notice. America is ticked off.

There has been much hand-wringing and navel gazing since the election about how liberalism was blind to a rising and hidden populism, about how identity politics were liberals' fatal flaw, about how Democrats needed to attract voters who were willing to ignore Trump's racial, ethnic and religious bigotry, his misogyny, and his xenophobia.

I call bunk on all of that.

I have given quite a few speeches since the election and inevitably some variation of this "reaching out" issue is raised in the form of a question, and my answer is always the same: The Enlightenment must never bow to the Inquisition.

Recognizing and even celebrating individual identity groups doesn't make America weaker; it makes America stronger. Acknowledging that identity groups have not always been — and indeed, continue not to be — treated equally in this country should not be a cause for agitation, but a call to action. Parity is not born of forced erasure but rather respectful subsumption.

Janelle Monáe, singer and star of the acclaimed film "Hidden Figures," put it this way at the march in Washington: "Continue to embrace the things that make you unique, even if it makes others uncomfortable. You are enough. And whenever you're feeling doubt, whenever you want to give up, you must always remember to choose freedom over fear."

If my difference frightens you, you have a problem, not me. If my discussion of my pain makes you ill at ease, you have a problem, not me. If you feel that the excavation of my history presages the burial of yours, then you have a problem, not me.

It is possible that Trump has reactivated something President Obama couldn't maintain, and Hillary Clinton couldn't fully tap into: A unified, mission-driven left that puts bodies into the streets. The women's marches sent a clear signal: Your comfort will not be built on our constriction. We are America. We are loud, "nasty" and fed up. We are motivated dissidents and we are legion.

Dionne : Why millions gathered to say 'no' to Trump

Within 48 hours, we learned that Donald John Trump intends to govern as the same fiercely angry man who shook the country in 2016. He confirmed that his administration intends to show no regard for norms — or facts.

His opposition has drawn the obvious conclusion. Its only options are to contain the damage Trump can do, to restrain him in his use of power, and, eventually, to defeat him.

Act Four newsletter

The intersection of culture and politics.

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In his inaugural address, Trump offered no outreach to his adversaries with a take-no-prisoners message. They heard it, and were ready to return the favor. Saturday's Women's March on Washington and its counterparts in cities and towns across the country drew millions who signaled plainly that they would not be cowed into silence or demobilized into a sullen indifference.

There was a jubilance in the Washington gathering because so many were grateful to each other for showing up in such large numbers. Those who had spent Jan. 20 in gloom spent Jan. 21 experiencing a sense of relief: In the face of the political troubles to come, they would have allies and friends ready to act.

On Jan. 20, 2017, President Trump took the oath of office, pledging in his inaugural address to embark on a strategy of "America first." Here are key moments from that speech. On Jan. 20, 2017, President Trump pledged to embark on a strategy of "America first." Here are key moments from that speech. (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

(Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

If power shifted decisively Friday to Donald Trump and a Republican-controlled Congress, passion switched sides as well. As the marches showed, the political energy in the country is now arrayed against Trump and his agenda.

Republicans no longer have Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton to kick around. For years, they were able to direct the country's discontents toward a president they loathed and then a Democratic nominee they disliked even more.

With control of both elected branches, the GOP, including Trump, *is* the establishment. Over time, this will make the faux populist anti-establishment appeal of Trump's inaugural address ring empty.

It was a speech that offered a dark and gloomy view that cast the world's richest nation as a victim of the rest of the world. He spoke of "carnage" in the country and declared: "We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies and destroying our jobs."

Trump invoked a radical nationalism not heard from any president of either party in the post-World War II era. His doctrine owes far more to the ideology of European far-right movements favored by his senior advisor Steve Bannon than to the views of American presidents from Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy to Ronald Reagan, both George Bushes and Barack Obama.

"We will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world," Trump said, "but we do so with the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first." If some might see this as refreshing honesty about how countries actually behave, it was hard to escape the idea that Trump's "America First" doctrine foreshadowed a willingness to destroy international systems, built in large part by the United States, that have, on the whole, protected us and advanced our values.

And for those who worry about Trump's devotion to democratic values, there was this disconcerting sentence: "We must speak our minds openly, debate our disagreements honestly, but always pursue solidarity."

Solidarity is wonderful. But the word can look like a threat when used in a way that seems to subordinate free speech and open debate. More disquieting, the nature of this solidarity will be defined by a man who now possesses awesome powers and has shown only disrespect for his foes and for an independent media.

By Saturday, Trump and his press secretary, Sean Spicer, had ratified these concerns. Expressing rage at the media for pointing out how relatively small Trump's crowds were — a hint of how shallow his movement's roots might be — both

Spicer and Trump lied outright in exaggerating the numbers of those who attended Trump's inauguration in comparison with the throngs that celebrated Obama's.

Challenged Sunday by Chuck Todd of NBC's "Meet the Press" as to why Spicer was asked to go to the podium and offer falsehoods, Kellyanne Conway, Trump's senior counselor, came up with a sound bite that George Orwell might have been embarrassed to include in "1984." It will go down as a defining phrase of the Trump presidency.

"Sean Spicer, our press secretary," she replied, "gave alternative facts."

"*Alternative facts*?" an astonished Todd exclaimed, and then he spoke the truth: "Alternative facts are not facts. They're falsehoods."

Fear of a presidency willing to declare that up is down and down is up is why so many rallied to say a very loud "no."

Rowe-Finkbeiner : Women, this is our rallying cry

Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner is executive director and co-founder of MomsRising.org. She is speaking at the Women's March on Washington. The views expressed are her own.

*(CNN)*The Women's March on Washington started as a trickle, then turned into a wave and then grew into a tsunami. Here's where it started: On Election Night, thousands of Hillary Clinton supporters at the Javits Center in New York stood cheering, buoyed by the polls, even before the final vote tallies came in.

Silence crept through the massive room as the vote returns finally appeared on jumbotrons on the walls. People pulled up calculator apps on their phones to see if somehow, some way the states could add up to victory. When the calculations came back, they stood looking at the intact glass ceiling above like it betrayed them, waiting for a crack, an explanation. But that didn't happen. I was there with my daughter waiting, too. You could hear a pin drop.

It was a runaway, unexpected, complete Electoral College victory by Donald Trump, a man with a history of brushing off saying things such as "grab them by the pussy" about women. Meanwhile, Clinton won the popular vote by nearly 3 million votes. But while the glass ceiling didn't shatter that night, something else cracked open. As Leonard Cohen wrote, "There's a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in."

The idea of the march was born on Facebook in the aftermath of Clinton's loss, and it is now bringing women together across our nation through more than 600 local "sister" marches and one massive march in Washington that could exceed the attendance of the Trump inauguration. To be clear, the Electoral College win was nowhere near a mandate. Losing the popular vote by nearly 3 million votes, as Trump did, means there is no basis on which to claim a mandate. The election, though, did serve as a wake-up call for many on a number of levels:

1. Every vote matters. Our recent election had the lowest voter turnout in 20 years.

2. Take nothing, no right for granted. The civil rights page on the White House disappeared the moment our new President took office.

3. Stay close to your friends to organize, knit change and hold elected officials accountable. That "grab them by the pussy" statement by Trump? He's now being held accountable. Hundreds of thousands of women are now knitting, wearing and sharing #PussyHats as they march.

Here's what some of the many MomsRising members who are attending have to say about why they are marching:

"As a Latina, public school teacher, head of household and social advocate I must be part of the resistance. We will make our voices heard! We will make changes for us and future generations." -- *Andrea from Florida*

"Three generations from our family will be marching -- this is a historical moment. Never has it seemed so imperative to speak out and be counted. No longer willing to be part of a silent majority!" -- *Linda from Washington*

"A bunch of my neighbors and friends are going. My family made some Trump puppets. We plan to bring the puppets and carry signs that say 'Not My Puppet.' Some of us are marching to keep the (Affordable Care Act) in place. For me, it was the Trump tweets against John Lewis. He went way too far. I am outraged. Which line will he cross next?" -- *Anne from California*

"As a 69-year-old black woman I must march to preserve the benefits we received from marching and protesting for civil rights. I have daughters and a granddaughter who need the opportunities that the incoming administration and their state and local cronies are vowing to destroy. I will take my medications, dress appropriately and join other women and our supporters to show the world that we will not sit quietly and let others control our voices, our bodies and our futures." -- *Sheila from Virginia*

"At the Women's March on Washington, I'll be a mom rising in several ways: I'm attending with my daughter, and she's pregnant with the next generation." -- *Nancy from Wisconsin*

"With the enthusiasm of a grandmother (I am 73) and a granddaughter (Maggie is 12) to share an adventure, we will board a bus in St. Paul, Minnesota, on Friday morning, attempt to sleep along the way, arrive in DC and march. Then we will re-board the bus and repeat the attempts to sleep, to return to Minnesota on Sunday afternoon. We march for those in our family tree who could not vote, we march for the protection of young women, which my granddaughter will be sooner than later; we march for the poor and the powerless, the voiceless and the voter! Thank you for asking for our story." -- *Barbara from Minnesota*

"My autistic son and I will virtually march in solidarity, because, 'Until all are free, none are free!' (MLK Jr.) #WhyIMarch" -- *Jessica from Tennessee*

"We will be marching in Fairbanks, Alaska, despite 40 below temperatures because we care. We care about human rights, we care about women's rights, we care about LGBT rights, we care about health care as a human right, we care about our environment and how we leave the planet for our grandchildren, we care about Social Security, we care about justice for all, we care about black lives, we care about immigrants, we care about refugees. We care!" -- *Kathy from Alaska*

"I'm 62 years old and I've never protested anything before. However, I'll be joining my neighbors in Asheville, North Carolina, to make the point that our president does not have a mandate, rather his immaturity is scaring even people like me into action." -- *Sherrie from North Carolina*

My 101-year-old grandma fought for women's rights with the same fierce determination that led her to take driving lessons on her 95th birthday -- 18-wheeler truck driving lessons, wearing kitten heels. My great grandma and mom fought for women's rights, too. And my son and daughter are marching Saturday. Our nation is generations into this fight. And we're absolutely not turning back now.

The march is a release valve, an avenue to be heard, a rallying cry. And people are answering each other's call, bringing voices together, many for the first time through friends telling friends until this historic march was born.

With executive order, Trump tosses a 'bomb' into fragile health insurance markets (UNE)

https://www.facebook.com/eilperin

President Trump's executive order instructing federal agencies to grant relief to constituencies affected by the Affordable Care Act has begun to reverberate throughout the nation's health-care system, injecting further uncertainty into an already unsettled insurance landscape.

The political signal of the order, which Trump signed just hours after being sworn into office, was clear: Even before the Republican-led Congress acts to repeal the 2010 law, the new administration will move swiftly to unwind as many elements as it can on its own — elements that have changed how 20 million Americans get health coverage and what benefits insurers must offer some of their customers.

But the practical implications of Trump's action on Friday are harder to decipher. Its language instructs all federal agencies to "waive, defer, grant exemptions from or delay" any

part of the law that imposes a financial or regulatory burden on those affected by it. That would cover consumers, doctors, hospitals and other providers, as well as insurers and drug companies.

The prospect of what could flow from pulling back or eliminating administrative rules — including no longer enforcing the individual mandate, which requires Americans to get coverage or pay an annual penalty, and ending health plans' "essential benefits" — could affect how many people sign up on the Affordable Care Act marketplaces before open enrollment ends Jan. 31 for 2017 coverage, as well as how many companies decide to participate next year.

Robert Laszewski, president of the consulting firm Health Policy and Strategy Associates, called the executive order a "bomb" lobbed into the law's "already shaky" insurance market. Given the time it will take Republicans to fashion a replacement, he expects that federal and state insurance exchanges will continue to operate at least through 2018.

As Republicans in Congress gear up to repeal the Affordable Care Act, two Pennsylvanians reflect on their different experiences under Obamacare. As Republicans in Congress gear up to repeal the Affordable Care Act, two Pennsylvanians reflect on their different experiences under Obamacare. (Alice Li/The Washington Post)

(Alice Li/The Washington Post)

"Instead of sending a signal that there's going to be an orderly transition, they've sent a signal that it's going to be a disorderly transition," said Laszewski, a longtime critic of the law, which is also known as Obamacare. "How does the Trump administration think this is not going to make the situation worse?"

[Trump signs executive order that could effectively gut Affordable Care Act's individual mandate]

Teresa Miller, Pennsylvania's insurance commissioner, said Saturday that several insurers on her state's exchange "seriously considered leaving the market last year" and that Trump's action could propel them to indeed abandon it in 2018. In fact, she added, some have raised the possibility of withdrawing from the ACA's exchanges during 2017, which would mean consumers could keep their plans but no longer receive federal subsidies to help them afford the coverage.

"That would create a nightmare scenario," Miller said.

As of this year, nearly a third of all counties nationwide have just one insurer in the federal marketplace, and almost two-thirds have two or fewer insurers.

The White House did not return requests for comment over the weekend.

On Capitol Hill, Republican leaders offered cautious praise for the president's executive order. Yet more broadly, the GOP remains in a state of uncertainty on health care, with unresolved questions about the path forward.

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), the chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, was briefed on the details of Trump's order only Thursday, according to a GOP aide who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe private talks.

Alexander said in a statement late Friday that Trump was "right to make the urgent work of rescuing Americans trapped in a collapsing Obamacare system a top priority on his first day in office."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), speaking on "Fox News Sunday with Chris Wallace," focused primarily on what Trump could do through executive action.

"President Obama implemented a lot of Obamacare himself, so President Trump will be able to undo a lot of it himself," McConnell said. Asked whether he knew what the new president's replacement plan is, he said Senate Republicans are working with the administration "to have an orderly process."

The GOP-led House and Senate have passed a budget measure that was designed to serve as a vehicle for repealing key parts of the law. But they have yet to rally around a consensus idea for when and what to do to replace it. They were placed under further pressure to act quickly after Trump vowed "insurance for everybody" in a recent interview with The Washington Post.

A key Trump ally said Sunday that the president's decision to sign the order on his first day in office, coupled with his recent comments about moving swiftly on repealing and replacing the law, has applied pressure on GOP lawmakers to act faster than they might have initially planned.

"I think Trump has consistently moved that needle with the mindset of our conference," Rep. Chris Collins (R-N.Y.) said.

[Pressure mounts on GOP for an Obamacare replacement]

Democratic leaders, however, are casting the executive order as evidence that Republicans are in a state of disarray on health care.

"They don't know what to do. They can repeal, but they don't have a plan for replace," Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (N.Y.) said in an interview that aired Sunday morning on CNN's "State of the Union." "The president's executive order just mirrored that."

At least publicly, the insurance industry's reaction has been muted. America's Health Insurance Plans spokeswoman Kristine Grow, whose group represents nearly 1,300 insurers, said in an email Saturday that it is "too soon to tell" what the executive order will mean for the industry.

"There is no question the individual health-care market has been challenged from the start," Grow said. "The president said he would take swift action to move our country to improve it, and he has."

A key question following Trump's order is what actions Republican-led states might take to withdraw from key provisions of the law. Florida Gov. Rick Scott's (R) office said Saturday that he was reviewing his options.

Jackie Schutz, a Scott spokeswoman, said the governor "appreciates" that the new administration is "swiftly taking action." But as to how and when Scott would seek to take advantage of it, "we're still looking into it to see what it specifically means to Florida," Schutz said.

Ohio Gov. John Kasich (R), who met with Senate Finance Committee Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah) and nearly a dozen other GOP governors on Thursday to discuss the future of Medicaid, said afterward that there are "some fundamental things that we can do that can settle people down so they are not worried they are going to lose their coverage but that at the same time bring significant changes to the Obamacare package."

Kasich, who expanded Medicaid in his state under the Affordable Care Act, said that one option he favors is paring Medicaid coverage to people with incomes up to 100 percent of the poverty level, rather than the current 138 percent, and then letting those above 100 percent go on the marketplace to get coverage.

Asked whether he could guarantee that none of his constituents would lose health-care coverage, Kasich responded, "I can't guarantee anything."

And more radical changes could be coming to Medicaid, the program that provides care for 70 million low-income Americans. In keeping with much-contemplated GOP proposals, senior Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway said on Sunday TV talk shows that the president intends to turn the entitlement program into block grants to states.

Even if the new administration is eager to grant waivers to states, it does not have the political appointees in place at the Health and Human Services and Treasury departments to do so.

But timing is important. While the exact deadline varies depending on the state, insurers generally must decide by the spring whether to participate in Affordable Care Act marketplaces for the next year and, if so, propose the rates they would like to charge. Their decisions could be complicated if the president's order results in rule changes that affect the benefits those health plans must include – or alters rules in other ways that, in turn, prompt fewer healthy customers to seek coverage through the marketplaces.

Chris Jennings, who served as a senior White House adviser on health care in the Clinton and Obama administrations, said that in the health-care arena, "more than any other domestic policy, details matter. Plans, they live off a comma, or an incentive, or a disincentive, or a penalty, or an enforcement mechanism."

Ceci Connolly, president and CEO of the Alliance of Community Health Plans, said her members are in a particularly difficult position because they are unlike large national companies that can "pick and choose" which markets they operate in under the federal exchange.

"Local nonprofit plans are in their communities, so they can't look around for certain markets and pull out of ones that they don't like," said Connolly, who added that her group's "biggest concern" is that some consumers might stop paying their premiums if they believe they will not be penalized for lacking coverage. That could lead to hospital and doctor visits that would not be reimbursed, which then would impose costs on providers and insurers more broadly.

With fewer than 10 days to go in the current enrollment period, Mila Kofman, executive director of the D.C. Health Benefit Exchange Authority, said that "all of this discussion of whether or not people will have access to affordable quality health insurance is very unsettling."

Some residents have asked Kofman whether she can assure them they will get the same health benefits if Congress and the administration overhaul the system in the coming months. “I tell them, ‘Sign up. We will certainly do everything we can to ensure that you’ll have access to quality health insurance.’ ”

Yet Mona Mangat, a solo practitioner in allergy and immunology in St. Petersburg, Fla., is not sure what to say when patients ask her whether they will be able to afford the kind of prescriptions and services they have taken advantage of under the Affordable Care Act.

“Unfortunately, I don’t have an answer for them,” Mangat said. “I say, ‘Oh my God, I don’t know what’s going to happen.’”

John Wagner and Amy Goldstein contributed to this report.

The New York Times

Trump’s Vow to Repeal Health Law Revives Talk of High-Risk Pools (UNE)

Reed Abelson

Now, after President Trump and the Republican-controlled Congress have vowed to repeal and replace the health law, one of the most vexing questions is whether people like Ms. Fitzgerald will be covered.

About 27 percent of people under 65 are thought to have some sort of pre-existing condition that will most likely leave them without individual insurance if the law is repealed, according to a recent study. The guarantee of coverage has already become a rallying cry for people who want to keep the law.

The issue “is the third rail” for the Republicans, said Michael Turpin, a longtime health industry executive.

Before the law, a fairly typical life event — like a divorce or the loss of a job — and a relatively minor medical condition could upend a person’s health coverage options. Stories of sick people unable to get coverage when they needed it most were legion.

Mr. Trump insists he wants to keep the pre-existing requirement for insurers, and other top Republicans say people who want coverage should not be turned away. Details about how they will cover people with existing medical conditions have not yet emerged, but many lawmakers have started pushing an idea — known as high-risk pools — that left many people uncovered or with strict limits to their coverage in the past.

The challenge for lawmakers is this: How do you get insurers to cover people who will definitely need costly medical care — and do so without making insurance too expensive for everyone?

The Affordable Care Act addresses that question by requiring everyone to get coverage or face a tax penalty. That mandate is meant to increase the number of healthy people who have insurance, distributing the costs of caring for those who are sick across a wider population. The thinking is that if enough healthy people sign up, the costs of sick people will be offset for insurers.

Top Republicans, though, say the system is not working and point to double-digit price increases for premiums.

“There is a better way to fix that problem without giving everybody else all these massive premium increases,” the House speaker, Paul D. Ryan, said at a recent televised forum.

Finding a fix is far from simple. Before the law was passed, insurance companies evaluated the health of each person applying for coverage before offering a policy, and priced the plan to reflect the possible cost of care. The companies wanted to minimize the risk of losing money by paying for costly medical care for too many of their customers.

Often, insurers offered no options to people with pre-existing conditions, because they considered the potential costs to be too high. As a result, 35 states had high-risk pools, the program again on the lips of top lawmakers, including Mr. Ryan.

The high-risk programs offered a separate insurance pool for people with potentially expensive medical conditions. The idea is that by separating sick people from the majority of people who are healthy, insurers could offer cheaper rates to the healthy people. Insurers could charge higher prices to those with existing medical conditions, but they would also rely on other sources of funding, including from the government, to cover their costs.

The system worked for Dan Nassimbene and his wife, who had breast cancer but is in remission. They enrolled in Colorado’s high-risk pool for three years. She paid about $375 a month for a plan that covered most of her treatments.

In 2014, though, the high-risk pool was closed, and Mr. Nassimbene bought a plan that met the requirements of the Affordable Care Act. The cheapest plan he could buy for himself and his wife cost around $900 a month and came with a family deductible of around $12,000, much higher than it was before. His income was too high for him to receive any government subsidies, which help about 80 percent of people buying such plans.

“I had coverage but no access,” said Mr. Nassimbene, 55. He has since switched to a Christian health care sharing ministry, in which members cover one another’s medical bills. It does not qualify as coverage under the law.

In many cases, the high-risk pools were overburdened financially, leaving many people without insurance or with tight restrictions on coverage. Insurers refused to cover the individuals who were likely to have the highest expenses, like those who had H.I.V. or serious kidney disease, and the pools lost money.

Many states had to turn applicants away — in some states, only a small percentage of those who applied received coverage — and the insurance was sharply limited to control spending.

In Washington, over 80 percent of the people referred to the state’s high-risk pool never got health insurance, said Mike Kreidler, the state’s insurance commissioner. In California, which relied on lawmakers to allocate money as part of the state budget, there was a waiting list, recalled Richard Figueroa, who was a senior administrator for the program.

The pool operated on a first-come-first-served basis, Mr. Figueroa said, without regard to people’s income or the severity of their medical condition.

“There were people literally dying on the waiting list,” he said.

In addition, most of the states offering coverage had caps on payments for medical care. Washington’s annual maximum was $2 million, while California’s limit was $75,000 a year. Under the Affordable Care Act, insurance plans cannot have such a limit.

In California, the program dwindled away until it served only 6,300 at the end of 2011.

Dennis Carr, for example, worked as an independent real estate agent when the financial markets crashed in 2008. He had savings, but he eventually had to drop his Blue Cross plan because his income had tailed off and he could not afford it. Mr. Carr, who is now 51, said his goal was to resume coverage as soon as he was financially secure.

When he reapplied to the same insurer a few months later, he was rejected — and then rejected again by another insurer because of his asthma and a sinus condition.

“It was just a real, real slap,” Mr. Carr said.

He was directed to California’s high-risk pool but found the premiums too high. He moved to Mexico as a way to afford his medications. He now lives in Phoenix, where he has coverage through an employer.

“For all the thousands of people who self-selected out because they couldn’t afford it, it broke our hearts on a daily basis,” Mr. Figueroa, the California official, said.

For others, the coverage offered by the high-risk pools was too limited for them to receive the care they needed.

Beth Martinez, 40, who has multiple sclerosis, was forced to join Texas’ high-risk pool when she and her husband moved to Austin. Only six visits to the doctor were covered, and she found she could not afford the annual M.R.I. recommended to monitor her disease because of her high deductible. At one point, she said, she went four years without an M.R.I.

She and her husband now live in California and are covered through private plans offered through that state’s marketplace, which meet all the health law’s requirements for pre-existing conditions. Because she can work only part time, she is eligible for federal subsidies, which bring the couple’s costs to $70 a month. Ms. Martinez had paid $275 a month in the Texas pool to cover herself, and her husband was uninsured.

She now gets the M.R.I.s she needs under her plan, and her policy even pays for physical therapy, which allows her to put in longer hours at her job as a hairstylist and makeup artist.

That sort of quality coverage, Ms. Martinez said, is a big departure

from what she had through the high-risk pool, adding that "it was definitely some of the worst insurance I had in my life."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

President Donald Trump Makes Revised Trade Deals an Early Priority (UNE)

William Mauldin

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WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump is taking immediate steps to reorder U.S. economic alliances in his first days in office, setting up meetings with leaders from Mexico and Canada on North American affairs and hosting U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May this Friday to lay the groundwork for a trade pact with London.

Just two days after taking office, Mr. Trump said he would follow through on plans to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement, or Nafta, the two-decade-old deal that binds the U.S. economy to Canada and Mexico.

Mr. Trump's triumph in industrial states in November, which proved key to his election, was helped by his set of economic principles, and an "America First" message, which he emphasized in his inaugural address on Friday.

In his campaign he blamed lackluster growth on bad trade deals with China, Mexico and other countries that ship more to the U.S. than it sends back to them. He has threatened to withdraw the U.S. from the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade deal that Congress never ratified, and his advisers say the goal is to use the threat of tariffs to win concessions from some countries, while negotiating smaller bilateral deals with like-minded strategic allies such as the U.K.

That approach will be on display when Mr. Trump meets Mrs. May to address the latest shift in the "special relationship" with the U.K. Negotiating and ratifying a deal with London won't come easily or quickly, and serious procedural and political roadblocks could postpone any such pact for many years or derail it entirely.

Still, even a year ago the prospect of a deal would have been inconceivable while the U.K. remained firmly in Brussels's orbit as part of the European Union and then-President Barack Obama was seeking a broader agreement with the entire EU before negotiations stalled last year. Mr. Obama, who also wanted to enact the Pacific trade agreement, warned Britain would have to go to the "back of the queue" if it voted to leave Europe.

Last week Mrs. May made it clear she wanted a firm break with the EU, while Mr. Trump's inauguration means she has a willing partner who prefers targeted, bilateral trade agreements to the multilateral affairs his predecessor sought for their economies of scale and strategic heft.

Mrs. May's key objective on her visit to Washington will be to prepare the way for a trade deal that would buttress the U.K. as it prepares for intense negotiations on exiting the EU. She said Tuesday the U.K. would pull out of the EU's single market, where nearly half of U.K. exports are sent, but she also set out a goal of keeping the U.K. economy growing through expanded trade and closer economic links with non-European countries, including the U.S.

For now, the U.K.'s most important negotiation is with Brussels, and the new emphasis on ties with Washington may be in part an effort to remind Europe that London has strong links to other parts of the globe. "She's trying to obtain and maximize leverage over Brussels," said Dan Ikenson, who leads the trade studies center at the Cato Institute, a Washington think tank.

The U.S. also has more pressing negotiations than a U.K. deal. Mr. Trump on Sunday said he would follow through with campaign pledges to overhaul Nafta, the trade agreement that became almost a dirty word in the 2016 campaign. "We're going to start some negotiations having to do with Nafta," he said, adding that he would meet with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as well as President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico.

Mexico City and Ottawa have said they are open to talks on Nafta, and a spokesman for Mr. Trudeau on Sunday noted the "depth" of U.S.-Canada economic ties and said the two leaders pledged to meet soon.

Mr. Trump's advisers are considering pressing for changes to Nafta's rules for the auto industry in ways that would require more of a car to be produced in North America and could possibly mandate that a significant portion of vehicles be produced in the U.S. in order to be shipped around the bloc duty free, according to two people familiar with the plans.

With the U.K., American business and farm groups would probably want to be sure that British tariffs on their goods don't rise after the country exits the European Union.

So far many U.S. business leaders have been only lukewarm to a trade agreement with the U.K., since any potential profit from such a deal could be erased by barriers that spring up due to Brexit.

"Until the context of that becomes much clearer, it's hard to have a meaningful discussion of the contours of a U.S.-U.K. free-trade agreement," said Mike Froman, former U.S. trade representative under Mr. Obama.

For example, many large U.S. firms will have to decide if it makes sense to keep their European headquarters in the U.K., since the British offices could face new regulatory or other barriers on the Continent. Many companies and farm groups had hoped Mr. Obama would succeed in a broad trans-Atlantic tie-up that included the European Union, retaining the U.K. in the framework if it exited.

Under European Union laws, nothing can be signed or formally agreed to with another country before the U.K. leaves, which is on course to happen in March 2019. U.S. officials may want to wait to see what kind of relationship the U.K. will have with the EU, particularly on financial issues, before coming to any agreement.

"It's about timing, and it's about watching to see what happens between the EU and the U.K.," said Myron Brilliant, head of international affairs at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the country's biggest business lobby. "We're supportive in principle."

Mrs. May's trade principles don't overlap much with Mr. Trump's. She backs widespread trade liberalization, while retaining sovereignty over immigration and other key national decisions, while Mr. Trump defeated fellow Republicans and Hillary Clinton by emphasizing the threat of tariffs for countries that don't cooperate on efforts to trim the trade deficit. On Friday Mr. Trump vowed that "protection will lead to great prosperity and strength."

Still, Mr. Trump and his advisers have insisted they do favor bilateral trade agreements to open up markets, and populist voters that supported Mr. Trump and Sen. Bernie Sanders (D., Vt.) are likely to have less opposition to a deal with high-wage countries such as the U.K. than with those such as Vietnam, which was included in the stalled TPP.

U.S. exporters could gain a bit by lowering or eliminating tariffs on goods with the U.K., but coming to an agreement on harmonizing financial regulations or other rules will be more difficult and could cause negotiations to be lengthy and drawn-out, experts say. Specific industries, such as agriculture for the U.S. and insurance for the U.K, could be sticking points, but overall Washington would probably face less opposition from the U.K. in agriculture and services than it did in talks with the EU because of similar approaches to those sectors.

"Some things could be easier," Mr. Froman said.

Christopher Meyer, former U.K. ambassador to the U.S., said the negotiations will likely be protracted, even if Mr. Trump is sincere in wanting a rapid trade agreement.

"I find it hard to believe that with the best political will in the world, something that ought to be relatively simple, like the U.K.-U.S. trade deal, can be negotiated to fruition relatively quickly," Mr. Meyer said.

In 2015, the U.S. was the destination for a fifth of U.K. exports of goods and services, some $124 billion.

Around half of those exports were services, including financial and business services, telecommunications and travel, while Americans also bought British-made drugs, electrical equipment and machinery. After the EU, the U.S. is the U.K.'s biggest overseas market.

U.K. opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn said the issue called for a "serious discussion."

—Jenny Gross and Jason Douglas in London and Paul Vieira in Ottawa contributed to this article.