

Revue de presse américaine

Ambassade de France aux États-Unis
Service de presse et de communication



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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Mardi 7 février 2017, réalisation : Josselin Brémaud



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FRANCE – EUROPE

**The
Washington
Post**

Russian media leap on French presidential candidate with rumors and innuendo

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

MOSCOW — As seen through a Russian television set, the upcoming French elections are the dirtiest in history, a shameful public display of the cronyism and liberal decay that the Kremlin says are tearing Europe apart.

“The stakes [of the election] are high, so they’re digging up kompromat on just about everyone,” said Dmitry Kiselyov, the firebrand state television anchor who headlines the country’s premier Sunday night news show. All the main candidates are tainted, he said.

At first glance, his assertion makes at least some sense: Financial shenanigans abound.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

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For starters, there is the obvious example of François Fillon, a conservative who had once been the front-runner and is now embroiled in an embarrassing nepotism scandal. His wife and two of his five children are accused of receiving roughly 900,000 euros (\$986,000) in public funds for work they did not do.

On Monday in Paris, a defiant Fillon — who nearly 70 percent of voters wish would step down, according to a recent poll — denied any wrongdoing and blamed the media for his troubles.

And Marine Le Pen, the outspoken leader of the far-right National Front party, has been accused by the European Parliament of spending around 300,000 euros (\$322,000) in E.U. funds on her staff instead of on authorized legislative expenses.

Like Fillon, Le Pen has denied any responsibility. “I will not submit to the persecution, a unilateral decision taken by political opponents,” she told Reuters last Tuesday.

All grist for Kiselyov, presumably, but neither of these two right-wing contenders were really who he had in mind.

His target was Emmanuel Macron, the centrist independent candidate and predicted front-runner ahead of Le Pen, who is seen as the Kremlin’s favorite.

As Macron has unexpectedly surged in the polls in the wake of the Fillon scandal, Russia’s state media have begun to eviscerate the former finance minister, employing a grab-bag of media reports, rumor and innuendo that could keep a fact-checker busy for days.

“Macron is married to his French teacher from school who is 24 years his senior,” the report on Kiselyov’s show said. “But there are still rumors about his nontraditional [sexual] orientation and how he took 120,000 euro from the budget to finance his movement and election campaign. He has also been connected with Hillary Clinton. So far it has not turned into a large scandal.”

None of these latter claims has any substantiation.

With concerns over hacking leaks, fake news and the influence of Russia on the European political process at fever pitch, online platforms are looking for new ways to vet news ahead of the highly anticipated presidential election.

On Monday, Facebook, Google and other Internet companies launched a new initiative to combat fake and poorly sourced news content ahead of France’s two-round presidential election slated for April and May.

Called “Cross Check,” the online social-media and search platforms are working with well-established French news organizations to flag fake stories. Facebook unveiled a similar initiative last week in Germany, which has parliamentary elections set for September. False Russian state news reports of the rape of a girl of Russian heritage by migrants last year set off minor demonstrations and criticism of Chancellor Angela Merkel’s liberal migrant policy.

The new initiative is a response to the proliferation of fake and highly partisan news reports during the U.S. presidential election.

Scandal and kompromat, the Russian term for politically damaging information, have already played more of a role in the French election than in the United States this past November.

Le Pen has alleged that Macron is “under the influence” of Patrick Drahi, a Franco-Israeli telecom magnate, and also of “international finance.” Various Twitter accounts in support of the National Front have repeated these rumors, obvious anti-Semitic dog whistles.

But other insinuations have come directly from Moscow — or at least through Moscow.

Reports of Macron’s ties to Clinton arise from remarks by WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to the hawkish Russian broadsheet Izvestia last week.

“We have interesting information about another presidential candidate in France, Emmanuel Macron,” Assange told the newspaper.

Assange, who has been accused of having ties to the Russian government, which he denies, nonetheless joins Moscow in a desire to see the current European order upended.

Russian state news agencies regularly amplify voices pushing that end. On Saturday, the state-funded English-language news agency Sputnik published an article headlined “Ex-French Economy Minister Macron Could Be ‘U.S. Agent’ Lobbying Banks’ Interests.”

The article, citing French Republican Party lawmaker Nicolas Dhuicq, repeated rumors that Macron may have traveled to the United States and had correspondence with Clinton, that he was a front for U.S. banking interests and also that he was gay.

“There is a very wealthy gay lobby behind him,” the French lawmaker told Sputnik.

Macron hasn’t responded directly to the Russian accusations, but he has previously denied rumors of a “double life.”

McAuley reported from Paris.

The Verge : France’s alt-right has turned Pepe the frog into Pepe Le Pen

Amar Toor

On November 10th, two days after the election of Donald Trump, a Reddit user posted an image to a

subreddit for supporters of Marine Le Pen, the far-right leader running for president of France. “I understand you require memes,” the user, globalism_sux, wrote. “I bring

you Pepe Le Pen. Rare, from across the pond.” The image attached to the post portrayed Pepe the frog as Le Pen — with long blond hair and a dark blouse — against a tri-color,

French flag backdrop. In a comment on the post, the Reddit user called on others to “spread it far and wide.”

As French magazine *Les Inrocks* reported last month, Pepe Le Pen has since spread across social media and forums like Reddit and 4chan, marking yet another permutation of what began as a harmless internet meme. During last year's US presidential election, Pepe the frog became a mascot for the alt-right: the pro-Trump online movement that has been linked to white nationalism and anti-Semitism. Now, with their own presidential election on the horizon, far-right groups in France are embracing and adapting the meme to galvanize online support for Le Pen.

"I don't think they all know the background or the cultural history behind Pepe the frog," says David Doucet, editor-in-chief of *Les Inrocks* and co-author of a recent book on the *fachosphère*, the French far-right online community often compared to the alt-right. "But I think they use it as a way of telling themselves that what Trump did is possible in France."

In the US, members of the alt-right frequently portrayed Pepe as Trump himself, with several illustrations underscoring his hardline approach to immigration. In one image, the Trump frog holds a machine gun on top of his proposed border wall with Mexico; in another, he's smiling in front of a border fence as two Mexican figures look on from the other side. The *fachosphère* has taken a similar approach with Le Pen, though the meme has been

modified to incorporate political issues that are specific to the candidate's anti-immigration platform. In one illustration, Pepe Le Pen is smiling in front of a border fence with Algeria, with two cartoon Muslim figures on the other side.

Not all French Pepe memes personify Le Pen. Some portray the frog as her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who founded the far-right National Front (FN) in 1972. Another photoshopped image shows Le Pen's niece, the FN parliamentarian Marion Marechal-Le Pen, cradling Pepe like a baby animal. Others incorporate more generic French stereotypes — Pepe in a beret and striped T-shirt, for example, or Pepe sipping a glass of red wine and smoking a cigarette — and some include Nazi iconography. (The Anti-Defamation League classified Pepe as an anti-Semitic hate symbol in September last year.)

In a report last month, *BuzzFeed* detailed how Trump supporters have created fake French social media accounts to spread pro-Le Pen memes and coordinate online trolling campaigns. The "meme bank" on the r/Le_Pen subreddit includes several Pepe memes, as well as others — *Star Trek's* Captain Picard, passive aggressive Willy Wonka, the "this is fine" dog — that will be familiar to American online audiences. Notably, most of the top posts on the Le Pen subreddit are written in English or link to English-language sources.

Much like their alt-right counterparts, members of the *fachosphère* frequently use Pepe to troll political opponents online. *Les Inrocks's* Doucet says the seemingly harmless image of a cartoon frog allows FN supporters to soften their "pretty radical" political views, and to defuse any criticism they receive. He also believes it enables them to reach a younger, more meme-savvy audience that can help amplify their message.

"The idea is to present themselves as more modern, more advanced than the French media," Doucet said in an interview last week. "To show their cultural modernity and their ability to reappropriate American cultural symbols... and their mastery of technological tools."

The FN has long been at the forefront of digital campaigns — it was the first French political party to launch a website, in the mid-1990s — and it has intensified its efforts ahead of this year's election, which will be held in April and May. As *Politico* reported last week, the party has a team of about 15 full-time employees dedicated to developing social media campaigns and memes, which are then spread among a network of volunteers.

Fachosphère websites have certainly latched onto the Pepe meme. *FDesouche*, one of the largest *fachosphère* news sites and the closest approximation to a French Breitbart, currently uses a Pepe illustration as the background

of its homepage. The site's founder, Pierre Sautarel, has also begun selling Pepe T-shirts on a site called "Bonne Dégaine."

Others in Europe have sought to capitalize on the trend, as well. A Twitter user who goes by @pepeclothing claims to have sold more than 300 shirts, stickers, and other Pepe-related merchandise on the site Redbubble over the past two months. The anonymous user, who claims to be a 23-year-old male in Berlin, sells some France-related Pepe shirts on their website, though other top-sellers include a Union Jack Pepe and an illustration of a squatting Pepe in a Poland hoodie.

"I was inspired by the sudden popularity of far right wing attitudes in Europe and America and basically saw a market to capitalize on," @pepeclothing said in a message over Twitter. The vendor claims to have once been "part of the antifascist movement," but says they were converted to the far right ("red pilled," in their terms) after "reading up on things." In their view, it "makes sense" that European audiences would gravitate to Pepe following Trump's election, in part because the meme lends itself to adaptation.

"You can do whatever you want with Pepe," @pepeclothing said. "He does not symbolize anything specifically. He can be whoever you want him to be. That's his charm."

CNBC : What happens if France leaves the EU

CNBC

Chesnot | Getty Images

President of French far-right Front National (FN) party Marine Le Pen delivers a speech during a major rally to launch her presidential programme on February 5, 2017 in Lyon, France. Marine Le Pen is candidate for the Presidential elections in France this year.

The German stock market closed today at its lowest level of the year. That may sound surprising, given that the European economy is showing clear signs of improvement. ECB Chief Mario Draghi said the European recovery was "resilient." The Eurozone PMI rose to its highest level in 69 months.

Yet there it was: The German DAX down 1.2% to a new low for the year, with the rest of Europe down as well.

What gives? It's obvious that political fears are trumping economic optimism.

Why? Because the trading community knows they were wrong on Brexit, they know they were wrong on Donald Trump winning the White House.

Now they are beginning to realize that they could be wrong on the direction of European politics, and they are trying not to get surprised again.

No one is laughing anymore at the populist candidates who have been making provocative statements for years.

No one is laughing anymore when Marine Le Pen, the leader of France's populist National Front party and one of the front-runners in the upcoming French election, says she will pull France out of the eurozone.

If they leave, what does it do to the eurozone experiment? That is a clear negative for bond prices. Right now, sovereign debt is priced with an implicit backstop from the ECB. But under Le Pen's plan, the French government would be the sole backstop, with a bunch of Socialists in charge! How would you price the credit spread? I bet you'd cut the price of French bonds.

It gets even weirder: Le Pen would issue a new currency (she would presumably replace the euro with a new franc) and eventually devalue the new currency, a move that would boost exports and help the French economy, Le Pen's advisor Bernard Monot told Bloomberg in a recent interview.

Here's where it gets tricky: Government debt would be redenominated in the new French currency. The government, presumably, would continue to meet

all its obligations, though with a new currency. Le Pen will then print money to reduce France's debt load.

If all of this sounds a bit, well, worrisome, particularly if you are a French bond holder, you're not alone. French 10-year bond yields hit an 18-month high today.

And remember, Italy's right behind them. They want the lira back. And the Germans? The old Deutsche Mark would be brought back, which would go through the roof.

This would be the final insult to whole grand European experiment with the euro: after a decade of relative stagnation, that a slowly improving economy should be derailed by the very centrifugal forces (populism, nationalism) that the euro and the European Union were designed to contain.



Drain Le Swamp? France's Le Pen gets boost as rival Fillon hit by scandal

Adam Shaw

French populist Marine Le Pen's longshot political campaign just got a major boost after her main rival became mired in scandal just months before France goes to the polls -- possibly giving the outsider her best shot yet at the Élysée Palace.

Le Pen, who leads the right-wing Front National, has run on a Trump-like platform of anti-Islamism, anti-globalization, stricter immigration controls, and a promise to leave the European Union. Formally launching her presidential bid Sunday, she warned about the "two totalitarianisms" facing France -- Islamism and globalization.

"Those two ideologies want to bring France to its knees," she told supporters in Lyon.

Le Pen's main opponent, conservative François Fillon -- who is running a traditionalist social and economic conservative platform with a strong Catholic flavor, was until recently seen as the favorite.

Although running neck-and-neck in first-round polls it was widely believed that in the second round on May 7 -- when the race becomes a

head-to-head between the two top candidates -- left-wingers and independents would pick Fillon over Le Pen.

But that narrative has been turned upside-down after the French newspaper *Le Canard Enchaîné* revealed earlier this month that Fillon's wife Penelope and their two children were paid almost a million euros of taxpayer money, with little evidence they did any work in return.

Police have opened a probe, Fillon's poll numbers have dropped, and a recent Franceinfo radio poll shows two thirds of the public want Fillon to pull out of the race.

The "Penelopegate" claims are more devastating in particular for Fillon as he has run a campaign emphasizing his Catholic background and "family values."

"These accusations are hitting at the load-bearing wall of his popularity," Yves-Marie Cann, head of political studies at Elabe, told Reuters.

Fillon has scrambled to move past the accusations. In a press conference Monday he apologized for hiring his wife, denied

wrongdoing and said he wasn't stepping down from the race.

"It was an error; I profoundly regret it and I apologise to the French people," he said.

Whether he steps out of the race, his fall from grace has left Le Pen in a fundamentally different fight. One of Fillon's strengths was that he was able to appeal both to traditional conservatives with his fiscal and social policies, while also eating into Le Pen's hardline stance on immigration -- he even wrote a book called "Conquering Islamic Totalitarianism."

As Fillon sinks, Le Pen's opponent is now likely to be independent center-left candidate Emmanuel Macron -- previously running in a distant third place. While Macron is running well behind Le Pen in first round polls, polls for a hypothetical second round between Macron and Le Pen suggest the centrist would be victorious.

France is a region that has been rocked by a number of high profile Islamic terrorist attacks, of which some of the perpetrators have been migrants. On Friday, a man wielding a machete and yelling "Allahu

Akbar" was shot by a soldier at the Louvre. Additionally, the recent deconstruction of the so-called "Jungle Camp" in Calais has left migrants from the Middle East and North Africa setting up makeshift camps on the streets of Paris.

Le Pen has repeatedly praised President Trump, and may use a form of his "drain the swamp" campaign promise to weaponize the Fillon scandal as an example of a broader problem in French politics. There were signs of that Sunday when she took a swipe at "the cash-rich right and the cash-rich left."

A Le Pen victory would not be a small issue globally. Should the feisty Frenchwoman enter the Elysee Palace, the European Union would be hit with a potentially fatal blow -- as she has promised a "Frexit" referendum to leave the E.U. France and Germany make up the core of the bloc and it is difficult to see how it could possibly survive in its current form if France chose to leave.

Adam Shaw is a Politics Reporter and occasional Opinion writer for FoxNews.com. He can be reached here or on Twitter: @AdamShawNY.



Far-right populist Marine Le Pen formally launches bid to make France great again

The Christian Science Monitor

February 6, 2017 —Marine Le Pen formally announced her bid for France's presidency Sunday, calling on voters to join her in fighting the "two totalitarianisms" of globalization and Islamic fundamentalism.

The far-right populist candidate from the National Front party, who is running under the slogan "In the Name of the People," outlined some of the 144 "commitments" she has promised to fulfill if elected president, including plans to control France's borders, readopt the old French franc as the national currency, and leave the European Union.

"We are at a crossroad This election is a choice of civilization," Ms. Le Pen said in her speech, painting a bleak picture of a future in which France has lost its French identity. "Will they even speak our French language?"

Her remarks against Muslim immigration were met with cheers and chants of "On est chez nous," meaning "We are in our land," from the crowd of roughly 5,000.

"We do not want to live under the rule or threat of Islamic fundamentalism," she said. "They

are looking to impose on us gender discrimination in public places, full body veils or not, prayer rooms in the workplace, prayers in the streets, huge mosques ... or the submission of women."

For decades, the National Front party, founded by Le Pen's father, was considered a fringe group with a small base of core supporters, as Weston Williams reported for *The Christian Science Monitor* last month. Today, France's high unemployment rate and widespread disgust with politics, combined with efforts by Ms. Le Pen to make the party more palatable to mainstream voters, have resulted in a surge in support for the National Front and Le Pen, a leader in early polls for France's two-round presidential election on April 23 and May 7:

If Le Pen were to become president of France, the impact of her victory would likely be felt far beyond France itself. She is running on a strongly anti-euro platform that could lead France to abandon the currency and return to the franc, a move that could significantly damage the shared economy of the Eurozone and significantly weaken the European Union as a world power. But in France, along with the rest of Europe, economic woes and dissatisfaction with the status quo

have caused many to turn away from traditional parties and appear willing to gamble that life may be better under a different and radical kind of leadership — the kind that Le Pen and the National Front say they can deliver.

"The context has changed," Robert Rohrschneider, a professor of political science at the University of Kansas, told the Monitor. "Immigration and opposition to integration have risen to historically high levels. Additionally, Brexit provided a boost for nationalist movements in Europe, as did the election of president-elect [at the time of this writing] Trump."

The inauguration of President Trump in the United States last month marked a turning point for far-right Europeans, many of whom are hopeful that his presidency will "[power] the transatlantic tidal wave of populism to both shores," as Sara Miller Llana reported for the Monitor.

"The entire world — it's true for Brexit, it's true for Mr. Trump — is becoming conscious of what we've been saying for years," said Le Pen in a television interview, as reported by the Associated Press.

But the Republican business mogul's White House victory may ultimately not have as much influence on the French election as some hope:

Here in France, the leader of the far-right National Front (FN), Marine Le Pen, was in fact one of the first foreign politicians to congratulate Mr. Trump on election night. Last week she was photographed inside Trump Tower. She followed in the footsteps of Nigel Farage, another of Europe's leading populists who led the Brexit charge and posed with Trump outside the gilded elevators of his New York City base after he swept the presidency.

The only problem? An ambivalence about Mr. Trump among actual far-right supporters in Europe. Their version of nationalism is often infused with anti-Americanism, and might collide with the tactical goals of far-right leadership in Europe. Though Le Pen and others may view Trump as a potential ally in defying globalism and Europeanism, the rank and file still see him as a prototypical boorish American.

This report includes material from the Associated Press and Reuters.

Bershidsky : Why Trump should hope France's Marine Le Pen loses

Leonid Bershidsky

Marine Le Pen, leader of France's extreme nationalist National Front, kicked off her election campaign with a fiery speech that, among other things, praised U.S. President Donald Trump, that beacon for European nationalist populists, for "keeping promises and acting quickly and powerfully in the interest" of the American people. But if she wins the French presidential election — a possibility since traditional political forces are in disarray — her actions will be unlikely to please Trump.

It's often tempting to lump all the nationalist populists together because of their most visible unifying features — nativism and hostility toward immigrants, particularly Muslim ones. They act in concert, rejoice in each other's company and hope to imitate Trump's success. But a nativist internationalism is an oxymoron. These politicians want to seal their countries, and that's a threat to the U.S., not just the European Union.

Le Pen's speech last Sunday in Lyon, the industrial city in southeastern France, built on her freshly published "commitments" to voters — 144 of them. The plan touches upon the main themes familiar from the Trump campaign. It's actually tougher on immigration and on Muslims than anything Trump proposed. It calls for an annual limit of 10,000 persons on net immigration, an end to the "right of the soil," under which citizenship is granted to children born in France, the automatic expulsion of everyone linked to "Islamic fundamentalists" and a ban on foreign funding

for religious organizations. It also talks of "re-industrialization" and protectionism, assured by France's exit from the euro and the European Union (Le Pen proposes to call a Frexit referendum within six months of coming to power), and it promises lower taxes to businesses.

Yet if Trump's explicit motivation for his slogans was rooted in economic competition — the outflow of jobs across the border, the U.S. trade deficit — Le Pen's case for nativism is primarily cultural. In the Lyon speech, she said France faced a "civilizational choice." It was, she said, the time to decide whether France's next generation would still be French:

"Will they live according to our cultural reference frame, our civilizational values, our art of living, and will they even still speak our language, French, which is disintegrating under the blows of political leaders who squander this national treasure, going as far as choosing a slogan in English to promote Paris's bid for the 2024 Olympics?"

The slogan, "made for sharing," picked for France's 2024 Olympics bid, is not one Le Pen would endorse in any language. Her program, and her speech, are all about putting France first. In Le Pen's France, the salaries of non-French employees will be subject to an additional tax. Foreign companies won't be able to acquire French ones if the latter have received government subsidies. They will also be denied government procurement contracts "as long as French companies' prices are reasonable." Le Pen would get out of free trade agreements and tax "activity carried out in France by

large groups and profits that would be diverted."

The Lyon speech went further than these proposals. In it, Le Pen lashed out against what she sees as two-pronged globalism threatening France. Islamic fundamentalism is one target; global capital is the other. Le Pen decries "the economic globalism that refuses any limitation and any regulation and which, for that purpose, weakens the nation's immunity."

We would be wrong to see this merely as attacks on the EU, though it is Le Pen's prime target. Much of the "globalist" foreign capital in France is American. The U.S., according to the American Chamber of Commerce in France, is the country's No. 1 foreign investor. In 2014, it was the fourth-biggest source of foreign direct investment, after two tax havens — Luxembourg and the Netherlands — and the U.K.

U.S. financial and tech companies will be among the first to suffer if Le Pen comes to power. She will make the relocation of staff economically unfeasible and lay waste to these firms' tax schemes. Her understanding of "economic patriotism" will also make mergers and acquisitions even more difficult than they are today.

France, the eighth-biggest trade partner of the U.S., receives more than \$31 billion annually in U.S. exports. Trade between the two countries is relatively balanced, with France enjoying about a \$1 billion surplus, but, given Le Pen's hostility toward imports and her intention to support French exports, especially agricultural ones, the balance is

hardly going to shift in favor of the U.S.

A Le Pen-led France would not present an environment in which the U.S. can "win," as Trump promised. Its economic cooperation with the U.S. — and with the rest of the world — would shrink. So would military cooperation: Le Pen wants to take France out of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's integrated military command structure so that the country is no longer "dragged into wars that are not its own."

Trump's team and Trump himself celebrate every crack that emerges in European unity. They appear to want the EU and the euro area to fall apart. The European nationalists who share these goals appear to be Trump's natural allies. But if they prevail despite competition from re-energized elites, they will put their own country first. Trump will get more difficult negotiating partners than he faces today, because their resistance to any U.S. expansion will be ideologically motivated and intractable.

Trump should hope the likes of Le Pen lose: Unlike Brexiters, who appear to seek his favor and welcome free trade, nationalists in France and the German-speaking world are by no means pro-American, no matter how encouraging Trump's victory is for them.

Bloomberg View

Leonid Bershidsky is a Bloomberg View columnist. He was the founding editor of the Russian business daily Vedomosti and founded the opinion website Slon.ru.

Draghi Says Euro Is Irreversible as Le Pen Urges French Exit

- ECB preside

nt responds to questions at European Parliament

- Says leaving single currency is not an option in EU law

Mario Draghi reaffirmed that the euro is irreversible in a defense of the single currency against populists who reject it.

"L'euro e' irrevocabile, the euro is irrevocable," the European Central Bank president said at the European Parliament on Monday, using both his native Italian and English. "Questo e' il trattato, this is the treaty."

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Draghi has made the claim multiple times before, but the issue of whether and how a country can leave the single currency returned to the fore after French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen

said

she would take France out of the euro if elected. Even after Greece and its European partners stepped back from the brink of a split in the summer of 2015, the procedures for a euro exit remain undefined and the repercussions of such a move are near impossible to gauge.

The question of a euro exit has also flared in Italy, where the Five Star Movement -- which is running close to the leading Democrat Party in polls -- favors a referendum on membership.

In his testimony, Draghi declined to say what the cost would be for a country that decided to leave the 19-nation bloc -- a debate sparked by a Jan. 18 letter he sent to European Union lawmakers Marco Valli and Marco Zanni.

"If a country were to leave the Eurosystem, its national central bank's claims on or liabilities to the ECB would need to be settled in full," Draghi wrote then. Zanni said that response acknowledged that countries can leave.

Target2 Imbalances

"I wanted to bring up the issue of exit from the euro and how it can happen," he said in an interview before the testimony. "Draghi has now clearly admitted that such an exit is possible and now there is need to have more clarity about the cost. I'm sure that in case of Italy's exit from the euro, benefits exceed costs."

Leaving the euro would "threaten savings and jobs in France" and lead to a "to a rise in interest rates," ECB Executive Board member Benoit Coeure said in an interview with Le Parisien on Tuesday. "It would be to choose impoverishment."

His words were echoed by Governing Council member Francois Villeroy de Galhau, who wrote in an op-ed in *Le Figaro* that abandoning the single currency would increase France's debt-servicing costs by over 30 billion euros (\$32 billion) a year.

In the European Parliament, Valli asked whether the "liabilities" that Draghi referred to are the imbalances in the euro-area payment-settlement system, known as Target2. Such imbalances were seen by some commentators during the region's sovereign debt crisis as

a sign of the unsustainable tension between debtor and creditor countries. Draghi demurred.

"I cannot answer a question that is based on hypotheses, on assumptions which are not foreseen" by the EU treaties, he

said. "What I could do is send you a written answer which compares our Target2 system with the Federal Reserve-based system."

Foreign Affairs : Can France Stem the Populist Tide?

By Carlo Invernizzi Accetti

The upcoming French presidential election offers a primer on the turbulent politics of our times. We are witnessing the collapse of the traditional divide between left and right, as well as the parties associated with it. In its place, a new opposition is emerging between nationalist populism on one hand and liberal technocracy on the other. At stake is the very model of society—and democracy—that has been dominant in the West since the end of the Cold War.

French politics in the past few decades has been characterized by a relatively stable alternation in power between a center-right party (recently renamed the Republicans), standing for market liberalization and traditional social values, and its center-left rival (the Socialist Party), which stands for more social welfare and economic redistribution. While these two parties disagreed on the *degré* of state intervention in the economy, there was a basic consensus on the welfare-state model as well as on France's commitment to European integration and multilateralism in international affairs.

Today, these parties are but shadows of their former selves. Facing historically low approval ratings, the incumbent Socialist president, François Hollande, decided not to seek re-election. His former prime minister, Manuel Valls, lost in the primaries against the outsider Benoît Hamon, whose signature proposal for a universal basic income succeeded in mobilizing support from the far left of the party's base but seems to have little chance of being taken seriously by the broader electorate.

On the Republican side, the primaries were won by another initial outsider, François Fillon, who also proposed a radicalized version of the party's traditional platform. His recipe for a "shock therapy" of

market liberalization, coupled with a flaunted religious conservatism, proved attractive to a rump of the party's base, but is seen as an obstacle in obtaining the support of the more centrist electorate needed to win in the general election.

Moreover, Fillon's campaign has recently been beset by allegations he hired his wife as a fictitious aide while serving as a member of parliament. By reaffirming his belonging to a political class that is widely perceived as corrupt and self-referential, this scandal may even deal a death-blow to his campaign. It is not clear, however, who could step up to replace him now, after the primaries have been held.

Either way, it is striking that the leaders of the two parties that once dominated French politics are now both predicted to be excluded from the second round of the presidential election. Even together, they are polling less than 35 percent of the electorate at the first round. The real struggle for power is elsewhere.

The first main contender is the leader of the National Front, Marine Le Pen, who has consistently led the polls for the past few months. In the aftermath of the U.S. presidential election, several commentators have likened her anti-establishment rhetoric and flaunted social and economic protectionism to that of Donald Trump: a comparison she has herself invited in the hope of turning it into an electoral advantage. Less remarked, though, is the way her political platform scrambles traditional political categories and distinctions.

The National Front is typically described as a far-right party. But whereas its economic nationalism and anti-immigrant rhetoric do indeed borrow from traditional right-wing discourse, Le Pen has also emerged as the candidate most prominently defending the welfare state and the interests of the working class. For instance, she has

proposed a tax on imports that would be used to fund a direct cash subsidy to those in the lowest income brackets and also promised to launch a massive project of "re-industrialization" of the national economy. Perhaps unsurprisingly, her most solid support comes from areas that were previously dominated by the Communist Party.

The other main contender is Emmanuel Macron. Previously a banker at Rothschild, he briefly served as economics minister under François Hollande before leaving the government in August 2016 to found his own movement called *En Marche!* Its trademark claim is to be "neither left nor right wing" but rather "doubly liberal" in both social and economic affairs.

Macron's youth and dynamism—as well as his pro-European and not-so-anti-immigration stance—have quickly made him a darling of the country's mainstream as well as the international press. But Macron's policy proposals have been singularly vague and, without an established party machine to back him, it is unclear from where he would draw his support within the legislative bodies, were he to succeed in winning the presidency.

Until now, the most striking thing about Macron's candidacy has been his capacity to somehow combine an anti-establishment appeal stemming from his novelty and youth with the technocratic credentials coming from his experience as a high-profile banker. The question remains, however, whether it will be possible to continue running as an outsider while essentially standing for a perpetuation of the status quo.

A confrontation between Le Pen and Macron in the second round would mark a new age in French—and European—politics. Despite the notable differences between them, there are also some striking points of convergence. First and foremost

is that both claim to be "neither left nor right wing": a slogan they have in fact both been using explicitly to mark their separation from the established political class (in spite of the facts that Le Pen has been a professional politician for most of her adult life and that Macron was a prominent member of the incumbent government).

Despite the notable differences between Le Pen and Macron, there are also some striking points of convergence.

Second, both Le Pen and Macron claim to have a direct relationship with the electorate, in which the traditional institutions of political mediation between the electors and their representatives—i.e. political parties and the media—are presented as obsolete. This is reflected in the fact that both are more or less *identified* with their political machines. Marine Le Pen inherited the leadership of her party from her father through a dynastic logic that now pitches her niece as her main successor. Macron created his own movement through his own charisma (and business network). In neither case can the question of "internal democracy" even really be posed.

Finally, perhaps the most salient element of convergence between Le Pen and Macron is the way in which they have attempted to name the new political divide that will replace the categories of left and right. At the launch of her campaign on Sunday in Lyon, Le Pen claimed that the key political struggle of the future is that between the partisans of a "rootless globalization" on one hand and "patriots" on the other. At a simultaneous counter-rally in the same city, Macron explained that *En Marche!* stands for "progress" against "conservatism" and "reaction."

The Verge : Facebook launches fake news filter in France

Amar Toor

Facebook has launched a campaign to crack down on fake news in France, ahead of the country's presidential election later this year. As *Reuters* reports, the social

network announced on Monday that it will work with eight French media companies to fact-check and filter news articles that have been reported by users.

According to *Le Monde*, one of Facebook's partners, the French campaign is similar to an initiative that Facebook launched in the US late last year, and in Germany last month. Both Facebook and Google faced widespread criticism for

allowing fake news to spread during the US presidential election, and European leaders have expressed concern that such misinformation could impact upcoming elections across the continent.

Under the system, if an article is reported as false by users, it will be sent to a portal that all eight media companies have access to, according to *Le Monde*. If at least two of the companies confirm the article as false (with links to support their claims), the content will be flagged as disputed in Facebook's News Feed, and users will see a warning before they share it. Advertising against the article will also be blocked, *Le Monde* reports.

Some media companies were reluctant to sign on to Facebook's campaign



In addition to *Le Monde*,

Facebook's French partners include Agence France-Presse (AFP), BFM-TV, Franceinfo, France Médias Monde, *L'Express*, *Libération*, and *20 Minutes*. Facebook also announced that it will support CrossCheck — an initiative that will allow users to submit questions and gather information from 16 French media partners. CrossCheck was launched by the First Draft News coalition, with support from the Google News Lab.

Some French media outlets have already their launched their own initiatives to combat fake news. *Le Monde* has compiled a database of more than 600 websites deemed to be unreliable, and the left-leaning

newspaper *Libération* is working to create a similar database of false stories.

In its report on the launch of Facebook's initiative, *Le Monde* said that French media companies had been reluctant to partner with the social network, amid concerns that the program would place too great a burden on their fact-checking teams. But the newspaper and other companies ultimately decided to sign on, in part because Facebook said that its algorithms could limit the visibility of articles flagged as false.

"That's what convinced us to join," said Jérôme Fenoglio, *Le Monde's*

editorial director. "For the first time, it'll be possible to tweak the algorithm if there's an editorial issue with a post."

Le Monde described the Facebook initiative as an "experiment," and that its early results will be assessed in two months. The first round of France's presidential elections will be held in April, with the second round slated for May.

France to Facebook, Google on fake news: 'Non merci'

President Donald Trump is furiously defending his immigration ban, insisting polls saying Americans don't want the ban are wrong. Nathan Rousseau Smith (@fantasticmrnate) reports. Buzz60

Facebook and Google are creating tools to combat fake news in the run-up to the presidential election in France. (Photo: Etienne Laurent, EPA)

SAN FRANCISCO — Stung by criticism they did too little to stop



the spread of fake news on their platforms during the bitterly divisive U.S. election, Facebook and Google are launching new tools and initiatives to combat fake news ahead of elections in Europe.

Facebook, which has 24 million users in France, said it would work with French news organizations including *Le Monde* and Agence France-Presse to flag disputed news in the run-up to France's presidential election in April.

News organizations have also joined Google which is asking users in France to submit links to suspect content so they can be investigated. A similar program is being considered in Germany, which has its federal parliamentary elections in September, according to Google.

Fact-checking has emerged as a top issue in Silicon Valley which has abandoned its hands-off approach to the content that streams through its platforms. Europe is on high alert for any attempt to manipulate elections through fake news.

Tech companies such as Facebook and Google faced sharp criticism, even from President Obama, that they aided in the dissemination of misinformation that only served to sharpen political divisions. Both companies have taken steps to clamp down on the spread of fake news in the U.S. About half of adult Americans rely on Facebook as a source of news, a recent study from the Pew Research Center found.

In France, social media and news organizations partner to battle fake news

The Christian Science Monitor

February 6, 2017 — Ahead of France's presidential election this spring, news organizations and social media giants have partnered together in an effort to combat fake news and ensure that the country's voters receive accurate information on candidates.

Facebook, Google, and several news organizations announced the initiative, which has been dubbed "Cross Check," on Monday. They will work together to curtail the spread of fake news stories across the social media and trending news platforms. Participating companies will partner with such newsrooms as Agence France-Presse, France's BFM TV, *L'Express*, and *Le Monde* to debunk false reports.



Once considered an inaccurate, but benign, annoyance, fake

news sources have become increasingly troubling for both politicians and established news outlets. After millions of US voters engaged with sources pushing false reports before the 2016 president election, social media sites have responded to criticism that their platforms helped spread sources filled with false claims, and have moved to stop promoting such information on their sites.

The phenomenon has launched social media sites, which often view themselves as technology platforms rather than media companies, into the position of weighing the pros of allowing unfettered free speech on their platforms against the cons of helping to disseminate false information.

France's initiative follows efforts in Germany to crack down on fake news ahead of the September 2017 parliamentary election, during which German Chancellor Angela Merkel

will seek re-election for her fourth term in office. Officials there have floated the idea of bringing criminal charges against those who write and disseminate fake news reports, and one official has proposed fining Facebook up to 500,000 euros for failing to remove fake or harassing posts within 24 hours. Legislators have also considered passing a law that would require the companies to open local offices to speed up responses to complaints.

In the fight against fake news, Germany has strict libel laws on its side. In the United States, however, bringing and winning defamation or libel suits could prove more difficult.

While Facebook founder and chief executive Mark Zuckerberg initially dismissed claims that fake news on the platform could have swayed voters' choices in the presidential election, he's since taken more responsibility for the content shared

on the site. So far, the company has tweaked its trending news section to make it more difficult for one-off hoax stories to go viral, enlisted third-party fact-checking organizations to sniff out fake reports, and also unveiled a feature that allows users to flag reports they believe are false.

"We believe in giving people a voice and that we cannot become arbiters of truth ourselves, so we're approaching this problem carefully," Adam Mosseri, the vice president of Facebook News Feed, wrote in a December blog post. "We've focused our efforts on the worst of the worst, on the clear hoaxes spread by spammers for their own gain, and on engaging both our community and third party organizations."

This report contains material from Reuters.

Former French president Sarkozy to face trial for fraud

Published February 07, 2017

ARCHIVO - En esta imagen de archivo del 9 de noviembre de 2016,

el expresidente y actual aspirante a la candidatura conservadora a la

presidencia de Francia, Nicolas Sarkozy, ofrece un discurso durante

un acto de campaña en Meyzieu, cerca de Lyon, en el centro de Francia. (AP Foto/Laurent Cipriani, Archivo) (The Associated Press)

PARIS – Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy was ordered Tuesday to stand trial in an inquiry into alleged campaign finance fraud during his failed 2012 re-election bid, the Paris prosecutor's office said.

Sarkozy and 13 other "protagonists" will go

to court on the order of a magistrate to answer allegations that his presidential campaign spent well above the legal ceiling of 22.5 million euros (\$24 million) and tried to cover it up fraudulently, the office said.

The claims center on whether the 61-year-old politician was aware of alleged false billing and fraud linked to PR company Bygmalion, where some executives have acknowledged false accounting.

Sarkozy denies any wrongdoing and his camp says it will appeal the decision.

The news may further erode public trust in politics as Sarkozy's former no. 2, Francois Fillon, their party's candidate in this spring's presidential election, fights for his political life over an investigation into whether well-paid political jobs he gave his wife, son and daughter were fake.

Conservative lawmakers have been summoned Tuesday for a meeting at Fillon's headquarters to form a united front around the ex-prime minister ahead of the April-May elections.

In 2011, former President Jacques Chirac was given a two-year suspended jail sentence in a scandal over phony jobs.



Tech, media companies to combat fake news stories in France

Harper Neidig

A network of media and technology companies are rolling out new fact-checking tools in France to combat the spread of viral fake news, the groups announced on Monday.

First Draft, a nonprofit coalition of news and social media outlets, announced the new initiative, called "CrossCheck," to help verify online

news stories regarding the French presidential election.

In addition to 17 news outlets, Facebook and Google will also be lending their expertise to the project, which goes live on February 27.

Using analytics tools like Facebook's CrowdTangle, French journalists will be looking to identify and fact-check news stories circulating on the internet. They will also work to verify stories flagged by social media users.

Facebook came under fire in the U.S. after Election Day, when critics accused the company of allowing fake news to spread on its platform during the campaign.

Since then, it has announced that it would be cracking down on the phenomenon by partnering with fact-checking organizations and giving users the option to flag articles.

Facebook announced last month that the new features will first be rolled out in Germany, and on

Monday revealed that the tools will also be available in France in late February.

Both countries are headed for high-profile elections later this year: France will elect a new president, and German voters will cast ballots for the lower chamber in parliament, where Chancellor Angela Merkel is hoping to hang on to her seat.



Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy to Stand Trial Over Campaign Financing (online)

William Horobin

Updated Feb. 7, 2017 5:49 a.m. ET

PARIS—Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy has been ordered to stand trial for allegedly breaking campaign financing rules in his failed bid for reelection in 2012, a judicial official said Tuesday.

An investigating magistrate ordered Mr. Sarkozy on Feb. 3 to stand trial on charges of illegal financing of an election campaign, according to the judicial official. Prosecutors allege Mr. Sarkozy ignored warnings he would break campaign spending

limits and spent €20 million (\$21.42 million) over the €22.51 million ceiling.

Mr. Sarkozy's lawyer Thierry Herzog didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

The investigating magistrate ordered another 13 people to stand trial as part of the probe into the financing of the 2012 campaign. Some of those suspects were ordered to stand trial for allegedly using phony bills to channel cash from Mr. Sarkozy's party and possibly into his election campaign.

Mr. Sarkozy's trial comes as France's political establishment is under increasing scrutiny over its handling of public funds. Police are investigating whether François Fillon, the conservative presidential candidate who served as Mr. Sarkozy's prime minister, placed his wife on the state payroll without having her perform real work.

Mr. Fillon has apologized for employing his wife while insisting her job was genuine. Still, the scrutiny has sapped his poll numbers ahead of this year's French presidential election, leaving him in

third place behind National Front leader Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron, an independent candidate.

Some of Mr. Sarkozy's supporters have suggested he could replace Mr. Fillon as their party's standard-bearer. The decision to put him in trial, however, complicated such a comeback.

Write to William Horobin at William.Horobin@wsj.com

Breitbart : France: Anti-Christian Attacks Rise 245 Per Cent

While racist, anti-Muslim, and anti-Semitic attacks have seen a huge fall since 2008, those on Christian places of worship more than doubled in this period of time, France's interior ministry reported last week.

Having documented a record number of anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim attacks in 2015, the French government spent €100 million on a huge anti-populist campaign to reduce Islamophobia, racism, and anti-Semitism.

Subsequently, racist, anti-Semitic, and anti-Muslim attacks fell sharply in 2016 with the former seeing a decline of 58.5 per cent and the latter a drop of 57.6 per cent. These

attacks are defined as being fires, violence, degradation, and threats — comments, inscriptions, insulting letters.

In this year, attacks on Christian places of worship have increased by 17.4 per cent in 2016 compared to 2015. Racist attacks, meanwhile, dropped by 23.7 per cent (608 versus 797).

The sharp drop in incidents of an Islamophobic or anti-Semitic nature was welcomed by the French government, who credited the figures as the "fruit of the government's action plan".

"Thanks to an unprecedented mobilisation of state services, we

have already achieved very encouraging results, as evidenced by the figures for 2016. This gives us much satisfaction", said interior minister Bruno Le Roux.

The minister warned against "triumphalism", however, telling Agence France-Presse: "Faced with racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian acts, we must not slacken our guard, quite the contrary."

"We continue, and we will continue always to fight against these absolutely intolerable acts, which sully the Republic" he added, insisting that France will combat 'intolerance' with "maximum vigilance".

Le Figaro reported that acts which target Christians now account for 90 per cent assaults on places of worship.

The newspaper points out that, while it is to be expected that attacks on churches are the most plentiful because they exist in the largest number, cases in which Christian places of worship were defiled saw a huge rise between 2008 and 2016.

The government says the majority of the 949 attacks on churches have "no religious motive", but that there was a possible "satanic motivation" in 14 cases and an "anarchist" motivation in 25. However, since

2008 assaults on Christian places of worship have risen by 245 per cent.

Last year in Dülmen, following the arrival of well over a million migrants in Germany, local media said "not a

day goes by" without attacks on Christian religious statues.



French Candidate Macron Seeks to Squash Speculation of Affair

by Mark Deen
@MarkJDeen

More stories by Mark Deen

7 février 2017 à 05:51 UTC-5

French economy minister Emmanuel Macron and his wife, Brigitte Trogneux, arrive to attend the annual Bastille Day military parade in Paris on July 14, 2015.

Photographer: PASCAL ROSSIGNOL/AFP/Getty Images

Emmanuel Macron sought to preemptively squash speculation of an extra-marital affair as polls show he's favorite to

become France's next president.

The 39-year-old former economy minister insisted his wife, Brigitte Trogneux, who is more than 20 years older, shares every aspect of his life. Making an ironic reference to rival Jean-Luc Melenchon's use of hologram technology to broadcast a campaign rally, Macron dismissed suggestions that he is having a relationship with Mathieu Gallet, president of Radio France.

Emmanuel Macron on Feb. 6.

Photographer: Marlene Awaad/Bloomberg

"If you hear over dinner that I have a double life with Mathieu Gallet, it must be my hologram that has escaped, but it can't be me," Macron told supporters late Monday. "I am what I am -- I've never had anything to hide," he said, adding that Trogneux "shares my whole life."

Macron, who quit president Francois Hollande's Socialist cabinet last August to make an independent presidential bid, currently has support of 20.5 percent of voters going into the first round of voting, according to Ifo's latest daily rolling poll. While that's behind National Front leader Marine Le Pen, who

has 25.5 percent support, Macron is 2 percentage points ahead of Republican candidate Francois Fillon in the battle to qualify for the run-off. All polls show Macron will win the presidency if he can survive the first vote.

France's two-round presidential election is scheduled for April 23 and May 7.

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French Presidential Candidate Fillon Apologizes for Employing Wife

Stacy Meichtry
and Inti Landauro

Updated Feb. 6, 2017 9:34 p.m. ET

PARIS—François Fillon, the conservative who until recently led polls to become France's next president, moved to stabilize his faltering campaign Monday by apologizing to the country for having employed his wife and children as parliamentary aides while rejecting accusations the jobs were phony.

The former prime minister held his first news conference since a criminal probe was opened about two weeks ago into whether his family did any work while collecting state salaries. No longer the race's front-runner, Mr. Fillon sought to thread a needle Monday, admitting his decision to employ family members was an ethical failing while denying he has committed any crimes.

"It was an error. I profoundly regret it, and I apologize to the French people," Mr. Fillon said.

Mr. Fillon characterized it as unfair for media reports to state his wife received nearly a million euros over

a 15-year period, saying after taxes her monthly average income came to only €3,677 (\$3,964). His two children each collected an average monthly salary of €3,000 after taxes, he added. All of those salaries are well above the monthly net income of the average French worker.

It is unclear whether the 62-year-old's mea culpa will halt his slide in the polls. Rivals Marine Le Pen, leader of the anti-immigration National Front, and Emmanuel Macron, an investment banker who launched his own party, have eroded his support by railing against the country's political establishment.

Polls predict Ms. Le Pen will win the first round of the election in late April but lose the run-off to Mr. Macron. On Sunday, Ms. Le Pen officially launched her campaign with a speech that described Islamic fundamentalism and globalization as "two totalitarianisms." She also framed her campaign as an insurgency, similar to that of U.S. President Donald Trump, taking on an entire political system.

The privileges traditionally available to France's ruling class were exposed with rare candor on

Monday. Mr. Fillon said he and other parliamentarians needed to stop the "political practice" of pocketing funds that are leftover in parliamentary budgets after assistants have been paid.

Mr. Fillon harkened back to an earlier political age when he said the practice of hiring of family members was considered acceptable.

"Collaborating with your family in politics is a practice that is now rejected by the French people," Mr. Fillon said.

The allegations, and the furor that followed, struck the conservative politician like a blow "to the stomach," he said. "I was destabilized."

Mr. Fillon, who lives in a stately chateau, promised to release records documenting the value of his property and detailing his wife's salary. He also acknowledged working as a consultant for a range of French companies, but denied any of those firms were Russian or linked to the Kremlin.

The candidate stood his ground in rejecting media reports his wife

never performed the work she was paid for. Last week, French TV broadcast footage from a decade-old interview in which Mr. Fillon's wife said she never worked as a parliamentary aide.

The former prime minister brushed off the video, implying the footage failed to capture the distinction between his wife's role and the work of an aide who takes orders.

"She was never my subordinate. She was always, above all, my partner in work, my collaborator," he said.

Ms. Fillon hasn't commented on the probe or the media reports.

The candidate also invoked the "separation of powers" between the judicial and legislative branches of government, saying "no one has the right to check her work" apart from Mr. Fillon himself.

—Noemie Bisserbe contributed to this article.

Write to Stacy Meichtry at stacy.meichtry@wsj.com and Inti Landauro at inti.landauro@wsj.com



French Candidate Fillon Refuses to Quit Despite Scandal

Elaine Ganley / AP

(PARIS)—François Fillon on Monday defiantly refused to drop out of the race to be France's next president despite an investigation into whether well-paid political jobs he gave his wife, son and daughter were genuine, a scandal that has knocked him from his perch as favorite in the April-May voting.

The conservative politician who served as prime minister from 2007

to 2012, the chief workhorse under then-President Nicolas Sarkozy, has long had a reputation as low-key, reliable and standing for moral rectitude, making the corruption scandal particularly shocking to his party, supporters and the French as a whole. On Monday, two weeks after revelations first surfaced, he scrambled to save his candidacy.

"I have nothing to hide," Fillon told a news conference aimed at stanching the blood-letting and conspiring within his party about who might

replace him as candidate. "All acts described (in the media) are legal and transparent."

Determined despite unending attacks, Fillon, stressing his 32 years in politics, vowed to stay in the race.

"Nothing will turn me from my duty to be candidate in the presidential election," he said.

Fillon apologized for employing his wife, while noting that it is not illegal

and he is not the only politician to have done so.

"What was acceptable yesterday ... is not today," Fillon said.

"It was a mistake. I deeply regret it and I present my excuses to the French."

French politicians are allowed to hire family members as aides as long as they actually do the jobs for which they are paid.

Prosecutors are trying to determine whether Fillon's family members did the jobs of parliamentary aides. The preliminary probe involves suspicions of embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds.

As prime minister and in his presidential campaign, Fillon put the accent on cutting back on government spending. A key campaign promise this year is to slash half a million public-sector jobs.

Fillon's popularity has dropped in the past two weeks following allegations by the *Canard Enchaîné* newspaper that his Welsh-born wife Penelope was paid 830,000 euros (\$900,000) over 15 years without doing anything to earn the salary. The Paris prosecutor's office on Thursday expanded its investigation to include Fillon's son and daughter.

Some conservative lawmakers have pressed for him to step down to improve the party's chances of winning the election. The first vote is on April 23, and the top two finishers compete in a runoff on May 7. If

Fillon's bid to win confidence while wading through a legal investigation fails to work, the election could become an unusual face-off without a strong right, or no right at all.

Fillon reiterated he would withdraw if he were charged — but questioned whether the financial prosecutor's office handling the case was the proper jurisdiction. A statement by the prosecutor's office said it was competent.

Officials of the far-right National Front party, including leader Marine Le Pen, also are under investigation for their use of aides in the European parliament.

Fillon laid out for reporters in some detail his own facts about the accusations.

"Yes, I employed my wife as an aide," Fillon said. He said she was paid an average 3,677 euros per month over 15 years.

"They call this job fictitious," he said, laying out the ill-defined duties of parliamentary aides who work "in the shadows."

"Her salary was perfectly justified because her work was indispensable to my activities as an elected official," he said.

Fillon and his family live in an elegant manor in the Sarthe region southwest of Paris. To bolster his reputation he detailed the worth of the building — 750,000 euros — and other holdings, and said he does not have to pay the tax on fortunes demanded of the wealthiest. Fillon said he was publishing his assets online Monday night.

Fillon said the scandal grew out of a political conspiracy to take him out of the race, and make it a face-off between far-right leader Marine Le Pen — whose family he blasted as "untouchable" — and Emmanuel Macron, an untested former banker and Socialist Party maverick whom Fillon called a "guru."

Fillon did not say who would be behind such a plot.

"Nothing will change my mind" about running, Fillon said. To members of his own The Republicans party, he

said twice, "I'm not the candidate of a party" but of the French people.

Conservative lawmaker Georges Fenech, among those who wanted Fillon to withdraw, changed his mind after the firm defense.

"Today we know who will be candidate to the end," Fenech told BFM-TV. "We must back him. We have no other choice."

On Tuesday, lawmakers in Fillon's party hold their weekly meeting, a likely place to examine the fallout from the scandal. There is no procedure in place to put aside his candidacy, and no ready replacement for Fillon.

Besides far-right Le Pen and centrist Macron, Socialist Party candidate Benoit Hamon and far-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon are running for president.

Socialist President Francois Hollande is so unpopular that he decided not to run for a second term.

CNBC : 'I have nothing to hide': Defiant Fillon vows he will not quit French presidential race

Sam Meredith

MARTIN BUREAU | AFP | Getty Images

French center-right presidential candidate Francois Fillon has pledged to continue his election campaign and told supporters at a news conference in Paris Monday he would fight allegations he improperly employed family members.

"I understand the need for me to clarify things and I will do so because I have nothing to hide," Fillon told supporters at his campaign headquarters on Monday.

Fillon has been under increasing pressure to withdraw from the race after accusations emerged that he had paid his wife hundreds of thousands of euros in state funds for work she may not have done.

'Perfectly justified'



Despite Scandal, Fillon Continues French Presidential Campaign

French presidential candidate Francois Fillon says he will continue his campaign, despite criticism amid media reports he paid his wife an unjustified salary for 15 years while he was a member of parliament.

Claiming his wife was paid fairly for work she did, Fillon only apologized

The Les Republicains (LR) candidate declared he was in the middle of an "extremely violent campaign" and dismissed accusations his wife, Penelope, wrongly benefitted financially as his assistant.

"Her salary was perfectly justified because her work was indispensable to my work as an MP (member of parliament)," he said.

Fillon claimed he saw no reason to reimburse the money paid to his wife from her time as his parliamentary assistant and also moved to respond to a preliminary probe from prosecutors who are investigating whether his children profited financially from parliamentary roles.

He argued all financial matters were declared throughout his time as an MP and all were legal. However, he conceded, "To collaborate with family members in politics was an

accepted thing, it is not accepted today. I am sorry and apologize".

The LR party distributed around 3 million leaflets on Saturday titled "Stop the Manhunt" in an effort to reject allegations pointed towards him as conspiracy.

However, some senior members of Fillon's own party have urged him to stand down to allow someone else attempt to build a campaign with just 11 weeks until the first round of votes are due to be cast.

"I want to tell millions of French people who chose me, no one will steal your choice," Fillon declared as he underlined his intention to pursue the French presidency. "Tonight a new campaign starts," he added.

Campaign contenders

Meanwhile, two other major contenders in the race to become president of France launched their

respective campaigns in the city of Lyon on Sunday.

The favorites to reach the second and final round of voting in May are the former economy minister and independent candidate, Emmanuel Macron, and leader of the anti-immigration and populist National Front party, Marine Le Pen.

Le Pen continues to be the political frontrunner with 25 percent of the vote with Macron slightly behind on 20.5 percent, according to the latest poll conducted by polling firm Ifop.

Until the political scandal began to unfold on January 25, Fillon had been projected to be the most likely challenger to Le Pen.

Opinion polls suggest both Fillon and Macron would defeat Le Pen in the final round of voting by a wide margin.

Monday, responding to allegations his wife performed no job duties, despite receiving a monthly government salary of \$4,000.

Fillon's popularity has declined significantly during the past two weeks since the *Canard Enchaîné*

newspaper published a report including Mrs. Fillon's salary.

The first round of presidential elections in France is scheduled for April.

European Stocks Drop on France, Italy as Political Risks Sharpen

6 février 2017 à 03:24 UTC-5
6 février 2017 à 12:02 UTC-5

European stocks drifted lower on Monday as investors turned cautious on the region's assets including bonds and the euro as their focus shifted to potential political risks.

The Stoxx Europe 600 Index fell 0.7 percent at the close, with 18 of 19 sectors lower. The benchmark index, which has moved mostly sideways this year, is up just 0.05 percent in 2017, lagging a 2.4 percent gain in the S&P 500 Index. Over the weekend, prospective French presidential candidate

Marine Le Pen unveiled a manifesto pledge to take the country out of the currency bloc should she win.

The Euro Stoxx 50, a gauge of euro-area shares, slid 1.1 percent, crossing below its 50-day moving average for the first time since early December.

- The yield spread between France and Germany's 10-year bonds widened to its most since 2012 as the political plot thickened amid the most unpredictable French election campaign in decades.
- In Italy, where equity markets are seen as among the most risky in Europe due mostly to its fragile banking sector, stocks underperformed. The FTSE MIB fell 2.2 percent. France's CAC 40 index dropped 1 percent in its largest decline in a week.
- European Central Bank President Mario Draghi said the euro-region economy and inflation still aren't strong enough to allow for a withdrawal of monetary stimulus, in

testimony at the European Parliament.

- Shares in automakers across Europe underperformed, with the sector index falling 1.4 percent. Bank of America Merrill Lynch equity strategists downgraded the sector to underweight, saying the recent rally looks stretched and the group faces structural challenges.



French Policeman Charged With Rape After Violent ID Check

ABC News

Hundreds of people marched in a Paris suburb Monday to show support for a young black man who authorities allege was sodomized by a police officer's baton last week during a police operation that targeted drug traffickers.

One officer was charged Sunday with aggravated rape and three others were charged with aggravated assault.

Interior Minister Bruno Le Roux suspended the four officers and also said the facts surrounding their arrest of the 22-year-old man during an identity check must be established "very clearly and with no ambiguity."

The incident allegedly occurred in a neighborhood with a large minority population in the city of Aulnay-sous-Bois, east of Paris, and a crowd turned out there to march in support of the alleged victim.

"The feeling of humiliation is felt by people," said Abdallah Benjana, a former deputy mayor who lives in the neighborhood.

"What are they seeking?," he said of the officers. "To provoke a spark?"

Isn't there enough gunpowder in those neighborhoods? Unemployment, insecurity, high rents ... no perspectives for future. They do that to a young man, it can only explode."

Abdel Adhoure, a 20-year-old resident of the area, said that "every day it's like that: whenever the police come they carry out abusive checks."

The young man allegedly assaulted by the officers told his story to the BFM television channel Monday. Speaking in an audio interview, he said the officers hit him and peppered him with racist insults. At one point, one of the officers took his truncheon and "he drove it into my buttocks," he said.

A lawyer for the officer charged with rape said that any injury inflicted was done accidentally.

The Associated Press does not typically identify victims of sexual assault. Authorities have not identified the young man, but supporters have been marching in "Justice Pour Theo" shirts.

Eric Dupond-Moretti, a lawyer representing the young man, told Europe 1 radio that his client

underwent emergency surgery for a "deep anal tear" and had been hospitalized since.

The attorney said the case is "exceptionally serious" and he called on judicial authorities to treat the officer as any other suspected rapist would be.

French law defines a rape as any act of sexual penetration of any kind, committed by violence, coercion, threat or surprise. When an alleged offender has an authority of law over the victim, a conviction can bring up to 20 years in prison.

In the interview with BFM, the alleged victim said that have he was sodomized, he fell face down. "I had no strength left. It was as if my body had left myself," he said.

He said he was then handcuffed and taken to a police car, where he was insulted again, spat at and beaten "in the private parts."

Once at the police station, he said, another officer saw his condition and he was taken to a hospital.

Frederic Gabet, a lawyer for the officer charged with rape, told Europe 1 radio that his client "had never wished at any time to cause any injury to the victim and that the

blow had been carried out in a totally involuntary manner, without his being aware of any injury."

In an interview with AP, Yves Lefebvre, a police union chief, suggested the rape charge was filed "to calm or to stop a violent outburst" in the sensitive suburban neighborhood.

Aulnay-sous-Bois was one of the worst-hit suburbs during 2005 riots around the French capital.

Lefebvre said there was no evidence so far that "the truncheon was actually introduced" into the victim's rectum. And if that actually happened, it was likely done "accidentally," the union leader said.

Defender of Human Rights, an independent French watchdog group, said Monday that it would investigate "this dramatic case that illustrates the conflicts that sometimes arise from identity checks."

Associated Press writer Milos Krivokapic contributed to this report.

Forbes : FCA Referred To French Prosecutor On Dieselgate Charges

Bertel Schmitt,

Contributor

I have written about the auto industry all my life.

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

Paris pollution, January 24, 2017 (Photo: FRANCK FIFE/AFP/Getty Images)

Fiat Chrysler is officially in dieselgate trouble in Europe. French investigators referred the carmaker for possible prosecution over abnormal emissions of nitrogen oxide pollutants from some of its diesel engines, Reuters reported today. While many EU states appear to protect their automakers, France is taking a hard stance. Last November, French investigators referred partially state-owned Renault to the prosecutors on

similar charges. At around the same time, reports appeared that the French anti-fraud agency DGCCRF was wrapping up its investigation into FCA, "with disturbing results."

FCA's case has been simmering for a long time in Europe. In May 2016, Germany's KBA regulator said it discovered "irregularities" involving Fiat's 500X. Fiat wasn't the only automaker with conspicuous readings. Last spring, a number of carmakers were called on the carpet

in Berlin, and also in other EU countries. They were told to sin no more, to quietly change their software, and their ways, and that was it. Fiat was also summoned to Berlin, but it did not show. The company had its lawyer write a letter stating that the Italian government is in charge of their EU type approval. That's true, and Italy's Transport Ministry promptly wrote that there is nothing illegal in the Fiat cars.

Masked woman at Place Maillot in Paris(Photo: GEOFFROY VAN DER HASSELT/AFP/Getty Images)

Ever since, the matter went back and forth between Germany and Italy. In September, Germany's Ministry Of Transport declared that Fiat Chrysler has used illegal defeat devices in at least three models, Fiat's 500X, Fiat Doblo and Jeep Renegade. Germany turned to the European Commission for action against Italy. Three weeks ago, the European

Commission called on Italy to provide proof against Germany's allegations. Italy said the cars are fine. Also three weeks ago, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency EPA "issued a notice of violation to FCA for installing and failing to disclose engine management software in certain light-duty diesel vehicles," regulator-speak for installing defeat devices.

As far as the French matter is concerned, Fiat Chrysler again professed its innocence today, claiming that "its diesel vehicles

were fully compliant with applicable emissions requirements," as a spokesman told Reuters. EU rules are quite elastic. "Illegal defeat devices" are verboten, but what is illegal is a matter of very generous interpretation. Volkswagen's dieselgate scandal brought to light that many EU automakers exploit the huge loopholes to the maximum extent possible. Meanwhile, many EU cities run out of breathable air. Last December, Paris registered the worst pollution levels in a decade, and its mayor Anne Hidalgo vowed that "there will be no more diesel

vehicles in Paris by 2020." Two weeks ago, Paris and Lyon begun to ban the most polluting vehicles from their streets.

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The New York Times

Brooks : Where History Is Being Made

David Brooks

Let's start with a little historical perspective.

If you had responded to the Fallows Question in 1968 you would have moved to California, both to the Bay Area and to Orange County. That would have put you at the epicenter of the '60s counterculture, and also at the center of the Reaganite conservatism that arose in response.

By 1974, the most important place to be was the offices of the magazine Ms. For all its excesses, feminism has been the most important and the most salutary change of our lifetimes.

By the 1980s, the big historical changes had to do with capitalism and finance, so either Japan or Wall Street was the place to be. In the early 1990s, Europe was the place to witness the end of communism and the false dawn of global peace. By the '90s, Silicon Valley was the most important driver of world historical change.

The Fallows were clearly right to go witness the rise of

China, but by 2006 I could also argue that equally important events were happening in Baghdad, Tehran and Damascus, with the crumbling of the modern Middle East.

By 2010, the Fallows Question would have taken you to the neuroscience departments at universities like N.Y.U., Harvard and U.S.C., where cognitive scientists were rewriting our understanding of the human mind. By 2015, it would have taken you to working-class Ohio to witness the populist upheaval that is driving current global politics.

Today, I'd say the most pivotal spot on earth is Washington, D.C. The crucial questions will be settled there: Can Donald Trump be induced to govern in some rational manner or will he blow up the world? Does he represent a populist tide that will only grow or is some other set of ideas building for his overthrow? Are the leading institutions — everything from the Civil Service to the news media to the political parties — resilient enough to correct for the Trumpian chaos?

Washington will either preserve the world order or destroy it.

I sent the Fallows Question to the Fallows themselves, and they agreed in part with my Washington answer. But they also said that the most important place to be now might be places like Erie, Pa.; Fresno, Ca.; and Columbus, Ohio.

Trump's presence in the White House may push change to the local levels. In these cities, the Fallows argue, citizen participants are coping with declining industries, creating new civic cultures, assimilating waves of immigration, collaborating across party lines to revive everything from arts programs to tech seedbeds.

If you want to "observe" history, the Fallows say, go to Washington. If you want to "participate," go elsewhere.

That's a good argument, but I suppose I should close by widening the possibilities. After all, few knew about Martin Luther in 1517 or what Deng Xiaoping would unleash in 1977. So maybe the most important spot on earth right now is to be found at:

An evangelical church in Brooklyn that has come up with a style of faith that satisfies the spiritual needs of blue America.

A National Front office in Paris where a French Stephen Bannon is plotting the final destruction of the European Union.

A bio lab somewhere where researchers are finding ways to tailor cancer treatment to each patient's particular genetic makeup, thus lengthening lives and restructuring the phases of the typical human life.

A set of universities, headquartered in Mauritius and spread throughout Africa, that will unleash the human potential of that continent at exactly the moment when the African future, in many places, is most promising.

Most people can't up and move in search of history. They're tied down by work, family and spiritual commitments. But you only go around once in life, so if you can swing it, you might as well be where the action is.

The New York Times

For Germany, Trump Poses a Problem With No Clear Solution

Max Fisher

BERLIN — As allies across Europe and Asia adjust to changes brought by President Trump, Germany is in a uniquely difficult position.

Its economy and national security are particularly reliant on American support, which now seems in doubt, and on European unity, which is under attack and increasingly up to Germany to maintain.

Yet Germany is constrained by the growing shakiness of allies like Britain and perhaps even France, by the rise of its own far-right populist movement and by lingering cultural sensitivities about any policy that feels militaristic or hegemonic. These dynamics are not new, but there is a growing tension between

the role Germany feels comfortable with, and the one it feels it needs to play on the world stage.

A growing number of officials in Germany are asking whether they need a Plan B for a post-American Europe. But they are finding that any such plan would require costs and sacrifices almost as great as the consequences of inaction.

'The 20th century is gone'

"We said farewell to your ambassador the other day," said Niels Annen, a lawmaker with the center-left Social Democrats, who are part of the governing coalition. "He tried to reassure everybody but I think nobody believed him."

Over breakfast in the restored Reichstag, a soaring imperial-era construction, Mr. Annen worried about "a return to geopolitics in the way that we saw in the 20th and maybe 19th centuries."

A few tables over sat Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the former foreign minister now designated to become president, who three days later would declare that, with Mr. Trump's election, "the old world of the 20th century is gone" and that Germans had to prepare for drastic changes.

The concern vexing Mr. Annen, and much of official Berlin, was that Mr. Trump might not only withdraw American protection but also actively aid Europe's growing internal and external threats.

"Someone like Mr. Bannon sitting in the White House who has contacts with right-wing, up to fascist, groups here in Europe," Mr. Annen said, referring to Mr. Trump's chief strategist, Stephen K. Bannon, "is really concerning."

He also said he feared that Mr. Trump could seek to improve ties with Moscow "on Russian terms," cutting out Europe, and potentially emboldening Russia's growing challenge to the continent's unity.

Other lawmakers worried that Mr. Trump was already undermining European unity, for example by rewarding Britain's exit from the European Union with promises of a speedy trade deal.

"What I find destabilizing is his announcement that he will make deals with national member states, because that will divide the E.U.," said Franziska Brantner, a lawmaker with the Green Party. She also said she was worried that Mr. Trump was weakening Europe's collective defense by questioning the value of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

A new German role

Most nations, facing such threats, would most likely be moving to respond.

Germany is unusual. It has secured its place in the world by upholding the liberal order through consensus-building and peacemaking.

"That's a nice idea," Ulrich Kühn, a fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said of that model. But Germany "is being confronted with a reality where we cannot continue that way anymore."

Most middle powers rely at least partly on traditional forms of power; Britain has its military might, India its regional dominance, Israel its nuclear program. Germany has explicitly avoided such assets, leaving it to rely on soft power tools, particularly its economic strength, that only work in the framework of a liberal European order that now looks uncertain.

Now, policy elites and the public in Germany are struggling with whether and how their nation should develop more traditional forms of power.

Germany has, in the past decade, grown beyond many of the taboos that stem from the Nazi era and World War II. It leads on eurozone matters, sends small numbers of troops on overseas NATO missions and has organized recent sanctions against Russia. National pride remains a touchy topic but one that can at least be discussed.

Still, the idea of Germany as a military power or even European hegemon — likely requirements for taking up the burdens and responsibilities of a leading European power in the Trump era — remains difficult.

But Germany may not have the luxury of time to reconcile its

contradictory feelings about its place in the world, especially with an intransigent America and resurgent Russia, and a Europe rived by populism.

"We still don't really have a clue who we are in the world and who we want to be," said Jana Puglierin of the German Council on Foreign Relations. That makes it difficult to face increasingly urgent questions, she said, over "what role we should play, who Germany is, how dominant do we want to be."

'We're running out of partners'

As the United States openly questions the European Union's value, its member states are plagued by populist backlashes that have made its leaders less willing to address the eurozone and refugee crises at a moment when they are most urgent.

Germany, as a result, is left carrying a greater share of the burden just as it is becoming heaviest.

"We're running out of partners," Mr. Annen said.

But while the United States could tell Europe hard truths and pressure its leaders to make difficult decisions, continental politics and memory mean Germany cannot take over this role. Its regional stature allows it enough power to push some policies on smaller states, but not enough to force unity on all issues. And past exercises of power, like pushing austerity plans that benefited Germany's own economy at the expense of its poorer neighbors, have not enhanced its regional leadership.

"It will never be a with-us-or-against-us policy, because then these countries will be against us," Mr. Annen said.

An even starker challenge is posed by Russia, which is staging cyberattacks and aligning with populist movements across Europe. The fear is that softening American and Western European defense commitments would compel some Eastern European states to hedge against the alliance and submit to a degree of Russian influence.

Should Europe's defense unity break under Russian pressure, analysts worry, its economic and

political unity would follow, leaving Germany isolated at a time when it is unequipped to go it alone.

Eastern European states may look to Germany, whose economy is almost triple the size of Russia's, to replace American security guarantees. But the German military lacks many basics such as sufficient ammunition, for which it relies on American forces. Even with rapid spending increases, it would take years for the country to be able to play a major European defense role, Mr. Kühn said.

"There is no substitute for the United States with regard to European security," said Norbert Röttgen, a lawmaker with the Christian Democratic Union, which is also the party of Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Should Germany seek to uphold European collective defense, the greatest hurdle may be the German people.

In 2015, a Pew poll of NATO member states found that only 38 percent of Germans said that their country should defend NATO allies bordering Russia if they were attacked.

An American threat

Officials say that while their first priority is to establish friendly relations with the Trump administration, they are not averse to hitting back if the United States undermines the European Union.

"We cannot allow even our most important ally to dismantle the single most historic achievement that we have," Mr. Annen said. "That is something that no government could accept without giving an answer."

Behind closed doors, according to a senior German government official, officials are preparing for the day that Berlin could be forced to treat its longtime ally as a threat, necessitating radical changes in German foreign policy.

The official asked to remain anonymous because of another predicament Berlin faces with Mr. Trump: Its leaders must prepare Germany by enunciating the stakes, but they fear that overtly stepping away from Mr. Trump would anger him, risking the very breakup they wish to avoid.

Others are beginning to think about the day after.

Roderich Kiesewetter, a former military officer who is now a lawmaker with the Christian Democratic Union, is among a small but growing group pushing these questions into the public debate.

Germany should focus on persuading Mr. Trump to drop his hostility toward Europe, Mr. Kiesewetter said, but "we should not wait" to consider acting.

Mr. Kiesewetter hopes to hasten military integration across the European Union. He acknowledged that a European-only defense against Russia would be far weaker than the status quo. Still, he argued it could be a sufficient deterrent — if Germany takes enough of a role to bring along the rest of Europe.

Though few lawmakers have joined Mr. Kiesewetter's public calls for considering a post-American Europe, policy analysts say that such discussions are becoming widespread in official Berlin.

Still, Mr. Kiesewetter is hardly optimistic. Should Mr. Trump strike a rapprochement with Moscow that did not include European leaders, leaving the continent on its own, he warned this would divide Eastern Europe between "zones of influence."

This possibility seems to torment German officials, who sometimes label it with the word "Zwischen-Europa." The phrase, which means "intermediary Europe" or "in-between Europe," comes from the interwar era, when Germans used it to describe the borderlands between it and the Soviet Union. It is remembered here as a partial cause of World War II.

The phrase is used today not to specifically warn of war but to remind Germans of the importance of the postwar order that many believe is in growing peril. It is also a warning: that the liberal system could slip away and that Germans must remember the dangers of the old order, even if the rest of the world forgets.



Trump tried and failed to build a wall in Ireland. That could mean big trouble for Europe.

<https://www.facebook.com/griff.witte>

DOONBEG, Ireland — Before Donald Trump proposed a 1,000-mile wall on the U.S.-Mexico border to stop migrants, he tried to build a

two-mile barrier on a pristine stretch of Irish coast to rein in an ocean.

He didn't succeed.

Irish surfers, weekend beachcombers, environmental

scientists, local planners and even a microscopic snail got in his way. In December, Trump International Golf Links backed down from plans it had said were essential to protect the company's lone Irish course —

picturesquely nestled in dunes overlooking the Atlantic — from being swallowed by rising seas.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

Please provide a valid email address.

For a man who loves to win, the defeat — just a month after his election as president — has left a bitter taste. And despite the motley nature of the resistance, Trump seems to have singled out a lone culprit: the European Union, whose rules and regulations underpinned many of the objections.

In interviews and public statements, Trump has cited his tangle over the golf-course wall as Exhibit A in justifying a jaundiced view of the E.U. that puts him at odds with decades of bipartisan U.S. foreign policy.

Previous presidents — Democrats and Republicans alike — have seen the E.U. as an essential partner in global stability and a bulwark against the self-interested nationalism that spawned two world wars. To Trump, the bloc's environmental protection regulations were a threat to his exquisitely manicured fairways and putting greens.

"I found it to be a very unpleasant experience," he told British and German interviewers last month after bringing up the wall dispute, unbidden, when asked his opinion of the E.U.

"A very bad experience," he emphasized weeks later as he raised the issue at his first White House news conference.

The bureaucratic battle over a golf-course sea wall makes for an unlikely inflection point in geopolitical history. And yet in Europe, Trump's hostility toward the union that backers credit with keeping decades of continental peace is seen as a potentially fatal blow.

European Council President Donald Tusk recently took the extraordinary step of including Trump on a list of threats to the already teetering E.U., right alongside China, Russia and radical Islam.

The golf-course dispute, of course, is not the only explanation for Trump's disdain. He has also criticized the E.U.'s status as a trading rival to the United States, the predominance within the bloc of German interests and its suppression of national identities.

But that a relatively minor spat at a golf course has any bearing on such a major foreign policy stance is baffling to some of those who battled the wall — especially, they

say, because Trump has his facts wrong.

"He speaks as though it was the E.U. that stopped it. It wasn't," said Dave Flynn, co-chair of a local surfers' group that opposed the sea barrier. "It's amazing that such a big foreign policy decision like this could be made on such an ill-informed basis."

The 18-hole golf resort in the west Irish village of Doonbeg is a relatively small and recent addition to Trump's global business empire, which he signed over to his sons just before entering the White House.

Ironically, the resort was originally built with the help of a \$4 million grant from the E.U. The money was intended to spur rural development. And for a time it did, drawing international tourists and more than 200 jobs to a village where cattle farming, fishing and a handful of pubs had been the mainstays of the local economy.

But by early 2014, just over a decade after opening, the resort was struggling, battered by the one-two punch of an Irish economy still reeling from the global downturn and severe winter storms that left the course badly damaged.

Trump's company swooped in and bought it at a deep discount — reportedly for about \$15 million.

That spring, Trump paid his new asset a visit. At nearby Shannon Airport, he was given a red-carpet welcome, complete with a harpist and a handshake from the Irish finance minister. In a radio interview, he said he would invest about \$45 million in a dramatic upgrade and expansion of the resort's facilities.

But as storms continued to pound away at the greens, it became apparent that any investment would come to naught unless the fragile and ever-shifting dunes upon which the course is built were better defended.

Initially, the company's solution was to begin dumping piles of rock along the beach. But the work lacked the necessary permits from County Clare, and was halted.

Ultimately, Trump International put an audacious plan before the county council: a two-mile, 200,000-ton, 15-foot-high rock wall that would sharply divide the dunes from the adjacent Doughmore Beach.

"It was a quantum leap from anything we had seen," Flynn said. "It was big and brash, just hugely shocking."

Flynn, who works as a development manager, said that he has been surfing at Doughmore for more than 20 years. The wide, sandy, half-moon beach is regarded as the best surf spot in western Ireland, he said. "During the spring, summer and autumn, it's perfect. It just tracks in waves."

He and fellow club members quickly concluded that Trump's wall would destroy their mecca.

"Nature doesn't like hard lines," he said. "The beach will erode at the front and the dunes will die at the back. They need to work together."

Residents of Doonbeg, a tiny, verdant and windswept village on the Atlantic coast, took a different view. Trump International said it needed the wall to keep the resort open. With course visitors pumping money into the economy, locals rallied around Trump International's plan.

"The scenery is beautiful here, but you can't eat it. You need to build in order to survive and thrive," said Rita McInerney, who owns a local cafe and general store and whose family has been in Doonbeg for seven generations. "Some people think we're selling our souls by dealing with Trump International. But prospects are few and far between in an area like this. And the fact is it's 200 jobs, plus the spinoff for local businesses."

Coincidentally, Vice President Pence has ancestors who hail from Doonbeg, which has also helped to consolidate local support.

"Trump has kept the jobs here and kept the tourists coming in. He made a promise to the people of Doonbeg, and he made good on it," said Hugh McNally, a local restaurant owner and Pence's third cousin.

McNally said that much of the opposition to the wall was generated based on political opposition to Trump and that it came from outside the village.

Opponents acknowledge their outsider status but insist the objections they lodged with county planners are based on genuine concern for an important natural habitat. Some of the legal objections, though not all, were based on the site's E.U. designation as "a special area of conservation" and a habitat for the narrow-mouthed whorl snail — a rare and protected species.

"If you damage the dunes, then you eventually eliminate the snail's habitat," said Tony Lowes, director of Friends of the Irish Environment. "They will go if a wall is put in place."

Trump has fumed at such arguments, calling them "environmental tricks to stop a project from being built" in an interview with the Times of London and Germany's Bild.

He also said his company had received "the approvals very quickly from Ireland and then Ireland and my people went to the E.U. to get the approval. It was going to take years."

The reality, however, is that E.U. approval was never needed, and Irish approval was never given. The project was stalled at the county level — with planners weighing objections based on local, national and E.U. law. A petition at the national level was rejected.

Trump encouraged Britain to leave the E.U., and has said he believes other members will follow. After the Brexit vote last June, he hailed the decision in a ribbon-cutting at one of his Scottish golf courses, Turnberry, saying the vote was "a positive" because it would depress the value of Britain's currency.

"When the pound goes down," he said, "more people are coming to Turnberry."

That's proved correct. The course has seen an upturn in business.

So has Doonbeg, with the course benefiting from what its general manager, Joe Russell, said is an investment of over \$25 million in upgrades since Trump International bought it.

But the resort will not be getting the rock wall — at least not as originally planned. Just weeks after Trump's victory in November, the company withdrew its proposal rather than answer 51 questions posed by county planners. Russell said the decision was made because approval would have taken "years" that "the company does not have."

Instead, Trump International has proposed two smaller walls, which together are less than a third the size of the original. "We hope [the new plan] will proceed through the planning process quicker," Russell said.

But the battle continues. Many of the same groups that opposed the original wall have objected to the new plan, arguing that when the smaller barriers inevitably fail, Trump International will be back demanding bigger ones.

"Sea walls," Lowes said, "beget sea walls."

Karla Adam in London contributed to this report.

Could Brexit pressures push May to surrender British 'independence' to US? (+video)

The Christian Science Monitor

February 6, 2017 London—In 1987, Donald Trump wrote in "The Art of the Deal," "The worst thing you can possibly do in a deal is seem desperate to make it."

To some in Britain, their prime minister, Theresa May, violated that rule when she became the first foreign leader to visit the US since President Trump's inauguration – and promptly invited Trump to make a state visit to the UK later this year.

The honor – one not extended to former Presidents Obama and Bush until they'd been in office for two years – comes as Britain gears up to leave the EU and shifts its gaze across the pond toward its top export partner. And the haste with which it was proffered has set off a firestorm.

Politicians and ordinary Britons alike are aware that the move out of the EU gives the "special relationship" of the US and Britain particular weight. But many are beginning to question its stature as the two countries start to diverge on key domestic and foreign policies. They are concerned that pressure to make Brexit go as smoothly as possible may spur May to trade Britain's new "independence" from the EU for a greater dependence on the US.

For May, the challenge now is to negotiate a trade deal with the US that helps counteract the economic effects of Brexit and maintain Britain's standing on the global stage, without being seen to capitulate to an administration that is dividing British public opinion.

"Politically, she's got to take account of public opinion in the UK, and in particular the repercussions that it's going to have on Conservatives in the next election, whenever that comes," said Robert Singh, professor of politics at Birkbeck, University of London.

Pressure to cut a deal

A recent poll found that half of Britons see the US as the country's most important ally, and 40 percent believe that Brexit means having to keep close ties with the US. One-third see Trump

as "good" for relations with Britain.

Unlike recent prime ministers such as David Cameron and Tony Blair, May was appointed after Cameron resigned following last year's referendum – putting her in a more vulnerable position lacking a popular mandate. And with the governing Conservatives having a slim majority in the House of Commons, even a small rebellion in her party could make it hard for her to push through her agenda. Another recent poll found that if an election were called now, May would win 38 percent of the popular vote compared to 30 percent for Labour.

"I think that the political and the economic imperative now to finding some kind of trade deal with the States – however long that is going to take – probably overrides everything else," Singh says. "She will probably have to do what, in essence, [former Prime Minister Tony] Blair did with Bush after Iraq, and just tough out all of the very, very vocal criticism that she's going to come under – not just from the left but also from Conservatives as well, I suspect."

Nearly 2 million people have signed a petition opposing Trump's state visit, which will be debated in Parliament this month. A driving force behind is Trump's recent travel ban on citizens of seven majority-Muslim countries, indefinite ban on Syrian refugees and planned wall along the Mexican border. Half of Britons oppose Trump's visit, though a counter-petition in favor of Trump's visit has more than 250,000 signatures.

Tensions could mount further as UK officials plan to visit Washington this week to start bilateral trade talks, in anticipation of Britain pulling out of the EU.

British values at risk?

What's at stake is a sense of "national sovereignty" that prompted some Brits to vote out of the EU, and would be perceived as weakened again if May ran straight from the EU's arms into those of a leader determined to put "America first."

Also at stake is one of Britain's most cherished institutions: the National Health Service (NHS), which dates back to the postwar era.

With more than 1.5 million staff, it's one of the world's largest employers and a key part of many Britons' national identity. Almost 90 percent of Britons support free, tax-funded universal health care, and three-quarters consider the NHS one of the country's greatest achievements.

"People say the NHS is the only British religion that people still believe in," Singh says.

Yet Britons are divided on opening up the NHS to further privatization and competition from American healthcare companies – a prospect that rallied opposition to the abandoned Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and that now looms over any trade talks with the US.

"The worry is, Theresa May is desperate to sacrifice whatever she needs to sacrifice in order to make her 'extreme Brexit' work," said Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party of England & Wales. "Is she really going to defend the NHS against that kind of deal? ... One suspects she might not."

The two leaders do have common ground in supporting restricted immigration – with the British government pushing a "hard Brexit" that would end the free movement of EU citizens to the UK and letting in only 2,900 of the 20,000 Syrian refugees it has pledged to resettle by 2020 (out of five million Syrian refugees in total).

'Take back control'

The "special relationship" has had peaks and troughs since Winston Churchill coined the phrase in the 1940s, with highs including the Reagan-Thatcher and Bush-Blair eras, when Blair wrote to Bush, "I will be with you, whatever" before the Iraq invasion.

"The only times really when you can see that [influence] happening is when the American administration is divided, and the British prime minister can lend some weight to

one of the sides," Singh argued, noting that Thatcher often sided with the hawks in Reagan's government and Blair sided with Colin Powell on not seeking UN approval to invade Iraq.

The Telegraph agreed, writing, "The role of Britain, as it was in the past, is once again to steady the powerful American ship, if it threatens to veer off course into dangerous waters."

"The trans-Atlantic alliance is renewed," the editors proclaimed.

Meanwhile, the hashtag #TheresaTheAppeaser circulated on Twitter.

Opposition parties are already pressuring May to stand up to Trump on issues of torture, women's rights, racial equality, and migration, after the government took two days before it criticized Trump's travel ban – in contrast with the swifter responses of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President François Hollande – and questions arose around whether May knew about the policy before it was announced. One Labour MP urged May to stand up for "British values," which the government defines as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and multicultural tolerance.

Within her party, May must navigate an ongoing split between the part that favors free trade and the EU and a more nationalist, anti-EU wing ready to "take back control" of Britain and work with Trump.

For Singh, there continues to be tension in government "between exiting Europe because we want national sovereignty and at the same time thinking, if we're going to project power, we need to get close to Washington again."

"A lot of Tories who pursue this 'take back control' line are at the same time recognizing that we're going to be weaker unless we are very, very closely linked to Washington, and Washington is giving us some goodies back in return," he says.

EU to Discuss Mideast Peace With Trump Officials

Julian E. Barnes in Brussels and Felicia Schwartz in Washington

Updated Feb. 6, 2017 3:55 p.m. ET

The European Union's foreign-policy chief will head to Washington this week for meetings with the Trump administration on the Israel-Palestinian peace process, as the

bloc seeks to clarify U.S. positions on key issues in the conflict.

Federica Mogherini, the European Union's high representative in charge of foreign policy, said Monday that the EU's position

supporting a two-state solution and opposing Israeli settlements remains the same, and the bloc must determine on which issues it can work with the U.S.

The prospect of changing U.S. policies on a variety of issues including the Middle East peace process, the Iran nuclear deal and sanctions on Russia has unnerved many allies.

President Donald Trump has steadfastly backed the Israeli government and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. But the Trump administration last week said Israel's settlement construction "may not be helpful" in achieving peace with the Palestinians, an apparent shift from the general tenor of Mr. Trump's previous statements about the dispute.

The statement indicated that Mr. Trump could take a tougher line with Israel. He had said on the campaign trail that he didn't have a problem with settlement construction. White House press secretary Sean Spicer also said last week that the Trump administration didn't view the existence of settlements as an "impediment to peace."

On Monday, Israel's military fired on Hamas installations in Gaza after a rocket launched from the Palestinian territory exploded in Israel, with no reports of casualties on either side,

Associated Press reported.

Ms. Mogherini is set to arrive on Thursday and is scheduled to meet at the White House with Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump's son-in-law and adviser, and Mike Flynn, national security adviser. Mr. Trump said Mr. Kushner will be his envoy to try to help negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

"It will be a dialogue hopefully to identify common ground, which files we want to cooperate together and which files there might be divergences," Ms. Mogherini said on Monday.

The European Union, along with the U.S., Russia and the United Nations, is part of the so-called quartet involved in trying to prod forward Israeli and Palestinian peace talks.

Those talks largely have stalled in recent years, and the Israeli government has appeared increasingly skeptical about the possibility of a two-state solution, a goal long pushed by previous U.S. administrations and European countries.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Greece's Response to Its Resurgent Debt Crisis: Prosecute the Statistician

Marcus Walker

Feb. 6, 2017 10:53 a.m. ET

ATHENS—Greece is struggling under its austerity regime and new questions are mounting as to whether it can satisfy its bailout terms. Some people in high places know just whom to blame—a statistician in rural Maryland.

Before Greece's debt crisis, its governments manipulated statistics and masked the size of budget deficits, waste and patronage. The statistician, Andreas Georgiou, moved from the U.S. to become Greece's first independent head of statistics in 2010. The European Union certified he subsequently fixed the omissions and reported the deficit in full.

On the contrary, Mr. Georgiou's foes claim, he manipulated the deficit figures as part of a plot to force severe austerity on Greece under the 2010 bailout "Memorandum" imposed by the EU and International Monetary Fund.

Four times in four years, Greek investigators or prosecutors have concluded that Mr. Georgiou merely applied EU accounting rules and committed no crime. Senior politicians and judges have nonetheless kept the accusations

alive. He could face five trials, and life imprisonment in one case.

Throughout Greece's debt crisis—history's biggest sovereign bailout and the deepest developed-country depression since the 1930s—much of the governing class has denied responsibility and instead fallen back on conspiracy theories.

That's raising doubts in the German-led eurozone about whether Greece is willing to learn from past mismanagement and avoid repeating its mistakes.

Berlin officials say they worry Greek statistics will become a political plaything again. Some EU countries have privately discussed freezing further loans and debt relief until Greece supports its statisticians, according to proposals viewed by The Wall Street Journal.

Mr. Georgiou's leading critics, economist Zoe Georganta and consultant Nikos Logothetis, say he was a pawn of IMF and European authorities, who needed the data to justify Greece's subjection to years of austerity.

"It's due to him that the evil continued," Mr. Logothetis told Greek television last fall. "If this isn't treason, what is?"

The Trump administration said last week that it was committed to peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, but didn't explicitly mention the two-state solution.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said during his confirmation hearing in January that the two-state solution "is a dream that everyone is in pursuit of. Whether it could ever be a reality remains to be seen."

Ms. Mogherini is also set to meet with Defense Secretary Jim Mattis in Washington or in Europe. She said she hopes to soon meet with Mr. Tillerson, and would meet with Vice President Mike Pence later in the month in Brussels.

Ms. Mogherini said the meetings were critical at a time when international positions may be shifting, and that officials need to be reminded that the EU's stance has remained firm: opposing Israeli settlements in the West Bank, supporting the establishment of a Palestinian state and leaving the status of Jerusalem for final settlement talks.

"This is a relevant thing to do at a time when we see changes in policies in the international

community," she said. "What doesn't change is the EU position."

Mr. Trump promised during the campaign to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and he said before he took office that it would be an immediate priority. Officials said the administration is in the beginning stages of decision-making on the matter.

Jordan's King Abdullah warned lawmakers and Trump administration officials about potential adverse consequences of moving the embassy in meetings last week.

Last month, Ms. Mogherini said that moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem could have serious consequences by threatening the stability of the region.

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The pair, who have made their accusations in Greek media and courtrooms for years, declined to be interviewed for this article. Ms. Georganta argues on her website that Greece's deficit when its debt crisis began was among the lowest in Europe—an assertion hard to reconcile with the country's ballooning debt issuance.

Mr. Georgiou, 56 years old and the single father of a 6-year-old daughter, is back home in Maryland and is low on money. He denies wrongdoing, says his calculations hewed to EU rules, and spends much of his days at his laptop, emailing, phoning and Skyping his Athens lawyers to prepare his defense in whichever case is coming up next.

"In my wildest nightmares," he says, "I wouldn't have thought this would be entering its sixth year."

The main allegation against Mr. Georgiou is that his upward revision of Greece's deficit for 2009 by €3.8 billion (about US\$4 billion) was a "false certification" that damaged the state by as much as €210 billion, or 120% of current gross domestic product.

While Mr. Georgiou awaits his fate, Greece's bailout is approaching its next storm. On Jan. 26, Europe and

the IMF pressured the Greek government to legislate extra austerity that Athens says goes too far. On Feb. 6, an IMF board meeting is expected to hear a bleak assessment of Greece's prospects absent major debt relief, which eurozone governments—entering a season of tricky elections—refuse to discuss.

The strains that have led to periodic drama in Greece are growing again, raising the specter of snap elections, in which politicians are likely to return to the theme of Greek victimhood.

Leading members of the conservative New Democracy party, which presided over Greece's unraveling budget from 2004 to 2009 under Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis, have long blamed Greece's crisis on the Memorandum. The left-wing Syriza party, now in power, has adopted that theme.

Greek data

Data fraud played a part in Greece's downfall, a European Parliament report has noted. In October 2009, the Karamanlis government told the EU its deficit that year would be 6% of GDP. Two days later, it lost elections. Greece then said the deficit would be 12.5%. EU officials

were furious; investors began dumping Greek bonds.

In early 2010, Mr. Georgiou read an EU report on Greek statistics. He was appalled.

The American-trained economist, a Greek citizen, was a manager in the IMF's statistics department in Washington, where people who worked with him say he was known as honest, frank and stubbornly attached to rules.

The report slammed Greece for years of deception. Countries "are supposed to cooperate in good faith," it said. "Deliberate misreporting or fraud is not foreseen in the regulation."

Mr. Georgiou applied for the post of Greece's chief statistician. The government scored him the most-qualified applicant. "I remember thinking Greece could and should do better," he says. "And I thought: This ought to be pretty straightforward."

Meanwhile, the EU's statistics arm, Eurostat, said the 2009 deficit figure was incomplete despite another revision, up to 13.6%. Greece signed the bailout in May 2010.

Three months later, Mr. Georgiou arrived in Athens to become president of the new Hellenic Statistical Authority, or Elstat. Along with him came his daughter, Maria Olympia, and her nanny.

He had resigned from the IMF, which put him on unpaid leave for four months until his 50th birthday so he would qualify to keep health insurance—an arrangement the Greek government accepted. Later, Greek judges tried him for breaching his duties by allegedly still working for the IMF.

In Athens, many saw Mr. Georgiou as an interloper who didn't understand local customs, some Greek officials say. He rebuffed calls from politicians asking for favors, they say, and ministry officials complained he was inflexible.

George Papaconstantinou, who as finance minister defended him at the time, says: "Our credibility on statistics was zero. We needed a stickler for rules."

In November 2010, Mr. Georgiou completed Eurostat's checklist and revised the 2009 deficit upward to 15.4% of GDP. He included deficits of state companies, such as the national railroad, whose sales to customers covered less than half of costs. EU rules say such bodies are government units. Also, Greece's social-security system had

overstated revenues and left out costs. Smaller corrections included unpaid government bills.

The EU said Greece's data were finally accurate. In Athens, bailout foes bit back.

Mr. Logothetis and Ms. Georganta had each applied for the job Mr. Georgiou won. The government scored them as less qualified than he, giving them positions on the agency's board for which they had also applied. Mr. Papaconstantinou says he regrets not vetting them more.

The pair suspected Mr. Georgiou was carrying out secret orders from the foreign creditors. His appointment was part of "the plan to enter Greece in the Memorandums of shame and genocide of the Greek population," they later wrote in a Greek magazine.

From Mr. Georgiou's first day, Mr. Logothetis hacked his emails after learning private access codes, a court trying him for that hacking later found. The court acquitted Mr. Logothetis, ruling he committed the deed but acted to protect state interests.

Board members wanted to approve the deficit data before telling the EU, according to Mr. Georgiou and indictments against him. He told them it wasn't the board's job to debate the deficit calculation—that EU rules made him alone responsible for its accuracy.

After discovering the email hacking, he stopped convening board meetings. The government eventually dismissed the board.

The dissenters publicized their claim that Mr. Georgiou inflated the deficit, disputing in Greek media the inclusion of state-company deficits and claiming rules were imposed only on Greece. (Eurostat's website contains correspondence with other countries about applying the same rules.)

Ms. Georganta published calculations that Greece's 2009 deficit was 3.9% of GDP. Her website shows she looked at how much Greek debt rose from 2008 to 2009, while subtracting items she disputed from the latter year only.

Bond markets could see Greece's 2009 new borrowing, a rough proxy for its deficit, was at least €35 billion—around 15% of GDP.

The accusers' theories gained traction in 2011 when New Democracy's leader, Antonis Samaras, spoke of an "organized

plan of forgery" of the deficit figure. An Athens public prosecutor began investigating the alleged inflation of the deficit and in January 2013 charged Mr. Georgiou with false certification causing damage to the state, and with breach of duty for not letting board members meet or approve the deficit, and with moonlighting for the IMF. Mr. Georgiou denied the charges.

Embattled, Mr. Georgiou was working late and seeing little of his daughter, he says. Anonymous callers phoned Elstat, threatening violence, he says. He wrote the government asking for police protection, he says, but there was no reply.

Prokopis Pavlopoulos, a leading New Democracy lawmaker, began championing the allegations, telling radio listeners Mr. Georgiou failed to resist European demands. Mr. Pavlopoulos, as interior minister of the Karamanlis government until 2009, had overseen a steep public-payroll expansion. Now Greece's president, he declined to be interviewed.

Judge: No case

In 2013, an investigating judge took over, concluding Mr. Georgiou had no case to answer. After an outcry, the case went to the Athens Appeals Court. Mr. Logothetis, in a 2014 newspaper interview, said: "He deserves to be hanged."

The appeals prosecutor concluded the charges should be dropped. New Democracy complained the truth was being impeded, and the Appeals Court ordered more investigation by another judge.

It was part of a legal loop that continues to this day: Mr. Georgiou faces allegations, judicial officials conclude there was no crime, Mr. Georgiou's foes protest, and courts order another look.

Mr. Georgiou continued to go into the office to produce data, which the EU verified.

He raised ire when he issued a news release asking why investigations were dragging on regarding data the EU had verified while nobody was investigating Greece's past statistics fraud. Mr. Pavlopoulos got a parliamentary committee to censure him for denigrating Greek justice and call for his removal. A court handed Mr. Georgiou a one-year suspended jail sentence for defaming his predecessors. He is appealing.

Syriza-party leader Alexis Tsipras piled on, launching his election campaign saying "it's time we knew...why Elstat really inflated the deficit, putting the country in the eye of the storm."

Mr. Georgiou returned stateside in August 2015 without seeking to extend his five-year term, he says, because he wanted more time for Maria Olympia.

He moved back into his four-bedroom Maryland house, meaning to seek academic and consultancy work. People were reluctant to hire him, he says—he believes because of criminal cases hanging over him.

And he was busy with his defense. Greek court documents filled a basement room. He had more time for his daughter, but his savings dwindled.

In Greece, he had a powerful new enemy in Xenia Dimitriou, a Supreme Court prosecutor who proposed that one court's partial acquittal of Mr. Georgiou be annulled. Last August, the Supreme Court upheld her proposal. The government applauded. Ms. Dimitriou, now Greece's highest prosecutor, declined to comment.

The European Commission called upon the Greek government "to actively and publicly challenge the false impression that data were manipulated during 2010-2015," Mr. Georgiou's term.

On Sept. 1, Ms. Dimitriou ordered a new investigation based on Greek-tabloid allegations, under headlines such as "The Emails of Treason," that claimed Eurostat ordered Elstat to inflate the deficit.

In November, an Appeals Court prosecutor again proposed dropping the main felony charge. The court hasn't ruled, but the new probe "sends a clear signal," Mr. Georgiou says. "If I'm acquitted, the same case can open again in another guise."

"I'm spending most of my waking moments on defending myself," he says. "It gets you down that you're dragged through the courts for doing the job right. But all those responsible for the mess—nothing."

—Nektaria Stamouli contributed to this article.

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Backing Into World War III

Think of two significant trend lines in the world today. One is the increasing ambition and activism of the two great revisionist powers, Russia and China. The other is the declining confidence, capacity, and will of the democratic world, and especially of the United States, to maintain the dominant position it has held in the international system since 1945. As those two lines move closer, as the declining will and capacity of the United States and its allies to maintain the present world order meet the increasing desire and capacity of the revisionist powers to change it, we will reach the moment at which the existing order collapses and the world descends into a phase of brutal anarchy, as it has three times in the past two centuries. The cost of that descent, in lives and treasure, in lost freedoms and lost hope, will be staggering.

Where exactly we are in this classic scenario today, how close the trend lines are to that intersection point is, as always, impossible to know. Are we three years away from a global crisis, or 15?

Americans tend to take the fundamental stability of the international order for granted, even while complaining about the burden the United States carries in preserving that stability. History shows that world orders do collapse, however, and when they do it is often unexpected, rapid, and violent. The late 18th century was the high point of the Enlightenment in Europe, before the continent fell suddenly into the abyss of the Napoleonic Wars. In the first decade of the 20th century, the world's smartest minds predicted an end to great-power conflict as revolutions in communication and transportation knit economies and people closer together. The most devastating war in history came four years later. The apparent calm of the postwar 1920s became the crisis-ridden 1930s and then another world war. Where exactly we are in this classic scenario today, how close the trend lines are to that intersection point is, as always, impossible to know. Are we three years away from a global crisis, or 15? That we are somewhere on that path, however, is unmistakable.

And while it is too soon to know what effect Donald Trump's presidency will have on these trends, early signs suggest that the new administration is more likely to hasten us toward crisis than slow or reverse these trends. The further accommodation of Russia can only embolden Vladimir Putin, and the tough talk with China will likely lead Beijing to test the new administration's resolve militarily. Whether the president is ready for such a confrontation is entirely unclear. For the moment, he seems not to have thought much about the future ramifications of his rhetoric and his actions.

China and Russia are classic revisionist powers. Although both have never enjoyed greater security from foreign powers than they do today — Russia from its traditional enemies to the west, China from its traditional enemy in the east — they are dissatisfied with the current global configuration of power. Both seek to restore the hegemonic dominance they once enjoyed in their respective regions. For China, that means dominance of East Asia, with countries like Japan, South Korea, and the nations of Southeast Asia both acquiescing to Beijing's will and acting in conformity with China's strategic, economic, and political preferences. That includes American influence withdrawn to the eastern Pacific, behind the Hawaiian Islands. For Russia, it means hegemonic influence in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, which Moscow has traditionally regarded as either part of its empire or part of its sphere of influence. Both Beijing and Moscow seek to redress what they regard as an unfair distribution of power, influence, and honor in the U.S.-led postwar global order. As autocracies, both feel threatened by the dominant democratic powers in the international system and by the democracies on their borders. Both regard the United States as the principal obstacle to their ambitions, and therefore both seek to weaken the American-led international security order that stands in the way of their achieving what they regard as their rightful destinies.

President Xi Jinping makes a speech during the opening ceremony of the G20 Leaders Summit as President Barack Obama, left, and President Vladimir Putin, right, listen on Sept. 4, 2016 in Hangzhou, China. (Photo credit:

NICOLAS ASFOURI - Pool/Getty Images)

It was good while it lasted

Until fairly recently, Russia and China have faced considerable, almost insuperable, obstacles in achieving their objectives. The chief obstacle has been the power and coherence of the international order itself and its principal promoter and defender. The American-led system of political and military alliances, especially in the two critical regions of Europe and East Asia, has presented China and Russia with what Dean Acheson once referred to as "situations of strength" that have required them to pursue their ambitions cautiously and, since the end of the Cold War, to defer serious efforts to disrupt the international system.

During the era of American primacy, China and Russia have participated in and for the most part been beneficiaries of the open international economic system the United States created and helps sustain; so long as that system functions, they have had more to gain by playing in it than by challenging and overturning it.

The system has checked their ambitions in both positive and negative ways. During the era of American primacy, China and Russia have participated in and for the most part been beneficiaries of the open international economic system the United States created and helps sustain; so long as that system functions, they have had more to gain by playing in it than by challenging and overturning it. The political and strategic aspects of the order, however, have worked to their detriment. The growth and vibrancy of democratic government in the two decades following the collapse of Soviet communism posed a continual threat to the ability of rulers in Beijing and Moscow to maintain control, and since the end of the Cold War they have regarded every advance of democratic institutions — especially the geographical advance of liberal democracies close to their borders — as an existential threat. That's for good reason: Autocratic powers since the days of Klemens von Metternich have always feared the contagion of liberalism. The mere existence of democracies on their borders, the global free flow of information they cannot control, the

dangerous connection between free market capitalism and political freedom — all pose a threat to rulers who depend on keeping restive forces in their own countries in check. The continual challenge to the legitimacy of their rule posed by the U.S.-supported democratic order has therefore naturally made them hostile both to that order and to the United States. But, until recently, a preponderance of domestic and international forces has dissuaded them from confronting the order directly. Chinese rulers have had to worry about what an unsuccessful confrontation with the United States might do to their legitimacy at home. Even Putin has pushed only against open doors, as in Syria, where the United States responded passively to his probes. He has been more cautious when confronted by even marginal U.S. and European opposition, as in Ukraine.

The greatest check on Chinese and Russian ambitions has been the military and economic power of the United States and its allies in Europe and Asia. China, although increasingly powerful, has had to contemplate facing the combined military and economic strength of the world's superpower and some very formidable regional powers linked by alliance or common strategic interest — including Japan, India, and South Korea, as well as smaller but still potent nations like Vietnam and Australia. Russia has had to face the United States and its NATO allies. When united, these U.S.-led alliances present a daunting challenge to a revisionist power that can call on few allies of its own for assistance. Even were the Chinese to score an early victory in a conflict, such as the military subjection of Taiwan or a naval battle in the South or East China Sea, they would have to contend over time with the combined industrial productive capacities of some of the world's richest and most technologically advanced nations and the likely cutoff of access to foreign markets on which their own economy depends. A weaker Russia, with its depleted population and oil- and gas-dependent economy, would face an even greater challenge.

For decades, the strong global position enjoyed by the United States and its allies has discouraged any serious challenge. So long as the United States was

perceived as a dependable ally, Chinese and Russian leaders feared that aggressive moves would backfire and possibly bring their regimes down. This is what the political scientist William Wohlforth once described as the inherent stability of the unipolar order: As dissatisfied regional powers sought to challenge the status quo, their alarmed neighbors turned to the distant American superpower to contain their ambitions. And it worked. The United States stepped up, and Russia and China largely backed down — or were preempted before acting at all.

Faced with these obstacles, the best option for the two revisionist great powers has always been to hope for or, if possible, engineer a weakening of the U.S.-supported world order from within, either by separating the United States from its allies or by raising doubts about the U.S. commitment and thereby encouraging would-be allies and partners to forgo the strategic protection of the liberal world order and seek accommodation with its challengers.

The present system has therefore depended not only on American power but on coherence and unity at the heart of the democratic world. The United States has had to play its part as the principal guarantor of the order, especially in the military and strategic realm, but the order's ideological and economic core — the democracies of Europe and East Asia and the Pacific — has also had to remain relatively healthy and confident.

In recent years, both pillars have been shaken. The democratic order has weakened and fractured at its core. Difficult economic conditions, the recrudescence of nationalism and tribalism, weak and uncertain political leadership and unresponsive mainstream political parties, and a new era of communications that seems to strengthen rather than weaken tribalism have together produced a crisis of confidence not only in the democracies but in what might be called the liberal enlightenment project. That project elevated universal principles of individual rights and common humanity over ethnic, racial, religious, national, or tribal differences. It looked to a growing economic interdependence to create common interests across boundaries and to the establishment of international institutions to smooth differences and facilitate cooperation among nations. Instead, the past decade has seen the rise of tribalism and nationalism, an increasing focus on the Other in all societies, and a loss of confidence in government, in the capitalist system, and in democracy.

We are witnessing the opposite of Francis Fukuyama's "end of history." History is returning with a vengeance and with it all the darker aspects of the human soul, including, for many, the perennial human yearning for a strong leader to provide firm guidance in a time of confusion and incoherence.

Left: Adolf Hitler and his staff salute teams during the opening ceremonies of the XI Olympic Games on Aug. 1, 1936 in Berlin. (Photo credit: Getty Images) Right: Former British Prime minister Winston Churchill, President Franklin Roosevelt and USSR Secretary General of the Soviet Communist Party Joseph Stalin pose at the Conference of the Allied powers in Yalta, Crimea, on Feb. 4, 1945. (Photo credit: AFP/Getty Images)

The Dark Ages 2.0

This crisis of the enlightenment project may have been inevitable, a recurring phenomenon produced by inherent flaws in both capitalism and democracy. In the 1930s, economic crisis and rising nationalism led many to doubt whether either democracy or capitalism was preferable to alternatives such as fascism and communism. And it is no coincidence that the crisis of confidence in liberalism accompanied a simultaneous breakdown of the strategic order. Then, the question was whether the United States as the outside power would step in and save or remake an order that Britain and France were no longer able or willing to sustain. Now, the question is whether the United States is willing to continue upholding the order that it created and which depends entirely on American power or whether Americans are prepared to take the risk — if they even understand the risk — of letting the order collapse into chaos and conflict.

That willingness has been in doubt for some time, well before the election of Trump and even before the election of Barack Obama. Increasingly in the quarter century after the end of the Cold War, Americans have been wondering why they bear such an unusual and outsized responsibility for preserving global order when their own interests are not always clearly served — and when the United States seems to be making all the sacrifices while others benefit. Few remember the reasons why the United States took on this abnormal role after the calamitous two world wars of the 20th century. The millennial generation born after the end of the Cold War can hardly be expected to understand the lasting

significance of the political, economic, and security structures established after World War II. Nor are they likely to learn much about it in high school and college textbooks obsessed with noting the evils and follies of American "imperialism." Both the crises of the first half of the 20th century and its solution in 1945 have been forgotten. As a consequence, the American public's patience with the difficulties and costs inherent in playing that global role have worn thin. Whereas previous unsuccessful and costly wars, in Korea in 1950 and Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s, and previous economic downturns, such as with the energy crisis and crippling "stagflation" of the mid- to late 1970s, did not have the effect of turning Americans against global involvement, the unsuccessful wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the financial crisis of 2008 have.

The Obama administration responded to the George W. Bush administration's failures in Iraq and Afghanistan not by restoring American power and influence but by further reducing them.

Obama pursued an ambivalent approach to global involvement, but his core strategy was retrenchment. In his actions and his statements, he critiqued and repudiated previous American strategy and reinforced a national mood favoring a much less active role in the world and much narrower definition of American interests. The Obama administration responded to the George W. Bush administration's failures in Iraq and Afghanistan not by restoring American power and influence but by further reducing them. Although the administration promised to "rebalance" American foreign policy to Asia and the Pacific, in practice that meant reducing global commitments and accommodating revisionist powers at the expense of allies' security.

The administration's early attempt to "reset" relations with Russia struck the first blow to America's reputation as a reliable ally. Coming just after the Russian invasion of Georgia, it appeared to reward Moscow's aggression. The reset also came at the expense of U.S. allies in Central Europe, as programs of military cooperation with Poland and the Czech Republic were jettisoned to appease the Kremlin. This attempt at accommodation, moreover, came just as Russian policy toward the West — not to mention Putin's repressive policies toward his own people — was hardening. Far from eliciting better behavior by Russia, the reset emboldened Putin to push harder. Then, in 2014, the West's inadequate response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and seizure of

Crimea, though better than the Bush administration's anemic response to the invasion of Georgia (Europe and the United States at least imposed sanctions after the invasion of Ukraine), still indicated reluctance on the part of the U.S. administration to force Russia back in its declared sphere of interest. Obama, in fact, publicly acknowledged Russia's privileged position in Ukraine even as the United States and Europe sought to protect that country's sovereignty. In Syria, the administration practically invited Russian intervention through Washington's passivity, and certainly did nothing to discourage it, thus reinforcing the growing impression of an America in retreat across the Middle East (an impression initially created by the unnecessary and unwise withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq). Subsequent Russian actions that increased the refugee flow from Syria into Europe also brought no American response, despite the evident damage of those refugee flows to European democratic institutions. The signal sent by the Obama administration was that none of this was really America's problem.

In East Asia, the Obama administration undermined its otherwise commendable efforts to assert America's continuing interest and influence. The so-called "pivot" proved to be mostly rhetoric. Inadequate overall defense spending precluded the necessary increases in America's regional military presence in a meaningful way, and the administration allowed a critical economic component, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, to die in Congress, chiefly a victim of its own party's opposition. The pivot also suffered from the general perception of American retreat and retrenchment, encouraged both by presidential rhetoric and by administration policies, especially in the Middle East. The premature, unnecessary, and strategically costly withdrawal of American troops from Iraq, followed by the accommodating agreement with Iran on its nuclear program, and then by the failure to hold the line on threats to use force against Syria's president, was noticed around the world. Despite the Obama administration's insistence that American strategy should be geared toward Asia, U.S. allies have been left wondering how reliable the U.S. commitment might be when facing the challenge posed by China. The Obama administration erred in imagining that it could retrench globally while reassuring allies in Asia that the United States remained a reliable partner.

Left: An aerial photo taken on Jan. 2 shows a Chinese navy format during military drills in the South China Sea. (Photo credit: STR/AFP/Getty Images) Right: Ukrainian servicemen sitting atop armored personnel carriers travel near Slavyansk on July 11, 2014. (Photo credit: GENYA SAVILOV/AFP/Getty Images)

Nature abhors a vacuum

The effect on the two great revisionist powers, meanwhile, has been to encourage greater efforts at revision. In recent years, both powers have been more active in challenging the order, and one reason has been the growing perception that the United States is losing both the will and the capacity to sustain it. The psychological and political effect of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in the United States, which has been to weaken support for American global engagement across the board, has provided an opening.

It is a myth, prevalent among liberal democracies, that revisionist powers can be pacified by acquiescence to their demands. American retrenchment, by this logic, ought to reduce tensions and competition. Unfortunately, the opposite is more often the case. The more secure revisionist powers feel, the more ambitious they are in seeking to change the system to their advantage because the resistance to change appears to be lessening. Just look at both China and Russia: Never in the past two centuries have they enjoyed greater security from external attack than they do today. Yet both remain dissatisfied and have become increasingly aggressive in pressing what they perceive to be their growing advantage in a system where the United States no longer puts up as much resistance as it used to.

The two great powers have differed, so far, chiefly in their methods. China has until now been the more careful, cautious, and patient of the two, seeking influence primarily through its great economic clout and using its growing military power chiefly as a source of deterrence and regional intimidation. It has not resorted to the outright use of force yet, although its actions in the South China Sea are military in nature, with strategic objectives. And while Beijing has been wary of using military force until now, it would be a mistake to assume it will continue show such restraint in the future — possibly the near future. Revisionist great powers with growing military capabilities invariably make use of those capabilities when they believe the possible gains outweigh the risks and costs. If the Chinese

perceive America's commitment to its allies and its position in the region to be weakening, or its capacity to make good on those commitments to be declining, then they will be more inclined to attempt to use the power they are acquiring in order to achieve their objectives. As the trend lines draw closer, this is where the first crisis is likely to take place.

Russia has been far more aggressive. It has invaded two neighboring states — Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 — and in both cases hived off significant portions of those two nations' sovereign territory. Given the intensity with which the United States and its allies would have responded to such actions during the four decades of the Cold War, their relative lack of a response must have sent quite a signal to the Kremlin — and to others around the world. Moscow then followed by sending substantial forces into Syria. It has used its dominance of European energy markets as a weapon. It has used cyberwarfare against neighboring states. It has engaged in extensive information warfare on a global scale.

More recently, the Russian government has deployed a weapon that the Chinese either lack or have so far chosen not to deploy — the ability to interfere directly in Western electoral processes, both to influence their outcomes and more generally to discredit the democratic system. Russia funds right-wing populist parties across Europe, including in France; uses its media outlets to support favored candidates and attack others; has disseminated “fake news” to influence voters, most recently in Italy's referendum; and has hacked private communications in order to embarrass those it wishes to defeat. This past year, Russia for the first time employed this powerful weapon against the United States, heavily interfering in the American electoral process.

Although Russia, by any measure, is the weaker of the two great powers, it has so far had more success than China in accomplishing its objective of dividing and disrupting the West.

Although Russia, by any measure, is the weaker of the two great powers, it has so far had more success than China in accomplishing its objective of dividing and disrupting the West. Its interference in Western democratic political systems, its information warfare, and its role in creating increased refugee flows from Syria into Europe have all contributed to the sapping of Europeans' confidence in their political systems

and established political parties. Its military intervention in Syria, contrasted with American passivity, has exacerbated existing doubts about American staying power in the region. Beijing, until recently, has succeeded mostly in driving American allies closer to the United States out of concern for growing Chinese power — but that could change quickly, especially if the United States continues on its present trajectory. There are signs that regional powers are already recalculating: East Asian countries are contemplating regional trade agreements that need not include the United States or, in the case of the Philippines, are actively courting China, while a number of nations in Eastern and Central Europe are moving closer to Russia, both strategically and ideologically. We could soon face a situation where both great revisionist powers are acting aggressively, including by military means, posing extreme challenges to American and global security in two regions at once.

Then-Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks during a rally at Macomb Community College on March 4, 2016 in Warren, Michigan. (Photo credit: SCOTT OLSON/Getty Images)

The dispensable nation

All this comes as Americans continue to signal their reluctance to uphold the world order they created after World War II. Donald Trump was not the only major political figure in this past election season to call for a much narrower definition of American interests and a lessening of the burdens of American global leadership. President Obama and Bernie Sanders both expressed a version of “America First.” The candidate who spoke often of America's “indispensable” global role lost, and even Hillary Clinton felt compelled to jettison her earlier support for the Trans-Pacific Partnership. At the very least, there should be doubts about the American public's willingness to continue supporting the international alliance structure, denying the revisionist powers their desired spheres of influence and regional hegemony, and upholding democratic and free market norms in the international system.

The weakness at the core of the democratic world and the shedding by the United States of global responsibilities have already encouraged a more aggressive revisionism by the dissatisfied powers.

Coming as it does at a time of growing great-power competition, this narrowing definition of American interests will likely hasten

a return to the instability and clashes of previous eras. The weakness at the core of the democratic world and the shedding by the United States of global responsibilities have already encouraged a more aggressive revisionism by the dissatisfied powers. That, in turn, has further sapped the democratic world's confidence and willingness to resist. History suggests that this is a downward spiral from which it will be difficult to recover, absent a rather dramatic shift of course by the United States.

That shift may come too late. It was in the 1920s, not the 1930s, that the democratic powers made the most important and ultimately fatal decisions. Americans' disillusionment after World War I led them to reject playing a strategic role in preserving the peace in Europe and Asia, even though America was the only nation powerful enough to play that role. The withdrawal of the United States helped undermine the will of Britain and France and encouraged Germany in Europe and Japan in Asia to take increasingly aggressive actions to achieve regional dominance. Most Americans were convinced that nothing that happened in Europe or Asia could affect their security. It took World War II to convince them that was a mistake. The “return to normalcy” of the 1920 election seemed safe and innocent at the time, but the essentially selfish policies pursued by the world's strongest power in the following decade helped set the stage for the calamities of the 1930s. By the time the crises began to erupt, it was already too late to avoid paying the high price of global conflict.

In such times, it has always been tempting to believe that geopolitical competition can be solved through efforts at cooperation and accommodation. The idea, recently proposed by Niall Ferguson, that the world can be ruled jointly by the United States, Russia, and China is not a new one. Such condominiums have been proposed and attempted in every era when the dominant power or powers in the international system sought to fend off challenges from the dissatisfied revisionist powers. It has rarely worked. Revisionist great powers are not easy to satisfy short of complete capitulation. Their sphere of influence is never quite large enough to satisfy their pride or their expanding need for security. In fact, their very expansion creates insecurity, by frightening neighbors and leading them to band together against the rising power. The satiated power that Otto von Bismarck spoke of is rare. The

German leaders who succeeded him were not satisfied even with being the strongest power in Europe. In their efforts to grow still stronger, they produced coalitions against them, making their fear of "encirclement" a self-fulfilling prophecy.

BEIJING, CHINA - OCTOBER 20: President of the Philippines Rodrigo Duterte and Chinese President Xi Jinping review the honor guard as they attend a welcoming ceremony at the Great Hall of the People on October 20, 2016 in Beijing, China. Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte is on a four-day state visit to China, his first since taking power in late June, with the aim of improving bilateral relations. (Photo by Thomas Peter-Pool/Getty Images)

Give 'em an inch, they'll take a mile

This is a common trait of rising powers — their actions produce the very insecurity they claim to want to redress. They harbor grievances against the existing order (both Germany and Japan considered themselves the "have-not" nations), but their grievances cannot be satisfied so long as the existing order remains in place. Marginal concession is not enough, but the powers upholding the existing order will not make more than marginal concessions unless they are compelled to by superior strength. Japan, the aggrieved "have-not" nation of the 1930s, did not satisfy itself by taking Manchuria in 1931. Germany, the

aggrieved victim of Versailles, did not satisfy itself by bringing the Germans of the Sudetenland back into the fold. They demanded much more, and they could not persuade the democratic powers to give them what they wanted without resorting to war.

Granting the revisionist powers spheres of influence is not a recipe for peace and tranquility but rather an invitation to inevitable conflict.

Granting the revisionist powers spheres of influence is not a recipe for peace and tranquility but rather an invitation to inevitable conflict. Russia's historical sphere of influence does not end in Ukraine. It begins in Ukraine. It extends to the Baltic States, to the Balkans, and to the heart of Central Europe. And within Russia's traditional sphere of influence, other nations do not enjoy autonomy or even sovereignty. There was no independent Poland under the Russian Empire nor under the Soviet Union. For China to gain its desired sphere of influence in East Asia will mean that, when it chooses, it can close the region off to the United States — not only militarily but politically and economically, too.

China will, of course, inevitably exercise great sway in its own region, as will Russia. The United States cannot and should not prevent China from being an economic powerhouse. Nor should it wish for the collapse of Russia. The United States should even welcome competition of a certain

kind. Great powers compete across multiple planes — economic, ideological, and political, as well as military. Competition in most spheres is necessary and even healthy. Within the liberal order, China can compete economically and successfully with the United States; Russia can thrive in the international economic order upheld by the democratic system, even if it is not itself democratic.

But military and strategic competition is different. The security situation undergirds everything else. It remains true today as it has since World War II that only the United States has the capacity and the unique geographical advantages to provide global security and relative stability. There is no stable balance of power in Europe or Asia without the United States. And while we can talk about "soft power" and "smart power," they have been and always will be of limited value when confronting raw military power. Despite all of the loose talk of American decline, it is in the military realm where U.S. advantages remain clearest. Even in other great powers' backyards, the United States retains the capacity, along with its powerful allies, to deter challenges to the security order. But without a U.S. willingness to maintain the balance in far-flung regions of the world, the system will buckle under the unrestrained military competition of regional powers. Part of that willingness entails defense spending

commensurate with America's continuing global role.

For the United States to accept a return to spheres of influence would not calm the international waters. It would merely return the world to the condition it was in at the end of the 19th century, with competing great powers clashing over inevitably intersecting and overlapping spheres. These unsettled, disordered conditions produced the fertile ground for the two destructive world wars of the first half of the 20th century. The collapse of the British-dominated world order on the oceans, the disruption of the uneasy balance of power on the European continent as a powerful unified Germany took shape, and the rise of Japanese power in East Asia all contributed to a highly competitive international environment in which dissatisfied great powers took the opportunity to pursue their ambitions in the absence of any power or group of powers to unite in checking them. The result was an unprecedented global calamity and death on an epic scale. It has been the great accomplishment of the U.S.-led world order in the 70 years since the end of World War II that this kind of competition has been held in check and great power conflicts have been avoided. It will be more than a shame if Americans were to destroy what they created — and not because it was no longer possible to sustain but simply because they chose to stop trying.



For Donald Trump's Team, Iran Moves Atop Confrontation List

Gerald F. Seib

Feb. 6, 2017

11:13 a.m. ET

In a recent conversation, former Defense Secretary Robert Gates ticked off four areas most likely to produce the first national-security crisis for the new Trump administration: a confrontation with Iran in the Persian Gulf, a showdown with North Korea over its nuclear program, a clash with China in the South China Sea or an encounter with Russia in the Baltic Sea.

The risk with China and Russia, he said, is of an "unintended incident that escalates." The danger with Iran and North Korea, by contrast, is an intentional provocation or challenge.

As Team Trump begins just its third full week in office, confrontation with Iran has clearly moved to the top of that list of early potential flashpoints. Moreover, this appears to be one of those intentional

standoffs, or at least one that neither side will shy away from.

The upshot is that risky times lie ahead—with Iran, inside neighboring Iraq, and with American allies in the region.

The Iranian regime itself set off this episode by conducting a ballistic missile test within days of Mr. Trump's taking office. It had to know that its action brushed up against a United Nations Security Council resolution prohibiting development of missiles that can carry nuclear warheads, and that such a step amounted to a test not just of a missile but of the new American president.

We all know by now, of course, how Mr. Trump responded. He sent national security adviser Mike Flynn to the White House press room to tell Iran publicly that it was being put "on notice."

New economic sanctions were imposed on Iranians and Iran-related firms. In case anybody in Tehran missed the point, Mr. Trump

declared in a Fox News interview over the weekend that Iran shows "total disregard" for America, and that the sanctions action was "just starting."

On one level, there is little new here. Iran has conducted such missile tests before. More broadly, the Iran problem has been a thorn in the sides of six straight American presidents, starting with Jimmy Carter. Mr. Trump has merely become the seventh.

But today's backdrop is important because it explains just how serious the current confrontation could become. Mr. Trump himself, of course, has repeatedly called out the Iranians and decried the nuclear accord President Barack Obama negotiated.

Mr. Flynn, his national security adviser, has a long history of decrying Iranian behavior. In congressional testimony in 2015 he said: "Iran represents a clear and present danger to the region, and eventually to the world." New Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, a

Marine, has a similarly long history of animus toward Iran. He remembers both the Iranian role in the bombing of a Marine barracks in Lebanon in the 1980s, as well as its role in supporting Shiite militias that killed Americans in Iraq when Mr. Mattis was head of U.S. Middle East forces more recently.

In short, this isn't a team that figures to shy away from a confrontation with Iran. Its attitude will be matched by hard-line elements of the Iranian regime, who define themselves by their anti-Americanism and who never liked the nuclear deal with the West in the first place because of its curbs on nuclear activity.

So what happens now? Though Mr. Trump said repeatedly during the campaign that he would ditch the nuclear deal, he may not. It was significant—though little noticed—that after a recent telephone call with Saudi Arabia's King Salman, the White House reported that the two leaders agreed to "rigorously" enforce the deal. The nuclear

agreement is effective at limiting nuclear activity, and there is little allied support for abrogating it.

Instead, look for the administration to find ways to challenge Iran over its support of extremist groups and its attempt to throw its weight around in the region. The Pentagon may find ways to stage a more visible military presence in the area. Congressional Republicans, already eager to act, will push ahead legislation

imposing penalties for Iran's nonnuclear behavior.

All this will agitate European allies eager to normalize diplomatic—and business—ties to Iran. Arab allies will cheer but will be quietly nervous at the potential for an explosion in their backyard. Russia will be torn between its desire to work with the Trump administration and its growing ties with Iran.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Douglas

Updated Feb. 6, 2017 4:13 p.m. ET

LONDON—Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday urged Western leaders to follow U.S. President Donald Trump in imposing fresh sanctions against Iran.

Speaking in London, where he met with his U.K. counterpart, Theresa May, Mr. Netanyahu said responsible countries should follow the U.S.'s lead to counter alleged Iranian aggression.

"Iran seeks to annihilate Israel. It says so openly. It seeks to conquer the Middle East, it threatens Europe, it threatens the West, it threatens the world. And it offers provocation after provocation," Mr. Netanyahu said.

"That's why I welcome President Trump's insistence of new sanctions against Iran. I think other nations should follow soon, certainly

Netanyahu Presses for More Sanctions Against Iran

Nicholas Winning and Jason

responsible nations."

Tehran recently test-launched a ballistic missile, drawing condemnation from the new administration in Washington, which imposed a raft of new sanctions against dozens of Iranian-linked entities on Friday.

Iran was also listed among the seven countries whose citizens have been denied access to the U.S. under Mr. Trump's controversial travel ban.

Senior U.S. officials said the sanctions marked the beginning of an escalating campaign to confront Tehran in the Middle East and restrain its military capabilities.

Mr. Netanyahu is scheduled to visit the White House on Feb. 15 for talks with Mr. Trump.

Speaking alongside Mr. Netanyahu on Monday ahead of their formal discussions, Mrs. May said she was willing to discuss Iran but didn't say whether the U.K. would support a tougher stance against Tehran.

The big danger is that hard-line elements in Tehran will be empowered internally by the confrontation, which they will use to vindicate their argument that the U.S. was never to be trusted in the first place. That attitude may be particularly acute as the hard-liners jockey for position in elections coming up this spring. They have plenty of weapons at their disposal, most notably unleashing terrorism, sponsoring more attacks on

American troops in Iraq and pressuring the Iraqi government to scale back cooperation with the U.S.

Bottom line: This won't be a short-lived production, but rather a drama destined for a long run.

Write to Gerald F. Seib at jerry.seib@wsj.com

A spokeswoman for Mrs. May said after the two leaders met that the British prime minister "was clear that the nuclear deal is vital and must be properly enforced and policed, while recognizing concerns about Iran's pattern of destabilizing activity in the region."

The U.K. is one of the parties to the 2015 deal under which Iran agreed to limit its nuclear program in exchange for an easing of international sanctions. Mr. Trump has criticized that accord and threatened to renegotiate it.

Shmuel Sandler, a political science professor at the Begin Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Israel's Bar Ilan University, said Mr. Netanyahu would discuss the framework of a U.S.-England-Israel axis against Iran.

Monday's talks covered trade and bilateral ties between Israel and the U.K., cybersecurity cooperation as well as the Middle East peace process and other regional issues, Downing Street said.

Mrs. May stressed the U.K.'s "firm commitment" to a two-state solution to the long-running Israeli-Palestinian conflict, her spokeswoman said. She also reiterated the U.K.'s opposition to Israeli settlement-building in the West Bank and other disputed territories

Israel's parliament, or Knesset, voted on Monday evening to legalize thousands of Jewish homes in the West Bank built on Palestinian-owned land.

On trade, the U.K. is eager to line up potential free trade deals ahead of its formal departure from the European Union, scheduled for early 2019.

The two leaders agreed to establish a working group to prepare the ground for a post-Brexit free-trade agreement, Downing Street said.

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The New York Times

Israel Passes Provocative Law to Retroactively Legalize Settlements

Ian Fisher

JERUSALEM —

Israel's Parliament passed a provocative law late Monday that would retroactively legalize Jewish settlements on privately owned Palestinian land, pressing ahead with a statement of right-wing assertiveness despite the likelihood that the country's high court will nullify the legislation.

It was a defining — opponents said frightening — moment in Israel's ever-more-distant relations with Palestinians and amid fading hopes of ending decades of conflict through a two-state solution.

While polls consistently show that most Israelis still support two states, their leaders and the reality of what is happening on the ground are consistently heading in the opposite direction: Fifty years after Israel defeated Jordan and captured the West Bank and East Jerusalem,

many right-wing politicians say that now — with negotiations with the Palestinians frozen — is the moment Israel must decide what it wants and act decisively on it.

The new law is "deteriorating Israel's democracy, making stealing an official policy and bringing us one step closer to annexation" of more land Palestinians claim for a future state, said Anat Ben Nun, the director of external relations for Peace Now, an anti-settlement group.

Only a few months ago, the law was believed to have little chance of coming up for a vote. Even Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was flying back from a meeting with Britain's leaders as the law was being debated, seemed to oppose its passage for fear of further international censure.

The bill had been so contentious that the nation's attorney general,

who described it as unconstitutional and in contravention of international law, said he would not defend it in the high court, which seemed in any case likely to nullify it.

That is partly because the law applies to Palestinians and their property rights. Since Palestinians in the occupied West Bank are not Israeli citizens and cannot vote for candidates for Israel's Parliament, or Knesset, critics of the legislation say it is inherently anti-democratic. Under the law, Palestinian landowners will be offered compensation for the long-term use of their property but will not be able to reclaim it.

But the bill gained internal momentum through several forces: Mr. Netanyahu is determined to show his support to the powerful settler movement, and is under pressure from hard-liners on the right and from corruption investigations that even his

supporters say appear serious. That pressure intensified last week after Mr. Netanyahu's government carried out a court order to evacuate about 40 settler families at the Amona outpost, declared illegal a decade ago.

"Today Israel decreed that developing settlement in Judea and Samaria is an Israeli interest," said Bezalel Smotrich, a right-wing lawmaker, using the biblical names for the West Bank. "From here we move on to expanding Israeli sovereignty and continuing to build and develop settlements across the land."

At the same time, Mr. Netanyahu and the right — some allies, some opponents — have taken into account that they have more leeway under President Trump than under President Barack Obama, who regularly condemned settlement building.

It is uncertain, however, just how firm the support from the new administration in Washington is: Last week, the White House issued a statement, amid announcements here about thousands of units of housing for settlers, saying that further expansion "may not be helpful" in achieving a deal with the Palestinians, which Mr. Trump has said he wants.

A clearer sense of how Mr. Trump differs from Mr. Obama and from nearly 50 years of American opposition to settlement building is expected to emerge from a meeting between Mr. Trump and Mr. Netanyahu on Feb. 15 in Washington.

The vote on Monday, which passed, 60 to 52, retroactively legalized several thousand housing units in 16 settlements on about 2,000 acres of Palestinian-owned land. The law provides for compensation to Palestinian landowners.



Israel passes bill to seize private Palestinian land for Jewish settlements

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JERUSALEM — Israel's parliament passed a contentious law late Monday that allows the state to seize land privately owned by Palestinians in the West Bank and grant the properties to Jewish settlements for their exclusive use.

The measure is designed to protect homes in Jewish settlements, built on private Palestinian property "in good faith or at the state's instruction," from possible court-ordered evacuation and demolition.

Thousands of homes in dozens of settlements and outposts may now be protected, at least temporarily. The bill is probably headed for a high court challenge.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

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Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu supports the legislation and has told his constituents that no government had done more for the settlers. On Monday, the Israeli leader said he had informed the Trump White House that a vote on the legislation was imminent.

Israeli legislators in the opposition condemned the bill as reckless and warned that it would turn the world against Israel while goading

Opponents said the law would encourage more settlements on Palestinian land, with the expectation that they, too, would be legalized.

"Looting is illegal," Saeb Erekat, the Palestinians' chief negotiator, said in a statement after the vote. "The Israeli settlement enterprise negates peace and the possibility of the two-state solution."

Yair Lapid, the opposition politician seeking to succeed Mr. Netanyahu, said before the vote: "It's unjust, it's not smart, and it's a law which damages the state of Israel, the security of Israel, governance in Israel and our ability to fight back against those who hate Israel."

He added, "They are passing a law which endangers our soldiers, will undermine our international standing and undermine us as a country of law and order."

Israel's settlement activity has come under intense international criticism. In December, the United Nations —

with the tacit support of the outgoing Obama administration — condemned Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem as an impediment to a two-state solution. Settlers and right-wing Israelis say the West Bank and East Jerusalem, captured from Jordan in the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, belong to the Jewish people.

The international significance of the vote on Monday was underscored during Mr. Netanyahu's quick trip to visit Prime Minister Theresa May of Britain. On one hand, she noted that her first meeting with Mr. Netanyahu came 100 years after the Balfour Declaration, in which the British government governing the area supported the creation of Jewish state. She said, however, that Britain remained "committed to a two-state solution," adding, "It's the best way of building stability, peace and prosperity in the future."

Appearing before reporters with Mrs. May in London, Mr.

Netanyahu, who has in the past tepidly supported a two-state solution, did not do so on Monday.

As voting neared, tensions rose in the divided Knesset. "You are only passing this law so that the Supreme Court will later overturn it, and then you'll be in the position to blame the judges," Revital Swid, a member of the Zionist Union Party, told the governing Likud Party's science minister, Ofir Akunis.

"The land of Israel is ours, and this cannot be disputed or be divided," Mr. Akunis responded. "The concept of settlement blocs is no longer relevant because there are no Arabs to negotiate with anymore."

The vote came on the same day as a rocket fired from Gaza landed near the Israeli city of Ashkelon. No one was hurt. The Israeli military responded with artillery fire and airstrikes in northern Gaza. It was unclear if the rocket attack was related to Monday's vote.

prosecutors at the International Criminal Court in The Hague to take action against the Jewish state.

The bill passed on a vote of 60 to 52.

[Israel plans settlement expansion amid policy shifts in Washington]

The private Palestinian land would be seized by the government and held until there is a final resolution of the decades-long Israel-Palestinian conflict. Palestinian landowners could apply to the state for annual rents or be given another parcel.

Benny Begin, a member of parliament in Netanyahu's Likud party and son of former prime minister Menachem Begin, spoke before the vote and labeled the measure "the robbery bill."

Another Likud party member, former justice minister Dan Meridor, condemned the bill as "evil and dangerous."

Meridor, a lawyer, warned the Israeli parliament that the West Bank remains under a "belligerent occupation" 50 years after Israel won the territory from Jordan in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Palestinians who live in the territory are not Israeli citizens. They don't vote in Israeli elections. They live under a military authority.

If Israel's parliament legislates for the Palestinians — rather than controlling them by military rule —

then Palestinians would have the right to become citizens and vote in Israel, Meridor argued.

"Don't cross a line we've never crossed before," Meridor pleaded in a newspaper column. "No government in Israel has applied its sovereignty to the West Bank."

The Palestinian Authority said the measure was "an illegal land grab." Former Palestinian peace negotiator Saeb Erekat compared the Israelis to "looters."

Last week, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said in a statement that new settlement construction in the West Bank "may not be helpful" in achieving a Middle East peace — a mild rebuke compared with those by the Obama administration. President Trump and Netanyahu are scheduled to meet in Washington next week.

The settlement legalization measure was pushed forward by Naftali Bennett, the education minister and leader of the Jewish Home party, who opposes granting the Palestinians a state and instead wants to annex to Israel the 60 percent of the West Bank where the Jewish settlements are located.

[Q&A with Israeli minister Naftali Bennett]

Bennett, a religious nationalist, said the bill seeks to "normalize" life for the settlers and allow them to remain in homes that the state has encouraged them to build, while

providing roads, water, power and protection by the army.

After the bill passed, Bennett tweeted just one word: "Revolution."

There are about 400,000 Jews in the West Bank and an additional 200,000 in East Jerusalem living in settlements. Most of the world considers the settlements illegal, but Israel disputes that.

Shuli Moalem-Refaeli, one of the bill's sponsors, called it "a historic achievement and a strategic event for the settlement movement. It's another step in normalizing the lives of thousands of citizens. The fate of thousands of homes will no longer be dependent on the whims of left-wing organizations."

She was referring to the forced eviction of 40 families living in the Amona settlement. Lawyers with the Israeli human rights group Yesh Din successfully argued that the land was owned by Palestinians in the nearby village of Silwad.

The Amona settlers said God had promised the land to the Jews and denied the Arab claims. The Israeli supreme court ordered the settlement demolished. It took 3,000 police officers to clear the isolated hilltop of radical youths, who threw excrement, bleach and rocks at the officers.

The settlement legislation was passed to stop more demolitions.

[Israeli police begin forced removal of Amona settlers in the West Bank]

The Israeli anti-occupation group, Peace Now, estimated that more than 3,800 homes on 53 illegal outposts could eventually be legalized by the bill, which they claimed “would turn Israeli citizens into thieves.”

A pro-settler advocacy organization, Regavim, said the

**The
Washington
Post**

How a U.S. team uses Facebook, guerrilla marketing to peel off potential ISIS recruits

<https://www.facebook.com/jobby.warrick>

Sometime today, a teenager in Tunis will check his smartphone for the latest violent video from the Islamic State. But the images that pop up first will be of a different genre: young Muslims questioning the morality of terrorists who slaughter innocents and enslave girls for sex.

“Don’t you kill our own Muslim brothers?” a mop-haired youth asks a terrorist recruiter in one animated video showing up on Arabic Facebook accounts in North Africa. “So much of this, it doesn’t seem right.”

The video is one of several paid ads that are turning up on millions of cellphones and computer screens in countries known to be top recruiting grounds for the Islamic State. The ads offer a harrowing view of life inside the self-proclaimed caliphate, sometimes with photos or cartoons and often in the words of refugees and defectors who warn others to stay away.

Most of them make no mention of the ads’ sponsor: a small unit inside the State Department that is using guerrilla marketing tactics to wage ideological warfare against the Islamic State. U.S. officials are using Facebook profile data to find young Muslims who show an interest in jihadist causes. Then they bombard them with anti-terrorism messages that show up whenever the youths go online.

Other government agencies have tried unsuccessfully to compete with militant jihadists in cyberspace. But officials at the State Department’s new Global Engagement Center say they’re the first to tap into the Internet’s vast stores of personal information to discourage individual users from joining the Islamic State.

This video — one of a few that are explicitly labeled as a State Department product — is an example of the message used to discourage young people from joining the Islamic State. This State

number of protected homes is half that.

Reporters in parliament said the most recent revised version of the bill would safeguard homes in 16 settlements but that the justice minister could add to this list.

The law will almost certainly be challenged in the courts by pro-Palestinian groups and human rights activists in Israel who say it

Department’s video hopes to stop potential Islamic State recruits (The U.S. Department of State)

(The U.S. Department of State)

“You have meat-cleaver messaging — large, thematic campaigns with big audiences — and then you have ‘scalpel’ messaging,” said Michael Lumpkin, a retired Navy SEAL who headed the center before stepping down last month at the start of the Trump administration. “These are highly targeted messages that go to the most vulnerable audiences: people who are susceptible to recruitment.”

[Officials worry that travel ban could hurt counterterrorism efforts]

The four-month-old campaign is undergoing renewed scrutiny as the Trump administration formulates its own strategy for fighting the Islamic State. The White House has pledged to accelerate efforts to defeat the group, though some senior officials have questioned the effectiveness of government initiatives that seek to address the causes of violent extremism.

The center’s counter-propaganda mission, now headed by a career civil servant, was mandated by Congress under a 2016 law that increased funding for the center and expanded its mission, ensuring that the effort will continue for the immediate future.

Many lawmakers, including prominent Republicans, have praised the new approach. Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), who heads the investigations panel on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, championed the legislation to expand the center, saying in December that the United States was “going to confront this threat head-on.”

But others have expressed skepticism.

“Should the federal government produce and disseminate content? Is the federal bureaucracy equipped for such a fast-moving fight? I

depends Israel’s own protections of private property.

Before its passage, Israeli Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit said the bill violates international law and that he would not defend it before the state high court.

Israel’s defense minister, Avigdor Lieberman, who is essentially the military governor of the West Bank, said in the days before the vote,

suspect not,” House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Edward R. Royce (R-Calif.) asked the program’s State Department overseers at a hearing last year.

Some critics have also questioned whether the program’s leaders would ever be able to produce quantifiable results, something that’s “difficult, given what they are trying to do,” said Tara Maller, a former CIA military analyst and senior policy adviser for the Counter Extremism Project, a nonprofit organization that seeks to prevent terrorists’ use of social media.

“While they can target the vulnerable audience they want to capture and provide counter-messaging, that is only one part of addressing the fight against extremism online,” said Maller, who says she is broadly supportive of the new approach. But she said that other government agencies and social-media companies must work in tandem to “remove the horrific content ... that is radicalizing individuals online every single day.”

[Jihadists hail White House travel ban, saying it proves anti-Muslim ‘hatred’]

State Department officials acknowledge that it may be difficult to prove that their ads dissuaded anyone from joining a terrorist group. Yet the program’s reach is indisputable: The videos have been watched more than 14 million times in a campaign that started in September and is pitched mainly to three countries: Tunisia, Morocco and Saudi Arabia. The effort recently was expanded to include nine other nations from Europe to Asia, including France, Libya and Jordan. Other targeted countries remain secret to protect partnerships with their governments.

Though the program is in its infancy, Lumpkin and his supporters see the potential for achieving a goal that has eluded Western governments for more than a decade: an effective and credible counter-message to jihadist

“You don’t have to be a genius to understand that when the attorney general is opposed to the bill, this means that he is not willing to defend it in the High Court of Justice and that it is an unconstitutional bill, and its chances of being disqualified are 100 percent.”

Ruth Eglash contributed to this report.

propaganda online, at a cost that is minuscule by government standards.

“There are places in the world where it costs a fraction of a penny per click,” Lumpkin said in an interview shortly before leaving his position Jan. 20. “For \$15,000 you can buy an audience. And you make sure you’re hitting them with the best information based on their profiles. That’s good business.”

‘Starve them of recruits’

The Global Engagement Center was designed to emulate a Silicon Valley start-up, and months into its creation, it retains the same edgy, bare-bones feel. The entire workforce numbers just over 70 people, crammed into a cluster of offices at the State Department. The online ads program was designed by two computer whizzes, ages 36 and 28, who were recruited from the National Security Agency.

Lumpkin, an energetic 52-year-old California native who started the unit, was picked by President Barack Obama to serve as a kind of entrepreneurial chief executive. Admired by former military colleagues for his skills as a fixer, the former SEAL and Special Operations commander was earlier tapped by the White House to lead the Pentagon’s response to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa in 2014. Before that, he helped secure Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl’s release from Taliban captivity and managed crises for Veterans Affairs and the Defense Department’s troubled POW accounting program.

Gen. Joseph Votel, the four-star who heads U.S. Central Command, praised Lumpkin and called his work on opposing the Islamic State’s propaganda “absolutely vital.”

“There is a lot we can do kinetically, but lasting success will only be found when we diminish ISIL’s allure in the eyes of potential recruits,” Votel said in an email. ISIS and ISIL are common English names for the Islamic State.

[Pentagon, surprised by travel ban, asks for exemptions for Iraqi aides]

In his new role, Lumpkin was in charge of a section of the government's counterterrorism operations noted mostly for its stumbles. A previous incarnation of the unit, called the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, was quietly shut down in 2015 after coming under criticism for producing videos such as "Welcome to ISIS Land," an attempt at parodying the Islamic State's brutal propaganda. The video, which bore the State Department's logo, was widely panned by terrorism experts as clumsy and ineffective.

"Government is not great at messaging," said Richard Stengel, who served as undersecretary of state for public diplomacy during Obama's second term, describing a hard-learned lesson from the program's earlier efforts. "Anything that was seen as coming from the State Department not only didn't work but could be used by the other side as a recruiting tool."

Department officials instead began shifting their focus to working with allied governments in the region, he said, assisting them in developing homegrown messaging campaigns designed for local audiences.

Upon his arrival at the State Department early last year, Lumpkin was surprised to discover that much of the

department's counter-messaging was done in English, and without the kind of data analysis needed to test whether the approaches were working. Some campaigns were little more than running Twitter battles in which moderate imams would try to challenge the extremists on theological grounds, he said.

"You're not going to convince die-hard jihadists," Lumpkin said. "We were not resonating with the audiences that we needed to resonate with. We needed to engage with people who haven't yet joined ISIL. It's how you starve them of recruits."

Harnessing Facebook data

Lumpkin, who ran a defense contracting firm after retiring from the Navy, looked to private industry for technical help and inspiration, quickly finding an array of eager new partners and advisers.

Jigsaw, the technology incubator created by Google, had just launched a pilot program to counter jihadist propaganda on the Google-owned video-sharing site YouTube. Under this program, called the Redirect Method, YouTube users who searched for Islamic State videos would automatically encounter video advertisements denouncing the terrorist group.

Lumpkin's team adopted a similar approach that targets Facebook users, specifically young Muslims in

countries heavily recruited by the Islamic State. By buying ads on Facebook — something never before attempted in this way — the officials found that they could tap into vast troves of data on the interests and browsing habits of legions of Facebook users, allowing them to pinpoint individuals who showed an affinity for jihadist groups and causes.

[More federal workers push back against White House policies]

Compared with the State Department's earlier efforts, the ads that began popping up on Facebook pages in September are strikingly different: nearly always in Arabic or another local language, bearing market-tested messages that make no mention of their U.S. government sponsor.

Each day, the team monitors the responses to different variations of the ads in real time, measuring how often each is viewed and for how long. Lumpkin discovered quickly that the appeal of different messages varied from one region to another. In locales with strong tribal traditions, appeals to family and duty seem to resonate. In others, it's the testimony of defectors, supplied mostly by partner agencies. Their disillusionment reveals "the true nature of ISIL," including harsh conditions that the group's propaganda videos never talk about, Lumpkin said.

"Defectors are among the most credible and capable messengers out there," he said. "There are many of them, and they come in different forms."

Lumpkin said he believes that the messages are helping to change young minds, pointing to sharply falling recruitment rates by the Islamic State in recent months. But he acknowledges that the link is difficult to prove, as the falloff is occurring at a time when the militants are in retreat on the battlefield.

"How do you know they didn't join because of you? That's where it gets difficult," Lumpkin said.

And yet, he argues, the effort remains a critical one for a reason that has long been apparent to terrorism experts around the globe: Extremist ideologies can't be defeated with conventional weapons alone.

"We're not going to message our way out of this conflict, nor are we going to kill our way out," Lumpkin said. "We have to have a layered and balanced approach."

[Trump insists torture 'works' but says he'll defer to aides]

[In Yemen raid, a lesson for Trump's security team]

[U.S. service member killed in raid is first casualty under new administration]

**The
New York
Times**

Samaan

An important northern Syrian city held by the Islamic State, the group's last major outpost in the region, was practically surrounded Monday by pro-government and insurgent forces squeezing it from different directions, according to rebels and the state-run Syrian news media.

The city — Al Bab, in Aleppo Province, 15 miles south of the Turkish border — has been hemmed in for months by insurgent fighters and Turkish troops, who have together blocked approaches from the east, north and west, according to rebels working with Turkey, as well as local activists and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a monitoring group.

But now the Syrian Army, aided by Hezbollah militia fighters and artillery units supplied by Russia, has cut off the approach to Al Bab from the south, the Syrian Observatory said Monday. The state-run news media corroborated

ISIS Redoubt in Northern Syria Is Said to Be Nearly Encircled

Rick Gladstone
and Maher

its account, saying the pro-government forces had captured a hill overlooking a southeastern route out of Al Bab, the last road not already blocked by the Turkish troops and rebels.

Although the Turkish-backed insurgents and Russian-backed government forces are not openly coordinating their moves — and in other circumstances, might be attacking each other — the joint encirclement of Al Bab appeared to reflect a strategic desire to rout the Islamic State, a group that both parties describe as an enemy.

Turkey and Russia are also pressing ahead with diplomatic cooperation, with the goal of expanding a partial truce and bringing the Syrian antagonists into a new round of peace talks.

But as the antagonists get closer to Al Bab, the encirclement could become a flash point. If Islamic State fighters flee, pro- and antigovernment forces could find themselves facing each other across an unpredictable new front line.

While Russia and Turkey have begun to coordinate air operations in northern Syria in some instances, there have been no reports of coordination on the ground.

Al Bab is one of the largest urban areas in central northern Syria, after Aleppo, the city retaken from rebel groups by Syrian forces, with Russian help, nearly two months ago. Since then, President Bashar al-Assad of Syria has focused more military resources on fighting the Islamic State, particularly in Palmyra, the ancient city that the group captured in May 2015, lost last March and recaptured in December.

If the Islamic State is defeated in Al Bab, it will lose its last piece of territory in Aleppo Province, where it once held large areas. That would winnow the group's significant Syrian territory to areas around Raqqa, its self-declared capital farther east.

That possibility has elevated the importance of Al Bab to all sides in the conflict, which is nearly six years old.

The Syrian Army's occupation of the southern approach to Al Bab gives it control of "the only and last main road used by the jihadists between Al Bab and Raqqa," said the Syrian Observatory, which bases its reporting on a network of contacts on the ground.

Turkey and Russia are working to advance peace talks on Syria, although they support opposite sides. A brief round of talks held last month in Astana, Kazakhstan, is set to resume this month in Geneva. The Islamic State and extremist militant factions tied to Al Qaeda are excluded.

The Islamic State is increasingly under assault in Syria and Iraq, where an American-backed military effort to evict the group from the northern city of Mosul has been underway for months. Roughly half the city has been retaken.

In a report issued on Monday, the United Nations said the Islamic State had been further constrained by declines in revenue from its oil-smuggling and extortion

businesses, as well as fewer recruits.

The report said the group was "militarily on the defensive in

several regions, notably in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic."

Nonetheless, it cautioned, the Islamic State has partly adapted and "continues to encourage its followers and sympathizers outside conflict zones to perpetrate attacks."

**The
New York
Times**

Amnesty Report Accuses Syria of Executing Thousands Since War Began

Anne Barnard

BEIRUT, Lebanon — The Syrian government has executed 5,000 to 13,000 people in mass hangings in just one of its many prisons since the start of the six-year-old uprising against President Bashar al-Assad, Amnesty International contends in a new report.

The report on the Saydnaya military prison, which Amnesty said was based on interviews with former detainees there, prison employees, judges and others, accuses the Syrian government of systematically executing perceived opponents after sham trials that lasted just a few minutes.

Inmates are kept under conditions so dismal — including regular, severe beatings and deprivation of food, water, medicine and basic sanitation — that they amount to deliberate

extermination, defined under international law as a crime against humanity, the report said.

While inhumane prison conditions in Syria have been known for decades, the Amnesty report laid out what it described as new details — not documented by any human rights monitoring group to date — about the scale of the killings and the state systems required to facilitate them, including approvals by high-ranking officials.

"We now know where, when and how often these hangings are taking place, as well as which elements of the Syrian government have authorized them," said Nicolette Waldman, an Amnesty researcher specializing in detention issues and one of the report's authors.

Mr. Assad, in an interview with The New York Times and other journalists last year, insisted that

detainees were being treated according to Syrian law and that their families could locate them by appealing to the judicial system.

But the report corroborates numerous accounts given to The Times by current and former detainees in several prisons across Syria, detailing regular torture and deprivation. It also echoes reports from families of detainees that the government has refused to provide even basic information such as where they are and whether they are alive.

According to former officials cited in the report, detainees — most of them accused of nonviolent offenses, such as participating in demonstrations — are tortured into giving confessions, then taken to so-called military field courts, where they undergo trials lasting two to three minutes. At regular intervals,

the Amnesty report said, they are gathered in the middle of the night from their cells and taken blindfolded to an execution room on the grounds of the prison near Damascus, where they are hanged.

Some prisoners have managed to stand on toilets to look out windows and see bodies carted away, and the number of slippers left lying on the ground. "If there were 30 slippers, then we knew that 15 people had been executed," Abu Osama, a former military officer detained in the prison, was quoted as saying. "There were usually between 30 and 80 slippers outside."

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Russia Open to Pragmatic Relationship With U.S. Despite Differences

James Marson

Feb. 6, 2017 6:10 a.m. ET

MOSCOW—Differences between Russia and the U.S. over Iran and other international issues shouldn't harm efforts to improve relations between the two countries, the Kremlin said Monday.

"It is no secret that on a whole range of questions of international and regional policy, the positions of Moscow and Washington are diametrically different," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Monday, Russian news agencies reported. "But that can't

and shouldn't be a hindrance for establishing normal communications and pragmatic mutual relations between Russia and the U.S."

President Donald Trump has expressed admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin and said he wants to improve relations, in particular to aid the fight against Islamic State. The Trump administration is also exploring ways to drive a wedge between Russia's military and diplomatic alliance with Iran, The Wall Street Journal reported Sunday. Mr. Peskov said Monday that Russia

and Iran had "good, partner relations."

The Kremlin spokesman hit out at Fox News host Bill O'Reilly, saying it was "unacceptable and insulting" that Mr. O'Reilly had called Mr. Putin "a killer" in an interview with Mr. Trump that aired Sunday. Mr. Peskov called for an apology from Fox News. He declined to comment on Mr. Trump's reaction to the comment, which appeared to draw equivalence between Russia and the U.S.

Mr. Peskov also responded to the Trump administration's description of "Ukraine's long-running conflict

with Russia," which appeared in a statement following a telephone call between Mr. Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart. "There's no conflict between Ukraine and Russia," Mr. Peskov said Monday, adding that it is "an exclusively internal Ukrainian conflict." Russia has long denied involvement in the nearly three-year conflict with Ukrainian government forces in Ukraine's east, despite plentiful evidence that it provides weapons, fighters and military units to support pro-Russian separatists there.

Write to James Marson at james.marson@wsj.com

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Editorial: Trump, Putin and Republicans

Updated Feb. 6, 2017 7:18 p.m.
ET 74 COMMENTS

An American President has enormous leeway on foreign policy, and generally that's better than being micromanaged by Congress. But there are exceptions, and one of them could be President Trump and Russia.

Mr. Trump has made eminently clear he wants to forge a new strategic relationship with Vladimir Putin, to the point of sometimes sounding like an apologist. In a

weekend interview with Bill O'Reilly of Fox News, Mr. Trump said he respects the Russian strongman, to which Mr. O'Reilly said, "But he's a killer though. Putin's a killer."

Mr. Trump responded by equating U.S. government actions with the Kremlin's, saying that "there are a lot of killers. We've got a lot of killers. What do you think—our country's so innocent. You think our country's so innocent?" That's the sort of false moral equivalence that might embarrass Jane Fonda at a left-wing antiwar rally, and the best you can say for it is that Mr. Trump

doesn't give much thought to most of what he says.

The more important issue is what kind of deal Mr. Trump wants to cut with Mr. Putin, and on that score the good news is that Republicans in Congress are under no illusions. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell on Sunday called Mr. Putin "a former KGB agent" and "thug." House Speaker Paul Ryan told CNN last month that Russia is a "global menace" and that Mr. Putin "does not share our interests. He frustrates our interests." GOP Senators Ben Sasse, Marco

Rubio, John McCain and Lindsey Graham are also clear-headed about Russia and American interests.

These voices matter as American officials willing to speak against Russian authoritarianism. But holding prominent positions in Congress, they also matter as a potential check on Mr. Trump's ability to strike a bad deal with Mr. Putin. Working with Democrats like Senator Ben Cardin, they could make Mr. Trump pay a political price for unilaterally lifting sanctions. This is what Democrats should have

done more of with President Obama, and Republicans should do better with Mr. Trump.

The Washington Post

gtonpostopinions

OF ALL the strangely accommodating remarks President Trump has made about Russian President Vladimir Putin, none is quite so startling and pernicious as his suggestion that the United States is morally equivalent to a ruthless regime whose critics keep getting murdered. For all its flaws, the United States is fundamentally different from the Russia of Mr. Putin, whose relentless pursuit of hegemony over his neighbors and the degradation of the West is founded in cynicism. Every U.S. president prior to Mr. Trump has embraced a contrary vision of American exceptionalism in which the country serves as a beacon of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. For Mr. Trump to casually equate the two is as false as it is shocking.

The New York Times

The bromance between President Trump and President Vladimir Putin of Russia, long a source of puzzlement and alarm in the West, has gotten even more disturbing. This weekend, Mr. Trump dismissed a question about why he respected “a killer” like Mr. Putin by drawing a moral equivalency between the United States and Russia.

“You got a lot of killers,” Mr. Trump told Bill O’Reilly of the slavishly pro-Trump Fox News. “What, you think our country’s so innocent?” Mr. Trump also said he respected Mr. Putin, noting: “He’s a leader of his country. I say it’s better to get along with Russia than not.”

President Vladimir Putin of Russia at a press conference last week. Attila Kisbenedek/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Asserting the moral and political superiority of the United States over Russia has not traditionally been a difficult maneuver for American presidents. But rather than endorsing American exceptionalism,



President Donald Trump went on record saying he respects Russian leader Vladimir Putin in a recent interview. Time

Editorial : Trump’s moral blind spot

<https://www.facebook.com/washingtonpostopinions>

Mr. Trump was interviewed by the Fox News commentator Bill O’Reilly for a broadcast just before the Super Bowl. Mr. O’Reilly brought up Russia, and pithily declared: “But he’s a killer, though. Putin’s a killer.” Mr. O’Reilly may have been referring to the many critics of Mr. Putin and his regime who have died in the past 17 years, including the opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, shot in the back near the walls of the Kremlin in 2015; anti-corruption investigator Sergei Magnitsky, who died in prison in 2009; former KGB man Alexander Litvinenko, poisoned with polonium in 2006; respected journalist Anna Politkovskaya, shot the same year; and journalist Yuri Shchekochikhin, thought to have been poisoned in 2003. In these cases and others, arrests have sometimes been made of the person who carried out the killing but not of those who ordered it.

Editorial: Blaming America First

The Editorial Board

Mr. Trump seemed to appreciate Mr. Putin’s brutality — which includes bombing civilians in Syria and, his accusers allege, responsibility for a trail of dead political opponents and journalists at home — and suggested America acts the same way.

There’s no doubt that the United States has made terrible mistakes, like invading Iraq in 2003 and torturing terrorism suspects after Sept. 11. President Barack Obama often drew fire from Republicans for acknowledging the obvious — there are limits to American power and sometimes decisions to employ military force have resulted in “unintended consequences.” American drone strikes against extremists in Afghanistan and Pakistan, for instance, have sometimes killed civilians.

But no American president has done what Mr. Putin has done in silencing nearly all independent media, crushing dissent, snuffing out Russia’s once-incipient democracy, invading Ukraine, interfering in the American election — apparently on Mr. Trump’s behalf — and trying to destabilize Europe.

Boot : Trump bows to Russia again

President Donald Trump went on record saying he respects Russian leader Vladimir Putin in a recent interview. Time

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Feb. 3, 2017. (Photo: Alexei Druzhinin, AP)

Once upon a time, “moral relativism” — the tendency to draw

Mr. Trump replied, “There are a lot of killers. We’ve got a lot of killers. Well, you think our country’s so innocent. You think our country’s so innocent?” Mr. O’Reilly: “I don’t know of any government leaders that are killers.” Mr. Trump: “Well — take a look at what we’ve done too. We made a lot of mistakes. I’ve been against the war in Iraq from the beginning.” Mr. O’Reilly: “But mistakes are different than — ” Mr. Trump: “A lot of mistakes, but a lot of people were killed. A lot of killers around, believe me.”

To state the obvious, in the United States, critics of the president are not poisoned or gunned down. By suggesting that U.S. military operations in Iraq — a country the George W. Bush administration invaded to depose a blood-soaked dictator — are equivalent to such crimes, Mr. Trump repudiates the very notion of a foreign policy based on values. He equates the forces of

liberty and thuggery — and thereby validates strongmen everywhere who rule by coercion, suffocate free speech and crush individual dignity.

The United States is, of course, far from perfect: Its history includes dark chapters both at home and abroad. But as President Barack Obama observed, American exceptionalism lies in its elevated aspirations, and in the nation’s capacity to reverse its errors through democratic reform. Rather than embrace that tradition, Mr. Trump’s rhetoric suggests he will mimic Mr. Putin in the naked pursuit of narrow interests and disregard for legality and morality. It is a doctrine that leaders of both parties, along with ordinary Americans, should repudiate.

At least in recent decades, American presidents who took military action have been driven by the desire to promote freedom and democracy, sometimes with extraordinary results, as when Germany and Japan evolved after World War II from vanquished enemies into trusted, prosperous allies.

Since taking office, Mr. Trump has shown little support for America’s traditional roles as a champion of universal values like freedom of the press and tolerance. In fact, as he has worked to cut Mr. Putin slack, Mr. Trump has bashed allies and laid the groundwork for an aggressive campaign that could lead to conflict with Iran, which the Pentagon has ranked behind Russia as a threat.

Mr. Trump’s willingness to kowtow to Mr. Putin in the Fox interview was too much even for the Republican Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, who rebuked Mr. Trump, called Mr. Putin “a thug” and rejected any equivalence between America and Russia. The House Democratic leader, Nancy Pelosi, urged the F.B.I. to investigate Mr.

Trump’s finances and personal ties to find out if the Russian government was blackmailing him.

Mr. Trump’s obsequiousness toward the Russian leader and his administration’s confusing policy is emboldening both sides in Ukraine. Last week, the conflict between the Ukrainian military and Russian-backed separatists reignited. The United States ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, blamed Russia for escalating the fighting. She had previously said sanctions imposed on Russia because of its 2014 annexation of Crimea and invasion into eastern Ukraine would stay in place.

But on Saturday, Mr. Trump spoke by phone to the Ukrainian president and later issued a statement that did not condemn Russia, played down the conflict as a border dispute and made no reference to sanctions. On Monday, European Union leaders, once the weak link in standing firm against Russian aggression, vowed to uphold sanctions. At least somebody is showing principled leadership.

comparisons between the conduct of the United States and its enemies — was the bane of American conservatives.

In his famous 1983 speech to the National Association of Evangelicals, President Reagan said, “I urge you to beware the temptation of ... blithely declaring yourselves above it all and label

both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire." Reagan's ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick, wrote, "There is no more misleading concept abroad today than this concept of ... superpower equivalence." In 2011, Rep. Paul Ryan, not yet speaker of the House, said, "If you ask me what the biggest problem in America is, I'm not going to tell you debt, deficits, statistics, economics — I'll tell you it's moral relativism."

And throughout the Obama administration, conservatives excoriated the president for supposedly apologizing for past American actions such as the nuclear bombing of Japan — and for not doing enough to champion the doctrine of "American exceptionalism," which holds that the U.S. is different from, and implicitly better than, ordinary nations. In 2015, for example, then-Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana complained: "This is ... maybe the first president ever who truly doesn't believe in ... America as a force for good."

So it is more than a little ironic that the chief font of

moral equivalence today is a Republican president who has the support of many conservatives — including Ryan and Jindal. President Trump has no problem trashing allies such as Australia and Mexico or bad-mouthing NATO and the European Union. But he will never say a bad word about Russian dictator Vladimir Putin.

The latest manifestation of Trump's disturbing bromance with Putin came in his Super Bowl Sunday interview, in which he once again touted the virtues of "getting along with Russia." Bill O'Reilly challenged him: "He's a killer, though. Putin's a killer." Trump was nonplussed: "There are a lot of killers. We've got a lot of killers. What, you think our country's so innocent?" This is no slip of the tongue — it is a repeat, virtually word for word, of comments that Trump made in December 2015 on *Morning Joe*. When Joe Scarborough said Putin "kills journalists," Trump insouciantly replied, "Well, I think that our country does plenty of killing, too, Joe."

Putin presides over a regime that routinely murders anyone with the temerity to criticize him. A partial list

of his suspected victims includes Alexander Litvinenko, a former Russian intelligence officer whose tea was doctored with radioactive polonium-210, killing him in London in 2006; investigative reporter Anna Politkovskaya, gunned down in front of her Moscow apartment in 2006; attorney Sergei Magnitsky, killed in police custody in 2009; and the opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, shot to death by mysterious assailants in 2015 within spitting distance of the Kremlin. Just a few days ago, Kremlin critic Vladimir Kara-Murza suffered massive organ failure, just he had in 2015, with the widespread suspicion being that he was poisoned on both occasions by the FSB, Putin's secret police.

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

Does Trump mean to imply that the FBI also kills anyone who dares to voice dissent just as the FSB does? The FBI has certainly harassed and wiretapped anti-war and civil rights demonstrators in decades past, but even then it never actually killed anyone. The implication is as ludicrous as it is offensive. Yet it is of a piece with Trump's non-stop denigration of America, which he described in his inaugural address

as a land of "carnage" in which crime is out of control, "rustled out factories" are "scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation," and "our young and beautiful students (are) deprived of all knowledge." Of America's many achievements, including our traditions of freedom and openness to immigrants, he predictably had not a word to say.

If such "hate America" sentiments had been uttered by a Democrat — say, Barack Obama — you can be assured that every conservative talking head and politician in the land would be rushing in front of a *Fox News* camera in a white rage. But when Trump does it? A few do protest, but not nearly enough. Vice President Pence won't even say America is morally superior to Russia. By not doing more to distance itself from this morally obtuse president, the Republican Party is becoming, de facto, the party of moral relativism. If only Paul Ryan were alive to see this.

Max Boot, a member of USA TODAY's Board of Contributors, is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. Follow him on Twitter @MaxBoot.



Satter: Trump Gives a Boost to Putin's Propaganda

David Satter

Updated Feb. 6, 2017 7:14 p.m. ET

President Trump's expression of "respect" for Vladimir Putin in an interview that aired over the weekend, and his comparison of extrajudicial killings by the Putin regime to American actions, has ushered in a new era in U.S.-Russian relations. Never before has an American president implied that political murder is acceptable or that the U.S. is guilty of similar crimes.

The goal of improved relations with the Russian president, as Mr. Trump explained, is to create the conditions for a U.S.-Russian alliance to fight Islamic State. But the result will be to cripple the Russian opposition, contribute to the propagandizing of the population, and diminish the ability of the U.S. to prevent internal and foreign Russian atrocities.

In the present atmosphere, Russian activists know they could be killed at any time. Last week Vladimir Kara-Murza, a political activist and journalist, was hospitalized with symptoms of poisoning. The motive for the poisoning may lie in statements Mr. Kara-Murza made to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee last June. In his testimony, he called for the extension of sanctions under the

Magnitsky Act, which imposed visa bans and asset freezes on Russian officials involved in the 2009 torture and murder of Sergei Magnitsky, an anticorruption lawyer.

Mr. Kara-Murza said sanctions should be imposed on Russian human-rights abusers including Gen. Alexander Bastrykin, at the time Russia's chief security officer and head of the Investigative Committee. Gen. Bastrykin resigned in September, and on Jan. 9 he was added to the list of those targeted by the Magnitsky sanctions.

Now Mr. Kara-Murza is in a coma, suffering from organ failure, and fighting for his life. The symptoms are identical to those he showed after being poisoned two years ago, when he was given a 5% chance of survival.

On Feb. 27, 2015, Boris Nemtsov, the leader of the Russian opposition, was shot dead as he crossed the Moskvoreskiy Bridge in the shadow of the Kremlin. He was compiling a report on Russian soldiers in eastern Ukraine whose presence was denied by the government. Earlier, he advised representatives of the U.S. government on targets for sanctions after the Russian annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine.

For both Mr. Kara-Murza and Nemtsov, the violence was demonstrative. Mr. Kara-Murza was poisoned twice in the same way, and Nemtsov was shot next to the Kremlin on the most heavily guarded bridge in Moscow. These are signs that the regime is not hesitant to indicate authorship of its crimes.

The oppositionists also face social isolation. Alexei Navalny, a prominent blogger, and Mikhail Kasyanov, the former prime minister, have been physically attacked. A secretly filmed video of Mr. Kasyanov with his lover was shown on national television. Before he was killed, Nemtsov received death threats on social media. After his murder, images of his body were circulated on websites and social media, and posts denouncing him received hundreds of thousands of "likes."

In such a hostile environment, U.S. backing is an important source of moral reinforcement for Russia's political and human-rights activists. Mr. Trump's remarks instead provide reinforcement for the Putin regime's propaganda, which tries to convince Russians that the abuses they experience in their daily lives are typical of all countries.

An example was an Oct. 30 Russian news report that U.S.

citizens, angered by vote fraud in the lead up to the Nov. 8 election, were ready to launch a massive demonstration in Washington, similar to the 2013-14 protests in Kiev's Maidan Square. While the story about the U.S. demonstration was fabricated, in December 2011 Russians did take to the streets to protest widespread vote fraud. The "news" item was intended to persuade them that vote fraud was also typical of the U.S.

Mr. Trump's statements suggesting that Russia and America are similar in abusing human rights and the U.S. also has "killers" will be quoted by the government, state-run media and other anti-opposition forces for years.

Mr. Trump also undermines America's moral authority, making it more difficult for the U.S. to prevent Russian atrocities. In Syria, Russian forces have deliberately targeted markets, hospitals and homes. The London-based monitoring group Airwars estimates that there were at least 3,786 civilian deaths caused by Russian bombing between Sept. 30, 2015, and Dec. 20, 2016, with the actual numbers likely far higher. Death on this scale can generate new resistance. But Mr. Trump's "respect" for Mr. Putin leaves little room for criticism. If the U.S. president is not concerned about political murders, what basis does

he have for objecting to the indiscriminate meting out of death from the air?

The attempt to mollify Russia is not new. In 1999 the U.S. failed to question Russia's official explanations for the apartment bombings that brought Mr. Putin to power despite the arrest of state security agents found planting a

bomb in an apartment building in Ryazan. In 2009 the Obama administration launched its "reset" policy despite the murders of Alexander Litvinenko, a former FSB agent, and Anna Politkovskaya, a leading investigative reporter, and the invasion of Georgia.

Mr. Trump's readiness to condone murder in the pursuit of an ill-

advised U.S.-Russia partnership suggests that he doesn't see the distinction between defensive war and the murder of one's own people to hold on to power. Cooperation with Russia on these terms could involve the U.S. in crimes that neither the American people nor the world will accept. Mr. Trump needs to give more thought to his words—while there is still time.

Mr. Satter is affiliated with the Hudson Institute and Johns Hopkins University. He is author of "The Less You Know, the Better You Sleep: Russia's Road to Terror and Dictatorship under Yeltsin and Putin" (Yale, 2016).

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Trump Set to Attend NATO Summit in May

Julian E. Barnes

Updated Feb. 6, 2017 3:40 p.m. ET

BRUSSELS—President Donald Trump committed to attending a summit of North Atlantic Treaty Organization leaders in May, NATO said Monday, a meeting that member countries sought after Mr. Trump's critical comments about the alliance.

The precise date of the NATO summit in Brussels is yet to be set, but officials said it would be in late May, likely immediately before or after the Group of Seven leaders' meeting in Sicily.

The commitment to attend the summit was made in a phone conversation between Mr. Trump and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg on Sunday evening that officials said also covered the alliance's counterterrorism efforts, military spending in Europe and the war in Ukraine.

As U.S. allies seek to gauge the new president's foreign-policy priorities, Mr. Trump said Monday he backed NATO, which he characterized as obsolete days before his inauguration last month.

"We strongly support NATO," Mr. Trump said Monday in remarks at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida. "We only ask that all of the NATO members make their full and proper financial contributions to the NATO alliance, which many of them have not been doing."

NATO defense ministers, including U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, will gather in Brussels next week, where the alliance's counterterrorism work will top the agenda.

Next week's meeting will focus on what the alliance is doing to fight terrorism and how it can meet the challenge from the Trump administration to expand its efforts, including stepping up its intelligence sharing and bolstering its work with special-operations forces.

Mr. Stoltenberg and other allied officials have long said NATO's best contribution to fighting terrorism is to train local forces and advise partner countries' ministries of defense, efforts the alliance is pursuing in 40 countries.

But Mr. Trump has pressured the alliance to do more to fight terrorism. NATO is also looking at other ways it can expand its counterterrorism efforts in conjunction with boosting its special-operations command, Mr. Stoltenberg said in an interview before his call with Mr. Trump.

"Special-operation forces is one element in a wide range of tools NATO has," he said. Exactly how the headquarters role would shift is still under discussion, he said.

Officials said NATO's special-operation headquarters could be expanded to take a greater role in training partner nations' forces. But some Republicans in Washington have said NATO should go further and examine a bigger operational role for the special-operation-forces command.

Mr. Stoltenberg also said NATO's new intelligence division is looking to better share information on terror threats, including foreign fighters.

"In a more complex world, with new threats and new challenges, we need intelligence even more to understand the different threats we are faced with. And we need to

work more closely together," he said. "We also need better intelligence to address the threats from foreign fighters and terrorism."

The secretary-general said allies need to share and understand intelligence "in a better way."

Allies have disagreed on how involved NATO should be in counterterrorism efforts, arguing the threats are best addressed by national governments and law enforcement. But Mr. Stoltenberg says there is a role for the alliance and has been prodding NATO to do more.

"I'm looking forward to sitting down with the new administration and to discuss with all allies how we can strengthen NATO's role in the fight against terrorism," he said.

Following the defense ministerial and the Munich Security Conference, which starts Feb. 17, Mr. Stoltenberg is set to meet with Vice President Mike Pence in Brussels.

Mr. Pence is also likely to meet with senior European Union officials, European officials announced Monday.

Last month Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders said a summit between European leaders and Mr. Trump was critical. "We might have divergent views on issues," he said. "But we have to see what things we can do together."

European foreign ministers met in Brussels on Monday to discuss Ukraine and other issues. While Russian sanctions aren't up for renewal, there was broad agreement in the talks that Europe wasn't in the mood to loosen them, especially with violence flaring in Ukraine, diplomats said.

Mr. Trump has caused worry in recent comments about Russia, but European diplomats said there may be more continuity in U.S. policy than expected, noting U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley's comments last week that sanctions should stay in place.

On Monday, Federica Mogherini, the European Union foreign policy chief, said Europe would maintain its support for Ukraine and the peace process as violence continues. "The situation in the last days is extremely worrisome for us," she said.

The accounts of Sunday's call released by the White House and NATO used different language on Ukraine. The White House, echoing language it has used in other recent statements, said Mr. Trump and Mr. Stoltenberg "discussed the potential for a peaceful resolution of the conflict along the Ukrainian border."

NATO, on the other hand, said the leaders "discussed the uptick in violence in eastern Ukraine, and prospects for a peaceful settlement."

The alliance statement also noted that Mr. Stoltenberg emphasized the organization's consistent stance of seeking to balance the defense of Europe with a dialogue between NATO and Russia.

—Valentina Pop and Felicia Schwartz contributed to this article.

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The New York Times

Task Force Urges Better U.S. Engagement With China

David Barboza

The United States' relationship with China was strained during the Obama administration, with sharp differences over economic and trade issues, cyberattacks and Beijing's assertive maneuvers in the South China Sea.

But since taking office last month, President Trump has signaled that matters could get even more contentious, as his administration has vowed to project more military might in Asia and to impose high tariffs on Chinese goods. China could respond with its own punitive measures.

A new report by a bipartisan task force of prominent China specialists is warning of dire consequences, including the possibility of a trade war or an armed skirmish, unless the United States can find a more effective way to engage China.

The 72-page report, to be issued Tuesday by the Asia Society's Center on U.S.-China Relations and the School of Global Policy and Strategy at the University of California, San Diego, urged the Trump administration to take a tougher line on China, while reaffirming principles that have

guided relations between the two nations since the 1970s.

At times, the report, "U.S. Policy Toward China: Recommendations for a New Administration," seemed at odds with the new president. It argued that the White House should support a trade agreement similar to the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which Mr. Trump has already rejected, to strengthen economic ties in Asia.

And it cautioned the administration not to tamper with Washington's commitment to a One China policy — a clear reference to the president's recent suggestion that the United States could ignore what had become a central tenet of the relationship after President Richard M. Nixon's groundbreaking trip to China in 1972.

The report urged swift action to reassure the United States' allies in Asia about its security commitments there. It also recommended that the administration initiate talks, as soon as possible, with China's leaders and develop constructive policies on what the task force identified as the six most critical areas of engagement, including efforts to halt North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

"We're really at a critical inflection point," said Orville Schell, a scholar at the Asia Society and a chairman of the task force. "We are worried about the increasingly antagonistic relationship" and "think the U.S. needs to up its game in terms of the effort its puts into high-level negotiations."

Mr. Trump has given no clear indication of how he will deal with China, but his administration has hinted at a more confrontational approach. The

commerce secretary, Wilbur L. Ross Jr., has complained about Chinese tariffs, and Mr. Trump named Peter Navarro, a strident critic of China, to lead a new White House office overseeing trade and industrial policy.

The defense secretary, Jim Mattis, has said the United States would stand "shoulder to shoulder" with Japan and its Asian allies, which angered China. He has also given China some reassurance, however, saying on Saturday in Tokyo that military maneuvers in the South China Sea were unnecessary. Diplomacy, he said, should resolve the differences.

The task force rebuked Mr. Trump's questioning of the One China policy, by which the United States recognizes the government in Beijing, rather than that of Taiwan, as representing China.

Crew members of China's South Sea Fleet took part in a drill in the the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea last year. China warned Washington in January that it would not back down over its claims in the disputed South China Sea. Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

The report said that "it would be exceedingly dangerous to unilaterally abandon our longstanding One China policy — an understanding that has served as the basis for the U.S. relationship with China, helped protect Taiwan's security, prosperity and democracy, and preserved peace and stability in Asia for almost four decades."

"Across-the-board tariffs or challenging the One China policy is not the way to go," said Susan L. Shirk, a professor at the University of California, San Diego, and a

chairwoman of the task force. "We shouldn't undervalue what we've achieved over the years — a more or less peaceful Asia, a big market for exports and a key partner on global problems, like climate change. If it was to become unhinged, it's not just chaos in Asia but destabilizing for the global economy."

United States-China relations have been charged for decades, particularly after the military suppression of pro-democracy demonstrations in 1989 in Beijing. But the task force said that American policies, regardless of whether a Democrat or Republican was president, had helped integrate China into the global economy and encouraged it to adhere to a rules-based international system.

But relations worsened after the 2008 financial crisis, which China withstood well with a huge stimulus package, it said. Beijing's leaders grew more hostile toward economic and military supremacy by the United States. In 2013, with Xi Jinping as president, these tendencies hardened.

Cheng Li, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, said that as China's economy grew, so did its abilities and determination, and old suspicions that the United States wanted to contain it resurfaced.

"China's goal is clear: It wants to be a regional power," said Mr. Li, who was not on the task force. "Xi Jinping wants to revitalize China's glorious past. And, with the world's second-largest economy, it wants to build a stronger military."

The task force report said the Chinese government also tightened restrictions on American internet

companies, nongovernmental organizations and media outlets.

As relations between Washington and Beijing started deteriorating, the task force was formed two years ago to make recommendations for the next president. Its members included Charlene Barshefsky, a former United States trade representative; Winston Lord, a former United States ambassador to China; Kurt M. Campbell, a former State Department officer; and Evan S. Medeiros, a special assistant to President Barack Obama on Asia.

As they began to meet, consensus emerged that the United States needed to strengthen its resolve and show greater firmness in dealing with China.

The task force urged the administration to keep a strong military presence in Asia. It also said new policy and diplomatic tools, including sanctions, litigation over trade disputes and the use of reciprocal measures, were needed. For example, if China restricted investment or trade, the United States might need to do the same.

The administration should make clear its resolve to combat climate change, avoid protectionism, reaffirm the One China policy, bolster its military commitments in Asia and, effectively, stay the course, the task force said.

The task force warned that if the new administration alters the basic course that has long guided United States relations with China, it could "destabilize not only the bilateral relationship, but also the region as a whole."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Abe to Tout Japan's U.S. Investment Plans in Trump Meeting

Mitsuru Obe

Updated Feb. 6, 2017 8:25 p.m. ET

TOKYO—Prime Minister Shinzo Abe plans to offer a vision for greater Japanese investment in the U.S. when meeting President Donald Trump in Washington on Friday, seeking to counter the president's criticism about trade, Japanese officials said.

Mr. Abe's five-pronged program, titled "U.S.-Japan Growth and Employment Initiative," says the two nations could work together to generate 700,000 jobs in the U.S. and create new markets worth \$450 billion over the next decade, the officials said. The program doesn't detail how those numbers could be reached through specific projects or corporate investments.

Since his inauguration on Jan. 20, Mr. Trump has criticized Japan several times. He suggested that Tokyo does "things to us that make it impossible to sell cars in Japan" and described Tokyo's monetary policy as an unfair way to devalue the yen and make business easier for Japanese exporters.

Underlining Japan's skittishness over its crucial U.S. ties, Mr. Abe became the first world leader to meet Mr. Trump in person in New York after Mr. Trump was elected in November.

Mr. Abe has said he planned to highlight investment by Japanese companies in the U.S. As of 2014, the number of U.S. jobs at Japanese companies totaled 840,000, while the cumulative total of Japanese investments in the U.S. more than doubled over a decade to

\$411 billion as of 2015, according to the most recently available data from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Last week, Mr. Abe said he would tell Mr. Trump that Japanese companies "have contributed to improving the competitiveness and productivity of U.S. manufacturing industries." He said he wanted to lay out a "package of programs" to generate jobs and growth in the U.S.

American critics of Japan point to the country's roughly \$60 billion annual trade surplus with the U.S. Japanese exports of cars and car parts account for a big portion of that. American cars have a minuscule market share in Japan. Some U.S. makers say Tokyo puts up hidden barriers, while Japanese officials observe that the imported

cars face no tariffs and say consumers simply aren't attracted to American models.

Japan had hoped to deflect such criticism by bringing the U.S. into a 12-nation trade pact, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, but Mr. Trump withdrew from the accord. The American leader has expressed a preference for two-way trade deals. Mr. Abe says he's open to that idea, but two-way negotiations could bring tough U.S. demands involving the sale of American cars in Japan and the value of the dollar against the yen.

"Chances are since this is a bilateral discussion rather than a multilateral one, the U.S. will demand more concessions," said Peter Petri, a professor of international finance at Brandeis International Business School.

Japanese officials involved in planning Mr. Abe's trip said he hoped to make the case for more cooperation through the five-part package. One of the parts discusses correcting trade imbalances but suggests this could be brought about through greater exports of U.S. natural gas to Japan rather than

through barriers to Japanese goods. The package says Japan could participate in U.S. infrastructure projects worth \$150 billion, such as the construction of high-speed railways in Texas and California. Tokyo has long urged the U.S. to accept its help and financing for high-speed rail, hoping to export

Japanese technology for the projects.

To support the assertion that the two nations could create new markets worth \$450 billion, the package also mentions robotics, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and aerospace as fields for cooperation and says U.S. and

Japanese companies could undertake joint projects in Asia such as supplying passenger jets and nuclear power plants.

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**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Editorial : Mattis's Pacific Promise

Updated Feb. 6, 2017 7:19 p.m.

ET 16 COMMENTS

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis concluded a successful visit to South Korea and Japan this weekend, the first overseas trip by a Trump cabinet member and a welcome gesture of reassurance to Asian allies threatened by North Korea and China. Now officials in Seoul and especially Tokyo want to see how President Trump follows up when he hosts Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Washington on Friday.

Mr. Mattis said in Seoul that the U.S. commitment to South Korea is "ironclad" and that "it is a priority for President Trump's Administration to pay attention to the northwest Pacific." He warned North Korea that "any attack on the United States or on our allies will be

defeated and any use of nuclear weapons will be met with a response that will be effective and overwhelming."

He also reconfirmed plans for South Korea this year to deploy the advanced U.S.-made missile-defense system known as Thaad. This would boost protection against the North and facilitate cooperation among Seoul, Tokyo and Washington—which is why China doesn't like it and is using informal economic sanctions to get Seoul to scotch its plans.

Whether Seoul caves will be a major test of the U.S. alliance as the Trump Administration finds its footing and South Koreans ride out their continuing presidential impeachment scandal and prepare to elect a new leader later this year.

In Tokyo, where the political leadership is more steady but

concerns are mounting over Chinese bullying in the East China Sea, Mr. Mattis offered similarly broad assurances. Most important, he reaffirmed that the U.S.-Japan security treaty applies to the Japanese-administered Senkaku Islands, which China claims for itself and regularly threatens using civilian and paramilitary ships.

Mr. Mattis also praised Japan's government for increasing defense spending. The U.S.-Japan alliance, he said, is "a model of cost-sharing and burden-sharing" and "an example for other nations to follow." This is especially important because as a candidate Donald Trump suggested several times that Japan is a free rider on U.S. security commitments, a view that underestimates Japan's contributions to regional security and the value of basing U.S. troops

at low cost near Asia's many flash points.

Mr. Trump's comments still sting, which is why his summit with Mr. Abe this week is highly anticipated in Tokyo and other allied capitals. The two men have had several promising exchanges since November's election, including phone calls and a Trump Tower meeting, but these addressed few specifics of the bilateral relationship.

If Mr. Trump this week follows Mr. Mattis in affirming the U.S. commitment to Japanese control of the Senkakus, he will go a long way to putting U.S.-Japan alliance concerns to rest. He would also help deter Chinese aggression, while underscoring that Washington remains a guarantor of world order in the face of authoritarian challengers.

**The
New York
Times**

Steve Bannon Carries Battles to Another Influential Hub: The Vatican

Jason Horowitz

ROME — When Stephen K. Bannon was still heading Breitbart News, he went to the Vatican to cover the canonization of John Paul II and make some friends. High on his list of people to meet was an archconservative American cardinal, Raymond Burke, who had openly clashed with Pope Francis.

In one of the cardinal's antechambers, amid religious statues and book-lined walls, Cardinal Burke and Mr. Bannon — who is now President Trump's anti-establishment eminence — bonded over their shared worldview. They saw Islam as threatening to overrun a prostrate West weakened by the erosion of traditional Christian values, and viewed themselves as unjustly ostracized by out-of-touch political elites.

"When you recognize someone who has sacrificed in order to remain true to his principles and who is fighting the same kind of battles in the cultural arena, in a different section of the battlefield, I'm not surprised there is a meeting of hearts," said Benjamin Harnwell, a confidant of Cardinal Burke who arranged the 2014 meeting.

While Mr. Trump, a twice-divorced president who has boasted of groping women, may seem an unlikely ally of traditionalists in the Vatican, many of them regard his election and the ascendance of Mr. Bannon as potentially game-changing breakthroughs.

Just as Mr. Bannon has connected with far-right parties threatening to topple governments throughout Western Europe, he has also made common cause with elements in the Roman Catholic Church who oppose the direction Francis is taking them. Many share Mr. Bannon's suspicion of Pope Francis as a dangerously misguided, and probably socialist, pontiff.

Until now, Francis has marginalized or demoted the traditionalists, notably Cardinal Burke, carrying out an inclusive agenda on migration, climate change and poverty that has made the pope a figure of unmatched global popularity, especially among liberals. Yet in a newly turbulent world, Francis is suddenly a lonelier figure. Where once Francis had a powerful ally in the White House in Barack Obama, now there is Mr. Trump and Mr. Bannon, this new president's ideological guru.

Trump's Campaign Chief

In August, Donald J. Trump shook up his presidential campaign for the second time in two months, hiring Stephen K. Bannon, the executive chairman of Breitbart News, as the Republican campaign's chief executive.

By AINARA TIEFENTHÄLER on August 17, 2016. Photo by Carlo Allegri/Reuters.. Watch in Times Video »

For many of the pope's ideological opponents in and around the Vatican, who are fearful of a pontiff they consider outwardly avuncular but internally a ruthless wielder of absolute political power, this angry moment in history is an opportunity to derail what they see as a disastrous papal agenda. And in Mr. Trump, and more directly in Mr. Bannon, some self-described "Rad Trads" — or radical traditionalists — see an alternate leader who will stand up for traditional Christian values and against Muslim interlopers.

"There are huge areas where we and the pope do overlap, and as a loyal Catholic, I don't want to spend my life fighting against the pope on issues where I won't change his

mind," Mr. Harnwell said over a lunch of cannelloni. "Far more valuable for me would be spend time working constructively with Steve Bannon."

He made it clear he was speaking for himself, not for the Institute for Human Dignity, a conservative Catholic group that he founded, and insisted that he shared the pope's goals of ensuring peace and ending poverty, just not his ideas on how to achieve it.

Mr. Bannon publicly articulated his worldview in remarks a few months after his meeting with Cardinal Burke, at a Vatican conference organized by Mr. Harnwell's institute.

Speaking via video feed from Los Angeles, Mr. Bannon, a Catholic, held forth against rampant secularization, the existential threat of Islam, and a capitalism that had drifted from the moral foundations of Christianity.

That talk has garnered much attention, and approval by conservatives, for its explicit expression of Mr. Bannon's vision. Less widely known are his efforts to cultivate strategic alliances with those in Rome who share his

interpretation of a right-wing “church militant” theology.

Mr. Bannon’s visage, speeches and endorsement of Mr. Harnwell as “the smartest guy in Rome” are featured heavily on the website of Mr. Harnwell’s foundation. Mr. Trump’s senior adviser has maintained email contact with Cardinal Burke, according to Mr. Harnwell, who dropped by the cardinal’s residence after lunch. And another person with knowledge of Mr. Bannon’s current outreach said the White House official is personally calling his contacts in Rome for thoughts on who should be the Trump administration’s ambassador to the Holy See.

During Mr. Bannon’s April 2014 trip he courted Edward Pentin, a leading conservative Vatican reporter, as a potential correspondent in Rome for Breitbart, the website that is popular with the alt-right, a far-right movement that has attracted white supremacists.

“He really seemed to get the battles the church needs to fight,” said Mr. Pentin, the author of “The Rigging of a Vatican Synod?” a book asserting that Pope Francis and his supporters railroaded opponents. Chief among those battles, Mr. Pentin said, was Mr. Bannon’s focus on countering a “cultural Marxism” that had seeped into the church.

Since that visit and the meeting with Cardinal Burke — an experience that Daniel Fluette, the head of production for Breitbart, described as “incredibly powerful” for Mr. Bannon — Mr. Trump’s ideological strategist has maintained a focus on Rome.

Mr. Bannon returned to direct the documentary “Torchbearer,” in which the “Duck Dynasty” star Phil Robertson contemplates the apocalyptic consequences of an eroding Christendom. Mr. Bannon also reunited with old friends, including Breitbart’s eventual Rome correspondent, Thomas Williams.

Stephen K. Bannon has sought alliances with those in Rome who believe that Pope Francis is taking the Roman Catholic Church in the wrong direction. Hilary Swift for The New York Times

A former priest, Mr. Williams said that he used to have arguments with Mr. Bannon about whether the pope subscribed to a hard-left brand of liberation theology, with Mr. Bannon calling the pope a “socialist/communist.” Mr. Williams said he usually defended the pope, but that recent statements by Francis convinced him “Steve turned out to be right. That happens more often than not.”

Mr. Bannon’s private thoughts about the pope have at times surfaced in public.

On May 23, Mr. Bannon and Mr. Williams spoke about Pope Francis on the radio program Breitbart News Daily.

Discussing a Breitbart article about the new mayor of London titled “Pope Hails Election of Sadiq Khan, Celebrates Mass Muslim Migration Into Europe,” Mr. Bannon suggested that the pope “seems almost to be putting the responsibility on the working men and women of Italy and Europe et cetera, that they have to go out of their way to accommodate” migration.

Was the pope a global elitist, Mr. Bannon asked, “two or three steps removed from this?”

Many critics of Francis express similar views, but they are often scared to express it for fear of retribution from the pope, who, they say, has eyes and ears all over the Vatican.

Instead, the pope’s critics anonymously papered Rome over the weekend with posters of a grumpy-looking Francis above complaints about his removing and ignoring clerics and cardinals. “Where’s your mercy?” it asked.

Conservatives and traditionalists in the Vatican secretly pass around phony mock-ups of the Vatican’s official paper, L’Osservatore Romano, making fun of the pope. Or they spread a YouTube video critiquing the pope and his exhortation on love in the family, “Amoris Laetitia,” which many traditionalists consider Francis’ opening salvo against the doctrine of the church. Set to the music of “That’s Amore,” an aggrieved crooner sings, “When will we all be freed from this cruel tyranny, that’s

Amoris” and “It’s the climate of fear engineered for four years, that’s Amoris.”

Cardinal Burke — who has said that the pope’s exhortation, which opened the door for divorced Catholics remarried outside the church to receive communion, might require “a formal act of correction” — has been unusually outspoken in his criticism of Francis. Cardinal Burke and Mr. Bannon declined to comment for this article.

Just weeks ago, the pope stripped Cardinal Burke of his remaining institutional influence after a scandal exploded at the Knights of Malta, a nearly 1,000-year-old chivalrous order where he had been exiled as a liaison to the Vatican. The pope had removed the order’s grand master after he showed disobedience to the pope. There was a sense in the order that the grand master followed the lead of Cardinal Burke because he projected authority, a power that stemmed in part from his support by the Trump administration, one influential knight said.

Cardinal Burke has become a champion to conservatives in the United States. Under Mr. Bannon, Breitbart News urged its Rome correspondent to write sympathetically about him. And at a meeting before last month’s anti-abortion March for Life rally in Washington, Cardinal Burke received the Law of Life Achievement, or Nail award, a framed replica of the nail used to hold the feet of Christ to the cross. According to John-Henry Westen, the editor of Life Site News, who announced the award, the prize is awarded to Christians “who have received a stab in the back.”

Despite Mr. Bannon’s inroads in Rome, Mr. Burke and other traditionalists are not ascendant in the Vatican.

The Rev. Antonio Spadaro, a Jesuit priest who edits the Vatican-approved journal La Civiltà Cattolica and who is close to the pope, dismissed their criticism as the stuff of a noisy but small “echo chamber.”

He also played down the effect of Mr. Trump’s ascent on the standing of Francis’ opponents in the

Vatican, saying it was only on a “level of image” and “propaganda.”

The pope will maintain his direction and not be distracted by fights against those trying to undercut him, Father Spadaro said. “He moves forward, and he moves ahead very fast.”

He added that Mr. Trump’s ban on immigrants from certain Muslim countries was “opposite” to the pontiff’s vision for how to foster unity and peace. The pope, Father Spadaro said, is doing everything he can to avoid the clash of civilizations that both fundamentalist Muslims and Christians want.

Indeed, the pope does not seem to be slowing down.

Days after the election of Mr. Trump, in St. Peter’s Basilica, the Vatican officially elevated new cardinals selected by Pope Francis who reflected the pope’s emphasis on an inclusive church — far from the worldview of Mr. Bannon and Mr. Burke.

“It’s not that he is just bringing new people in that think maybe like him,” Cardinal Blase Cupich, the influential new cardinal of Chicago, said after the ceremony. “He is transforming the church in making us rethink how we have done things before.”

That transformation was evident later in the evening, when the old conservative guard came to pay their respects to the new cardinals.

João Braz de Aviz, a powerful cardinal close to the pope, walked around in simple cleric clothes, the equivalent of civilian dress among all the flowing cassocks. Asked whether the ascent of Mr. Trump would embolden Mr. Bannon’s allies in the Vatican to intensify their opposition and force the pope to take a more orthodox line, he shrugged.

“The doctrine is secure,” he said, adding that the mission of the church was more to safeguard the poor. It was also, he reminded his traditionalist colleagues, to serve St. Peter, whose authority is passed down through the popes. “And today, Francis is Peter.”

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

New Study Adds to Mystery of Water on Mars

Ellie Kincaid

to National Aeronautics and Space Administration scientists.

Feb. 6, 2017 3:15 p.m. ET

The early Martian atmosphere likely didn’t contain enough carbon dioxide to keep the planet warm enough for liquid water, according

New findings further complicate the mystery of how the chilly planet could have once been home to the lakes and rivers that left their marks on its surface.

Geological evidence from the Curiosity rover shows evidence of lake beds and river deposits on Mars that planetary scientists generally believe could have been formed only by the presence of liquid water billions of years ago. But they have pondered how a

young Sun, shining more faintly than it does today, could possibly keep the red planet above freezing long enough for liquid water to shape the land.

One theory suggests Mars’s atmosphere, thin today, once

contained much more carbon dioxide warming the planet as a greenhouse gas. Previous work has failed to find a sufficient quantity of carbonates, minerals expected to form on the surface of Mars if carbon dioxide were present in the atmosphere, and the new research throws another monkey wrench in this theory.

The research, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, analyzes data from Curiosity's analysis of rocks from Gale Crater, which scientists believe was home to an ancient and long-lived lake. The analyzed rocks were approximately 3.5 billion years old, dating from the time scientists believe was the end of Mars's wet period.

The rover's X-ray diffraction instrument, which identifies the minerals present in a rock sample,

didn't turn up any carbonates. Using that evidence and the amount of other minerals present, the researchers calculated that the Mars atmosphere must have contained very little carbon dioxide. "What we see is a lot lower than the amount needed to produce the greenhouse effect to have lakes and rivers around at that time," said Thomas Bristow, a research scientist at the NASA Ames Research Center in Moffett Field, Calif., and lead author on the paper. An atmosphere with plenty of carbon dioxide would be the simplest answer, Dr. Bristow said, but "it doesn't seem that easy solution will work in this case."

The puzzle remains of how Mars was once warm enough to support liquid water.

One potential explanation is that Mars was icy overall with brief

repeated warm periods in which water melted and formed the suggestive features, said Paul Niles, a planetary scientist at NASA's Johnson Space Center who wasn't involved in the research. "I think the key problem is how long these liquid water events lasted," Dr. Niles said, but determining the date of geologic features on Mars is difficult. Meanwhile, chemical data like that from the new research seem to conflict with geological data, which makes for "a big divide" in scientific opinion, he said.

The geologic evidence from Curiosity "does demand a lake over a long period of time," said Raymond Arvidson, a professor at Washington University in St. Louis and scientist on the Curiosity and Opportunity rover teams who wasn't involved in the research. Glaciers couldn't have formed the features observed such as river deposits and

mud cracks, which he said would have developed when a shallow lake evaporated.

Other gases might have contributed to warming Mars in the absence of carbon dioxide, Dr. Arvidson said. The Opportunity rover has found large amounts of rocks containing sulfur, which in other forms is also an effective greenhouse gas. Dr. Arvidson posits that gases released from volcanic eruptions and high-speed impacts could provide the missing warming element.

"Let's not be Earth chauvinists" and assume carbon dioxide must be important on Mars because it is here, he said.

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ETATS-UNIS

The
Washington
Post

Federal appeals court decides to schedule a hearing on Trump travel order

<http://www.facebook.com/matt.zapotosky>

(Lee Powell/The Washington Post)

Yemeni brothers Ammar and Tareq Aquel Mohammad Aziz reunite with their father in the United States on February 6th. The brothers had been stranded in Addis Ababa and Djibouti after their visas were revoked when President Trump signed an executive order temporarily banning visa-holders from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States. It was a time of reunions at Washington Dulles International Airport as two brothers and a family from Yemen reached love ones after being stranded. (Lee Powell/The Washington Post)

A federal appeals court will hear arguments Tuesday on whether to restore President Trump's controversial immigration order, marking a critical juncture for the president's directive temporarily barring refugees and those from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States.

The hearing, which will be conducted by telephone, is to review an order by a lower court judge to put Trump's directive on hold.

It was scheduled just as Justice Department lawyers made their final written pitch to immediately restore the president's order — and as tech

companies, law professors and former high-ranking national security officials joined a mushrooming legal campaign to keep the measure suspended.

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Justice Department lawyers asserted that the executive order was "a lawful exercise of the President's authority over the entry of aliens into the United States and the admission of refugees," and that U.S. District Judge James Robart's order to stop it was "vastly overbroad."

The future of the temporary ban now lies with three judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit: William C. Canby Jr., who was appointed by President Carter; Judge Richard Clifton, who was appointed by President George W. Bush; and Judge Michelle Taryn Friedland, who was appointed by President Obama.

(Jayne Orenstein, Dalton Bennett, Natalie Jennings/The Washington Post)

Families that had been affected by President Trump's ban on travel reunited in airports across the U.S. on Sunday. Families that had been affected by President Trump's ban

on travel reunited in airports across the U.S. on Sunday. (Jayne Orenstein, Dalton Bennett, Natalie Jennings/The Washington Post)

The judges said each side would have 30 minutes to present their arguments beginning at 6 p.m. Eastern. It is unclear how soon a ruling could follow. The hearing will be live-streamed, the clerk of court said..

With the court case ongoing, those once stopped from coming to the United States have rushed to come into the country. The Department of Homeland Security said it was suspending all enforcement of Trump's directive after the federal judge in Seattle ordered it frozen, and many travelers have since been able to reunite with family here.

[Court document: Declaration of National Security Officials]

The broad legal issue is whether Trump exceeded his authority and violated the First Amendment and federal immigration law, and whether his executive order imposes irreparable harm on those it affects.

Either Justice Department lawyers representing the Trump administration, or the states of Washington and Minnesota — which had successfully sued to put the ban on hold — could ask the Supreme Court to intervene if they disagree with the appeals court

decision. The Supreme Court, though, remains one justice short, and many see it as ideologically split 4-4. A tie would keep in place whatever the appeals court decides.

The rhetoric from both sides has been fierce. The states of Washington and Minnesota argued in a filing Monday that reinstating the ban would "unleash chaos again" by "separating families, stranding our university students and faculty, and barring travel."

Justice Department lawyers countered that non-citizens outside the United States have "no substantive right or basis for judicial review in the denial of a visa at all," and that, at most, the lower court judge should have limited his ruling to "previously admitted aliens who are temporarily abroad now or who wish to travel and return to the United States in the future."

Who is affected by Trump's travel ban

Federal immigration law undeniably gives the president broad authority to bar people from coming into the United States, saying that if he finds "the entry of any aliens" would be "detrimental" to the country's interests, he can impose restrictions. Legal analysts have said those challenging the ban will face an uphill climb to overturn it.

[Court document: Amicus brief by tech companies]

Yet the opposition has been successful so far, and it is growing. On Monday, 10 former high-ranking diplomatic and national security officials; nearly 100 Silicon Valley tech companies; more than 280 law professors; a coalition of 16 state or district attorneys general, including those from D.C., Maryland and Virginia; and a host of civil liberties and other organizations formally lent their support to the legal bid to block Trump's order.

While it is not unusual for outside parties to weigh in on legal cases of such public interest, the breadth and depth of those lining up behind Washington and Minnesota is notable.

Former secretaries of state John F. Kerry and Madeleine Albright, along with former CIA director Leon Panetta, former CIA and National Security Agency Director Michael Hayden and other former top national security officials, attached their names to an affidavit declaring there was "no national security purpose" for a complete barring of people from the seven affected

countries.

"Since September 11, 2001, not a single terrorist attack in the United States has been perpetrated by aliens from the countries named in the Order," the group declared. "Very few attacks on U.S. soil since September 11, 2001 have been traced to foreign nationals at all."

[Travelers from Iran board flights to the United States following stay, attorney says]

Apple, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Netflix, Twitter, Uber and other companies asserted in a brief that Trump's order "hinders the ability of American companies to attract great talent; increases costs imposed on business; makes it more difficult for American firms to compete in the international marketplace; and gives global enterprises a new, significant incentive to build operations — and hire new employees — outside the United States."

And 16 attorneys general said, while their specific businesses and residents were different, "all stand

to face the concrete, immediate, and irreparable harms caused by the Executive Order."

Trump and his supporters have continued to press the case that the short-term stoppage on refugees and immigrants from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen is necessary for national security reasons. He said Monday, during remarks at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, that, "We need strong programs so that people that love us and want to love our country and will end up loving our country are allowed in, not people who want to destroy us and destroy our country."

On Twitter, he went so far as to suggest that if an attack were to happen, the judiciary would be to blame.

"Just cannot believe a judge would put our country in such peril," Trump wrote. "If something happens blame him and court system. People pouring in. Bad!"

[Trump lashes out at 'so-called judge' who temporarily blocked entry ban]

The president also dismissed as "fake news" polls showing opposition to the executive order and asserted that the public wants and needs border security and strong vetting.

Federal courts in New York, California and elsewhere already have blocked aspects of the ban from being implemented, although one federal judge in Massachusetts declared that he did not think that challengers had demonstrated that they had a high likelihood of success. The case before the 9th Circuit, though, is much broader than the others, because it stems from a federal judge's outright halting of the ban.

Robert Barnes, Brian Murphy and John Wagner contributed to this report.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Donald Trump's Administration Argues in Travel-Ban Appeal That Security At Risk

Devlin Barrett and Brent Kendall

Updated Feb. 6, 2017 11:27 p.m. ET

The Trump administration argued the president has broad authority to decide who can and can't enter the U.S. and that preventing him from doing so puts national security at risk, as it sought to persuade an appeals court to reinstate a travel ban.

The administration's filing to the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco sets the stage for oral arguments Tuesday afternoon, after which a ruling could be made at any time. The Justice Department is asking the appeals court to reverse a restraining order issued by a Seattle judge last week that blocked enforcement of President Donald Trump's executive order on immigration and refugees.

The case is the first major legal test of the Trump administration's agenda—one that could end up redefining how much power a president has in determining who can or can't enter the country.

"The potential national-security risks and harms" of allowing the judge's order to stand "cannot be undone," the government lawyers argued in Monday's new filing.

But the government filing also seems to suggest the appeals court could reach for a compromise and

allow entry of foreign citizens who had previously been admitted to the U.S. or wish to return.

The executive order Mr. Trump signed on Jan. 27 suspended entry to the U.S. for visitors from seven predominantly Muslim countries for at least 90 days. The administration argues the action was needed to keep terrorists from entering the U.S. The order also froze the entire U.S. refugee program for four months and indefinitely banned refugees from Syria.

Mr. Trump has defended the executive order, saying Sunday that the courts should be blamed if there is a terrorist attack. On Monday morning, he tweeted that any polling indicating the policy is unpopular is "fake news."

"Sorry, people want border security and extreme vetting," he said on Twitter.

In remarks Monday afternoon at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Fla., Mr. Trump said: "We will defeat radical Islamic terrorism, and we will not allow it to take root in our country."

He then referred to his policy but didn't mention the legal battle: "We need strong programs so that people that love us and want to love our country and will end up loving our country are allowed in, not people who want to destroy us and destroy our country."

The court clash poses an unusually direct test of presidential powers and the courts' ability to limit them.

The president has broad powers when it comes to immigration, as well as to issues he deems important to national security. The Constitution forbids the government to discriminate on the basis of religion, so if the courts ultimately conclude the executive order does that, they could strike it down—but they could also rule on narrower grounds.

Rarely does this sort of judicial conflict arise so early in a presidency. Mr. Trump issued the directive within days of taking office through an executive order, rather than following a lengthy internal review process. Raising the stakes, he has attacked Judge James Robart, the Seattle judge who issued the restraining order against the government on Friday and blocked enforcement of the new rules, at least temporarily.

Protesters who objected the new rules massed at major city airports once it went into effect, and officials have said some 60,000 visa-holders were affected by the move.

Opponents of the ban argue it is discriminatory, while the White House has denied any discrimination, saying it is entirely lawful and within the president's authority to protect the country from

terrorist attack. The case was brought by the state of Washington and was joined by the state of Minnesota.

Lawyers for the two states, in a court brief filed early Monday, argued that the ban stripped tax revenue from the state, interfered with its businesses, separated families and stranded some college faculty and students abroad.

Justice Department lawyers called Washington's alleged injuries "hypothetical and speculative" in papers filed over the weekend. The real harm, the government lawyers said, lay in suspending the ban and risking the security of the country.

The Ninth U.S. Circuit judges have a narrow role at this early point in the case, legal experts said. They may later wade through the merits of the legal claims, but for now they must consider whether Judge Robart abused his discretion when he ruled to freeze the directive.

Either side could appeal any action by the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court, asking the Supreme Court to intervene. But that may prolong the legal limbo, potentially for months.

Given the current 4-4 split on the Supreme Court between liberal-leaning and conservative-leaning justices, it is possible that the losing side at the Ninth U.S. Circuit won't be able to muster the support needed among the justices for high-

court intervention. An emergency stay of the lower court ruling by the Supreme Court would require agreement from five justices. A Supreme Court tie vote would leave the Ninth U.S. Circuit decision in place.

The Trump administration says it is likely to win the appeal because the state of Washington "has no basis" for challenging the denial of visas or entry to foreigners and has pointed to no legal defect in the executive order.

Similar arguments persuaded a federal district court in Boston, which on Friday refused to extend a

restraining order against Mr. Trump's temporary travel ban.

The states in their brief said the Trump administration's national-security claims were unsupported, citing a written declaration to the court on Monday by former Secretary of State John Kerry, former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and eight other former senior national-security officials, who served mostly in Democratic administrations.

Several friend-of-the-court briefs were submitted in support of the challengers on Sunday and Monday, including one filed by a

group of 97 businesses, mostly technology companies including Apple Inc., Facebook Inc., Alphabet Inc.'s Google, Intel Corp. and Microsoft Corp. Other organizations filing in support of the challenge included the American Civil Liberties Union, and HIAS, a refugee protection agency.

Friday's restraining order let travel resume from the affected countries, and as many as 50 stranded travelers have planned flights into San Francisco over the next few days, said Julia Wilson, executive officer of the California nonprofit

OneJustice, which provides free legal assistance.

"Our advice has been for them to get on planes as quickly as possible," Ms. Wilson said.

Families from Yemen, one of the affected countries, were expected to arrive at Dulles airport outside Washington, D.C., on Monday, their lawyers said.

—Aruna Viswanatha contributed to this article.

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The New York Times Justice Department Urges Appeals Court to Reinstate Trump's Travel Ban

Adam Liptak

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department on Monday evening urged a federal appeals court to reinstate President Trump's targeted travel ban, saying immediate action was needed to ensure the nation's safety.

The administration's brief was the last in a series of urgent pleas to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, in San Francisco, which is now set to rule on the most ambitious and disruptive initiative of Mr. Trump's young presidency. The ruling will almost certainly be followed by an appeal to the Supreme Court.

The court scheduled an hourlong oral argument for Tuesday. That gives at least another day of reprieve to foreign visitors from seven predominantly Muslim countries, as well as other immigrants, who initially were blocked from entering the United States by Mr. Trump's order.

The administration's brief largely tracked its earlier arguments that dismissing the ban outright would threaten national security and disregard presidential authority. But it also asked the appeals court, at a minimum, to reinstate at least part of Mr. Trump's order — appearing to acknowledge the possibility that the government's case might not be successful.

"At most," the brief said, the court order blocking the ban should be limited to "previously admitted aliens who are temporarily abroad now or who wish to travel and return to the United States in the future." That would allow the federal government to block people who have never visited the United States.

On Monday, Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, said the

administration stood ready to reinstate the entire ban. "Once we win the case, it will go right back into action," he said.

Later on Monday night, Mr. Trump called threats "from radical Islamic terrorism is very real."

"Courts must act fast!" Mr. Trump said on Twitter.

Trial judges around the country have blocked aspects of Mr. Trump's executive order, which suspended travel from the seven countries and limited the nation's refugee program, but none of those cases have reached an appeals court. And none of the lower-court rulings were as broad as the one under review in the case, *State of Washington v. Trump*.

The Ninth Circuit scheduled the oral argument in the case for Tuesday at 3 p.m. Pacific time. It is to take place by telephone, and the court said it would be live-streamed on its website. Holding an oral argument by telephone in a major case is unusual.

The case will be heard by Judge William C. Canby Jr., appointed by President Jimmy Carter; Judge Michelle T. Friedland, appointed by President Barack Obama; and Judge Richard R. Clifton, appointed by President George W. Bush.

At issue is the earlier ruling, by Judge James L. Robart, a federal judge in Seattle, that blocked the key parts of Mr. Trump's executive order. Judge Robart's ruling allowed immigrants and travelers who had been barred from entry to come to the United States, and it inspired a harsh attack from Mr. Trump, who accused the judge of endangering national security.

On Saturday, the administration asked the Ninth Circuit for an immediate administrative stay of

Judge Robart's ruling without hearing from the plaintiffs, the States of Washington and Minnesota. The court declined, instead asking for more briefs.

Opponents of Mr. Trump's targeted travel ban made three kinds of arguments in their submissions to the appeals court, saying that the ban is unlawful, that it represents bad national-security policy, and that it is a threat to the nation's economy.

A brief from Washington and Minnesota, filed early Monday morning, said that "President Trump unleashed chaos by signing the executive order."

Fifteen states and the District of Columbia — including New York, California, Massachusetts and Virginia — filed a supporting brief to argue that allowing the ban to stand would "cause harm to the states, including to state institutions such as public universities, to the businesses that sustain our economies, and to our residents."

In a brief filed Saturday, the Trump administration argued that Judge Robart's order would cause irreparable harm to national security.

In response, lawyers for Washington and Minnesota said that was not plausible, because it would mean the nation had long been suffering "some unspecified, ongoing irreparable harm."

"That makes no sense," the brief said. "As this court has held, preserving the status quo against sudden disruption is often in the interest of all parties."

On Monday, the Trump administration responded that the states were asking the courts "to take the extraordinary step of second-guessing a formal national-

security judgment made by the president himself pursuant to broad grants of statutory authority."

In its earlier brief, the Trump administration urged the Ninth Circuit to reject arguments based on religious discrimination, even though Mr. Trump has said he meant to favor Christian refugees. Judicial consideration of the president's motives, the administration's brief said, would violate the separation of powers.

The states responded that "courts have both the right and the duty to examine defendants' true motives."

They added that the administration had taken "a dizzying number of positions" on whether the executive order applied to permanent residents holding green cards. The order itself appears to cover such people, but the administration has said it will not enforce that part of the order.

Questions about permanent residents are not moot, the states' brief said, as the administration could again change positions.

Several former diplomatic and national security officials filed a declaration making a second kind of argument. "We view the order as one that ultimately undermines the national security of the United States, rather than making us safer," it said. "In our professional opinion, this order cannot be justified on national security or foreign policy grounds."

The officials filing the declaration included John Kerry, a secretary of state under Mr. Obama; Madeleine K. Albright, who held the same position under President Bill Clinton; Susan E. Rice, Mr. Obama's national security adviser; and Leon E. Panetta, secretary of defense and director of the C.I.A. under Mr. Obama.

Mr. Trump's order, the officials said, would endanger American troops and intelligence sources, disrupt counterterrorism and law enforcement efforts, damage the economy and have "a devastating humanitarian impact."

"And apart from all of these concerns," the former officials said, "the order offends our nation's laws and values."

The third front in the legal battle against Mr. Trump's order was opened by the technology industry and other businesses.

Almost 100 companies, including Apple, Facebook and Google, urged the Ninth Circuit to continue to block the order, saying it "harms the competitiveness of U.S. companies."

The "instability and uncertainty" created by the order, the brief said,

"will make it far more difficult and expensive for U.S. companies to hire some of the world's best talent — and impede them from competing in the global marketplace."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Joe Palazzolo

Updated Feb. 6, 2017 7:52 p.m. ET

All eyes are on a federal appeals court in San Francisco as it weighs President Donald Trump's executive order on immigration and refugees.

But the decision facing the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals is just the beginning of what could be a long road, perhaps to the U.S. Supreme Court and back.

The Ninth Circuit judges have a narrow role at this early point in case, legal experts said. They may later wade through the merits of the legal claims, but for now they must consider whether U.S. District Judge James Robart in Seattle abused his discretion when he issued an order Friday freezing Mr. Trump's directive.

The Ninth Circuit "is not supposed to put itself in a lower court judge's shoes and say, 'If I were that judge, would I have issued that temporary restraining order?'" said Adam N. Steinman, a law professor at University of Alabama School of Law and an expert in civil procedure.

"It's supposed to give some deference to the lower court," he said.

What the Appeals Court Must Consider on President Trump's Immigration Order

Mr. Trump's executive order suspended entry to the U.S. for visitors from seven countries for at least 90 days and halted the admission of refugees for four months.

Lawyers for Washington state said in a court brief filed Sunday that the travel ban stripped the state of tax revenue, interfered with its businesses, separated families and stranded some college faculty and students abroad.

Justice Department lawyers called Washington's alleged injuries "hypothetical and speculative" in court papers filed over the weekend.

In reviewing Judge Robart's order, the Ninth Circuit panel will look at whether the federal government would suffer irreparable injury if Judge Robart's order remains in effect and whether it has demonstrated a good chance of winning on the merits of its case, legal experts said.

The Trump administration says it is likely to win because the state of Washington has no basis for challenging the denial of visas or entry to foreigners and has pointed to no legal defect in Mr. Trump's executive order.

Similar arguments persuaded a federal-district court in Boston,

which on Friday refused to extend a restraining order against Mr. Trump's temporary travel ban.

In rendering that decision, U.S. District Judge Nathaniel M. Gorton wrote that he didn't want to "encroach upon the 'delicate policy judgment' inherent in immigration decisions."

Judge Robart, however, ruled that Washington state and others challenging the executive order showed they were likely to win on their claims that the order violates U.S. Constitution's guarantee of due process and discriminates on the basis of religion.

After a pit stop in the Ninth Circuit, the case could head up the U.S. Supreme Court or back down to Judge Robart's court, or both. A ruling on the merits of the case could still be months away.

The Ninth Circuit could decide it is too early to review Judge Robart's temporary restraining order, which the Trump administration has described as a "nationwide injunction."

The phrasing is no accident. Courts generally issue temporary restraining orders in emergency situations and limit their duration, while injunctions are more considered.

As a result, parties typically can't appeal temporary restraining orders, even though they have the same practical effect as injunctions—forcing one party to do something or to stop doing something.

The Ninth Circuit could preserve Judge Robart's injunction, which would send the case back to his court for another hearing. Or the appeals court could dissolve it, restarting Mr. Trump's temporary travel ban while the parties continue their legal dispute in Judge Robart's court.

Following the decision, the losing side could ask a larger Ninth Circuit panel to review the three-judge decision or seek review from the U.S. Supreme Court.

Potentially complicating matters: the Supreme Court is currently working without a ninth justice to cast a theoretical tiebreaking vote, if it came to that.

While the Seattle case is currently the front-runner, legal experts say another case could emerge and take it over.

—Nicole Hong contributed to this article.

Write to Joe Palazzolo at joe.palazzolo@wsj.com

The New York Times

Jun Cen

When President Trump doesn't get what he wants, he tends to look for someone to blame — crooked pollsters, fraudulent voters, lying journalists. Anyone who questions him or his actions becomes his foe.

Over the past few days, he's added an entire branch of the federal government to his enemies list.

On Friday, a federal judge in Seattle, James Robart, blocked Mr. Trump's executive order barring entry to refugees and immigrants from seven predominantly Muslim nations. The next day the president

Editorial : President Trump's Real Fear: The Courts

The Editorial Board

mocked Judge Robart, a George W. Bush appointee, in a statement on Twitter as a "so-called judge" who had made a "ridiculous" ruling.

That was bad enough, but on Sunday, Mr. Trump's taunts became more chilling. "Just cannot believe a judge would put our country in such peril," he tweeted. "If something happens blame him and court system. People pouring in. Bad!"

Where to begin? In the same week that he announced his nominee for the Supreme Court, the president of the United States pre-emptively accused not only a judge, but the whole judicial branch — the most dependable check on his power —

of abetting the murder of Americans by terrorists. It's reasonable to wonder whether Mr. Trump is anticipating a way to blame meddling courts for any future attack.

There was, in fact, a terrorist attack shortly after Mr. Trump issued his immigration order: a white supremacist, officials say, armed himself with an assault rifle and stormed a mosque in Quebec City, slaughtering six Muslims during their prayers. Mr. Trump has not said a word about that massacre — although he was quick to tell America on Twitter to "get smart" when, a few days later, an Egyptian man wielding a knife attacked a

military patrol in Paris, injuring one soldier.

In the dark world that Mr. Trump and his top adviser, Stephen Bannon, inhabit, getting "smart" means shutting down immigration from countries that have not been responsible for a single attack in the United States in more than two decades. As multiple national security experts have said, the order would, if anything, increase the terrorism threat to Americans. And contrary to Mr. Trump's claim, no one is "pouring in" to America. Refugees and other immigrants already undergo a thorough, multilayered vetting process that can take up to two years.

But Mr. Trump's threats are based on fear, not rationality, which is the realm of the courts.

Judge Robart is not the first judge Mr. Trump has smeared. During the presidential campaign last year, he pursued bigoted attacks on a federal judge presiding over a class-action fraud lawsuit against his so-called Trump University. The judge, Gonzalo Curiel, could not be impartial, Mr.



gtonpostopinions

AS THE Trump administration fought in court to revive its temporary ban on entry by refugees as well as travelers from seven majority-Muslim countries, the president persisted in perversely suggesting that the judicial branch will be responsible for any terrorist attack carried out by what he portrayed as the violent hordes clamoring to enter the country.

By conflating a dangerous fiction about immigrants with blatant disrespect for an equal branch of government, President Trump fans the xenophobic flames he did so much to ignite during the presidential campaign. "Just cannot believe a judge would put our country in such peril," he tweeted over the weekend, after a ruling by U.S. District Judge James L. Robart in Seattle, who was nominated to the court by President George W. Bush. "If something happens blame him and court system. People pouring in. Bad!"



TODAY

In Grand Rapids, Mich., on Feb. 5, 2017. (Photo: Daytona Niles, AP)

President Trump stands a reasonably good chance of winning his appeal and getting his entry ban on citizens of seven Muslim-majority nations reinstated.

While his executive order is both controversial and counterproductive, presidents have considerable leeway on immigration matters granted by law and the Constitution.

If he does lose, however, the place he should look for answers is in the mirror.

To be sure, this is a place he probably looks quite often. But this time he should do so in a different, more critical light, as no one has

Trump claimed, because he "happens to be, we believe, Mexican," and Mr. Trump had promised to build a border wall and deport millions of undocumented Mexican immigrants. (Judge Curiel was born in Indiana, and Mr. Trump settled the lawsuit in November for \$25 million.)

Coming from a candidate, this was merely outrageous; coming from the president, it is a threat to the rule of

law. Judges can now assume that if they disagree with him, they will face his wrath — and perhaps that of his millions of Twitter followers.

Mr. Trump's repeated attacks on the judiciary are all the more ominous given his efforts to intimidate and undermine the news media and Congress's willingness to neutralize itself, rather than hold him to account.

Today, at least, the new administration is following the rules and appealing Judge Robart's decision to the federal appeals court. But tomorrow Mr. Trump may decide — out of anger at a ruling or sheer spite at a judge — that he doesn't need to obey a court order. Who will stop him then?

Editorial : Refugees are part of America's fabric and its promise

<https://www.facebook.com/washingtonpostopinions>

The president's calumny and travel ban have been denounced by an array of diplomatic and national security experts, not least former secretaries of state John F. Kerry and Madeleine Albright, who made the point, in a court filing, that the order would endanger U.S. troops and boost the Islamic State's recruitment efforts.

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Amid the furor, it is critical to remember that in recent decades the United States has admitted hundreds of thousands of refugees from the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Vietnam, Iraq, Burma and elsewhere — never with ironclad assurances that those immigrants would love America or its values, though in many cases they clearly did.

Mr. Trump and his chief strategist, Stephen K. Bannon, pledge

"extreme vetting" of new immigrants, especially refugees, which would somehow assure their patriotism and adherence to U.S. law as a condition of admission to this country.

It makes sense to scrutinize immigrants, particularly those from terrorism-prone regions, which is exactly what the current rigorous process does by subjecting applicants to multiple security, biometric, document and data checks by an alphabet soup of U.S. agencies. For refugees, the screening is painstaking, often lasting up to two years and involving face-to-face interviews in which factual discrepancies can mean rejection. Even tighter screening may be possible, particularly of social media accounts, although aliases, multiple languages and sarcasm could be pitfalls.

Even if the courts uphold its actions, it is critical that the administration not use the inevitable imperfections of any vetting process as a pretext to ban refugees for more than the 120-day period covered by the Jan.

27 order. Already, Mr. Trump has slashed the current fiscal-year target for refugee admissions to 50,000, from 110,000.

That's a trickle when measured against the United States' traditional role as a beacon to those fleeing violence and tyranny, and against global demand. The United Nations counts some 16 million refugees (excluding Palestinians); more than half are children. By far the largest number, nearly 5 million, are Syrians, who are barred indefinitely under Mr. Trump's order.

"These are not Jeffersonian democrats," sneered Mr. Bannon, referring to Muslim immigrants who entered Europe. In 2015, he asked, "Why even let 'em in?"

Similar remarks were made a century ago about immigrants from Ireland, Italy, Germany and Eastern Europe, then widely seen as unschooled, unwashed and, often, violent. No one would ask now, "Why did we even let 'em in?"

Editorial : Judicial independence could trump Trump

The Editorial Board, USA

undermined his case as much as he has.

There's no doubt that the executive order was rushed. Chaotic implementation gave the appearance of knee-jerk bigotry rather than the efficient measured implementation of the rule of law.

Such bumbling wouldn't surprise any experienced manager. Trump didn't allow time for Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly to ensure smooth implementation of the order. And he didn't wait for his attorney general to be approved by the Senate to handle the predictable legal objections that such a sweeping move was sure to inspire.

And his repeated attacks on judges — most recently James Robart, who blocked his travel ban — give courts all the more reason not to give his administration's amateur exercise of presidential power the

benefit of the doubt it's normally due.

Judges are not vain per se. But they will sense a need to restrain a president who is unglued, out of control or insufficiently respectful of the independence and co-equal status of the judiciary.

Trump shows signs of all three. His rant of a tweet calling Robart a "so-called judge," coming after a racially tinged broadside against another judge last summer, will be hard for members of the bench to stomach. This could be important for the travel ban, but also for numerous issues going forward.

Presidential administrations are at the mercy of the courts. The Obama administration, for example, begged the Supreme Court to support the Affordable Care Act (which it did) and his executive order granting deportation relief (which it did not). It also asked the court to strike

down state laws, most notably those banning same-sex marriage (which it did).

In all, President Obama went before the Supreme Court 175 times. President George W. Bush did so 148 times, President Clinton 235 times, President George H.W. Bush 130 times and President Reagan 349 times. With Trump's high-energy approach to governance, there's little doubt he will follow.

Beyond the question of his best legal strategy is the more important issue of whether he is fulfilling his obligations to the American people and to the Constitution.

Trump took an oath to preserve, protect and defend a sacred document that sets the judiciary as the final arbiter of law. He then belittled a member of that very same judiciary.

He is running a government (or trying to at least) while also

undermining public confidence in it. That might be a good way to generate headlines and energize his most fervid supporters. It is not the way to rally broad support for his policies among the American public or respect for those policies from Democratic leaders abroad.

Whatever the outcome for the travel ban at the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, the legal battle is far from over. Even if the executive order is upheld in court, Trump's sloppy management and disdainful treatment of the judiciary have already cost the administration and

the American people more than they could hope to gain.

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NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

Editorial : Robart's Renegade Ruling

The old saw that "bad facts make bad law" is supposed to be operative only when a court is in a position of making law — i.e., deciding a vexing legal question in the absence of firm guidance from a statute or precedent. That is not the situation, however, in the matter of President Trump's temporary ban on entry into the U.S. by refugees and aliens from seven Muslim-majority countries. Federal district judge James Robart of Seattle was not on tabula rasa when he issued a temporary restraining order suspending the ban. He was acting in defiance of the law.

Trump's executive order is patently lawful. In our system, border security is a plenary power of the political branches; the judiciary has almost no authority over it. Moreover, not only is a president at the height of his constitutional power in acting against foreign threats to national security; Congress, which has indisputable authority to prescribe qualifications for aliens seeking to enter the country, has further vested the president with sweeping discretion to impose temporary bans. The controlling provision of federal immigration law, Section 1182(f), could scarcely be clearer:

Whenever the President finds that the entry of any aliens or of any class of aliens into the United States would be detrimental to the interests of the United States, he may by proclamation, and for such period as he shall deem necessary, suspend the entry of all aliens or any class of aliens as immigrants or nonimmigrants, or impose on the entry of aliens any restrictions he may deem to be appropriate.

Trump's executive order explicitly relies on this statute and tracks its language. The statute does not invite judicial second-guessing of his judgment. The claim that the executive order imposes an unconstitutional "Muslim ban" is specious. No matter how foolish such a policy would be, it is anything but clear that the

Constitution would prohibit a categorical ban on Muslim aliens — or, indeed, on all aliens. And even so, Trump has not come close to doing such a thing.

The ban applies to refugees and aliens from seven Muslim-majority countries, affecting less than 15 percent of the world's Muslim population. The seven countries — Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, and Sudan — were not chosen because they are Islamic. The exclusion is expressly rooted in an Obama-era law, now codified in Section 1187(a) of the immigration law, that permits the federal government to refuse visas to aliens who cannot be realistically vetted for security risks because their native countries are either sponsors of anti-American terrorism (as is the case with Iran) or have been left with dysfunctional or nonfunctional governments because of war.

Even as to the seven cited countries, the ban is only temporary (90 days). Similarly, the refugee ban is anticipated to be temporary (120 days) — although for Syrian refugees there is no definitive limit because U.S. security agencies have conceded that vetting them is extraordinarily difficult. The point is not to keep Muslims out; it is to set up a reliable screening system that will deny visas to persons who threaten national security. Significantly, the order empowers the secretaries of state and homeland security to make exceptions on a case-by-case basis (e.g., for aliens who have helped our armed forces overseas). In addition, it caps refugee admissions at 50,000 for this year, which is comfortably within historical levels — including during several of the Obama years.

Nevertheless, acting at the behest of two states led by Democratic governors, Washington and Minnesota, Judge Robart (an appointee of President George W. Bush's) suspended Trump's order. His ruling is judicial policymaking masquerading as law: The judge believes that the executive order

provides more anxiety for aliens and hardship for the administration of state universities than security for the United States. That Robart tacitly realizes that this call is not his to make is evident from his ruling's failure to mention, much less address, the legal authority cited by the president. Nor does Robart explain how he figures the states should prevail on the merits, notwithstanding that this is a prerequisite to the issuance of a temporary restraining order.

This decision should be an easy one to overturn, even for the notoriously liberal Ninth Circuit. Yet, the Trump administration's self-inflicted wounds have helped its opposition muddy the waters. The order, signed on a Friday night, was immediately put into effect, with no time for agencies to prepare or for travelers holding formerly valid visas to change their plans. The result was a weekend of confusion and chaos. The relevant Cabinet officials, Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, reportedly had minimal involvement in the policymaking process, even though they are principally responsible for enforcing the president's order and explaining it to the public; apparently, they were embroiled in a dispute with the White House political team over the ban's application to lawful permanent residents (LPRs), who are already subject to extensive vetting and considered the legal equivalent of citizens for most purposes. Kelly was eventually authorized to waive restrictions against LPRs and others with lawful visas, but not before the media characterized the administration's performance as amateur hour driven by anti-Muslim bias.

Judge Robart's ruling is judicial policymaking masquerading as law.

When Robart made his ruling, Trump did less than nothing to call attention to its baselessness. He launched a Twitter attack on the "so-called judge" who issued it and

on "the court system" — a fit of unpresidential pique that will not go unnoticed by the appellate court. Even though the administration, notwithstanding its objections, immediately complied with Robart's ruling, Trump ensured that the weekend's big story was the president's seeming undermining of judicial legitimacy.

The appellate court should overrule Robart, but it has an out: Generally, temporary restraining orders cannot be appealed; review must await the entry of a permanent injunction. That principle should not control in this case: Robart did not put an end date on his "temporary" injunction, so treating it like one would elevate form over substance. He also took the unusual step of making the suspension nationwide, even though his jurisdiction is generally limited to the greater Seattle area and the case involves just two of the 50 states. Given that the restraining order suspends government policy in an area where there is almost no legitimate judicial role, it cries out for immediate appellate review. But the Ninth Circuit could use the nominally temporary nature of the injunction to sidestep a decision, returning the case to Robart for further, drawn-out proceedings.

Thus far, the Ninth Circuit has refused to grant the administration an immediate stay. It has, however, directed rapid briefing from the parties and could issue a decision in the next few days. The stakes are high. With only eight justices currently on the Supreme Court, and all four liberals hardwired to endorse "progressive" results, the administration must anticipate a 4–4 deadlock there at best. If that were to happen, the Ninth Circuit's decision would stand.

The president's executive order is entirely lawful, and a dutiful judiciary would make that clear. Donald Trump can help the Ninth Circuit come to the right decision by letting his lawyers, rather than his Twitter account, do the arguing.

POLITICO Trump's White House tries to rehab its Hill outreach

By Josh Dawsey,

Shane Goldmacher, Eli Stokols and Matthew Nussbaum

Kellyanne Conway, one of President Donald Trump's most prominent aides, trekked to Capitol Hill Monday morning on a diplomatic mission — to reassure the 100 or so Senate GOP communications staffers that Trump has no intention of acting unilaterally with a pen and a phone, while neglecting Congress.

Instead, a number of aides were left wondering if the White House is truly hearing their concerns.

Story Continued Below

After touting last week's smooth rollout of Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch, Conway faced questions about the tens of thousands of calls and emails that GOP senators have received about education secretary nominee Betsy DeVos, according to three sources who attended the meeting.

The sources said Conway and Boris Epshteyn, who leads Trump's surrogate operation and also attended the meeting, appeared dismissive of their worries and struggled to give satisfactory answers.

A senior White House official disputed that account, saying Conway received an ovation and that Conway's meeting was friendly and brief — "maybe 12 or 15 minutes." But some of the communications staffers were left with a distinctly different impression.

"We said it would be nice to get some cover on this because we're taking the heat on our own," said the communications director for one Republican senator. "But there was radio silence."

If Trump wants to accomplish his first-year goals, namely the overhaul of the tax code and repeal of Barack Obama's health care law, he's going to need the help of Congress, and the White House team is now focusing on building out a legislative shop that, in the early going, has been understaffed and overextended.

A senior White House official said there was an effort to have more "consistent communication" with Capitol Hill, an effort that has been noted by senior GOP aides. Several top congressional leaders say they now at least know when some executive orders are being discussed, and Trump has taken to frequent calls with House Speaker Paul Ryan.

The Trump team's operation is expected to grow to as many as 15 people and be overseen by Rick Dearborn, Trump's deputy chief of staff and a former chief of staff to Sen. Jeff Sessions, and managed by Marc Short, an adviser to Vice President Mike Pence and a former chief of staff in both the House and Senate.

"Like anything else, things go at a pace," said Rep. Chris Collins (R-N.Y.), who is close with Trump. "He did not come into office with an entourage. They are filling these jobs as fast as they can."

The hires are meant to alleviate tensions that have developed over the first two weeks during which congressional aides and members say they've had little contact with the White House — and little input into the policies. And some senior GOP lawmakers are already growing tired of being forced to address and defend the president's controversial, and sometimes false, statements. His attack on a federal judge on Saturday may, for instance, complicate the upcoming confirmation hearings of Gorsuch, these people fear.

Among the early hires is Paul Teller, a former chief of staff to Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and before that the longtime executive director of the Republican Study Committee, the largely conservative group in the House.

Teller will be working with Ben Howard, most recently the floor director for House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, who worked for Pence when he was in House leadership and, briefly, in the legislative affairs shop of President George W. Bush. Another former McCarthy aide, Tim Pataki, who more recently has worked for the Energy and Commerce Committee, is expected to join the legislative affairs operation, as is Cindy Simms of the House Homeland Security Committee. Trump's team is also hiring Jonathan Hiler, who previously worked with Pence, Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-Texas) and Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.).

The Senate side of the legislative affairs team is still coming together, the senior White House official said. Another White House official said the team is intent on becoming a "serious operation with people who have relationships on Capitol Hill."

They're trying to collect aides with connections on both sides of the Capitol and those with ties among

both the tea party hard-liners and establishment Republican leaders.

The early going, however, has not been smooth, as senior Republicans on the Hill felt blindsided by Trump's executive order on immigration and refugees and frustrated by the lack of any text or talking points to defend the action.

Trump's White House has dispatched Epshteyn for a series of meetings with top Capitol Hill staffers. The meetings have produced uneven results.

In one recent meeting, Epshteyn faced difficult questions about the immigration ban — and why Capitol Hill leaders weren't consulted on the text. In another meeting, he ended it abruptly after "maybe five minutes," a source said. His appearance has sparked jokes on the Hill, with aides "trying to figure out who this guy is, and why he's speaking for them," according to one senior GOP aide. Epshteyn went back to the House Monday afternoon.

During Monday's morning meeting, Conway, multiple sources said, shrugged off the concerns from thousands of people jamming phone lines critical of Trump's Cabinet nominees, explaining that she's more worried about her own "RPI" or "Real Person Impact" meter.

"She basically said the people jamming up the phones don't matter to this White House," the communications director continued. "That this administration just cares about what matters to 'real people.'"

A senior White House official, however, said Conway was noting that they expected DeVos to pass with Pence's vote, calling it a "historic moment" and that the president remained supportive of DeVos.

The meeting, which is a weekly gathering and typically lasts 15-20 minutes, ended abruptly moments later after another staffer asked Conway if she'd seen "Saturday Night Live's" lampooning of White House press secretary Sean Spicer over the weekend. Asked if she'd laughed at the portrayal, Conway's face "turned to stone," according to another source in the room. A senior White House official said Conway didn't comment on the Spicer video but that her face didn't turn to stone.

"They definitely did not find it funny," the source said. "And then they walked out."

There are also concerns that simply bringing in more bodies for Hill outreach will be enough, especially if staffers don't have specific lines of responsibility.

"They just don't have a lot of people. You need to have a line in to Dearborn or Short or have relationships with them," said one House Republican chief of staff. "I think they're trying to figure it out, but it takes a while."

Another senior GOP aide said: "They are trying to keep us in the loop more, but it's still sometimes hit and miss. We at least hear that they might do an executive order now."

Republicans, at least, are getting meetings. So far, Democrats, stuck in the minority in both chambers, have been mostly ignored.

In the Senate, there was once talk that Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and Trump could be deal-makers together. Instead, Trump has viciously mocked Schumer on Twitter and not spoken to him outside of their meetings at the White House, sources say.

"They aren't working on anything bipartisan, so we don't really have a reason to talk with them," said one senior Democratic aide.

Last week, on an internal listserv for House legislative directors, Democratic staffers made fun of the inability to reach anyone on the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue. "I don't think they knew they had to hire a legislative affairs staff. Maybe he can sign another EO appointing staff?" wrote Matthew Herrmann, chief of staff to Rep. Madeleine Bordallo (D-Guam).

On a thread about a lawmaker wanting to send a letter to the White House, Alejandro Renteria, a legislative director for freshman California Rep. Lou Correa, a moderate Democrat, chimed in, "A White House representative told me they do not have staff for this purpose and recommended to send the letter via snail mail."

Trent Lott, the former Senate majority leader, said staffers like Dearborn, who worked for him and has deep ties in Congress, will improve relationships, but there are growing pains. Some of the staffers are trying to reconcile Trump's controversial positions on trade and other issues with Republican orthodoxy.

"They've been a little bit behind the curve because Trump has been all cylinders running," he said.



Borger : Does Trump's 'management by conflict' equal chaos?

Gloria Borger, CNN Chief Political Analyst

Story highlights

- Gloria Borger: Trump's White House is a combustible combination
- It's a staff searching for defined roles and a deliberative policy process and a president who likes to freelance, she says

(CNN)When Abraham Lincoln envisaged a productive "team of rivals," the Trumpian incarnation is probably not what he had in mind.

Donald Trump's version of the Lincoln model: less team and more rivals. "He manages by conflict," says one source close to the White House who is familiar with Trump's management style. "And in the end, if there's conflict, he likes it because he can steer the point of view himself."

In business, it often worked. In the campaign, it clearly worked. But inside the new White House — and with a new team of Cabinet members — not so much. It's a combustible combination: a staff searching for defined roles and a more deliberative policy process and a president who likes to freelance.

Poking Australia's Prime Minister and Mexico's President in the eye, issuing an executive action on immigration without reaching out to GOP leaders, is part of the new normal. So is a President who tweets furiously at whom, even deriding the federal judge who reversed his travel ban as a "so-called judge."

The staff is already spent, just two weeks in. At the President's direction they're trying to wrestle control of the policy process through the chief of staff, Reince Priebus, as first reported by CNN's Dana Bash. But the real staff problem may be trying to figure out how to deal with an often impetuous and off-script President they also aim to please. (See: Trump's generous comments on Putin's Russia.) "He just needs some managing," according to one source close to the White House. "It's not a healthy thing having nobody tell you the truth." Or worse yet, getting blind affirmation.

Home alone

Despite the flurry of controversy, sources who have spoken with the President say he's happy living in the White House. His wife, Melania, remains in New York, at least for now. The official line is that she will move to DC at the end of the school year, but sources caution that while

that is likely, it is not set in stone. In the meantime, daughter Ivanka accompanied Trump to Dover Air Force Base as the commander in chief paid his respects to a soldier killed in action, the first on his watch. It was a reminder that the first lady is not in town.

And that the President is literally home alone. "When you're there by yourself, you don't really settle into a regular family life, so it's easier to think — and govern — like it's still the campaign," worries one Trump ally. "And you grow isolated." So the new President lives upstairs by himself, keeps long hours, watches TV, and, of course, tweets. Then it's rinse and repeat.

But keeping the pace of a whirling dervish is exactly what Trump wanted and continues to crave, which is why executive orders have been so appealing, despite past GOP complaints that Barack Obama used them too much. He's thrilled with his Supreme Court pick, his multiple photo ops and with his congressional call to action on numerous fronts. "The American people wanted to see action," says one senior White House adviser. "And they got it." Sure, Trump was critical of the immigration order rollout and the communications shop in general, but he asked for early action — early "wins," one administration source says — and governing by signature seems to provide that.

The world is paying attention. So is the American public, but with negative reviews. In a CNN/ORC International Poll released Friday, Americans gave Trump the highest disapproval rating for any newly elected president since pollsters began tracking that data.

All of which raises the question: When making decisions, where does he get his advice? According to sources within and outside the White House, the President has set up a hydra-headed structure that needs work. After a rough start, staffers have recently gone out of their way to say they're working well together. But there's no denying history: Priebus, who chose Sean Spicer to be the administration's public voice, has had to make some adjustment. To begin with, the former chairman of the Republican National Committee is not used to saluting a boss. "Reince has never been a staffer," says one knowledgeable source. "Everybody is still trying to feel each other out."

And learning how to run a government has exposed fissures. "Reince should be the logical person, along with the vice president, to create a simpler path for information and decisions to flow," says one Trump ally, who

also cautions that, during the campaign, Priebus and Trump did not have a "perfect relationship."

Then again, who does? Consolidating trust and power for Priebus may be a tad easier after the immigration order fiasco and the President's designation of him as his chief conduit. Senior adviser Kellyanne Conway is likely to coordinate communications. She "has endeared herself to Trump by being the pit bull, by going out there and doing the unthinkable," says one source close to the White House. Of course, Conway's "Bowling Green massacre" mistake last week was a reminder that misstatements, when coming from a White House mouthpiece, are magnified.

What's missing

All of which leads to the missing ingredient in the West Wing: experience. The refrain that "he needs a Jim Baker (Ronald Reagan's ex-chief of staff)" is common among both Republicans and Democrats these days. A person Trump regards as a peer would go a long way toward focusing him on governing and away from campaign mode. The problem, says one ally, is that Trump thinks he is his own Jim Baker.

And, to state the obvious, Steve Bannon is no Jim Baker, nor does he want to be. After a smartly executed campaign, Chief White House Strategist Bannon no longer needs any introduction, especially after appearing on the cover of Time magazine, a perch previously reserved just for the President himself. If Trump sees himself as the leader of a movement, Bannon is the movement's architect. It's no secret he believes that real change comes through complete disruption.

His appointment, as a political adviser, to become a principal sitting on the President's National Security Council raised eyebrows, and ire. "It's unprecedented," says a former senior Obama national security adviser. "Steve Bannon is not the equivalent of the secretary of the defense. The President can get his political advice in another forum. It's dangerous and insulting to the rest of the national security team." Insulting, maybe, but the President doesn't care.

If Trump sees a forceful intellect in Bannon, the senior adviser also has a forceful ally: Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner. Kushner, who is 36 and married to Ivanka Trump, has no government experience, but became close to Bannon during the campaign. "Jared realizes that Bannon has the floor on explaining the administration's revolution,"

says one knowledgeable source. "And he may be able to help by taking some of the edges off."

But Kushner's portfolio is much larger than that: He's at the helm of a small group that wants to do nothing less than overhaul Washington's calcified bureaucracy. And Trump himself has said he wants his son-in-law to be at the center of negotiating Mideast peace, and Kushner hasn't been shy at getting that message out. "The fact that he tells everybody 'I'm the guy' shows bad judgment," says a former high-ranking Obama administration official. But he's the President's son-in-law, and becomes a first among equals, another tricky personnel matter.

In all of this, there is the question of the role of Vice President Mike Pence. He has made a point of sticking closely by the President these days, standing alongside him at multiple photo ops, taking the Presidential Daily Brief (even when Trump does not), serving as the President's liaison to Capitol Hill.

After the controversial immigration executive order, Pence played the role of sounding board at his old haunt in Congress. "On the one hand, we keep hearing publicly of complaints that Congress wasn't consulted," says one senior administration official. "But privately, we're hearing 'keep it up, things are great. There's more energy in our conference than ever before.'"

Pence, a relative newbie in Trumpworld, is sticking to his job description: making sure Cabinet members get confirmed, smoothing the way for the confirmation of Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch, trying to figure out the "repeal and replace Obamacare" conundrum. And most of all, not allowing any daylight between himself and the President.

There's a hope among both the President's detractors and allies that, with the confirmation of Gen. James Mattis at Defense, Gen. John Kelly at Homeland Security and former Exxon CEO Rex Tillerson at State, the circle of advice-givers will be broader and deeper, and powerful enough to keep the most aggressive advisers from wading onto their turf. On Tillerson's first full day as secretary of state, the White House released a statement saying that new Israeli settlements "may not be helpful" in achieving peace. And UN ambassador Nikki Haley delivered a stern warning to Russia on its aggression in Ukraine. Not the usual Trump messages.

Now all the White House has to do is figure out who is actually speaking for the President.

Conservative Republicans Double Down on Push to Repeal Obamacare

Kristina Peterson and Louise Radnofsky

Feb. 6, 2017 6:56 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Conservative Republicans, worried about growing voices within the party advising or accepting a slower pace for repealing the Affordable Care Act, are redoubling their push to speed the GOP's long-desired goal.

President Donald Trump on Sunday became the latest top Republican to sound cautious notes about the party's ability to rapidly repeal large swaths of the 2010 health law and enact its own vision. He told Fox News's Bill O'Reilly that "maybe it'll take until sometime into next year," saying repeal and replacement was "statutorily" difficult to accomplish quickly.

The remarks reflected the unforgiving congressional math hamstringing the Republican efforts. The party has a narrow 52-48 vote majority in the Senate, and a handful of centrist Senate Republicans have already demanded that the party have a replacement in hand for the health law, sometimes called Obamacare, before they vote to void it.

But the party's thin congressional margins can also be undone by conservative lawmakers, particularly in the House, where the right-leaning House Freedom Caucus represents a 40-strong contingent. Conservatives see sweeping away the law as an essential first step to

hammering out a far-reaching alternative.

Now they worry about losing momentum, angering the party's base and complicating plans for a tax overhaul, which most party leaders believe must happen after an ACA replacement.

"In order for Democrats to negotiate in earnest on a replacement plan, they have to understand that we're serious about repealing what we currently have," Rep. Mark Meadows (R., N.C.), chairman of the House Freedom Caucus, said in an interview Monday. "It is critically important we deliver on the promises we made to the American people."

Mr. Meadows said the Freedom Caucus planned to discuss Monday night whether to adopt an official stance in favor of immediate repeal of the law, which would require the support of 80% of their members.

That idea is supported by conservative groups like Heritage Action for America, which is already calling on the House to push forward with an aggressive repeal strategy they hope will force Senate Republicans to follow suit.

"House action is sort of imperative to get this kick-started and going," said Dan Holler, vice president of communications and government relations for Heritage Action. "I think the longer this drags on, the more people are starting to understand the chance of a repeal is slipping

away. Certainly it's becoming harder and harder with each passing day."

In the Senate, Republicans say they are working on fixing the health-law's failing components. "We will repair the damage that Obamacare has caused millions of Americans," Sen. Lamar Alexander (R., Tenn.) wrote in a statement Sunday. "We will do that by replacing Obamacare with better, lower-cost alternatives and repealing the parts of Obamacare that have caused the damage."

Conservatives fret that it only gets harder for a new Congress to take sweeping actions as the momentum of their election fades and a new election approaches, causing lawmakers to worry more about the political consequences of taking action.

Rep. Jim Jordan (R., Ohio), another conservative leader, said conservatives are alarmed about the talk from centrist Republicans of stopping short of a full repeal of the ACA. "That causes greater concern," he said.

Mr. Jordan said House conservatives would continue to push for legislation that at a minimum does as much as a bill passed in early 2016 that would have repealed big chunks of the health law but was vetoed by then-President Barack Obama.

"We should at least be able to put on President Trump's desk what we

put on President Obama's desk," Mr. Jordan said.

A White House spokesman said Monday that Mr. Trump remains "fully committed to repealing and replacing Obamacare with a healthcare system that benefits all Americans." He blamed Senate Democrats for delaying the process by holding up a confirmation of Georgia Rep. Tom Price to head the Department of Health and Human Services.

Mr. Trump signed an executive order on Inauguration Day urging agency heads such as Mr. Price to take actions to unwind parts of the health law and force Congress to act, though that move would come with political risks of its own.

Republicans' delay in repealing and overhauling the health-care law affects their ability to complete other items. For instance, GOP plans to overhaul the tax code are likely to stall if health-care negotiations drag on.

That is because Republicans plan to use a particular legislative maneuver tied to the budget, allowing them to pass legislation with a simple majority instead of 60 votes, first to repeal the health-care law and then overhaul the tax code.

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From 'Repeal' to 'Repair': Campaign Talk on Health Law Meets Reality

Michael D. Shear and Robert Pear

WASHINGTON — Asked at a confirmation hearing two weeks ago if he was working with President Trump on a secret plan to replace the Affordable Care Act, Representative Tom Price, Mr. Trump's nominee for secretary of health and human services, smiled broadly and answered: "It's true that he said that, yes."

The committee room, filled with health care lobbyists, consumer advocates and others with a vital stake in the future of the health care law, erupted with knowing laughter at Mr. Price's careful formulation. For those following the issue closely, it has been an open secret that the fledgling Trump administration is a long way from

fulfilling one of Mr. Trump's most repeated campaign promises.

In a brief aside in an interview with Bill O'Reilly of Fox News broadcast before the Super Bowl on Sunday, Mr. Trump went further than he ever has in acknowledging the reality that any hope of quickly replacing the Affordable Care Act has been dashed.

"Yes, I would like to say by the end of the year, at least the rudiments, but we should have something within the year and the following year," the president said.

That admission is sure to be a serious disappointment for the president's most fervent supporters, who sent him to Washington believing that he would move quickly to dispatch the health law.

Soon after he was elected, Mr. Trump reacted to Republican suggestions of a delay in replacing the health act by insisting that repealing and replacing the law must happen at about the same time.

Representative Tom Price of Georgia at a confirmation hearing last month to become secretary of health and human services. Al Drago/The New York Times

Now, Mr. Trump and his Republican allies on Capitol Hill have recast their ambitions for a rapid-fire repeal, talking privately and publicly about a more deliberative process that could be phased in over weeks or months.

"The political uncertainty surrounding repeal is growing," said Dan Holler, a spokesman for Heritage Action for America, the

advocacy arm of the conservative Heritage Foundation. "If the House has not passed a repeal bill and sent it to the Senate by mid-March," Mr. Holler added, "that would be serious cause for concern."

The uncertainty is already reflected in the way Republicans talk about the health care law. Some now talk about "repairing" the law, rather than repealing it entirely. And in a twist of fate, many are facing tough, angry questions at town hall meetings — the mirror image of 2009, when Tea Party activists assailed Democrats who supported the law.

A crowd of protesters gathered outside a town meeting in California held over the weekend by Representative Tom McClintock, who was escorted by police officers as he left the event, according to

news reports. Representative Gus Bilirakis of Florida faced 200 angry supporters of the health care law at a meeting on Saturday.

In the interview that aired on Sunday, Mr. Trump appeared to admit that his get-it-done braggadocio about a swift repeal of President Barack Obama's signature legislation was instead becoming a drawn-out Washington process that could stretch for months or even years.

Mr. Trump's comment prompted what is becoming a ritual on Capitol Hill: trying to interpret the words of a president who is not steeped in the rhythms of the legislative process.

"I don't really know what he's referring to in terms of a year," said Senator John Cornyn of Texas, the No. 2 Senate Republican. He added that Republicans hoped to get their replacement plan in place "well before that."

Senator John Thune of South Dakota, the No. 3 Republican in the chamber, said the Senate hoped to work "systematically, in a step-by-step way." But he conceded "that may take longer than, you know, than people at first thought." He expressed hope that "at some point," if Mr. Trump has a health care proposal, "he'll engage and

that we'll be able to work together with him on it."

Few of Mr. Trump's campaign promises rivaled the one he made to dismantle the Affordable Care Act. He repeatedly called it a "disaster" and vowed that, if elected, he would immediately replace it with a new and better overhaul of the health care system.

Mr. Trump issued an executive order on his first day in office directing agencies to do what they could to provide relief from the health care law to people and businesses. But his power to unravel the law unilaterally is limited.

Michael F. Cannon, the director of health policy studies at the libertarian Cato Institute, warned that the delay in taking action in Congress threatened to undermine the momentum for significant change.

"Every day they delay," he said, "the problems of the Affordable Care Act get worse."

Insurance executives say immediate action is needed to stabilize insurance markets, or else more insurers will withdraw from the public marketplaces created under the Affordable Care Act. Insurers

deciding whether to participate in the market in 2018 face a May deadline for submitting rate proposals to the federal government.

The turnabout has made Democratic lawmakers gleeful. Their refusal to work with Republicans unless a full-blown repeal is taken off the table has helped to ratchet up pressure on the president and his allies to come up with a replacement before eliminating a health care program that delivers insurance to about 20 million Americans.

"The reality of the difficulty of getting things done is sinking in," Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the Democratic leader, said of Mr. Trump and Republicans in Congress. "Democrats are feeling much better that there's some chance of success."

Democrats have also been encouraged by opinion polls showing that the public is increasingly supportive of the health care law. A Quinnipiac University poll released last month found that 84 percent of people believe Congress should not repeal the Affordable Care Act until a replacement plan is in place.

That is proving especially difficult for Republicans to accomplish in the time frame that Mr. Trump once called for.

In the first 10 days of the new Congress, lawmakers passed a budget resolution clearing the way to repeal major provisions of the law and neutralize the threat of a Democratic filibuster. By Jan. 27, four congressional committees were supposed to have drafted legislation gutting the 2010 health care law. But it soon became clear that the deadline was neither realistic nor enforceable.

Republican leaders in the House and the Senate now envision a more conventional legislative process. In an interview on Sunday, Speaker Paul D. Ryan insisted that Republicans believed it was their duty to "step in front of this crash and rescue people from this collapsing health care system and replace it with something better."

But Mr. Ryan has also been clear for weeks about the reality of the legislative timeline.

"The question there is: How long will it take for markets to be put in place, for markets to adjust?" Mr. Ryan told reporters on Jan. 5. "That question we don't know the answer to."



Editorial : The ObamaCare Cleanup Begins

Updated Feb. 6, 2017 7:17 p.m. ET 137

COMMENTS

All of a sudden the press is filled with stories about Republicans supposedly retreating from their promise to repeal and replace ObamaCare. Liberals are claiming vindication and conservatives are getting nervous, but the stampede to declare failure is premature. The orderly transition to a more stable and affordable health-care system is merely beginning.

As with much else in the Donald Trump era, people should avoid rushing to conclusions. Too much significance is attributed to Republicans adding the word "repair" to their vocabulary, as if this represents a policy change. The insurance markets really do need repair, and doing nothing isn't realistic amid ObamaCare's downward spiral.

Likewise, the GOP retreat in Philadelphia last month was contentious, according to leaked audio, but debating the merits of different ideas is how political parties form a strategy. Republicans now recognize that they can't blame President Obama for insurance disruptions, even if his

Administration caused them. They also increasingly understand that they've been handed an armed bomb and need to be careful and serious when defusing it.

The exchanges are ailing and fragile—beset by high and rising premiums and a wave of insurer exits. The Health and Human Services Department announced Friday that final enrollment on the federal exchanges for 2017 dropped by about 400,000 from last year. "In spite of the best intentions of Washington and the industry, the intended goals of the ACA have not been achieved. Millions of Americans remain uninsured, and still lack access to affordable health care," Aetna CEO Mark Bertolini said on an investor call, expressing the business consensus.

Uncertainty is inevitably priced into premiums, and benefits and rates for 2018 started to be designed and set months ago. They'll be approved by regulators in the spring, so Mr. Trump's HHS nominees, Tom Price and Seema Verma, need to move fast to bring more predictability to the markets.

One of the President's first acts was to sign an executive order to "waive, defer, grant exemptions from, or delay" rules that burden individuals,

states and business in order to "create a more free and open health-care market." The specifics are waiting in an HHS proposed rule about "market stabilization" now under review by the White House budget office.

This rule likely includes short-term measures to deregulate ObamaCare's most onerous provisions. Technical reforms could be immediately reflected in lower premiums. These include relaxing the essential benefits mandate or the price controls that limit how much rates can vary from person to person. The Obama HHS turned the individual mandate into swiss cheese, creating "special enrollment periods" that allow people to dip in and out of insurance at will. Ensuring continuous coverage may be a priority.

Another useful interim change to reduce gaming would be to shorten the ObamaCare "grace period," a 90-day window that requires insurers to cover consumers who aren't paying their premiums. A McKinsey study found one of five exchange enrollees stop paying at some point during the year, and half of them re-enrolled in the same plan the next year, availing themselves of three months of "free" coverage.

Congress could also help stabilize the exchanges by suspending the 10-year \$145 billion tax on the insurance industry. The costs will be passed on to consumers in higher rates, which is why Congress and the Obama White House agreed to a one-year suspension for 2017. Oliver Wyman estimates that another delay would offer immediate premium relief of 3% for 2018. This would buy some goodwill amid debates about who owes what in various ObamaCare reimbursement programs.

Meanwhile, the work to replace the law in the longer term is well underway. The House Energy and Commerce Committee had a legislative hearing on four bills last week, and other power centers are making progress. House Speaker Paul Ryan said he hopes the repeal and replace proceedings will conclude by the second quarter.

The defining failure of ObamaCare is that too few people find its centrally planned insurance either affordable or valuable, despite the subsidies. The Republican-Trump bet is that more competitive markets will do a better job delivering coverage that people want and need.

Mr. Ryan's scheduling goal may be too ambitious, and maybe health-care reform round II will break down

in intra-GOP disarray about ideological purity and implacable Democratic opposition. But the

panic is excessive based on the evidence so far.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Neil Gorsuch's Personality Could Shift Supreme Court's Dynamic

Brent Kendall
and Jess Bravin

Updated Feb. 6, 2017 1:09 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Scrutiny of Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch is focusing heavily on his judicial rulings and legal views, but there is another issue that will be almost as important should he reach the high court: how he fits in on a bench where personality and style can have a significant impact on decisions.

If confirmed, Judge Gorsuch would replace the late Justice Antonin Scalia, a man he admired and whose influence often came more from fiery dissents than consensus-building. The conservative giant could have a sharp tongue with colleagues, such as in the 2015 case that legalized gay marriage when he wrote that he "would hide my head in a bag" before he ever joined a flowery opinion like the one written by Justice Anthony Kennedy.

Justice Scalia also was an occasional critic of fellow conservative Chief Justice John Roberts's efforts to prod the court toward narrower rulings that attract a broader coalition of justices, preferring to sit on the periphery rather than bend on principles important to him.

While Judge Gorsuch has some similarities to Justice Scalia, the new nominee is sure to bring a different dynamic.

People who know Judge Gorsuch, who currently serves on the Denver-based 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, say he is unfailingly respectful and, as his former law clerk Katherine Yarger put it, "extraordinarily careful with his word choice, tone and his approach when communicating with other judges."

"It's an approach that will serve him well," said Ms. Yarger, who later clerked for Justice Clarence Thomas and now practices law at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP.

"The style could not be more different than Nino's," said Robert George, a

professor of jurisprudence at Princeton University, using Justice Scalia's nickname. Judge Gorsuch "doesn't behave like he's a knight in combat or a boxer in the ring," said Mr. George, a friend of the judge's since they met at Oxford University more than a decade ago.

Still, "he's not a backslapper, he's not a deal maker. This is not going to be William Brennan," Mr. George said, referring to a former justice legendary for building consensus. "He's not going to cultivate his fellow justices with a view to winning them over to anything any more than Nino did."

While early indications are that Judge Gorsuch wouldn't be forging a centrist coalition on the court, his commitment to collegiality and his attentiveness to the judiciary's reputation raise intriguing questions for court watchers: Will he gravitate toward the more diplomatic chief justice, picking and choosing his moments while occasionally finding common ground with liberals in difficult cases? Or will he assume the more confrontational mantle of the Scalia camp, albeit with a smile?

Which direction Judge Gorsuch chooses could determine Chief Justice Roberts's success in navigating the court through tricky, divisive cases, as well as how the public views the court, particularly after the long and bitter political fight over who would fill the court's current vacancy.

Justice Scalia did build close personal relationships on the court—most famously with Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, whose liberal views clashed with his own—but his verbal jousting could create raw feelings (he called one majority opinion "interpretive jiggery-pokery"). And he could be harder than anyone on Justice Kennedy, a moderate conservative who sometimes sides with the court's liberal wing.

Justice Kennedy, by contrast, has been a mentor to Judge Gorsuch, who clerked for him during the Supreme Court's 1993-94 term. Judge Gorsuch would be the first

former clerk to sit on the Supreme Court with his ex-boss, raising novel questions about which man would be more influential on the other, especially since the nominee's writings reflect a deeper conservatism than Justice Kennedy's.

Clerkships are a life-changing experience that can produce enduring bonds, said Adam Charles, a lawyer at Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton LLP who clerked for Justice Kennedy the year before Judge Gorsuch did. "You feel a great deal of gratitude and respect," he said. "It has to be hard to put that aside when you're a peer."

Perhaps an even bigger question is whether Judge Gorsuch would become a regular ally of Chief Justice Roberts. Both have spoken of the importance of judicial restraint and expressed concern about the judiciary being viewed as a political body instead of a neutral arbiter, a view that can be countered when judges across the ideological spectrum find common ground.

The chief justice's stewardship could be especially important during the Trump administration if, as expected, a series of cases challenging the president's agenda make their way to the court. If the president overreaches, the legal records of Chief Justice Roberts and Judge Gorsuch suggest they could form bonds to limit executive encroachment upon the constitutional powers of the legislative and judicial branches.

Nevertheless, there is reason to believe the two men may have differences in terms of legal theory and strategic pragmatism.

While the chief justice maintains a conservative voting record on the court and has led some bold conservative decisions, he has held his fire on other occasions. And he isn't a champion of originalism, the method of interpreting legal texts based on their perceived original meaning, an approach favored by Justices Scalia and Clarence Thomas—and Judge Gorsuch.

Chief Justice Roberts famously parted company with conservative justices in upholding the Affordable Care Act's mandate that individuals carry health insurance or pay a penalty. In that same ruling, liberal Justices Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan joined with the chief in invalidating the terms of the ACA's expansion of Medicaid, a big win for states' rights and a sign that the chief's bridge-building can occasionally win over liberals to more conservative outcomes.

Through a decade on the 10th Circuit, Judge Gorsuch has been a prolific writer of concurring and separate opinions, and some reflect a belief that legal principles shouldn't take a back seat to compromise.

"He has written some opinions that aren't of a go-along-to-get-along nature," said William M. Jay, an appellate lawyer at Goodwin Procter LLP.

Leonard Leo, who advised President Trump on the court nomination, said these opinions are "a glimpse of the extent to which he believes you have to be independent and free-spirited in situations where your colleagues might not necessarily agree with you."

But it is too soon to say where Judge Gorsuch will fall along the spectrum with other conservative justices, said Mr. Leo, who is on leave from his executive position at the Federalist Society, an influential conservative lawyers' network.

"I don't know, and at the end of the day I don't think even he knows" how Judge Gorsuch would fit in, given the unique dynamic on the nine-member Supreme Court, he said. Judge Gorsuch "has certain fundamental principles that he will continue to apply, but how that works when you're sitting there with the same people every day, it's hard to say."

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**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Elliott: For Moderate Democrats, Judge Gorsuch Is as Good as It Gets

E. Donald Elliott

Updated Feb. 6,
2017 10:05 p.m. ET

Moderates could do a lot worse than Judge Neil Gorsuch—and we

probably will if he isn't confirmed. Donald Trump is clearly determined to nominate a judicial conservative to the Supreme Court. Elections have consequences, as Barack

Obama once chided congressional Republicans.

Judge Gorsuch's judicial philosophy isn't mine. He believes that the Constitution's meaning is fixed, that whatever the words signified in the

era of the Founders is what they still express today. My view, which aligns more closely with that of Justices Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan, is that judges must respect the Constitution's text and history

but may also interpret them to fit the changing times.

But among judicial conservatives, Judge Gorsuch is as good as it possibly gets. I have known him personally for more than a decade, since he was an attorney in the Justice Department. He is a brilliant mind, but more important he is a kind, sensitive and caring human being. Judge Gorsuch tries very hard to get the law right. He is not an ideologue, not the kind to always rule in favor of businesses or against the government. Instead, he follows the law as best as he can wherever it might lead.

Judge Gorsuch has demonstrated in his rulings that he believes the judiciary has a sworn duty to protect individual liberties, even when they lack broad public support. Today Judge Gorsuch rules that Hobby Lobby cannot be forced to offer employees certain contraceptive coverage that violates its owners' religious beliefs. (That ruling was upheld by the Supreme Court.) But tomorrow it could mean standing up for an unpopular minority group that

liberals like better.

American history teaches that the controversy of the moment when a Supreme Court nominee is considered rarely becomes the defining issue of that justice's career. The life of the country is unpredictable, and it would be a mistake to back a nominee simply for having the right political views on the *cause célèbre du jour*. More important is putting on the court someone like Neil Gorsuch—a good person with solid values—to decide, as the law requires, future controversies that we have yet to dream.

Democrats are still rightly upset that President Obama's nominee for the vacancy, Judge Merrick Garland, was not given a hearing or a vote last year. Judge Garland is also a good man and a fine jurist, and he deserved better than to be treated like a political football. But retaliating now won't right that wrong. It only will deepen the blood feud.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D., Conn.) had it exactly right: "I am still angry about Merrick Garland," he

was quoted by Real Clear Politics as saying. "But I believe that this nominee"—meaning Judge Gorsuch—"ought to have a hearing and a vote. We should not repeat the Republican wrong. Two wrongs don't make a right."

Then there is the practical political situation: Of the Democratic senators up for re-election in 2018, 10 represent states that Donald Trump carried. Blocking the president's nominee could result in the defeat of some of them—and an even larger Republican majority for President Trump's next potential Supreme Court nominee.

That battle will probably be more important. For years the court has been in rough balance, with four conservative justices, four liberal ones, and a swing vote cast by the relatively moderate Justice Anthony Kennedy. Confirming Judge Gorsuch to replace the late Justice Antonin Scalia will not alter that balance, but Mr. Trump's next nominee might.

The sensible route for moderate Democrats is clear: They should cross the aisle and join Republicans

to cut off a filibuster, allowing an up-or-down vote by a simple majority on Judge Gorsuch. That will prevent Republicans from invoking the "nuclear option" to change the Senate rules and abolish the filibuster for Supreme Court nominees. One way or another, Judge Gorsuch is going to be confirmed. The question is how much damage will be done to the country first.

It has been Hatfields and McCoy's in Washington for the past few years. No one has been trying to do the right thing anymore. The only goal seems to be getting even for the last outrage. This is an opportunity to break the cycle by coming together for the good of the country. The partisan wars started in 1987 with Judge Robert Bork; the time to end them is 2017 with Judge Gorsuch.

Mr. Elliott is an adjunct professor at Yale Law School.

The New York Times Threat Trump Says Journalists 'Have Their Reasons' to Play Down Terror

Julie Hirschfeld Davis

WASHINGTON — President Trump on Monday asserted that the news media was playing down the terrorist threat posed by the Islamic State, telling American military personnel that journalists were reluctant to report on the militant group's attacks in Europe and "have their reasons" for failing to cover them.

Mr. Trump initially did not provide examples of a news media conspiracy to underplay terrorist attacks, and his comments appeared to ignore the vast amount of reporting on violence committed by the Islamic State and its supporters in the Middle East, Europe and the United States. Later Monday night, the White House released a list of what it said were 78 attacks from September 2014 to December 2016 that were carried out or inspired by the Islamic State. The White House said that "most have not received the media attention they deserved."

The list included the major attacks in Paris; Brussels; San Bernardino, Calif.; and Orlando, Fla., that dominated the news for weeks. Other attacks overseas, lesser known to Americans, received extensive local coverage, like a shooting in Zvornik, Bosnia, in April 2015 in which one police officer was

killed and two others were wounded.

The president's speech was the second time in recent weeks that he has used an appearance before national security personnel — usually apolitical settings in which the focus is on strategy and sacrifice — to discredit journalists and exult in his election victory.

"Radical Islamic terrorists are determined to strike our homeland, as they did on 9/11, as they did from Boston to Orlando to San Bernardino and all across Europe," Mr. Trump said at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Fla., home to the military's Central Command and Special Operations Command. "All over Europe it's happening. It's gotten to a point where it's not even being reported, and in many cases, the very, very dishonest press doesn't want to report it."

"They have their reasons," Mr. Trump added, "and you understand that."

The theory that the news media is trying to whitewash terrorist attacks to protect Islam or Muslim migrants has been pushed by several right-wing news organizations, including the conspiracy-filled site Infowars, whose founder, Alex Jones, is an ally of Mr. Trump's.

The president's comments on Monday were reminiscent of his claim during a visit last month to the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency in Langley, Va., that the news media had fabricated his feud with the intelligence community. Those remarks came only days after he likened American intelligence officials to Nazis, after several weeks in which he had denigrated their work.

Aboard Air Force One on Monday, Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, told reporters returning to Washington with Mr. Trump that the president had been referring in Tampa to "several instances" in which the news media had not devoted sufficient attention to terrorism. Mr. Trump, Mr. Spicer said, believes journalists pay more attention to public protests than they do to terrorist attacks or plots.

"He felt members of the media don't always cover some of those events to the extent that other events might get covered," Mr. Spicer said. "Protests will get blown out of the water, and yet an attack or a foiled attack doesn't necessarily get the same coverage."

During his 12-minute speech on Monday, Mr. Trump promised to make "a historic financial investment in the armed forces," in an effort to maintain peace in "our troubled, troubled times." He also

vowed to give the military the tools necessary to prevail against the Islamic State and thwart its attempts to strike America.

He also used the time — as he did at the C.I.A. two weeks earlier — to exult in his election victory, citing the large share of military votes he drew as proof of service members' loyalty to him.

Got a confidential news tip?

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"We had a wonderful election, didn't we?" Mr. Trump said. "I saw those numbers, and you liked me, and I liked you."

While exit polls showed that about 60 percent of military personnel supported Mr. Trump in the November election, the armed forces are not a partisan institution and their members swear to obey their commander in chief, regardless of party.

Earlier on Monday, at a luncheon with enlisted soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, Mr. Trump went around his table asking who would remain in the military, and told them their experience would improve during his presidency.

"Come on; you have to stay," he said to one luncheon companion. "You'll like it better with me."

The speech underscored the drivers of his inward-looking national security vision: an almost exclusive focus on the threat of the Islamic State; a skeptical view of multilateral alliances including NATO; and an "America First" rationale for hard-line policies like his travel ban, which he is now defending from legal challenges.

"We need strong programs so that people that love us and want to love our country and will end up loving our country are allowed in, not people that want to destroy us and destroy our country," Mr. Trump said, an apparent

reference to his executive order on Jan. 27 suspending the United States' refugee program, blocking Syrian refugees indefinitely and barring any entrants from seven predominantly Muslim countries.

On NATO, Mr. Trump, who has said in the past that the alliance is "obsolete," tempered his message, arguing that he was focused on ensuring that it is well funded.

"We strongly support NATO; we only ask that all of the NATO members make their full and proper contributions to the NATO alliance, which many of them have not been doing — many of them have not been even close," he said.

**The
Washington
Post**

Former national security officials organize to challenge Trump

By Karen DeYoung

willing to formally challenge Trump administration words and actions.

While much of the rest of the country was settling in for the Super Bowl on Sunday night, a group of senior Obama administration officials was putting the finishing touches on an unprecedented legal brief charging President Trump with endangering national security.

Signed by former president Barack Obama's national security adviser, his top counterterrorism aide and his secretary of state, as well as other senior security officials from the past three administrations, the brief was filed in support of Friday's federal court ruling that froze Trump's executive order on immigration.

The filing called the order "ill-conceived, poorly implemented and ill-explained," and said there was "little evidence" it had been analyzed by policy professionals before Trump signed it.

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On Monday, Trump called reports of wide public disapproval of the order "lies" and "fake news." While the brief contended that the order was signed without input from intelligence, law enforcement and diplomats, Trump tweeted that he acted "largely based on an accumulation of data."

Signatories to the brief are part of a nascent movement seeking to match ongoing public protests with the efforts of former government insiders who are

Most of the participants are former Obama officials, but they include some diplomatic, military, White House and Cabinet-level officials from the administrations of George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. Obama himself offered his support for protest, in a statement three days after Trump's Jan. 27 order, that called on "all citizens ... to be guardians of our democracy" and "have their voices heard."

On the same day, more than 100 former diplomats, government and military officials signed a letter urging top officials at the departments of State, Homeland Security and Justice to use their "discretion" in implementing the directive to "mitigate" its effects.

Using technology that was far less prevalent when Obama took office in 2009, some former officials have taken to Twitter, Trump's favored means of mass communication, to counter the new administration.

"I'm not aware of any U.S. President ever discussing campaigns and voting data when talking to Americans in uniform," Benjamin Rhodes, an Obama deputy national security adviser, tweeted minutes after Trump began his Monday remarks to the U.S. Central Command in Tampa by thanking military members for voting for him. "I saw those numbers, and you liked me, and I liked you," Trump said.

Colin Kahl, former vice president Joe Biden's national security adviser, tweeted last week to deny that a chaotic raid by U.S. Special Operations forces in Yemen, which left one service member and a

Mr. Trump said he would ensure that military personnel had the tools they needed to do their jobs, asserting that "we've been depleted" and vowing that this would not continue during his presidency.

"We're going to be loading it up with beautiful new planes and beautiful new equipment," he said of the Air Force base. "You've been lacking a little equipment. We're going to load it up — you're going to get a lot of equipment."

The president also asserted that he had saved more than \$700 million on the F-35 fighter jet program "when I got involved in the negotiation," arguing that defense contractors including Lockheed

Martin and Boeing had "cut their prices" at his insistence.

Mr. Trump was apparently referring to a decision by Lockheed on Friday to cut the price on a new contract for 90 of the radar-evading fighters by an additional \$7.4 million per jet. Officials with the military and with Lockheed said the president's intervention had helped speed negotiations and had contributed to the savings. But some savings will come from increased manufacturing efficiencies as the production rate grows, they added, making it difficult to quantify how much can be attributed to Mr. Trump's prodding.

number of civilians dead, had been initially approved by Obama.

"Trump and his team owns the process and the ultimate decision — and the consequences," Kahl said.

Seeking to build on the model of the now-defunct National Security Network, a group of progressive Democrats espousing "pragmatic and principled" national security policies that was formed after John F. Kerry's loss in the 2004 election, Obama officials led by former acting secretary of homeland security Rand Beers, former Defense Department official Vikram Singh and Jake Sullivan, a senior White House and State Department adviser who joined Hillary Clinton's campaign, have been gathering adherents and seeking funding.

With guidance from that group, the immigration brief was written by Harold Hongju Koh, a Yale Law School professor and former dean who served as a State Department legal adviser during Obama's first term.

Working with students and professors at Yale's Rule of Law Clinic, Koh drafted the statement Saturday, the morning after a judge with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit in Washington state ordered a stay on all action under Trump's order. The administration has appealed the ruling.

Signers exchanged drafts and added points until shortly before the brief was filed late Sunday night. "My purpose [in signing] was pretty narrow," Michael V. Hayden, who served as Bush's National Security Agency head and CIA director, said in an email.

"From my point of view and experience, the intelligence did not warrant such a dramatic step" as Trump's executive order, Hayden said. "Bottom line: didn't solve a real problem and actually made the overall situation worse."

Four of the 10 signers — Kerry, who served as Obama's secretary of state; national security adviser Susan E. Rice and her deputy, Avril Haines; and chief counterterrorism adviser Lisa Monaco — "were current on active intelligence regarding all credible terrorist threat streams directed against the U.S. as recently as one week before" the order was issued.

"We all agree that the United States faces real threats," it read, but "we are nevertheless unaware of any specific threat that would justify the travel ban" the order included. "In our professional opinion, this order cannot be justified on national security or foreign policy grounds."

In addition to disrupting lives, "there is no national security purpose" for an order that, they wrote, "will endanger U.S. troops in the field"; "disrupt key counterterrorism, foreign policy, and national security partnerships that are critical" to counterterrorism operations; "endanger intelligence sources in the field"; "feed recruitment" of the Islamic State and other extremists; and "disrupt ongoing law enforcement efforts."

Other former officials who signed the brief include defense secretary and CIA director Leon Panetta, secretary of state Madeleine K. Albright, homeland security secretary Janet A. Napolitano and acting CIA directors John McLaughlin and Michael J. Morell.

**The
Washington
Post**

In divided America, history is weaponized to praise or condemn Trump

<https://www.facebook.com/mikerose.nwald>

On social networks and talk radio, in classrooms and at kitchen tables, the country's past is suddenly inescapable. Many, many people — as President Trump would put it — are sharing stories about key moments and figures in American history to support or oppose one controversial White House executive order after another.

Andrew Jackson and Huey Long are alive in Facebook feeds. Twitter is afire with 140-character bursts of historical moments — the St. Louis steaming toward Miami in 1939 with Jewish refugees fleeing Germany's Third Reich, or the "Saturday Night Massacre." President Richard Nixon's firing of a special prosecutor in 1973 during the Watergate scandal.

Trump may or may not make America great again, but he has certainly revived interest in U.S. history. It has been a long time since Woodrow Wilson, Abraham Lincoln and Susan B. Anthony were in the news, not to mention import taxes, the Revolutionary War, Japanese internment camps and the Immigration Act of 1917.

"I've never seen so many people desperate to refer to historical examples," said David Bell, a Princeton University history professor who last month moderated a panel on Trump at the American Historical Association's annual conference. "Everyone seems to have an example."

While Barack Obama's election renewed discussion of the nation's tortured racial history and Hillary Clinton's would have spawned a look back at women's rights, historians say the speed and breadth of Trump's policy pronouncements have prompted the electorate to deploy history as an offensive or defensive rhetorical weapon.

In the dark days of the Watergate scandal, President Richard Nixon pushed out two attorney generals and the special prosecutor of the Watergate investigation in what became known as the "Saturday Night Massacre." In the dark days of the Watergate scandal, President Richard Nixon pushed out two attorney generals and the special prosecutor of the investigation. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

"History really feels explosive to many people right now," Harvard University historian Jill Lepore said. "People are reaching out for whatever twig is streaming by to give some meaning to what they're seeing."

Decades and even centuries are jumbled together. Frederick Douglass became a trending topic on Facebook last week after Trump talked about him as if he were still alive. Alongside news feeds, the 19th-century abolitionist was listed between the Cheesecake Factory and the Johnson Amendment, the 1954 law that restricts political activity by tax-exempt religious groups. Trump has vowed to "totally destroy" the amendment.

[Trump book riddled with falsehoods removed by national history museum]

The historical references are not limited to this country. A headline last week on Breitbart News, a conservative website founded by Trump White House strategist Stephen K. Bannon, said, "Why Saint Thomas Aquinas Opposed Open Borders."

Even Adolf Hitler is hard to avoid. Last week, a student in Norway tweeted that the Nazi dictator was being discussed in class. "Someone will bring up Trump before class ends," he wrote. "I just know it." Less than 20 minutes later: "YEP THERE WE GO."

In the United States, there have been enough Hitler comparisons on social media to inspire satirists. Steve Hely, a former writer for "The Office" and "30 Rock," recently tweeted several "ways Hitler was better than Trump." One was "Wrote his own book."

Hely's satire gets at the concerns scholars have about the recent flood of historical citations.

Americans are terrible armchair historians. A nationwide survey by the American Revolution Center found that "more Americans remember that Michael Jackson sang 'Beat It' than know that the Bill of Rights is part of the Constitution." Professional historians worry that specious and cherry-picked comparisons will reverberate through social networks as gospel, deepening the country's divisions.

Last month, a guy named Eric in Ohio — fearful of reprisal, he would not give his last name — posted a video on YouTube titled "Donald Trump, import taxes, History and left wing insanity."

Eric's passion is economics and history.

"I have three bookshelves filled with books on that topic," he said, "so when you combine those two things with posts on Facebook, I tend to respond because it pisses me off."

The Trump administration, just a few days in office, proposed adding tariffs to imports. Suddenly, Eric began reading posts about how import taxes had led the country to war.

This confused him. So he started asking the posters what they were talking about — the Revolutionary War, they said.

"No, we f---ing didn't," Eric said into the camera. "Who the hell is telling you this stuff? Did you get your American history off the back of a Cracker Jack box?"

Putting aside the question of who is right, Eric's rant illustrates how Trump's supporters and detractors are drawing on historical moments in a prosecutorial way.

Lepore, the Harvard historian, said that "in more normal times," she becomes frustrated when complicated, nuanced history is used in "deceptive, misleading" ways. But she is sympathetic to how befuddled people are.

"These moments from the past are enticing because of the depth of uncertainty," she said.

And they are being used to argue both for doubling down on and disavowing current events.

Take immigration. Those who support Trump's executive order restricting travel from seven Muslim-majority countries point to previous eras when the country was more restrictive on immigration.

"The news channels are overrun with liberals claiming Trump's ban violates the constitution and is contrary to our traditions," a Trump supporter wrote on Facebook. "Like it or not, 'our traditions' have been to use immigration law to keep out people of other races and cultures, whether they were considered dangerous or not."

A half-hour later, someone replied, "Thanks to all on this thread for being an oasis of sanity in a wasteland of partisans railing about what is and isn't constitutional."

[Who could be affected by Trump's travel ban]

Those appalled by Trump's actions see it differently.

"The overall effect of Trump's latest executive order would be to put the U.S. back on to similar footing as the 1930s, when refugees most needed our help to escape persecution," the Human Rights Campaign wrote in a widely shared blog post that retold the story of the St. Louis being turned away.

Others cut and pasted a long post that Heather Richardson, a Boston College history professor, put on her personal Facebook page, describing the executive order as a "shock event."

"Such an event is unexpected and confusing and throws a society into chaos," she wrote. "People scramble to react to the event, usually along some fault line that those responsible for the event can widen by claiming that they alone know how to restore order."

But shock events, in Richardson's telling, can ultimately change the country for the better.

"If people realize they are being played," she wrote on Jan. 29, "they can reach across old lines and reorganize to challenge the leaders who are pulling the strings. This was Lincoln's strategy when he joined together Whigs, Democrats, Free-Soilers, anti-Nebraska voters, and nativists into the new Republican Party to stand against the Slave Power."

Although Richardson writes frequently on politics for several large news organizations, she did not intend her post to be read by a large audience — only friends and family on both sides of the political debate.

She posted it, then went to dinner. When she came home, she discovered it had been shared 17,000 times.

"It just went insane," she said.

A week later, it was more than 80,000.



Editorial : Will Trump follow through and 'drain the swamp'?

<https://www.facebook.com/washingtonpostopinions>

THE SLOGAN "drain the swamp" was a potent one, tapping into public perceptions that Washington is paralyzed by special interests.

President Trump has signed an executive order for administration appointees that is more restrictive in some ways than the rules President

Barack Obama left behind. It is a down payment on draining the swamp, but by itself not a solution. What counts are not only the edicts,

but also how Mr. Trump and his appointees behave in the face of potential conflicts of interest, attempted influence-peddling and revolving-door lobbying.

Mr. Trump's executive order, replacing Mr. Obama's from 2009, imposes new and tougher restrictions on officials who leave his administration. He has banned them from engaging in "lobbying activities" relating to their former agency for five years, a provision not in Mr. Obama's rules. A parallel provision in Mr. Trump's order prohibits government officials who leave and become lobbyists from lobbying the administration for the rest of Mr. Trump's presidency. In both cases, Mr.

Trump's order contains restrictive wording, tighter than Mr. Obama's, that will cover those who are not formally registered as lobbyists but give advice on strategy, a growing shadow realm in Washington's power game. Mr. Trump vowed in the campaign to press Congress to apply this to its members and write it into law, but so far he has not. The impact of Mr. Trump's rules may be felt most strongly by his appointees once they leave government; many could find it difficult to work in government policy areas. In one way, however, Mr. Trump eased the rules for leavers — the "cooling-off" period for contacting their former agency has been cut to one year, from two.

Another new rule Mr. Trump imposed is a lifetime ban on former appointees conducting work for a foreign government or foreign political party that would require registration under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. This provision, a campaign promise of Mr. Trump, strikes us as too strict. Lobbying on behalf of other governments is legitimate when carried out lawfully and properly disclosed. Such a prohibition could discourage people from joining government at all, and may be difficult to enforce.

A great deal will depend on the tone Mr. Trump sets and how he conducts himself as a former businessman with a wicket of

possible conflicts of interest. It is not a good omen that he promised in the presidential campaign to release his tax returns and has not done so. It is worrisome that details of Mr. Trump's far-flung financial empire remain opaque. It is unsatisfactory that Mr. Trump has not created more of a firewall between his presidential role and his businesses. The idea behind "drain the swamp" is worthy if it leads to a government unshackled by special interests, but it is up to Mr. Trump to show what it really means by personal example.



Gerson : The 'best fortnight in a decade' for conservatives? Uh-oh.

By Michael Gerson

Read These Comments

Stepping back, cooling off a bit, displaying some strategic patience, taking the long view: The first two weeks of the Trump administration have been the most abso-frigg-in-lutely frightening of the modern presidency.

President Trump has managed to taunt and alienate some of our closest allies — Mexico and Australia (!) — while continuing an NC-17-rated love fest with Russia. He has engaged in moral equivalence that places America on the level of Vladimir Putin's bloody dictatorship. "Well, you think our country's so innocent?" he said — a statement of such obscenity that it would haunt any liberal to the grave. He has issued an immigration executive order of unparalleled incompetence and cruelty, further victimizing refugees who are already fate's punching bag. He has lied about things large (election fraud) and small (inaugural crowd size), refused to allow facts to modify his claims, and attempted to create his own reality through the repetition of deception. He has abused his standing as president to attack individuals, from a respected judge to the movie star who took over his God-awful reality-TV show. He has demonstrated a limitless appetite for organizational chaos and selected a staff that leaks like a salad spinner. He has become a massively polarizing figure within the United States and a risible figure on the global stage.

All in a fortnight.

The best conversations on The Washington Post

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And yet, serious, non-Trumpian figures on the right, such as blogger Ed Morrissey, have found it the "best fortnight in a decade" for conservatives. It is a "continuing feast of promises kept," most obviously concerning Trump's Supreme Court pick, but also on personnel choices, regulatory policies, the Keystone XL pipeline and the beginnings of the Obamacare rollback. For conservatives, it is a "solid winning streak," concludes Morrissey. All the more welcome after a long dry spell.

These developments give conservatives much to chew on. Their best of times is a scary period for much of the country. Liberals would say: Of course, because conservatism itself is frightening. But Trump's most vivid problems concern his character, his view of executive power, and a set of foreign policy instincts that America has not seen since Pearl Harbor caused the original "America First" to close up shop.

Vice President Pence and senators of both political parties on Feb. 5 reacted to President Trump's comments about Russia and the United States in a Fox News interview. Vice President Pence and senators of both political parties react to President Trump's comments about Russia and the

United States in a Fox News interview. (Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

I am grateful to Trump for the wise nomination of Neil Gorsuch to the high court. But the trends of the first two weeks are not good for the Republican Party or for the long-term interests of conservatism. Trump is building deep loyalty among hard-line conservatives as his alarming antics and executive boundary-testing are alienating most Americans. (His disapproval is already more than 50 percent in recent polls.)

Republicans are on the horns of a bull in a china shop. Perceptive leaders can see their party eventually physically reduced and morally diminished to a fanatical ethno-nationalist core. But opposing Trump in public risks Twitter attacks and primary challenges. In Trump's amoral, counterpunching ethic, even the mildest criticisms can result in massive retaliation. Trump has already succeeded in creating an atmosphere of intimidation in Washington.

Several members of the Senate are willing to take on Trump on a case-by-case basis. But almost the whole of the Republican House is riding the populist wave or waiting quietly until it passes. And Speaker Paul D. Ryan (Wis.) seems to have embraced the Faustian bargain with open eyes — a chance to legislate if he occasionally ignores his conscience.

Where is the Republican red line when it comes to Trump? It is too early to determine, but not too early to consider. Trump's theory of governing, as it develops, could be a direct and serious challenge to American institutions. The president views legislative leaders such as Ryan — if the first part of his inaugural address is to be believed — as corrupt, spineless failures. And he believes that court rulings that go against him always represent bad faith on the part of a judge. Trump does not think he needs the support of political and media elites; the only things that really matter in politics are the people and the leader. And it is the leader who interprets the true interests of the people.

On the issues that seem to matter most to Trump — immigration and trade — America's chief executive has extraordinary powers. He can end trade agreements and impose tariffs unilaterally. He can impose immigration changes up to limits that he is not even approaching. We are discovering how many presidential limits are rooted in respect for norms rather than obedience to laws.

After two weeks, we can be certain of two things: To Trump, norms mean nothing. To America, they matter greatly.

Read more from Michael Gerson's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.



Robinson : Trumpism is all tantrums, all the time

<https://www.facebook.com/eugen.roberson.colum>

No one should have been surprised when President Trump raged that the "so-called judge" who blocked his travel ban should be blamed "if

something happens." It is clear by now that the leader of the free world has the emotional maturity of a 2-year-old who kicks, punches and

holds his breath when he can't have ice cream.

He dismisses anything he doesn't want to hear as "fake news," which

nist

is the equivalent of holding his hands over his ears. A poll showing that most people disapprove of the ban? Photographic evidence that the crowd for his inauguration was less than historic? Fake! All fake!

Trump's supporters may convince themselves that the tantrums are part of a clever act. But if they were, Trump's closest aides wouldn't be leaking like walking colanders to what he calls the "dishonest media." It appears they can't get the president to sit for a briefing or read a memo, so they send messages to him via the newspaper stories that are clipped for him to read and the cable channels he obsessively watches.

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Trump's temperament is at least an issue and potentially a crisis, not just for the nation but also for the world. In one of his introductory phone calls with foreign leaders, he even managed to ruffle feathers with Australia, which is a hard thing to do. What kind of leader accuses one of our most steadfast allies of trying to send the "next Boston bombers" to the United States? A leader utterly lacking in self-control, apparently.

I realize there is some method to go along with all the madness. I understand that Trump wants to be disruptive and has disdain for traditional norms. I know he believes he has a mandate to radically change U.S. immigration policy, defend what he sees as Western values and project his vision of American strength.

After what President Trump reportedly called "the worst call by far," with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on Jan. 28, Turnbull gave sparse details at a news conference on Feb. 2, but said, "I stand up for Australia in every forum, public or private." After what President Trump reportedly called "the worst call by far," with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Turnbull spoke at a news conference. (Video: AuBC via AP / Photo: AP and Bloomberg)

(Video: AuBC via AP / Photo: AP and Bloomberg)

But how does feuding with Australia further those ends? What rational purpose is served by lashing out at a federal judge for fulfilling his constitutional role? Why did he spend his first week in office trying to deny the fact that his inaugural crowd, while of quite respectable size, was much smaller than either of President Barack Obama's?

Trump's assault on the concept of an independent judiciary can be

seen as something out of Orwell. "What is our country coming to when a judge can halt a Homeland Security travel ban and anyone, even with bad intentions, can come into U.S.?" Trump tweeted on Saturday. In one efficient sentence, the president trashed the concept of separation of powers and falsely alleged that prior administrations had let just anyone into the country.

So should that tweet be read as a deliberate attempt to encourage fear as a way of grabbing more power? Or was it simply Trump's prekindergarten reflex to hit back at anyone who hits him?

I think it was probably the latter. I've seen no indication that Trump is able to control his need to retaliate. We saw it throughout his campaign, and 70-year-old men usually don't change.

Those in his inner circle obviously know that the way to accomplish their own goals, and to stay in Trump's favor, is to indulge his impulses in hopes of being able to channel them in a given direction. Those who speak for the White House, including press secretary Sean Spicer, are required to emulate Trump's air of wounded pugnacity. And yes, Melissa McCarthy's portrayal of Spicer on "Saturday Night Live" may be the funniest thing I've seen all year.

Thus far, senior advisers Stephen K. Bannon and Stephen Miller — both from the nationalistic, protectionist, anti-immigration alt-right — have proved most skillful at the game of intrigue in Trump's court. Chief of Staff Reince Priebus has had less success in getting the president to pursue a traditional Republican agenda, though he is likely to get the deregulation and tax cuts his party wants. Kellyanne Conway's overreach with "alternative facts" and "the Bowling Green massacre" seem to have pleased, not irked, her boss. Son-in-law Jared Kushner has had little apparent impact thus far, but he can play the long game because he's family and doesn't have to worry about being fired.

But make no mistake: We are talking about the rising and falling fortunes of courtiers who, with flattery and whispers and flowery professions of fealty, serve the unpredictable whims of their liege lord. The next four years promise to be a history lesson in the sort of thing that caused American democracy to be born.

Read more from Eugene Robinson's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook. You can also join him Tuesdays at 1 p.m. for a live Q&A.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Stephens : The Thomas Hobbes Presidency

Bret Stephens

Updated Feb. 6, 2017 7:24 p.m. ET

First, the obvious: Had it been Barack Obama, rather than Donald Trump, who suggested a moral equivalency between the United States and Vladimir Putin's Russia, Republican politicians would not now be rushing through their objections to the comparison in TV interviews while hoping to pivot to tax reform.

Had it been the president of three weeks ago who had answered Bill O'Reilly's comment that Mr. Putin "is a killer" by saying, "We've got a lot of killers," and "What do you think? Our country's so innocent?" conservative pundits wouldn't rest with calling the remark "inexplicable" or "troubling." They would call it moral treason and spend the next four years playing the same clip on repeat, right through the next election.

In 2009, Mr. Obama gave a series of speeches containing passing expressions of regret for vaguely specified blemishes from the American past. Examples: "The United States is still working

through some of our own darker periods in history." And "we've made some mistakes." This was the so-called Apology Tour, in which the word "apologize" was never uttered. Even so, conservatives still fume about it.

This time, Mr. Trump didn't apologize for America. He indicted it. He did so in language unprecedented for any sitting or former president. He did it in a manner guaranteed, and perhaps calculated, to vindicate every hard-left slander of "Amerika." If you are the sort who believes the CIA assassinated JFK, masterminded the crack-cocaine epidemic, and deliberately lied us into the war in Iraq—conspiracy theories on a moral par with the way the Putin regime behaves in actual fact—then this president is for you.

Only he's worse.

For the most part, the left's various indictments of the U.S., whether well- or ill-grounded, have had a moral purpose: to shame Americans into better behavior. We are reminded of the evils of slavery and Jim Crow in order not to be racist. We dilate on the failure in Vietnam to guard against the arrogance of

power. We recall the abuses of McCarthyism in order to underscore the importance of civil liberties.

Mr. Trump's purpose, by contrast, isn't to prevent a recurrence of bad behavior. It's to permit it. In this reading, Mr. Putin's behavior isn't so different from ours. It's largely the same, except more honest and effective. The U.S. could surely defeat ISIS—if only it weren't hampered by the kind of scruples that keep us from carpet bombing Mosul in the way the Russians obliterated Aleppo. The U.S. could have come out ahead in Iraq—if only we'd behaved like unapologetic conquerors, not do-gooder liberators, and taken their oil.

This also explains why Mr. Trump doesn't believe in American exceptionalism, calling the idea "insulting [to] the world" and seeing it as an undue burden on our rights and opportunities as a nation. Magnanimity, fair dealing, example setting, win-win solutions, a city set upon a hill: All this, in the president's mind, is a sucker's game, obscuring the dog-eat-dog realities of life. Among other distinctions, Mr. Trump may be our first Hobbesian president.

It would be a mistake to underestimate the political potency of this outlook, with its left-right mix of relativism and jingoism. If we're no better than anyone else, why not act like everyone else? If phrases such as "the free world" or the "liberal international order" are ideological ploys by which the Davos elite swindle the proletarians of Detroit, why sacrifice blood and treasure on their behalf? Nationalism is usually a form of moral earnestness. Mr. Trump's genius has been to transform it into an expression of cynicism.

That cynicism won't be easy to defeat. Right now, a courageous Russian opposition activist named Vladimir Kara-Murza is fighting for his life in a Moscow hospital, having been poisoned for a second time by you-can-easily-guess-who. Assuming Mr. Trump is even aware of the case, would he be wrong in betting that most Americans are as indifferent to his fate as he is?

The larger question for conservatives is how Mr. Trump's dim view of the world will serve them over time. Honorable Republicans such as Nebraska's Sen. Ben Sasse have been

unequivocal in their outrage, which will surely cost them politically. Others have hit the mute button, on the theory that it's foolish to be baited by the president's every crass utterance. The risk is that silence quickly becomes a form of

acquiescence. Besides, since when did conservatives reared to their convictions by the rhetoric of Winston Churchill and Ronald Reagan hold words so cheap?

Speaking of Reagan, Feb. 6 would have been his 106th birthday.

Perhaps because he had been an actor, the 40th president knew that Americans preferred stories in which good guys triumphed over bad ones, not the ones in which they were pretty much all alike. Conservatives should beware the

president's invitation to a political film noir in which the outcome is invariably bleak.

Write bstephens@wsj.com

**The
New York
Times**

Naomi Klein : Labor Leaders' Cheap Deal With Trump

Naomi Klein

And Mr. Trump's nominee for the Supreme Court, Neil Gorsuch, has ruled in favor of employers far more frequently than workers.

Indeed, the more cleareyed unions are openly questioning whether their organizations will survive this administration. The Labor Network for Sustainability, in a report, warns this could be "an 'extinction-level event' for organized labor."

All this is an awful lot of ground to lose in exchange for mostly temporary jobs repairing highways and building oil pipelines.

And it's worth taking a closer look at the implications of those pipelines, along with the rest of Mr. Trump's climate-change denying agenda. A warming world is a catastrophe for the middle and working classes, even more than for the rich, who have the economic cushions to navigate most crises. It's working and precariously

unemployed people who tend to live in homes that are most vulnerable to extreme weather (as we saw during Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy) and whose savings, if they have any, can be entirely wiped out by a disaster.

It's natural to ask: In times of insecurity, why shouldn't unions worry more about jobs than about the environment? One reason is that responding to the urgency of the climate crisis has the potential to be the most powerful job creation machine since World War II. According to a Rockefeller Foundation-Deutsche Bank Climate Change Advisers study, energy-efficient retrofits in United States buildings alone could create "more than 3.3 million cumulative job years of employment." There are millions more jobs to be created in renewable energy, public transit and light rail.

Moreover, a great many of those jobs would be in the building trades — jobs for carpenters, ironworkers, welders, pipe fitters — whose union

leaders have been so cozy with Mr. Trump. These unions could be fighting for sustainable jobs in a green transition as part of a broad-based movement. Instead, they are doing public relations for the mostly temporary jobs Mr. Trump is offering — those building oil pipelines, weapons, prisons and border walls, while expanding the highway system even as public transit faces drastic cuts.

The good news is that the sectors that have made common cause with Mr. Trump represent less than a quarter of all unionized workers. And many other unions see the enormous potential in a green New Deal.

"We must make the transition to a clean energy economy now in order to create millions of good jobs, rebuild the American middle class, and avert catastrophe," George Gresham, president of 1199 S.E.I.U., the largest health care union in the nation, said in a statement two days after Mr. Trump's pipeline executive orders.

Other unionized workers, like New York's Taxi Workers Alliance, showed their opposition to Mr. Trump's travel ban by refusing fares to and from Kennedy Airport during the protests.

For a long time, these different approaches were papered over under the banner of solidarity. But now some union heads are creating a rift by showing so little solidarity with their fellow union members, particularly immigrants and public sector workers who find themselves under assault by Mr. Trump.

Today labor leaders face a clear choice. They can join the diverse and growing movement that is confronting Mr. Trump's agenda on every front and attempt to lead America's workers to a clean and safe future.

Or they can be the fist-pumping construction crew for a Trump dystopia — muscle for a menace.

**The
New York
Times**

Arbeiter : I'm Pro-Life, and Pro-Refugee

Scott Arbeiter

A banner last month at the March for Life in Washington. At Drago/The New York Times

I am an evangelical Christian, and central to that is my belief in the sanctity of all life — a belief that, like millions of other evangelicals, I have expressed through my opposition to abortion. Over the past 40 years my wife and I have joined silent prayer walks and have given to crisis pregnancy centers. We have written to our elected leaders, debated with friends and family who disagreed with us and sought to influence our culture to value life at every stage, especially those not yet born.

We have grieved for the loss of so many lives, so full of potential never realized. We have always believed that protecting life is an obligation for us, for any elected official we support and especially for judges who interpret our laws. That is why we are grateful that President Trump has said that value for those not yet born was an important criterion in choosing his first nominee to the Supreme Court.

But in recent years, I have come to realize that being pro-life requires more of me. My compassion and my advocacy must mature into giving equal care for the young mother who carries that child. I can no longer persuade myself that the birth of the child is the end of my pro-life agenda. I must be "pro" everything needed for that child not just to be born, but to flourish.

This means that I need to be pro education and pro job growth, and pro many other things I never considered as connected to my pro-life convictions. And I need to be ready to stand against every form of economic injustice, racism and individual or corporate greed that destroys the life of a family and a community.

Of course, my being pro-life never meant not caring about education or jobs, but I suspect like many people, I tended to see these as unrelated issues. Being pro-life has always been a deeply moral question; it still is. However, I now see that to be fully pro-life I must broaden my sense of morality and embrace a wider agenda.

My maturing pro-life views have also caused me to examine how I grapple with the question of war, nuclear proliferation and other causes I never used to consider pro-life. And it causes me to ask more of pro-life candidates and officials before I offer my full support.

These evolving beliefs come at a time when many pro-life Americans feel bullish. Not only has the new administration sided strongly with them, but as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports, the abortion rate in the United States has been falling steadily. The Guttmacher Institute reported last month that the rate of abortions per 1,000 women has fallen to the lowest rate since Roe v. Wade was decided in 1973. While the causes for this decrease are complex, many of us who are pro-life found this to be good news.

I hope my fellow evangelicals will join me in neither resting on the recent positive developments nor focusing solely on the traditional pro-life agenda. There is reason for hope, but there is so much yet to be done to protect the not yet born and

those born into broken systems. The rate of incarceration for black males continues to be six times that of white males. Millions of lower-income Americans lack access to quality food, education and health care. We must also take up these causes, and others.

Or take another issue, right now in the news and central to my work: our country's response to the global refugee crisis. I understand the concern that many of my neighbors have about security. But how can I demand absolute security for myself (which I do not expect or demand in any other part of my life) while 65 million people are fleeing the very terrorism, war and persecution that are the antithesis of life?

The fact is, no refugees can simply choose to come to the United States. They can enter the United States only if invited by the State Department. More than that, they must generally undergo 18 to 24 months of vetting by the Department of Homeland Security, F.B.I. and other agencies.

Since 1980, three million refugees have been resettled in the United States. In that time not one has

taken the life of an American in an act of terrorism. The conservative Cato Institute estimates that the likelihood of an individual American being killed in an act of terrorism committed by a

refugee is one in 3.64 billion a year. Somehow it does not feel truly and fully pro-life to be unwilling to give up one-3.64 billionth of my security to make room for someone bombed

out of their city, someone who is homeless, cold and unwelcomed.

I remain as concerned as ever about the well-being of children still in the womb, and I continue to

advocate policies that protect them. I am pro-life — but I hope to become more so.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

McGurn : Who's 'Normalizing' Donald Trump Now?

William McGurn

Updated Feb. 6,

2017 7:21 p.m. ET

Quick: What do "Tonight Show" host Jimmy Fallon, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, NBC's "Saturday Night Live," US Weekly and former President Barack Obama have in common?

All have been accused of the high crime of "normalizing" Donald Trump. The idea is that anyone not relentlessly emoting against the 45th president is helping him build the new Reich. As with so much of the Sturm und Drang surrounding Mr. Trump, the point here is not to advance an anti-Trump argument but to preclude argument altogether.

After all, does one argue with Hitler?

The crazy is not entirely mad. In 2009, activists note, Republicans found themselves in a similar fix, with Mr. Obama ensconced in the Oval Office and lopsided Democratic majorities running Congress. By crashing Mr. Trump's administration, the activists hope to excite their base and revive their party the way Republicans did.

Perhaps. But there's a good argument that the Democrats are getting played. This was, in fact, the headline over a recent New York Daily News piece by Mike Gecan, co-director of the Industrial Areas Foundation—the same IAF that was

co-founded by Saul Alinsky and helped inspire a young community organizer named Barack Obama.

Mr. Gecan argues that the parallel for what's happening in Washington right now is Wisconsin in 2011. Back then, Gov. Scott Walker backed a bill stripping public-employee unions of collective-bargaining rights. The left erupted in protest, with demonstrators occupying the State Capitol and a movement pushing a recall of the governor in what became a national drama.

Just one problem: It didn't work. The bill was passed and ruled constitutional. Gov. Walker won the 2012 recall election in June even as Mr. Obama carried Wisconsin in the presidential in November. And Republicans increased their majorities in the Wisconsin state House and Senate.

Mr. Gecan says protest is no substitute for hard, grass-roots persuasion. "Many Dems either don't know how to relate to people with moderate or mixed views or they don't want to," he writes. "They prefer rock stars and celebrities to bus drivers and food service workers. They like cute sayings and clever picket signs, not long and patient listening sessions with people who have complicated interests, people who might not pass the liberal litmus test."

Certainly it's possible Mr. Trump will end up alienating people who would otherwise work with him but are

wary of cracks such as the one implying a moral equivalence between America and Vladimir Putin's Russia. Yet the American people are not hearing Mr. Trump in a vacuum. They are hearing him in the context of what is coming from the mouths of his critics, the extravagance of which risks overwhelming anything preposterous Mr. Trump might say himself.

One example: Have any of those outraged by Mr. Trump's tweet disparaging a "so-called judge" paid the least attention to the glaring emptiness of legal reasoning behind the judge's stay? Ditto for Sally Yates: Anyone else spot the irony in praising a Justice Department appointee for standing up to fascism with an unconstitutional challenge to executive authority?

These are only the mildest forms. At the Women's March on Washington, Americans heard Madonna fantasize about bombing the White House. On Twitter, they read a then-Politico journalist use a four-letter obscenity to suggest an incestuous relationship between the president and his daughter. Last week American TV screens were filled with images of the champions of tolerance setting fires and smashing windows at Berkeley to stop a gay conservative from addressing College Republicans. On, Wisconsin!

Now Mr. Trump's progressive opponents seem determined to eat

their own. Recently they protested outside Mr. Schumer's Brooklyn home, under the banner of that same four-letter obscenity, which is highly popular among those who regard Mr. Trump as the triumph of the vulgar.

In New York, where Hillary Clinton won nearly 80% of the citywide vote, this kind of protest may be a crowd pleaser. So is a strategy that calls for boycotting presidential inaugurations, not showing up for Senate committee votes or voting "no" on every Trump cabinet pick. But in, say, North Dakota—a state Mr. Trump carried by 36 points and where Sen. Heidi Heitkamp is up for re-election in 2018—folks might see things differently.

Again, it's entirely possible President Trump has unleashed furies that will do him in or at least prevent him from doing his job. But the Wisconsin outcome remains equally possible. Which two years from now would leave Mr. Schumer leading an even more shrunken Democratic Party, especially if President Trump manages to get the economy growing again.

If the Wisconsin outcome happens, it won't be the pro-Trumpers who normalized him. It will be the enemies who shunned democratic politics in favor of celebrity preening, F-bombs and protests designed to intimidate.

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The New York Times

Editorial : Congress Moves to Roll Back a Sensible Obama Gun Policy

The Editorial Board

Republican lawmakers and the National Rifle Association often attribute gun massacres to the country's inadequate mental health system, rather than the easy availability of firearms. Now, those same people want to make it easier for those with schizophrenia, psychotic disorders and other mental health problems to buy guns.

The House voted last week to scrap a policy the Obama administration finalized in December that would have added to the national background check database about 75,000 people who receive Social Security disability benefits because

they have mental health problems. People who would be added to the database under this policy have conditions that make it impossible for them to work, cannot manage their own affairs and have someone else receive benefits on their behalf.

Wayne LaPierre, the National Rifle Association's executive vice president, meeting with President Trump at the White House last week. Carlos Barria/Reuters

Licensed gun dealers must check the database before selling firearms. The Senate could pass the legislation to overturn the Obama regulation this week, and President Trump, who has embraced many of the N.R.A.'s extremist positions, would almost surely sign it into law.

The Obama administration policy was inspired in part by the 2012 school shooting in Newtown, Conn., by Adam Lanza, who killed 20 children and six educators. An investigation found that psychiatrists had recommended that Mr. Lanza be treated for obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety and anorexia, calling attention to the need to keep guns from people with severe mental health problems.

Federal law prohibits people who have been "adjudicated as a mental defective" or involuntarily committed to a mental institution from buying guns. But it has been hard to enforce that restriction because government agencies have not always submitted the names of people with mental health problems

to the background check database. The Obama policy was intended to address that weakness by guaranteeing more reporting.

While most people with mental health problems never commit violence, it makes no sense to give them access to the kind of assault weapons that can kill scores of people in minutes. That's why the push to repeal this Obama policy is deeply troubling. Even Republican lawmakers like Senator John Cornyn of Texas have previously said that the deeply mentally ill should not be able to buy guns.

The Social Security Administration would have to notify people that they are being reported to the database and provide a way for

them to appeal their inclusion. But critics of the Obama policy such as Republican lawmakers, the N.R.A., the American Civil Liberties Union and some organizations that advocate on

behalf of the disabled say those protections are not sufficient. They argue that the rule unfairly limits the Second Amendment rights of people receiving disability benefits without going through an additional

legal process to establish their impairment.

But the fact that these people receive government benefits because of serious mental health

problems gives officials justification for including them in the database.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Miller : Don't Repeal Obama's Modest Gun Limit

Dinah Miller

Feb. 6, 2017

7:11 p.m. ET

The House last week voted to overrule an Obama administration regulation prohibiting gun ownership by a small group of people with severe psychiatric disorders. The Senate shouldn't follow suit. The Obama rule is sensible, and to expend energy repealing it implies there should be no reasonable limits on firearms ownership.

While I favor stricter gun control, I don't believe anyone should be denied a civil right based solely on a psychiatric complaint or diagnosis. Psychiatric illness is not a reliable predictor of violence, and our diagnoses are imprecise and subject to change over time. In any given year, 1 in 5 Americans suffers from a psychiatric disorder; over the course of a lifetime, half of us will have at least one episode of mental illness. Associating gun violence

with "mental illness" paints with a very broad brush and may discourage people with problems from seeking care for fear of losing gun rights.

But the Obama regulation is a very thin brush stroke. It applies only to those whose mental illnesses impair their ability to work enough to qualify them for Social Security Disability Insurance *and* who are deemed unable to manage their own benefits—some 75,000 Americans in all.

Disability groups have opposed the regulation on the grounds that it stigmatizes those with mental illness. But the vast majority of people with psychiatric conditions are able to work, and SSDI benefits are hard to get. Recipients have gone through prolonged periods of inability to work. In short, their conditions are severe, chronic and disabling.

Even then, the majority of recipients remain capable of managing their finances, so that their gun rights are unaffected by the Obama regulation. When an adult is considered unable to manage his own money, it is for one of two reasons: cognitive impairment or notably poor judgment. These—not mental illness alone—are the defining features of the Obama regulation.

The National Rifle Association claims the regulation violates due process. But the determination that an SSDI recipient is unable to manage his benefits is made by an administrative law judge and can be appealed. By contrast, many state laws deny gun rights based on far less stringent criteria and without procedural protections. New Yorkers can lose their gun rights based solely on a therapist's opinion that they are "likely" to be dangerous. California bans gun ownership for five years after an

involuntary psychiatric hold, which can be issued by a clinician or police officer without a hearing.

Taking away a civil right should never be done lightly, and mental illness is a poor predictor of violence. On the other hand, people with serious psychiatric disorders have a significantly elevated risk of suicide, the most common reason for death by firearms.

It does seem to hit the mark of common sense that patients who are so ill that they are unable to work, and who exhibit cognitive impairment or poor judgment so profound that they can't manage their own finances, should not be permitted to own firearms.

Dr. Miller is a psychiatrist in Baltimore and is co-author, with Annette Hanson, of "Committed: The Battle Over Involuntary Psychiatric Care" (Johns Hopkins, 2016).