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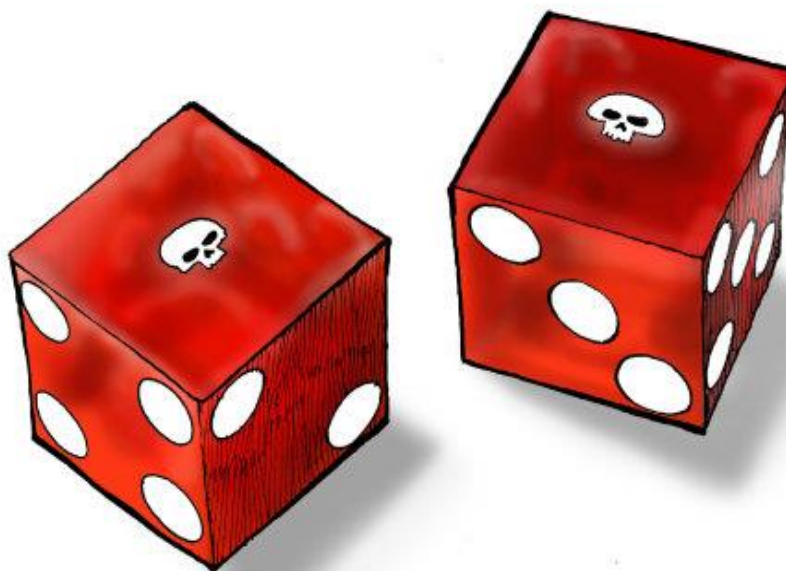


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FRANCE – EUROPE



Paris to Increase Security Around Eiffel Tower

Aurelien Breeden

Soldiers on patrol at the base of the Eiffel Tower in January 2016. Dmitry Kostyukov for The New York Times

PARIS — The iron lady, as the French affectionately call the Eiffel Tower, is getting a security upgrade.

Paris officials said on Thursday that the city planned to make the landmark safer by extending the security perimeter at its base to include two small public gardens on its eastern and western sides, and by building walls on the northern and southern edges.

As a major tourist destination that has endured several deadly terrorist attacks in recent years, Paris wants to ensure that the millions of visitors who come here every year feel not only welcome but also safe as they tour the city's crowded attractions.

After the project was announced, local authorities rushed to ease worries that the tower would soon become a "bunker."

The newspaper Le Parisien, which first reported the project, said on Thursday that the head of the company that manages the Eiffel Tower had told city councilors the

plan was to build a "bulletproof fence" made of glass. The fence, according to the newspaper, would be about eight feet high.

Several city councilors told the newspaper they worried about the tower becoming a "fortress," and one of them, the center-right councilor Yves Pozzo di Borgo, later posted on Twitter: "The Eiffel Tower, new bunker."

But Jean-François Martins, the deputy mayor in charge of tourism, said in a telephone interview that the city was only tweaking existing security measures, and that it was too early to say what the enclosure would be made of.

"It could be glass, it could also be wrought iron," Mr. Martins said, adding that the walls would not block views of the tower, which was built for the 1889 World's Fair and attracts six million tourists every year.

Security checks would be moved to the garden entrances on each side, but visitors would still be able to reach the tower's base free of charge, he said.

The French authorities say that the Eiffel Tower, arguably the capital's most iconic landmark, is a major

target for terrorists. After the November 2015 attacks in and around Paris that killed 130 people, the authorities closed the tower for two days.

During the European soccer tournament last year, the city buffed up security around the Eiffel Tower and the Champ de Mars, the park that stretches southward from its base, where the authorities had set up an area for fans to party and watch games on giant screens.

Mr. Martins said the project announced on Thursday aimed to replace the "ugly" metal barriers and temporary buildings that stayed behind after the tournament ended.

"Because the risk and the threat are, unfortunately, here to last, the idea is to make the security setup more durable, but to do it in a way that is aesthetically nicer and more elegant than it is today," he said.

The project will be examined in the spring by a committee that monitors construction around historical landmarks, and it must also be approved by the environment ministry.

Officials hope to begin construction by the end of the year, Mr. Martins said.

The city said the enclosure was part of a wider set of renovations at the Eiffel Tower that would cost 300 million euros, or about \$320 million, over 15 years. Those include a paint job, elevator renovations and the replacement of thousands of flashing bulbs that make the tower sparkle every hour on the hour.

Paris and the surrounding region are top tourist destinations, attracting 47 million visitors every year, according to the city authorities. Officials said in a statement that the Eiffel Tower was the "symbol of Paris and the most visited paying monument in the world."

But the city continues to be rattled by attacks.

Last week, an Egyptian man armed with two large knives assaulted a military patrol near an entrance to the Louvre museum, and in September French security forces disrupted a plot by a group of radicalized women to set off an explosion near the Cathedral of Notre-Dame with a car stuffed with gas canisters.



The Christian Science Monitor

Paris putting glass walls around its Eiffel Tower?

February 9, 2017 —Parisian authorities are planning to erect an 8-foot wall of reinforced glass around the Eiffel Tower, in a security measure designed to function as a more aesthetically pleasing replacement of a metal fence that went up last year for the Euro 2016 soccer championship.

Paris officials have also proposed a \$318-million modernization of the 128-year-old monument that includes better elevators and lights, more security, and a renovated visitor entrance, according to CNN Money. Officials say that the new see-through panels will afford visitors a view of the monument

from the popular Champ de Mars park and the Iena Bridge, unlike the metal fences.

"We will replace the metal grids to the north and south with glass panels which will allow Parisians and visitors a very pleasant view of the monument," the assistant mayor for tourism, Jean-François Martins, told the BBC.

The construction seems a symbol of how conspicuous security measures deployed by the French government in the wake of terrorist attacks have gradually become normalized, especially in tourist-heavy Paris.

"The terror threat remains high in Paris and the most vulnerable sites, led by the Eiffel Tower, must be the

object of special security measures," Mr. Martins added.

The announcement one week after a machete attack on French troops stationed outside the Louvre Museum ended with the attacker, Egyptian citizen Abdullah Reda Al-Hamamy, shot four times. He has told officials he wanted to damage paintings and "avenge the Syrian people," according to Reuters. The museum was reopened last weekend after closing briefly, in what was perhaps a testament to much of the city's "business-as-usual" attitude toward the incident.

The November 2015 massacre in Paris, orchestrated by a man suspected by Belgian authorities of being an Islamic State fighter, was a

turning point for security agencies in France and across Europe, with governments considering new means of intelligence-sharing and rethinking privacy safeguards, as The Christian Science Monitor's Rachel Stern reported last February:

"Intelligence agencies are talking now, both because of the panic and, quite frankly, practically because lives are at stake," said Scott Stewart, vice president of tactical analysis at Stratfor, a global intelligence and advisory firm. "Politically we can't be seen dropping that same ball again." Before the attacks, only half of the European Union's 28 countries participated in intelligence exchange through Europol, the EU's law enforcement agency, according

to press spokesperson Jan Op Gen Oorth. Now all belong, and three are in the process of joining.

In France, the expansion of policing has been particularly aggressive, including the extension of emergency security measures originally put in place after the Paris



USA TODAY

After terrorists killed more than 230 people in France over the past few years, the Eiffel Tower will be ramping up security. Veuer's Nick Cardona (@nickcardona93) tells us what they're planning to do. Buzz60

Shingles with the names of victims of the Nice terror attack are displayed in Nice, France, on Feb. 9. On July 14, a truck smashed into a crowd in the French resort, killing 84 people as they watched a Bastille Day fireworks display. (Photo: AFP/Getty Images)

French anti-terrorism forces arrested four people, including a 16-year-old girl, and uncovered a makeshift laboratory with explosives material

attacks.

But as the Monitor's Sara Miller Llana and Colette Davidson wrote in the days after those attacks, some French still worry about going too far toward a "whatever it takes" mentality.

"Not whatever it takes," Paris resident Antoine Lippen told the Monitor at the time. "It would be too dangerous to block our own liberties when we know terrorist attacks are always cowardly attacks attacking at the place and time you least expect it, so there is always a breach in security, whatever is imposed."

This report contains material from Reuters and the Associated Press.

France thwarts suspected new terror attack

Kim Hjelmgaard ,
USA TODAY

as they thwarted a suspected new terror attack, the Paris prosecutor's office said Friday.

The arrests Friday were in the Montpellier area of southern France. The prosecutor's office said around 70 grams of TATP were seized. The explosive, which can be made from readily available ingredients, was used in the November 2015 attack in Paris and the March 2016 attack in Brussels carried out by Islamic State extremists. The men arrested were aged 20, 26 and 33.

Unconfirmed French media reports said the people arrested were planning a suicide bombing on a tourist site in Paris. The prosecutor's office, which handles terrorism investigations in France, has not commented on the reports.

The arrests came a week after a machete-wielding assailant who shouted "Allahu Akbar!" was shot by soldiers outside the Louvre Museum in central Paris. Investigators found no links between the Egyptian-born attacker and militant groups but the episode occurred as France remains on high alert for new attacks.

Amid heightened new security measures, Paris' city council announced this week that it plans to permanently install a bullet-proof glass barrier around the Eiffel Tower. A temporary fence was put in place last June.

More than 230 people have died in terror attacks in France over the last two years.

Earlier this week the White House released a list of 78 terror attacks that it claimed the media failed to adequately report.

The list followed comments from President Trump in which he said "in many cases, the very, very dishonest press doesn't want to report it."

White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer subsequently clarified Trump's remarks. "Protests will get blown out of the water, and yet an attack or a foiled attack doesn't necessarily get the same coverage," he said.

USA TODAY reported on 59 of the 78 attacks cited in the White House list.



associated press

PARIS — Feb 10, 2017, 7:21 AM ET

French anti-terrorism forces arrested four people on Friday, including a 16-year-old girl, and uncovered a makeshift laboratory with the explosive TATP and other base ingredients for fabricating a bomb, the Paris prosecutor's office said.

4 Arrested, Including Teen, Explosives Seized in French Raid

• By Iori
hinnant

The prosecutor's office said around 70 grams of TATP were seized in the home of a 20-year-old man, along with a liter each of acetone, oxygenated water and sulfuric acid. TATP, which can be made from readily available materials, was used in the November 2015 attack in Paris and the March 2016 attack in Brussels carried out by Islamic State extremists.

Two other men were arrested, a 33-year-old and a 26-year-old, along with the 16-year-old girl, according

to the prosecutor's office, which handles terrorism investigations in France.

A police official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the unfolding investigation, said one of the suspects was believed to be planning a suicide attack but that the investigation had not yet uncovered a specific target.

He said one in the group had tried to reach Syria in 2015 and was known to intelligence services. The group

— notably the girl — attracted new attention with their social media postings, he said.

"Faced with the heightened threat, there has been an extremely strong mobilization of our intelligence services to ensure the French as protected to the utmost," said Prime Minister Bernard Cazeneuve.

NPR : Demonstrations Continue Around Paris Over Alleged Sexual Assault By Police

Rebecca Hersher

Demonstrators have taken to the streets in and around Paris to protest the alleged beating and rape of a black man by French police.

The unrest has gone on nearly a week, and "rioters have clashed with police and have set fire to trash cans, cars and a nursery school," reported Jake Cigainero for NPR's Newscast unit.

Four police officers have been suspended and charged in connection with the incident, according to a statement by the French Interior Ministry. Three face assault charges and one faces a charge of rape.

The victim, referred to by officials as "Theo," gave the BBC a graphic account of what he says happened to him.

The BBC reported Theo said he left his house last Thursday evening and found himself in the middle of a police operation targeting drug dealers:

"Theo said he was sodomized with a truncheon, as well as racially abused, spat at and beaten around his genitals," the broadcaster reported. "He has undergone emergency surgery for severe anal injuries, and has been declared unfit for work for 60 days.

" 'I fell on to my stomach, I had no strength left,' he said.

"He was then sprayed with tear gas around the head and in the mouth and hit over the head."

On Tuesday, French President Francois Hollande visited Theo in the hospital, and later praising his dignity in a tweet, which included a photo of Hollande by his bedside.

CNN reported that police arrested 26 people on Wednesday, according to a spokesperson for the local prefecture in the suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis northeast of Paris, where the incident occurred.

Those arrests followed two previous nights of demonstrations in the region, CNN reported:

"A few miles away, near Paris' M\u00e9nilmontant metro station, several hundred demonstrators gathered to protest police violence. Authorities say 17 people were arrested in Aulnay-sous-Bois on Tuesday night, after protesters torched garbage bins and vehicles.

"Videos shared on social media showed clashes between riot police and youths as fires burned in the streets. Police fired warning shots into the air to disperse the crowd, according to French reports.

"On Monday, hundreds of peaceful protesters marched in the same northern suburb. Demonstrators carried banners reading 'Justice for Theo' past a nearby building that had 'police, rapists' written on it in graffiti."

Stephane Troussel, the president of the General Council of the Seine-Saint-Denis region, said the incident brought up "numerous questions," reported German broadcaster Deutsche Welle.

"Although thousands of police are doing their work properly...too many arrests end in nightmares for some young people. The image of the Republic is being tarnished," Troussel said.

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New York Daily News : Black man's alleged rape by French officers was accidental

BY Elizabeth Elizalde

A group of French police officers accused of beating and anally raping a black man with a baton did so accidentally, investigators said Thursday.

A 22-year-old man identified as Theo said four police officers sodomized him during an identity check on Feb 2.

One officer was charged with aggravated rape and the others with aggravated assault, French Interior Minister Bruno Le Roux said in a statement.

Police block a street as people gather to protest against an alleged police assault on a black man.

(GEOFFROY VAN DER HASSELT/AFP/Getty Images)

Theo reportedly suffered head trauma and had to undergo surgery for "severe anal injuries," France's The Local reported.

An earlier police investigation concluded that while Theo's incident was serious, there was no indication it was rape, and that his injuries were accidental.

Protesters burn garbage containers during a protest in support of a man allegedly abused while in police custody in Paris' Aulnay-sous-Bois suburb.

(-AFP/Getty Images)

"I would like to ask the residents of my neighborhood to calm down. I ask them to stop the hostilities

because I love my city, and I want to find it the way I left it," Theo told French news station BFMTV.

French President Francois Hollande visited the alleged victim at a suburban hospital Tuesday.

People march in the streets of Aulnay-sous-Bois, north of Paris, France, holding a sign reading "Justice for Theo" during a protest.

(Milos Krivokapic/AP)

He later posted a photo to Twitter with a caption saying, "Theo reacted with dignity and responsibility" and that "justice has been seized."

Video cited by French media showed the officers roughing up the young man against a wall, but police

claim Theo's pants "slipped down on their own."

The incident sparked protests Sunday across Paris and has continued through early Thursday morning, resulting in more than a dozen arrests.

The unrest also reflects the current tensions between police and residents in several communities where the unemployment rate is high among youth.

Send a Letter to the Editor

CNBC : French political turmoil clouds Moody's review

Sri Jegarajah

Heightened French political risk and policy uncertainty, reflected by a jump in sovereign yields and a weaker single currency, are clouding a scheduled ratings review by Moody's, economists and currency strategists told CNBC.

Moody's rates French government debt at Aa2, the third-highest investment grade ranking, but some are not ruling out a cut in the outlook to negative from stable. Others, however, said they believe such action is unlikely until after the conclusion of the French presidential elections and a clarification about the winner's economic platform and commitment to the European Union.

"The experience from similar episodes is that a country will be put on a negative outlook, but not downgraded until the worst is confirmed," said Benat Onatibia, macro strategist at Vanda Securities. "That's what happened with DBRS on the

Italian referendum. Hence, we see it as highly unlikely, especially given how low Le Pen's victory odds are."

Though trailing in the polls, far-right leader Marine Le Pen's call to take France out of the European Union is rattling financial markets, pushing the premium investors demand to hold French debt over German bonds to its highest since 2012.

Philippe Wojazer | Reuters

French National Front political party leader Marine Le Pen arrives at the Elysee Palace in Paris, France, to attend a meeting with government, main political parties leaders and presidents of the Parliament, November 15, 2015.

"The widening of this yield premium is a classic sign of increasing investor risk for France," said Heng Koon How, senior FX strategist at Credit Suisse. "We have long argued that markets are complacent about increasing political risk in Europe."

Cutting the outlook on French debt would "be a bit premature," Heng said, though Le Pen's publication of a 144-point manifesto to take France out of the Eurozone is contributing to elevated stress in the French debt, he said: "That worried investors."

Moody's last month warned of the rise of populist parties fielding candidates in 2017 elections and the impact on the future of the European Union.

"While it is unusual for changes in government to have material credit implications, the far-reaching nature and ubiquity of the political shifts under way means that the impact of the upcoming elections could be more significant from a credit perspective than is usually the case," Moody's said in its outlook on January 12.

Macquarie's FX strategy team said the expected Moody's ratings review was a "scheduled exercise" and didn't necessarily imply any action, "but should be worth monitoring

given how French yields have been rising in recent sessions."

Olivier Desbarres, independent G10 FX strategist suggested Moody's may even take action before the presidential polls conclude.

"Rating agencies want to come across as apolitical so if they think that a downgrade is justified they may not wait until after elections," Desbarres said. "The recent rise in French yields, although modest, could at the margin be stretching debt dynamics."

"Moreover, if the new president loosens fiscal policy, which most presidential candidates clearly want to do (with the exception of Fillon), that in itself could put France's credit ratings under pressure," he added.

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France Has a New Front-Runner. Can He Last?

With Fillon's campaign in turmoil, Emmanuel Macron now has a real shot at the presidency.

by

Gregory Viscusi

9 février 2017 à 19:00 UTC-5

From

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If France's 2017 presidential election were a movie, there would be no shortage of possible titles. *Revenge of the Third Man* or *The Curse of the Front-Runner*. Don't like them? With two and a half

months to go and the plot twists coming fast and thick, there will be plenty of other possibilities.

The French go to the polls on April 23 to choose from a slate of at least

five major candidates. If no one wins more than 50 percent—and no one ever has—then the top two face off on May 7. In the primaries held in November by the Republicans, the traditional center-right party, a late surge took François Fillon past former Prime Minister Alain Juppé and former President Nicolas Sarkozy. That victory made the 62-year-old Fillon the front-runner to be the next president. The most likely scenario seemed to be that he'd defeat the National Front's Marine Le Pen in the runoff as voters from other establishment parties coalesced around his candidacy to keep out the anti-European Union, anti-immigration Le Pen.

Fillon's campaign is now in turmoil. A newspaper reported in late January that his wife and two of his children were on the public payroll as his parliamentary assistants, earning a total of almost €1 million (\$1.1 million) over more than a decade. While it's not illegal for French lawmakers to hire family members, they must actually work

for their pay. Prosecutors are trying to determine whether the *famille* Fillon held real jobs.

The Republicans are deeply split between those who say Fillon should stand his ground and clear his name and those who say he should step down. Adding to the confusion: The party has no procedure to replace a candidate so close to an election. At a Feb. 6 news conference, Fillon gave an impassioned defense of his wife's work and said he'd campaign with renewed vigor.

Fillon has plummeted in the polls, and though he seems to have halted the slide, as things stand he wouldn't make the second round of voting. A poll conducted Feb. 7-8 by the Elabe survey group found that he'd run behind independent candidate Emmanuel Macron in the first round, with Macron getting at least 22 percent to Fillon's 17 percent. At 25.5 percent, Le Pen would take first place, but would be trounced by Macron in the second round, the poll found. That puts the

39-year-old Macron, who was minister of the economy from 2014 to 2016, in position to prevent France from becoming the first major European nation to fall to the populist wave that swept Donald Trump and Brexit to victory. A Le Pen win would almost certainly mean the end of the euro and maybe even the EU.

Macron's rallies are attracting crowds of believers in his vision of a plugged-in France open to the world and to new technologies. But he's under pressure to release a platform that goes beyond vision and gets into specifics. And with his technocratic background and belief in open borders, he's much shakier talking about national security in a country whose military is engaged in conflicts from the Sahara to Iraq and that's suffered more than 200 deaths at the hands of Islamic militants since January 2015. "Can Macron embody the image of a president of a country that's still at war, that's still facing a terrorism threat?" asks Bruno Cautres, a

political scientist at Sciences Po in Paris. "That's Macron's big challenge."

At a rally in Lyon on Feb. 5, just two days after a soldier shot a machete-wielding attacker at the Louvre, Le Pen pushed the theme of Islamic terror and gave a Trump-like view of a defenseless France at the mercy of open borders. She got big cheers when she said Trump's win was a victory of the people. Macron also held a rally in Lyon that weekend and proudly said his program has no walls. Polls say most French reject Le Pen, largely because she wants to take France out of the EU. But with more than two months to go, there's still time for more surprises.

—With Carol Matlack

The bottom line: Front-runner Fillon's family scandal has made Macron the chief contender to defeat Le Pen in France's presidential election.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

James Mackintosh : Treat French Debt Like Italy, but Don't Worry About Le Pen (online)

Updated Feb. 10, 2017 7:22 a.m. ET

France isn't Greece. But as investors worry about the impending presidential election, French bonds have shifted from trading like haven German bunds to be treated more like troubled Italian debt.

The reassessment of France—from part of the eurozone's financial core toward its periphery—shows the heightened concern about far-right National Front leader Marine Le Pen winning the presidency.

The effects on trading were visible even as fears about France receded this week. The daily move in French yields was much closer to that of Italy than of Germany, both as yields rose and fell. This shift began shortly before the U.S. elections in November, amid talk of a populist surge.

Ms. Le Pen will almost certainly lose, but that doesn't mean French bonds are wildly mispriced or traders are mistaken to treat France more like Italy than Germany.

Investors are trying to price two things: the risk that France leaves the euro and the loss that would result from being repaid in devalued francs instead of euros. Many, particularly outside France, think both risks have risen. Ms. Le Pen's chances are slight, I'll come to this later, but a "Frexit" from the euro would be so catastrophic for bondholders that even small increases in the chance she will

occupy the president's Élysée Palace have a big impact on bonds.

The point of introducing a new franc, as Ms. Le Pen has set out, would be to take back the central bank and print money to finance government spending. A plunge in the franc's value is certain, but France can't be considered in isolation. If France leaves the euro, it is hard to see how Spain or Italy could remain.

The euro could survive only as a kind of deutsche mark-plus, with hard-currency northern European countries sticking with Germany. This would amount to a catastrophe not only for holders of French bonds but for investors in Italy and Spain, too. When this is the focus, French bonds trade more like the periphery.

To see how French bonds trade, look at how much of their move is explained by the direction of Italian and German bonds. From the July 2012 promise by European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi to do "whatever it takes" to hold the euro together up to late October last year, French bonds moved much more closely with German bunds and had little link to Italian debt. Since fears of a global populist backlash began to increase in October, the situation has reversed, with French and Italian debt closely linked and the connection to German bonds weaker.

Bond-market treatment of France matches how the nation is regarded by economists. "France now is

somewhere between proper core and periphery," says Antonio Garcia Pascual, Europe chief economist at Barclays PLC. "None of these countries look in great shape, not France or Italy or Spain."

Something similar happened at the height of the last euro crisis, when those betting on a currency breakup began to lump France in with the periphery.

Yet, the absolute level of risk priced in to French bonds remains astonishingly low, with the 10-year yield on Thursday back below 1% and Italian bonds yielding below 2.2%. It is only relative to Germany that the fear shows up, with 10-year bunds yielding 0.31%.

A measure created by Roberto De Santis, an ECB economist, based on credit-default swaps, shows a rise in the past few months in the risk of eurozone bonds being repaid in a different currency in Italy, Spain and France. However, the rise was from a very low level, in the case of both France and Spain the lowest since late 2011.

But even a slightly higher chance of a bond apocalypse is enough to drive up the extra yield investors demand to hold French bonds.

Another explanation for the low French yield is the ECB's buying of €60 billion (\$64.19 billion) of eurozone bonds each month. As the manager of one large European hedge fund put it, "It's shocking how

wide [the France-Germany spread] is given the ECB's buying all the bonds."

In terms of Ms. Le Pen's chances, at best they've risen to negligible from nonexistent. Laurence Boone, AXA SA chief economist and a former adviser to French President François Hollande, points out that polls have been a good guide to Ms. Le Pen's support in the past. Even if the populist surge like that seen in the U.S. is repeated in France, polling errors would need to be far bigger to give her a hope in the French system. The latest polls give her only about a third of the vote if a second round pits her against current front-runner Emmanuel Macron, a centrist former economy minister.

Investors who think the world is being turned upside down by populists will still see value in betting that the French-German bond spread will widen far more on a Le Pen win. For everyone else, don't worry about boredom. There is an early test of European populist power in March with the Dutch elections, then the excitement of the German election later this year, and the wild card of a possible Italian election, complete with anti-euro populists who have a shot at government.

Corrections & Amplifications

The third chart of the graphic shows percentage point change in Italian bonds against French bonds from

Oct. 26 to Feb. 9. In a previous version of the graphic this was

incorrectly labelled as Oct. 25 to Feb. 9. (Feb. 10, 2017)

Write to James Mackintosh at James.Mackintosh@wsj.com



Le Pen May Get a Shock If She Tries to Pay French Debt in Francs

by Helene Fouquet and

Chiara Albanese

10 février 2017 à 06:03 UTC-5

- Investors question Le Pen's view on currency of debt payments
- 'We would need to re-assess our exposure': Banque Audi's Naud

Algebris' Gallo Finds More Populism in U.S. Than Europe

French Presidential candidate Marine Le Pen says most holders of the nation's debt don't care what currency they get repaid in. The investors themselves disagree.

If the re-denomination of the debt became a real possibility, "we would need to re-assess our exposure to France," said Yannick Naud, head of fixed income at Banque Audi in Geneva. "International emerging-market investors expect much higher yield for debt in local currency than in hard currency in

order to compensate for the currency risk. I would expect the same for France in this scenario."

Marine Le Pen on Feb. 9.

Photographer: Thomas Samson/AFP via Getty Images

The National Front leader is trying to convince French voters they can leave the European single currency without hurting their pocket books ahead of a presidential election in April. As part of her plan, she intends to take control of the Bank of France and print new francs to pay for welfare spending and to service the government's financial obligations.

Speaking in a two-hour television interview on Thursday, Le Pen defended the policy of re-denomination, saying that it wouldn't matter for investors, or the French people. Concerns that Le Pen will triumph in the elections have roiled markets this week, pushing the premium investors demand to hold French bonds over similarly maturity

German debt to the highest in more than four years.

"We don't care who owns France's debt, what matters is what type of contracts the debt is in," Le Pen said. Lenders "won't be repaid in euros, the contracts are in French law. And according to the IMF, 90 percent of the French debt is under French law, that means that only 10 percent would be at risk. It's the *lex monetae*," she said, referring to the right of a sovereign state to choose which currency it will use.

Polls show Le Pen is on course to lead the first round of voting in April, but is unlikely to win the decisive May 7 run-off. The French electoral system, a two-round direct vote, means the winner needs broad-based support making it difficult for more extreme candidates like Le Pen to take power.

Changing French debt into francs would constitute a default in the eyes of the major rating companies, according to Christian Lenk, senior market strategist at DZ Bank AG in Frankfurt. Moody's Investors Service

is due to scheduled to release an update on France's Aa2 rating on Friday.

The yield difference between French and German 10-year bonds widened two basis points to 70 basis points on Friday. Still, that's down from about 80 basis points on Tuesday, the highest since 2012.

"The major consideration for international investors" is "what the new French franc is worth relative to the old euro and relative to their own currency," said James Athey, a fixed income portfolio manager at Aberdeen Asset Management in London. "French investors might not care as much, but investors whose base currency is dollars or sterling would very much care as the base currency valuation of their holding could end up being significantly less."



French Far-Right Candidate Le Pen Opposes Dual Citizenship

By The Associated Press

PARIS — Feb 10,

2017, 5:39 AM ET

French far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen has vowed to request all

people with dual citizenship in France and other countries to choose only one nationality, except for Europeans and Russians.

She said this doesn't mean foreigners would need to leave the country, explaining they can stay "as

long as they respect French laws and values".

Le Pen said she considers Russia to be part of the "Europe of nations." In response to a specific question from a reporter on France 2 television Thursday night she said the

measure would involve Israel, since it's not a European country.

In early polls, Le Pen appears in a good position to be among the two top contenders and advance to the second round of the April-May presidential election.



Now Francois Fillon's Campaign Is Running into Money Problems

@HeleneFouquet
More stories by

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by

10 février 2017 à 00:00 UTC-5

- Republican outspent mainstream rivals winning party nomination
- Former President Sarkozy faces trial for illegal funding

Francois Fillon's efforts to climb back into contention in the French presidential race are running into financial constraints.

While the Republican has raised the most money so far, he also spent more than his mainstream rivals on his primary campaign. Added to that, his party is hyper-sensitive about the limits on campaign spending after running into trouble

with a splurge in 2012 and the belt-tightening is starting to show.

"Every day I look into our spending - every day," Fillon's campaign chief Patrick Stefanini said in an interview. "Every day my treasurer tells me it's not cash I should worry about, but spending."

For a dashboard tracking European political risk, click here

After almost seeing his candidacy derailed by allegations he'd handed his wife an unjustified public salary, Fillon can ill afford any missteps on campaign financing. Indeed, his defeated primary opponent, former President Nicolas Sarkozy, stands as a cautionary tale. Sarkozy is due to stand trial for spending violations during his losing 2012 campaign and has already incurred fines that nearly bankrupted his party.

The money involved in a French presidential election is nothing like

what's spent in the U.S. The entire French campaign may cost barely 100 million euros while Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton spent \$1.8 billion on their battle for the White House. The challenge for French candidates is as much about how to deploy their funds as how to raise them.

Primary Battle

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Fillon spent just under 1.5 million euros (\$1.6 million) on his primary campaign as he overturned party grandees

Alain Juppe and Sarkozy to score a shock victory. By comparison, Socialist Benoit Hamon spent just 150,000 euros on securing his nomination and the independent

Emmanuel Macron, the favorite to win, didn't even fight a primary. A spokesman for nationalist

Marine Le Pen declined to comment on her spending.

Alain Juppe.

Photographer: Marlene Awaad/Bloomberg

Team Fillon is having to count the pennies just as their man needs new impetus. A torrid couple of weeks saw the one-time front-runner slip to third place in the polls after he was dragged into preliminary criminal investigation for alleged nepotism over his wife's job.

Read more: an explainer on the Fillon affair

While Le Pen, Macron and even far-leftist Jean-Luc Melenchon are booking stadiums and conference centers in major cities like Lyon and

Paris, Fillon is making do with more modest settings.

He spoke in small meeting room in the northeastern Ardennes region on Feb. 2 and visited a factory on Feb. 7 though the budget did stretch to the iconic Futuroscope center in Poitiers on Thursday. Even before he went underground during the first week of the scandal, Fillon's relatively low profile had led the French press to dub him "the invisible candidate."

Sarkozy Indictment

It's a far cry from 2012 when Sarkozy was renting out sports grounds for elaborate rallies and throwing cocktail parties for privileged insiders. A French judge this week ordered Sarkozy should stand trial for allegedly attempting to cover up spending of at least 42.8 million euros -- almost twice the campaign limit.

"For the Republicans 2012 is a trauma," Rene Dosiere, a Socialist lawmaker who specializes in the use of public money, said in an interview. "Sarkozy's spending went totally out of line and he nearly ruined his party. Fillon is trying to avoid that at all costs."

The first meeting after news broke that he employed his wife as a parliamentary assistant was a symbol of the Fillon campaign's austerity. Over 10,000 supporters gathered in a warehouse-like hall out by the beltway in northern Paris. The decoration was minimal and there was no cocktail party for VIPs afterward.

Under election rules implemented in 1988 after a string of scandals, French candidates can spend as much as 16.9 million euros on campaigning for the first round while the ceiling rises to 22.5 million euros for the two contenders who reach

the run-off on May 7. Anyone who gets more than 5 percent of the vote has almost half of their spending refunded by the state.

Banks Take Sides

Le Pen's anti-euro campaign, still tainted by her party's racist past, says French banks have refused her funding, unlike in 2012 when Societe Generale helped finance her presidential bid. She's taken a 6 million euro loan from her father to sustain her operations and told Paris Match she is seeking additional financing in the U.S.

Running as an independent means Macron doesn't have the financial heft of a party machine behind him. He's raised 5 million euros from private donations so far and is aiming to pull in another 2 million euros. He's also negotiating with two banks for a loan of 8 million euros, a

spokesman said, declining to specify how much the candidate had spent.

Macron's more streamlined campaign also has much lower overheads than Fillon, paying 20,000 euros a month for its headquarters. Fillon's staff are based in a 27,000 square-foot (2,500 square-meter) space in southern Paris which costs 150,000 euros a month, according to funding chief Vincent Chriqui.

Chriqui said he's allocated about half the campaign's budget to electoral meetings and Fillon has asked him to be "very rigorous" to make sure they don't exceed the spending limits.

"They want to avoid taking any risks," Dosiere said. "They are very conservative in their spending now."

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New York daily News : McDonald's gets a French makeover with croissants, chokolatines

BY Jeanette Settembre

Call it Le Big Mac.

A new French-inspired McDonald's has landed in Chelsea serving freshly baked Parisian sweets like croissants and chokolatines alongside its gut-busting burgers and French fries.

And don't expect to see Ronald McDonald or the Hamburglar lurking anywhere in sight. The super-sized chain called in French designer Patrick Norguet to give the Golden Arches a facelift. The new restaurant, labeled McCafé outside, is the first of its kind in the US and features a sleek, minimalist interior with an open counter ordering area, redesigned kitchen and posh, high top red chairs with communal seating.

It basically looks like an an upscale Panera Bread.

People selling McDonald's special

sauce online for up to \$10G

"This model emphasizes simplicity to set the stage for a different kind of McDonald's experience," said franchisee PJ Fonseca.

The entrance is almost unrecognizable with a subtle yellow "M" at the top of the building's silver facade. Guests at the 809 6th Ave. location are greeted by a restaurant host, and can order from kiosks built into the wall.

Customers can browse menu items like a new apple pie with a fancy lattice crust, blueberry muffin toppers, raspberry petite pastries and a cinnamon coffee cake to go along with the McCafé espresso.

"It's very sleek and chill. It doesn't feel like a McDonald's at all," one patron, who tried the blueberry muffin topper, noted Thursday adding: "It tasted more Pillsbury than Jacques Torres, but it was good!"

McDonald's sales fall for first time in 6 quarters

The price is right. All pastries are \$1.29 and under. While it's no Dominique Ansel, the French sweets are a bargain compared to other French chains like Le Pain Quotidien, which hawks \$4 croissants.

There's also a Signature Crafted section with savory chicken sandwiches like the maple bacon dijon variety, and customizable burgers.

Of course, it wouldn't be Mickey Dee's without a selection of new Big Macs, like the double cheesy, extra beefy, Grand Mac topped with special sauce, lettuce, onions and pickles. And don't worry, Chicken McNugget fans, McDonald's entire all-American menu is still available.

It's not the first time a fast food chain has experimented with a more upscale concept. Chick-fil-A opened its first three-level location in

Midtown two years ago with "waiters" taking orders on iPads. Starbucks also took a bite out of the fast casual restaurant concept in 2015 when it started slinging meatballs and Malbec with its macchiatos in Brooklyn as part of its "Starbucks Evenings" menu.

McDonald's film 'The Founder' loses its way

There will be several more McCafé concepts opening in New York City in the "near future," a company spokesperson told the Daily News.

The New York Times For Roma in France, Education Is an Elusive Path to Integration

Martin de Bourmont

BOBIGNY, France — After the shantytown he was living in burned to the ground, Slavi and his siblings slept in the trunk of a car for several weeks one winter. When police officers confiscated the car and moved them on, they did not allow the children to even retrieve their shoes.

Today, however, Slavi is lucky enough to have something that most Roma children do not: a classroom that allows him to imagine a future beyond the shacks and the frigid train station halls in which he has spent most of his 11 years.

"When I first started coming here, I didn't really know what school was," said Slavi, reflecting on his school, Marie Curie, in this Paris suburb. "School will help me a lot. More than anything."

On that, most agree. But while there is consensus that public education could help integrate a Roma population that has long faced systematic discrimination, the obstacles remain formidable.

In France, schooling is mandatory between the ages of 6 and 16, but about 67 percent of Roma children do not regularly attend.

The reasons often have to do with a lack of stable housing or bureaucratic obstacles that

advocates for the Roma, also known as Gypsies, say are deliberately heightened to keep the Roma out, perpetuating a vicious cycle of poverty and marginalization.

In the case of Slavi, whose surname name is being withheld because he is a minor, the director of Marie Curie, Véronique Decker, and the school's teachers stepped in to help after his shantytown burned down in 2014.

They found housing for the children and their families. And they demanded that the municipal government allow the Roma children who had begun their education in Bobigny to continue studying here.

The city obliged, but provided no support. So Ms. Decker and her colleagues sought funding from a foundation to subsidize the children's daily transportation costs. With the help of government grants and charitable organizations, the teachers provided the children with school supplies and clothes.

But such compassionate intervention is exceptional — and would be unnecessary, Roma advocates say, if the state and local authorities lowered the barriers to public education for the Roma.

Ms. Decker, for one, said the problem stemmed partly from the refusal of local governments to respect the law. Educators, she said, should act as a bulwark against discrimination.

Véronique Decker, the director of the Marie Curie school in Bobigny. She and the school's teachers demanded that the municipal government allow the Roma children who began their education in Bobigny to continue studying there. Dmitry Kostyukov for The New York Times

"If all the school directors had registered the children in their district, without asking the mayor for permission, saying 'Excuse me, they are in my school district, I am taking them,' we wouldn't have this problem," she said.

François Loret, an administrator for the National Human Rights Collective Romeurope, also attributed much of the failure of

Roma integration to discrimination and a lack of political will.

Since 2012, Mr. Loret has worked with the Roma in the Val Maubée, an agglomeration of six towns about 25 miles east of Paris.

"That's when we discovered there were four to five hundred people in the area" of thick forests, Mr. Loret said, referring to the Roma.

About 250 remain today after years of trying to help them get jobs, medical care and schooling. The obstacles have been sometimes overt, sometimes subtle, but always persistent and numerous.

When Mr. Loret and his associates — a network of concerned citizens, political activists and union members — began efforts to register children for school in the town of Champs-sur-Marne, the children were denied access.

The town hall cited a lack of identity papers. Only in mid-November 2012, after obtaining birth certificates, identity cards and soliciting a visit from the state inspector of schools, were the children able to go to school.

"The teachers told us they rediscovered a sense of purpose in their work," Mr. Loret said, "and that these kids were boosters for the classes because they want to learn about everything."

This victory proved short-lived.

Champs-sur-Marne refused to include Roma children during its annual distribution of sweets and dictionaries to local children. Town hall employees also took down an exhibit on Roma life featuring pictures taken by Roma children.

The following school year, Champs-sur-Marne required Roma children to pay roughly \$13 a meal for access to the school cafeteria, a price high above the \$1.20 ordinarily charged to children from low-income families.

The town also assigned Roma children to schools far from the shantytowns and camps where they lived. Local bus drivers often refused to drive the Roma.

After escaping homelessness thanks to the support of a schoolteacher and her parents' tireless efforts, Anina Ciuciu went on to finish high school and earned a law degree at the Sorbonne. Dmitry Kostyukov for The New York Times

So the children walked the two miles to school. For the mothers, who accompanied the children to and from school and brought them food at noon, this meant walking more than 10 miles a day.

Maud Tallet, the mayor of Champs-sur-Marne, defended her town's actions, saying that it reserves reduced cafeteria tariffs for the children of taxpayers. Moreover, she said, the town assigns children to schools with the space to accommodate them.

She also noted the Roma children's poor school attendance. Pressed on the matter of evictions impairing the children's ability to attend school, she replied that "no one has the right to settle on land that does not belong to them."

Alexandre Le Cleve, a legal expert who specializes in the rights of foreigners, said families and the state bore equal responsibility for ensuring a child's education.

"Today, a child — whether French or foreign, whether they were born in

the township or have only been present for a few days — must be registered by the township," he said.

Sylvain Mathieu, a delegate for the illicit encampment and shantytown division of the Interministerial Delegation for Accommodation and Access to Housing, pointed out that while French authorities were allowed to evict the Roma from camps for safety and sanitary reasons, they were obliged to offer solutions for housing, schooling, employment and health.

There is little doubt that the never-ending cycle of eviction and relocation of Roma families poses a significant obstacle to schooling.

With a safe place to live, young people stand a chance of overcoming poverty and marginalization. That is the lesson offered by Anina Ciuciu.

"I was only able to study when I had access to stable housing," said Ms. Ciuciu, who arrived in France in 1997.

After escaping homelessness thanks to the support of a schoolteacher and her parents' tireless efforts to secure housing, she went on to finish high school and university before earning a law degree at the Sorbonne.

Today, Ms. Ciuciu works as legal support coordinator for a nongovernmental organization that promotes Roma rights, while preparing to begin her career in human rights law.

"Before we had housing, my sisters and I couldn't attend school," she said. "We were always moving, and these conditions do not allow one to go to school everyday, to be clean."



A French farmer fed and sheltered migrants. Now he faces 5 years in prison.

By James McAuley

BREIL-SUR-ROYA, France — The house, if you can call it that, is nearly impossible to find. Unless you happen to be a migrant — then you probably know the place. And, by word of mouth, its owner.

A self-described "extreme leftist" with the requisite beard and unruly ponytail, Cédric Herrou — once an auto mechanic, then a steeplejack — is now technically an olive farmer, living out of a crumbling, 19th-century cottage in the middle of nowhere, on a rocky incline high above a riverbed. But Herrou's focus is no longer the picholines that grow

on his trees. These days, what matters are the migrants.

For the past two years, Herrou, 37, has continually defied French authorities by shepherding undocumented migrants across the Italian border and onto his hillside farm. As many as 60, he says, have stayed on his land at one time, some after knocking on his door in the dead of night. Herrou, like other good Samaritans in Britain and Scandinavia, is now on trial, accused of "helping undocumented foreigners enter, move about and reside" in France. He faces a possible sentence of five years in prison as well as a fine of 30,000 euros (\$32,000) if convicted. On Friday, he will learn his fate.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

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As France struggles to navigate the tidal wave of migration that has crashed onto European shores in recent years, the case of this obscure mechanic-turned-farmer has electrified a nation that has remained comparatively inhospitable to refugees. At its core is an uncomfortable question about the moral obligations of French citizenship. In times like these, does being French mean following the letter of the law, which indeed prohibits undocumented foreigners?

Or does it mean upholding the lofty, humanitarian values of the French republic in spite of its laws?

Herrou — and the thousands who have rallied to his defense across the country — insist on the latter. As was widely reported in French media during his trial last month, he responded to a judge who asked him why he had helped migrants across the border with a simple phrase.

Cédric Herrou has defied French authorities by shuffling undocumented migrants across the Italian border and onto his hillside farm. Farmer faces jail time for helping migrants cross into France

(James McAuley/The Washington Post)

(James McAuley/The Washington Post)

"I am a Frenchman," Herrou said.

"There's much to criticize about it today, but France is a country with values that are beautiful — the rights of man, the protection of children, and the social welfare we have," Herrou said in an interview Wednesday, sitting on the terrace of his cottage, sipping coffee he had made in his alfresco kitchen. "All of which we are in the process of losing."

He was brandishing a sizzling skillet in front of the last of the migrants staying on his land: Mohamed, 19, from Sudan, who had made his way into Libya and across the central Mediterranean to Lampedusa and then onto the Italian mainland. Herrou had found Mohamed wandering in the valley earlier in the week and quickly taken him in.

"I worry about this one," Herrou said. "He doesn't eat much."

Typically, Herrou said, he collects migrants from a church in nearby Ventimiglia, Italy, where many — most often from sub-Saharan Africa — live in a squalid camp along a set of abandoned train tracks outside of town. Then he drives them across the French border in the same beat-up blue van he uses on the farm.

Entry into France tends to be safer on the back roads than through the train stations, where — in spectacles eerily reminiscent of the hunts for Jewish stowaways during World War II — French police repeatedly stop and comb trains for migrants without the right papers.

This is precisely what happened Tuesday afternoon at the Menton-Garavan station, the last stop in France before the Italian border. A squadron of the French National Police flanked Cheick Isaac Binate, 21, from Ivory Coast, on the platform and deposited him on the 3:40 p.m. train for Ventimiglia.

"Don't you worry!" Binate screamed as the officers shoved him on the train and waited for it to pull out of the station.

All of the officers involved declined to comment.

Once on the Italian side, Binate — who had also arrived in Europe via Libya and Lampedusa — explained that he had crossed the French border late Sunday night with hopes of making it to the Paris suburb of Saint-Denis to find his aunt. The French police had caught him in Nice earlier on Tuesday trying to board a Paris-bound train with papers that had expired in mid-November.

When he struggled with the officers, Binate said, one of them struck him over the head, leaving a bloody gash, which he bent over to show. "I had a positive idea of France, the country of human rights, of legality," he said. "But there's nothing to see of that here." Even still, he vowed to try again.

Back on the French side of the border, Herrou scoffed at the notion that many now consider him a hero.

"I'm not doing this for the money or the material benefit. When you don't live for that, the notion of 'your house' and 'my house' being somehow separate doesn't apply," he said.

Herrou sees the problem on the border as less about a society shutting its doors on foreigners than about people willing to tolerate indecency beyond the scope of their immediate concerns.

"Everyone should go out in the streets and try to solve whatever problems they see," he said. "That's what democracy is. It's not staying at home and sharing things on Facebook. It's positioning ourselves to live better together."

"And if we have to fight against the state to do it, then we have an obligation to do so."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Merkel Plans to Speed Deportations of Rejected Asylum Seekers

Ruth Bender

Updated Feb. 9,

2017 3:42 p.m. ET

BERLIN—German Chancellor Angela Merkel is stepping up efforts to speed deportations of rejected asylum seekers after a terror attack in Berlin last year cast a sharp light on the potential risks of letting those not granted asylum remain in the country.

The chancellor Thursday reached an agreement with the country's 16 federal states to back fresh measures expediting deportations. The states would be responsible for carrying out many of the new measures in deporting illegal migrants that still need to be transcribed into new laws.

The agreement comes after Berlin proposed a 16-point plan that foresees a more centralized organization of deportations, now subject to a patchwork of laws and practices, the creation of a national repatriation center, more cash incentives to those who depart willingly and allowing lengthy detention time for rejected asylum seekers who are believed to pose a risk to national security.

"The matter we discussed today is the necessary requirement for our country to remain a country that can welcome people in need of protection," Ms. Merkel said, after meeting with the state governors in Berlin to discuss the chancellery's proposal, which called for a "national effort" to improve deportations.

"We all agree that we can only tackle this challenge together," said Volker Bouffier, premier of Hesse and a member of Ms. Merkel's Christian Democratic Union, after the meeting.

The agreement comes after months of debate between the states, which largely feel overburdened by the responsibility of carrying out the deportations, and the federal government, frustrated by a lack of progress on sending back refused asylum seekers.

Practices vary widely from state to state. While conservative Bavaria has boosted forced departures, some left-leaning state governments rarely carry out deportations and oppose tougher steps.

With some eight months to go before federal elections, Ms. Merkel is under pressure from the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany and conservative allies in Bavaria to address public concern over migration, rising crime and the looming terror threat.

A December terror attack at a Christmas market in Berlin committed by a rejected Tunisian asylum seeker sparked sharp criticism of authorities' failure, over many months to deport the man long known as a criminal and Islamist radical. Anis Amri killed 12 people when he rammed a truck into a Berlin Christmas market on Dec. 19. Authorities said he hadn't been deported because Tunisia failed for months to issue the necessary papers. Those documents finally

reached authorities in Germany two days after the attack. Amri was killed in a shootout with Italian police near Milan four days after the market attack.

While Ms. Merkel has stuck to her stance that Germany, unlike the U.S., can't cap the amount of refugees it takes, she has been taking a firmer stance on deportations. Government officials hope that if the government follows through on expelling rejected asylum seekers, it will discourage would-be migrants.

Berlin already has introduced some measures to speed up departures, carrying out mass deportations of Afghans and offering illegal immigrants financial incentives to leave the country. Improvements, however, have been slow.

In 2016, a total of 25,375 people were deported, a rise from 20,888 in 2015, according to the interior ministry. But deportations represent only a tiny share of the more-than-200,000 foreigners currently under orders to leave the country. Many avoid expulsion because their countries won't take them back. Others claim medical exemption, hide their identities or simply disappear.

"One of the big problems we have is that people without the right to stay often stay three, four or five years because it takes so long," said Erwin Sellering, prime minister of the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. "That needs to happen faster."

Under the new plan, Berlin would set up a joint center for deportations that would support the states in difficult cases, for instance by mediating with countries that refuse to issue travel papers to their nationals.

Scores of migrants—some of them rejected asylum seekers—have been accused of supporting terrorism and some committed attacks or were implicated in foiled plots in recent months, putting Berlin under additional pressure to act.

On Thursday alone, two rejected asylum seekers from Algeria and Nigeria suspected of planning an imminent terror act were arrested in Lower Saxony. Boris Pistorius, state interior minister, said authorities were checking whether the men could now be deported, saying that they "abused our hospitality."

Ms. Merkel's plan includes proposals to allow for longer detentions of rejected asylum seekers deemed a risk to public safety as well as measures to restrict the residency of those who use fake identities and allow immigration officials to search asylum seekers' phones to prove their true identities.

While federal states agreed in principle to the plan, its success will hinge on how the measures will be put into practice. Ms. Merkel said a planned national repatriation center, the most controversial measure of the plan, requires further discussion.

Such a center would give the federal government more sway over ordering and

implementing deportations, which could require several legislative changes and, possibly, an

amendment to the constitution, lawyers warned.

Write to Ruth Bender at Ruth.Bender@wsj.com

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Germany's Global Trade Surplus Hits Record in 2016

Nina Adam and
Andrea Thomas

Updated Feb. 9, 2017 12:46 p.m. ET

FRANKFURT—Germany's exports exceeded its imports by the widest yearly margin on record last year, a sign of the strength of Europe's biggest economy that could inflame tensions between Washington and Berlin over their trade relations.

Germany's trade surplus—or the balance of exports and imports of goods—rose to €252.9 billion (\$270.58 billion), marking the highest surplus since records began after World War II, the statistics body said on Thursday. Total exports of goods rose 1.2% from 2015, while imports increased just 0.6%.

Underlining the German economy's reliance on exports, net trade accounted for about 8.1% of Germany's gross domestic product last year, according to calculations by The Wall Street Journal, in contrast with the large trade deficit recorded by the U.S. last year.

The German data follow recent criticism by President Donald Trump's administration of Germany's dependence on foreign demand.

Mr. Trump has accused Germany of flooding the U.S. with cars while U.S. car makers weren't being given enough access to the German market. Peter Navarro, the head of Mr. Trump's new National Trade Council, has said German exporters had an unfair advantage because of the euro's weak exchange rate.

Berlin can expect more U.S. criticism, said Marcel Fratzscher, president of prominent German think tank DIW. "Germany is vulnerable with its high export surplus," Mr. Fratzscher said, with the data likely to be seen in the U.S. as vindication of Mr. Trump's protectionist platform.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has rejected White House claims, pointing out that Berlin had no influence on exchange rates and interest rates. Berlin has been a fierce critic of the European Central Bank's easy-money policy, which has helped keep the euro low compared with the dollar. Others have pointed to German companies' productivity and engineering prowess as the main factors behind high exports.

"Germany and the U.S. understood early on that economic competitiveness is central...for reaping the benefits of globalization," Germany's deputy finance minister wrote in a commentary published in The Wall Street Journal on Thursday. Blaming a country for being competitive "would be bizarre," Jens Spahn said, adding that "nobody can have an interest in provoking a trade war."

German officials have said they feared coming under particularly heavy fire when Wolfgang Schäuble, Germany's plain-speaking finance minister, holds a meeting of the Group of 20's finance ministers in Baden-Baden. Meetings of the group, which Germany chairs this year, have been a central forum for global macroeconomic disputes in the past.

Berlin argues that it has done a lot to boost domestic demand—and therefore imports—for instance by enacting the country's first minimum-wage legislation. But the erection of trade barriers by the U.S. would hit Europe's largest economy hard.

German exports of goods to the U.S. outstripped imports by around €45 billion in the 11 months through November, according to Germany's statistics body, and the U.S. remains Germany's single-biggest export market.

European Central Bank President Mario Draghi intervened into the

trans-Atlantic spat this week, rushing to Berlin's defense. "We are not currency manipulators," he said on Monday, adding that different central-bank policies reflected "diverse positions in the [economic] cycle" between the U.S. and the eurozone.

Still, many economists agree that the euro's exchange rate doesn't fully reflect Germany's economic strength, because it mirrors developments in all 19 countries that use the euro, whose economies have been mostly trailing Germany's.

And while Germany sells more products than ever to the world, domestic demand in Europe's largest economy isn't keeping up—a development that, economists say, is depressing economic growth and employment in other parts of the world. Weak domestic investment is also holding back growth inside Germany.

"Exports are not too high, but imports are much too low as Germany has a huge investment gap and private and public investment is too low," Mr. Fratzscher said, adding that the trade surplus was more a sign of economic imbalance than strength.

Recent analysis by The Wall Street Journal showed that many German companies are still reluctant to step up investment in their own country.

Germany's statistics body also released data that showed a sharp rise in the country's already high current-account surplus—a measure both of the country's export prowess and of German companies' reluctance to invest at home.

Germany's current account stood at €266 billion in 2016, which marks the highest surplus since records began in 1991. By comparison, Germany's current-account balance was showing a deficit in the 1990s and in the early 2000s.

It accounted for about 8.5% of GDP last year, according to calculations by The Wall Street Journal. That is the highest percentage among the world's largest global economies, according to preliminary data, and well above the 3%-of-GDP level the U.S. Treasury targets when it assesses the exchange-rate policies of major trade partners in its biannual currency report. Along with currency intervention and large bilateral trade gaps, Treasury gauges current-account surpluses as one of the three key criteria that can trigger currency negotiations and even sanctions.

Most economists consider a large current account surplus as a sign of economic unbalance. The International Monetary Fund, the U.S., and even the European Commission have criticized Germany for its huge current account surplus and called on Berlin to do more to stimulate both domestic demand and spending on imports.

While Germany's government expects the current account surplus to ease to around 8.1% of GDP this year, the forecast decline is unlikely to silence these critics.

Reflecting those concerns in Berlin, Mr. Spahn wrote in his column that "we need to move beyond the current account and broaden our view to the real challenges ahead...Germany and the U.S. should seize any chance to foster their good economic and political relations, and to build on their strengths, especially their open-market economies."

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The Washington Post

Britain to end its program for lone child refugees

By Karla Adam
and James
McAuley

LONDON — A former child refugee, Alfred Dubs was elated in May when he helped force the British government to accept unaccompanied refugee children from other European countries.

Less than a year later, the Czechoslovakia-born Dubs, a

member of the opposition Labour Party, is trying to prevent the closure of the refugee program he helped spearhead.

The British government announced quietly Wednesday that it would limit the number of lone child refugees brought in from Europe under the "Dubs Amendment" to 350 — far fewer than the 3,000 that campaigners wanted.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

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The rollback, however, reflects forces that resonate across the West as many countries tighten immigration policies, rethink the size of their welcome mat for refugees,

fret over perceived threats to their culture — and watch a landmark court battle play out in the United States over the Trump administration's entry ban on refugees and on citizens from seven Muslim-majority nations.

[Britain will start taking in child refugees, as it did before World War II]

British Prime Minister Theresa May tells lawmakers she had no prior knowledge of President Trump's travel ban on citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries despite her visit to the White House. Britain's Theresa May says President Trump gave her no prior warning of travel ban (Reuters)

(Reuters)

British Prime Minister Theresa May said at a news conference Thursday that President Trump's ban was "wrong" and "divisive" and not something that Britain would do. She also insisted that Britain's approach to child refugees is "absolutely right" and said that Britain is helping refugees from Syria.

"What we are doing in terms of refugees is absolutely right, on top, of course, of the significant financial support and humanitarian aid we are giving to refugees in the region of Syria — a commitment of 2.3 billion pounds, the second-biggest bilateral donor," she said.

Dubs, whose father was Jewish and who entered Britain at age 6 on one

of the famed "Kindertransports" out of Nazi-occupied Europe, disagreed. "They have no right to stop it at any point on any basis. It's going against the whole tenor of the parliamentary debate," Dubs, 84, said in an interview with The Washington Post.

Britain is not the only country in Europe wrestling with its stance on immigration and refugees. In Germany, for instance, Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is facing an election this year, has recently taken a tougher position on deporting rejected asylum seekers. Germany deported 620 unaccompanied minors in 2016.

Amber Rudd, Britain's home secretary, defended the government's decision, telling Parliament on Thursday that the initiative risked encouraging traffickers and suggested that local councils did not have the capacity to accept more children.

In a statement Wednesday, the British government said that 200 children had arrived from France and that 150 more were expected next month. A spokesman for the Home Office said that a total of 350

children would be accepted under the Dubs program.

[They were rescued as kids in WWII. Now they want to help today's refugee children.]

Last year, Dubs sponsored an amendment to the government's immigration bill that required Britain to make arrangements for the safe passage of unaccompanied refugee children who arrived in the European Union before March 20, 2016. The government never agreed to a specific number, but Dubs originally proposed that it take 3,000 children.

In a passionate address in the House of Commons on Thursday, Yvette Cooper, a Labour politician who chairs the Home Affairs Committee, urged the British government to reconsider.

"Where does it say that instead of the 3,000 that Parliament debated that we will only help one-tenth of that number?" she said. "Britain can do better than this."

Some have suggested that by limiting the number of refugees allowed in by this route, May is

moving Britain in the direction of Trump's immigration policies.

"May's treatment of refugee children is appalling, and shows how close she has moved to the policies of Trump," the Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron said in a statement.

But Rudd insisted that the United Kingdom was not turning its back on vulnerable children, and that it would focus on supporting those in Syria and the region.

"The U.K. has a strong reputation, in Europe and internationally, for looking after the most vulnerable that will continue," she said. "We have a different approach to where the most vulnerable are. We believe that they are in the region. That's why we have made a pledge to accept 3,000 children from the region and we are committed to delivering on that. They are the most vulnerable."

Campaigners have indicated that the decision to end the Dubs scheme could face a legal challenge.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

In Departure, ECB Officials Stump for the European Union

Tom Fairless

Updated Feb. 9,

2017 4:44 p.m. ET

FRANKFURT—European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi's meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin on Thursday was only the latest turn in an exceptional round of election-year politicking by top ECB officials.

Senior ECB staff have recently weighed in on France's presidential election, defended Germany's vast trade surpluses against U.S. criticism, and attacked President Donald Trump's plans to deregulate the U.S. finance industry.

The unusual ECB interventions come against a backdrop of intense opposition to the European Union within some of its member states, as well as unprecedented criticism of the bloc from a U.S. president.

The ECB's unelected civil servants are mounting their defense of the EU as Europe's elected leaders are enmeshed in national debates. Britain is preparing to leave the EU, and elections will be held this year in France, Germany, the Netherlands and possibly Italy.

Mr. Draghi last had a bilateral meeting with Ms. Merkel in January 2016, according to his diary as published on the ECB's website. On Thursday the two discussed the eurozone economy, an ECB

spokesman said, without elaborating.

The meeting occurred amid a surge of criticism of the ECB's policies in Germany, where a jump in inflation has raised fresh concerns about the impact of ultralow interest rates on the nation's savers.

German politicians and economists have been urging the ECB to start winding down its €2.3 trillion (\$2.5 trillion) bond-purchase program, known as quantitative easing or QE. The ECB extended the program by nine months in December and bank officials have signaled they want to provide steady support for the economy during an election-heavy year.

The ECB, which won sweeping new powers after helping to beat back Europe's successive crises in recent years, has become a last line of defense for the bloc and its single currency.

The bank's decision to launch QE, fiercely opposed by Germany's Bundesbank, has contributed to the ECB's politicization. By buying €80 billion a month of mainly government bonds, the ECB redistributes wealth across the region from creditors to debtors, driving up asset prices and reducing government borrowing costs.

"For the most part, EU leaders are weak and have limited mandates, while Draghi is strong," said Mujtaba

Rahman, managing director at Eurasia Group. "What's new is the fact that the ECB is now wading into the EU's international relations."

In a series of statements this year, Mr. Draghi called for closer integration among eurozone countries, complained about their economic policies and criticized policy proposals of the new U.S. administration.

"Unity is the key to security for our continent—today as it has always been," Mr. Draghi said this month in Slovenia. In Italy, where Beppe Grillo's 5 Star Movement has advocated ditching the euro, the ECB president spoke glowingly of Italy's historic ties with Europe. In Brussels, he called the euro "irreversible" and slammed potential the Trump administration's plans by the Trump administration to roll back financial-services regulation.

The risk in speaking out, analysts say, is that the ECB could draw more of the same criticism the EU has faced: being a distant, opaque, unaccountable bureaucracy. From Rome to Berlin, the ECB is already a prime target for anti-EU parties that have lambasted it for stifling growth, stoking inflation or increasing inequality.

"The ECB has to walk a very careful line," said Guntram Wolff, the director of Bruegel, a Brussels-

based think tank. "They are ultimately bureaucrats."

It is perfectly legitimate, analysts say, for the ECB to highlight economic risks, such as a breakup of the eurozone, and to defend the common currency. The problem comes if the ECB is seen as trying to shape political decisions. "There is a legitimate question to be asked about whether they really have the mandate to push states toward political union," Mr. Wolff said.

In France this week, where National Front presidential candidate Marine Le Pen has laid out her plans for yanking her country out of the euro, two ECB officials warned sharply that such a move would impoverish the nation.

"The euro is not the enemy of growth," Bank of France Governor François Villeroy de Galhau said Tuesday. He warned that returning to the franc would cost the nation €30 billion a year in added debt-financing costs. In a dig at Mr. Trump's "America first" stance, he referred to "this new world that the current U.S. administration seems to coldly envisage."

Benoît Coeuré, a French member of the ECB's executive board, said the euro allows "medium-sized countries like France to speak as an equal to the United States or China." Sounding sounded more like a politician than an economist as he ,

Mr. Coeuré praised the single currency for helping “the disadvantaged and the vulnerable,” and warned that leaving the euro “would be to choose impoverishment.”

With such comments, the ECB is trying to fill a political void at the heart of the eurozone, according to Mr. Wolff. “We do have a currency without a state and without a real political representative that would take care of that currency,” he said.

That void creates a dilemma for non-eurozone governments, who have no one outside the central bank to call to discuss the euro. When Peter Navarro, the head of Mr. Trump’s National Trade Council, last week said Germany was exploiting its trading partners by using a “grossly undervalued” euro, German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble responded by blaming the ECB.

Several ECB officials, including Bundesbank President Jens

Weidmann, hit back, calling the U.S. accusations absurd.

Forcing the ECB to defend European policies, such as Germany’s trade surpluses, could be beneficial if it allows national leaders to preserve precious political capital while bank officials make important points, said Mr. Rahman.

Even as ECB officials step into the international spotlight, they have generally avoided specific policy recommendations. But sometimes, it

is a fine line. In Slovenia this month, Mr. Draghi urged governments to construct “an institutional architecture” for the eurozone, and called for “a new stage of integration.”

“The central bank can’t be a political” actor, Mr. Wolff said. “The risk is that it is seen as illegitimate.”

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



ECB's French Folly

Marcus Ashworth

Source: Bloomberg

Do you prefer Marmite debt over La Belle France?

Unilever NV, with its A1/A+ credit rating, managed a yield of just 1.03 percent for the 600 million-euro (\$641 million) 10-year bond it issued Wednesday. France’s Aa2/AA rating doesn’t seem to be doing it much good, since its 10-year yielded a few basis points more at the time.

Unilever is at least cash flow positive whereas France does have an ever-expanding deficit, but is the market really saying that Unilever has greater placement control of toiletries than a major European sovereign has in raising taxes? This does not seem to be an efficient measure of credit risk. There are two effects at play here, both the richness of corporates and the recent cheapening of France.

Keeping a Lid on Corporate Spreads

ECB company bond purchases are shrinking the difference between corporate and government yields

Such a distortion can be placed at the feet of the European Central Bank and the impact negative rates and quantitative easing are having on trapping short-end yields so low. So the longer end has to take the strain, steepening the government yield curve. While some of the pickup in French yields might also be due to the upcoming tapering of the Public Sector Purchasing Program, it is also down to the recent repricing wider of France versus Germany as euro crisis fears resurface.

While government bond yields have backed out, corporate spreads have held in amazingly. As yields on company debt fall, that must at some point restrict investor demand for longer-dated new issuance, which would be contrary to the program’s aims of loosening funding availability. Continuance of the ECB’s Corporate Sector Purchase Program might only make this worse.

Seven Year Itch

The power of the ECB’s easing measures wane toward the long end of the curve, with the illogical result that sovereign debt yields more than a proxy for bank credit

Source: Bloomberg

Longer-dated French government bonds are currently quoted wider than swap rates, an anomaly not seen since 2014. It is unusual to see the proxy for European bank credit yield less than one of the bedrock sovereign countries of the EU.

Recent political turmoil ahead of the presidential election is the driver here -- in the last four months, the gap blew out 40 basis points. This is a clear expression that the market is pricing back in euro breakup risk.

And it is a French effect -- as the relationship between German government bonds and swaps is actually going the other way.

Back to the Crisis

Recent slump shows investors see the French sovereign as riskier than European banks

Source: Bloomberg

The ECB must be aware of the distorting effect QE is having both on government and corporate bonds. It is about time they took steps to correct these effects, which has at its root the insistence on continuing QE for countries that don’t need it -- something the Bundesbank reminds them of incessantly. QE should be focused on countries that still need it, and purchasing for the rest should just fade away.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of Bloomberg LP and its owners.

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Greece Pressured to Improve Migrants’ Living Conditions

Niki Kitsantonis

A baseball stadium built for the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens is now filled with tents for migrants. Louisa Gouliamaki/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

ATHENS — Human rights groups stepped up their warnings on Thursday about the living conditions for migrants in Greece after three people died during a recent cold snap on the Aegean island of Lesbos, and as dozens of asylum seekers near Athens threatened to resume a hunger strike if the situation did not improve.

The European Commission criticized Greece last month for an “untenable” situation at its refugee camps amid worsening weather, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

Amnesty International and other aid groups have previously expressed alarm about sites across Greece, including those at Elliniko, a camp near Athens, and on Lesbos.

More than a million migrants have passed through Greece in the last two years, and the country has been stretched to its limits in trying to cope simultaneously with the huge influx and an economy that was already teetering.

The approval this week of 3.9 million euros, about \$4.15 million, in emergency funds from the European Union will help, but with around 62,000 migrants effectively trapped in Greece at the moment, it will not be nearly enough to resolve the situation.

“The conditions at Elliniko are difficult,” Roland Schoenbauer of the United Nations refugee agency said

of the site near Athens that was once home to the city’s international airport. “This is not a camp that was made to house human beings for an extended period.”

The site, along with two adjacent sports venues built for the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, is home to about 1,600 migrants, mostly Afghans, as well as some families from Iran and Pakistan.

Migrants at Elliniko have been living in flimsy tents for more than a year, and a group of around 30 people started refusing food and trying to block deliveries to the site over the weekend to protest living conditions, according to aid workers. They have since started eating again but are threatening an open-ended hunger strike if conditions are not improved.

The Greek migration minister, Ioannis Mouzalas, was confronted

by migrants on Monday and briefly prevented from entering Elliniko. While acknowledging the “pain and hardship” they face, Mr. Mouzalas said groups — which he did not identify — were waging a campaign of misinformation and exploiting migrants for their own political ends.

During a visit by the Greek migration minister on Monday to the Elliniko camp near Athens, Afghan migrants briefly blocked the entrance to protest conditions. Thanassis Stavrakis/Associated Press

At a news conference on Thursday, Maria Bikaki, a spokeswoman for the left-leaning Coordination for Refugees and Migrants, rejected assertions that the migrants at Elliniko were being manipulated or instigated.

“The only instigation here is the situation,” she said.

Zeinab Ghanbari, a 20-year-old Afghan woman who has been living at Elliniko since she, her husband and her son, now 4, were turned away from Greece's border with Macedonia a year ago, expressed dismay at her predicament.

"In my country, the Taliban and Al Qaeda kill us in one go with a bullet," said Mrs. Ghanbari, who is pregnant and would like to go to Sweden. "Here we're dying gradually over a year. If we knew that Europe, that Greece, is like this, I would have preferred to die in my country."

The list of migrants' demands includes a disinfection of the site, where insects and rats are said to be rife; better food and medical services; and a gradual relocation to proper homes rather than tents in disused military barracks and other makeshift quarters.

Kyriakos Mantouvalos, a spokesman for Mr. Mouzalas, said the authorities were doing "everything possible" to help the migrants, including improving access to hot water and better food. He added that the country's options were limited, and he said that many migrants had rejected offers to move to better-equipped facilities in central Greece.

"They don't want to go," Mr. Mantouvalos said. "What can we do?"

Mr. Schoenbauer did, however, report "one positive development." Two warehouses in northern Greece being used to house migrants — "currently among the worst in the country" — will be closed and its occupants moved to alternative accommodations in United Nations-subsidized apartments and hotels.

On Lesbos, which became the main gateway for tens of thousands of migrants seeking better lives in Europe last year, severe overcrowding at the main camp has meant that hundreds have been forced to live in tents for the past several months.

Three people died in one week in January, when cold weather swept across the island and covered tents in snow. Local reports attributed the deaths to the inhalation of toxic fumes from cheap or makeshift stoves set up by migrants for warmth, though a coroner's ruling is pending.

The Moria refugee camp on the island of Lesbos during a snowstorm in January. Three people died in one week last month, when cold weather swept across the island and covered tents in snow. Stratis Balaskas/European Pressphoto Agency

With temperatures plummeting and snow falling across much of the country, Greek officials acknowledged after the criticism from the European Commission that hundreds of migrants were living in tents at overcrowded camps on the Aegean Islands. A recent improvement in the weather offered some respite, but there are concerns about what will happen when temperatures drop again.

Thousands of migrants were left stranded in Greece last year after several European countries closed their borders in an effort to prevent them from moving on to central and western Europe.

An agreement between Turkey and the European Union to crack down on rampant human smuggling in the Aegean in March last year drastically curbed the influx into Greece, but officials there have complained that a European Union plan to relocate migrants to other countries in the bloc is moving too slowly.

So far, about 12,000 people have been moved from Greece and Italy to other European Union member states under a plan scheduled to expire in September that envisioned the relocation of 160,000 refugees; of the 12,000, about 9,000 were relocated from Greece.

A plan by the European Commission to allow member states to return asylum seekers to Greece starting in mid-March, in line with European Union rules that were suspended last year because of the crisis, is expected to heap even more pressure on Greece.

On Thursday, the authorities in neighboring Macedonia said they had returned 49 migrants who had elected not to file asylum claims. The migrants were taken by bus to the border and then crossed on foot, where they were met by the Greek authorities.

As the Greek authorities and rights groups try to keep a lid on tensions, the United Nations refugee agency has been working with the government to transfer hundreds of migrants from cramped island facilities to more spacious quarters on the Greek mainland.

According to Mr. Schoenbauer, the United Nations is working with hotels on Lesbos, but several government buildings are sitting idle, notably on the nearby island of Samos, where many residents are frustrated with the presence of migrants.

"The local authorities don't want to give us the keys," Mr. Schoenbauer said.

The New York Times

In Romania, Corruption's Tentacles Grip Daily Life

Palko Karasz

Romania captured the world's attention last week when hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets, protesting a government decree that many saw as backtracking on fighting corruption.

Corruption is an endemic problem across Eastern Europe. But Romania's long struggle against it has placed the issue at the center of its political debate. The government decree would have decriminalized some corruption offenses, which alarmed Romanian judges and prosecutors. In Brussels, the European Commission expressed concern, as many people inside and outside Romania feared the decree could undermine the rule of law in one of Europe's youngest democracies.

Although the government revoked the decree and survived a no-confidence vote on Wednesday, opponents vowed to continue to fight, and on Thursday the justice minister, Florin Iordache, submitted his resignation.

As the protests intensified last week, The New York Times asked

Romanians to share their personal encounters with corruption. They spoke of constant, everyday bribery — at hospitals, schools and public institutions. Some people felt helpless, saying that corruption was a deeply rooted cultural problem. Many were infuriated by the government's decree, which would have directly benefited some prominent politicians, and feared the edict could erode the country's long-term commitment to fighting corruption.

After we made the initial call to Romanians for their stories, we followed up to ask how they viewed the protests. The submissions below have been condensed and edited for clarity.

Dr. Dan Arama in his apartment in downtown Bucharest on Wednesday. "Corruption is so embedded in the medical system that it's nearly impossible to change without the help of the judicial system," he wrote. Andrei Pungovschi for The New York Times

'I Don't Take Money From My Patients'

Corruption is so embedded in the medical system that it's nearly

impossible to change without the help of the judicial system. A lot of my colleagues do take bribes from their patients. Some of them won't treat someone who doesn't offer them money, although Romania's medical system guarantees free access to medical services. I don't take money from my patients, and when I refuse their money, some get worried, thinking I refused them because they have some sort of terminal disease. Some think you're a low-quality doctor if you treat them without charge.

On protesting: I went to all of the protests that have taken place in Bucharest during the last three weeks. Like so many others, I felt that the recent government decree, which was adopted at 10:30 p.m., was the first sign that Romania was turning away from democracy and the rule of law.

— Dan Arama, 31, a doctor in Bucharest.

I've paid a lot of money — the equivalent of 5,000 euros — in the hospital from the doorman to nurses, assistants, residents, doctors and for medicine for my

husband, who had no hope of staying alive.

Generally you have to give bribes to get anything done. That's how it was in the Ceausescu times, and that's how it has remained until today.

On protesting: I've taken part in the protests, out of indignation with the thievish way in which they adopted Emergency Decree No. 13, and with its contents, and intent to save the criminal Dragnea [Liviu Dragnea, the ruling party's leader]. — Cristina Iftode, 62, a retired mathematician in Bucharest. Translated from Romanian.

Nightmarish Memories of a Club Fire

In 2015, a deadly nightclub fire in Bucharest was widely blamed on corruption. Protests afterward forced the government to step down. Oana Celia Gheorghiu, 38, a translator and lecturer in Galati, lost three of her friends in the fire.

I have attended all the protests in Galati, starting with the night when the government passed the Emergency Ordinance 13/2017. I am not the revolutionary type, but the indignation I felt that night

prompted me to join the hundreds of thousands in the street.

Ioan-Radu Tanasescu taking part in a protest outside the Romanian government's headquarters in Bucharest on Wednesday. "When I was a kid, I thought these politicians were all-powerful; the law seemed to not apply to them," he wrote. Andrei Pungovschi for The New York Times

'Cheese, Alcoholic Beverages, Even Eggs!'

I've had to pay bribes in order to get normal things done that should have required no payment, like getting power back after it was cut for nonpayment. The bribe made the procedure to give me back electric power last only three days after I paid the full bill. Without a bribe, it would have taken three months.

Our country has been fighting corruption for decades. When I was a kid, I thought these politicians

were all-powerful; the law seemed to not apply to them. That always bothered me and everyone I know, even the supporters of the Social Democratic Party (in charge of the government right now).

On protesting: I was in front of the government just an hour or two after they passed Emergency Ordinance 13/2017. I promised them this would not pass, I promised them they would pay a political price. — Ioan-Radu Tanasescu, 31, a front-end developer in Bucharest.

I have been put under pressure to promote students who never attended class. I have been offered bribes for this and I have been sanctioned because of my integrity. I was forced to leave the country many times because of the awful corruption and because my monthly wages were insufficient for survival. My colleagues took huge amounts of money from selling graduation

papers and grades, also taking homemade products from the "candidates," like cheese, alcoholic beverages, even eggs! — Monica Vlad, 49, a university professor in Sibiu.

A protest in Timisoara, Romania, on Sunday. Sebastian Tataru/European Pressphoto Agency

Growing Up With Corruption

In small towns like my hometown, nepotism is just as natural as inheriting something from your parents, going to church on Sundays or watching the seasons go by: It is one of our customs or something that goes without saying. — Tamas Hunor Kecskes, 25, a student in Cluj-Napoca.

As a child growing up in Romania, you are surrounded by this notion of "corruption." You hear your family discuss how that politician made a

fortune using their influence. You see how they argue on television about it all day. By the time you reach maturity, you comprehend corruption as an active part of your society.

— Rares Petru Achiriloaie, 22, a student in Paris.

I grew up in the '90s in a country where you always kept a pack of Kent cigarettes and a bottle of whiskey in your drawer. You kept them for the visit to the doctor, to get into a better school; you kept them for when you had a lawsuit or even for going on vacation. Romania has made huge progress in recent years. A new generation has emerged that doesn't keep drawers full of bribery presents. Everything can be shattered in the next 10 days.

— Lucian Alexe, 28, a communications professional in Brussels.

POLITICO First we take Hässleholm ... Swedish far-right rises

Richard Orange

Unlikely alliance

HÄSSLEHOLM, Sweden — When the leader of the Moderates, Anna Kinberg Batra, recently announced that her party would be open to negotiating with the Sweden Democrats, it sent shockwaves through the establishment.

Many accused Kinberg Batra of ripping up the *cordon sanitaire* which has prevented far-right populists in Sweden from winning the kind of influence they have achieved in neighboring Denmark and Norway, and elsewhere on the Continent.

"You will be sitting and negotiating with a party that you yourself say is racist and pro-Russia," Prime Minister Stefan Löfven said in response to the news, arguing that his opponent had "lost her political compass."

Even the Moderates' allies in the centre-right Alliance bloc were unhappy. Liberal leader Jan Björklund calling the move an "unfortunate gambit." Both he and Centre Party leader Annie Lööf have said they would never be part of a government formed with the active support of the Sweden Democrats.

But the Sweden Democrats — which have been surging in the polls — will likely be in a position to wield real power after next year's election. And the blessing by the Moderate leadership to allow MPs and local councilors to start talks with the SD is clearly helping sanitize a party that, until now, has been cut out of mainstream politics over links to neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups.

In Hässleholm, a town in northern Skåne, a stronghold for the Sweden Democrats, Ulf Erlandsson, the local SD leader, looks every inch the maverick in black jeans, trainers and a floral shirt. At the end of this month, he intends to join forces with the centre-right Moderates to oust the ruling Social Democrats, whose budget the two parties have blocked from being voted through.

He hopes the Social Democrat council chairman will resign at a meeting on February 27 and, in exchange for supporting the Moderates' appointee to replace her, expects to be made his deputy.

Ulf Erlandsson, the local SD leader in Hässleholm | Richard Orange

The collaboration between SD and the Moderates in this area will be the first of its kind in Sweden and if he gets made vice chairman, Erlandsson will be the first Sweden Democrat to take such a position in Sweden, "so it's nice," he said. "But I think it will soon be happening all over the country."

Indeed, Erlandsson believes the winds of change blowing through Skåne are the same ones that have brought Brexit and Trump and have upset the upcoming elections in France and Germany.

In November, he made a speech in the council chamber, celebrating the election of U.S. President Donald Trump. "I said that those people who wanted to see a woman president ... just have to wait for it to happen in France," he said.

His party's support has soared in recent years on the back of growing disquiet over migration. Last year, Sweden, a country of 9.5 million people, granted residency to a record 150,000 immigrants. As the number of asylum seekers has dipped, the party has turned its focus to law and order concerns in areas with large immigrant populations.

At the height of the refugee crisis in 2015, party activists posted the addresses of all asylum centers in and around the city of Lund.

But despite leader Jimmie Åkesson's moves to soften the party's image, it continues to be dogged by scandals involving racism.

An MP was sacked last year for proposing that the Bonniers newspaper group, whose family owners are Jewish, be broken up because no "ethnic group" should be allowed to "control more than five percent of the media."

At the height of the refugee crisis in 2015, party activists posted a map listing the addresses of all asylum centers in and around the city of Lund, a move criticized as inviting anti-immigrant activists to commit arson attacks.

A big deal

Last week, Moderate party officials held their first official meeting with their Sweden Democrat counterparts on cooperation in the Riksdag, Sweden's parliament.

"It's a really big deal [although] it was very probably a matter of time," said Nicholas Aylott, associate

professor at Södertörn University, who sees the shift as part of a necessary realignment of the party system since the growth of the Sweden Democrats deprived alliances on the left and on the right of the chance of a majority.

"I still think we've got a long way before the Sweden Democrats get anywhere near ministerial positions," he said. "What's more likely is some understanding where SD would passively support a centre-right government."

Kinberg Batra, who has repeatedly described Sweden Democrats as "racist in its actions," put a stop to her party's backroom negotiations with the SD in Hässleholm as recently as December, saying: "I do not want us Moderates to enter into cooperation with the Sweden Democrats on any level."

Her sudden shift has left Moderate MPs grumbling, mostly off-the-record, that they were never consulted. And at least three former Moderate ministers have criticized the move publicly.

Mikael Odenberg, defense minister in the last Moderate government, wrote an article on Monday, calling for a grand coalition with the Social Democrats rather than negotiations with a party whose policies on most issues, he said, are "a total joke."

Jimmie Åkesson, right, at the Swedish parliament in Stockholm. He led the party to finishing third in the 2014 general election | Jonathan Nackstrand/AFP via Getty Images

"Is limited cooperation with SD possible?" asked Sten Tolgfors, a

former trade minister, on Facebook. "Is it desirable? Will you influence one another through cooperation? Will the political climate be affected by it?"

In Hässleholm, Douglas Roth, who hopes to be appointed chairman of the council this month if all goes to plan, argued the move was a return to sanity. The last Moderate government's "open hearts" in terms of immigration and its refusal to put in place tougher policies proposed by then-immigration minister Tobias Billström, was the reason his party came third in the municipality, he said.

"We saw that people were horrified by the immigration politics we were driving forward," he said. "If we had brought in the politics that Billström wanted, we wouldn't have had the Sweden Democrats with 16 percent of the votes."

He is not alone. A poll by Inizio found that 82

percent of Moderate voters supported Kinberg Batra's move while a clear majority of Moderate local councilors, approached by the Dagens Nyheter newspaper, welcomed the possible collaboration.

The Moderates are already moving to detoxify the Sweden Democrats' image among voters.

Roth admits that talks have already taken place in Hässleholm, contradicting the claims of Pär Palmgren, the local party leader, that there is no cooperation.

For Roth, it comes down to arithmetic. The Social Democrats have 20 seats in Hässleholm and, with their allies, hold 30 seats on the council, leaving them one crucial vote short of a majority. The Moderates, with just eight seats, are far short of a majority, even with all of their Alliance partners, unless they get the support of the Sweden Democrats and the local Folkets Vål

party, which would earn them 31 votes.

Authoritarian roots

The maths looks similar across Sweden. In Gävle municipality, halfway up the Baltic coast, the Moderates at the start of last year ended more than a hundred years of Social Democrat rule, again with the passive support of the Sweden Democrats. Kinberg Batra's move opens the way for more to do so.

The Moderates are already moving to detoxify the Sweden Democrats' image among voters.

Kinberg Batra's latest line is that her party would neither form a government with the Sweden Democrats nor with the Left Party as "both have authoritarian roots."

Sweden Democrats posters in Stockholm for the last general election | Jonathan Nackstrand/AFP via Getty Images

The underlying message is that ruling with the passive support of a party whose founders had links to the neo-Nazi movement is no different from the way the Social Democrats often have done with the former Communist party, whose previous leaders supported Joseph Stalin.

"It's wrong to call SD such a terrible and disgusting party," Roth said. "The Social Democrats want you to see them like that because they want to be able to stay in power. Half of SD's members are old Moderates."

In Hässleholm, Erlandsson can't wait to move into his council office. "I don't have a key, but I will next month!" he said with a laugh. "I will have a big office on the second floor. It feels very good."



Emily Tamkin : A Critical Month Ahead for Europe

For 60 years, the preservation of European unity and stability was a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy.

And then came U.S. President Donald Trump, who applauded the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union and now may appoint Ted Malloch, a man who considers the EU to be anti-American, as the U.S. envoy to Brussels.

European leaders have responded by saying that Trump is a threat to Europe, and that, while they must work with the U.S., so, too, must they be masters of their own destiny.

Strong rhetoric, certainly. But a month from Thursday, on March 9, European leaders will meet for a summit — and the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaty, which marked the beginning of Europe as an economic union. Three key events in the next month may determine the future of Europe for many months after.

The first is Brexit. British Prime Minister Theresa May's government recently moved up the date to begin negotiating the U.K.'s exit from the EU to March 7, ahead of the summit.

On Thursday, the House of Commons voted 494 to 122 in favor of May's government's Brexit bill, which gives May's government the authority to notify the EU of the intention to withdraw and begin negotiations. The bill now goes to the House of Lords. Parliament is expected to approve the bill by May's March 7 deadline.

May has already said she will be pursuing a "hard Brexit," one that privileges limited migration into the United Kingdom over remaining in the single European market. European leaders know this. So, too, they know the formal talks to leave the EU will start ahead of their summit. Whether they know how they will respond and conduct themselves during negotiations is still to be seen.

The second is a statement made by German Chancellor Angela Merkel

on Saturday. She said Europe may be open to letting countries commit to being in the Union at "different speeds." To some extent, as Stefan Lehne of Carnegie Europe told Foreign Policy, this already exists: there are, for example, more EU members in the Schengen area (between which individuals can travel without passports) than in the eurozone (which shares a common currency). Reforming European treaties to allow more of the same sort of flexibility could prevent another Brexit, he argues.

However, Lehne does not believe substantive action will be taken on this anytime soon because this is an election year for several European countries and leaders will be loath to fuel Euroskepticism. Nevertheless, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg have already come out in support of a two-speed solution. Other countries, like Poland, will likely worry that two speeds will leave them behind. It is worth watching whether European leaders weigh in on Merkel's proposal ahead of the summit and how their

message resonates with their electorates.

Which brings us to the third event: The Dutch national election. The Netherlands's elections, which will be held on March 15, are the first of three (possibly four, if Italy has elections this year) elections this year that will determine whether continental Europe will go the way of Brexit and Trump. So far, Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch anti-Muslim Freedom Party, has managed to drag political rhetoric across parties to the right. Prime Minister Mark Rutte recently told immigrants to "act normal or leave."

How various Dutch politicians incorporate Euroskepticism or Europhilia into the last month of campaigning — and how the Dutch electorate responds on March 15 — will be the first test of whether Europe will forge its destiny as a union that can hold for another 60 years — or whether it won't hold together at all.

POLITICO Trump's next trade target: Europe's scooters and cheese

Hans von der Burchard and Adam Behsudi

Iconic European products ranging from Roquefort cheese to Vespa scooters will soon be in Donald Trump's sights.

The billionaire property tycoon won the U.S. presidency on a highly protectionist agenda and vowed to slash the country's eye-watering

deficits with leading trade partners. While China and Mexico have borne the brunt of his early threats, he now has a prime opportunity to box out some of Europe's most famous exports.

Next Wednesday, the U.S. trade representative will hold a public hearing on slapping an eventual 100 percent import tariff on about 90 European products, particularly

targeting agricultural products from France, Germany and Italy.

The potential duties derive from a transatlantic quarrel that has dragged on for more than 20 years over the EU's refusal to accept imports of U.S. beef treated with hormones. Powerful U.S. farming groups are pushing the Trump administration to hit the EU hard. The EU has a €136 billion surplus

with the U.S., making it particularly vulnerable to trade sanctions.

While most of the 90-odd products targeted by the U.S. retaliatory list are meats, Washington also has its knife out for motorbikes, chocolate, mustard, paprika, chestnuts and — bizarrely — hair clippers.

"If a tariff is put on Vespas, we would lose our business because

some U.S. farmers want to inject their cattle with growth hormones" — *Paul Henry, owner of a Vespa dealership in Oregon*

The European Commission said it was following "closely the U.S. review process to reinstate trade sanctions." The USTR could not comment, in part because Trump's nominee for U.S. trade representative, Robert Lighthizer, has not yet been confirmed by the Senate.

A new era

"I'm definitely concerned," said German Social Democrat Bernd Lange, the European Parliament's rapporteur for trade relations with Washington. "Apparently the willingness to engage in a dialog is no longer a given on the U.S. side."

"This is a sign we're heading for a new era" in trade relations between Brussels and Washington, he said.

Christian Burgsmüller, a member of European Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström's cabinet, last week also expressed his concern that the likely demise of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership — now in a deep freeze — had put an end to an "armistice" between the EU and U.S. "under which we tried to solve differences amicably instead of engaging in disputes."

As with Trump's controversial plans to slap a 20 percent tax on imports from Mexico, the U.S. will have to carefully calibrate the domestic reaction to price hikes on European goods.

European food giant Nestlé protested the move | *Fabrice Coffrini/AFP via Getty Images*

Paul Henry, the owner of a Vespa dealership in Portland, Oregon, said the tariff on scooters would mean he would have to cut his five employees and would likely fall on hard times.

"If a tariff is put on Vespas, we would lose our business because some U.S. farmers want to inject their cattle with growth hormones," he wrote. "There is no connection in logic."

Festering dispute

The dispute dates back to 1996, when the U.S. sued Brussels at the World Trade Organization for its ban on hormone-treated beef. After Europe continued to uphold the ban, the WTO authorized the U.S. to impose punitive tariffs equal to the damage suffered because of the hormone ban.

The retaliatory tariffs had a significant impact, causing the value of EU imports affected by the duties to drop from \$130 million in 1997-98 to less than \$15 million in 2008, a Congressional Research Service report says.

In 2009, under the newly elected President Barack Obama, both sides reached an agreement for ending the trade sanctions in return for allowing the U.S. to export up to 50,000 tons of hormone-free beef per year to Europe.

"That was at a moment when the Americans were truly open to negotiate at eye level," said Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl from the European People's Party, who was the European Parliament's rapporteur on the deal. In 2012, the agreement passed the parliament, one year before the EU and U.S. started talks on their transatlantic trade pact.

"Today, our trade talks are stalled ... and in the light of a 'America first' policy, the mood seems to have changed," she added.

The possible tariffs now under consideration were announced by Obama's outgoing Trade Representative Michael Froman, who — amid frustration over TTIP — launched the process in December.

Rolling out the cannons

The dispute over beef has kicked off again partly because U.S. farmers argue that the 2009 deal was not fair to them. They say countries such as Australia and Uruguay, which can produce hormone-free beef more cheaply, moved in to fill the 50,000 ton quota originally intended for the U.S.

Vespa scooters in Rome, Italy | *Gabriel Bouys/AFP via Getty Images*

North American Meat Institute President and CEO Barry Carpenter cautioned in December that retaliation was a "last resort" but added that it was "the only way to secure fair compensation for the losses the U.S. meat industry has incurred over the years because of the EU's hormone ban."

Jean-Luc Mériaux, secretary-general of the European Livestock and Meat Trading Union, saw America's retaliatory list as leverage on Brussels to take action.

"It's more expensive for U.S. farmers to comply with the EU's requirements than for beef producers from other countries using the quota. There's an economic problem ... The message to the Commission is: Find a way to fix this."

Despite the farmers' concerns, there is public unease about retaliation. More than 11,500 people and organizations have flooded the U.S. trade representative with comments in an online consultation ahead of next week's meeting.

"Currently the Americans are rolling out the cannons, but they are not firing yet" — *Trade lawyer Reinhard Quick*

Many expressed outrage that the list, unlike the previous tariffs in the 1990s, include not only agricultural produce but also motorbikes.

"The motorcycle sector should not be dragged into trade disputes over food products," said Manuel Ordonez de Barraicua from the European Association of Motorcycle Manufacturers. "European companies must be able to compete in the US market on fair terms and must not be hindered by artificial and politically-motivated trade barriers."

The American Motorcyclist Association last month also urged its members to deluge the agency with objections. The organization said it thwarted an effort by the USTR in 2008 to put motorcycles on a revised retaliation list.

While most of the 90-odd products targeted by the U.S. retaliatory list are meats, Washington also has its knife out for mustard and paprika | *Dan Kitwood/Getty Images*

European food giant Nestlé protested the move, saying it threatened more than 250 jobs and would make popular European sparkling waters such as San Pellegrino and Perrier prohibitively expensive.

"The United States has demonstrated its ability to resolve this dispute — i.e., to return the Commission to the table — without resorting to additional tariffs," Nestlé USA, Inc.'s attorneys wrote.

Trade lawyer Reinhard Quick, a professor of international trade at Saarland University, said that a deal could still be found, and urged companies to wait for the Trump administration to fully settle in.

"Currently the Americans are rolling out the cannons, but they are not firing yet."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Carol E. Lee, Anton Troianovski and Santiago Pérez

Feb. 9, 2017 11:25 a.m. ET

President Donald Trump's combative approach to world affairs is scrambling political dynamics in countries across the globe, bolstering some candidates who promise to stand up to the new U.S. leader and potentially reshaping America's alliances.

From Germany to Mexico to Iraq, political opposition to Mr. Trump is

The Trump Effect: The President's Wild Start Churns Domestic Politics Around the World

an increasingly popular brand that appeals to those who broadly disapprove of his world view or who have been put off by some of his early moves. Multinational organizations such as the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization are racing to formulate a unified response to what promise to be dramatic shifts in U.S. policy.

"There is a feeling which is pretty widespread that Trump is trying to end what has been 70 years of American foreign policy based on international institutions and

alliances and just the thought of that has reverberations both with allies and with rivals," said Joseph Nye, former chair of the National Intelligence Council. "If you have a slogan 'America First,' that means everybody else is second."

The White House said Mr. Trump's foreign-policy approach is designed to implement what he sees as a necessary course correction in America's role in the world.

"He just feels that for too long we've let other countries' interests become

ahead of ours," White House press secretary Sean Spicer said.

While the new president's style is brash—particularly after eight years of the cautious, deliberative approach of former President Barack Obama—Mr. Trump is seeking to advance his agenda one personal relationship at a time, his aides said, despite that effort's rocky start.

A White House visit Friday by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe offers the next test of the Trump

effect on other countries' politics. People close to Mr. Abe say he plans to make it easy for the new president by launching a charm offensive—something that won't likely cost him politically thanks to his own popularity at home.

Mr. Abe wants to avoid inflaming Mr. Trump by pushing back on his policies, even in areas where the U.S. leader has attacked Japan's interests, these people say. One advantage: Hot-button issues such as immigration and refugee policy aren't top-of-mind in insular Japan.

The same weekend, a rising likely candidate in Mexico's presidential elections next year, leftist leader Andrés Manuel López Obrador, is embarking on a tour of half a dozen U.S. cities in an attempt to cement his lead in the polls following a nationalist backlash in his country against Mr. Trump's policy proposals and rhetoric on immigration.

Starting Sunday in Los Angeles, Mr. López Obrador is holding a series of events to convey his support for Mexican migrants in the U.S. The ascent of the 63-year-old founder of the populist National Regeneration Movement, who narrowly lost Mexico's two previous elections, comes as President Enrique Peña Nieto scrambles to establish a working relationship with Mr. Trump. Mr. Peña Nieto cancelled a planned Jan. 31 White House meeting after Mr. Trump repeated demands that Mexico pay for a wall between the two countries.

A poll published Feb. 1 by Mexican business daily *El Financiero* gave Mr. López Obrador 33% voter support, up 4 percentage points from November and six points ahead of former first lady Margarita Zavala, a leading presidential contender within the conservative National Action Party.

In Europe, Mr. Trump's election, policy pronouncements and style have had an impact on matters including the British government's position on Brexit to European military spending to political races in Germany to Polish foreign policy.

"I have not had a conversation, no matter how minor, with a European official that hasn't focused on Trump," said Jeremy Shapiro, the director of research at the European

Council on Foreign Relations, a London think tank.

Mr. Trump's victory initially energized his ideological allies, particularly in Europe's nationalist, anti-immigrant and euroskeptic parties. Yet that enthusiasm has tempered since he took office and in some countries centrist politicians who oppose the new American president's policies are enjoying a revival.

The president's praise for Russian President Vladimir Putin and criticism of NATO has rattled European leaders. Mr. Trump's policy on Russia, as well as China, isn't yet clear, although he has rattled Beijing's leadership by questioning the status of Taiwan and accusing the country of manipulating its currency. He has said he hopes to have better relations with Mr. Putin, and this week the White House said the U.S. won't support lifting sanctions on Russia in response to its incursion into Ukraine until the conflict there ends.

In Germany, the party of a candidate taking a hard line against Mr. Trump ahead of September's general election has surpassed Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative party for the first time in more than five years, according to a survey released Monday by the polling firm INSA for the *Bild* newspaper.

By contrast, the anti-immigrant and antiestablishment Alternative for Germany, which has praised Mr. Trump, has struggled in the polls recently. It dropped to 12% in this week's INSA poll, compared with 15% in early January.

Martin Schulz, the Social Democratic candidate challenging Ms. Merkel for chancellor, has been rallying supporters by criticizing Mr. Trump, saying his "attacks on Europe are also attacks on Germany."

Even in France, where Trump-style populism was surging, the picture is growing more complicated, and the American leader becoming a defining wedge issue in the presidential race.

Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Front, said Mr. Trump's swift action since taking office has lent credibility to her own causes: cracking down on

immigration, resurrecting France's national borders and pulling the country out of the European Union's common currency.

Emmanuel Macron, a pro-EU former investment banker who is running as an independent, has increasingly used Mr. Trump as a foil. He's cast his centrist campaign as a sanctuary for liberal democracy and multiculturalism.

"I want to issue a solemn appeal to all the researchers, academics and businesses in the United States that are fighting against obscurantism," Mr. Macron told thousands at a rally on Saturday. "You have and you will have, as of next May, a homeland. It will be France!"

While Ms. Le Pen is leading in the polls with about a quarter of the vote, Mr. Macron gets between 20% and 23% for the No. 2 spot. He recently supplanted conservative François Fillon who is now in third after an expenses scandal.

If the current pattern holds, Ms. Le Pen would win the first round of voting in late April, but polls predict she'll lose in a landslide to Mr. Macron in the runoff in May as voters for Mr. Fillon and left-wing candidates are expected to shift their votes to him.

In the Middle East, Mr. Trump is being watched closely by America's allies and adversaries alike. He has a close relationship with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is scheduled to visit the White House next week. And Mr. Trump's aggressive opening salvo with Iran was greeted positively by Sunni Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, which is a shift from the deep skepticism they had for former President Obama, said R. Nicholas Burns, who advised President George W. Bush on Iran policy.

Iraq, though, may be emerging as a trouble spot. Mr. Trump's executive order banning the vast majority of Iraqis from traveling to the U.S., coupled with his comments that the U.S. should have taken Iraq's oil during the Iraq war, has shaken the delicate political balance Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has tried to maintain between serving as a pro-U.S. ally and resisting strong anti-American forces in his government, analysts say.

Mr. Trump's statements have emboldened hard-line Shiite parties that traditionally tilt toward Iran. "What Trump did confirms what we have warned of before: that America is not a strategic ally to Iraq," said Naeem al-Aboudi, spokesman for Asaib Ahl al Haq, one of the largest Shiite militias.

Mr. Trump's early move to retaliate against Iran after its ballistic missile test just days after he took office, and his administration's warning that Tehran is "on notice," could embolden the country's hard-liners, warns Iran's exiled crown prince, Reza Pahlavi, son of the last Iranian shah and president of the Iran Council for Free Elections.

"The regime, in fact, would welcome a conflict," he said in an interview. "They use a conflict" to deflect attention from domestic unhappiness over the economy and political repression.

Mr. Trump has tempered some of his campaign pronouncements, such as that Japan and South Korea perhaps should acquire nuclear weapons. But he did withdraw the U.S. from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade pact with 11 Asia-Pacific nations, as promised during the campaign.

In South Korea, a U.S. ally, Mr. Trump has helped fuel the rise of upstart candidates bidding to replace President Park Geun-hye, who was impeached by the country's National Assembly in December.

In Australia, another close U.S. ally, Mr. Trump's presidency has jolted the coalition of Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, which has only a thin majority in parliament, emboldening conservative party rebels to talk of another leadership coup and straining ties with the U.S. over a flashpoint refugee deal.

On Tuesday, a high-profile lawmaker who says he has drawn inspiration from Mr. Trump and the conservative drift in U.S. politics, quit the government to start his own rival party, hoping to draw others.

—Jacob Schlesinger, Alastair Gale, Stacy Meichtry, Tamer El-Ghobashy, Jonathan Cheng, Rob Taylor, Julian E. Barnes, Valentina Pop and Martin Sobczyk contributed to this article.



US Allies Worry About Joint Intel Operations Under President Trump

WASHINGTON

Some U.S. allies are increasingly uneasy about the future of joint intelligence endeavors with Washington as they try to figure out

just how much President Donald Trump plans to shake up the existing order.

The concerns are still in the early stages, with most of those willing to share their thoughts expressing a

willingness to give the Trump administration more time to get people in place at the various agencies and departments.

But many also admit that the ongoing lack of communication

combined with what, at times, appears to be contradictory messages from the White House, key departments and even from President Trump himself, is starting to strain ongoing efforts.

"It's hard to know for sure," one Western diplomatic official told VOA on condition of anonymity, when asked about the future of intelligence cooperation with the U.S.

"So much of the administration is not in place," the official said, cautioning that despite the many remaining vacancies there is already a sense Trump prefers some allies to others.

Perhaps no set of issues has been more emblematic of the dilemmas facing officials from Washington's European allies as the Trump administration's approach to Russia and the NATO alliance.

Starting on the campaign trail, Trump continually talked about his respect for Russian President Vladimir Putin, a view he has clung to even since taking office.

"I do respect him," Trump told Fox News' Bill O'Reilly in an interview that aired this past Sunday. "He's a leader of his country. I say it's better to get along with Russia than not."

At the same time, Trump has criticized NATO repeatedly, calling it "obsolete."

And despite voicing "strong support for NATO" in a phone call Sunday with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, Western officials say they are left to wonder how far that support truly goes, given other statements the president has made.

During a visit to U.S. Central Command headquarters in Tampa, Florida, Monday, for example, Trump repeated criticism of NATO members who have not been making "their full and proper financial contributions."

"Many of them have not been even close," Trump said. "And they have to do that."

FILE - President Donald Trump speaks to troops while visiting U.S. Central Command and U.S. Special Operations Command at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida, Feb. 6, 2017.

"These alliances have been a little too much of a one way street, which is not to say that the alliances have no value," said Kevin Harrington, deputy assistant to the president for strategic planning at the National Security Council, at a forum Monday in Washington.

"It was time for the United States to look harder at a fairer burden sharing on certain fronts," he said of the president's message during the campaign. "This is not being anti-alliance to do that. I think it's simply a question of fairer distribution of burdens."

"It's a wonderful area of opportunity," according to NSC Senior Director for Strategic Assessments Victoria Coates who spoke at the same event regarding the chance to work on Washington's relationships.

But it has been the U.S. president's apparent willingness to work with Russia that has some Western officials most unnerved.

"It's a key concern," said the Western diplomatic official who spoke on condition of anonymity. "Russia has been a very disruptive player."

Officials worry Moscow's disruptions of upcoming elections in France, Germany and the Netherlands will only increase.

The fear, the officials say, is Russia will interfere in those elections in much the same way American intelligence officials said it interfered with the recent U.S. presidential election.

"What you're going to see, I'm sure, is a campaign of fake news," the diplomatic official said, warning a softer approach to Russia's activities is only likely to backfire on the West.

FILE - Russian President Vladimir Putin takes part in a meeting in Moscow.

"If the most important of these allies, the U.S., decides to forgive, it will be very difficult," the official said.

While Trump's aides have done little to ease creeping anxiety for some U.S. allies, there have been some hints of pragmatism.

"If we've learned anything from the last eight years it's that sort of cuddling up to your opponents and punishing your allies is not a good recipe for a peaceful, stable world," said the NSC's Coates. "We have terrific friends who are willing to help us and if we ask them to do so in a purposeful way, that there's a plan behind it, I actually think we have a great deal of upside."

Western officials hope that thinking ultimately wins out.

"We have something to offer," noted Dutch Ambassador to the U.S. Henne Schuur, who has been watching developments closely.

The Netherlands has been working with various U.S. agencies to improve security across Europe and to establish a European Union intelligence community in order to better share vital information and combat threats.

"We have a very good relation with the intelligence community [in the U.S.]," Schuur said. "That will not be broken easily."

Meetings this week with key European Union officials may also go a long way in easing potential anxieties.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos sounded an optimistic tone, calling his talks Wednesday with U.S. Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly, "fruitful and friendly."

"The security threats faced by the United States and the European Union are common and so should be our response," Avramopoulos said in a statement.

Kelly, for his part, emphasized Washington's "deep commitment to help the EU fight the terrorist threat" according to a readout from his office.

Yet for every step forward, Western officials say it is difficult to move past nagging doubts caused by tweets, comments or even the administration's executive order pausing immigration from seven Muslim majority countries.

One Western official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the order caused several days of uncertainty as Western countries struggled to get answers on how it impacted their citizens and what they were supposed to do.

For now, many Western officials seem willing to give the Trump administration more time to get its footing. Still they worry, waiting, as one official put it, for a firm signal to indicate what sort of course the U.S. leadership will ultimately take.

INTERNATIONAL

The
Washington
Post

David Ignatius : Fears of an Islamic State breakout fuel Trump's strategy

<https://www.facebook.com/davidignatiusbooks>

Michael Flynn, the national security adviser to President Trump, shows visitors a map predicting what will

happen to the Islamic State after its stronghold in Mosul is captured. It shows menacing black arrows reaching west toward future battlefronts in Iraq, Syria and beyond.

That's the worry that motivates the Trump administration as it plans strategy against the terrorist group: Rather than a shattering defeat for the adversary, Mosul may be the start of a breakout to other regions.

That may be one rationale for Trump's controversial ban on travel from Iraq and six other Muslim-majority countries, which was rejected Thursday night by a federal appeals court. Defenders of the ban

could argue that it might prevent a metastasis of the Islamic State into the West after its capitals are crushed.

"As Mosul falls, everyone [in the Islamic State] will move out," said a senior Trump administration official. "ISIS will fall back into different areas. You could get suicide attacks again in Ramadi," an Iraqi city that was liberated 14 months ago.

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But many experts outside the administration see holes in Trump's counterterrorism approach and worry that it could backfire. His rhetoric about "Islamic terrorism" has turned up the ideological heat, but it has frightened some potential Muslim allies at home and abroad. Trump has denounced the Obama administration's strategy — which, however cautious, was slowly throttling the Islamic State — without having a clear alternative.

The travel ban has offended the Iraqi government, even as its elite forces bravely captured eastern Mosul. The casualty rate among the Iraqi Counterterrorism Service, which has done

most of the heavy fighting, is about 30 percent, a high-level intelligence official said. Because that unit must rebuild its strength, victory in Mosul is at least six months away.

Then there's the Iran conundrum. Flynn put Iran "on notice" after its Jan. 29 missile test, and the administration soon announced sanctions. But Tehran is also the United States' de facto ally against the Islamic State in Iraq. Iran-backed Shiite militias haven't turned their guns on U.S. forces, but they could — severely complicating the Islamic State campaign.

And there's the puzzle of how to deal with the new alliance of Russia, Iran, Turkey and the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Will the United States join them in a shared fight against the Islamic State? If so, would that mean abandoning the Syrian Kurdish militia known as the YPG, which has been the United States' strongest partner against the Islamic State, but which Turkey rejects as a terrorist group?

During the presidential campaign, Trump urged an alliance with Russia against the Islamic State in Syria, and some officials have talked of driving a wedge between Moscow and Tehran. But analysts from the

Institute for the Study of War caution that such a Russia-Iran split is probably wishful thinking.

Trump's notion of partnership with President Vladimir Putin is also increasingly problematic. Congressional Republicans are wary about embracing Moscow. And last Friday, the senior administration official endorsed the hard-line statement by U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley that Russia must withdraw from Crimea before sanctions are removed. The White House position on Russia is now "high standards, high expectations," the official said.

The Trump team has criticized President Barack Obama's plan for taking Raqqa as "poor staff work," without having its own version ready. Some analysts worry that the Islamic State is regrouping as the new administration recalibrates policy. "Simultaneity and pressure are the keys going forward," one U.S. commander said. He urged that the United States sustain its broad coalition, including the Syrian Kurds, to keep up momentum.

Victory in Raqqa could be a year off, the intelligence official warned. That would give the Islamic State many months to plan the global attacks that Flynn fears. Given this danger, some analysts speculate that Trump may eventually decide

to clear Raqqa with thousands of U.S. troops from mobile units, such as the 82nd Airborne Division, which is already partly deployed in Iraq. That would be a decisive show of force, and it could get the United States in and out relatively quickly. But it would probably mean high U.S. casualties.

The bitter irony is that as Trump proclaims his anti-Islamic State campaign, al-Qaeda is becoming stronger in both Iraq and Syria, warn analysts from the Institute for the Study of War. This is a fight where easy slogans and rushed travel bans aren't likely to provide a path to victory.

●A clarification about the National Security Council organizational chart described in a previous column: Susan Rice, former national security adviser, disputed a claim by Flynn, her successor, that she had 23 people reporting directly to her, compared with Flynn's eight. Rice said she had just eight direct reports. Flynn's spokesman said he had based his estimate on an organizational chart that Rice had given him.

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Editorial : A terrorism label that would hurt more than help

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THOSE WHO favor the United States designating the Muslim Brotherhood a foreign terrorist organization, a move being considered by the Trump administration and advanced by a few members of Congress, think it will strike a singular blow against violent extremism. But they labor under an illusion. The Muslim Brotherhood is not a single, cohesive unit, but rather a sprawling organization. It does not systematically engage in terrorism, although some parts of it have turned to violence. A blanket designation would be a mistake.

Founded in 1928 in Egypt as a religious, social and political organization, the Muslim Brotherhood has evolved over subsequent decades. After endorsing the use of violence in its early years, the Egyptian branch of the Brotherhood disowned it in the

1970s in exchange for the freedom to organize politically and socially. Following the Arab Spring uprising in Egypt, the Brotherhood moved into politics and one of its members, Mohamed Morsi, was elected president in 2012. His faltering performance led to mass protests, and he was deposed by the military a year later. Gen. Abdel Fatah al-Sissi, now Egypt's president, has outlawed the Brotherhood, arrested its leaders and members, and pressed hard for Washington to impose the foreign terrorist designation.

In Tunisia, a party inspired by the Brotherhood is openly engaged in politics, and the democratic transition would have been impossible without its moderate leadership. Among Palestinians, the Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas, which has waged a violent conflict against Israel, is also an offshoot of the Brotherhood and is already on the U.S. foreign terrorist

organization list. A Jordanian branch, purged of extremists, is represented in parliament. A 2015 review by the British government concluded that "for the most part, the Muslim Brotherhood have preferred non violent incremental change," but "they are prepared to countenance violence — including, from time to time, terrorism — where gradualism is ineffective." A blanket designation would injure those who seek change without terrorism.

Under U.S. law, the designation as a foreign terrorist organization is to be made by the secretary of state. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) and Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.) have reintroduced legislation that would urge the secretary to make the designation, saying the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, "espouse a violent Islamist ideology with a mission of destroying the West." If the Muslim Brotherhood

were so labeled, anyone in the United States or abroad who provided "material support or resources," including something such as democracy training, would be at risk of removal from the United States, as well as financial sanctions.

The possibility of this being used unfairly against Muslim groups in the United States is real, and worrisome, given the inclination of President Trump and some members of his team to unfairly conflate all Muslims with the danger of terrorism. An overly broad designation against the Brotherhood would also have unwanted blowback in the Middle East, tainting people who are working for nonviolent change. This is a case where the United States needs a laserlike attention to real threats, not a senseless political designation that would miss the mark.

Syria's Assad Brushes Off Amnesty Report on Prison Executions as 'Fake News'

Zamira Rahim

Syrian President Bashar Assad has dismissed allegations of extensive human rights violations at military prison outside of Damascus as "fake news."

The Amnesty International report claims that up to 13,000 prisoners were killed at the Saydnaya prison between 2011 and the end of 2015, Yahoo News reports.

"You can forge anything these days," Assad responded when shown the report during an interview with Yahoo News in Damascus. "We are living in a fake news era." He was also shown an FBI report concluding that photo of bodies at one of his prisons were genuine. Assad dismissed this as "propaganda".

He added: "If the FBI says something, it's not evidence for anyone."

The Syrian President also said that life was returning to normal in parts of Syria, including Damascus, as the intensity of the 5-year civil war diminishes. Amnesty's report said that between 20 - 50 people a week were executed in a "calculated

campaign of extrajudicial execution."

[Yahoo News]



Russian airstrike kills 3 Turkish soldiers in northern Syria

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MOSCOW — A Russian airstrike in northern Syria killed three Turkish soldiers and wounded 11 others Thursday, in a friendly fire incident that could test the shaky coordination between the two countries in the fight against the Islamic State.

Russia and Turkey both described the morning attack as accidental, saying a bomb hit a building used by Turkish troops near the northern Syrian town of al-Bab. Turkish forces are launching an offensive to retake the town from the Islamic State.

The two countries quickly took steps to limit fallout from the incident. Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed condolences to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in a telephone call and blamed the strike on poor coordination, according to a Kremlin spokesman. The Russian Defense Ministry said the strike was meant to hit Islamic State targets.

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The deaths added to a heavy toll suffered by Turkish troops embroiled in an increasingly complicated and bloody fight to help Syrian rebels capture al-Bab from the Islamic State. Five died Wednesday, and the latest deaths brought the number of Turkish soldiers killed in the two-month battle to more than 60.

[Report: Syria has secretly executed thousands of political prisoners]

In a short statement, the Turkish armed forces said Russian officials had expressed their "sadness and condolences." It added that "investigation and studies related to the event will be carried out by both sides."

Moscow and Ankara appeared close to the brink of war in late 2015 after Turkish jets shot down a Russian warplane over Turkey's border with Syria. But Putin restored relations with Erdogan after a coup attempt nearly unseated the Turkish leader in July.

The two countries have increased their coordination in Syria, where Turkish-backed rebels have sought to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad, a Moscow ally. Last month,

Russia, Turkey and Iran hosted talks in Kazakhstan to manage a cease-fire between rebel factions and the Syrian government, and Russian and Turkish officials announced that they would begin coordinating strikes against the Islamic State.

The two countries' relations have warmed despite dramatic incidents, including the assassination of Russia's ambassador to Turkey in December by a gunman who yelled, "God is great!" and "Don't forget Aleppo! Don't forget Syria!"

[Trump to Erdogan: No decision yet on arming Kurds in Syria]

In recent days, rebel and Turkish reinforcements have been converging from the north on the outskirts of al-Bab for what rebel commanders said is expected to be a major push to eject the militants.

Meanwhile, Syrian government forces have also been advancing on the town from the south, setting up a race for control of al-Bab between Turkish-backed forces and those loyal to Assad.

Russia has been providing air support to both sides as they advance. It was unclear whether the errant strike Thursday was

conducted in support of Syrian or Turkish operations there.

The attack also coincided with reports of the first direct clashes between Syrian forces and Turkish-backed rebels on the outskirts of al-Bab, threatening to turn the battle into a three-front, international war. Photographs posted on social media by rebel groups showed rebels driving an armored vehicle that was said to have been commandeered from government forces.

[The road to Raqqa: On the front line of a U.S.-backed advance]

Erdogan is hoping to persuade U.S. military commanders to partner with the Turkish-backed force fighting in Syria — rather than arm Syrian Kurdish fighters linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which is designated a terrorist group by Turkey and the United States. The ground force would be used in a final assault on the Islamic State's self-proclaimed capital in the northern Syrian city of Raqqa.

President Trump's advisers have been skeptical about a plan to arm the Kurds but have not ruled it out.

Sly reported from Beirut. Kareem Fahim in Istanbul contributed to this report.



Trump May Turn to Arab Allies for Help With Israeli-Palestinian Relations (UNE)

Peter Baker and Mark Landler

WASHINGTON — President Trump and his advisers, venturing for the first time into the fraught world of Middle East peacemaking, are developing a strategy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that would enlist Arab nations like Saudi Arabia and Egypt to break years of deadlock.

The emerging approach mirrors the thinking of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, who will visit the United States next week, and would build on his de facto alignment with Sunni Muslim countries in trying to counter the rise of Shiite-led Iran. But Arab officials have warned Mr. Trump and his advisers that if they want

cooperation, the United States cannot make life harder for them with provocative pro-Israel moves.

The White House seems to be taking the advice. Mr. Trump delayed his plan to move the United States Embassy to Jerusalem after Arab leaders told him that doing so would cause angry protests among Palestinians, who also claim the city as the capital of a future state. And after meeting with King Abdullah II of Jordan last week, Mr. Trump authorized a statement that, for the first time, cautioned Israel against building new West Bank settlements beyond existing lines.

"There are some quite interesting ideas circulating on the potential for U.S.-Israeli-Arab discussions on regional security in which Israeli-Palestinian issues would play a significant role," said Robert Satloff, the executive director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "I don't know if this is going to ripen by next week, but this stuff is out there."

The discussions underscore the evolution of the new president's attitude toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as he delves deeper into the issue. During the campaign and the postelection transition, Mr. Trump presented

himself as an unstinting supporter of Israel who would quickly move the embassy and support new settlement construction without reservation. But he has tempered that to a degree.

The notion of recruiting Arab countries to help forge an agreement between Israelis and Palestinians — known as the "outside-in" approach — is not a new one. As secretary of state under President George Bush, James A. Baker III organized the first regional conference in 1991 at which Arab leaders sat down with Israel's prime minister. President George W. Bush invited Arab

leaders to a summit meeting with Israel in Annapolis, Md., in 2007. And President Barack Obama's first special envoy, George Mitchell, spent months in 2009 trying to enlist Arab partners in a joint effort.

Mr. Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel last year in New York. The Trump administration's emerging approach to Middle East peace efforts mirrors Mr. Netanyahu's thinking. Reuters

The difference is that in the last eight years, Israel has grown closer to Sunni Arab nations because of their shared concern about Iranian hegemony in the region, opening the possibility that this newfound, if not always public, affiliation could change the dynamics.

"The logic of outside-in is that because the Palestinians are so weak and divided — and because there's a new, tacit relationship between the Sunni Arabs and Israel — there's the hope the Arabs would be prepared to do more," said Dennis B. Ross, a Middle East peace negotiator under several presidents, including Mr. Obama.

That is a departure from the countervailing assumption that if Israel first made peace with the Palestinians, it would lead to peace with the larger Arab world — the "inside-out" approach. That was at the core of President Bill Clinton's attempts to bring the two sides together and was Mr. Obama's fallback position after his efforts to find Arab partners failed.

Mr. Netanyahu, who is due at the White House on Wednesday, has been talking about an outside-in approach for a while. His theory is that the inside-out approach has failed. And so, he argues, if Israel can transform its relationship with Sunni Arab nations, they can ultimately lead the way toward a resolution with the Palestinians.

Jared Kushner, the senior White House adviser whom Mr. Trump has assigned a major role in negotiations, has been intrigued by

this logic, according to people who have spoken with him. Mr. Kushner has grown close to Ron Dermer, the Israeli ambassador and a close confidant of Mr. Netanyahu's. Mr. Trump and Mr. Kushner also had dinner at the White House on Thursday night with Sheldon Adelson, the casino magnate, who is a key supporter of Mr. Netanyahu.

A series of telephone conversations and personal meetings with Arab and regional leaders in recent weeks have also shaped Mr. Kushner's thinking and that of the president. Mr. Trump has talked with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt; King Salman of Saudi Arabia; Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates; and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey. Mr. Kushner has also met with Arab officials, including Yousef Al Otaiba, the ambassador from the United Arab Emirates.

The United States Embassy in Tel Aviv. Mr. Trump delayed his plan to move the embassy to Jerusalem after Arab leaders told him that doing so would lead to protests among Palestinians. Jack Guez/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

King Abdullah II of Jordan seems to have played a particularly pivotal role. Concerned that an embassy move would anger the many Palestinians living in his country, the king rushed to Washington without an invitation, in a gamble that he could see Mr. Trump. He visited first with Vice President Mike Pence, who had him over for breakfast at his official residence last week. The king appealed to the administration's fixation with the Islamic State, arguing that the United States should not alienate Arab allies who could help.

Several days later, the king buttonholed Mr. Trump on the sidelines of the National Prayer Breakfast and made a similar case. He advised against a radical shift in

American policy and emphasized the risks that Jordan would face if Israel were to become even more assertive about building settlements, according to people who spoke with Mr. Kushner and Stephen K. Bannon, the chief White House strategist.

Mr. Trump had already decided by that point to slow down the embassy move — a decision that did not especially trouble Mr. Netanyahu and his team, who, while publicly supporting a move, privately urged caution to avoid a violent backlash. The administration had also received reports from American diplomats in Jordan that the threat level for a terrorist attack there had been raised to the highest level in years.

But a series of announcements of new settlement construction worried some White House officials, who thought Mr. Netanyahu was taking action without first meeting with Mr. Trump.

Within hours of Mr. Trump's meeting with King Abdullah, the administration leaked a statement to The Jerusalem Post saying, "We urge all parties from taking unilateral actions that could undermine our ability to make progress, including settlement announcements."

After that was posted online, the White House issued a public statement with softened language: "While we don't believe the existence of settlements is an impediment to peace, the construction of new settlements or the expansion of existing settlements beyond their current borders may not be helpful in achieving that goal."

King Abdullah II of Jordan, far left; Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson; and the White House adviser Jared Kushner, right, at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington last week. Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

It was worded in a way that let different parties focus on different parts. The "may not be helpful" phrase was the first time Mr. Trump had warned against new housing in the West Bank.

But the "beyond their current borders" phrase suggested a return to George W. Bush's policy of essentially acquiescing to additional construction within existing settlement blocs as long as Israel did not expand their geographical reach or build entirely new settlements. Elliott Abrams, one of the authors of that policy under Mr. Bush, is poised to become deputy secretary of state under Mr. Trump.

Mr. Netanyahu's team focused on that part of the statement. "I happen to know they were very pleased with the statement because it was such a contrast from Obama," said Morton A. Klein, the national president of the Zionist Organization of America, who has been supportive of the Trump administration.

Indeed, undeterred, Mr. Netanyahu's coalition pushed through Parliament a bill to retroactively authorize thousands of homes in the West Bank that even under Israeli law had been built illegally on Palestinian-owned land.

Mr. Klein, who argues that settlements are not an obstacle to peace, said the White House had made the statement too confusing to provide clear direction. "I did find it ambiguous, and not as clear as I would like it to be," he said.

The challenge now is whether Mr. Trump can use this ambiguity to his benefit. If the United States can extract gestures from the Arabs, then that could provide a basis for Israelis and Palestinians to make compromises that they could not do by themselves, Mr. Ross said.

"You'd have to have some kind of parallel approach," he said. "This would be a serious investment of diplomacy to probe what is possible."

The Washington Post Neocon and Iran-contra figure Elliott Abrams in line for State Department job

<https://www.facebook.com/anne.gearan>

If President Trump hires Elliott Abrams as the No. 2 at the State Department, he will be sending several important signals on the administration's emerging foreign policy, especially regarding Israel, and on his own tolerance for dissenting views.

Abrams is fiercely pro-Israel, and his inclusion at a high level in the

State Department would be another sign that the Trump administration intends to remake U.S.-Israel policy after what Trump sees as the failures of the Obama years. It also suggests that Trump plans to quickly make good on Trump's pledge to seek a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians.

Best known for his role in the Reagan-era Iran-contra scandal, Abrams interviewed for the deputy

secretary of state job Tuesday at the White House. The nomination could come within days, ahead of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to the White House next week.

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If he is chosen, Abrams is expected to play a major role in the administration's effort to resume negotiations toward a peace settlement or smaller, interim agreements. That effort is likely to be headquartered at the White House under presidential adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner. While Kushner has no government experience, and other influential Trump advisers on Israel have little, Abrams would bring decades of

experience and extensive contacts across the Middle East.

Ghaith Al-Omari, a former Palestinian peace negotiator, praised what he called Abrams's "solid grounding in reality" and learned understanding of the problem.

"As importantly, he was an effective counterpart to work with: He got things done," Omari said.

Paula Dobriansky, who served in the Reagan and George W. Bush administrations, is another potential choice for deputy. The post often goes to an experienced bureaucrat or a career Foreign Service officer. Although recent secretaries of state have had two deputies, the Trump administration might fill only one slot, according to current and former officials.

Abrams's White House visit is the clearest sign yet that he has become the leading candidate, people familiar with the search said. Through an assistant, Abrams declined to comment. A White House spokesman did not respond to a request for information about the meeting between Trump and Abrams.

An appointment under Trump would be Abrams's third stint in government, all for Republican presidents, and the most surprising.

As a candidate, Trump pilloried the views of neoconservatives such as Abrams, especially in relation to

their support for the Iraq War. He vowed to break free of constraints on U.S. actions abroad that he said were the false constructs of a Washington foreign policy establishment that Abrams undoubtedly represents.

Abrams supported two of Trump's Republican rivals during the presidential campaign, Sens. Ted Cruz (Tex.) and Marco Rubio (Fla.), and declined to back the businessman once he became the GOP nominee.

Trump and chief adviser Stephen K. Bannon prize loyalty, and the administration turned its back on Republicans who signed manifestos calling Trump unqualified on national security grounds. Abrams did not sign those letters but wrote last year that Republicans had chosen someone who could not win. Questions about his loyalty are a main reason for the long delay in announcing a nominee for the deputy job at State, people familiar with the process said.

Abrams has no personal history with either Trump or Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who also attended the Tuesday meeting at the White House.

But Abrams's knowledge of Washington appealed to Tillerson, who has no government background, one official said. As Abrams's stock rose as a potential deputy to Tillerson, current and former officials and others involved

in Middle East peace issues were encouraged.

James J. Carafano, head of foreign and defense policy analysts at the Heritage Foundation, said Abrams knows the State Department well and believes American diplomacy is important.

"He's a tough, thick-skinned guy," Carafano said. "That's what you need as a deputy. It's not a job where you make a lot of friends."

"He's a guy a lot of conservatives trust," he said of Abrams. "I don't think he's intensely ideological. He makes each decision on its merits."

Carafano said he expects Trump to brush off Abrams's criticism of him during the campaign.

"He respects expertise and leadership," he said of Trump. "I don't think he keeps score. If he thinks someone is good for the team and gives honest, straightforward advice, he'll be fine."

Within the State Department, Abrams developed a reputation as a manager who listened to alternative viewpoints before making a decision. His appointment would come as a welcome relief to employees who were dreading the prospects of another former diplomat whose name was floated as a deputy, former U.S. ambassador to the U.N. John Bolton.

"He's not going to burn the building down," said a State Department official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to comment on a personnel issue.

David Makovsky, an adviser on the Middle East under President Barack Obama, witnessed the collapse of former secretary of state John F. Kerry's peace efforts.

"Adding Elliot would be a very important signal that someone who has experience in this issue will be very much at the center of administration policy," he said. "I served in a Democratic administration, but I think it would be welcome across the board."

The bipartisan praise is all the more noteworthy for the fact that Abrams's conviction for withholding information from Congress is seldom mentioned.

Abrams pleaded guilty in 1991 to concealing knowledge of the scheme to sell arms illegally to Iran and divert the profits to anti-communist rebels in Nicaragua.

Abrams was pardoned by President George H.W. Bush.

Carol Morello contributed to this report.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Kenyan Court Blocks Government Plan to Close the World's Largest Refugee Camp

Matina Stevis

Updated Feb. 9, 2017 6:30 p.m. ET

NAIROBI, Kenya—The nation's high court threw out Kenya's plan to shut the world's biggest refugee camp, halting the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Somalis to the war-ravaged nation and relieving pressure on refugee facilities caused by President Donald Trump's recent travel ban.

Thursday's ruling suspends plans for the closure of Dadaab, but the government said it intends to appeal the decision.

The Kenyan government last year said it wanted to shut Dadaab, where roughly 300,000 Somali refugees have been living for years, many born there as their homeland has been in the throes of a civil war and a violent Islamist insurgency.

"The government decision specifically targeting Somali refugees is an act of group

persecution, illegal, discriminatory and therefore unconstitutional," Judge John Mativo ruled in Nairobi on Thursday. He said the plan was a violation of Kenya's obligations under international law, and declared it "null and void."

The United Nations and Western countries that helped Kenya fund Dadaab criticized the closure plan last year, but the government, which is preparing for an election scheduled for August, insisted it would proceed. It alleged, without offering evidence, that the camp could be a hub for extremists and said wealthier Western countries were rejecting refugees as well.

Mr. Trump's executive order suspending the admission of Somali refugees to the U.S. because of security concerns has added pressure to resolve the refugees' situation.

The U.S. last year accepted 11,000 Somali refugees, many of whom were joining families. The number

pales in comparison to the one million Somali refugees in Kenya and other East African countries, but it gave more-vulnerable displaced Somalis, especially small children, a chance at an education outside the vast refugee camp.

News of Mr. Trump's decision in January shook Dadaab and left thousands who had already gone through multiyear vetting procedures by U.S. authorities in limbo, fearful that Kenya would send them home as the U.S. was shutting the door.

"After months of anxiety because of the camp closure deadline hanging over their heads, increasingly restricted asylum options and the recent U.S. administration suspension of refugee resettlement, the court's judgment offers Somali refugees a hope that they may still have a choice other than returning to insecure and drought-ridden Somalia," said Laetitia Bader, Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch.

A U.S. appeals court on Thursday upheld a federal judge's order last week that temporarily barred enforcement of Mr. Trump's directive.

Somalia, which on Wednesday evening elected a new president, a U.S.-Somali dual national who fled the civil war to find refuge in Buffalo, N.Y., where he spent much of his adult life, is facing a multitude of problems.

Apart from the interclan conflict that has been going on for 25 years and al Qaeda-affiliated al-Shabaab still controlling swaths of the country and wreaking havoc with attacks, the Somali economy is decimated and a drought has left some six million people on the verge of famine, the U.N. has said.

Write to Matina Stevis at matina.stevis@wsj.com

A Bilingual Cameroon Teeters After English Speakers Protest Treatment

Francois Essomba and Dionne Searcey

BAMENDA, Cameroon — Lawyers have long put up with laws that aren't translated into their native English. They have endured French-speaking judges whose English is barely passable and who aren't familiar with their judicial system.

Last fall, after another new law, regarding business transactions, was not translated, the lawyers here in Bamenda, a bustling city in Cameroon's northwest, decided they'd had enough. They organized a demonstration to protest a government that they believed had long slighted their English-speaking region by failing to uphold a constitutional promise of a bilingual nation.

The demonstrations grew, as teachers vented their frustration that the government in Yaoundé — dominated by the French-speaking majority — sent teachers with shoddy English skills to schools in their area. Hundreds of citizens joined in, carrying banners and chanting against what they said were longtime injustices against their region.

By December, the protests had turned violent. Security forces used live ammunition to disperse demonstrations in Bamenda. At least two unarmed protesters were killed and others were injured, according to human rights groups. News media reports said as many as four protesters died.

As the violence and calls for secession in English-speaking areas rise, the issue is quickly becoming a big problem for the central government. In recent days, protest organizers have called on businesses in Anglophone areas to stop paying taxes.

For four decades, Cameroon was split into English and French territories. After independence in the early 1960s, the nation unified into one republic made up mostly of

French speakers and a minority who speak English and adhere to British common law. The setup has been plagued by constitutional disputes and complaints from English speakers who say the government gives them fewer resources and generally fails to represent their interests.

Cameroon, a Central African nation so geographically and ethnically diverse it is known as "all Africa in one country," has been ruled since 1982 by President Paul Biya, 83, who spends weeks at a time in European hotels and is seen as increasingly out of touch with a growing population of young people.

The nation is battling Boko Haram in its Far North region, as the war with Islamic militants spills over from Nigeria, and wildlife trafficking elsewhere, regularly fighting off international poachers of its ivory. Last month, Cameroonian officials seized two shipping containers of pangolin scales. They were being illegally smuggled to China, where the fingernail-like scales are valued as an ingredient in medicine.

The demonstrations have spread to Buea, an English-speaking city in the southwest, where a video circulated on social media of police officers hovering over female students lying in the mud and of officers beating students in their dormitories.

In recent weeks, dozens of protesters have been arrested and moved to Yaoundé.

"We don't call it arrested; we call it abducted," said one government employee who considered the detentions in a French-speaking city yet another slight to English speakers. The worker comes from an English-speaking area and did not want to be identified out of fear for his safety and that of his family.

Protesters have been accused of violence, too. But the government's heavy-handed response has revived calls in the English-speaking area to break away from

the rest of the country, further inflaming the situation.

Protests Violence in Cameroon

In Cameroon, anti-government protests in the country's English-speaking regions grew in size and frequency last fall, sometimes turning violent. This footage from November 2016 shows protesters lighting trash bins.

By CHARLES CHARLO, VIA STORYFUL on February 9, 2017. Photo by Facebook/Charles Charlo.

"Cameroon is one and indivisible and shall so remain," Issa Tchiroma Bakary, Cameroon's information minister, told reporters at a news conference last month.

American diplomats have called for a peaceful resolution of the dispute. The government and protesters have tried to negotiate.

A group of lawyers who organized the protests came up with a list of grievances, but before they could be fully resolved, Nkongho Felix Agbor-Balla, the president of the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium, and Fontem Neba, the group's secretary general, were arrested.

On the same day as their arrests, Jan. 17, the government declared the group illegal.

"Any other related groups with similar objectives," according to a government letter presented to the news media, "are hereby prohibited all over the national territory."

The jailed lawyers have been charged with inciting terrorism, a crime that landed them before a military tribunal, raising alarms from human rights groups. Last month, Amnesty International called for the release of Mr. Agbor-Balla and Dr. Neba, saying their detention was unlawful.

"These two men have been arrested solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression," said Ilaria Allegrozzi, a Central Africa researcher for Amnesty. "This

flagrant disregard for basic rights risks inflaming an already tense situation in the English-speaking region of the country and is clearly an attempt to muzzle dissent."

With protest organizers in jail, members of the Cameroonian diaspora have intervened, sending messages to supporters by WhatsApp and Facebook.

Government officials circulated their own warning message to WhatsApp users, cautioning them that they risked up to two years in prison if they spread information on social media that they could not prove.

The government has shut down the internet in English-speaking areas, angering a population accustomed to using social media to communicate, and internet-based cash transfers to send money for business transactions and to relatives.

In English-speaking towns recently the population seems to disappear on some days. The streets are quiet, shops close down and classrooms sit empty as daily life is suspended, in a form of protest called Operation Ghost Town, organized by English-speaking Cameroonians.

In English-speaking areas, demonstrators have turned violent against people who have not supported the Ghost Town movement, which is hampering commerce and keeping students from classrooms.

A few days ago, a shop in an English-speaking town that reportedly stayed open during a Ghost Town protest day was set on fire. And a message circulating on social media warned students at the University of Bamenda to boycott classes or "the blood of those killed in this struggle will be on their heads."

National security adviser Flynn discussed sanctions with Russian ambassador, despite denials, officials say (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/ellenakashimapost/>

National security adviser Michael Flynn privately discussed U.S.

sanctions against Russia with that country's ambassador to the United States during the month before President Trump took office, contrary to public assertions by

Trump officials, current and former U.S. officials said.

Flynn's communications with Russian Ambassador Sergey

Kislyak were interpreted by some senior U.S. officials as an inappropriate and potentially illegal signal to the Kremlin that it could expect a reprieve from sanctions

that were being imposed by the Obama administration in late December to punish Russia for its alleged interference in the 2016 election.

Flynn on Wednesday denied that he had discussed sanctions with Kislyak. Asked in an interview whether he had ever done so, he twice said, "No."

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On Thursday, Flynn, through his spokesman, backed away from the denial. The spokesman said Flynn "indicated that while he had no recollection of discussing sanctions, he couldn't be certain that the topic never came up."

Officials said this week that the FBI is continuing to examine Flynn's communications with Kislyak. Several officials emphasized that while sanctions were discussed, they did not see evidence that Flynn had an intent to convey an explicit promise to take action after the inauguration.

President-elect Donald Trump named retired Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn his national security adviser on Nov. 18, but Flynn has a history of making incendiary and Islamophobic statements that have drawn criticism from his military peers. The controversy about Michael Flynn, Trump's new national security adviser, explained (Peter Stevenson/The Washington Post)

(Peter Stevenson/The Washington Post)

Flynn's contacts with the ambassador attracted attention within the Obama administration because of the timing. U.S. intelligence agencies were then concluding that Russia had waged a cyber campaign designed in part to help elect Trump; his senior adviser on national security matters was discussing the potential consequences for Moscow, officials said.

The talks were part of a series of contacts between Flynn and Kislyak that began before the Nov. 8 election and continued during the transition, officials said. In a recent interview, Kislyak confirmed that he had communicated with Flynn by text message, by phone and in person, but declined to say whether they had discussed sanctions.

The emerging details contradict public statements by incoming senior administration officials including Mike Pence, then the vice

president-elect. They acknowledged only a handful of text messages and calls exchanged between Flynn and Kislyak late last year and denied that either ever raised the subject of sanctions.

"They did not discuss anything having to do with the United States' decision to expel diplomats or impose censure against Russia," Pence said in an interview with CBS News last month, noting that he had spoken with Flynn about the matter. Pence also made a more sweeping assertion, saying there had been no contact between members of Trump's team and Russia during the campaign. To suggest otherwise, he said, "is to give credence to some of these bizarre rumors that have swirled around the candidacy."

Neither of those assertions is consistent with the fuller account of Flynn's contacts with Kislyak provided by officials who had access to reports from U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies that routinely monitor the communications of Russian diplomats. Nine current and former officials, who were in senior positions at multiple agencies at the time of the calls, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters.

All of those officials said Flynn's references to the election-related sanctions were explicit. Two of those officials went further, saying that Flynn urged Russia not to overreact to the penalties being imposed by President Barack Obama, making clear that the two sides would be in position to review the matter after Trump was sworn in as president.

"Kislyak was left with the impression that the sanctions would be revisited at a later time," said a former official.

A third official put it more bluntly, saying that either Flynn had misled Pence or that Pence misspoke. An administration official stressed that Pence made his comments based on his conversation with Flynn. The sanctions in question have so far remained in place.

The nature of Flynn's pre-inauguration message to Kislyak triggered debate among officials in the Obama administration and intelligence agencies over whether Flynn had violated a law against unauthorized citizens interfering in U.S. disputes with foreign governments, according to officials familiar with that debate. Those officials were already alarmed by what they saw as a Russian assault on the U.S. election.

U.S. officials said that seeking to build such a case against Flynn would be daunting. The law against U.S. citizens interfering in foreign diplomacy, known as the Logan Act, stems from a 1799 statute that has never been prosecuted. As a result, there is no case history to help guide authorities on when to proceed or how to secure a conviction.

Officials also cited political sensitivities. Prominent Americans in and out of government are so frequently in communication with foreign officials that singling out one individual — particularly one poised for a top White House job — would invite charges of political persecution.

Former U.S. officials also said aggressive enforcement would probably discourage appropriate contact. Michael McFaul, who served as U.S. ambassador to Russia during the Obama administration, said that he was in Moscow meeting with officials in the weeks leading up to Obama's 2008 election win.

"As a former diplomat and U.S. government official, one needs to be able to have contact with foreigners to do one's job," McFaul said. McFaul, a Russia scholar, said he was careful never to signal pending policy changes before Obama took office.

On Wednesday, Flynn said that he first met Kislyak in 2013 when Flynn was director of the Defense Intelligence Agency and made a trip to Moscow. Kislyak helped coordinate that trip, Flynn said.

Flynn said that he spoke to Kislyak on a range of subjects in late December, including arranging a call between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Trump after the inauguration and expressing his condolences after Russia's ambassador to Turkey was assassinated. "I called to say I couldn't believe the murder of their ambassador," Flynn said. Asked whether there was any mention of sanctions in his communications with Kislyak, Flynn said, "No."

Kislyak characterized his conversations with Flynn as benign during a brief interview at a conference this month. "It's something all diplomats do," he said.

Kislyak said that he had been in contact with Flynn since before the election, but declined to answer questions about the subjects they discussed. Kislyak is known for his assiduous cultivation of high-level officials in Washington and was seated in the front row of then-GOP candidate Trump's first major

foreign policy speech in April of last year. The ambassador would not discuss the origin of his relationship with Flynn.

In his CBS interview, Pence said that Flynn had "been in touch with diplomatic leaders, security leaders in some 30 countries. That's exactly what the incoming national security adviser should do."

Official concern about Flynn's interactions with Kislyak was heightened when Putin declared on Dec. 30 that Moscow would not retaliate after the Obama administration announced a day earlier the expulsion of 35 suspected Russian spies and the forced closure of Russian-owned compounds in Maryland and New York.

Instead, Putin said he would focus on "the restoration of Russia-United States relations" after Obama left office, and put off considering any retaliatory measures until Moscow had a chance to evaluate Trump's policies.

Trump responded with effusive praise for Putin. "Great move on the delay," he said in a posting to his Twitter account. "I always knew he was very smart."

Putin's reaction cut against a long practice of reciprocity on diplomatic expulsions, and came after his foreign minister had vowed that there would be reprisals against the United States.

Putin's muted response — which took White House officials by surprise — raised some officials' suspicions that Moscow may have been promised a reprieve, and triggered a search by U.S. spy agencies for clues.

"Something happened in those 24 hours" between Obama's announcement and Putin's response, a former senior U.S. official said. Officials began poring over intelligence reports, intercepted communications and diplomatic cables, and saw evidence that Flynn and Kislyak had communicated by text and telephone around the time of the announcement.

Trump transition officials acknowledged those contacts weeks later after they were reported in The Washington Post but denied that sanctions were discussed. Trump press secretary Sean Spicer said Jan. 13 that Flynn had "reached out to" the Russian ambassador on Christmas Day to extend holiday greetings. On Dec. 28, as word of the Obama sanctions spread, Kislyak sent a message to Flynn requesting a call. "Flynn took that call," Spicer said, adding that it "centered on the

logistics of setting up a call with the president of Russia and [Trump] after the election."

Other officials were categorical. "I can tell you that during his call, sanctions were not discussed whatsoever," a senior transition official told The Post at the time. When Pence faced questions on television that weekend, he said "those conversations that happened to occur around the time that the United States took action to expel diplomats had nothing whatsoever to do with those sanctions."

Current and former U.S. officials said that assertion was not true.

Like Trump, Flynn has shown an affinity for Russia that is at odds with the views of most of his military and intelligence peers. Flynn raised eyebrows in 2015 when he appeared in

photographs seated next to Putin at a lavish party in Moscow for the Kremlin-controlled RT television network.

In an earlier interview with The Post, Flynn acknowledged that he had been paid through his speakers bureau to give a speech at the event and defended his attendance by saying he saw no distinction between RT and U.S. news channels, including CNN.

A retired U.S. Army lieutenant general, Flynn served multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan in the years after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks — tours in which he held a series of high-level intelligence assignments working with U.S. Special Operations forces hunting al-Qaeda operatives and Islamist militants.

Former colleagues said that narrow focus led Flynn to see the threat posed by Islamist groups as overwhelming other security concerns, including Russia's renewed aggression. Instead, Flynn came to see America's long-standing adversary as a potential ally against terrorist groups, and himself as being in a unique position to forge closer ties after traveling to Moscow in 2013 while serving as director of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Flynn has frequently boasted that he was the first DIA director to be invited into the headquarters of Russia's military intelligence directorate, known as the GRU, although at least one of his predecessors was granted similar access. "Flynn thought he developed some rapport with the

GRU chief," a former senior U.S. military official said.

U.S. intelligence agencies say they have tied the GRU to Russia's theft of troves of email messages from Democratic Party computer networks and accuse Moscow of then delivering those materials to the anti-secrecy group WikiLeaks, which published them in phases during the campaign to hurt Hillary Clinton, Trump's Democratic rival.

Flynn was pushed out of the DIA job in 2014 amid concerns about his management of the sprawling agency. He became a fierce critic of the Obama administration before joining the Trump campaign last year.

Karen DeYoung, Tom Hamburger, Julie Tate and Philip Rucker contributed to this report.

**The
Washington
Post**

Details of Trump-Putin call raise new White House leak concerns

<https://www.facebook.com/PhilipRuckerWP>

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The White House is probing ongoing leaks of President Trump's private conversations with foreign leaders, including a report Thursday that he criticized a 2011 U.S.-Russia nuclear arms treaty during last month's call with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"We're looking into the situation, and it's very concerning," White House press secretary Sean Spicer said, deploring "the idea that you can't have a conversation without that information getting out. ... We're trying to conduct serious business on behalf of the country."

On the same day as the Putin call, Jan. 28, The Washington Post reported that Trump told Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull that their conversation was "the worst call by far" and blasted him over a pending refugee deal negotiated by the Obama administration. Tensions were also reported during a call the day before with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto.

Checkpoint newsletter

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In all three, Trump reportedly touted his political accomplishments and

popularity.

[What we know so far about Trump's phone calls with foreign leaders]

(Video: AuBC via AP / Photo: AP and Bloomberg)

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)

Following the Australia and Mexico reports, Trump told Fox News the leaks were "disgraceful" and accused "Obama people" still serving in the White House of providing the media with potentially embarrassing details.

During the Putin call, the Russian leader raised the possibility of talks on a number of issues, including the New START treaty limiting nuclear weapons deployments, according to a report Thursday by Reuters.

The news agency said Trump paused to ask aides what the treaty was, and then denounced it as favoring Russia.

Spicer would not comment on some details of the call. But he challenged

the report that Trump did not know what the treaty was, saying the president had merely sought an opinion from an adviser during the conversation, which was conducted through a translator.

"It wasn't like he didn't know what was being said," Spicer said of Trump.

A White House statement on the call at the time did not mention any nuclear discussion.

Spicer said Trump is "very concerned" about the continued leaks, which he said represent breaches of protocol and potential illegality.

The New START treaty set limits on both countries' deployed strategic arms. It does not limit non-deployed warheads.

Trump mentioned the treaty, which he called the "start-up," in all three debates with Democrat Hillary Clinton during the presidential campaign. He charged that Russia had increased its number of warheads and said, erroneously, that the United States was not permitted to do the same for non-deployed weapons.

[Why Vladimir Putin has a grudge against Hillary Clinton]

"Our nuclear program has fallen way behind, and they've gone wild with their nuclear program," Trump said during the Oct. 10 debate. "Not good. Our government shouldn't have allowed that to happen.

Russia is new in terms of nuclear. We are old. We're tired. We're exhausted in terms of nuclear. A very bad thing."

Current U.S. planning calls for spending more than \$1 trillion over the next 30 years to update the American nuclear arsenal.

Jeffrey Lewis, an arms-control expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, Calif., said the phone call was troubling because it showed that Trump has not taken the time to learn anything about nuclear policy since the election. "He knows one thing, which is that Obama signed it, so he's going to rail against it," Lewis said.

But the treaty is not without critics.

"I would agree if he said that the treaty is more advantageous to Russia and kind of a bad deal to the United States," said Michaela Dodge, a senior policy analyst with the conservative Heritage Foundation. Trump's call, she said, could mark this as a good time to reexamine whether New START is still good policy for Washington and reshape the debate.

Dan Lamothe contributed to this report.

**The
Washington
Post**

Trump targeted Japan during the campaign. Now its prime minister is embracing the new president. (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/annafifiel>
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As foreign leaders have recoiled and recalibrated amid President Trump's bluster and bullying on the world stage, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan has taken another tack — offering the new American president an embrace.

Like most foreign capitals, Tokyo was shocked at Trump's upset victory and scrambled to make sense of the outcome. Japan was one of Trump's primary foreign policy targets during the campaign as he denounced a hefty trade imbalance and suggested that the longtime U.S. ally in Asia was freeloading off America's security umbrella.

But Japanese diplomats had been studying Trump — reading books, news articles and even psychoanalytical essays about the New York business mogul — and trying to get to know his top deputies. On a congratulatory phone call in November, Abe invited himself to Trump Tower — and, after stopping in New York on a trip to Peru, presented Trump, an avid golfer, with a \$3,755 gold-colored driver.

If the strategic charm offensive was designed to blunt Trump's inflammatory rhetoric, the Japanese have seen some initial returns on the investment. On Friday, Abe will visit the White House for a formal summit with Trump, followed by a trip together on Air Force One, along with their wives, for a weekend at Mar-a-Lago, Trump's winter retreat in Palm Beach, Fla.

White House aides said the weekend getaway, which Trump will pay for as a "personal gift" to the prime minister, is aimed at helping the two leaders get to know each other in a more relaxed setting. Trump "just really enjoys his company," press secretary Sean Spicer said of Abe, adding that the president intends to use Mar-a-Lago for relationship building in the way other presidents have used Camp David.

(Reuters)

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe arrived in the U.S. for a summit with President

Trump. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe arrived in the U.S. for a summit with President Trump. (Reuters)

"We're going to have a round of golf, which is a great thing," Trump said in an interview this week with Westwood One Sports Radio. "That's the one thing about golf — you get to know somebody better on a golf course than you will over lunch."

Abe's determination, and early success, in forging a personal connection with Trump has contrasted with other foreign leaders. Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto abruptly canceled a White House visit after Trump signed an executive action to get started on building a border wall. Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull got into a testy exchange with Trump during a phone call after the American president questioned a U.S. commitment to help resettle refugees.

For Abe, the goal is to reassure Trump that the U.S.-Japan security alliance is a "win-win" relationship, Japanese officials said.

"It's extremely important to build a trusting relationship with the president, who was chosen through an election," Yoshihide Suga, Japan's chief cabinet secretary, told reporters in Tokyo.

Though Trump's first executive action was to make good on his campaign pledge to cancel U.S. participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) — an expansive, 12-nation trade deal on which Abe had staked significant political capital — the prime minister has maintained hope that the deal can be rekindled down the road.

In the meantime, Abe arrives in Washington with a proposal for Japanese companies to invest \$150 billion in U.S. infrastructure, including high-speed rail, potentially creating 700,000 jobs in the United States.

The Japanese are "well acquainted with President Trump's priorities, which can be summed up in three words — jobs, jobs, jobs — when it comes to the economic relationship," a senior White House official told reporters on a

conference call Thursday. The official was not authorized to speak on the record.

Abe, who has met with the head of Toyota to prepare for the trip, also will try to preempt Trump's criticism over the lack of market access for U.S. auto companies in Japan. Japanese auto exports make up about three-quarters of Japan's \$60 billion annual trade surplus with the United States.

But the prime minister intends to explain that companies such as Toyota and Honda are not just making cars at U.S. plants but also creating huge demand for local suppliers, Japanese officials said.

On security, Trump raised alarms during the campaign by suggesting that U.S. military basing agreements in Japan and South Korea were too expensive and that those two nations should consider developing their own nuclear weapons.

But Tokyo was encouraged by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis's visit last week, during which he reaffirmed

Washington's commitment to defending Japanese territories under Article 5 of the security treaty. Mattis said the Trump administration recognized Japan's administration of a group of disputed islands in the East China Sea that has also been claimed by Beijing.

Mattis "made very clear statements about the strength of the alliance, that these alliances and our commitment to them are unwavering," the senior White House official said. "I think you'll hear a very similar message from the president himself, and that will go a long way toward dispelling any doubts that might remain among our Japanese and Korean friends and other allies in the region."

To some degree, Abe has spied an opening to further his own security agenda with Trump's rise, foreign policy analysts said. The prime minister has moved to increase the role of Japan's Self-Defense Forces, whose combat missions are limited by the constitution imposed on the country by the United States after World War II.

With uncertainty over the future of the alliance, Abe and his allies have renewed prospects of raising defense spending, said Andrew Oros, author of the recently published "Japan's Security Renaissance."

"Trump is like the gift from heaven to Abe to push forward more on his security agenda," said Oros, associate professor of political science and international studies at Washington College. "Abe's goal on the security side is to show Trump that Japan is doing more."

At home, Abe can sell his goals to a skeptical public by saying, "Trump is forcing us to do this; it's not my fault," Oros added.

As for the chemistry between Abe and Trump, foreign policy analysts said the Japanese put value in the type of personal warmth exhibited by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who played catch with a baseball at Camp David in 2001, and by Ronald Reagan and Yasuhiro Nakasone, who were nicknamed "Ron-Yasu" in the 1980s.

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In 1957, just 12 years after the end of World War II, Abe's own grandfather, then-Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, played golf with President Dwight D. Eisenhower at Burning Tree Club in Maryland after finishing a more formal summit meeting.

Abe, who has been busy practicing his swing, has repeatedly refused to disclose his handicap, but the Japanese media has reported that he usually shoots around 90 — about 18 shots over par.

Trump has boasted that his own handicap is in the low single digits, something the Japanese have been sure to research.

"We hear he's a big hitter," one Japanese diplomat said.

Fifield reported from Tokyo. Philip Rucker in Washington and Yuki Oda in Tokyo contributed to this report.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

David Feith : The U.S.-Japan Alliance of Hope

David Feith

Feb. 9, 2017 7:29 p.m. ET

Tokyo

"Let us call the U.S.-Japan alliance, an alliance of hope," Shinzo Abe declared in 2015 to a rare joint meeting of Congress. With this poetic touch, the Japanese prime minister sought to define one of the world's key relationships with themes suited to Obama-era

sensibilities: optimistic, liberal, even gauzy. Six weeks later Donald Trump announced his candidacy for president.

Soon Mr. Trump was criticizing Japan and other allies as trade cheats and free riders on American security commitments. The new

president rails against "globalism" and promises a vague, unsentimental and transactional policy of "America First." Today an American visiting the Japanese capital hears worries that the Trump ascendancy could spell the end of the alliance.

An important exception, though, is Prime Minister Abe, who responded to Mr. Trump's surprise victory quickly and confidently, securing an early postelection meeting in Trump Tower and an invitation to a White House summit this Friday. On Saturday Mr. Abe will become the first foreign leader to golf with the president at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida.

Mr. Abe's optimism, guarded as it may be, is justified. For starters, he doesn't mourn the passing of an Obama administration that promised a "pivot" to Asia and deepened ties with Tokyo, but cut defense spending and mostly refused to confront Chinese aggression. The Japanese leader is known to have been alarmed by President Obama's failure to enforce his Syrian red line.

As for the new administration, Mr. Abe can take comfort in a generally overlooked shift: Mr. Trump has refrained recently from criticizing the Japanese alliance, even as he has repeated his indictments of NATO. And the new president has denounced Beijing's maritime bullying and coddling of North Korea, reaffirmed plans for a major naval buildup, and hired several aides who are noted China skeptics. This suggests Mr. Trump may be serious about trying to curb Chinese

aggression—in which case Japan is America's single most important security partner.

Japan does spend too little on defense, as Mr. Trump has charged. But Mr. Abe agrees and has already increased spending five years running. Although Japan's annual defense budget is still a slight 1% of gross domestic product, that figure ignores additional security outlays. Japan spends \$2 billion a year to support the U.S. troops it hosts (more than any other ally) and billions more to assist the Philippines, Vietnam and other countries facing Chinese bullying.

Tokyo is also spending \$20 billion on several of the largest U.S. military construction projects in the Pacific. These include two projects in Japan and even one in the U.S. territory of Guam. If the Japanese delegation has mock-ups of the sites, the visuals could be particularly persuasive to America's builder-turned-president.

Add to this Tokyo's legal embrace of "collective self-defense" two years ago. Even if Japan isn't attacked directly, its military can now help American forces facing, say, a North Korean missile launch or a Chinese naval assault. So when Mr. Trump charged last year that Japan could "sit home and watch Sony television" if the U.S.

were attacked, his lament was outdated.

Further, the bilateral security treaty allows U.S. forces based in Japan to operate across the "Far East"—including in Korea, the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. The 50,000 American troops Japan hosts aren't mercenaries hired out for Tokyo's security, but Washington's most valuable asset for deterring conflict across the region. Moving them to the U.S. would be a strategic catastrophe, and it would cost more to boot.

Or consider the dramatic scene off Hawaii last week, when the USS John Paul Jones successfully test-fired a new missile interceptor, the SM-3 Block IIA. This system, a joint U.S.-Japanese effort, is intended to defend against intermediate-range ballistic missiles such as North Korea's. If Mr. Trump wants to expand missile defense, Japanese help is crucial.

None of this guarantees harmony between Messrs. Trump and Abe. Even the most optimistic observers expect friction on trade, which is why Mr. Abe comes prepared with data: Japan accounts for about 14% of the U.S. trade deficit, down from more than 40% in the 1980s. More important, Mr. Abe has tallied Japanese firms' plans for U.S. investment. Ideally he will also seek

to expand Japanese purchases of American shale gas, the first shipment of which arrived last month, and will welcome bilateral free-trade talks as a means to liberalize Japan's economy.

Many in Tokyo harbor contradictory concerns about Mr. Trump. They worry he may prove too aggressive in confronting North Korea or revising the "One China" policy regarding Taiwan. Yet they also worry he might accept a Chinese grand bargain that sells out Taiwan, Japan and others.

A good summit can't erase these concerns, even if recent statements from Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson have helped calm them. But a successful summit would vindicate Mr. Abe's eagerness to sit down with Mr. Trump early and often.

Japan's leader is the most strategically ambitious in at least a generation, and he suspects that on the most important issues of regional security he and President Trump will see eye to eye. Until further notice, the alliance of hope endures.

Mr. Feith is a Journal editorial writer based in Hong Kong.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Donald Trump Commits to 'One China' Policy in Call With Xi Jinping (UNE)

Te-Ping Chen in Beijing and Carol E. Lee in Washington

Updated Feb. 10, 2017 1:34 a.m. ET

In a phone call with Chinese President Xi Jinping, U.S. President Donald Trump affirmed the "One China" policy that has long underpinned Sino-U.S. relations, a declaration that appeared aimed at ending weeks of uncertainty in Washington's approach to Asia.

The phone call late Thursday in Washington was likely to help smooth relations between the two nations, which had been rocked by Mr. Trump's questioning of whether the U.S. should continue to adhere to the policy.

The call to Mr. Xi follows a pledge by other top officials of Mr. Trump's administration to adhere to longstanding U.S. policy. The White House didn't elaborate on Mr. Trump's declaration regarding the One China policy, or explain whether he no longer sees it as open to negotiation.

But Mr. Trump's secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, said before his confirmation by the Senate on Feb. 1 that he intended to adhere to the policy under which Washington grants diplomatic recognition to China, but not to Taiwan.

"The United States should continue to uphold the One China policy and support a peaceful and mutually agreeable cross-strait outcome," he wrote in response to questions from Sen. Ben Cardin (D., Md.), senior Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, last month.

In his answer, he identified "the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China and acknowledges the Chinese position that Taiwan is part of China."

Speculation that a call between Messrs. Xi and Trump was in the making had been rife for days. The conversation came after Mr. Trump had a series of calls with other world leaders, including urging Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto to rein in drug cartels and one

with Australia's Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, in which Mr. Trump questioned an agreement reached under the Obama administration for the resettlement of refugees.

Such conversations, buffeted by Mr. Trump's unpredictable diplomatic style, are likely to have increased challenges in setting up a call with protocol-conscious Chinese officials wary of exposure to public embarrassment.

The U.S.-China relationship is often called the most important bilateral relationship. As weeks passed without direct contact between Messrs. Trump and Xi, the contrast with Mr. Trump's other diplomatic outreach became increasingly conspicuous.

The White House said the pair had a lengthy, "extremely cordial" call in which Mr. Trump agreed to honor the policy "at the request of President Xi." Before his inauguration, Mr. Trump had indicated he planned to use the

policy as a bargaining chip in broader negotiations with Beijing on economic and security issues.

The phone call took place on the eve of a visit by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the White House and to Mr. Trump's home in Florida over the weekend and comes two months after Mr. Trump roiled relations with China by participating in a protocol-breaking phone call with the leader of Taiwan.

China's official state-news agency Xinhua cited Mr. Trump as saying he "admires the historic accomplishments of China's development," expressing confidence that relations between the two nations could, through mutual effort, achieve a "new high."

Mr. Xi said China was willing to strengthen cooperation with the U.S. on a number of areas, including trade and investment, according to Xinhua. It said Mr. Xi "appreciated" that Mr. Trump had

stressed the U.S. government's adherence to the One China policy.

Mr. Trump's rhetoric has unsettled U.S. allies in the region as well, following comments in which he questioned the financial cost of keeping U.S. troops in South Korea and Japan. Such remarks had prompted anxieties in both nations, which depend heavily on a U.S. presence to help deter an increasingly assertive China and the North Korean nuclear threat.

The administration has moved to try to assure both nations, last week dispatching U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to the region, where he made stopovers in both countries and indicated

there were no U.S. plans to withdraw.

The White House statement said the two leaders extended invitations to each other to meet in the U.S. and China and that officials from both governments "will engage in discussions and negotiations on various issues of mutual interest."

The phone call followed a letter from Mr. Trump to Mr. Xi this week.

In the lead-up to his inauguration, Mr. Trump took a markedly more aggressive stance toward China than his predecessor. In early December, Mr. Trump had a phone call with Taiwan's President Tsai

Ing-wen, the first such high-level contact since in 1979.

He also took to Twitter to fire off tweets critical of China's assertiveness in the South China Sea and blamed Beijing for failing to halt North Korea's military buildup.

Mr. Trump's December phone conversation with Ms. Tsai had prompted both elation and anxiety in Taiwan, which has long been insecure about its political future. While the call marked a breakthrough, it also provoked fears of trade or other reprisals from Beijing. Others worried Mr. Trump might abandon the island's interests following signs of concessions from Beijing.

Beijing has stressed that the Taiwan issue remains the "most important and sensitive part of the China-U.S. relationship."

Washington's agreement to cease diplomatic recognition of the government in Taiwan, which Beijing views as a breakaway province, was a precondition for the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and China in 1979.

Write to Te-Ping Chen at te-ping.chen@wsj.com and Carol E. Lee at carol.lee@wsj.com



China Hangs Tough. Trump Folds. China Ups the Ante.

Gordon G.
Chang02.10.17
4:59 AM ET

Photo Illustration by Elizabeth Brockway/The Daily Beast

KOWTOW

After months of calling into question the 'One China' policy that acknowledges the mainland's claim on Taiwan, Trump has made a humiliating about-face.

On Thursday night, President Trump told his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, that he accepted the "One China" policy. The acknowledgement, made during a phone conversation, appears to be a capitulation to Beijing's demands.

A letter also was delivered to China's ambassador to the U.S. accepting the policy, which, with some nuances, acknowledges Beijing's position that Taiwan is a province of China.

According to the White House readout, "President Trump agreed, at the request of President Xi, to honor our 'One China' policy."

Trump, before his inauguration, appeared to put

the policy in question when, on Dec. 2, he accepted a congratulatory phone call from Taiwan's president, Tsai Ing-wen.

The call was considered a violation of U.S. policy in place since 1979, when President Jimmy Carter broke off diplomatic ties with Taipei in order to recognize Beijing. Both Beijing and Washington state that 'One China' forms the basis of their ties.

Furthermore, Trump, in a Chris Wallace interview aired on Dec. 11 and in an interview published in *The Wall Street Journal* on Jan. 13, said he did not feel constrained by the policy.

The 'One China' policy accepts the People's Republic of China as the legitimate government of China, acknowledges Beijing takes the position that Taiwan is part of the People's Republic, and states Taiwan's status is unresolved.

Furthermore, Washington insists that resolution of that status be peaceful, in other words, with the consent of Taiwan's people.

"It's a wise move that sets the basis for Trump and Xi to address the

myriad challenges on the U.S.-China agenda," Evan Medeiros, a high-ranking Obama Asia adviser, told the *Financial Times*.

Medeiros is right that the acceptance allows dealings between Beijing and Washington to go forward, but it is hardly "wise."

The New York Times reports that administration officials believed that Xi would refuse to talk to Trump until he publicly accepted the policy. To smooth over the rift and as "a gesture of conciliation," National Security Adviser Michael Flynn and his deputy, K.T. McFarland, hand-delivered to Cui Tiankai, China's ambassador to the U.S., a letter from Trump to Xi. The Chinese will view both actions as evidence of an American climb-down.

In what was a test of will, the Chinese will surely believe they have scored a quick victory. Trump, therefore, has fed their sense of power and arrogance—and American weakness. Beijing, as a result, is bound to become even more difficult to deal with.

The phone call came just hours before Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe arrives at the White

House for a day of talks. Abe's visit, in turn, comes after Defense Secretary James Mattis visited Tokyo.

On Saturday, Mattis reaffirmed that Article 5 of the U.S.-Japan mutual defense treaty covers the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, pledging Washington to defend them from attack. The only country threatening the barren outcroppings is China, which claims sovereignty. Beijing for years has been pressuring Japan to hand them over.

Just two days after Mattis issued his confirmation, three Chinese coast guard vessels, without permission, intruded into Japan's territorial waters around the Senkakus. The intrusion is seen as a warning to Tokyo and the United States.

Trump, seeking better ties with China, has just made matters far worse for America. It is fair to say that in Chinese eyes, they have just disrespected Mattis and intimidated his boss, the president of the United States.



Trump Will Use Abe Visit to Soothe Worried Asia-Pacific Allies

Carol E. Lee and
Alastair Gale

Updated Feb. 9, 2017 8:39 p.m. ET

President Donald Trump plans to use the White House visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Friday to reassure America's Asia-Pacific allies that his administration values U.S. alliances in the region, despite his earlier comments raising doubts about his support for the relationships.

The new president views alliances generally as the "cornerstone" of security for the U.S. and the world,

and will make clear during Mr. Abe's visit that he views those in Asia as "central to our success both in terms of security and prosperity in the region," a senior administration official said.

"I think that that will go a long way towards dispelling any doubts that may still remain" about Mr. Trump's commitment to U.S. alliances, the official said.

The effort seeks to quell anxiety stoked in the region triggered by Mr. Trump's comments during the presidential campaign suggesting

he might break from decades of American foreign policy by scaling back the U.S. military presence in Asia, and by raising the prospect of countries like Japan and South Korea acquiring nuclear weapons.

Mr. Trump's election victory raised concerns in Japan in particular about a disruption to the international order that has underpinned the country's peace and return to prosperity after World War II. A poll conducted at the end of January by Kyodo News showed 84% of Japanese residents thought

Mr. Trump would create global instability.

The stakes are high for Japan because the U.S. is both its largest export destination and security guarantor. About 50,000 U.S. troops are deployed in Japan, the largest American military contingent in Asia.

Japan's concerns of U.S. disengagement from Asia were amplified by Mr. Trump's decision in January to suspend U.S. involvement in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a 12-country trade pact

that would have included seven nations in Asia, including Japan.

A recent visit to Japan by U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis offered reassurances, as he indicated the new administration sees Japan as a vital partner in tackling North Korea's accelerating nuclear program and China's military assertiveness. Mr. Mattis praised Japan's contributions to the alliance and didn't raise the issue of U.S. military costs, according to Japanese officials.

While Mr. Mattis's comments helped calm Japanese nerves, officials have been mindful of the periodic contradictions that have emerged in the new American administration between the president and his aides. So the reaffirmation expected from Mr. Trump to Mr. Abe has an added significance.

Mr. Abe's visit is the second for Mr. Trump by a world leader since he took office last month, following a late-January visit from British Prime Minister Theresa May. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is scheduled to visit Mr. Trump in Washington on Monday.

But the meeting with the Japanese leader will be more extensive. The president and the prime minister are scheduled to meet in the Oval Office, have lunch at the White House and take questions jointly from reporters, before the two parted bringing some reward.

leaders and their wives fly to Florida to spend the weekend at Mr. Trump's home there, Mar-a-Lago.

The Florida weekend is designed for Messrs. Trump and Abe to get to know each other in a more casual setting, over golf and meals, administration officials said.

Beyond general support for the alliance, Mr. Trump is expected to say that he will continue current U.S. policy that the U.S.-Japan bilateral defense treaty covers islands in the East China Sea administered by Tokyo but claimed by Beijing.

As China has made territorial challenges to other Asian countries in recent years, it has sent more ships to the waters surrounding islands, known as Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China.

Three Chinese coast guard ships sailed close to the islands on Monday, the fourth appearance in the area by Chinese vessels this year, according to Japan.

"I would expect certainly for you to hear on that subject in fairly concrete terms that President Trump is committed to that treaty and it extending," the senior administration official said. "We oppose any unilateral actions that would seek to undermine Japan's administration of the islands."

On trade, the two leaders are expected to discuss a possible path forward after Mr. Trump withdrew the U.S. from the TPP, with Mr. Trump favoring bilateral deals instead.

"In a bilateral agreement you can negotiate terms that are more favorable to the United States than you can negotiate a multilateral agreement where sometimes you're held to the standards to the weakest link in the compact," the U.S. official said.

Japanese officials say they are open to discussions about a bilateral deal, though they preferred the TPP.

Mr. Trump has regularly blasted Japan for unfair trade practices, citing the \$60 billion bilateral trade imbalance, and last week lumped Japan together with China as unfairly manipulating currencies to boost exports—a charge both countries deny.

Part of Tokyo's strategy for trying to contain tensions over those views is to offer Mr. Trump and his advisers a detailed picture of how Japan contributes to the U.S. economy through investment and job creation.

"We are talking about a mature relationship between two economies that are mutually dependent," Japanese trade

minister Hiroshige Seko said on Tuesday." Our relationship today is different from that in the past when the two countries collided over trade frictions."

A priority for Japan is for Mr. Abe to develop personal ties with Mr. Trump. The Japanese leader appeared to make a misstep by holding talks with Democratic U.S. presidential nominee Hillary Clinton in September but not Mr. Trump. A meeting was hastily arranged soon after Mr. Trump's election.

Mr. Abe wasn't seen as being close to President Barack Obama, but ties between the two nations grew warmer in the final year of Mr. Obama's presidency.

Last May, Mr. Obama became the first U.S. leader to visit Hiroshima, the site of one of two U.S. atomic bombings of Japan in 1945. Mr. Abe reciprocated with a trip to the USS Arizona Memorial in Pearl Harbor in December.

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ETATS-UNIS

The New York Times Court Refuses to Reinstate Travel Ban, Dealing Trump Another Legal Loss (UNE)

Adam Liptak

WASHINGTON — A federal appeals panel on Thursday unanimously rejected President Trump's bid to reinstate his ban on travel into the United States from seven largely Muslim nations, a sweeping rebuke of the administration's claim that the courts have no role as a check on the president.

The three-judge panel, suggesting that the ban did not advance national security, said the administration had shown "no evidence" that anyone from the seven nations — Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen — had committed terrorist acts in the United States.

The ruling also rejected Mr. Trump's claim that courts are powerless to review a president's national

security assessments. Judges have a crucial role to play in a constitutional democracy, the court said.

"It is beyond question," the decision said, "that the federal judiciary retains the authority to adjudicate constitutional challenges to executive action."

The decision was handed down by the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, in San Francisco. It upheld a ruling last Friday by a federal district judge, James L. Robart, who blocked key parts of the travel ban, allowing thousands of foreigners to enter the country.

The appeals court acknowledged that Mr. Trump was owed deference on his immigration and national security policies. But it said he was claiming something more — that

"national security concerns are *unreviewable*, even if those actions potentially contravene constitutional rights and protections."

Within minutes of the ruling, Mr. Trump angrily vowed to fight it, presumably in an appeal to the Supreme Court.

"SEE YOU IN COURT, THE SECURITY OF OUR NATION IS AT STAKE!" Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter.

At the White House, the president told reporters that the ruling was "a political decision" and predicted that his administration would win an appeal "in my opinion, very easily." He said he had not yet conferred with his attorney general, Jeff Sessions, on the matter.

The Supreme Court remains short-handed and could deadlock. A 4-to-4 tie there would leave the appeals

court's ruling in place. The administration has moved fast in the case so far, and it is likely to file an emergency application to the Supreme Court in a day or two. The court typically asks for a prompt response from the other side, and it could rule soon after it received one. A decision next week, either to reinstate the ban or to continue to block it, is possible.

Joyous Reunions as Travel Ban Is Lifted

Approved refugees and visa holders from the seven countries listed in President Trump's immigration order were able to enter the country after judges suspended the move.

By CAMILLA SCHICK. Photo by Alex Wroblewski for The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

The travel ban, one of the first executive orders Mr. Trump issued

after taking office, suspended worldwide refugee entry into the United States. It also barred visitors from seven Muslim-majority nations for up to 90 days to give federal security agencies time to impose stricter vetting processes.

Immediately after it was issued, the ban spurred chaos at airports and protests nationwide as foreign travelers found themselves stranded at immigration checkpoints by a policy that critics derided as un-American. The State Department said up to 60,000 foreigners' visas were canceled in the days immediately after the ban was imposed.

The World Relief Corporation, one of the agencies that resettles refugees in the United States, called the ruling "fabulous news" for 275 newcomers who are scheduled to arrive in the next week, many of whom will be reunited with family.

"We have families that have been separated for years by terror, war and persecution," said Scott Arbeiter, the president of the organization, which will arrange for housing and jobs for the refugees in cities including Seattle; Spokane, Wash.; and Sacramento.

"Some family members had already been vetted and cleared and were standing with tickets, and were then told they couldn't travel," Mr. Arbeiter said. "So the hope of reunification was crushed, and now they will be admitted."

Several Democrats said they hoped the appeals court ruling would cow Mr. Trump into rescinding the ban. Representative Karen Bass, Democrat of California, said in a statement that the ban "is rooted in bigotry and, most importantly, it's illegal."

Washington Attorney General Applauds Decision

Bob Ferguson, the attorney general of Washington State, said the rebuke of Donald J. Trump's travel ban by a federal appeals court

panel was a "complete victory."

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS. Photo by Associated Press. Watch in Times Video »

"We will not stop," Ms. Bass said.

But some Republicans cast aspersions on the Ninth Circuit's decision and predicted that it would not withstand a challenge in the Supreme Court.

"Courts ought not second-guess sensitive national security decisions of the president," Senator Tom Cotton, Republican of Arkansas, said in a statement.

"This misguided ruling is from the Ninth Circuit, the most notoriously left-wing court in America, and the most-reversed court at the Supreme Court," he said. "I'm confident the administration's position will ultimately prevail."

Trial judges nationwide have blocked aspects of Mr. Trump's executive order, but no other case has yet reached an appeals court. The case in front of Judge Robart, in Seattle, was filed by the states of Washington and Minnesota and is still at an early stage. The appeals court order issued Thursday ruled only on the narrow question of whether to stay a lower court's temporary restraining order blocking the travel ban.

The appeals court said the government had not justified suspending travel from the seven countries. "The government has pointed to no evidence," the decision said, "that any alien from any of the countries named in the order has perpetrated a terrorist attack in the United States."

The activist Michael Petrelis outside of the Ninth United States Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco on Thursday after the ruling was announced. Jim Wilson/The New York Times

The three members of the panel were Judge Michelle T. Friedland, appointed by President Barack Obama; Judge William C. Canby

Jr., appointed by President Jimmy Carter; and Judge Richard R. Clifton, appointed by President George W. Bush.

They said the states were likely to succeed at the end of the day because Mr. Trump's order appeared to violate the due process rights of lawful permanent residents, people holding visas and refugees.

The court said the administration's legal position in the case had been a moving target. It noted that Donald F. McGahn II, the White House counsel, had issued "authoritative guidance" several days after the executive order came out, saying it did not apply to lawful permanent residents. But the court said that "we cannot rely" on that statement.

"The White House counsel is not the president," the decision said, "and he is not known to be in the chain of command for any of the executive departments." It also mentioned "the government's shifting interpretations" of the executive order.

In its briefs and in the arguments before the panel on Tuesday, the Justice Department's position evolved. As the case progressed, the administration offered a backup plea for at least a partial victory.

At most, a Justice Department brief said, "previously admitted aliens who are temporarily abroad now or who wish to travel and return to the United States in the future" should be allowed to enter the country despite the ban.

The appeals court ultimately rejected that request, however, saying that people in the United States without authorization have due process rights, as do citizens with relatives who wish to travel to the United States.

The court discussed, but did not decide, whether the executive order violated the First Amendment's ban on government establishment of religion by disfavoring Muslims.

It noted that the states challenging the executive order "have offered evidence of numerous statements by the president about his intent to implement a 'Muslim ban.'" And it said, rejecting another administration argument, that it was free to consider evidence about the motivation behind laws that draw seemingly neutral distinctions.

But the court said it would defer a decision on the question of religious discrimination.

"The political branches are far better equipped to make appropriate distinctions," the decision said. "For now, it is enough for us to conclude that the government has failed to establish that it will likely succeed on its due process argument in this appeal."

The court also acknowledged "the massive attention this case has garnered at even the most preliminary stages."

"On the one hand, the public has a powerful interest in national security and in the ability of an elected president to enact policies," the decision said. "And on the other, the public also has an interest in free flow of travel, in avoiding separation of families, and in freedom from discrimination."

"These competing public interests," the court said, "do not justify a stay."

The court ruling did not affect one part of the executive order: the cap of 50,000 refugees to be admitted in the 2017 fiscal year. That is down from the 110,000 ceiling put in place under President Barack Obama. The order also directed the secretary of state and the secretary of homeland security to prioritize refugee claims made by persecuted members of religious minorities.

As of Thursday, that means the United States will be allowed to accept only about 16,000 more refugees this fiscal year. Since Oct. 1, the start of the fiscal year, 33,929 refugees have been admitted, 5,179 of them Syrians.

THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL

Kendall

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A federal appeals court on Thursday unanimously ruled against President Donald Trump's executive order on immigration and refugees, saying such a travel ban shouldn't go into effect while courts consider whether it goes too far in limiting travelers to the U.S.

Appeals Court Rules Against Trump Travel Ban (UNE)

Devlin Barrett
and Brent

The appeals court declined to take a position on the most pointed accusation leveled at the Trump administration—that the Jan. 27 executive order restricting immigration from seven predominantly Muslim countries discriminated on the basis of religion. Instead, the panel ruled the travel ban likely violated the due process rights of travelers.

"The government has not shown that the executive order provides

what due process requires, such as notice and a hearing prior to restricting an individual's ability to travel," a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco found.

The ruling is a major legal setback for Mr. Trump and marks the latest chapter in an unusually early clash between the judiciary and a brand-new president, one with considerable ramifications for the separation-of-powers. Mr. Trump

has directed uncommonly blunt criticisms at the judges who have ruled against him. The judges—appointed by presidents from both parties—in turn have sought to defend their long-established authority to interpret the law and ensure the president acts within it.

As government lawyers scrambled to analyze the ruling Thursday evening, Mr. Trump fired back quickly, tweeting in all capital letters: "SEE YOU IN COURT, THE

SECURITY OF OUR NATION IS AT STAKE!"

Shortly after, Mr. Trump told reporters at the White House that the court decision was "political," and added: "We have a situation where the security of our country is at stake, and it's a very, very serious situation."

Mr. Trump predicted after the decision that he would ultimately win on further appeal.

The case before the Ninth Circuit involved a challenge brought by the states of Washington and Minnesota against the executive order Mr. Trump signed one week into his presidency. A federal judge in Seattle ruled in favor of the states on Feb. 4 and issued a restraining order blocking enforcement of the new rules, at least temporarily, prompting the government to appeal.

Mr. Trump's executive order suspended entry to the U.S. for visitors from seven countries—Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen—for at least 90 days, froze the entire U.S. refugee program for four months and indefinitely banned refugees from Syria. The government said such action was needed to keep terrorists from entering the U.S.

The Trump administration could seek emergency intervention to end the restraining order from a larger panel of Ninth Circuit judges or the Supreme Court immediately, a process that could play out in a matter of days but wouldn't fully resolve legal questions surrounding the president's order.

The appeals court's 29-page order isn't a final ruling on the executive order. Full court proceedings that take a deep dive into its legality are expected to take many months, and with multiple appeals it could take well over a year before the courts, and likely the Supreme Court, fully resolve the matter.

Justice Department lawyers said they were reviewing the appeals-court decision, and White House press secretary Sean Spicer told reporters that the administration hadn't determined its next legal step.

Democrats and civil-rights groups hailed the decision. Republican leaders on Capitol Hill were quiet, with the office of House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) declining to comment, saying it was deferring to the White House.

The Justice Department had previously suggested a possible compromise—that the appeals court reinstate some aspects of the travel ban, but not others. Thursday's order rejected that idea, suggesting it would be better instead for the White House or Congress to draft new rules if they desire.

"It is not our role," the judges wrote "to try, in effect, to rewrite the executive order...The political branches are far better equipped to make appropriate distinctions."

As the court weighed the issue, Mr. Trump had suggested the courts should be blamed if a terror attack occurred while the new travel limits were suspended. In its ruling, the appeals court pushed back sharply against any suggestion that judges

had no business reviewing a president's order.

The court said that protecting against terrorism was of the highest priority, but that the administration "submitted no evidence" as to why the order needed to go into immediate effect "despite the district court's and our own repeated invitations to explain the urgent need."

"There is no precedent to support this claimed unreviewability, which runs contrary to the fundamental structure of our constitutional democracy," the court wrote, adding that it is appropriate for the court to review public statements made by elected officials in making determinations about their intent.

Jonathan Adler, a law professor at Case Western Reserve University, said the court order shows "how the Trump administration made this whole fight harder on themselves than it needed to be."

The judges' language "certainly suggests" that a rewrite of the executive order by White House officials "might solve the problems," he said.

The appeals court didn't reach a conclusion about whether the executive order discriminates against Muslims.

"The states' claims raise serious allegations and present significant constitutional questions," they wrote, but the judges said they would wait to address that issue until it is more fully explored in additional court proceedings.

The appeals-court judges heard oral arguments in the case on Tuesday, in which a Justice Department lawyer argued that the president has wide authority to make such decisions regarding immigration and national security.

Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson called the order "a complete victory" for opponents of the travel ban.

"We are a nation of laws, and as we have said those laws apply to everybody in our country and that includes the president of the United States," he said.

The executive order prompted protests soon after it went into effect, with large gatherings at major city airports. Officials have said some 60,000 visa-holders were affected by the move.

Mr. Adler, the law professor, said the initial confusion surrounding the travel ban hurt its chances of surviving legal challenges.

The judges said as much in their order. "In light of the government's shifting interpretations of the executive order, we cannot say that the current interpretation by White House counsel, even if authoritative and binding, will persist past the immediate stage of these proceedings," the court said.

—Rebecca Ballhaus and Siobhan Hughes contributed to this article.

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POLITICO 3 key Trump mistakes that led to the travel ban court defeat

By Richard Primus

threat posed by foreigners entering the U.S.

Story Continued Below

Several legal experts are urging President Donald Trump to withdraw his order altogether. | Getty

Several legal experts are urging Trump to withdraw his order altogether.

President Donald Trump's three-week-old administration took a thrashing from a federal appeals court Thursday as a panel of three judges unanimously rejected his request to resume enforcement of his controversial travel ban executive order.

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling put into sharp relief several tactical and strategic errors Trump and his aides made in crafting, implementing and defending the order, which the president said was needed to ward off the terrorist

Introspection does not seem to be one of Trump's strongest personality traits. Even after Trump's own Supreme Court nominee expressed strong discomfort with Trump's public attacks on judges weighing his travel ban case, White House press secretary Sean Spicer made clear that the president had no intention of retreating from his remarks.

"He has no regrets," Spicer said flatly.

Now, several legal experts are urging Trump to withdraw his order altogether, so it can be redrafted in a way that might be more likely to hold up to court review.

Here are three key mistakes that contributed to Trump's courtroom defeat Thursday:

1. The green-card debacle

The White House failure to make clear from the outset that the travel ban did not include U.S. permanent residents, so-called green-card holders, was both a political and legal gaffe of the first order. The confusion led to the detention of more than 100 green-card holders during the first 24 hours the order was in effect and many more thereafter.

That caused major blowback from Congress, because many green-card holders are longtime residents of the U.S. It included many Iranians who fled their country in the 1980s to escape Islamic fundamentalism, a bizarre result for an executive order allegedly aimed at combating radical Islamic terrorism.

But strictly as a matter of legal strategy, the impact on green-card holders was a serious error.

Permanent residents have more U.S. constitutional rights than any other category of foreigners. The green-card issue all but guaranteed that opponents of the travel ban would win the early rounds of litigation by persuading judges that these long-term U.S. residents were being unfairly denied entry or detained.

White House officials have insisted that green-card holders were never supposed to be covered by the order, but many experts don't believe that.

"I think they clearly intended to include legal permanent residents," said Jonathan Meyer, a former Department of Homeland Security deputy general counsel. "It was a mistake to do so, compounded by the fact and shows that they did not vet this sufficiently. There's no question that it meant they would face legal defeats ... It's definitely hurt them."

2. The McGahn fix

One of the steps the Trump team settled on to save face while stemming the legal and public outcry over the order's impact on U.S. residents essentially blew up in the White House's face Thursday.

Once the concern about green-card holders was identified, Trump could have simply signed a half-page tweak to his executive order, making crystal clear that U.S. permanent residents were exempt from the order. But he didn't do that, apparently because he or his aides did not want to admit any flaws in the drafting or vetting process. A formal change to the order would have amounted to a concession of such imperfections.

Instead, Trump and his advisers settled on having his official lawyer — White House Counsel Don McGahn — sign a memorandum purporting to offer "authoritative guidance" that the order did not apply to green-card holders. The memo did not say that Trump instructed McGahn to tweak the order or even that the president approved the new "guidance."

"The White House counsel speaks for the president in this context," Justice Department lawyer August Flentje insisted during Tuesday's oral arguments in response to skeptical questions from the only Republican appointee on the three-judge panel, Richard Clifton.

Despite the claims by McGahn and Flentje that the counsel's memo was conclusive, the three judges nearly ridiculed that position.

"At this point, however, we cannot rely upon the Government's contention that the Executive Order no longer applies to lawful permanent residents. The Government has offered no authority establishing that the White House counsel is empowered to issue an amended order superseding the Executive Order signed by the President," the judges wrote, adding curtly: "That proposition seems unlikely."

And the appeals judges didn't leave it there.

"Nor has the Government established that the White House counsel's interpretation of the Executive Order is binding on all executive branch officials responsible for enforcing the Executive Order. The White House counsel is not the President, and he is not known to be in the chain of command for any of the Executive Departments," the court wrote.

Some legal experts said the Trump administration's contention that McGahn could clarify the order was bizarre. If Trump wanted to change it, he could have in moments with the stroke of a pen, but the bravado exhibited by the president and his aides seemed to foreclose that possibility.

"There were other options," said George Washington University law professor John Banzhaf. "The president's counsel has no official standing at all ... The Homeland Security Secretary does, the Secretary of State does. Maybe it's not as good as the president himself, but it's a hell of a lot better than the counsel, the president's

dog, his wife or his son, all of whom have no official standing whatsoever in the government.

3. Pushing the legal argument too far

Another major tactical mistake came when the Justice Department decided to argue to the 9th Circuit that the courts have no role to play whatsoever in examining immigration-related decisions the president makes on national security grounds.

The claim that Trump's action was unreviewable is a tough one for judges to stomach. Some lawyers say government lawyers might have done better by acknowledging a role for judges but insisting that they must be very deferential to the executive branch.

"I think in the context of this case it was clearly a mistake," said Meyer, now with Sheppard Mullin. "I think it's a mistake almost any time you tell judges you can't look at something."

The claim that the issue was beyond the province of the courts essentially invited the judges to do just what they did at oral arguments on Tuesday: raise Trump's "Muslim ban" comments and ask whether the courts would have no role in reviewing an immigration-related action explicitly taken to discriminate against a religion or for some other highly dubious reason.

The court's opinion makes short work of that argument. "There is no precedent to support this claimed unreviewability, which runs contrary to the fundamental structure of our

constitutional democracy," the judges wrote.

And while the judges made no reference to the arguments or in their opinion to Trump's extraordinary public attacks on them and the judge who issued the restraining order at issue, this is where Trump's statements may have come into play.

The 9th Circuit ruling goes on to cite a Supreme Court case decided under President George W. Bush rejecting efforts by Congress and the White House to shut down legal cases brought by Guantanamo prisoners. If the courts did not believe Bush was due complete deference in that case, it seems unthinkable that the 9th Circuit would grant such latitude to Trump, given the erratic decision-making processes on display in recent weeks.

"Given the dynamics we've seen in this administration, they had to know that argument would not be popular with almost any judge," Meyer said.

In their ruling Thursday, the judges didn't squarely address the relevance of Trump's "Muslim ban" talk to assessing the legality of his executive order. But it was clear that the fact Trump was on the record suggesting a desire to target Muslims made it almost impossible for the judges to buy into the Justice Department's argument and conclude his order should be entirely immune from judicial scrutiny.

Bloomberg

Eli Lake : Trump's Travel Ban Is Not Recruiting More Terrorists

Eli Lake

Since President Donald Trump last month issued an executive order banning travel from seven Muslim majority nations, we've heard a lot about how it will aid jihadists.

Leading Democrats, counterterrorism experts and even Iran's foreign minister have all asserted that Trump's travel ban will end up being used by the Islamic State to recruit new terrorists. Senator Chris Murphy, a Democrat from Connecticut, made this point forcefully on Jan. 30, when he told MSNBC that Trump's executive order "ultimately is going to get Americans killed."

The argument goes like this: Jihadists believe there is a Manichaean struggle between Islam and the West. An alleged "Muslim ban" plays directly into this worldview, telling Muslims that they are not safe in the un-Islamic world.

No wonder they are calling the executive order a "blessed ban" on Islamic State web forums.

This is a familiar line to anyone who has followed the national security debate since 9/11. Democrats in particular have argued that the Iraq War, the Guantanamo Bay prison and anti-Muslim web videos help to radicalize otherwise peaceful Muslims to murder us at random. Hence Trump's travel ban is now a "recruitment tool."

If only jihadi recruitment were so easily disrupted. Sadly it's much more complicated.

To start, the process by which an individual gets sucked into the death cults of al Qaeda or the Islamic State cannot be reduced to a single cause. Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, the research director for the Program on Extremism at George Washington University, put it like this: "The

argument that the Trump policy will radicalize people is predicated on the flawed premise that people radicalize as a response to government policy. The reality is it's a highly complex process that involves religious and personal factors. A government policy may play a role, but it's one of many factors."

Meleagrou-Hitchens's program released an invaluable report last year that studied motivations of Americans who had declared allegiance to the Islamic State. It found that the motivations ranged from sympathy for the plight of Syrians suffering under their dictator's war to a sense of religious obligation to join a new utopian Islamic caliphate.

Another problem with this argument is that it fails to account for the significant rise in radical Islamic terror under President Barack Obama. He went out of his way to

counter the jihadist worldview. He began his presidency by delivering a speech to the Islamic world from Cairo, in which he stressed his own administration's respect for Islam. He promised, and ultimately failed to, close Guantanamo; he withdrew U.S. troops from Iraq in 2011, and he scrubbed terms like "radical Islam" and "war on terror" from the government's lexicon.

And yet despite his efforts, the FBI arrested more Americans for joining Islamic terrorist groups during his presidency than during that of George W. Bush. And while Obama decimated al Qaeda's central leadership following the raid that killed Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda's franchises in Yemen, Somalia and Libya grew stronger. Meanwhile, the Islamic State broke away from al Qaeda during Obama's presidency and managed to gain territory in Syria and Iraq. Only now has the

military campaign to liberate Mosul shown some success.

It's true that Obama also did many things jihadists did not like during his presidency. For example, he used drone strikes against more of them than his predecessor did. And when the U.S. Supreme Court recognized the legal right to gay marriage, Twitter accounts affiliated with the Islamic State posted video of gay men being thrown to their deaths off of high buildings in Raqqa, with the hashtag #lovewins. The Islamic State didn't like the Iran nuclear deal, either. After all, Shiites like the Iran regime are seen as apostates, and in the battle for Syria, the

Iranians are on the side of the oppressors.

This gets to the most important point. The fanatics who seek to recreate an eighth-century caliphate have an endless supply of grievances about our open society. If we succumb to the fallacy that we can counter their propaganda by not doing things they could exploit for propaganda purposes, we are giving them too much power.

A far better argument against Trump's executive order is that it undermines our own recruitment efforts to counter the jihadists. At first the travel ban applied to translators who helped the U.S.

military in Iraq, not to mention leading advocates for the Islamic State's victims like the Yazidi-Iraqi legislator Vian Dakhil. Fortunately the Trump administration has reversed these elements of the travel ban in the last week. But the perception that America would close its doors to the people who helped us makes it harder to recruit allies against the Islamic State going forward.

Critics of Trump's travel ban are not inclined to make that argument. After all, Democrats were silent when Obama abandoned the Iraqi sheiks who helped to temporarily drive al Qaeda out of the Anbar province between 2007 and 2009.

At the time, they were too busy insisting the Iraq War helped create more terrorists.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

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**The
Washington
Post**

Trump is changing the presidency more than the presidency is changing Trump (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Karen-Tumulty/1410916925870676>

A month after announcing his candidacy, Donald Trump shocked the establishment by questioning the heroism of Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), a former prisoner of war. The near-unanimous verdict of the pundit class: Trump was doomed.

Eighteen months later, Trump is still insulting McCain — only now he's doing so from the White House.

"He's been losing so ... long he doesn't know how to win anymore," Trump tweeted Thursday.

Despite all predictions — including his own — that the country would see a new, more "presidential" Trump once he took office, the commander in chief has barely changed from the impulsive candidate who blew up every political norm that stood between him and the White House.

He is still tweeting at odd hours, calling people names, promoting his family's business interests, bragging about crowd sizes, complaining about media coverage and lashing out at anyone who challenges him, including members of his own party and a federal judge. His White House seems just as chaotic, tumultuous and discordant as his campaign was.

All of which is according to plan, his team insists.

"Part of the reason the president got elected is because he speaks his mind," White House press secretary Sean Spicer said at Thursday's news briefing. "He doesn't hold it back, he's authentic, and he's not going to sit back."

[Trump lashes out at senator who revealed Supreme Court nominee's comments]

Washington, meanwhile, is beginning to figure out that it had better get used to it. Surreal is the new normal.

"Most people in Congress and elsewhere did harbor the fantasy that he would become a different person," said Vin Weber, a former Republican congressman from Minnesota who is now a lobbyist. "I think they're learning differently."

Mark Salter, a confidant and former top aide to McCain, said he never expected Trump to change because that would have required "not just growing into the job, but growing up."

Other Republicans were deluding themselves in predicting that another Trump would emerge once the enormous weight of the presidency was placed on his shoulders, Salter said. "They just couldn't bring themselves to believe otherwise, because it would have been an indictment of them" for supporting Trump.

Lyndon B. Johnson once said: "The presidency has made every man who occupied it, no matter how small, bigger than he was, and no matter how big, not big enough for its demands."

But in his first three weeks in office, Trump appears to be changing the presidency more than the reverse.

Rather than moderating his impulses, his top aides seem intent on amplifying them — pleasing their boss by attacking critics and the news media, defending his factually inaccurate assertions and adding to the growing pile of what counselor Kellyanne Conway called "alternative facts."

[The Fix: John McCain's brutal rejoinder to Sean Spicer]

Trump and those around him had long promised that he would tone down his style if elected. There was even talk that he might give up the Twitter account that functions as an expression of his id.

In an April rally in Pennsylvania, Trump promised: "At some point, I'm gonna be so presidential that you people will be so bored."

Anthony Scaramucci, a prominent New York financier who now works at the White House, predicted the same during a Fox News interview in late December.

"I think that the gist of what happened during the election season is going to be slightly modified now," Scaramucci said. "I think the candidate as president is going to be way more presidential and way more precise than people think. That's my prediction."

Reince Priebus, the former GOP chairman who is now Trump's chief of staff, repeatedly used the word "pivot" to explain how the businessman was prepared to mature as he transitioned from the primaries to the general election and beyond.

"He has a lot of space to grow," Priebus said in a July 17 interview with ABC News. "I think he's much more precise in his rhetoric, in his tone, in his attack. I think he's got a lot of room to grow. ... He knows the pivot is important. He has been better, and I think he's going to be great moving forward."

[For Donald Trump, it's always about control]

Trump kept repeating the promise himself.

"When I'm president, I'm a different person," Trump said at a rally in Pella, Iowa, last January. "I can do anything. I can be the most

politically correct person that you've ever seen."

Two weeks later, Trump told NBC News that he would be "much different, much different" as president.

"When you're president, you act in a different way, there's no question about that, and I would do that," Trump said, after being questioned about why he called rival Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) a "p---y" at a rally in New Hampshire.

Yet there were other times when Trump made it clear he had no intention of undergoing an extreme makeover.

"I am who I am. It's me. I don't want to change," Trump said in an interview in La Crosse, Wis., in August. "Everyone talks about, 'Oh, well, you've got to pivot.' ... I don't want to pivot. I mean, you have to be you. If you start pivoting, you're not being honest with people."

After he obliterated expectations and pulled out an electoral college win in November, Trump sent conflicting signals.

Days after the election, Lesley Stahl of "60 Minutes" asked him in an interview: "Are you going to sometimes have that same rhetoric that you had on the stump? Or are you going to rein it in?"

"Well, sometimes you need a certain rhetoric to get people motivated," Trump responded. "I don't want to be just a little nice monotone character and, in many cases, I will be."

Stahl asked: "Can you be?"

Today's WorldView

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"Sure I can," Trump said. "I can be easily, that's easier. Honestly, to do that, it's easier."

His Republican allies on Capitol Hill insist that Trump's unorthodox style will not get in the way of their policy agenda.

Brendan Buck, chief communications adviser to House

Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.), said the speaker has a normal working relationship with the president and doesn't get "distracted by whatever the statement out of the pool spray is or whatever the tweet is."

"He's got a unique way of doing things," Buck said, "and we don't ever expect that to change."

Alice Crites contributed to this report.



White House says Conway has been 'counseled' after touting Ivanka Trump's products

<https://www.facebook.com/PostRoz>

The White House on Thursday said that a top adviser to President Trump had been "counseled" after using a television appearance from the West Wing to promote the clothing and jewelry line sold under the brand of Trump's daughter.

The endorsement, in which Kellyanne Conway told Fox News Channel viewers to "go buy Ivanka's stuff," appeared to violate a key ethics rule barring federal employees from using their public office to endorse products. The White House reaction was a rare acknowledgment of an ethical misstep.

Conway's remarks drew a sharp and unusual rebuke from a top Republican lawmaker, House Oversight Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), who said that Conway's comments were "absolutely wrong, wrong, wrong" and "clearly over the line."

Chaffetz, who has resisted calls by Democrats to investigate potential conflicts related to President Trump's businesses, joined with the Oversight Committee's ranking Democrat, Rep. Elijah E. Cummings (Md.), in sending a letter to the Office of Government Ethics calling Conway's comments "unacceptable." The letter asked the agency to recommend discipline given that Trump, who is Conway's "agency head," holds an "inherent conflict of interest" due to the involvement of his daughter's business.

In a terse comment to reporters Thursday, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said that Conway had been "counseled on the subject" but did not say whether she would be disciplined. Spicer did not say why Conway's statements had required the intervention, and the White House declined to answer further questions.

Speaking on Fox News Thursday evening, Conway declined to comment but said Trump supports her "100 percent."

Conway said she advised all women to, at some point in their life, have a boss who treats them "the

way the president of the United States treated me today."

The incident was the latest illustration of how the Trump White House has struggled to grapple with long-established ethics rules as the president has attempted to balance the potentially competing interests of his new public position and his family's vast business holdings.

The matter has grown politically thorny in recent weeks as many opponents of Trump's policies have waged a campaign to boycott the family's brands and protest at its properties. The tensions underscore the difficulty Trump faces in carrying through on his vow to separate his presidency from his businesses — particularly given that he and his daughter have refused to divest their ownership stakes.

The president has faced criticism from ethics experts and Democratic lawmakers who have warned that his public power could be misused to enrich him and his family. Trump has turned over the management of his businesses to his two adult sons and a longtime executive.

Although Trump has said that most ethics laws and rules do not apply to the president, Conway's stumble Thursday served as a reminder that staffers are nonetheless subject to those provisions.

The Conway episode followed other instances in which Trump's political rise and his presidency have provided a promotional platform for the family businesses.

On Monday, first lady Melania Trump filed a lawsuit accusing a British news company of publishing an inaccurate story that hurt her ability to take advantage of a "once in a lifetime opportunity" to build her brand of jewelry and accessories. The lawsuit said that the August 2016 article, which falsely suggested that Melania Trump had once worked for an escort service, damaged her ability to build "multimillion dollar business relationships for a multi-year term" and damaged her brand during a time when Trump "is one of the most photographed women in the world."

A day later, after ethics experts criticized the notion of Melania Trump attempting to make money from her public role, her attorney and a spokeswoman issued statements saying that the first lady "has no intention" of using her position for profit.

The first family has struggled to cleanse its public appearances of private entanglements.

In his official biography on the White House website, Donald Trump boasts of the success of the business he still owns and cites his book "The Art of the Deal," which remains for sale.

Melania Trump's initial online biography referenced her jewelry line, once sold on the cable television channel QVC, and noted its trademark, a registration now overseen by a federal office led by her husband.

Ivanka Trump, whose brand includes dresses, shoes, skirts, handbags, jewelry and accessories, much of which is sold online and at dozens of the United States' largest retailers and department-store chains, mixed her business and newly elevated political profile shortly after the election.

Hours after she was interviewed by CBS's "60 Minutes" about her father's victory, her jewelry line alerted journalists to the fact that she was wearing an Ivanka-brand diamond bracelet, which viewers could buy for \$10,800.

Conway's endorsement of Ivanka Trump's brand followed a tweet Wednesday by President Trump complaining that his daughter had "been treated so unfairly" by the department store Nordstrom, which dropped her clothing line, citing slow sales.

Conway touted Ivanka Trump's "wonderful line" of clothing and shoes during an interview Thursday morning with "Fox & Friends" from the White House briefing room.

Responding to national boycotts of Ivanka Trump merchandise, Conway said, "Go buy Ivanka's stuff is what I would tell you."

"I'm going to give a free commercial here," she added. "Go buy it today, everybody. You can find it online."

Experts quickly seized on Conway's remarks as a direct violation of Office of Government Ethics rules. Don W. Fox, a former OGE acting director and general counsel, said Conway's statements were "jaw-dropping" and "a clear violation of rules prohibiting misuse of public office for anyone's private gain."

Peter Schweizer, who has worked closely with Trump chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon and wrote a book, "Clinton Cash," that was critical of donations to the Clinton Foundation, said, "They've crossed a very, very important, bright line, and it's not good."

"To encourage Americans to buy goods from companies owned by the first family is totally out of bounds and needs to stop," - Schweizer added. "Clearly, the Trumps feel some of this is related to politics. But whether that's true or not, these marketing battles need to be fought by Ivanka and her company. They cannot and should not be fought by government employees and the White House."

Schweizer said that it was time for Trump "to move beyond the mindset and the role of a businessman and assume the mantle of commander in chief."

Federal law states that the director of the Office of Government Ethics can advise the White House and Conway of the violation and recommend disciplinary action. But the OGE's recommendations are nonbinding, and the ultimate decision resides with the White House.

OGE officials did not respond to requests for comment. By midmorning, the agency's website had crashed, and the OGE's official Twitter account said that the office's phone and email systems were receiving "an extraordinary volume" of citizen input about "recent events."

The office tweeted that its role is to help prevent ethics violations but not to investigate allegations that rules have been broken — a job reserved for the FBI, inspectors

general and other watchdogs. Still, the OGE notifies agencies of possible ethics violations and asks for reports on any action taken, a process the office indicated it is "actively following," according to the OGE's tweets.

Experts said that a typical executive-branch employee who violated the endorsement rule could face significant disciplinary action, including a multi-day suspension and loss of pay. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees, for instance, face a five-day suspension or termination for using public office for private gain.

But enforcement measures are largely left to the head of the federal agency — in

Conway's case, the White House. Conway's counseling, independent lawyers said, could have included a meeting with members of the White House counsel's office, but it remained unclear what disciplinary steps would be taken.

Independent ethics groups and Trump critics targeted the endorsement as a make-or-break moment for how the White House will address future ethical concerns.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

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Noah Bookbinder, director of the liberal Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, which filed an official ethics complaint, called Conway's comments "just another example of what looks like a disturbing pattern of this administration acting to benefit the businesses of the president's family and supporters."

Conway's endorsement of Ivanka Trump's business also highlighted an awkward reality for a White House threatening U.S. companies seeking to move jobs or operations overseas. Nearly all Ivanka-brand merchandise is manufactured in low-cost-labor countries, including China, Indonesia and Vietnam.

The president and his daughter have taken steps to put distance between their private companies and public ambitions. Both resigned their official leadership roles in the Trump Organization.

Ivanka Trump retains a financial interest in her separate business. The Trump company says the president does not have a financial interest or ownership stake in the Ivanka brand.

[Fact Checker: Trump's claim Ivanka is being 'treated so unfairly' by Nordstrom]

NATIONAL
REVIEW
ONLINE

Jonah Goldberg : Kellyanne Conway & CNN -- Media Pile-On Reveals Double Standard

CNN has grave concerns about White House senior adviser Kellyanne Conway's credibility and even refused to have her on its Sunday show recently, apparently to protect viewers from her Jedi-mind-trick powers.

CNN subsequently invited Conway to appear on the network, infuriating a chorus of liberal-media critics who insist she must be shunned like a harlot in an Amish colony.

Now, I should disclose that I know Conway a bit and like her. At the same time, no one who's read my columns over the last two years would accuse me of being a cheerleader for her or her boss.

Conway's job is, at least in part, to sell the president's agenda and fight back against a hostile press. She is very good at it. Too good, apparently.

Bill Moyers, who had a similar job for President Lyndon Johnson, lamented CNN's decision not to permanently ban Conway, which is the "the surest way to prevent a professional con artist from using you to pollute the airwaves with one flagrant lie after another." Moyers says Conway is the "administration's official Queen of Bulls***," which is an interesting charge coming from someone who used to clean out LBJ's stables gustily.

Journalism professor Jay Rosen thinks there's little journalistic value in giving Conway a platform. "The logic is, this is a representative of the president," Rosen said on the Recode Media podcast. "This is somebody who can speak for the Trump administration. But if we find that what Kellyanne Conway says is routinely or easily contradicted by Donald Trump, then that rationale disappears."

"Another reason to interview Kellyanne Conway is, our viewers want to understand how the Trump world thinks," Rosen added. "But if the end result of an interview is more confusion about what the Trump world thinks, then that rationale evaporates."

I can understand Rosen's frustration. President Trump's surrogates, including Vice President Mike Pence, have mastered the art of defending straw-man positions that don't reflect the actions and views of the president himself.

But I find this talk of refusing to interview Conway baffling and bizarre. It's also a bit ironic, given the hysteria this week over Senator Elizabeth Warren's being "silenced" by the Senate. Apparently, using a parliamentary technique to cut off a demagogic stemwinder in the Senate is outrageously sexist. But cavalierly insulting Conway, the first successful female presidential

campaign manager, is fine — and calling for her media banishment is the height of journalistic seriousness.

In 2012, Susan Rice, Barack Obama's national-security adviser, flatly lied on five Sunday news shows, saying that the attack on the Benghazi compound was "spontaneous" and the direct result of a "heinous and offensive video." No one talked of banning her from the airwaves. Nor should they have.

Here's a news flash for the news industry: Birds are gonna fly, fish are gonna swim, and politicians are gonna lie. The assumption that Conway is uniquely dishonest strikes me as not only preposterous but irrelevant. If she's that dishonest, a good interviewer will make that clear to the viewer. Personally, I think Jake Tapper is more than capable of holding anyone's feet to the fire.

The arrogance is remarkable. The Fourth Estate priesthood thinks viewers can't see through Conway's spin, so they must be protected from it. It's a compliment to Conway and her skills, and an admission of incompetence by the press.

But the more important point is that singling out Conway would strike millions of viewers — and voters — as further evidence that the press changes its standards depending on

which party is in power. Under President George W. Bush, vast swaths of the media celebrated dissent as the highest form of patriotism. Under President Obama, dissent became the lowest form of racism. And upon Donald Trump's election, dissent became not only patriotic but a requirement for the new mythopoetic cause of "resistance."

While not a news organization, Saturday Night Live is emblematic of this mindset. Jim Downey, the SNL writer in charge of political mockery, insisted that there was simply nothing funny about Obama. "It's like being a rock climber looking up at a thousand-foot-high face of solid obsidian, polished and oiled," Downey said. "There's not a single thing to grab onto — certainly not a flaw or hook that you can caricature."

The Trump White House, meanwhile, is a bottomless source of japery. That's fine. But the double standard is obvious to those who don't share the political biases of SNL, The Daily Show, or, for that matter, CNN.

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

THE HILL

Senate confirms Trump's Health chief

By Jordain
Carney - 02/10/17 02:11 AM EST

The Senate confirmed Rep. Tom Price (R-Ga.) to serve as secretary of Health and Human Services during a 2 a.m. vote Friday.

No Democratic senator supported Price in the 52-47 vote. He overcame an initial procedural hurdle on Wednesday evening along party lines.

With the GOP's 52-seat hold on the Senate and only a simple majority

required, Democrats don't have the manpower to block any nominees on their own.

But they signaled early on that Price would be a top target and spent hours on the Senate floor ahead of the vote protesting his confirmation

because of his support for nixing the Affordable Care Act and overhauling Medicare.

"Make no mistake: In the dark hours of the early morning, with the confirmation of Secretary Price, the Republicans launch the first assault

in the war on seniors," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.).

Democrats argue Price's positions are out of line with campaign-trail Trump, who signaled during the race that he wouldn't cut entitlement programs.

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) called Price — who has previously backed privatizing Medicare — the "exact opposite" of what Trump campaigned on.

"My opposition to Congressman Price has less to do with his well-known extreme right-wing economic views than it has to do with the hypocrisy and dishonesty of President Trump," Sanders said.

Price, who was chairman of the House Budget Committee when nominated, said late last year that Republicans would move to overhaul Medicare within six to eight months of Trump's administration.

He also voiced support in 2015 for a proposal to reduce Medicare costs by delivering benefits through a voucher program.

Democrats are all but guaranteed to use the vote on Price, and his position on Medicare, to target GOP Sens. Dean Heller (Nev.) and Jeff Flake (Ariz.) — two Republican senators up for reelection in 2018.

Price faced a rocky confirmation battle, also coming under fire for a growing number of reports about his stock trading as a member of Congress.

CNN and Time reported last month that he had invested in health-related companies shortly before introducing or supporting legislation that benefited them. The GOP lawmaker denied wrongdoing, adding that he made the investments through a broker.

But Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) — in her first floor speech since she was temporarily banned on Tuesday night — said Price

should be disqualified for "basic ethics."

"He should have withdrawn his nomination weeks ago, and if he didn't go voluntarily, the president and his friends in Congress should have quietly but forcefully pushed him out," she said.

The Wall Street Journal also reported last month that he received a 12 percent discount on his purchase of biomedical stock.

But Republicans never publicly signaled that they were wavering on Price. They believe getting him confirmed is key to syncing up with the White House on the plan to repeal and replace ObamaCare.

Trump and congressional Republicans — as well as House and Senate lawmakers — have at times struggled to get on the same page about a time line for repealing ObamaCare or how to replace it.

They included a Jan. 27 date for repeal proposals in a budget bill passed earlier this year, but

lawmakers acknowledged at the time that they wouldn't meet the deadline.

Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) said Thursday that he hopes confirming Price will speed up the process.

"After seven years we've got all kinds of great ideas, but we have to come together behind one," he told reporters.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) praised Price separately as the "right man" for to lead the department.

"Price knows more about health care policy than just about anyone. He doesn't just understand health care policy as a policy maker ... he also understands it as a practicing physician," he said. "He gets the real-world impact."

**The
Washington
Post**

Michael Gerson : In a time of tragedy, could Trump soothe the nation?

By Michael Gerson

Each day of the Trump era seems to bring strange new objects to the national punchbowl. The newly minted president publicly obsessed over his inaugural crowd size. He claimed pervasive voter fraud. He reviewed television shows. He attacked the independence of the judiciary. He called into question the fairness and good faith of Nordstrom, further deepening our class divide on tie selection.

It is difficult for an easily outraged columnist to ignore the president's bad-boy, shock-jock, schoolyard, bar-stool, mental-ward provocations. But the Trump phenomenon raises more fundamental questions, including about the nature of political communication. Has President Trump permanently changed the way that politicians win office and speak once they assume it? Is Trump's use of Twitter in the same category of revolutionary change as the political pamphlet (see Thomas Paine) or the barn-burning stump speech (see William Jennings Bryan) or the radio (see Franklin D. Roosevelt)?

There is little doubt that the Trump precedent will amplify an existing trend among communication advisers to candidates. During my professional life as a speechwriter, I often heard the point made that

people hate written speeches and reward extemporaneousness. In some ways, John McCain's 2000 presidential campaign was a dry run for this approach, with the candidate making much of his news in daily bull sessions on the press bus. It was seriously proposed to me during George W. Bush's 2004 reelection campaign (on which I was chief speechwriter) that the president deliver his convention address from notes. Even Trump did not attempt this feat, but the enemies of texts, teleprompters and speechwriters have plenty of ammunition in their quest to promote authenticity as spontaneity.

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There is no doubt that Trump tapped into public impatience with typical-sounding politicians, embodied by the Democratic nominee for president, who seemed to have talking points in her soul. People who know Hillary Clinton would dispute that characterization vigorously. But many voters could not imagine four scripted, stilted years of presidential rhetoric. At least, it was widely argued, Trump says what he thinks.

That struck me as an odd way to choose a president, especially given

what Trump actually thinks. But the tweet, briefly expressing a taunt, appears triumphant. Spontaneity reigns in presidential splendor.

Yet there are two caveats at least as huge as Trump's crowd size. First, Trump's communication style has not even begun to be tested. It is at times of tragedy, grief and the solemn expression of national purpose that the words of a president are assessed by history. Moments such as these usually require both thought and craft. Words are used to empathize, to heal, to reach out, to uplift, to speak from the undivided heart of the country.

There is no evidence that Trump is capable of this kind of communication; there is much evidence he is not. In the aftermath of terrorist attacks, Trump's instinct is to take credit for his own foresight and to employ events as justification for his own agenda. There are few things more repulsive than narcissism at a time of grief. In moments demanding empathy, Trump may use a text and sound inauthentic, or not use a text and sound indifferent.

The second caveat is that we don't know the ending of Trump's story. His style of communication is attractive now because it helped him overcome nearly impossible political odds. But in, say, the fourth and final year of a failed presidency,

Trump's tone and approach — his insults, his self-centeredness, his strange inability to discern appropriateness — may appear in a different light. A virus produces antibodies. Americans may become exhausted with his shtick. The decency of the country may be deeper than the Trump phenomenon.

I'm betting on it, but who knows? The final measure of Trump's aggressive authenticity may be somewhere in the middle, as the truth of this matter may be somewhere in the middle.

The requirements of presidential communication are symbolized for me by the rigors of one day: Sept. 14, 2001. In the morning, Bush spoke at the National Cathedral: "Grief and tragedy and hatred are only for a time. Goodness, remembrance and love have no end, and the Lord of life holds all who die and all who mourn."

Later that day, Bush held a bullhorn on smoldering rubble in New York and promised, spontaneously: "The people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon."

Both text and heart. Both prayer and bullhorn. Both needed by an American president.

Read more from Michael Gerson's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook .

**The
New York
Times**

David Brookds : A Gift for Donald Trump

Revue de presse américaine du 10 février 2017

David Brooks

If you could give Donald Trump the gift of a single trait to help his presidency, what would it be?

My first thought was that prudence was the most important gift one could give him. Prudence is the ability to govern oneself with the use of reason. It is the ability to suppress one's impulses for the sake of long-term goals. It is the ability to see the specific circumstances in which you are placed, and to master the art of navigating within them.

My basic thought was that a prudent President Trump wouldn't spend his mornings angrily tweeting out his resentments. A prudent Trump wouldn't spend his afternoons barking at foreign leaders and risking nuclear war. "Prudence is what differentiates action from impulse and heroes from hotheads," writes the French philosopher André Comte-Sponville.

But the more I thought about it the more I realized prudence might not be the most important trait Trump needs. He seems intent on destroying the postwar world order — building walls, offending allies and driving away the stranger and the refugee. Do I really want to make him more prudent and effective in pursuit of malicious goals?

Moreover, the true Trump dysfunction seems deeper. We are used to treating politicians as vehicles for political philosophies and interest groups. But in Trump's case, his philosophy, populism, often takes a back seat to his psychological complexes — the psychic wounds that seem to induce him into a state of perpetual war with enemies far and wide.

With Trump we are relentlessly thrown into the Big Shaggy, that unconscious underground of wounds, longings and needs that drive him to do what he does, to tweet what he does, to attack whom he does.

Thinking about politics in the age of Trump means relying less on the knowledge of political science and more on the probings of D.H. Lawrence, David Foster Wallace and Carl Jung.

At the heart of Trumpism is the perception that the world is a dark, savage place, and therefore ruthlessness, selfishness and callousness are required to survive in it. It is the utter conviction, as Trump put it, that murder rates are at a 47-year high, even though in fact they are close to a 57-year low. It is the utter conviction that we are engaged in an apocalyptic war against radical Islamic terrorism, even though there are probably several foreign policy problems of greater importance.

It's not clear if Trump is combative because he sees the world as dangerous or if he sees the world as dangerous because it justifies his combativeness. Either way, Trumpism is a posture that leads to the now familiar cycle of threat perception, insult, enemy-making, grievance, self-pity, assault and counterassault.

So, upon reflection, the gift I would give Trump would be an emotional gift, the gift of fraternity. I'd give him the gift of some crisis he absolutely could not handle on his own. The only way to survive would be to fall back entirely on others, and then to experience what it feels like to have them hold him up.

Out of that, I hope, would come an ability to depend on others, to trust other people, to receive grace, and eventually a desire for companionship. Fraternity is the desire to make friends during both good and hostile occasions and to be faithful to those friends. The fraternal person is seeking harmony and fair play between individuals. He is trying to move the world from tension to harmony.

Donald Trump didn't have to have an administration that was at war with everyone but its base. He came to office with a populist mandate that cut across partisan categories. He could have created unorthodox coalitions and led unexpected alliances that would

have broken the logjam of our politics.

He didn't have to have a vicious infighting administration in which everybody leaks against one another and in which backstairs life is a war of all against all.

He doesn't have to begin each day making enemies: Nordstrom, John McCain, judges. He could begin each day looking for friends, and he would actually get a lot more done.

On Inauguration Day, when Trump left his wife in the dust so he could greet the Obamas, I didn't realize how quickly having a discourteous leader would erode the conversation. But look at how many of any day's news stories are built around enmity. The war over who can speak in the Senate. Kellyanne Conway's cable TV battle du jour. Half my Facebook feed is someone linking to a video with the headline: Watch X demolish Y.

I doubt that Trump will develop a capacity for fraternity any time soon, but to be human is to hold out hope, and to believe that even a guy as old and self-destructive as Trump is still 0.001 percent open to a transformation of the heart.



Trump gets a powerful lesson in role of judiciary

<https://www.facebook.com/robert.barnes.3139>

President Trump, meet the judicial branch.

You like fast? It prefers to take its time. You were elected to disrupt, but it insists on order.

Most important, you have pledged to move single-handedly to protect the country and change its immigration priorities. The federal judiciary in the weeks-that-feel-like-months of the Trump presidency has pushed back in a series of decisions that make clear it has a role to play.

Only history can know whether the unanimous decision by a panel of three very different federal judges will ultimately be considered a case of judicial overreach, a self-imposed mistake caused by the administration's lack of precision, or something more significant.

But for now it served as a powerful reminder that judges demand their designated part, even if in most cases it is to defer to the president on matters of national security.

A federal appeals court upheld a lower court ruling suspending President Trump's controversial immigration order barring refugees and citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the U.S. on Feb. 9. Federal appeals court rules against Trump's immigration ban (Peter Stevenson/The Washington Post)

(Peter Stevenson/The Washington Post)

The judges fairly bristled at the government's contention that courts had no business weighing Trump's executive order temporarily banning refugees and temporarily from seven majority-Muslim countries.

"The government does not merely argue that courts owe substantial deference to the immigration and national security policy determinations of the political branches — an uncontroversial principle that is well-grounded in our jurisprudence," the court's unsigned opinion said.

"Instead, the government has taken the position that the president's decisions about immigration policy, particularly when motivated by

national security concerns, are *unreviewable*, even if those actions potentially contravene constitutional rights and protections."

That, the court said, "runs contrary to the fundamental structure of our constitutional democracy."

That the opinion was unsigned seemed intended to emphasize the unanimity of the diverse panel: Judge William C. Canby, 85, a Jimmy Carter nominee with more than 36 years of experience; Judge Richard R. Clifton, 66, nominated to the bench in 2002 by President George W. Bush; and Judge Michelle T. Friedland, 44, a Barack Obama nominee who became a judge less than three years ago.

They were deciding only whether to lift a temporary halt to the executive order, issued last Friday by Judge James L. Robart (another Bush nominee). It could have been a one-paragraph order, but instead it ran for 29 pages.

It gave the president's lawyers almost nothing.

Washington and Minnesota had standing to sue, the judges decided,

because the ban had a detrimental effect on the rights of students and faculty at the public universities. Actions of the executive branch designed to promote national security are not immune from judicial inspection, the court continued.

To have Robart's order dissolved, the burden was on the government to show it was likely to win on the merits.

But the judges said there were serious questions about whether the order provides the due process guarantees required, "such as notice and a hearing prior to restricting an individual's ability to travel."

The government claimed that lawful permanent residents would not be affected; the court said there was no guarantee. The word of White House Counsel Donald F. McGahn was not enough, the judges said.

"We cannot say that the current interpretation by White House counsel, even if authoritative and binding, will persist past the immediate stage of these proceedings," the decision said.

That argued against leaving even part of the order in place.

The court said there was not enough in the record to decide whether the order amounted to religious discrimination, which would violate the Constitution's Establishment Clause prohibition of any "law respecting an establishment of religion."

But Trump's words came back to haunt him. "The states have offered evidence of numerous statements by the president about his intent to implement a 'Muslim ban' as well as evidence they claim suggests that the executive order was intended to be that ban," the judges wrote.

"We reserve consideration of these claims until the merits of this appeal have been fully briefed."

The court referred to the "massive attention" the case has received, and said it had to weigh interests.

"On the one hand, the public has a powerful interest in national security and in the ability of an elected president to enact policies," the judges wrote. "And on the other, the public also has an interest in free flow of travel, in avoiding separation of families, and in freedom from discrimination."

Parts of the decision are sure to be controversial. While it said courts defer to the president, it seemed to

demand an explanation before the president may act preemptively.

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"The government has pointed to no evidence that any alien from any of the countries named in the order has perpetrated a terrorist attack in the United States," the judges said.

Again, they said: "Rather than present evidence to explain the need for the executive order, the government has taken the position that we must not review its decision at all."

Despite the lopsided nature of the ruling, it also seemed to offer pointers for the administration. A legal strategy less dismissive of the court's role might have helped. Less haste in drafting the order, issued just a week after Trump's inauguration, might have filled some of the holes the judges saw.

Before his lawyers could decide on their next move, Trump issued an all-caps tweet: "SEE YOU IN COURT," seemingly at odds with his recent criticism of judges as "political."

The full appeals court? The Supreme Court? It was an acknowledgment, if nothing else, of the role the judiciary holds in how his presidency will proceed.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Hook and Peter Nicholas

Feb. 9, 2017 9:37 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—A federal appellate court ruling blocking President Donald Trump's immigration ban sent a powerful message about the balance of power enshrined in the Constitution establishing three equal branches of government, a system that will serve as a check on his presidency just as it does on any other.

The three-judge panel at the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco also delivered a withering blow to a central pillar of Mr. Trump's political agenda—national security—just three weeks into his administration.

The president's executive order was aimed at blocking travelers from seven Muslim-majority countries because of what the administration said were concerns about terrorism.

The order prompted protests at airports nationwide and already has cost Mr. Trump, a Republican, political capital and momentum. His decision to attack the judges who handled the case also touched off concerns that he sought to undermine the nation's judiciary.

Mr. Trump, speaking to reporters at the White House moments after the court ruled, called the decision "political."

The administration could ask for its appeal of the stay to be heard by the full appellate court or seek review by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The White House faces additional political risks if it prolongs the fight at such an early moment in Mr. Trump's presidency, said Leon Panetta, who served in Mr.

Ruling Showcases Checks and Balances

Michael C. Bender, Janet Hook and Peter Nicholas

Obama's cabinet and as chief of staff to former President Bill Clinton, both Democrats.

"Presidents have to be really careful about what fights they pick early in an administration because if they pick the wrong fights, it is going to make it tougher for them to do the things that are really important to their legacy," Mr. Panetta said. "If you start off by engaging in a war of words and tweets and executive orders, and picking fights with the left and the right, you hurt your chances for being able to get the more meaningful things done."

Sen. Tom Cotton (R., Ark.), a defender of the travel policy, described the court's ruling as "misguided" and called the ninth circuit "the most notoriously left-wing court in America."

"I'm confident the administration's position will ultimately prevail," Mr. Cotton said.

Many Democrats praised the decision. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said, "President Trump ought to see the handwriting on the wall that his executive order is unconstitutional."

The rollout of the order was widely criticized for the confusion it caused, even for some in government who were charged with enforcing it. The ruling also cited flaws in the order's wording, which was largely drafted during the president's transition period and not widely circulated.

Mr. Trump could have it rewritten, and his administration is now better staffed to manage such an undertaking. Attorney General Jeff Sessions was confirmed this week and is now at his post in the Justice Department.

The order was also widely viewed by critics as a variation of Mr. Trump's call for a Muslim ban, which helped him win the Republican Party's first primary contest in New Hampshire last year.

Nearly 90% of Republicans said they supported the executive order, according to a Quinnipiac University poll released Tuesday. And the defeat in court may not hurt his standing among supporters, said Julian Zelizer, a professor of history and public affairs at Princeton University.

"His supporters are still happy he's fighting the fight," Mr. Zelizer said. "There is probably an element of the Trump presidency that will be defined forever around fighting: Fighting with people, fighting with institutions."

Other presidents have had to weather early storms, and they stand as warnings to the current administration about how enduring the damage can be from major stumbles early in a presidency.

A decision by former President Jimmy Carter to block the hometown spending projects favored by members of Congress alienated fellow Democrats, whose help he needed when confronting a major international oil crisis. Lyndon Johnson's overly optimistic description of the Vietnam War struck a devastating blow to his credibility.

The collapse of Mr. Clinton's health-care plan in his first two years helped Republicans take control of Congress, although Mr. Clinton managed to regroup and rebuild his presidency by working with Republicans to forge major bipartisan laws—welfare reform, smaller health-care measures and a big deficit reduction plan.

"It's a permanent drag on his presidency even if he does eventually get out of it," said Bruce Buchanan, a political scientist at the University of Texas at Austin, referring to Mr. Trump's legal setbacks. "Early missteps can be overcome, but the problem is: Then you have to overcome them, and you are getting out of a hole, rather than starting on level ground."

Using tactics honed in the campaign, Mr. Trump belittled the courts that would decide the fate of his executive order. He talked and tweeted in hopes of shaping public opinion, suggesting that the public faces a more dire threat than it might realize.

"Historically, presidents have learned that attacking judges personally has tended to reduce their own credibility rather than that of their judicial adversaries," said Jonathan Turley, a George Washington University law professor.

On Friday, a federal judge in Seattle, James Robart, issued a ruling blocking the order. The next day, the president tweeted that Judge Robart was a "so-called judge," a characterization that his own nominee to the Supreme Court, Neil Gorsuch, later described as demoralizing for the judicial branch.

Still, more tweets followed. On Sunday, he urged his millions of followers to blame Mr. Robart and the courts for putting the country in such peril.

With the three-judge panel considering the appeal, Mr. Trump raised the issue again in an appearance Wednesday at a police chiefs conference. He said the courts "seem to be so political," and that even a "bad high school student" would grasp his right to bar

certain people from entering the country he was elected to lead.

Other presidents also bristled over court rulings that subverted their agenda.

What's different about Mr. Trump's comment is the vituperative tone,

said Paul Collins, director of legal studies at University of Massachusetts, Amherst and co-author of a 2015 article, "Presidential Rhetoric and Supreme Court Decisions."

Mr. Trump's language in the Robart case "rings very different to me than

that of other presidents before him," Mr. Collins said.

"President Trump might be trying to undermine confidence in the federal courts as a way to justify a later decision to choose not to follow one or more of the rulings," Mr. Collins said.

—Rebecca Ballhaus and Siobhan Hughes contributed to this article.

**The
Washington
Post**

In executive actions, President Trump vows crackdown on violent crime. Is America as unsafe as he thinks?

<http://www.facebook.com/matt.zapotosky>

President Trump signed three executive actions Thursday designed to crack down on violence in America, directing the Department of Justice to form a task force and take other steps to target criminal gangs and reduce violent crime and crime against police.

Trump has long held a pessimistic view of how safe people are in the U.S., declaring in his inaugural address that the "American carnage" would stop with his presidency. As his new attorney general, Jeff Sessions, was sworn in Thursday, Trump said he was signing the executive actions to "restore safety in America."

"First, I'm directing Department of Justice & Homeland Security to undertake all necessary and lawful action to break the back of the criminal cartels that have spread across our nation and are destroying the blood of our youth and other people," Trump said. "Secondly, I'm directing Department of Justice to form a task force on reducing violent crime in America. And thirdly, I'm directing the Department of Justice to implement a plan to stop crime and crimes of violence against law enforcement officers."

But Trump has, in the past, misstated crime statistics or not presented them in the proper context, presenting a somewhat bleaker view than perhaps is warranted. He has accurately cited a statistic from the Brennan Center for Justice, which found that, in the largest 30 cities, homicides increased by 14 percent from 2015 to 2016. But in that data set, one outlier city — Chicago — was responsible for 43.7 percent of the total increase in homicide rates in 2016.

[Fact-checking Trump's rhetoric on crime and the 'American carnage']

The latest FBI data show a more than 10 percent increase in murder

and non-negligent manslaughter from 2014 to 2015. But the murder rate is down even from as recently as 2009, and it has been declining — with a few upward blips — since the height of the crack epidemic in the early 1990s.

[Violent crime and murders both went up in 2015, FBI says]

Civil liberties groups criticized the executive orders as responses to a non-existent problem.

"President Trump intends to build task forces to investigate and stop national trends that don't exist," said ACLU Deputy Legal Director Jeffery Robinson. "We have seen historic lows in the country's crime rate and a downward trend in killings against police officers since the 1980s. The president not only doesn't acknowledge these facts about our nation's safety, he persists in ignoring the all-too-real deaths of Black and brown people at the hands of law enforcement."

Maria McFarland Sanchez-Moreno, Co-Director of Human Rights Watch's U.S. program, said, "The executive orders President Trump signed today on criminal justice are premised on a distortion of reality that will ultimately be counterproductive. Smart public safety policies should be based on the realities that communities, law enforcement, and victims face, so that resources are used wisely. Far from soaring, overall crime rates have decreased steadily in recent decades, though homicide rates in several major cities have increased and require thoughtful attention."

Sessions said in his own remarks that America had "a crime problem," and it was no mere anomaly.

"I wish the rise that we are seeing in crime in America today were some sort of aberration or a blip," he said. "My best judgment, having been involved in criminal law enforcement for many years, is that this is a dangerous, permanent trend that places the health and safety of the American people at risk. We will

deploy the talents and abilities of the Department of Justice in the most effective way possible to confront this rise in crime and to protect the people of our country."

Sessions mentioned violent crime in his remarks even before terrorism, indicating just how high a priority it might become in his Justice Department.

Trump issued executive orders on three topics — gangs, violent crime in general, and violence against police particularly. They contained mostly broad directives, which Sessions presumably will be left to implement.

On crime in general, Trump ordered the creation of a task force to study existing laws and crime data collection and "develop strategies to reduce crime." The task force is to submit a report to him within a year. On gangs, he ordered beefed up enforcement and the issuance of once quarterly public reports "detailing convictions in the United States relating to transnational criminal organizations and their subsidiaries." He asked for a broader progress report for himself in 120 days.

[Trump says he may send 'the feds' to Chicago. Federal agents are already there.]

On violence against police, Trump ordered prosecutors to develop a strategy to use existing laws to prosecute those who harm law enforcement officers and to "review existing Federal laws to determine whether those laws are adequate to address the protection" of police. According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, there were 135 officers killed in 2016, up from 123 the year before, and 64 were shot and killed, up from 41 the year before.

"It's a shame what's been happening to our great, truly great, law enforcement officers," Trump said. "That's going to stop, as of today."

Trump has cast himself as a pro-law enforcement candidate since the campaign trail. Some advocates worry that he is not adequately concerned, though, with police abuses and those killed by police.

Some cities in recent years, including Ferguson, Mo., Baltimore and Charlotte, have seen protests and violence erupt after incidents of black men being killed at the hands of law enforcement officers. The Justice Department under President Barack Obama sent mediators to those cities to try to keep the peace. The Obama administration also aggressively investigated the police with systemic reviews of entire departments to address the root cause of conflict between law enforcement and residents.

Neither Trump nor his attorney general mentioned such investigations at the swearing-in ceremony. On the White House website, the Trump administration has hinted at a crackdown on protests. "Our job is not to make life more comfortable for the rioter, the looter, or the violent disrupter," the site says.

Sessions, though, did note another issue of importance to him: immigration. That is significant, as the Justice Department is in the midst of a heated court battle to defend Trump's now-frozen executive order barring refugees and citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the U.S.

"We need a lawful system of immigration — one that serves the interests of the people of the United States," Sessions said. "That's not wrong, that's not immoral, that's not indecent. We admit a million people a year plus, lawfully, and we need to end this lawlessness that threatens the public safety, pulls down wages of working Americans."

This post was updated after the full text of the executive orders was released, and to include comments from civil liberties groups.

**The
Washington
Post**

Gorsuch's criticism of Trump may be winning him Democratic support

<https://www.facebook.com/costareports>

Senate Democrats sent mixed signals the day after Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch expressed concerns about President Trump's attacks on the federal judiciary — a sign that the judge's comments could attract some badly needed Democratic support.

"To whisper to a senator but to refuse to say anything public is not close to a good enough show on independence. So from my view, not a good start for Judge Gorsuch. Not a good start," said Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.), speaking on the Senate floor.

But Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, struck a more positive note about Gorsuch's remarks, which came in a meeting with Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.).

"I for one appreciated them," Feinstein said. "I think he was being truthful as to how he felt about it. And that was very much appreciated." She said she wanted Gorsuch to have a "fair hearing process."

The comments highlighted the lingering uncertainty over a crucial question: What level of support will Gorsuch receive from the Democratic caucus?

Republicans hope that at least eight of them will break ranks to help his nomination clear procedural hurdles, if not support him outright. But that will be challenging, as Democrats have largely united against Trump in the first three weeks of his presidency and have signaled they intend to keep doing so.

In a private session with Blumenthal on Wednesday, Gorsuch called Trump's criticism of federal judges "disheartening" and "demoralizing" — raising some Republicans' hopes that he had separated himself from the president's controversial posture in a way that could warm some Democrats to him.

"I think [Gorsuch's] position is very, very positive" and his recent comments "show respect for what we all respect from the judiciary, in terms of independence. He's established that, answered that question from the Democrats who were grasping at straws in the first place since they know he's a mainstream judge," said Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa), the chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

Injecting further uncertainty into the process: Trump on Thursday

disputed Blumenthal's account, even after it was confirmed by Gorsuch's team.

Republicans are hoping to confirm Gorsuch by early April, and they have moved swiftly toward meeting that self-imposed target. Grassley said Thursday that he is considering holding Gorsuch's confirmation hearings sooner than he had planned, in light of recent Democratic attempts to slow the confirmations of many of Trump's Cabinet nominees.

"The fact that we see all of these stalling shenanigans could impact the necessity of moving it forward," he said. "If we're going to have the same game played on Gorsuch, that'll be taken into consideration."

Grassley said early to mid-March is now under consideration as a time frame, whereas he had been looking at mid- to late March a few weeks ago.

Several Senate Democratic officials called the White House's aim of winning over a few Democrats for the Gorsuch nomination overly hopeful. They said that Gorsuch's criticism of Trump's comments was not going to suddenly change Democratic minds about whether to confirm him.

The officials said the party's strategy moving forward is to further raise the bar as Gorsuch asserts his judicial independence. That means pressing Gorsuch to speak out more forcefully about Trump's comments and to do so publicly rather than in private meetings. They expect Democratic senators to push Gorsuch on issues such as Trump's temporary ban on entry to the United States for citizens of seven majority-Muslim countries and all refugees.

"Because President Trump has made unwise and unbalanced comments that are perceived as undermining judicial independence, I expect in my conversation with Judge Gorsuch to raise the issue of judicial independence, to ask for a demonstration of his commitment to judicial independence," said Sen. Christopher A. Coons (D-Del.).

Gorsuch was back on Capitol Hill on Thursday, where he met with six senators — five Republicans and one Democrat. He ignored questions from reporters as he strode down a hall with Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) for his first meeting of the day.

Afterward, Collins said she did not press Gorsuch on his comments criticizing Trump. But, Collins said, "I disagree" with Trump's attacks against judges, which included recent criticism of the judge who halted the refugee ban.

Collins said she has not decided whether she will vote to confirm Gorsuch.

Democrats have signaled that they will seek to impose a 60-vote threshold on Gorsuch's nomination, while Republicans have said that he should get a straight up-or-down vote without having to first clear that obstacle.

Trump has said that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) ought to "go nuclear" and change the rules so that Gorsuch can be confirmed with a simple majority. Republicans hold a 52-to-48 advantage over the Democratic caucus.

"I thought he'd get more than 60 votes and still do," Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) said.

Flake said he does not see Gorsuch's attention-grabbing comments as a "calculated statement" encouraged by the White House to get him confirmed.

"When you read his opinions, the statements and speeches he's given, he feels very strongly about the separation of powers," Flake said. "I have a hard time believing" that his statements were part of a political strategy.

Ahead of a Thursday lunch with a bipartisan group of senators at the White House, Trump said during a brief availability with reporters that he believed Gorsuch's comments were "misrepresented" by Blumenthal. Trump then took a shot at the Connecticut Democrat.

"What you should do is ask Senator Blumenthal about his Vietnam record that didn't exist after years of saying it did," he said. "So ask Senator Blumenthal about his Vietnam record. He misrepresented that just like he misrepresented Judge Gorsuch."

Blumenthal came under sharp criticism during his 2010 Senate campaign for repeated remarks over the years that he had "served" in Vietnam, even though he did his full Marine service in the United States.

Blumenthal obtained several deferments between 1965 and 1970 and then joined the Marine Corps Reserve but did not serve in Vietnam. He later said he misspoke and intended to say that he was in the Marine Reserve during the Vietnam conflict.

Trump received five deferments from the draft during the Vietnam War, four while he was a student and a fifth for bone spurs in his heels, records show.

Trump on Thursday also reiterated his support for Gorsuch, calling him

an "exceptionally qualified nominee." But the president acknowledged that getting Democrats to agree with him may be hard.

"I think that because of politics, perhaps they're not going to vote for him. I think that's a shame because that's not being honest," Trump said.

Grassley said there was "absolutely not" a coordinated strategy between the Judiciary Committee and the White House to broadcast Gorsuch's comments widely.

"There couldn't have been any conspiracy between members of the Judiciary Committee or Republicans because how would we know that Blumenthal would do what he did?" Grassley asked. "These are usually private conversations."

As Gorsuch appeared to make at least some progress on the left, on Twitter and on talk radio, there were growing grumbles from the right about him.

"Doesn't that make you concerned that Judge Gorsuch might be the kind of justice then who would want to please the editorial boards of the New York Times and The Washington Post when a hot-button issue comes up? That crossed my mind last night, didn't make me happy to hear it at all," conservative commentator Laura Ingraham said Thursday on her radio program.

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But Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), a conservative member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, told the Post in a phone interview that a revolt against Gorsuch from the right is very unlikely — and said he was "surprised" by Ingraham's criticism.

Sen. Joe Manchin III (D-W.Va.), a centrist who attended the White House meeting with Trump, was not impressed by Trump's attack against Blumenthal — yet another reminder that as Gorsuch courts Democratic votes, the actions of the president will also be closely watched.

"That's something I wouldn't have done," Manchin said, admitting that many in the room found the president's attack on a fellow senator awkward.

Read more at PowerPost

Ed O'Keefe and John Wagner contributed to this report.

Fareed Zakaria : Stephen Bannon's words and actions don't add up

<https://www.facebook.com/fareedzakaria>

Perhaps it's just me, but a few weeks into the Trump presidency, between the tweets, executive orders, attacks and counterattacks, I feel dizzy. So I've decided to take a break from the daily barrage and try to find the signal amid the noise: What is the underlying philosophy of this administration?

The chief ideologist of the Trump era is surely Stephen K. Bannon, by many accounts now the second-most powerful man in the government. Bannon is intelligent and broadly read, and has a command of U.S. history. I've waded through his many movies and speeches, and in these, he does not come across as a racist or white supremacist, as some people have charged. But he is an unusual conservative. We have gotten used to conservatives who are really economic libertarians, but Bannon represents an older school of European thought that is distrustful of free markets, determined to preserve traditional culture and religion, and unabashedly celebrates nationalism and martial values.

In a speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference in 2012, Bannon explained his disgust for Mitt Romney and his admiration for Sarah Palin, whose elder son, Bannon noted, had served in Iraq. The rich and

successful Romney, by contrast, "will not be my commander in chief," Bannon said, because, although the candidate had five sons who "look like good all-American guys ... not one has served a day in the military."

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The core of Bannon's worldview can be found in his movie "Generation Zero." It centers on the financial crisis of 2008, and the opening scenes — in their fury against bankers — could have been written by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.). But then it moves on to its real point: The financial crisis happened because of a larger moral crisis. The film blames the 1960s and the baby boomers who tore down traditional structures of society and created a "culture of narcissism."

How did Woodstock trigger a financial crisis four decades later? According to Bannon, the breakdown of old-fashioned values resulted in a culture of self-centeredness that measured everything and everyone in one way: money. The movie goes on to accuse the political and financial establishments of betraying their country by enacting free trade deals that benefited them but hollowed out Middle America.

In a strange way, Bannon's dark, dystopian view of U.S. history is closest to that of Howard Zinn, a popular far-left scholar whose "A People's History of the United States" is a tale of the many ways in which 99 percent of Americans were crushed by the country's all-powerful elites. In the Zinn/Bannon worldview, everyday people are simply pawns manipulated by their evil overlords.

A more accurate version of recent American history would show that the cultural shift that began in the 1960s was fueled by a powerful, deeply American force: individualism. The United States had always been highly individualistic. Both Bannon and Trump seem nostalgic for an age — the 1930s to 1950s — that was an aberration for the nation. The Great Depression, the New Deal and World War II created a collectivist impulse that transformed the country. But after a while, Americans began to reassert their age-old desire for personal freedom, fulfillment and advancement. The world of the 1950s sounds great, unless you were a woman who wanted to work, an African American who wanted to vote, an immigrant who wanted to move up or an aspiring entrepreneur stuck in a large, faceless corporation.

The United States that allowed individuals to flourish in the 1980s and 1990s, of course, was where

the young and enterprising Bannon left a large bank to set up his own shop, do his own deals and make a small fortune. It then allowed him to produce and distribute movies outside of the Hollywood establishment, build a media start-up into a powerhouse and become a political entrepreneur entirely outside the Republican hierarchy. This United States allowed Bannon's brash new boss to get out of Queens into Manhattan, build skyscrapers and also his celebrity, all while horrifying the establishment. Donald Trump is surely the poster child for the culture of narcissism.

In the course of building their careers, Trump and Bannon discarded traditionalism in every way. Both men are divorced — Bannon three times, Trump twice. They have achieved their dreams precisely because society was wide open to outsiders, breaking traditional morality did not carry a stigma and American elites were actually not that powerful. Their stories are the stories of modern America. But their message to the country seems to be an old, familiar one: Do as I say, not as I do.

Read more from Fareed Zakaria's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.

Charles Krauthammer: The travel moratorium: A hopeless disaster

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Charles-Krauthammer/95978776589>

Stupid but legal. Such is the Trump administration's travel ban for people from seven Muslim countries. Of course, as with almost everything in American life, what should be a policy or even a moral issue becomes a legal one. The judicial challenge should have been given short shrift, since the presidential grant of authority to exclude the entry of aliens is extremely wide and statutorily clear. The judge who issued the temporary restraining order never even made a case for its illegality.

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals has indeed ruled against the immigration ban, but even if the ban is ultimately vindicated in the courts (as is likely), that doesn't change the fact that it makes for lousy policy. It began life as a barstool eruption after the San Bernardino

massacre when Donald Trump proposed a total ban on Muslims entering the country "until our country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on."

Rudy Giuliani says he was tasked with cleaning up this idea. Hence the executive order suspending entry of citizens from the seven countries while the vetting process is reviewed and tightened.

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The core idea makes sense. These are failed, essentially ungovernable states (except for Iran) where reliable data is hard to find. But the moratorium was unnecessary and damaging. Its only purpose was to fulfill an ill-considered campaign promise.

It caused enormous disruption without making us any safer. What was the emergency that compelled us to turn away people already in the air with already approved visas for entry to the United States?

President Trump said he didn't want to give any warning. Otherwise, he tweeted, "the 'bad' would rush into our country. ... A lot of bad 'dudes' out there!"

Rush? Not a single American has ever been killed in a terror attack in this country by a citizen from the notorious seven. The killers have come from countries that are not listed — Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Lebanon, Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan (the Tsarnaev brothers). The notion that we had to act immediately because hordes of jihadists in these seven countries were about to board airplanes to blow up Americans is absurd.

Vetting standards could easily have been revised and tightened without the moratorium and its attendant

disruptions, stupidities, random cruelties and well-deserved bad press.

The moratorium turned into a distillation of the worst aspects of our current airport-security system, which everyone knows to be 95 percent pantomime. The pat-down of the 80-year-old grandmother does nothing to make us safer. Its purpose is to give the illusion of doing something. Similarly, during the brief Trump moratorium, a cavalcade of innocent and indeed sympathetic characters — graduate students, separated family members, returning doctors and scientists — were denied entry. You saw this and said to yourself: We are protecting ourselves from *these*?

If anything, the spectacle served to undermine Trump's case for extreme vigilance and wariness of foreigners entering the United States. There is already empirical evidence. A Nov. 23 Quinnipiac poll

found a six-point majority in favor of "suspending immigration from 'terror prone' regions"; a Feb. 7 poll found a six-point majority *against*. The same poll found a whopping 44-point majority opposed to "suspending all immigration of Syrian refugees to the U.S. indefinitely."

Then there is the opportunity cost of the whole debacle. It risks alienating the leaders of even nonaffected Muslim countries — the 57-member Organization of Islamic Cooperation expressed "grave

concern" — which may deter us from taking far more real and effective anti-terror measures. The administration was intent on declaring the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization, a concrete measure that would hamper the operations of a global Islamist force. In the current atmosphere, however, that declaration is reportedly being delayed and rethought.

Add to that the costs of the ill-prepared, unvetted, sloppy rollout. Consider the discordant, hostile message sent to loyal law-abiding

Muslim Americans by the initial denial of entry to green-card holders. And the ripple effect of the initial denial of entry to those Iraqis who risked everything to help us in our war effort. In future conflicts, this will inevitably weigh upon local Muslims deciding whether to join and help our side. Actions have consequences.

In the end, what was meant to be a piece of promise-keeping, tough-on-terror symbolism has become an oxygen-consuming distraction. This is a young administration with a

transformative agenda to enact. At a time when it should be pushing and promoting deregulation, tax reform and health-care transformation, it has steered itself into a pointless cul-de-sac — where even winning is losing.

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The New York Times

Paul Krugman : When the Fire Comes

Paul Krugman

What will you do when terrorists attack, or U.S. friction with some foreign power turns into a military confrontation? I don't mean in your personal life, where you should keep calm and carry on. I mean politically. Think about it carefully: The fate of the republic may depend on your answer.

Of course, nobody knows whether there will be a shocking, 9/11-type event, or what form it might take. But surely there's a pretty good chance that sometime over the next few years something nasty will happen — a terrorist attack on a public place, an exchange of fire in the South China Sea, something. Then what?

After 9/11, the overwhelming public response was to rally around the commander in chief. Doubts about the legitimacy of a president who lost the popular vote and was installed by a bare majority on the Supreme Court were swept aside. Unquestioning support for the man in the White House was, many Americans believed, what patriotism demanded.

The truth was that even then the urge toward national unity was one-sided, with Republican exploitation of the atrocity for political gain beginning almost immediately. But people didn't want to hear about it; I got angry mail, not just from

Republicans but from Democrats, whenever I pointed out what was going on.

Protesters at the inauguration in January. Damon Winter/The New York Times

Unfortunately, the suspension of critical thinking ended as such suspensions usually do — badly. The Bush administration exploited the post-9/11 rush of patriotism to take America into an unrelated war, then used the initial illusion of success in that war to ram through huge tax cuts for the wealthy.

Bad as that was, however, the consequences if Donald Trump finds himself similarly empowered will be incomparably worse.

We're only three weeks into the Trump administration, but it's already clear that any hopes that Mr. Trump and those around him would be even slightly ennobled by the responsibilities of office were foolish. Every day brings further evidence that this is a man who completely conflates the national interest with his personal self-interest, and who has surrounded himself with people who see it the same way. And each day also brings further evidence of his lack of respect for democratic values.

You might be tempted to say that the latest flare-up, over Nordstrom's decision to drop Ivanka Trump's clothing line, is trivial. But it isn't.

For one thing, until now it would have been inconceivable that a sitting president would attack a private company for decisions that hurt his family's business interests.

But what's even worse is the way Sean Spicer, Mr. Trump's spokesman, framed the issue: Nordstrom's business decision was a "direct attack" on the president's policies. *L'état, c'est moi*.

Mr. Trump's attack on Judge James Robart, who put a stay on his immigration ban, was equally unprecedented. Previous presidents, including Barack Obama, have disagreed with and complained about judicial rulings. But that's very different from attacking the very right of a judge — or, as the man who controls 4,000 nuclear weapons put it, a "so-called judge" — to rule against the president.

The really striking thing about Mr. Trump's Twitter tirade, however, was his palpable eagerness to see an attack on America, which would show everyone the folly of constraining his power:

Never mind the utter falsity of the claim that bad people are "pouring in," or for that matter of the whole premise behind the ban. What we see here is the most powerful man in the world blatantly telegraphing his intention to use national misfortune to grab even more

power. And the question becomes, who will stop him?

Don't talk about institutions, and the checks and balances they create. Institutions are only as good as the people who serve them. Authoritarianism, American-style, can be averted only if people have the courage to stand against it. So who are these people?

It certainly won't be Mr. Trump's inner circle. It won't be Jeff Sessions, his new attorney general, with his long history of contempt for voting rights. It might be the courts — but Mr. Trump is doing all he can to delegitimize judicial oversight in advance.

What about Congress? Well, its members like to give patriotic speeches. And maybe, just maybe, there are enough Republican senators who really do care about America's fundamental values to cross party lines in their defense. But given what we've seen so far, that's just hopeful speculation.

In the end, I fear, it's going to rest on the people — on whether enough Americans are willing to take a public stand. We can't handle another post-9/11-style suspension of doubt about the man in charge; if that happens, America as we know it will soon be gone.

The Washington Post

Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian : Since 9/11, Muslim society in the U.S. has been transformed. Trump could change it back.

By Bethany

Allen-Ebrahimian

Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian is an editor on leave from Foreign Policy magazine.

Two weeks ago, Sarah Cochran awoke to an inbox full of panicked emails.

The night before, Reuters had reported that President Trump

would soon sign an executive order blocking visas for citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East and Africa. The move, an expression of the "Muslim ban" that Trump touted during his campaign, marooned Muslims legally working or studying in the United States and threatens to divide families who have relatives in their home countries.

Cochran is director of the Virginia chapter of Emerge USA, an organization founded in 2006 to help Muslims get involved in local politics across five states. It's one of many organizations that American Muslims created in the aftermath of 9/11 to protect and advocate for their embattled community. That very morning, she was already set to travel to Richmond to meet with

state lawmakers to communicate the concerns of Muslim Virginians.

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If Trump keeps his campaign promises — and so far there's every indication he will — the country may

see a return to the excesses of the Bush era that saw American Muslims profiled, surveilled, harassed and marginalized. Trump's administration is more openly anti-Muslim than any in history. Trump himself has stated that "Islam hates us"; his national security adviser, Michael Flynn, has called Islamism a "vicious cancer inside the body of 1.7 billion people"; his chief strategist, Stephen K. Bannon, once operated Breitbart, an alt-right news site known for anti-Muslim rhetoric.

Sixteen years ago, many American Muslims didn't know where to turn for help. There was no Emerge USA for them to email. They had almost no political, social or cultural capital. Now they are far better prepared. That's because American Muslims have learned to arm themselves, not with weapons but with the freedoms guaranteed in the Constitution. In the crucible of American society after 2001, Muslims have fully embraced the democratic ideals, expansive religious freedom and rich civil society that truly make America great.

On the eve of 9/11, there were no Muslims in U.S. Congress. There were no Muslim-focused think tanks, few well-known Muslim journalists or comedians, and only a handful of national organizations to represent them. Most Muslims lived quiet lives, studied and worked hard, and provided for their families; they didn't

understand how American political organizing worked.

When 9/11 came, the community paid a heavy price. As Muslims and Muslim charities were targeted in terrorism investigations, they had to scramble to mount a legal defense. Mosques often had no idea how to respond to media requests. As a result, those labeling Islam a religion of violence spoke far louder than Muslims themselves, and hate crimes against Muslims spiked — according to FBI data, there were 481 incidents in 2001 alone. In September 2002, a special registration system was quietly implemented to track many Muslim and Arab immigrants from more than 20 Muslim-majority countries. It lasted until 2011. Most Americans didn't know this "Muslim registry" existed, because Muslims at the time didn't have the means to mobilize or publicize the issue.

But 16 years later, Muslim society in the United States has undergone a stunning transformation. There are now two Muslim members in the U.S. House of Representatives, Keith Ellison (D-Minn.) and André Carson (D-Ind.). There are Muslim staffers on Capitol Hill and numerous Muslim elected officials at the state and local levels. There are dozens of new Muslim nonprofits aimed at community outreach, political engagement, interfaith ties, research and legal aid. Emerge USA, where Cochran works, is just one of many, such as the Muslim Legal Fund of America,

the Constitutional Law Center for Muslims in America, the Alliance for an Indivisible America 2020, WORDE, the Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council, the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding in Michigan, Ta'leef Collective in California, the Texas Muslim Women's Foundation and many others. After 2001, the nation's premier Muslim civil rights advocacy organization, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), vastly expanded its footprint and now operates 30 offices nationwide.

Mosques in Northern Virginia have banded together to take advantage of their proximity to the nation's lawmakers. "In the past, the results that the community thought were a win were having a representative showing up at your mosque or having a meeting with them," said Colin Christopher, deputy director of government affairs at Dar Al-Hijrah in Fairfax County. "We hope to usher in a new style of policy engagement. It involves holding our officials publicly accountable. When they make promises and they don't keep them, we will call them out."

As pop-culture-savvy Muslims raised in the West have reached adulthood, they have beefed up their social presence as well. Aziz Ansari and Aasif Mandvi, formerly of "The Daily Show," have satirized anti-Muslim bigotry for an audience of millions. Columnists such as Wajahat Ali for the New York Times and Haroon Moghul for CNN offer

commentary whenever Islam makes headlines.

The increased visibility has paid off, as many Americans have come to know and embrace their Muslim neighbors. In contrast to the 2002 registry, implemented with hardly a peep, Trump's executive order on visas and refugees sparked a massive backlash. On Feb. 3, a federal judge in Seattle issued a temporary restraining order blocking the travel ban nationwide. The Department of Homeland Security has reverted to pre-ban immigration policies for now.

But there's another threat on the horizon. Lawmakers have introduced a measure that calls for the Muslim Brotherhood, a loosely organized multinational Islamist party, to be designated as a terrorist organization. Such a designation could be used to launch investigations into a swath of influential Muslim organizations, charities and individuals that, even if later found to be without merit, could cripple Islamic civil society in the United States.

As one speaker at CAIR's annual banquet in December remarked, "A nightmare that we have been fighting in this country for the past 15 years is now in the White House." Muslims may have to harness every bit of influence at their command to protect themselves from what may be an unprecedented challenge.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**
Armour

GOP Ramps Up Effort to Transform Medicaid Into Block Grants (UNE)

Jennifer Levitz
and Stephanie

Feb. 9, 2017 12:03 p.m. ET

Congressional Republicans are stepping up efforts to overhaul how Medicaid is funded, a move that could reduce the funds states receive while giving states more control over the roughly \$500 billion program.

House Republicans this week weighed bills on Medicaid eligibility that are widely seen as their first move toward a broader overhaul. Last week, a House Energy and Commerce subcommittee hearing to discuss changes to issues such as eligibility became a platform for debating Republican plans to turn the program—which provides assistance to more than 70 million Americans—into a block grant or other capped spending program, a move opposed by congressional Democrats.

The House can pass Medicaid legislation with just a simple majority, but most bills need 60

votes to clear the Senate. Republicans hold a narrow 52-48 majority in the Senate, so any Medicaid proposals would likely need at least eight Democratic lawmakers to support the bill to make it to the president's desk. That isn't the case if Republicans seek to convert most of Medicaid through a budget maneuver process, in which case they wouldn't need the support of Democrats.

The path forward is still uncertain even though top Republicans have made Medicaid block grants a centerpiece of their health care agenda. Some Republican lawmakers concerned about funding cuts, especially in states that expanded Medicaid, could put pressure on GOP members in Congress not to change the program.

Under the Republican push, Medicaid would transform from an open-ended entitlement program whose conditions are set by the federal government to one in which states receive a fixed amount of funds that they would control. That

change, should it be adopted as part of the planned overhaul of the Affordable Care Act, would represent the biggest shift since Medicaid's inception in 1965, and it is both alarming and intriguing governors.

The policy change "will result in the single largest transfer of risk ever from the federal government to the states," Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, a Republican, wrote recently to House leaders, urging caution on a new financing structure while not opposing the idea altogether.

Moving to block grants has long been a goal of the GOP but sets up challenges for states that may eventually have to make do with less, which could trigger adjustments to state Medicaid programs. State legislatures would have to re-evaluate coverage and benefits beyond what is federally mandated or figure out how to fund the shortfall. Republicans themselves, meanwhile, aren't aligned on the best course forward.

Of the 31 states that opted to expand Medicaid coverage under the 2010 health law, 16 now have Republican governors. Several have said they want to keep that expansion if the health law is repealed. Some governors welcome the expected flexibility of block grants, but caution their support will depend on how the amount of the grants is determined.

Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval, a Republican, raised concerns about moving to a fixed funding structure in the event of an economic downturn. "I want to make sure that there is something within that that takes into account for a fluctuation in the economy," he said at a National Governors Association event last month.

Nevada experienced the second highest increase among all states in enrollment in Medicaid and children's health insurance since the rollout of the Medicaid expansion, behind only Kentucky, according to recent data from Kaiser Family Foundation. In that time, Nevada's enrollment rose 87%

to about 620,000. In 2015, Medicaid spending in the state was \$3.1 billion, ranking it 35th among states, according to the Kaiser data.

For many, like Sue Rillovick, who is 59 years old and lives in Farmington, N.H., Medicaid is a safety net in tough times. Ms. Rillovick, an interior designer by training, lost her health insurance after the 2008 economic downturn and for six years she didn't see a specialist for her diabetes, until her low income allowed her to qualify for Medicaid around 2014. Then, she was able to get treatment for a serious eye condition as well as depression.

Getting her health under control put her on better footing to pursue a new career path. She is now working at a mental-health agency and transitioning off Medicaid to employer-sponsored insurance. "It really changed everything about my life," she said.

Republican lawmakers working to alter the ACA have yet to coalesce around any one replacement plan. Rep. Tom Price, President Donald Trump's nominee to head Health and Human Services, has backed block grants. Kellyanne Conway, senior adviser to Mr. Trump, has also said an overhaul of the health law would put Medicaid into block grants. "You really cut out the fraud,

waste and abuse," she said in televised remarks.

The GOP pushed the block grant approach in the past, but hit Democratic opposition. President Bill Clinton vetoed a block grant Medicaid proposal passed by the Republican Congress in 1995.

In recent debates in Washington, Democrats have voiced their discontent with the change. "It appears that yes indeed they intend to target families who rely on Medicaid, for the elimination of care and services disguised by the terminology of 'per capita caps' and 'block grants,'" said Rep. Kathy Castor (D., Fla.).

Currently, the federal government pays an average of about 63% of Medicaid expenses, a smaller share in wealthier states than in poorer states. The dollar amount can rise and fall depending on needs. Block grants would give states a lump sum amount based on a formula that hasn't yet been determined.

"At a minimum, the Medicaid expansion population should be converted to a block grant program," Kentucky Gov. Matthew Bevin, a Republican, wrote recently to House leaders, who had solicited input from governors.

Otherwise, he said, spending for the expansion group could crimp

coverage for the elderly and disabled. More than half of Medicaid spending goes to seniors and people with disabilities, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, a health-care research nonprofit.

The rolls for Medicaid and the connected Children's Health Insurance Program have swelled by around 16 million people since the Medicaid expansion provisions kicked in at the start of 2014, according to federal data.

A shift to block grants or per capita caps for Medicaid would reduce federal funding and hinder flexibility at states, said Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker, a Republican. "States would most likely make decisions based mainly on fiscal reasons rather than the health-care needs of vulnerable populations," he said in a letter to congressional lawmakers.

Diane Rowland, executive vice president of the Kaiser Family Foundation, said a key concern is whether block grant funding would be based on current spending levels, thereby penalizing states that didn't expand Medicaid. Another concern is what the growth rate will be for block grants to keep up with rising costs.

A 2012 plan by House Speaker Paul Ryan, (R., Wis.) to reduce federal spending included a plan to

transform Medicaid funding into block grants. Under this plan, the Congressional Budget Office concluded, states might be able to deliver health care more efficiently, but also "would need to increase their spending on these programs, make considerable cutbacks in them, or both."

House Republicans later backed an agenda that floated a block-grant alternative called per capita caps, where the amount of federal money states get is tied to the number of beneficiaries. This would mean more funding, for example, in an economic downturn when the number of enrollees rises. That agenda includes block grants as an option, a spokesman for the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which is playing a key role in drafting legislation to dismantle and replace the ACA, said this week.

"In recent meetings with governors, we saw strong support from Republican governors in the per capita approach," he said.

—Michelle Hackman contributed to this article.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Kimberley Strassel : The GOP's Health-Care Offensive

Kimberley A. Strassel

Updated Feb. 9, 2017 7:45 p.m. ET

When Dave Hoppe recalls his first big health-care fight, one memory stands out. It was the summer of 1994, and Sen. George Mitchell, the Democratic majority leader, had canceled August recess to force a debate over his party's health-care monster: HillaryCare.

Senators weren't happy about losing their break, remembers Mr. Hoppe, who at the time was an aide. "And yet, Republican senators were lining up in the cloakroom; they couldn't wait to get to the floor," he says. "They knew this issue. They'd studied it. They were better informed than Democrats about HillaryCare. There was such an *esprit de corps*. It was energizing."

Twenty-three years later, Mr. Hoppe's mission is to re-create that energy—only this time for a Republican Party that wants to pass a health-care bill, not stop one. He is helping to assemble a sweeping new alliance—underground until now—called One Nation Health. This "inside-out" coalition—a fast-growing collection of elected

officials, staffers, grass-roots groups, think tanks, trade associations, donors and corporations—will serve as the GOP's voice for selling the country on a "replace/repair" plan for ObamaCare.

One Nation Health is the brainchild of another veteran of the policy wars: David Wilson, the CEO of a Midwestern company called Asset Health. An advocate for individual health empowerment, Mr. Wilson has been in the arena since the Reagan days, and has recently worked on the leading conservative blueprints for reform.

Mr. Wilson grew concerned after last fall's election that Republicans weren't coordinating to explain what underpinned their ideas. "The right-of-center approach has a set of core principles—with regards to greater access, benefits, choices, health savings, responsibility, rewards to all Americans," he says. "It is a unifying concept, and one [that] people can understand."

One of his first calls was to an old friend, Mr. Hoppe, a respected D.C. fixture, both off Capitol Hill (as a consultant) and on (most recently as chief of staff to Paul Ryan). Mr.

Hoppe was also concerned by GOP inaction, especially given the depth of determination on the left to thwart reform.

Mr. Hoppe had watched as powerful liberal groups, such as Families USA, launched a save-ObamaCare coalition within 24 hours of the 2016 election. He had seen Democrats begin a full-throated scare campaign about the risks of ending the health law. He had heard that deep-pocketed donors were committing to fund a massive PR effort. He had even witnessed President Obama sojourn to Capitol Hill to exhort Democrats to do whatever necessary to defend his signature law. Mr. Hoppe knew that the right needed its own campaign, and he agreed to help Mr. Wilson set up One Nation Health.

The umbrella group isn't a policy shop. It isn't a vehicle to push one GOP health plan over another. And it isn't a lobbying outfit intended to corral votes in a legislative debate.

Instead, One Nation Health is a clearinghouse, a place for conservatives to meet, share notes, craft messages for the public, and unite on talking points. It will facilitate progress between

Congress and the White House. The model was used successfully in 1993-94 by former Sens. Phil Gramm and Paul Coverdell in the fight against HillaryCare, leading to moments, like the Harry and Louise ads, that tipped the scale.

Mr. Hoppe spends every day on calls, and he held the group's first big meeting two weeks ago. The coalition includes everyone from health policy gurus like the American Enterprise Institute's James Capretta and the Heritage Foundation's Bob Moffit to advocacy groups like the American Action Network, which is already running \$1 million worth of TV ads, in 15 House districts, arguing for an ObamaCare replacement. Congressional leadership is on board. Rep. Kevin Brady, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, addressed the group's inaugural session. Mr. Hoppe says people are joining so fast that his biweekly conference calls are ballooning.

What they all understand: "We've got to explain to Americans that the end of ObamaCare doesn't mean going back to the old system," Mr. Hoppe says. "It's about creating a whole new, better system." That message might help buy

Republicans some time to get a reform in place.

Another thing One Nation Health is: an experiment. The right is great at opposing things. It isn't so great at unifying in support of ideas. Can the

GOP flip the HillaryCare model on its head? The One Nation Health umbrella is a first big attempt to answer that question. The hope is that the very act of focusing conservatives on shared themes will remind them how much they have in

common. If it works, it could be a model for other big reform efforts.

If it fails, Mr. Hoppe doesn't like to consider the consequences. "Not everyone is going to get what they want in any reform effort," he says.

"But we're here to remind people that this is an opportunity of a generation. And if we aren't successful now, it'll be generations before we get another shot."

The New York Times

Sarah Binder : A Game Plan for Senate Democrats

Sarah Binder

Senator Chuck Schumer, center, and his fellow Democrats could impede the Trump agenda by taking advantage of Senate rules to slow down Republican legislation. Al Drago/The New York Times

The Republican majority in Washington has vowed to bulldoze the legacy of President Barack Obama. Because Democrats — despite round-the-clock efforts this week in the confirmation votes of Betsy DeVos as education secretary and Jeff Sessions as attorney general — have yet to block any member of President Trump's cabinet, Democrats might appear to have little hope of stopping the Republican juggernaut.

While Democrats are out of power, though, they are not out of options. Their tools are limited in the House. But archaic chamber rules grant Democrats considerable leverage in the Senate. By dragging their feet, sticking together and driving wedges between Republicans and Mr. Trump, Senate Democrats can focus attention on controversial parts of the president's agenda and force Republicans to cast potentially unpopular votes.

In the House, a simple majority can end debate and bring matters to a vote. In the Senate, rules on debating and amending bills typically limit the ways the majority leader can advance a party plan, creating avenues for Democrats to gum up the works.

Those rules empower a cohesive minority in several ways. The majority leader routinely seeks unanimous consent on procedural

matters, meaning that one senator can temporarily block the majority. As a former top Senate staffer recently observed, withholding consent is a sure way for Democrats to slow or stop Mr. Trump. Want to force committees to adjourn? Refuse consent when the leader wants to waive the rule that prevents committees from meeting beyond the first two hours of a Senate day. Want to delay votes for 30 hours? Refuse consent. If Democrats make sure to always have a senator available to dissent and Republicans don't retaliate by adjusting chamber rules, such tactics can potentially secure concessions.

A single objection forces the majority leader to seek cloture — a cumbersome, multiday process culminating in a vote to cut off debate with the support of 60 senators. With a Republican bench of 52 senators, eight Democrats would have to cross the aisle to achieve cloture. Even then, unless all senators agree to waive their rights to more debate, 30 hours of post-cloture debate ensues. Senators can also threaten to filibuster amendments and other motions. So long as 41 Democrats stick together, they can force Senator Mitch McConnell, the majority leader, to slog through cloture repeatedly on just a single bill. And every time Democrats force Republicans to find 60 votes, they make it harder for Republicans to advance other parts of their plan.

Democrats have an even more powerful arrow in their parliamentary quiver. Most times, senators can offer unrelated amendments to bills under debate, affording Democrats the chance to

create discord among Republicans and between Republican senators and the White House. Debating a bill to deregulate Wall Street? Offer an amendment to reject the president's order banning refugees and immigrants from entering the country. A bill to loosen limits on offshore oil drilling? Propose an amendment to prevent the president from lifting sanctions on Russia.

Senator McConnell can block votes on such amendments only if he also curtails Republican amendments. So Democrats are likely to secure votes on at least some of their proposals that might force Republicans to take sides.

Exploiting these Senate rules empowers Democrats to change the subject, signal resistance to their party base and perhaps change voters' minds. Whether or not their tactics ultimately prevent proposals from going forward, Democrats force Republicans to own Mr. Trump's agenda by casting controversial votes — a move that could come back to haunt Republicans in the next election.

Such tools are of more limited value when it comes to blocking confirmation of presidential appointees. Having banned the filibuster of most judicial and executive branch nominees in 2013, Democrats can slow down nominations, but can't derail them without Republican defections. Nonetheless, delay eats up floor time and shines a spotlight on nominees Democrats oppose.

Senators can still filibuster confirmation votes for Supreme Court nominees, a tactic Democrats are debating now that Mr. Trump has nominated Judge Neil Gorsuch

to fill Antonin Scalia's seat. Some Democrats seem inclined to allow a vote since the confirmation would simply replace one conservative justice with another. Filibustering also increases the risk that Republicans will do away with Supreme Court filibusters altogether, which they could do with a simple majority vote.

Democrats are no strangers to exploiting Senate rules, having used such tactics occasionally during the George W. Bush years. Republicans, however, fully weaponized Senate rules by routinely deploying them against President Obama and the Democrats. Americans would know that there was a great debate going on, Senator McConnell reasoned, only if Republicans refused to sign on to Democratic proposals.

These tactics could backfire and provoke Republicans to ban filibusters. But senators' power — majority and minority alike — flows from the chamber's lax rules. There is no guarantee that a majority would vote to curtail filibusters. The Senate's 60-vote rule also allows Republicans to blame Democrats for blocking more controversial parts of the Trump agenda.

Still, Democrats should take the lesson of the Republicans' years in the minority to heart. Majorities are more often blamed for inaction than minorities are held accountable for blocking them. If Democrats adopt the Republican playbook, Senate rules will largely work in their favor.

Write to kim@wsj.com.

The New York Times

Editorial : When Rules No Longer Apply

The Editorial Board

An abandoned railroad trestle crossing a creek in Harlan County, Ky. Luke Sharett/Bloomberg

Republicans in Congress seem strangely eager to let coal companies pollute streams without telling the public, to let oil and gas companies more easily bribe foreign officials, and to let any company win federal contracts no matter how badly it has violated labor laws.

They're well on their way to getting all this done under the Congressional Review Act, a legislative cudgel that has rarely been used until now. The act lets Congress use fast-track procedures to pass "resolutions of disapproval" that, when signed by the president, nullify federal regulations issued roughly in the last six months of the previous presidential term.

The stream pollution and bribery measures are already on President

Trump's desk, and he's expected to sign both within days.

The goal of the Interior Department's "stream protection rule" was to prohibit mining practices that permanently pollute streams, destroy drinking water sources and threaten forests. It requires coal companies to compile and provide information about contamination, so affected communities could take legal action against polluters under the Clean Water Act. The companies argued,

against all evidence, that the rule would cost jobs. What it really would have done is subject them to fines for pollution that harms human health.

The antibribery rule was called for in the Dodd-Frank Act of 2010 and issued by the Securities and Exchange Commission in June. By requiring companies in extraction industries like oil and gas to disclose payments to foreign governments, it aimed to combat corruption. The American oil

industry has said such disclosure would put it at a competitive disadvantage. That's ridiculous. Many other countries have similar rules.

As of Wednesday, the House had sent several other rule-nullifying measures to the Senate. One of the rules it wants to undo requires the oil and gas industry to reduce polluting leaks, flares and ventings of methane — a powerful greenhouse gas — on public and tribal lands;



Editorial : A serious Republican idea on climate change

The Editorial Board, USA TODAY

Carbon emissions from a power plant. (Photo: Jim Cole, AP)

Maybe it was just a coincidence, but the high temperature in Washington hit a record-shattering 74 degrees on Wednesday, the day a bevy of Republican elder statesmen pitched White House officials on an appealing plan to combat global warming.

The plan for a refundable national carbon tax — endorsed by James Baker, Henry Paulson, George Shultz and other GOP luminaries — represents a long overdue, market-based contribution from the right on the climate change issue.

We have long endorsed the idea of putting a price on carbon dioxide, which traps heat in the atmosphere. Taxing fossil fuels where they enter the economy — at the refinery, the mining operation or the port — provides a powerful economic

incentive to reduce carbon emissions. A tax is simpler and less intrusive than the Obama administration's heavily regulatory Clean Power Plan, which targets electricity-generating plants. The tax would boost the chances of clean energy sources becoming more competitive with oil, coal and natural gas. As long as the carbon polluters can use the atmosphere as a free waste dump, renewable sources such as solar and wind will struggle to be economically viable.

Depending on how the tax is structured, it could produce rebates going directly to American consumers to offset higher energy costs. The plan promoted by former secretary of State Baker and his colleagues estimates that an initial tax of \$40 on a ton of carbon would generate \$2,000 the first year for a family of four.

And there's built-in bipartisan support for the carbon tax idea, which originated with the environmental left. Al Gore likes it,

as does Rex Tillerson, Trump's new secretary of State and a former CEO of ExxonMobil. "A carbon dividends program provides a rare exception: a simple idea that strengthens the economy and elevates the economic prospects of the nation's disaffected," the Baker plan says. "Mounting evidence of climate change is growing too strong to ignore."

There would, of course, be devilish details to hammer out. Imports from countries that don't have a carbon tax would have to be taxed; U.S. exports to those nations would have to get a rebate. Environmentalists would want some or all of the revenue generated by the tax to be invested in clean technology research. Republicans say the tax would make environmental lawsuits and tougher regulations against carbon emitters unnecessary, a stance many Democrats would oppose.

The biggest problem is political: getting support from tax-averse Republicans in Congress and a new

creates a clear process for resolving violations before contracts are awarded.

Dozens of other regulations are vulnerable to this tactic. They include limits on fees on prepaid cards, rules that let states sponsor retirement plans for people who do not have pension coverage at work, chemical facility standards, Arctic drilling safeguards, student-borrower protections and internet privacy protections.

Mr. Trump won the presidency, in part, by promising to hold powerful interests accountable for practices that harm the public. But nullifying final rules — which went through a long, public process on the way to being issued — elevates corporate interests above all others.

administration stocked with climate change skeptics. But with evidence mounting by the day of the harmful effects of greenhouse gases accumulating in the atmosphere, the Baker plan represents a significant Republican-led effort to address climate change, one that's more than a lot of hot air.

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Editorial : A group of prominent Republicans has an excellent plan to fight climate change

<https://www.facebook.com/washingtonpostopinions>

A GROUP of prominent Republicans brought a refreshing message to Washington on Wednesday: Climate change is a threat that deserves serious attention, and the GOP should embrace smart ways of dealing with it. What sorts of ways? The group — which calls itself the Climate Leadership Council and includes two former secretaries of state, James A. Baker III and George P. Shultz; two former chairmen of the Council of Economic Advisers, Martin S. Feldstein and N. Gregory Mankiw; and former treasury secretary Henry M. Paulson Jr. — has a carbon emissions-reduction plan ready to go. And it is excellent.

Instead of indulging in the fiction that carbon emissions will take care

of themselves with minimal government intervention, these veteran Republican hands endorsed what economists insist is the best approach to dealing with the sprawling carbon emissions issue: a carbon tax. Put a price on the pollution, and businesses and consumers will change their behavior in thousands of ways that government regulators would not have predicted and could not have compelled. This process, driven by energy consumers, produces the largest carbon cuts for the buck. Its basic structure is also simple enough for most people to understand, and, since Congress would be writing it into the law, it could not easily change from president to president, as current regulations can.

The council's plan would initially peg the tax at \$40 per ton of carbon

dioxide emissions — which, the group's experts say, equates to about 36 cents per gallon of gasoline — and set it to rise at a steady rate year after year. How could this possibly be a political winner, particularly for Republicans who spent years accusing President Barack Obama of attempting to raise energy prices? The group proposes that the tax replace the climate rules the Environmental Protection Agency established under Mr. Obama, which Republicans hate. The plan would also rebate the money the tax raised back to every American.

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The total picture, then, is a policy that would defuse the climate issue for Republicans, without growing government revenue, while rolling back energy regulations and sending Americans a regular check in the mail. The council reckons that those checks would make the vast majority of Americans, and particularly those with lower incomes, whole or better, after subtracting out what they paid in carbon taxes.

Still, it will be a political long shot. Energy interests — particularly the dirtiest of them all, coal — will fight hard against this sort of plan. As usual, they will push for dangerous inaction instead. Some environmentalists, meanwhile, have already objected to the fact that the plan would rescind the EPA's authority to address climate change via regulation, even though doing so

is a crucial prerequisite for GOP movement. Environmentalists worry that merely setting a tax rate, without directly capping carbon emissions, would not guarantee that emissions would drop to desired levels. That is a fair concern, but there are smart ways of dealing with

it: Congress could set the tax to adjust automatically if carbon emissions do not hit targets, for example.

These dyed-in-the-wool Republicans have proposed an elegant climate policy that addresses an issue of widespread

concern and poses no threat to conservative ideology. The rest of their party should listen.