

# Revue de presse américaine

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



Mardi 28 février, réalisation : Jérémie Gauthier



<b>FRANCE – EUROPE</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Vogue : Vera Wang Reflects on Paris, YSL, and an Early French Flame as She Prepares to Accept France’s Légion d’Honneur .....	3
Human Rights Watch : France Takes Historic Step Toward Reducing Supply Chain Abuses .....	4
The malleability of truth in French politics today (online).....	4
NPR : Political Outsider Emmanuel Macron Campaigns To 'Make France Daring Again' .....	5
French Court Probes Leave Le Pen Unscathed as Fillon Bid Falts .....	6

France's Disillusioned Farmers Turn to Le Pen .....	6
MarketWatch : Stock investors are seeking protection from Marine Le Pen .....	7
Commercial property prices climb in France ahead of election (online) .....	7
Meet The People Who Want Obama To Become France’s Next President .....	8
Thousands Sign Petition to Put Obama on French Presidential Ballot .....	8
French Inflation Rate Unexpectedly Drops, Ending Months of Gains .....	9
Germany sees ‘alarmingly high’ number of anti-migrant crimes.....	10

Eurozone business confidence grows despite impending elections .....	10	Catherine Rampell ‘America first’ really means ‘Americans last’ .....	27
Robert Colville : Britain Is Now a One-Party State.....	11	Justice Department changes its position in high-profile Texas voter-ID case (UNE).....	28
<b>INTERNATIONAL..... 12</b>		Editorial : The evidence backing Trump’s travel ban simply isn’t there.....	28
U.S. Allies Are Learning that Trump’s America Is Not the ‘Indispensable Nation’ .....	12	Thomas Ricks : Are U.S. Immigration Centers the Next Abu Ghraib? .....	29
As ISIS Prepares Its Terror Resurrection, Watch Out for Drone ‘Swarms’ .....	13	Editorial : Who Belongs in Trump’s America? .....	29
With ISIS besieged in western Mosul, civilians decide it's time to flee.....	14	Billionaire investor Wilbur Ross confirmed as Trump’s secretary of commerce .....	30
Hunting Boko Haram, Nigeria’s Army Is Accused of Massacring Civilians (UNE).....	15	William McGurn : The “shaming” of Betsy DeVos, ....	30
Editorial : When a famine points to a deeper need .....	16	Trump urges insurers to work together to ‘save Americans from Obamacare’ .....	31
English speakers fight for equality in French-run Cameroon.....	17	Trump calls health care ‘so complicated’ but vows to forge ahead in replacing Obamacare.....	32
Afghanistan’s Approach to Russian Diplomacy: Keep It in the Family.....	17	David Leonhardt : The Fight for Obamacare Has Turned .....	33
Editorial : Lingering Questions in the Yemen Raid.....	18	Eugene Robinson : Does Trump know he’s president? .....	33
Chinese Diplomat Meets Trump, Holds White House Talks .....	19	David Brooks :The Enlightenment Project .....	34
James Woolsey and Peter Vincent Pry : Don’t underestimate North Korea’s nuclear arsenal, from R. James Woolsey and Peter Pry .....	19	Dana Milbank : Trump wants ‘no more sources.’ Here’s how his speech might sound without them.....	35
In Japan, a scandal over a school threatens to entangle Abe.....	20	George W. Bush critiques Trump on travel ban, free press .....	35
Philippine militant group posts video claiming to show beheading of German hostage.....	21	Michael Gerson : Bannon’s reckless pursuit of ethno-nationalist greatness .....	36
Clashing Agendas: Antidoping Officials vs. U.S. Olympics Leaders (UNE) .....	21	Edward Lazear : How Trump can hit 3% growth—maybe, writes Edward P. Lazear.....	37
<b>ETATS-UNIS ..... 22</b>		An unlikely ally for President Trump: Liberal actress Jennifer Garner.....	37
Trump touts spending plan, but promise to leave entitlements alone puts GOP in a quandary (UNE) .....	22	A new polarization is hardening around Donald Trump.....	38
Donald Trump is set to boost military spending (UNE).....	23	Trump Hopes for a Reset With Speech to Congress.....	39
Why the EPA faces big cuts under Trump budget proposal.....	24	Tom Cole : What the G.O.P. Wants Trump to Say Tonight.....	39
Editorial : A Blank Check Won’t Make the U.S. More Secure.....	25	Robert Lehrman : I hope Trump surprises me Tuesday.....	40
Editorial : Trump’s Unrealistic Budget.....	26	Molly Ball : Trump Promised to Bend Congress to His Will—but Is Congress Taming Trump Instead? .....	40
Editorial : Trump’s bad math on the budget .....	26	White House dismisses Russia ties .....	41
Bret Stephens: Clear, clarify, hold, build, from.....	26	Marc Bennetts : What if Donald Trump played the Kremlin?.....	42
		James Downie : Tom Perez’s biggest problem as DNC chair: His backers .....	43
		Paul Tudor Jones’ new hedge fund pitch: low, low prices (UNE) .....	43
		New wave of anti-Semitic bomb threats rattle the U.S.....	44

## FRANCE – EUROPE

### Vogue : Vera Wang Reflects on Paris, YSL, and an Early French Flame as She Prepares to Accept France's Légion d'Honneur

A few weeks ago, just as New York Fashion Week was getting under way, Vera Wang was hard at work . . . in Paris. Rather than readying a runway show, she was preparing a short film that would intersperse evocations of her life spent in the City of Light with her Fall collection as worn by Mariacarla Boscono. Over the course of two days, a substantial production crew captured both the designer and the model against backdrops that were unmistakably Parisian and personal. At one point, director Yvan Fabing was shooting Boscono in a black lampshade dress fronted with gilded feathers—the presence of a ballet bar in a hazy, oak-paneled room throwing back to the designer's period as a young dancer. Wang looked on from the marble hallway of a *hôtel particulier*. "It's so couture; it was meant to be," someone among her entourage declared. "It's gorgeous," Wang marveled of her black and gold swan. "She looks particularly amazing right now." Indeed, the vibe was haute Degas circa 2017.

The film's debut today is significant, and not just because it coincides with the start of Paris Fashion Week. At a presentation overseen by Gérard Araud, the French ambassador to the U.S., Wang will receive the rank of Chevalier in the Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur, an order that represents the highest civilian distinctions in France. That it was established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802 offered an obvious reference point for this latest collection, although Wang insists the goal was not to go literal. But the high-impact embroidered patches in matte bronze and silver featuring the fleurs-de-lis, bees, and

eagles (his chosen emblems) and various stylized medallions certainly imbue her refined offering with an empire edge.

"It's not Napoleon redux, yet I pay homage to him on so many levels," the designer explained, noting that she and her team gathered inspiration from the Musée de la Légion d'Honneur, where vitrine upon vitrine of decorated, elaborate medals and portraits amount to a veritable treasure island in the heart of the city.

Two weeks post-shoot, we are now seated in a banquette at Le Relais Plaza, the renowned restaurant in the Hôtel Plaza Athénée on Avenue Montaigne, where Wang volunteers who sat where with greater gusto than any culinary memento. "The history of this room for me; you would see Saint Laurent sitting right there with Loulou de la Falaise and Betty Catroux at that table," she said, pointing to a prime corner perch, adding, "Mr. Ungaro would sit there because his office was across the way. This was the center of fashion, not the Ritz, because all the offices were here. And now when I come back, it's different. But this place has been my friend forever."

Since launching her namesake label nearly three decades ago, Wang has never shown in Paris. But the Manhattan native, 67, has a rightful claim to the French capital as her second home. Her first memory: She was 6 years old on a family vacation—they traveled via ocean liner—and remembers being aware of her charcoal gray patent Mary Janes. "I fell in love with that little pair [of shoes]; something resonated," she said.

There were also the Paris salon shows that she would attend with her mother, who had an enduring fondness for French fashion and the designs of Hubert de Givenchy and Yves Saint Laurent—the latter while he was still at Christian Dior and once he started his own house. "My mother and I became massive clients of Saint Laurent," she recalled. And when he opened his boutique on Madison Avenue, Wang spent a summer while in college working there.

"I guess he just totally seduced me because I'm a bit of a tomboy, and yet he also understood a certain femininity. The range of what he covered, it was a social commentary, it wasn't only about fashion," she said.

If most people know that Wang was a competitive figure skater before entering the world of *Vogue* as an assistant in 1971, they may not be au courant on the brief period in between, which was spent in Paris. There was the romance with French figure skater Patrick Péra, as well as classes at the Sorbonne as part of a study abroad program while at Sarah Lawrence College. It was a pivotal time; the student protests and civil unrest of 1968 had galvanized people to be agents of social change. "We didn't do it as a stylistic Coachella statement; we did it because we were addressing the fact that young people deserve that say, not only in the government, but in our culture."

Wang had yet another stint in Paris as the European editor for American *Vogue*, although she admits that this was not among the high points of her 16 years at the magazine. "I was getting tickets and making sure cars

were arranged. I had always been on the creative side, and this was nothing to do with that. The time difference—getting calls at dinner and no one had cell phones, so you would have to go and pick up a phone at a bar. So I didn't last," she said of the six-month post.

But she's definitely as qualified as any to weigh in on the mythic notion of Parisian style, which she says has both a past and a present. Then as now, she elaborated, "it wasn't fussy; it was modern." The difference back then: "It was revolutionary," she gushed of the '70s and '80s, name-checking not just Saint Laurent and Sonia Rykiel, but also the rise of the Japanese designers—Yohji Yamamoto, Rei Kawakubo, Kenzo Takada—as well Agnès B. and even Chevignon. "It was the time; it was the golden age."

And perhaps this gives some sense of why she uses the word *painful* to describe her impressions when she returns today. Because while the city itself still holds the same wonder and unparalleled inspiration—we traded history trivia and mused how her nail polish was "Dior gray"—it is also inextricably linked to her youth and memories shared with people who may no longer be living. Anyone who spends enough time here can sympathize how the accumulated layers of human contribution throws a single life span into even sharper relief. "I don't mind saying that because I've lived so many lives here," she explained. "And there are [other] lives that are now gone. And that part of my life that's now over, so there's a nostalgia for things that were once."

This extends to the memories of bringing her two daughters, now in

their 20s, to Paris and soaking up the city through requisite stops at the Arc de Triomphe, the Tuileries Garden, and Pizza Pino. Given that her youngest recently spent a summer taking a cooking course here, one would assume their visits now include a broader range of restaurants.

Still, in the spirit of *plus ça change*, she says that attending the couture shows in July “made me remember why I fell in love with fashion,” with John Galliano’s creations for Maison Margiela worth the trip alone. “I was screaming like Polly Mellen,” she mused, while noting how the craftsmanship of the *petites mains* felt especially meaningful, even

motivating the workmanship throughout this collection.

As it happens, *petites mains* is one of those French expressions that crosses over into English because there’s really no exact translation. Wang, however, is fluent, so much so that her voice-over in the film could have been in French with an

impressive accent. For all the qualities and accomplishments people associate with her, her Paris stays may have never been up top until now. The beauty of the *Légion d’Honneur* and her love letter of a film is that they acknowledge the city as a constant in her life all along.

## Human Rights Watch : France Takes Historic Step Toward Reducing Supply Chain Abuses

February 27, 2017 1:35PM EST  
Dispatches

Our lives are full of products produced in faraway countries, under conditions we don’t know – think of the vegetables you eat, the clothes you wear, or even the device you are reading this on. Human Rights Watch has documented serious abuses in the supply chains that produce these products, including child labor, attacks on trade unionists, and ill health from toxic pollution.

A 13-year-old boy works in artisanal and small-scale gold mining in Obuasi. He dropped out of school at the age of 12 and

would like to continue his education.

© 2014 David A. Masterwille

Last week, France took a historic step toward reducing these human rights abuses. Parliament passed a law that pushes for accountability for multinational companies sourcing from global supply chains. The “duty of vigilance” law requires companies to establish safeguards designed to ensure that labor rights and other human rights are respected in the production sites they source from.

This good law unfortunately does not have many counterparts elsewhere. There are very few laws around the world that oblige

companies to have such safeguards, called “due diligence,” in place. One of the few other laws of this kind, the rules under a United States law on so-called conflict minerals, may soon be suspended by the Trump administration.

Governments are often reluctant to regulate businesses, particularly when it comes to their global supply chains. But binding regulations benefit businesses that want to do the right thing without being overtaken by competitors who don’t care about conditions in their supply chains. Companies such as Apple and Tiffany have made that case,

since they oppose suspending the US conflict minerals rule.

Ultimately, a global standard for human rights in supply chains is needed. While this is not going to happen soon, the International Labour Organization last year decided to consider the idea of a new multinational treaty more closely. In the meantime, let’s hope France’s action inspires other countries to move ahead with their own laws to reduce abuses in global supply chains.

### THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

## The malleability of truth in French politics today (online)

John Vinocur

Feb. 27, 2017 2:15 p.m. ET

The man who, it seems, has the best shot at keeping Marine Le Pen out of France’s presidential palace is also offering voters these goodies: 100% reimbursement by the state for dentures, hearing aids and eyeglasses.

Emmanuel Macron, the 39-year-old former economy minister who often calls himself a “progressive,” doesn’t stop there. Without any apparent gift for reassuring the French about halting their sense of national decline and loss of identity, Mr. Macron has instead also promised the end of a residential tax that costs 80% of French families about €600 (\$634) a year.

Beyond vote fishing, he comes on big as a transcendent, post-left-right candidate committed to the “moralization” of French political life.

Beating Ms. Le Pen’s nasty populists would be of great merit. Projections currently have Mr. Macron running ahead of the hard-right leader by more than 10 points for France’s May 7 presidential election runoff round.

But who believes anything about self-proclaimed, above-the-melee politicians in France today?

The depth of contempt for the political class in France is riveting. In

a late-December poll only 18% agreed with the phrase “most politicians try to keep their election-campaign promises.” Seventy-five percent said, “French political leaders and elected officials are rather corrupt.”

A they’re-all-the-same-anyway disrespect is one explanation for why François Fillon, the former prime minister and mainstream right-wing candidate, has poll scores that, though slipping, still indicate he, too, can defeat Ms. Le Pen. Mr. Fillon is being investigated for having given his wife and children jobs as his assistants during the period from 1988 to 2013, worth an estimated €831,000 in taxpayers’ money—without his family actually doing much real work.

Here’s a reflection of a political culture in deep decomposition.

Mr. Fillon, who bills himself as the “moral” candidate, has offered only a vague apology about what he insists were legal jobs. His Republican party barely shrugged.

This lack of accountability extends to an incumbent Socialist Party, irretrievably split between its hard-left members and its soft liners. And to a Macron campaign where his positions have swiveled on the decriminalization of cannabis (from yes to no); on his being a Socialist (again, yes to no); and on whether France’s totemic 35-hour workweek

should be ended (once more, from yes to no).

Sadly, there are no exemplary promise-keepers or Honest Abes in France’s immediate presidential past. Nicolas Sarkozy ran on an affirmative-action plank and dropped it once on the job. François Hollande got nowhere near success with his economic and job-market reform plans. And, although hardly anyone remembers, the very popular Jacques Chirac, president from 1995 to 2007, received a two-year suspended sentence in 2011 on embezzlement charges over fake jobs during an earlier term as Paris’s mayor.

Thierry Pfister, a government spokesman during the François Mitterrand era and the author of a remarkable book on the French political mind-set, reminded me last week that French law demands witnesses tell the truth but frees defendants from that obligation. Mr. Pfister believes that among its politicians, “France has a cult of lying. Some see it as the sign of a superior civilization. Attempting to limit its use makes you look ridiculous.”

There’s no overwhelming concern about the dishonesty of quick turnabouts reversing politicians’ supposed convictions. Last week François Bayrou, a three-time centrist presidential candidate,

proposed forming an alliance that Mr. Macron has accepted. The two insist that together they will “moralize” politics.

Anything goes. The evidence: French television then showed earlier clips of Mr. Bayrou describing Mr. Macron, his former rival. “I don’t recognize myself in what he represents,” Mr. Bayrou is shown to say. “It won’t work. What’s behind all this is an attempt to achieve political power by very great financial interests.”

Presto: Mr. Bayrou now calls Mr. Macron, a former Rothschild banker, “brilliant.” Cocksure of his youth, Mr. Macron says: “I assert my immaturity and political inexperience.”

Beyond that, what do we actually know of Mr. Macron’s views on a consistently meaner world? He likes to use the word “independence” in describing France’s global role—which means avoiding taking sides—although in January he was described by Alexander Orlov, Moscow’s ambassador to Paris, to the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung as “pro-Russian.”

In the end, the options in this election are not the worst that France could have, with Mr. Macron and possibly Mr. Fillon (who also proposes free dentures) but most hopefully a sensible electorate pointing to the defeat of Ms. Le Pen.

She's currently defying the police by refusing to answer questions about her National Front's own alleged fake job-making.

But the visible French dollop of national common sense is accompanied by a miserable truth. There's not a single politician in the

country who can credibly reassure voters: Trust me, everything is going to turn out fine.

## NPR : Political Outsider Emmanuel Macron Campaigns To 'Make France Daring Again'

Eleanor Beardsley Facebook Twitter Instagram

Emmanuel Macron has a photo taken with fans in the southern town of Carpentras, where he campaigned earlier this month. Macron has bucked the two-party system to run as an independent.

**Eleanor Beardsley/NPR hide caption**

**toggle caption**

Eleanor Beardsley/NPR

Emmanuel Macron has a photo taken with fans in the southern town of Carpentras, where he campaigned earlier this month. Macron has bucked the two-party system to run as an independent.

Eleanor Beardsley/NPR

In the southern French city of Toulon, 39-year-old presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron is greeted by cheering crowds as he makes his way onstage at a rally. The former investment banker, who served briefly as President Francois Hollande's economy minister, has never been elected to political office. Yet he stands a good chance of becoming the next French president.

Analysts say this year's election is like no other. Just two months before French voters go to the polls, party favorites have been cast out, candidates have been hit with scandals and outsiders have come to the fore. In this strange political season, it's anybody's guess as to who will become the next president.

Macron, who has bucked France's two-party system to run as an independent, has injected an element of excitement and surprise into what everyone thought would be a dull contest between the same old political faces. Macron says he wants to make France daring — "make France daring again" is how he puts it — and innovative.

He tells the enthusiastic crowd in Toulon that the country has a problem. "We stigmatize failure," he says. "So we've become a country that is afraid to dare. There's nothing worse in a world economy based on innovation and risk."

But France doesn't look kindly on success, either, he says.

"I want to make France a country that accepts failure, embraces risk and revels in success!" he says.

Macron wants his country to be a beacon for the whole world, he says. Last week, he launched an appeal to American scientists who feel threatened by the current U.S. political climate.

"I invite you to come to France and join European and French researchers to work on climate change here," he said in a video message he released on social media. "Because here you are welcome."

Macron stepped down as President Francois Hollande's economy minister six months ago to start a new party, En Marche!, and launch his campaign. His party, whose name translates loosely as "On the Move," is described as a progressive party that takes the best from the left and right — but is neither.

The young technocrat, who calls himself a centrist, combines faith in the free market with a belief in social protections. That mix is drawing new voters like 60-year-old web designer Gilles Iltis, who attended the Toulon rally. He says Macron is the only person who can beat the far-right front-runner, Marine Le Pen.

Presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron, a former investment banker who served briefly as President Francois Hollande's economy minister, has never been elected to political office.

**Eleanor Beardsley/NPR hide caption**

**toggle caption**

Eleanor Beardsley/NPR

Presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron, a former investment banker who served briefly as President Francois Hollande's economy minister, has never been elected to political office.

Eleanor Beardsley/NPR

"He can definitely win. There's no other way," says Iltis. "He's young, he's got brand new ideas — daring ideas — and he's the only one who talks about Europe."

Guillaume Mailey, 23, is also at the rally and says Macron is different from the usual staid French politicians.

"He's a young man and I think he has the power to change things in France," Mailey says. "He has a real vision for the future."

Part of Macron's rising fortunes are due to the troubles of the mainstream conservative candidate, Francois Fillon. He billed himself as morally irreproachable. But now he's under investigation for a no-show jobs scheme involving his wife and two of his children.

Over the weekend, a judge said authorities would look deeper into allegations that Fillon's wife, Penelope, may have earned a handsome salary as an assistant in his parliamentary office, without actually doing any work.

The couple has five children. After a video surfaced of Penelope Fillon telling a journalist she had never worked for her husband "as an assistant or anything else," many were left wondering if she was even aware of her job.

The inexperienced Macron has plenty of detractors. He was met with protests on his recent campaign trip to the south, which has long been a stronghold of the far right. One man in the town of Carpentras confronted Macron in the street over the candidate's recent comments that colonization was a crime against humanity.

"You don't know French history," the voter spat. "You're too young."

Macron made his comments about colonization earlier this month during a trip to Algeria, a former French colony. He wants to build closer relations and heal the wounds from the Algerian war for independence, which ended in 1962. But back in France, his comments infuriated French people who'd lived in Algeria for generations and been forced to flee after independence. Some 2 million arrived in France after 1962, and typically vote for the far right.

"We didn't hurt anybody, but we farmed the land and built Algeria," one woman said.

Meanwhile, many on the left see Macron as a traitor who betrayed Hollande and the Socialist party. Others say his lack of experience would doom France when dealing with Russia, the U.S. and China. He's also been criticized for waiting too long to unveil his detailed platform — which he plans to do this week.

Political editor Thierry Arnaud, with French news channel BFM TV, says

Macron's past life as an investment banker doesn't help.

"He is the hostage of the business elite and the financial industry," says Arnaud. "He made a lot of money and that is not always an advantage when you're running for office in France," where showing one's wealth can be considered crude.

Macron's personal life has attracted both positive and negative interest. In 2007, he married his former high school French teacher, who is 24 years his senior.

Macron and his wife Brigitte traveled from Paris to Toulon on a second-class train for a rally earlier this month.

**Eleanor Beardsley/NPR hide caption**

**toggle caption**

Eleanor Beardsley/NPR

Macron and his wife Brigitte traveled from Paris to Toulon on a second-class train for a rally earlier this month.

Eleanor Beardsley/NPR

I sat with Macron on the train as he headed from Paris to a campaign rally in Avignon, traveling in a second-class car. (He only travels second class). Brigitte, his wife, was at his side.

Macron told me he launched his own political movement because he believes that today's divide between left and right is no longer meaningful.

"When you look at the key challenges of our world — innovation, digital, green technologies, our new global environment — the classical answers of the rightists and leftists are no longer valid," he said. "We need a new software for the 21st century."

The French presidential election takes place in two rounds. All the candidates run in the first round and the top two vote-getters face off in the second round. The candidate with a majority wins.

For now, Macron's poll numbers continue to rise. The latest figures show him in second place, behind Marine Le Pen. And in the past week, he has been endorsed by

several major political figures, including respected centrist lawmaker

Francois Bayrou, who ran for president himself in 2007.

Still, many wonder if Macron will be able to gather enough support to

beat Marine Le Pen in a second-round runoff.



## French Court Probes Leave Le Pen Unscathed as Fillon Bid Falters

@gviscusi More stories by Gregory Viscusi

by

28 février 2017 à 00:01 UTC-5

- Republican Fillon has seen his support dented by investigation
- Le Pen defies authorities with anti-establishment rhetoric

Prosecutors' interventions in the French election have so far done more damage to the establishment's one-time champion than the nationalist firebrand vowing to overthrow the system.

The Republican Francois Fillon and National Front leader Marine Le Pen both say the criminal probes they face are political plots against them, but it's only Fillon, a church-going 62-year-old former prime minister, who has been set back by the allegations. Le Pen's suspected misuse of her allowance from the European Parliament hasn't hurt her at all.

"The National Front is seen as persecuted by the system so their supporters think that if everyone else has gotten rich of the system, it's good for them to get some of that money back," said Jean-Yves Camus, a political scientist linked to the Jean Jaures research institute. "Fillon tried to use the conspiracy angle but it doesn't work because he's from the system."

On Tuesday, a committee of lawmakers in Brussels will consider

a request from the French courts to strip Le Pen of her parliamentary immunity over two separate cases of defamation and publishing violent images of Islamic State killings on Twitter. The committee is due to release its recommendations to the EU parliament next week, and the full chamber will vote on the issue later in March.

Le Pen is battling a range of mainstream politicians asking for one more chance to address voters' concerns about lackluster economic growth and the perceived threat of immigration and terrorism. Instead, she's offering voters a chance to upend the status quo by putting up border controls, stopping mass immigration and pulling out of the euro.

### Bonds Rally

While polls make Le Pen the favorite to win the first round on April 23, they also project that she'll lose heavily to the independent centrist Emmanuel Macron in run-off on May 7.

French bonds have rallied this week since Macron's candidacy was boosted by a series of alliances from potential rivals. The extra yield investors demand to hold French 10-year debt instead of similar-maturity German bunds dropped 6 basis points on Monday to 68.

At the beginning of January it was Fillon who was tipped to face Le Pen in the second round. Then prosecutors in Paris decided to investigate media reports that his wife had earned almost 1 million

euros (\$1.1 million) in public wages without actually doing any proper work. His polling numbers dropped by about 5 percentage points to 20 percent and haven't recovered.

Fillon cried foul, demanding to know why the allegations came out just weeks before the election, when some of the facts date back to the 1990s. Prosecutors on Friday extended the probe, saying further investigation is needed. That move means he's unlikely to be charged before the election, but leaves a permanent stain on his candidacy.

### Prosecutors' Dilemma

The emergence of the allegations just weeks before the first round vote on April 23 are putting prosecutors in an unprecedented bind, according to Didier Rebut, a law professor at the University of Paris 2 Pantheon-Assas. The courts can't avoid interfering with the campaign, he said, all they can do is try to minimize their impact.

"We've set new records for speed" in the Fillon investigation, he said. "It's not that they want to harm Fillon. But that they want to interfere the shortest amount of time with the presidential campaign."

Socialist Justice Minister Jean-Jacques Urvoas said in an interview with the Journal du Dimanche that there would be no let up from prosecutors during the campaign, though he insisted he had no involvement in the decision to investigate Fillon. Socialist candidate Benoit Hamon, trailing in

fourth in the polls, backed that stance.

"The justice system is independent," he said on France Inter radio Monday. "They are involved in the election because there are serious suspicions of fraud."

Le Pen on the other hand has styled herself as a crusader to free ordinary French people from the misrule of European elites. That leaves her far less vulnerable to attacks from the establishment.

"In the National Front's affair there's no accusation of personal enrichment, while in the case of Francois Fillon it's him and his family that are the direct targets of the probe," said Cecile Alduy, a professor of French culture and politics at Stanford University.

Earlier last week, Le Pen refused a non-binding summons to be interviewed by French police over use of European Parliament funds to pay for party work in France. She told investigators she won't meet them until after the presidential elections, which conclude in May, and the vote on a new legislature in June.

"The magistrates are there to apply the law, not to invent the law and thwart the will of the people," Le Pen told supporters at a rally Sunday in Nantes.

Before it's here, it's on the Bloomberg Terminal. [LEARN MORE](#)



## France's Disillusioned Farmers Turn to Le Pen

PLESSE, FRANCE —

"We see her with farmers more than other candidates."

France's presidential contenders will this week make mandatory campaign stops at the annual Paris farm fair as polls show farmers increasingly tempted by the far-right's Marine Le Pen when they even bother to vote at all.

Polls now show Le Pen placing first in a first round of France's presidential election in April and losing in the second round to a single candidate from the centre-left or center-right.

Though only a fraction of the population still works in the farm sector, voters remain attached to the country's agrarian roots, making the annual agriculture fair a fixture of the political calendar.

But that race has tightened, raising the prospect that the National Front leader could become the first far-right politician to win power through the ballot box in Western Europe since World War II.

"Lots of us farmers are pinning our hopes on Marine," dairy and poultry farmer Mickael Thomas said as he set up for the nine-day-long show.

Le Pen is due on Tuesday to start the parade of politicians at the fair as the first major candidate to visit this year.

After years of crisis in the sector and perceived indifference from other

candidates, Le Pen's anti-EU anti-globalization rhetoric strikes a chord with many farmers, once faithful voters for mainstream conservatives.

A Cevipof poll for Le Monde newspaper published on Feb. 16 showed that 35 percent of farmers who plan to vote will back Le Pen in the election, compared to 26 percent of the general population.

Conservative Francois Fillon and centrist Emmanuel Macron are both on 20 percent among farmers, close to their ratings overall.

The same poll also showed farmers are increasingly giving up on politicians altogether, with 51 percent of the 300 surveyed saying they would not vote.

"Farmers were always the French people who voted the most.

They voted like they went to mass," said sociologist Francois Purseigle. "What's surprising about this survey is that they might not go."

A farmer prepares a six-year-old Bretonne Pie Noir dairy cow named Fine, which is the mascot for the 2017 Paris International Agricultural Show in Paris, France, Feb. 24, 2017.

The mascot of this year's farm show, a six-year-old dairy cow called "Fine", hails from an organic farm in the western French town of Plesse - historically Socialist territory.

But even here, the National Front is making inroads. The party's vote more than tripled in December 2015

regional elections compared with the previous poll in 2010.

Dairy farming is vital to the local economy but has struggled since 2015 as plummeting prices, the end of EU quotas and Russian sanctions inspired by the Ukraine crisis hit hard.

"We don't have faith anymore," a representative for the FNSEA farmers' union in the region, Yoann Vetu, said.

"We know a thing or two about crises and we can't get out of them. So the politicians might talk about it, but they don't act," he said.

Politician Jean-Luc Melenchon (L), of the French far-left Parti de Gauche, and candidate for the 2017 French presidential election, listens to a farmer during a visit to a farm in Saint-Germain-la-Poterie, France, Feb. 27, 2017.

While Vetu believes Le Pen's protectionist policies would hurt the

sector, local FN representative and struggling dairy farmer Olivier du Gourlay said his friends were turning to the party in increasing numbers.

"We're asking ourselves, what's going on? Because we really have been abandoned," he said.

## MarketWatch : Stock investors are seeking protection from Marine Le Pen

Joseph Adinolfi

After being burned twice by election polls in the past year, investors in European stocks are approaching the coming French election with a healthy dose of skepticism.

At least, that's what stock futures markets seem to be implying.

Polls largely failed to anticipate that the "leave" camp would emerge victorious in the U.K.'s June "Brexit" referendum on a split with the European Union, handing European stocks their deepest loss since the 2008 financial crisis. They also missed a Donald Trump victory over rival Hillary Clinton in the Nov. 8 U.S. presidential election. So now, investors are buying up protection against a potential stock-market selloff should far-right nationalist candidate Marine Le Pen emerge victorious in the French presidential election.

Evidence of this can be found in the widening volatility spread between futures contracts tied to the Euro Stoxx 50 Volatility Index. The spread between the April and May contracts has widened by about five points in recent trade, up from less than one point at the beginning of February, according to Bloomberg data. The first round of voting will take place on April 23.

Volatility for the April contract was at 26.88 in midday trading on Monday, according to Bloomberg data. Meanwhile, volatility for the May contract was at 22.75.

**Read:** How to make sense of the conflicting signals stocks and bonds are sending investors

Le Pen's lead widened in an electoral poll released last week, though she's still expected to lose in the second round, according to some polls. It's widely believed that a Le Pen victory could spark a selloff in European stocks and

French sovereign debt. Le Pen has vowed to hold a referendum on France's membership in the EU should she win. She has also called for France to leave the euro EURUSD, +0.0661%

**Read:** Expect investors to bid adieu to French stocks on Le Pen's presidential prospects

**Read:** France's president fires back at Trump for showing disapproval 'to an ally'

Despite the political uncertainty permeating Europe, continental stocks have performed relatively strongly so far this year. The European STOXX 50 SX5P, -0.07% , the index on which the European volatility index is based, has risen 1.9%. The CAC 40 PX1, +0.04% , a benchmark index for French stocks, has fallen only marginally. Over the same period, the S&P 500 index SPX, +0.10% has climbed 5.7%.

European bond markets are also telegraphing nervousness, said Marvin Loh, senior global markets strategist at BNY Mellon.

Last week, the difference in yield between the German 10-year bund TMBMKDE-10Y, +9.21% and U.S. 10-year note TMBMKFR-10Y, +1.52% reached 77.3 basis points, its widest level since November 2012, according to Tradeweb data.

"Bond investors are certainly taking the vote seriously, even though the polls show that Le Pen would lose by a wide margin in a runoff," Loh said.

Elections in Germany and the Netherlands are also contributing to the rising sense of political uncertainty. Investors fear that far-right, anti-euro parties could make inroads during those elections, too.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Commercial property prices climb in France ahead of election (online)

Art Patnaude

Updated Feb. 28, 2017 7:50 a.m. ET

Yield-hungry investors are driving commercial real-estate prices higher in France despite the possibility that the country's next president could pull the country out of the eurozone.

Polls this year have indicated that Marine Le Pen, the leader of the right-wing National Front party, has a better chance than previously thought of coming from behind to win the presidential election this spring. The possible victory, which is being compared with the unexpected wins by Donald Trump in the U.S. and the Brexit referendum in the U.K., is sending jitters through some financial markets.

But values of prime office buildings in central Paris are the lowest in Europe, according to CBRE Group Inc., a real-estate services firm. Their yields fell to a record 3% in the fourth quarter, compared with 3.15% in the third quarter and 3.25% a year earlier. Commercial property yields, a common measurement of value, fall as prices rise.

Commercial property transactions in France, meanwhile, picked up sharply in the fourth quarter. There were \$9.7 billion of real-estate deals in the last three months of 2016, compared with less than \$6 billion in each of the previous three quarters, according to Real Capital Analytics.

Investors say the bullish outlook, particularly in Paris, is partly because of high demand among companies for office space, increasing the prospect that rents will rise.

At the same time, demand for commercial property is being fueled by investors desperate for higher yields. Ultralow interest rates at central banks have made property returns increasingly attractive compared with other assets like bonds.

"We've been able to feed better in France than we have for a long time," said Ric Lewis, chief executive of Tristan Capital Partners, a London-based real-estate investment manager that says it has purchased about €600 million (\$633.7 million) worth of

French property in the past nine months.

Paris has been a focal point for foreign property investors in Europe. Big deals include the €1 billion purchase in December by Norway's giant oil fund of an office building in central Paris. The yield on the Vendôme Saint-Honoré sale was 3.1%, Swiss lender UBS estimated.

Demand from companies for quality offices "has started to recover, and that's created a lot of interest," said Rob Wilkinson, CEO at AEW Europe, which invests on behalf of global clients. Adding to that, many investors from the U.S. or Asia feel they don't own enough French property in their portfolios, he said.

AEW in December bought a portfolio of business parks in the Paris suburbs for about €141 million on behalf of an Australian investor. A big attraction was the potential return compared with what is available in center. Mr. Wilkinson said it can be as much as 3%.

The French election will take place over two rounds. Recent polls have suggested Ms. Le Pen will win the

first round, but lose in the second round against Emmanuel Macron and François Fillon, the two next most popular candidates.

But Ms. Le Pen's second-round polling support has been rising in recent months. While it isn't the likely scenario, "I'm really focused on it because I was wrong twice in 2016," said Eric Adler, CEO of PGIM Real Estate, at a panel discussion last week in New York.

Many investors feel widespread economic repercussions might result if Ms. Le Pen wins, and succeeds in getting France to leave the euro. That scenario "plunges everything into uncertainty globally, at least for a while," Mr. Adler said. "We can't underestimate that."

Investors have been selling French government bonds over the past month because of worries that Ms. Le Pen could win. As investors sought out perceived havens, last week some German government bond yields hit record lows.

To be sure, this concern is shared by some property investors. If France were to start a process to leave the euro, the uncertainty could

cause investors to back off until clarity emerges, hitting commercial real-estate prices.

Buying in France now “is a big bet,” said Will Woodhead, head of France at property broker Savills. “The elections have to go well.”

But presuming low political risk, fundamentals are attractive for many investors.

Economic output in France at the start of the year was stronger than in Germany for the first time since 2012. The unemployment rate

across Europe has been falling rapidly, with France leading the way.

The amount of available office space in French cities has shrunk, “but the most spectacular decreases were in Paris, where a third of supply has vanished over the last 12 months,” said property broker Cushman & Wakefield.

Vacancy rates were around 3% in Paris in the fourth quarter, the lowest since 2012, the broker said. In Paris’s central business district,

rents rose nearly 2% last year to \$88.80 a square foot, it said.

With property returns in central Paris reaching record lows, global investors have started taking on bigger risks by acquiring assets in the suburbs. They are also willing to take on more risk.

For example, a property arm of U.K. asset manager Schroders PLC bought the Resonance building in a Paris suburb in December for more than €100 million, said Tony Smedley, head of Continental

European investment for the real-estate funds platform at Schroders. The building isn’t fully let, “so comes with a bit of leasing risk,” he said.

“We are trying to look past what we think are short-term political events,” Mr. Smedley said. Investing ahead of the French election is “a calculated risk. But then it always is.”

—Peter Grant contributed to this article.

Write to Art Patnaude at art.patnaude@wsj.com

## Buzz Feed

# Meet The People Who Want Obama To Become France’s Next President

Annabelle Azadé

The four friends who started the “Obama 17” campaign in Paris. Martin Bureau / AFP / Getty Images

PARIS — A group of Parisian friends may have found a solution to their lack of enthusiasm for the current candidates running for president in France: recruit one of their own. And who better to do the job than someone who has already done the job once — just not in France.

Posters bearing the face of former US President Barack Obama began springing up on walls in the neighborhood of Le Marais last week, and since then, the idea has started gaining traction throughout the city.

“All of this started when we were having dinner and discussing the French elections. We thought, ‘Damn, another election where we are going to have to vote against [far-right candidate Marine Le Pen],’ then we started to think, why not voting for someone we really, really want to become our president?” the founder of “Obama2017.fr: a petition for a charismatic French President and a real international leader” told BuzzFeed News in a phone interview.

The four thirtysomething Parisians who started the initiative say they hung posters of Obama on the capital’s walls “without any permission,” which allowed them to keep their identities secret to avoid punishment over copyright violations. Paris laws are extremely strict — hanging posters on a wall of a building you don’t own can carry a

fine of up to 3,550 euros (about \$3,800). But that didn’t stop the group from hanging 500 posters all over the city.

“It started as a joke, turned into a Twitter phenomenon” and the petition has now gathered more than 42,000 signatures.

It’s not hard to see why French voters might be looking for a new option. Only a few weeks before the French presidential elections’ first-round polls, local papers report that Le Pen, a one-time longshot candidate on the far-right whose supporters closely mirror President Donald Trump’s in the US, might win. President Francois Hollande’s unpopular term has divided left-wing voters, who are lost in between three different liberal candidates: Emmanuel Macron, a former Rothschild banker, Benoit Hamon, who wants to launch a universal minimum wage, and Jean-Luc Melenchon, the French Sanders who claims he is the candidate of an “unsubmissive France” — although he does not specify to what France is currently submissive to.

In addition to this, the only center-right candidate, Francois Fillon, is involved in a corruption scandal.

“I am not going to lie, all we wanted to do was to make people laugh on their way to work,” the group member who spoke with BuzzFeed News said. “But on the other hand, we wanted people to think about the bigger picture than just electing a president for our country. In such a globalized world, we need to elect someone who will be able to deal with international issues, and Barack

Obama surely has the power to do so.”

While Le Pen’s goal is to withdraw France from the eurozone and organize a French Brexit, other candidates have not expressed their views on international policies, especially their positions on migrants and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

“French people are tired of seeing the same elite being elected every five years. They might say they are from different parties, but at the end of the day, they are linked one way or another and corrupted,” the member said, pointing to the number of people who say they are simply not going to vote this year.

The petition site is hoping to collect 1 million signatures before March 15. Via obama2017.fr

While the idea of Obama being the next French president is pretty unrealistic — you have to actually be French to be eligible, for starters — the swell of support that Obama2017.fr has seen might actually result in a change in the rules. “A few days ago, several lawyers contacted us to see if we could apply or vote a new law so non-French citizens could apply for the elections,” the group’s founder said, having set a goal of gathering a million signatures before March 15 to show the proposal’s value.

The one-time joke campaign has been picking up steam in the US press, with several outlets writing about the posters. The four friends, who all work in the entertainment industry, are trying to “show that France needs a change. We need

someone who embodies modernity, serenity, integration, and certainly someone who would think twice before dropping any nuclear bomb on any country,” said the Obama2017.fr co-founder.

While neither the current nor most recent occupant of the White House has commented on the recruitment drive yet, the founder of the petition hopes that “Barack replies himself and hopefully will say yes. We did not think it was realistic at first, but we received so much support that we hope we might change something, or at least point out to our French candidates that we need a game-changer, ready to be a president and not simply being ‘the mayor of France.’”

France does have a certain history of quirky candidates. Actor Coluche, whose popularity turned him into a real threat against established politicians in the 1980s, eventually withdrew his nomination as his increasing appeal invited death threats against him. In 1995, a man called Jacques Cheminade wanted to become president to colonize the moon and Mars. He tried again, and failed, in 2012. Last but not least, in 2002, soft-porn actress Cindy Lee founded the “Pleasure party, for the right to have pleasure,” announcing her presidential candidacy.

Since the campaign began gaining attention, founders of the Obama website have been encouraging followers to become ambassadors of the movement to spread the word. On March 15, France might have a new candidate.



## Thousands Sign Petition to Put Obama on French Presidential Ballot

PARIS —

Hurrying home from work, Noellie Benison paused to take in the grinning poster of the former U.S. president, flanking a busy meridian in northern Paris.

“Obama 2017,” she read out. Below: the French translation of his famous tagline, “Oui, on peut” — “Yes we can.”

“If Obama runs, I’ll vote for him, that’s for sure,” said 55-year-old Benison, who is planning to cast a

blank ballot in this spring’s presidential vote.

“We’ve lost our confidence,” she added, dismissing the current crop of candidates. “They’re all the same.”

What started as a joke over beers by a quartet of Parisians in their 30s has made international news in less than a week. Today, Obama2017.fr - an online petition to put Barack Obama on the French ballot, has received 50,000 signatures, its organizers say.



"We were talking about how we always feel we're voting against and never for something," one of the organizers said in an interview, describing how the initiative was born. "And then we started thinking it would be so great to have Obama as president."

Besides soliciting smiles, the tongue-and-cheek petition is resonating in a disaffected France, where many of the same faces crop up vote after vote.

An Obama 2017 campaign poster is shown in Paris, France. (Lisa Bryant)

With the exception of former economy minister Emmanuel Macron, a relative neophyte, this spring's presidential election appears no different. Further souring the political offer, two of the front runners, far-right candidate Marine Le Pen and conservative former prime minister Francois Fillon, face financing scandals.

"This election season is so anxiety ridden," said historian Nicole Bacharan, an expert on U.S. politics. "All the contenders seem tainted or not right. Not enough experience or

all the wrong experience. Certainly no one who can make people dream."

That's essentially the message of Obama2017. Its website calls for nothing short of a Sixth Republic that would usher in a new system of governance "to bring France out of its lethargy."

With Obama jobless, "Why not hire him as president of France?" it asks.

Still the odds are daunting. To begin with, the group needs to collect one million signatures by March 15 to put Obama on the ballot. Then he needs to become a French citizen, although one enthusiastic lawyer tipped the Obama2017.fr team on how this could be fast-tracked.

Campaign financing is another headache. The Paris group pooled their centimes to pay for the Obama posters in the capital; a nationwide rollout was out of the question.

"It was an expensive joke," the campaigner admitted with a grin.

Obama's own views about taking office here are not known. His favorite cheeseburgers and fries are widely available in Paris. So are

basketball courts. Efforts to contact his media team for comment, however, proved unsuccessful.

Still, Parisian voters interviewed gave his candidacy a thumbs-up.

"Obama was a very kind man," said one retiree, who only gave his first name, Jacques. "I would vote for him. I wouldn't vote for Marine le Pen."

Europe greeted Obama's election a decade ago with euphoria, a sentiment that waned as his two-term presidency focused more on domestic and Asian-Pacific issues than Europe. But a Pew Research Center poll last June found the majority of citizens in five European Union countries surveyed were confident he would do the right thing in world affairs. That included 86 percent of Germans, and 84 percent of French.

"I think there was hardly any country where Barack Obama as more popular than in France," analyst Bacharan said. "Even though his popularity dwindled a little bit at the end, he still remains this heroic figure: elegant, charismatic, smart, young, connected."

The Obama2017.fr team says it is apolitical, but disturbed by divisions splintering French society, based mostly on economic divides, the campaigner interviewed said, than ethnic or religious ones.

But there have been protests against alleged police abuse and discrimination against minorities. Rights groups are also worried about discrimination against the country's Muslim community, particularly after the terror attacks in Paris and Nice.

"I think someone like Obama can unite us, can focus us on a project and a future," the campaigner said.

Asked if France was ready for a black president, he added, "I think Obama would be perfect. He's done the job in the U.S., exactly the way we would need someone to do it in France."

"Sadly, I'm quite sure France is not ready for a black president," analyst Bacharan said. "But the French would be ready for Barack Obama. Worldwide, he lost his color; he just became an American president."

## French Inflation Rate Unexpectedly Drops, Ending Months of Gains

@fergalob More stories by Fergal

O'Brien

by and

27 février 2017 à 05:00 UTC-5  
27 février 2017 à 12:04 UTC-5

- Policy specifics seen as needed to sustain election rally
- Reflation trade shows sign of fatigue in stock, bond markets

Donald Trump's address to Congress on Tuesday is taking on the importance of a State of the Union speech when it comes to U.S. financial markets.

For investors relying on more than a year of campaign promises of a pro-growth agenda to push U.S. stocks to record highs, the dollar surging and bond yields climbing, the prime-time speech to House and Senate lawmakers couldn't come any sooner.

"We need to see some details within all the policy talk," said Sean Simko, who manages \$8 billion in fixed-income assets at SEI Investments Co. in Oaks, Pennsylvania. "More specifics in terms of numbers or even a more defined timeline. If there aren't specifics there, the risk trade might be ending."

Though new life was given to some faltering Trump reflation trades by the president's promise of a "phenomenal" tax plan earlier this month, investors say more is needed, especially with the administration designating the repeal and replace of Obamacare as its first priority ahead of a tax overhaul.

While it isn't considered a State of the Union address since it falls within Trump's first year, the initial speech to Congress has been no less important to presidents in the modern era. Barack Obama first spoke before both legislative bodies in February 2009 about the financial crisis.

The most important market news of the day.

Get our markets daily newsletter.

Trump will propose boosting defense spending by \$54 billion in his first budget plan and offset that by an equal amount cut from the rest of the government's discretionary budget, according to administration officials. During a speech to governors Monday, Trump called his plan a "public safety budget" and promised that "we're going to start spending on infrastructure, big," without giving details.

Since Trump's election, stocks have showed few signs of slowing down.

The S&P 500 has advanced 10 percent, posting 17 record closes in a rally that's added \$2.8 trillion in value to the U.S. equity market. To be sure, fundamentals are playing a part in the market's gains. The economy has shown signs of accelerating and corporate earnings are predicted to surge 12 percent from last year, a turnaround from the profit declines in 2015 and 2016.

"It's possible that if the market hadn't been rising so dramatically, we could wait," said Quincy Krosby, a market strategist at Prudential Financial Inc., which oversees about \$1.3 trillion. "But this is a market that's pretty impatient and wants results."

Adding to the anxiety are differing views on how to proceed on tax reform. House Republicans are considering a border-adjustment tax proposal that shifts the burden from exporters to importers, arguing that it would benefit American manufacturing while providing revenue to make up for losses from reducing corporate-tax rates. Trump has called the plan "too complicated."

As the debate grows, traders have reduced bullish wagers on the dollar. The greenback has dropped 3.3 percent since January, after surging 6.5 percent after the Nov. 8 presidential vote, according to the Bloomberg Dollar Spot Index.

Hedge funds and other large speculators have cut net bullish dollar bets to the least since before the election.

"There is only so long the market will bid the dollar higher on the promise of something," said Stuart Bennett, head of Group-of-10 currency strategy at Banco Santander SA in London. "They will want detail. And if it's not forthcoming, then it's a little bit like the boy who cried wolf."

Complacency could be one of the biggest risks, according to John Canally, chief economic strategist at LPL Financial in Boston. The Chicago Board Options Exchange Volatility Index, a gauge of investor anxiety also known as the VIX, is only two points above its all time low. The VIX, which tracks implied volatility through S&P 500 options, is headed for the lowest yearly average on record.

"Everyone is wondering why equity market volatility is so low given the uncertainty out there," said Canally. "The economy is not in dire need of a tax cut, but maybe his speech could be a catalyst" for an uptick in volatility, he said.

Not everyone is convinced. The rally in stocks has been driven by solid earnings and economic data in spite of growing skepticism over Trump's policies, Tobias Levkovich, Citigroup Inc.'s chief U.S. equity strategist, wrote in a Feb. 24 note.

"Fears of a major pullback if President Trump does not outline a 'phenomenal' tax program on Feb. 28th may be overdone," Levkovich said.

In the bond market, speculators are holding onto wagers on higher yields, and lower debt prices.

David Woo, head of global rates and FX strategy at

**The  
Washington  
Post**

Migrants and their homes in Germany faced more than 3,500 attacks in 2016, a number that is "alarmingly high and cause for concern," a German official said Monday, adding that the crimes are being aggressively prosecuted and the numbers of such attacks are falling.

Most of the attacks were crimes such as vandalism targeting homes of asylum seekers — including far-right graffiti, threats and slander — but the report also included more serious attacks such as arson, bodily harm and attempted murder. It was compiled by the Interior Ministry with information from Germany's 16 states in response to a question in Parliament by the Left Party.

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL.**

Paul Hannon  
Updated Feb. 27,  
2017 11:38 a.m. ET

Eurozone businesses grew more optimistic about their prospects in February, as a measure of confidence among service providers rose to its highest level since before the global financial crisis.

The pickup in business sentiment is consistent with the results of other recent surveys, which suggest the eurozone economy has gained fresh momentum in early 2017, despite heightened uncertainty about future policies ahead of key elections across the currency area.

In a separate release that carried a similar message on Monday, the European Central Bank said lending to households increased in January, though credits to businesses grew at the same pace as at the end of 2016.

The European Commission said its Economic Sentiment Indicator, which aggregates business and consumer confidence, rose to 108.0 from 107.9 in January, reaching its highest level since March 2011.

Bank of America Merrill Lynch, said Trump's desire for a tax plan before the August break means it is likely that the president lays out at least a "skeleton" of the program on Tuesday.

If Trump does provide more clarity on his tax and growth plans, that raises the risk that the Federal Reserve will be more willing to increase interest rates, Woo said.

Traders currently assign about a 40 percent probability for a hike at the Fed's March 15 policy meeting.

"There is a lot riding on Tuesday," said Woo. "The consequences for some kind of plan being unveiled will be massive. You will see volatility really going through the roof if he does so."

Before it's here, it's on the Bloomberg Terminal. [LEARN MORE](#)

## Germany sees 'alarmingly high' number of anti-migrant crimes

BERLIN —

"There was a very wide spectrum of crimes ... every one is to be condemned," said Interior Ministry spokesman Johannes Dimroth.

Evening Edition newsletter

The day's most important stories.

Please provide a valid email address.

The attacks led to 560 people being injured, including 43 children. Overall, 2,343 suspects were identified and investigated, according to the report.

Comparison figures for previous years have not been compiled, but Dimroth said that after 2016 the "trend is downward ... which gives us a little bit of hope."

Germany took in 890,000 asylum seekers in 2015, and the influx caused a backlash and a rise in anti-

immigrant sentiment, which was most pronounced in eastern parts of the country.

The government has invested more resources into fighting xenophobic crimes, but the new figures show more needs to be done, said Gauri van Gulik, deputy Europe director of Amnesty International.

"We need to see better risk assessments, more protection at certain locations, thorough investigations and prosecutions of these appalling racist attacks to stop them in the future," van Gulik said.

Dimroth said that in addition to government policies and police enforcement, it is up to society in general to fight racism, saying it is impossible to just "ban" extremism.

"All of society has the responsibility to establish a climate where

extremism finds no fertile ground," he said.

The number of asylum seekers in Germany tapered off to 280,000 in 2016. With the decrease, and more intensive government efforts to rapidly send home those whose applications are rejected, anti-immigrant sentiment has ebbed somewhat.

The government also has been working to more rapidly integrate those who are allowed to stay.

With a national election planned for September, it seems likely that the nationalist and anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany party, or AfD, will have more than enough support to win seats in Parliament for the first time, even though recent polls have shown a steady decline in support.

## Eurozone business confidence grows despite impending elections

Paul Hannon

Updated Feb. 27,

2017 11:38 a.m. ET

However, that increase occurred despite a drop in consumer confidence. Among businesses, manufacturers were at their most upbeat since June 2011, while the measure for service providers rose to 13.8 from 12.8 in January, reaching its highest point since October 2007, almost a year before the collapse of Lehman Brothers.

The pickup in sentiment is a positive for the eurozone's growth prospects, since more confident businesses tend to invest and hire more freely.

Many economists had expected sentiment to weaken this year, given the high levels of uncertainty created by coming elections in which political parties hostile to the euro and the wider European Union look set to gain ground, and possibly triumph.

The Netherlands faces elections on March 15, while France faces two rounds of votes in April and May. Later in the year, Germans select a new government.

The leading candidates in France's elections have built their programs around a rejection of incumbent President François Hollande's economic policies after years of

weak growth and high unemployment.

The front-runner, pro-business and pro-European centrist Emmanuel Macron, has indicated he would concentrate on loosening labor laws to tackle unemployment. National Front leader Marine Le Pen, who polls show losing to Mr. Macron in the second round on May 6, has a more radical plan: Pull France out of the euro and abandon the constraints of EU fiscal discipline. The conservative candidate François Fillon says he would implement a deep austerity program coupled with tax cuts for business and tax increases for consumers.

French businesses appear undaunted, with the country's ESI rising to 106.1 from 105.0, its highest level since July 2011. The Dutch measure also rose to its highest level since April 2011, though the German measure fell.

Eurozone businesses weren't alone in shrugging off heightened uncertainty. The U.K. government has said it would initiate the two-year process of leaving the EU in March, and the terms on which that departure will take place have yet to be negotiated. But the

Commission's survey recorded a significant improvement in British business confidence during February. The country's ESI jumped to 109.4 from 107.1 to hit its highest point since December 2015.

The rise in eurozone business confidence follows the release last week of a measure of activity in the private sector, based on surveys of purchasing managers, which suggested the eurozone economy has accelerated this year.

Despite recent encouraging signs for the eurozone economy, policy makers at the ECB have been at pains to play down the prospect of a reconsideration of its stimulus policies soon. In December, the ECB extended its bond-buying program, also known as quantitative easing, until the end of the year from March, though it lowered the monthly value of purchases.

"Improved lending growth underpins the current strength in the eurozone economy, although it doesn't seem strong enough to sway the ECB toward an earlier exit from QE," said Bert Colijn, senior eurozone economist at ING.



## Robert Colville : Britain Is Now a One-Party State

It was the morning after the Copeland by-election, one of two vital votes last week that were poised to indicate whether the post-Brexit political landscape really will be as kind to the Conservatives and disastrous for the Labour Party as the polls had suggested. And Stephen Parkinson, the Downing Street advisor who had overseen the campaign for the Conservatives, was facing a welcome dilemma. Which of the many, many historical precedents to boast about first?

This was the first time a governing party in Britain had gained a seat in between general elections since 1982. It was the biggest electoral swing toward a governing party since 1966. And the last Conservative to win in Copeland — a Labour heartland if ever there was one — had been born in 1879. “We are spoilt for choice,” a gleeful Parkinson told the *Times of London*.

Ahead of the Brexit referendum in June 2016, it was widely thought that a vote to leave the European Union would produce a kaleidoscopic shattering of British politics, particularly for the Conservative Party, which was projected to split down the middle between “leave” supporters and “remain” supporters. Instead, the result has turned Britain — that formerly lively multiparty democracy — into what is effectively a one-party state.

To understand the extent of Theresa May’s supremacy as prime minister and Tory leader, consider the state of the potential challengers to her authority.

Labour? The official opposition party is disintegrating before our eyes. It is torn between socialists and moderates, middle-class “remain” supporters and working-class “leave” supporters, far-left activists and center-left MPs. Its leader, Jeremy Corbyn, lags behind May in popularity among every age and class demographic. David Miliband, the former Labour foreign secretary, says the party is in its worst state in 50 years.

The Feb. 23 votes in both Copeland and another Labour stronghold, Stoke-on-Trent, were by-elections — that is, votes that take place because a seat has become unexpectedly empty. These two became empty because of the retreat from politics of talented, centrist MPs who had looked at the future, and lost the will to fight on.

What about the U.K. Independence Party, the right-wing insurgents who so tormented May’s predecessor David Cameron? If anything, last week’s events demonstrated that they are even worse off. During the course of the Stoke by-election campaign, their new post-Nigel Farage-era leader, Paul Nuttall, who decided to stand for the seat himself and was caught lying about, among other things, living in Stoke, holding a doctorate, being a former professional footballer, and (worst of all) having “close personal friends” among the 96 fatalities in the 1989 Hillsborough Stadium disaster.

It isn’t going to get any better, at least for those who worry about the consequences of an imperial premiership. May currently has ruled out an early election — but should she find herself needing a mandate, she can easily go to the country and get it, coming away stronger. Any Labour recovery is probably, in the best-case scenario, two or three elections away — not least because a long-overdue adjustment to constituency boundaries, to reflect changing demographics, will add yet more MPs to the Tory total.

The consequences of the “one-partyfication” of Britain are already evident.

The consequences of the “one-partyfication” of Britain are already evident. The absence of any effective parliamentary opposition to the Tories means the only checks to Theresa May’s rule as prime minister come from within her own party. The parliamentary majority she inherited from David Cameron is small enough that she needs to take account of their views — which, given the makeup of her party, means keeping in with those on the right.

This, along with her long-standing passion for controlling immigration, helps explain why May (who voted to remain in the EU) has taken a hard line on Brexit, sacrificing Britain’s membership of the European single market and customs union in exchange for the ability to control its borders. And there have been other, less prominent, sacrifices on domestic matters that might offend Thatcher-style traditionalists: Plans to include workers on company boards, for instance, have already been watered down.

You do not have to be supportive of May — as I am — to see that this situation is not exactly optimal. One of the lessons of British politics over

the last 30 years is that when the opposition to the center is so weak, it is a recipe for bad government. For one thing, it breeds the kind of Olympian overconfidence in the long term that leads to measures such as the poll tax or the invasion of Iraq. For another, the absence of any counterweight means that the governing party’s focus tends to turn inwards — that both politicians and the media obsess about internal quarrels and personality clashes, rather than questions of policy. (The endless debilitating feuding between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown is the classic example of this.)

If Jeremy Corbyn were a credible prospective prime minister, it would keep Theresa May on her toes. But his inadequacy has consequences beyond the electoral. His shadow ministers are selected not for their knowledge of their briefs, but for their ideological conformity. Some people joked that by making a single speech at Bloomberg, Jeremy Corbyn had spent more time in the City of London than his own shadow banking minister, Richard Burgon. Similarly, the sole interest that Emily Thornberry had shown in military matters, before being chosen as shadow defense secretary, was voting for the abolition of Trident nuclear program and signing a parliamentary motion accusing the Grenadier Guards of cruelty to animals because they used bearskin hats.

Brexit — whether hard or soft — will be an enormous and transformative challenge for the British state. It will depend on the closest possible scrutiny of thousands of lines of legislation and regulation. At the moment, there is not the slightest evidence that Labour is up for that challenge. Parliament’s select committees may fill some of the gap, but only some.

In the wake of the Brexit referendum there have been efforts to form some sort of coalition of disgruntled “remain” supporters — the 48 percent who voted to stay in Europe — composed of Europhilic Liberal Democrats and devotees of former Prime Ministers Tony Blair and David Cameron, whose primary policy plank would be either reversing Brexit or at least softening it. There has even been talk of a new party called “The Democrats,” modeled on Emmanuel Macron’s *En Marche!* movement in France.

But the hurdles to such a plan are myriad: Britain’s first-past-the-post system favors established parties. And many of the cheerleaders for

metropolitanism are tarnished goods. Last week, Blair made one of his periodic reappearances in British politics, arguing that just because the British people had voted for Brexit, it didn’t mean they couldn’t change their minds. The fact that Blair thought he was a viable delivery vehicle for such a message is a demonstration of how dire things have become. Though Britain’s hardcore Blairites will never be dislodged from their affection for the former prime minister, he is reviled by most of the rest of the country.

And who else is there to challenge Theresa May, or even mildly inconvenience her, besides her own right-leaning MPs? There is Britain’s increasing array of prominent regional leaders — Sadiq Khan in London, and in particular Nicola Sturgeon in Scotland, who is eager to use whatever Brexit deal emerges as a pretext for a second independence referendum. (Tellingly, the former Labour leadership contender Andy Burnham is now standing to be the first elected mayor of Greater Manchester instead of working at the national level.) There is the House of Lords, stuffed with Labour and Liberal Democrat placemen. And there is Britain’s — largely right-wing — press.

All seem unlikely to be able to offer up much of a fight: Regional leaders, by their nature, are restricted in their influence. The House of Lords, tempted though it will be, knows it cannot push the government too far: Ultimately, the Commons is in charge. And the papers — whose coverage of May has been rapturous so far — might object to particular measures, but they are hardly likely to urge their readers to embrace Jeremy Corbyn instead.

That, perhaps, leaves the markets, whose verdict on Brexit is being closely watched as the last real check on the government. It may not be good for democracy that Theresa May cares more about the bond vigilantes than the Labour Party. But it is a sign of how completely, since that vote in June, Britain’s new prime minister has indeed taken back control.

Photo credit: Carl Court/Getty Images

Share +

Twitter Facebook Google + Reddit



## U.S. Allies Are Learning that Trump's America Is Not the 'Indispensable Nation'

Grappling with an unpredictable White House, foreign partners in Europe and Asia are weighing contingency plans and bracing for the worst.

On Saturday night, President Donald Trump dined at his new D.C. hotel with the governor of Florida, Rick Scott, his daughter Ivanka, her husband and powerful senior White House advisor Jared Kushner, and Nigel Farage, the nemesis of the European Union. A few tables away, alone with his wife, sat Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, the man nominally charged with charting America's relations with the rest of the world.

Photos of the president dining with a smiling Farage, the former UKIP leader who has railed against the EU for years, and who led the populist campaign to pull Britain out of Europe, only served to reinforce growing doubts about America's stance toward the European Union and much of the international order forged by U.S. leadership in the years after World War II.

Now, U.S. allies are resigning themselves to the likelihood that Trump's administration will remain unpredictable and often incoherent, if not downright hostile, in its foreign policy. And they are beginning to draw up contingency plans to protect their interests on trade and security, as they adapt to a world where strong American leadership is no longer assured.

"It's dawning on people now that what you see is what you get," said one European diplomat, "and that the uncertainty is not going away."

Trump has of course alarmed transatlantic allies by sending mixed messages about the value of the NATO alliance, both on the campaign trail and once in office. But a much bigger concern for European governments is the White House's apparent desire to reverse more than seven decades of U.S. policy of fostering a strong and united Europe as a bastion of

democracy and free trade in order to bolster U.S. security.

The president of the European Commission, former Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, voiced what many senior officials will only say in private when he issued a dire warning in a recent letter to European leaders. Tusk said that Washington is "seeming to put into question" 70 years of American policy, placing the United States alongside Russia, China and terrorism as a source of instability for Europe.

The White House has actively fueled those worries, chiefly through Trump's chief strategist, economic nationalist and anti-globalist Steven Bannon. This month he reportedly told Peter Wittig, Germany's ambassador to Washington, that the EU is a flawed and weak institution, a week before Vice President Mike Pence was dispatched to Germany to express America's "steadfast" commitment to the EU. Last week, Bannon in a speech before conservative activists in Washington touted what he calls "economic nationalism," and said the administration wanted bilateral trade deals with other countries. But in Europe, the EU as a whole would have to negotiate any new trade deals.

Wittig declined to comment on the details of his conversation with Bannon, but said he rejects any attempts to divide the EU or belittle it as a purely economic trading bloc.

"The EU is not just an economic club, but it's a political project," he said. "It has brought us unprecedented security and stability [and] as far as Germany is concerned, we will certainly fight for a coherent and resilient European Union."

The Trump administration's tack is precisely the approach long favored by Moscow, which prefers the leverage that comes with dealing with European nations individually rather than collectively. Russian President Vladimir Putin has sought

to divide the EU — and NATO — by fostering divisions within the Western bloc. Hungary and the Czech Republic — both members of the EU and NATO — have moved closer to Moscow in recent years, while Russia continues to support extremist, anti-EU parties in countries like France and Germany.

Trade, as much or more than security, has become the nascent administration's cudgel to attack Europe. Trump's top trade adviser, Peter Navarro, accused Berlin in January of manipulating foreign exchange markets, and Trump has talked of slapping all imports, including potentially those from Europe, with punitive tariffs.

Berlin, however, views free trade as a pillar of its prosperity and the global economy. Robust trade with countries around the world turned Germany into Europe's economic engine. And German officials are clearly dismayed about the Trump administration's threats to slap tariffs on German car manufacturers if they establish plants in Mexico instead of the United States and subsequently seek to export automobiles to the U.S. market.

Wittig suggested such a tariff could violate World Trade Organization rules, raising the possibility of retaliation. "WTO conformity is very important," he said.

The Trump administration, however, appears serious about taking a hard line on trade, including possibly bypassing the WTO rules that Washington helped create. Officials have asked the U.S. Trade Representative's office to prepare a list of legal measures that would allow the United States to impose sanctions unilaterally without having to go through WTO trade dispute procedures, the *Financial Times* reported Monday.

A European official said pursuing a unilateral approach to trade carried serious risks. "Trump and his aides are acting like it's the 1950s or 60s. But U.S. economic power is not

what it was. I think they're in for a surprise."

To be sure, German officials stress that U.S. presidential transitions are time-consuming, and while other European countries may see incoherence as a permanent feature of the Trump administration, Berlin expects Washington's message will eventually take form.

The Germans and others, meanwhile, are clinging to reassuring messages delivered by some Trump administration officials. Vice President Pence underscored the U.S. commitment to NATO at a security conference in Munich on Feb. 18, just as Defense Secretary James Mattis has tried to convey the same message to American allies in Asia.

"We received a clear message from Vice President Mike Pence," EU ambassador to the U.S. David O'Sullivan told Foreign Policy. "He told us President Donald Trump had specifically asked him to go to Brussels to express the strong commitment of the United States to continued cooperation and partnership with the European Union. I don't think you can get much clearer than that."

An EU official also pointed to a Trump interview with Reuters published on Friday where the president flippantly seemed to reaffirm longstanding U.S. policy. "The EU, I'm totally in favor of it," said the president, who cheered Brexit and urged more countries to leave the European Union. "If they're happy, I'm in favor of it."

Europe, though, is hedging its bets, especially after a proposed trade deal between the United States and the EU, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, unraveled last year.

EU officials are now looking to Asia, since in one of his first acts in office, Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a vast 12-nation trade deal. The jilted partners and the EU now see an opportunity for new trade

arrangements — without the U.S. in the equation — and are already in talks.

Within Asia, the Trump administration has also rattled allies already unnerved by an aggressive China. Trump has repeatedly bashed China over trade, accusing Beijing of taking advantage of the United States, even while attacking longtime ally Japan over trade issues. But the president pulled back from a threat to abandon Washington's "One China" policy, and so far the White House has sidestepped conflict in the contested South China Sea.

The administration's mixed messages have fueled anxiety about whether Washington has a strategy for Asia, and what it might be. China, meanwhile, is forging ahead with its own Asian free trade deal, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which excludes Washington, and

deepening ties with many in the region, from Sri Lanka to the Philippines.

"It's clearly wishful thinking that there was a deeper game, a strategy at work. That's just not the case," said Gregory Poling of Center for Strategic and International Studies. Governments are recognizing that "what we're going to get is uncertainty and you just have to live with that."

Even Australia, which has fought alongside the United States in every conflict since World War II, Trump's election is seen by some as a sign that Canberra can no longer count on the United States for economic engagement or security in the Asia-Pacific.

In Canberra, the implications of a Trump presidency cast a long shadow as officials and policy analysts draft their foreign policy strategy in a new white paper. China has long been an economic

siren for Australia, sucking up giant quantities of mineral exports, while the United States has for decades been Australia's defense shield.

"The simple fact is that throughout Asia, the balance has been always to look to the U.S. for security and to China for economic benefits," said Kerry Brown, a former British diplomat and now professor of Chinese Studies at King's College in London.

But those calculations are now in flux, especially for Australia's leaders.

"They will have to grapple with Trump as a major variable that imparts a great deal of uncertainty into their own foreign policy," said Mira Rapp-Hooper of the Center for a New American Security. Canberra may have to contemplate the possibility that "the United States may be a less predictable alliance partner in coming years that it has been in the past," she said.

Trump's presidency could accelerate a trend already underway in Canberra to carve out a more active role in Asia, while pulling back from the country's traditionally unwavering support for Washington's military adventures in other parts of the world. If concerns build in Australia over the trajectory of the Trump administration, Canberra probably will look to deepen defense ties with partners in the region, particularly Singapore, experts said.

If the U.S. backs away, said Brown, "Australia will be one of the key players who will have to make sure that there is no security void for China to fill, or, if such a void starts to open up then Australia is there with others before the Chinese get there," he said.

FP reporter David Francis contributed to this article



## As ISIS Prepares Its Terror Resurrection, Watch Out for Drone 'Swarms'

Christopher Dickey02.28.17

1:15 AM ET

Photo Illustration by Kelly Caminero/The Daily Beast

### Killer Quads

The so-called Islamic State is being driven out of its Iraqi and Syrian strongholds. But the organization has staged brutal comebacks before—and this one could be global.

PARIS—The terrorists have new toys, and they're letting the world know. As Iraqi troops backed by U.S. warplanes and special forces keep pushing into Mosul, the so-called Islamic State is fighting back with its own air force: commercially available drones carrying small explosive payloads.

The "asymmetry" in firepower is so enormous that, at first glance, it seems almost ludicrous. But the concern of counterterrorism experts is not that one drone carrying one little grenade can do much damage. It's that multiple drones hitting simultaneously can be used to disrupt and demoralize the enemies of ISIS, and not only on the battlefield, but in the cities of Europe, and perhaps even in the United States.

Georgetown University's Bruce Hoffmann, author of *Inside Terrorism*, sketches a very grim scenario: "Picture Paris on November 13, 2015—the night when people were slaughtered at a

rock concert and in sidewalk cafés—"with drone attacks superimposed on top of it. Authorities would have been completely overwhelmed. This elevates our greatest fear, which is simultaneous urban attacks—now with swarming on top of them."

On the battlefield, multiple coordinated drone attacks by ISIS already are happening. CBS News reported from the front in Mosul on Saturday that U.S.-backed Iraqi government operations to retake the western part of the city are being disrupted by "swarms of three to five" commercial quad copters modified to carry small grenades or artillery shells.

ISIS boasts about its new weapon, publishing photographs of its recruits in a classroom studying drones. The young men look like they're there for vocational training, but the vocation is jihad. ISIS has also posted live-action videos taken by its little birds hovering over targets, then dropping explosives with surprising accuracy, including down the hatch of an armored car.

But in the context of urban terror such as Hoffman describes, the use of drones to harass and distract is especially problematic. As a detailed investigative report by the independent research site Bellingcat notes, drones give ISIS the ability to transform the battle space from 2D to 3D as it can drop one or more small bombs "without warning and with surprising accuracy" wherever it chooses.

In one ISIS video, as Bellingcat reports, "We see that a drone strike was used to distract soldiers on the ground from the greater danger of the approaching SVBIED [suicide truck bomb] which detonates with deadly effect."

"The history of terrorism," says Hoffman, "is that weapons used on the battlefield move into the civilian theater."

As recently as October, all this seemed a hypothetical danger. An excellent paper (PDF) by Don Rassler for the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point noted that "use of a small group of drones, or a swarm of drones guided by autonomous features, has the potential to up the ante in terms of an attack's lethality, its psychological impact and its complexity."

At that point, in October last year, such an operation had "not yet been observed." Now it has been. And the threat is developing quickly.

"In the past month things have really changed in terms of the armed consumer drones," says Dan Gettinger, co-director of the Center for the Study of the Drone at Bard College. ISIS "has come out with a slew of videos, mainly around Mosul." The danger they pose, he says, is more psychological than physical, but of course that is the nature of terror.

"The messaging cannot be ignored," says Gettinger. "From the beginning it was evident that drones played

heavily in [ISIS]'s messaging strategy."

Mia Bloom of the Minerva Research Initiative, which monitors ISIS activity on encrypted media such as Telegram and on the dark web, notes that the ISIS department of media has a special drone unit using aerial images to create very slick videos of suicide bombings. It's no longer just a photograph, a testimonial and a name, she says. They will follow the car along, heading toward its targets marked post-production with red dots, until it blows up.

"The more they are losing the more they are going to feel the urgency of the need to project their power and demonstrate their relevance," says Bloom. The suicide videos and efforts to carry out terror attacks in the West are all part of that. So is the airborne threat.

"Armed consumer drones are no longer hypothetical," says Bard's Gettinger.

Thank You!

You are now subscribed to the Daily Digest and Cheat Sheet. We will not share your email with anyone for any reason

One of the most horrific terror attacks of the last few weeks was in Istanbul late on New Year's Eve at the Reina Nightclub on the Bosphorus. Thirty-nine people were killed by a lone shooter—but one who was well-prepared, well-armed,

and well-managed. A single gunman, but not a "lone wolf" at all.

Indeed, Abdulgadir Masharipov, eventually arrested for the atrocity, could be a paradigm for one type of terrorist ISIS is likely to deploy: the trained killer—the "sleeper" just waiting to be activated. And although he did not use them, in the searches that lead to his arrest, two commercial drones were discovered in one of the places he had stayed.

\*\*\*

There is little question that ISIS plans to continue fighting whenever, wherever, and however it can, even when, as seems inevitable, it is pushed out of Mosul and its Syrian capital, Raqqa. "We don't know what form ISIS will take when it is defeated," says Claude Moniquet, one of Belgium's leading authorities on terrorism. "What we do know is that they have prepared to be defeated—and go underground." ISIS was crushed in 2007 in Iraq. But then it regrouped, reestablished itself in Syria and came back with a vengeance. "They have extraordinary resistance."

As Mia Bloom points out, the communications on ISIS-linked sites appear to be laying the groundwork for a global offensive, "a war of attacking and reposition," as ISIS boasts.

The propaganda notes, for instance, that ISIS was driven out of the city of Kobane in 2014, but there is nothing left of it: "So congratulations to you, O Pentagon, on this 'victory.' Congratulations to the Crusaders on piles of rocks in Kobane..."

As the territory controlled by ISIS in

Syria and Iraq continues to shrink, the organization makes clear it intends to broaden its horizons. The ISIS strategy to pursue this long war in months and years to come will depend on its ability to reestablish bases among jihadis in other parts of the world, from the Boko Haram battlefields of northeastern Nigeria to the chaotic shores of Libya, Egypt's desolate Sinai, the mountains of Afghanistan, and the jungles of the southern Philippines—all places where ISIS has tried to recruit loyal followers and build networks.

But ISIS does not intend to stop there. "We want Paris by Allah's permission before Rome and before Spain, after we blacken your lives and destroy the White House, the Big Ben, and the Eiffel Tower—by Allah's permission... We want Kabul, Karachi, the Caucasus, Qom, Riyadh, and Tehran. We want Baghdad, Damascus, Jerusalem, Cairo, Sanaa, Doha, Abu Dhabi, and Amman. The Muslims will return to mastership and leadership in every place."

To that end, it already is keeping up a constant drumbeat of propaganda hoping to recruit disaffected Muslims and even non-Muslims in Europe and the United States. According to Bloom, ISIS has even been tagging some of its postings with #BLM for Black Lives Matter. President Donald Trump's anti-Muslim rhetoric and clumsy, clearly discriminatory policies, meanwhile, have given ISIS a great propaganda bonus.

As Brian Jenkins of the Rand Corporation has written, the danger that ISIS poses to the United States

is less one of infiltration than of inspiration. But its activities in Europe and especially in Turkey over the last couple of years give a good idea how it operates.

Ahmet Yayla, a former counterterrorism officer with the Turkish police who is now a professor at George Mason University in Virginia, points out the conspicuous division of labor in the ISIS attacks carried out in Turkey. On the one hand, local recruits are used for suicide bombings, which require relatively little skill. On the other hand, attacks that include a military-style assault are the work of battle-hardened jihadists who usually come from abroad—then remain in place in Turkey, inactive and apparently innocuous, until they strike.

The Reina Nightclub attack fit the latter profile. According to Yayla, the killer entered Turkey legally and lived quietly for about a year with his wife and children in a provincial city until he was activated about 10 days before the New Year's Eve attack. He moved to an apartment in Istanbul, where arms were delivered to his door by the ISIS underground network.

The attack originally was supposed to take place in Istanbul's equivalent of Times Square, but Masharipov contacted his handler in Syria over the Telegram app and told him there were too many police and soldiers there, so the venue was moved to the Reina Nightclub, where he easily killed the one policeman standing guard and coolly proceeded to slaughter dozens of people.

The November 13, 2015, terror attack in Paris was carried out by a

combination of similarly trained killers wielding guns and a few recruits who were only supposed to blow themselves up. The support network that helped lay the groundwork for the Paris attacks then became the operational network for the Brussels attacks in March of last year, according to Moniquet.

But some of the most horrific carnage has been wrought by people who have never had much if any connection to ISIS. According to American and French officials, the Tunisian resident of France who drove a truck through the crowd watching Bastille Day fireworks in Nice last year, killing 86 people and injuring more than 400, never had any discernible connection to ISIS, even though the group claimed the killing.

"He may have been a complete walk-in," says Georgetown's Hoffman. "But as long as you've got the potential to inspire that sort of action you can stay in business forever. That's why [ISIS] pushes along multiple lines: the directed operation, the inspired lone wolf," that is, one directed by remote control on Telegram or through other means, "and the true lone wolf."

On such people—willing to use any means at their disposal from 19-ton cargo trucks to softly whirring drones—ISIS is depending for its survival and, indeed, for its resurrection.



## With ISIS besieged in western Mosul, civilians decide it's time to flee

The Christian Science Monitor

February 27, 2017 Haj Ali, Iraq—Every time the Islamic State knocked on the door of the west Mosul home, two things would happen.

Ahmed, a former Iraqi police officer, would race to an underground hiding place. And Waha, his wife, would answer the door and try to refuse the jihadists entry, pleading ignorance of her husband's whereabouts.

"I am alone, a woman," Waha, a mother of four, recalls telling the IS militants each time, appealing to their professed respect for Muslim women. "I was so afraid."

The ruse worked, but the family knew the lie to protect Ahmed was unsustainable.

Those terrifying moments became more frequent as Iraqi forces squeezed IS out of eastern Mosul in January and set their sights on the west of the city—launching a new offensive last week to remove the jihadists from their last remaining urban stronghold in the country.

As the offensive loomed, IS fighters trapped in western Mosul with no exit routes put even more pressure on local residents, hunting with new aggressiveness for possible collaborators, who could inform advancing Iraqi forces of IS defenses. Families who had endured nearly three years under IS rule, marked by now-familiar atrocities like beheadings and crucifixions, felt the pressure build further to make the life-and-death decision about whether to stay or attempt to escape.

Ahmed and Waha— they asked that their real names not be used—

recounted their saga in front of their children in a corner of the Haj Ali camp, a well-organized grid of white and blue canvas United Nations tents that now holds more than 5,000 Iraqis displaced by the fighting, some 40 miles south of Mosul.

So far an estimated 170,000 Iraqis have fled the battle to liberate Mosul, many of them now living in a string of camps south and east of the city. Some 1,000 more arrived at Iraqi government positions Monday morning, Reuters reported, adding to roughly 10,000 who have so far escaped the western Mosul fight.

The couple was interviewed along with Ammar Gergis Adham, another former policeman, whose family was in a nearby camp. Their stories illustrate the excruciating choices an estimated 750,000 civilians are being asked to make as Iraqi

security forces appeal to them to stay in their homes during the fight.

The presence of civilians has slowed down the Iraqi forces' advance throughout the Mosul campaign, and made civilians vulnerable to being used as human shields by IS or to being caught in the crosshairs. While that may have added to the civilian death toll—with one estimate of 500 dying in east Mosul—the policy has meant less overall damage to the city, and a swifter return to normal life in liberated areas.

Still, the pressure on both these families was too much, and using guile and disguise they escaped from IS territory in recent days, but at high cost: each of them left behind brothers captured by IS.

"They took my brother, and I don't know if he is alive or not," says Mr. Adham, who wears a black faux-

leather jacket. His calm demeanor belies the scale of his exhaustion and relief at getting out the rest of his family. "Ninety-nine percent I think they killed him."

### A turn against the Islamic State

Both families lived in Wadi Hajar, a district at the northwest corner of the Mosul airport – the first objective of the latest offensive, captured by Iraqi forces over the weekend – which is known for housing police and Army officers and their families.

They chose to stay in their homes when IS first arrived in June 2014, because at first it was easy to travel in and out, and IS initially used a lighter touch after declaring the creation of an Islamic caliphate in its territory in Iraq and Syria. Mosul, with upwards of 1.5 million citizens, was meant to be a model of popular Islamic rule.

It wasn't long before that changed, as citizens increasingly turned against IS, by refusing, for example, to send their children to IS schools whose jihadist curriculum turned basic math equations into counting bullets and grenades.

But by then fleeing was a punishable offense, and the cost of smuggling an entire family out of Mosul rose to \$5,000.

"IS would kill people if they tried to leave," says Adham, a 38-year-old with short gelled hair and a slight build. The worst IS act he says he witnessed was the killing of a young man, perhaps 15 and accused of being gay, who was pushed off a high building. After three attempts that failed to kill the boy, he was shot in the head.

### Fleeing across the Tigris

While residents of Mosul became used to such events – including executions for which people were rounded up and forced to attend, as a lesson of IS punishment – the pressure of recent months was of a different kind, these Mosul residents say.

With the help of a friend, Ahmed, Waha, and their children finally fled by boat across the Tigris River a few nights ago. "If I stayed there, they would kill me," says Ahmed. "The best way was for us to escape."

Adham had already come to the same conclusion.

"We thought every day they would come for us and kill us," says Adham, who began his family's escape three weeks ago. "They call us infidels because we [former police and soldiers] help the Iraqi Army."

Staying behind, he first sent his family: a brother wounded in the head by a sniper, his right arm paralyzed, and his wife and three children, carrying just three bags across a small bridge.

Adham's wife carried a tiny memory chip hidden inside her clothes that had hundreds of incriminating photographs, including many of him in his police uniform. Until then, it had been secreted away inside a pillow.

### An escape in disguise

Two nights later, with the family already safe, it was Adham's turn. He dressed in what Iraqis call the "Kandahar" style favored by extreme Salafist Sunnis like IS – a long thick beard, baggy short trousers, and a characteristic head

covering. He even put a short wooden sprig in his pocket, like those that many IS fighters chew to clean teeth.

Adham carried nothing. He took off during evening prayers, when he knew many IS jihadists would be in mosques, and then – heart racing – he passed quickly and unnoticed through the last IS checkpoint, precisely as an ambulance laden with wounded fighters arrived, which distracted the guards.

"They were busy," says Adham, smiling.

He could not be more angry with IS, and says the earnings of 10 years of work were spent in 2-1/2 years, keeping his family alive when he could not work.

"My dream is to be a policeman again," says Adham. "Right now I want to fight."

Ahmed, too, says he is eager to return to police work. And both men are relatively optimistic that the worst is over, for them at least.



## Hunting Boko Haram, Nigeria's Army Is Accused of Massacring Civilians (UNE)

Dionne Searcey

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria — A wheelbarrow saved his life.

Sprawled across it, Babagana felt every bump, moaning in pain from four bullet wounds. Covered in his blood, his pregnant wife helped roll him across the Nigerian countryside to a hospital.

Somehow, Babagana survived the makeshift ambulance ride. More than 80 men from his village had been shot to death, he said, all of them forced to strip to the waist and lie face down. The gunmen then burned their small farming village before speeding away.

The attack fit the pattern of rampages by Boko Haram, the terrorist group that has killed poor people in this region for years. But Babagana and multiple witnesses to the attack in June, as well as another one days before in a neighboring village, say the radicals were not to blame this time.

Instead, they say, the massacres were carried out by the Nigerian military.

"They told us they were here to help us," said a resident, Falmata, 20, adding that soldiers in uniform shouted for villagers to point out the Boko Haram members among

them. When none were identified, the killings began, she and other witnesses said.

In recent months, the Nigerian military has made great headway in its war against Boko Haram, the radical Islamist militants terrorizing northeast Nigeria.

But the army's aggressive sweeps to root out the remaining fighters have taken a toll on more than just Boko Haram. Witnesses are accusing Nigerian soldiers of killing unarmed civilians, as well.

Reports of civilian massacres have emerged in recent weeks as residents from areas previously sealed off by Boko Haram start to stream out.

"As more combatants from Boko Haram have been hiding within the civilian population, the line between who is civilian and who is not has been blurred," said Agnes Bjorn, a manager for Plan International, an aid group. "It is, however, the responsibility of the Nigerian Army to protect civilians and clearly distinguish between civilians and combatants. Protecting civilians in war is part of international humanitarian law."

The Nigerian Army has a long record of human rights abuses. In 2013, soldiers burned homes and

opened fire in the village of Baga, killing as many as 200 people, survivors said. Civilians have complained for years of arbitrary detentions, torture and killing by soldiers. Worried about such abuses, the American government held up the sale of attack helicopters to the Nigerian military.

President Muhammadu Buhari, a former general elected on promises to defeat Boko Haram and stamp out corruption, pledged to clean up the abuses.

"We are guided by rules and guided by our transparency of operations," said Brig. Gen. Rabe Abubakar, the director of defense information for the Nigerian military. He denied that the military was responsible for the massacres, contending that insurgents, "criminal elements" or cult members could be to blame.

Many observers give the president credit for pressing the campaign against Boko Haram and taking steps toward professionalizing the military.

Soldiers have pushed into forests that have long hidden Boko Haram fighters. New villages have been freed, and major roads have reopened. The army says it has scattered Boko Haram and encouraged many of the nearly two million people in Nigeria who have

been uprooted by violence to go back home.

"What you find now is a collection of ragtags that are running from pillar to post," Maj. Gen. Leo Iboror, the commander leading the fight against Boko Haram, said of the militants at a recent news conference.

Nigerian soldiers in Borno State last year. The army has made progress in the fight against Boko Haram. Stefan Heunis/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

In some areas, soldiers have treated sick residents, helped with food handouts and repaired wells. Here in Borno State, the center of the battle against Boko Haram, one commander even secured a film projector to host a movie night in a displaced persons camp, screening "Tom and Jerry" cartoons and movies in two local languages.

But allegations of abuse continue. The military has detained children and infants for weeks at a time after their families have escaped or been freed from Boko Haram territory. Huge detention centers have been set up to hold families until civilians with perceived sympathies for Boko Haram can be weeded out. Last month, the Nigerian military mistakenly bombed a displaced

persons camp, killing at least 90 civilians.

Humanitarian workers for the United Nations said they had heard repeated complaints from civilians that the military had been evacuating villages and burning them to the ground. On a helicopter flight over the area, the blackened remains of small villages were clear.

Inside one enormous camp for displaced persons, on the grounds of an old science-theme high school, several residents said the military ordered them to leave their villages to carry out operations against insurgents.

Shortly after they fled, they said, their villages were set ablaze.

Salamatu Omaru, an elderly woman living in the camp with her sister, said the military told everyone in her village of Uruga to clear out three weeks ago. A relative sneaked back to check on their homes, she said, only to find them burned. Like most residents with similar complaints, Ms. Omaru was uncertain whether soldiers or insurgents were responsible.

But witnesses had few such doubts about the massacres last year in Marte, a dangerous region where military officials say operations against insurgents continue.

Residents acknowledge that Boko Haram had recruited fighters from the tiny villages in the area. Militants would also go to a market there to get fuel and meat. Last summer, soldiers killed three Boko Haram members in Marte and captured 11 others, recovering hand grenades and weapons.

A few days before the massacres in June, witnesses said, soldiers and local vigilantes surrounded the village of Ngubdori, a small farming community in the area. They rounded up all

residents, including those out working in the fields, witnesses said.

Men were forced to remove their shirts, perhaps to reveal any weapons they might be hiding. They stood bare-chested before the soldiers, said Mallam, a 25-year-old man who complied.

Point out the Boko Haram members among you, soldiers told the residents, witnesses recounted. The villagers argued back, saying that none among them were insurgents.

"We told them we'd also been attacked by Boko Haram from time to time," said Mallam, who, like several other witnesses, asked that his last name not be used to protect him from reprisals by the military. "But we had nowhere to go. Our farms were there, and we hadn't yet harvested. Our livestock was there."

At one point, two men stepped from inside their homes. The soldiers shot both of them, witnesses said. Seven other men came out of their homes and were shot, too.

"We watched so many of them killed like that," Mallam said.

Then the soldiers turned their weapons on the crowd, gunning down 13 more men. The soldiers grabbed a canister of fuel, doused rags and set fire to all the grass huts before leaving.

"We separated the corpses from the ones who had not yet died," said another resident, Zainaba, 42, adding that she lost six relatives that day. "All of our bodies were stained with blood."

About four days later, a missile landed in the nearby village of Alamderi, announcing the arrival of soldiers.

A bullet wound in the left hip of Babagana, a survivor of a rampage

that witnesses say was carried out by the Nigerian military, in villages in the Marte area. Ashley Gilbertson for The New York Times

"That was our first indication trouble was coming," Babagana said.

He and a community official were just outside the village when they heard the missile, followed by gunshots, he said. The two returned with their hands in the air "to indicate our loyalty," Babagana said.

But when they arrived, the soldiers were already burning homes. Everyone in the village had their hands up.

"Drop your hands," Babagana recalled soldiers saying. "We're here to fish out your Boko Haram."

The soldiers gathered women and children to one side of the village and told them not to look back.

"I'll show you who's Boko Haram," Babagana recalled one soldier saying before he picked men from the crowd and shot them. "I ask you again. 'Who is Boko Haram?'"

The group pleaded with the soldiers, witnesses said. The soldiers made the men lie face down on the ground. They started shooting.

One woman, Fanna, said she and the other women secretly turned their heads toward the gunfire. "We wanted to know whose husband was being killed," she said.

Babagana, lying with the men, said he tilted his head to see what was happening. But before he could get a clear picture, he was shot, too. The gunfire stopped, but soldiers noticed his leg twitching. They shot him again, he said.

The soldiers drove off in military vehicles, and women rushed to the

bullet-riddled bodies of their husbands.

Maryam, 20, said she ran crying to her husband, Babagana. Others dug shallow graves. Corpses, many with bullet wounds to the head, were stacked in piles, but Babagana was still breathing. Maryam propped him up against a wall.

"I was praying for him," she said. An hour passed before Babagana opened his eyes. He drifted in and out of consciousness.

Villagers from nearby poured into town once the gunfire stopped. Several took turns pushing Babagana for hours until they persuaded a vehicle to take them to a hospital. His medical records confirmed four gunshot wounds.

"We were all stained with his blood," Maryam said.

The couple, along with other witnesses interviewed, now live in one of the most squalid camps for displaced people in Maiduguri, the biggest town in the state where Boko Haram is active.

General Irabor has promised that anyone harboring or helping Boko Haram would be ensured psychological counseling to help them understand they were "with the wrong people."

But witnesses of the massacres in Marte say they had been victims of Boko Haram, not collaborators.

Last week, even the camp where they had taken refuge was set upon by nine suicide bombers from Boko Haram, the most coordinated attack in months. The witnesses stumbled upon the decapitated head of a girl, apparently that of a bomber, shortly before being interviewed for this article.

"We wanted to tell our story," Zainaba said.



## Editorial : When a famine points to a deeper need

The Christian Science Monitor

February 27, 2017 —Last week, the United Nations issued its first famine alert in six years, citing a dire need for aid to reach 100,000 people currently facing starvation in South Sudan. At least another million people in the East African nation are on the brink of famine, the UN said, a result largely of a three-year civil war. The alert drew welcome promises of food aid from a few wealthy nations. But equally in need is a fresh way to end the conflict in the world's youngest country.

South Sudan, which has a large Christian population, gained

independence from mostly Arab Sudan in 2011. Within two years, its leaders split in a violent power struggle, triggering tribal differences and worries about a potential genocide. Nearly a third of the country's 11 million people have been displaced. Now starvation is spreading, forcing a renewed focus on efforts to reconcile South Sudanese at the grass-roots level.

The country's president, Salva Kiir, promises a "national dialogue" to achieve a political settlement. But he has yet to start the process and is widely distrusted. He also rejects a proposal for transitional administration run by the UN. In addition, foreign mediators, such as

other African nations, have failed to end the fighting. To facilitate a peace process, many experts point to the country's most trusted and impartial institution, the South Sudan Council of Churches, which is made up of different Christian faiths.

With foreign aid, the council has begun reconciliation work in villages divided by conflict or beset by militias. "The people of South Sudan must come to terms with the effects of trauma and rebuild ties between communities in order to lay the foundation for long-term peace and reconciliation," said Bob Leavitt, an official at the US Agency for

International Development, last year.

In addition, the ecumenical council has reached out to world leaders of the Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Presbyterian churches for support. This week, Pope Francis said he hopes to travel to South Sudan soon along with the head of the Anglican Church, Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

To bring its famine as well as its cycle of violence to an end, South Sudan needs the kind of patience that religious leaders can offer in bringing rival leaders and groups together in public discussions about social healing. Other countries that have suffered conflict, such as



Liberia and Ghana, have found reconciliation by relying on traditional methods of arbitration.

South Sudan must do the same, community by community, even as

food aid is rushed to its hungriest people.



## English speakers fight for equality in French-run Cameroon

Christian Locka,  
Special for USA

TODAY

Cameroon's president Paul Biya Dec. 6, 2013. (Photo: Alain Jocard,, AFP/Getty Images)

YAOUNDÉ, Cameroon — Tamanjong Stella is upset because her children's school is closed, a victim of a bitter dispute between English-speaking protesters and the government of this largely French-speaking central African nation.

"The teachers say they cannot start classes until the government has removed the security forces that are posted everywhere," said Stella, who lives in Bamenda, the capital of one of two English-speaking regions of Cameroon. "I do not know what is going to become of my children without school."

Months of protests and clashes with government troops have not only forced schools to close, but the Internet also has been shutdown and dissidents have been jailed as English-speaking citizens demand equal rights.

Although English and French are both official languages, the English speakers say President Paul Biya, 83, discriminates against them by installing French teachers, judges and officials in their regions.

"Francophone teachers who teach English-speaking children must be removed and replaced by English-speaking teachers," said Wilfried Tassang, executive secretary of the Cameroon Teachers Trade Unions, whose members walked out of their schools three months ago. "Francophone judges must also be

removed to have English-speaking judges."

In December, police killed at least four people in a market in Bamenda after a strike by teachers and lawyers. A month earlier, police killed one person and arrested more than 60 during violent protests there.

The conflict stems from Cameroon's colonial past, when separate parts of the country achieved independence from Britain and France in the early 1960s and the English-speaking regions opted to join Cameroon rather than neighboring Nigeria. The resulting country was supposed to draw strength from its linguistic diversity.

"We should never forget that we are walking in the footsteps of our country's founding fathers, our national heroes, who shed their blood to bequeath to posterity a nation that is united in its diversity," Biya said late last year in a rare statement about the conflict. "Cameroon's unity is therefore a precious legacy with which no one should take liberties."

Critics said Biya could quell the protests by granting more powers to the English-speaking regions. "President Biya said that the founding fathers wanted a rich country with its diversity, but this diversity is also linguistic," said George Ngwane, who has written books about Cameroon's politics.

A week before Biya issued his statement, security forces arrested the leaders of the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium, a banned group, without making the charges public.

The group had organized "ghost town" demonstrations, where people refused to leave their homes or go to work.

Joseph Ayeah Chongsi, executive director of Human Rights, Peace and Advocacy, said Biya needed to hold accountable police who had killed citizens at protests or in jail or locked up activists without explanation.

"The Cameroonian government must set up an independent commission to investigate all suspected cases of death, particularly those arising during custody," said Chongsi.

The problem has disrupted the economy of the two English-speaking regions, especially after Biya shut down the Internet in those provinces in mid-January.

Travel agent Awah Francis in Buea, capital of the southern English-speaking province, said he can't book tickets or make financial transactions without Internet access.

"It is absolutely unacceptable," Francis said. "I am obliged to travel to the capital to make money transfers, to receive my salary or even to consult my (email) mailbox. The banking establishments do not have a connection. We are tired of this suffering."

The Roman Catholic Church, a powerful force in the country, offered to mediate the dispute, but so far Biya has instead asked chiefs, religious authorities and trade union leaders to find a solution to the crisis.

"There is need for dialogue, because violence, separation or anger never solves any problem. People must sit at the table to talk," said Kwai Amos, a Catholic priest in the English-speaking Northwestern province.

That isn't enough for many young adults who say they are missing opportunities and see a bleak future ahead.

Edmondo Bayo, 24, from the English-speaking Northwestern province, left Cameroon last year to find more opportunities in Europe and hopes to join his brother who is studying in England.

Bayo took part in the December protests, but says he was arrested and tortured for three days. He escaped his captors and made his way to Lesbos, Greece, along with about 30 other English-speaking Cameroonians who are living in a refugee camp waiting to be granted asylum in Europe.

"They call us young rebels, saying that we want to divide the country," he said. "But as English-speaking people in Cameroon, we can't find a job."

Edmondo Bayo, an English-speaking refugee from Cameroon inside the Moria refugee camp that was snowed in the beginning of January. He escaped his country to search for more opportunities in Europe. (Photo: Associated Reporters Abroad)

Read or Share this story: <http://usat.ly/2IMvZps>



## Afghanistan's Approach to Russian Diplomacy: Keep It in the Family

Mujib Mashal  
and Jawad

Sukhanyar

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Afghan ambassador to Russia is known for his undiplomatic talk and his signature aviator glasses. He has insulted a close ally of his host country. His second passport is an American one.

Qayyum Kochai, 76, may seem miscast as a young nation's chief envoy to Russia, a country whose long, tricky relationship with Afghanistan is seen as critical to its future.

But Mr. Kochai is also an uncle of President Ashraf Ghani, and in

Afghanistan, the most important diplomacy is often kept in the family.

The seat Mr. Kochai occupies was vacated by Azizullah Karzai, an older uncle of Mr. Ghani's predecessor as president, Hamid Karzai; before that, the post was held by another president's kinsman.

"Basically, the Moscow embassy has been at the service of the relatives of whoever has led the country," said Kamal Nabizada, an Afghan businessman who once served as chargé d'affaires in Moscow.

Mr. Kochai's history of leaving a trail of contentious remarks in his wake

worries some. In an interview, however, he said he had not asked for the job, but was persuaded to take it because of his qualifications.

There was "a national need" for an experienced diplomat who speaks Russian and has followed the country, which he has since his student days and his time as a junior diplomat there in the late 1960s, he said.

In Moscow, Mr. Kochai will be managing a delicate relationship with a country that could tip the scale of the long war in Afghanistan in either direction, and, according to Afghan and American officials, has contributed recently to growing

instability. They say that Russia is lending legitimacy to the Taliban insurgents by openly acknowledging contacts with them at a time when violence has escalated. At the same time, Russia has been cold to the Kabul government, apparently seeing Mr. Ghani as being too close to the United States at Russia's expense.

Russian officials justify their contacts with the Taliban because they say the militants are fighting the Islamic State, which Russia fears particularly because it includes Central Asian elements that may threaten Russian territory. The United States commander in Afghanistan, however, in recent

testimony to the Senate, said that the Russians were trying to undermine NATO's mission in the country, and that it was the Afghan government that was fighting Islamic State, not the Taliban.

Historically, Russia has been an important player in Afghanistan, from the Great Game between Russia and Britain in the 19th century to the Soviet Union's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan in support of its communist allies in Kabul.

Omar Nessar, the director of the Moscow-based Center for Contemporary Afghan Studies, said Russia had cooperated with the United States' mission in Afghanistan for much of the past 15 years because it saw Al Qaeda as a shared threat. But the recent change of policy — to not only stop cooperating with the United States in Afghanistan, but also start working with the enemy — was as much shaped by events in Syria and Crimea, both places where the United States has challenged Russian interests.

Mr. Kochai, who will be working from a mansion designed by Lev Kekushev, an Art Nouveau architect, and given to the Afghan government by Lenin, agrees that he has a challenging task at hand.

United States Army soldiers overseeing training of Afghan Army members in Helmand Province in 2016. Many Russians believe Ashraf Ghani's government is too close to the United States. Adam Ferguson for The New York Times

"The government of Russia does not have faith in the government of Afghanistan, they think the Afghan government is a puppet of the Americans, which is baseless," Mr. Kochai said. "I have talked to them a lot, that that perception of theirs is wrong. Afghanistan is an independent country — the U.S. has helped us a lot, militarily and economically, they haven't destroyed our country, they haven't invaded our country."

He says he has advised Russian officials against establishing ties to the Taliban at the expense of the Afghan government, reminding them how Russians considered the Taliban regime of the 1990s an adversary and how the Russian Supreme Court declared the Taliban insurgency a terrorist group in 2003.

"My belief is that just as the Taliban are being used by Pakistan and have no free will of their own, tomorrow they will be used by the Russians," Mr. Kochai said.

Mr. Kochai's position is the continuation of a long tradition that has kept some of the most sensitive projects within the family.

When Mr. Karzai, the former president, hoped to start peace talks with the Taliban, he tasked his brother — a restaurateur in the United States who pivoted, briefly, to become a lawmaker known for chronic absenteeism — with making secret trips to Saudi Arabia and meeting with insurgent leaders there. In the later part of his 13-year

tenure, as Mr. Karzai became disenchanted with the United States, which had helped bring him to power, he grew increasingly close to Russia.

His choice for ambassador to Moscow was his uncle Azizullah, a mild-mannered man well into his 70s who had been living in the United States.

Mr. Ghani came into office with a promise of cleaning up what he called a mess of corruption and nepotism. At one public forum he said that if any of his relatives were seen in the highest circles of power, "you can chop off my hand."

Many knew he had spoken too much, too soon.

Already, several family members and relatives were lurking in the shadows of the presidential palace, chief among them his uncle Mr. Kochai, who had returned to Afghanistan from California.

Mr. Kochai quickly became seen as an informal special envoy of Mr. Ghani, traveling to countries in the Persian Gulf to attend forums with the Taliban. And as he did, his comments about some of the powerful former warlords and strongmen in Kabul impeding peace created further problems for his nephew's already shaky coalition government.

After one episode, Mr. Ghani had to personally travel to the villa of one angry former warlord in a visit that was seen as an apology for his uncle's remarks.

On a visit to California to be with his ailing wife, Mr. Kochai appeared for nearly three hours on a call-in television show on a channel aimed at the Afghan diaspora, where he insulted Tajikistan, one of Russia's closest allies and a former Soviet state. He said the booming narcotics business in Afghanistan was largely fueled by the mafia from Tajikistan, a country that did not have its own culture, but had adopted a Russian one. (He insists that his comments were taken out of context.)

Tajikistan reacted with anger, sending a letter of protest to the Afghan government. The Russian special envoy to Afghanistan called Mr. Kochai's comments "abusive and unacceptable." And the Afghan Foreign Ministry put out a statement saying the ambassador's words did not represent the policy of the Afghan government.

Mr. Nessar, from the Center for Contemporary Afghan Studies, said the only apparent reason for Mr. Ghani to choose his uncle as ambassador to Russia was a hope that Moscow would respond positively to a gesture promising intimate access.

But, he said, "If there is a perception in Afghanistan that the ambassador's personal relationship with the president will help in Russian policies, that is an incorrect perception." He added: "Ghani sent his uncle based on this same perception," to little avail.



## Editorial : Lingerin Questions in the Yemen Raid

The Editorial Board

President Trump arriving at Dover Air Force Base to pay respects to Chief Petty Officer William Owens, who was killed in Yemen. Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

The first military operation President Trump authorized, a rare and risky raid in Yemen on Jan. 28, resulted in the deaths of a Navy SEAL and as many as 29 civilians. That led to reasonable questions from members of Congress, including Republicans, who wanted to know what went wrong and whether there were lessons to be learned.

The Trump administration tried to shut down those inquiries, calling them an affront to the legacy of the fallen service member, Chief Petty Officer William Owens.

Chief Owens's father begs to differ. Bill Owens told The Miami Herald in an interview published Sunday that he has several lingering questions

about the mission during which his son, known as Ryan, was killed. "Don't hide behind my son's death to prevent an investigation," he said. "The government owes my son an investigation."

The Pentagon routinely conducts investigations into the deaths of service members, the destruction of military equipment in battle and credible reports of civilian casualties. Such inquiries are now underway regarding the Yemen mission, which the Pentagon says was carried out primarily to gather intelligence on the branch of Al Qaeda in that country.

But there are broader questions those reviews are unlikely to address that Congress should demand answers to. The most important is whether national security officials in the Trump administration carefully considered the risks and potential benefits of the operation, and explained them to Mr. Trump before the president

approved it just five days after taking office. The military had considered carrying out the raid for months, but Obama administration officials did not sign off on it before the end of Mr. Obama's term.

Mr. Trump was reportedly briefed on the plans over dinner with members of the national security team, his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and his domestic policy counselor, Stephen Bannon.

Another question is whether the operation yielded valuable intelligence. In the immediate aftermath of the raid, White House officials described it as an intelligence coup that would save American lives. That assertion was called into question after the Pentagon, in an unusual move, released footage seized during the raid in an effort to highlight the value of the intelligence gathered, only to later acknowledge that a version of that video had been available online for years.

When Senator John McCain, who heads the Senate Armed Services Committee, suggested the raid had been a failure, Mr. Trump attacked him in a series of tweets, defiantly claiming that "Ryan died on a winning mission" and that debating the success or failure of a military operation "only emboldens the enemy!"

A spokesman for Mr. McCain said on Monday that the senator has no plans to hold hearings on the mission and that he has not sent the Pentagon a formal inquiry seeking more details. He should. The Trump administration needs to learn the lessons of any mistakes made in the raid. And Mr. Owens deserves to know whether his son died in a worthwhile pursuit or a botched mission of dubious value.

## Chinese Diplomat Meets Trump, Holds White House Talks

Felicia Schwartz

Updated Feb. 27,

2017 11:02 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—China's top diplomat briefly met President Donald Trump on Monday during a visit to Washington that comes as the two countries move to improve relations roiled by Mr. Trump's harsh campaign stances toward Beijing.

State Councilor Yang Jiechi became the highest-ranking Chinese official to meet with administration officials since Mr. Trump took office. His visit also comes as Mr. Trump charts a course on North Korea policy amid Pyongyang's increasing provocations.

Mr. Yang briefly exchanged greetings with Mr. Trump on Monday after meeting with the president's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, and the White House national security

adviser, Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, according to White House press secretary Sean Spicer. China's Foreign Ministry said Mr. Yang also spoke to Trump political adviser Steve Bannon. He will meet Tuesday with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

Chinese state media said Mr. Yang is expected to discuss setting up a meeting between Mr. Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit. The Chinese side brought a six-person delegation to its White House meetings, Mr. Spicer said.

Mr. Tillerson spoke with Mr. Yang by phone last week, and the two officials later affirmed their commitment to a "constructive bilateral relationship" and discussed the need to address the threat posed by North Korea, State Department spokesman Mark Toner said.

Planned back-channel talks set for early March between North Korean

government officials and former U.S. officials were scrapped last week after the State Department withdrew visa approvals for a key North Korean official.

It wasn't clear Monday why the State Department did so, but recent North Korean provocations since Mr. Trump took office, including test-firing a new missile while Mr. Trump huddled with his Japanese counterpart Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, as well as the suspected assassination of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's half brother may have contributed.

Before taking office, Mr. Trump upset Beijing when he spoke with Taiwan's president and said the U.S. might not continue its "One China" policy, under which the U.S. has supported China's position that Taiwan is part of China, but maintains a strong unofficial relationship with Taiwan.

Earlier this month, however, Mr. Trump lowered tensions and affirmed his commitment to the "One China" policy in a phone call with Mr. Xi.

Also Monday, the State Department's special representative for North Korea policy Joseph Yun met with senior Japanese and South Korean officials at the State Department.

The U.S., Japan and South Korea released a joint statement after the meeting, saying North Korea's nuclear and missile programs directly threaten the three countries.

"The officials considered other possible measures under national authorities, including means to restrict further the revenue sources for North Korea's weapons programs, particularly illicit activities," according to the statement.

Write to Felicia Schwartz at Felicia.Schwartz@wsj.com

## James Woolsey and Peter Vincent Pry : Don't underestimate North Korea's nuclear arsenal, from R. James Woolsey and Peter Pry

R. James Woolsey and Peter Vincent Pry

Feb. 27, 2017 6:54 p.m. ET

North Korea successfully tested a solid-fueled missile earlier this month, the latest in a series of technological leaps. Instant experts allege Pyongyang is not yet a serious nuclear threat to the U.S. Some reporters say North Korea does not have "miniaturized" nuclear warheads for missile delivery and that its weapons are primitive—even after five nuclear tests. These are dangerous delusions.

Google the history of nuclear testing and weapons development, and North Korea's tests suddenly seem a lot more serious. This has all been done by the U.S., the Soviet Union, China, Britain, France, Israel, South Africa, India and Pakistan. History suggests North Korea already has nuclear-missile warheads and a sophisticated array of nuclear weapons.

Testing is not necessary to develop nuclear weapons. The first atomic bomb, which used enriched uranium, was never tested: Hiroshima was the test. The second one, which used plutonium, was tested once and worked perfectly at Trinity and on Nagasaki.

France entered the nuclear club in 1960 with a sophisticated high-yield

fission weapon that worked perfectly on its first test.

According to the Wisconsin Project and defector Mordechai Vanunu, Israel developed a sophisticated array of nuclear weapons from the 1960s to the '80s—all without testing. Its arsenal ranges from high-yield thermonuclear missile warheads to low-yield tactical weapons, including neutron warheads.

South Africa also developed nuclear weapons and designed a missile warhead without testing. India and Pakistan designed atomic bombs, thermonuclear warheads and neutron warheads 20 years before testing.

North Korea built its first atomic weapons by 1994, more than a decade before testing. Yet the yield of North Korean nuclear tests isn't known. Estimating yields from seismic signals is inexact. Press reporting on estimates for North Korea's January 2016 test range from 4 to 50 kilotons. The estimated yield for North Korea's fifth nuclear test, in September 2016, is between 20 and 30 kilotons.

Less known: North Korea could conduct decoupled tests to hide their true yield. Decoupling entails detonating a device in a cavity to dampen the signal by as much as 10-fold. A 100 kiloton test could look like 10 kilotons.

And low-yield tests may indicate more-advanced nuclear technology. High-yield testing is usually done for political reasons and to study nuclear-weapon effects. Low-yield testing is scarier because it is usually done to verify design principles for a more advanced generation of nuclear weapons.

In 1946 the U.S. used 23-kiloton Nagasaki-type atomic bombs to study blast and radiation effects on ships and structures. But it was the 1951 nuclear tests of mostly low-yield devices, between 1 and 8 kilotons, that confirmed new designs to expand the U.S. deterrent. America went from 50 atomic bombs in 1948 to hundreds of new weapons, including hydrogen bombs.

Two of the most significant early Soviet nuclear tests had yields of only 2 kilotons and 3.5 kilotons, but these foreshadowed tactical nuclear weapons, including nuclear artillery and torpedoes.

Pakistan's nuclear test series in 1998 had yields of mostly only 1 kiloton. At the time, the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission said these were "neutron bombs—a battlefield weapon that is essentially a low-yield device." Almost immediately afterward, Pakistan deployed nuclear-armed missiles and bombers.

North Korea has intercontinental ballistic missiles, the mobile KN-08 and KN-14, that can strike the U.S. mainland. They are probably nuclear-armed. Following North Korea's fourth illegal nuclear test in January, the Pentagon warned that Pyongyang might have tested components of a hydrogen bomb.

The Congressional EMP Commission—and Russian, Chinese and South Korean sources—assess that North Korea probably has nuclear arms specialized for electromagnetic pulse, what the Russians call "Super-EMP" weapons. These warheads would be low-yield because they are designed to produce gamma rays, not a big explosion.

These are the most dangerous weapons known to man. A single Super-EMP warhead detonated over North America could permanently black out the U.S. and Canada and kill up to 90% of the population through starvation and societal collapse.

Since North Korea and Iran are strategic partners, and since nuclear testing is unnecessary to develop weapons, Iran too might already have nuclear-armed missiles.

Among the senior national-security experts who share these views are William Graham, chairman of the

EMP Commission; Henry Cooper, former director of the Strategic Defense Initiative; and Fritz Ermarth, who chaired the National Intelligence Council.

The U.S. should immediately harden its national electric grid to

deter and defeat a nuclear EMP attack. Further, it should quickly redeploy Aegis guided missile cruisers to America's most vulnerable regions. Looking to the future, President Trump must work with Congress to modernize the U.S. nuclear deterrent and revive

President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative by deploying space-based missile defenses to render nuclear missiles obsolete.

*Mr. Woolsey was director of the Central Intelligence Agency (1993-95). Mr. Pry, chief of staff of the*

*Congressional EMP Commission, has worked in the House Armed Services Committee and served in the CIA.*

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## In Japan, a scandal over a school threatens to entangle Abe

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

TOKYO — Japan's prime minister is facing the biggest crisis of his tenure, caught up in a burgeoning scandal that involves a shady land deal, allegations of a coverup and a kindergarten sending out notes about "wicked" Koreans and Chinese.

Shinzo Abe strongly denies any wrongdoing, and his wife, Akie Abe, has resigned as "honorary principal" of the planned school at the center of the firestorm. But the scandal shows no sign of going away anytime soon.

"There are so many questions that need to be answered," said Koichi Nakano, a professor of political science at Sophia University and sharp critic of the Abe government. "We don't know whether Abe was directly involved, but even if he wasn't, this will still hurt him."

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

Please provide a valid email address.

It all started with a local story about hate speech.

Tsukamoto kindergarten in Toyonaka, Osaka prefecture, sent a letter to parents in which it described Korean residents of Japan and Chinese people as having "wicked ideas," using a derogatory term for Chinese.

Yasunori Kagoike, the chairman of the organization that runs the private kindergarten, has admitted to sending the letter.

*[Abe heads to Washington this week bearing pledges of jobs and investment]*

A separate note said, "The problem is that people who have inherited the spirit [of Koreans] exist in our country with the looks of Japanese people." Kyodo News reported the contents of the letter, citing a copy obtained from a parent.

A video from a sports day in 2015, also obtained by Kyodo, shows a child at the school saying: "We want

China and South Korea, which portray Japan as a villain, to be repentant. We'll root for Prime Minister Abe."

Abe sought to distance himself from the school Monday, saying under questioning in the Diet, or parliament, that he had no idea what was being taught.

Abe had previously described Kagoike as having "an ideology similar to mine" but said Monday that it was not appropriate for a school leader to discriminate "based on race, nationality and religion."

"Of course I don't want the kids to root for me like that, and I don't think it's an appropriate thing for them to say," Abe said.

Osaka is home to a high proportion of Japan's ethnically Korean residents, a legacy of Japan's colonial occupation of the Korean Peninsula in the early 20th century.

Children aged 3 to 5 who attend the private kindergarten sing the national anthem in front of the Japanese flag and recite the Imperial Rescript on Education, an 1890 tract that calls on Japanese to "offer yourselves courageously to the state" to "guard and maintain the prosperity of our Imperial throne." The rescript was abolished after Japan's defeat in World War II, when the emperor's role in Japan was reduced to that of a ceremonial figurehead.

The kindergarten, whose website says it will teach children to "respect the courtesy of Japanese and foster patriotism," apologized for the "misunderstanding" about its statements.

*[ Trump reaffirms U.S.-Japan security alliance in bid to soothe fears in Tokyo ]*

But the scandal really erupted when it emerged that Moritomo Gakuen, the educational organization that runs the kindergarten, had bought a plot of land for what it hoped would become the "Shinzo Abe Memorial Elementary School" at a vastly reduced price.

The new school, which is due to open in April, touts itself on its website as the "first and only Shinto elementary school" and says it will

"foster children who hold pride in being Japanese and have a solid backbone." Shinto is the animist religion of Japan, and Abe is an adherent.

Moritomo Gakuen paid \$1.2 million last year for a two-acre plot of land that was appraised at \$8.4 million. The discount was ostensibly because the land contained buried rubbish and some contamination, although the state reimbursed the organization almost \$1.2 million — the same as the sale price — for cleanup costs.

"Didn't the state give the land away for free?" asked Takeshi Miyamoto, a lawmaker in Japan's Communist Party.

A neighboring, slightly larger plot of land was sold to the city of Toyonaka to build a park for \$12.5 million — 10 times the amount the school paid — in 2010.

Now, the Finance Ministry is saying that it threw out the records on the land negotiation after the deal was concluded, leading opposition politicians to accuse the government of a coverup. The Board of Audit is investigating.

Abe said that he asked Moritomo Gakuen not to use his name in connection with the school but that the organization has ignored the request in its fundraising drive.

"It is extremely regrettable that my name was used in that manner despite my repeated requests to stop it," Abe told a parliamentary committee last week. He has said he will resign as both prime minister and as a member of parliament if he or his wife are found to have done anything wrong.

Akie Abe, who had previously praised the principal's "passion," was to serve as honorary principal of the school. But she resigned from the post Friday, and all reference to her was scrubbed from the school's website.

*[ Japan's prime minister-in-waiting to make her debut in Washington ]*

The case has triggered allegations not just of bigotry but of political collusion.

Kagoike, the chairman of the educational organization, is an

executive member of the Osaka chapter of Nippon Kaigi, a nationalist group that has close ties to the prime minister and numerous members of his ruling party, including some in his cabinet.

Nippon Kaigi has among its goals to "nurture patriotism" and to adopt a new constitution "based on our nation's true characteristics," rather than the document written by Japan's American occupiers after World War II.

Abe, an arch-conservative who has said he wants to make Japan a "beautiful country" again, has been working to revise the constitution to loosen some of the postwar shackles imposed on Japan.

But Nippon Kaigi's goals are widely seen as intended to restore the strength Japan had before the war. Kagoike promoted constitutional revision in a newsletter to kindergarten parents, encouraging them to "emulate a great man like Prime Minister Shinzo Abe."

If the case continues to snowball and if Abe is found to have a greater role than disclosed, it could gravely hurt the prime minister, analysts say.

"This could be so damaging that it could shake the foundation of the Abe administration," said Eiken Itagaki, a political analyst and former reporter for the left-leaning Mainichi newspaper.

The case encompassed local political and budgetary issues, but it also could cause a diplomatic storm with Japan's closest neighbors. "Prime Minister Abe might think this story is a minor issue, but it has the potential to become very damaging," Itagaki said.

Abe has been enjoying approval ratings above 60 percent in polls and faces very few challenges, either from within his party or from the main opposition Democratic Party. But the widening scandal could cause him to delay plans to dissolve the lower house of parliament and call a general election.

Yuki Oda contributed to this report.

## Philippine militant group posts video claiming to show beheading of German hostage

By Paul Schemm and Brian Murphy

LONDON — An Islamic State-affiliated group in the Philippines posted a video on Monday purporting to show the beheading of a 71-year-old German hostage after a deadline for his ransom had expired, a monitoring group reported.

The SITE Intelligence Group said the video was posted by the Abu Sayyaf group on its Telegram social media account and follows Sunday's deadline for about \$600,000 in ransom.

The authenticity of the video could not be confirmed independently, but a German government spokesman called the slaying a "sad certainty." Abu Sayyaf has carried out similar beheadings of captives in the past, and the latest video brought swift condemnation from authorities in the Philippines.

National News Alerts

Major national and political news as it breaks.

Please provide a valid email address.

"We grieve as we strongly condemn the barbaric beheading of yet another kidnap victim," said Jesus Dureza, an adviser to Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.

The video shows a confused-looking Jürgen Kantner surrounded by armed and masked men in camouflage. "They kill me now," Kantner says before a man with a curved knife saws his head off. The severed head is displayed for the camera.

Kantner last appeared in a video on Feb. 14, when Abu Sayyaf militants demanded the ransom and threatened to kill him if the money was not delivered.

Kantner was seized by the extremists in November, sailing along the coast of the southern Philippines. His wife, Sabine Merz, was killed in the assault on their 53-foot yacht, Rockall.

Abu Sayyaf militants told local media that Merz was killed after she opened fire on them while trying to defend the boat.

In Germany, a statement by government spokesman Steffen Seibert said Kantner was

"barbarically killed" by his captors, suggesting that German experts had determined the video to be authentic.

Seibert said Chancellor Angela Merkel "condemns the abhorrent deed" and called on nations to "stand together and fight" terrorism.

In 2008, Merz and Kantner were kidnapped by Somali pirates and held for nearly two months before a ransom was paid.

*[A shocking beheading is a reminder of the terror threat in the Philippines]*

Abu Sayyaf has taken hostages for decades — and killed captives — as part of a rebellion it has claimed to be waging on behalf of the Muslim minority in the predominantly Roman Catholic Philippines. The government has deemed Abu Sayyaf a terrorist organization, one that operates more like a criminal gang, engaging in kidnapping for ransom, extortion and drug trafficking, among other crimes.

In April, the severed head of a 68-year-old Canadian held by Abu Sayyaf was left on a street in the

southern Philippines, five hours after a ransom deadline.

In November 2015, Abu Sayyaf militants decapitated a Malaysian hostage on the same day that the Malaysian prime minister arrived in Manila for a summit.

Abu Sayyaf — a collection of militant splinter groups — has been weakened by expanded military and police operations over the past decade, but it retains footholds in jungle hideouts used as bases for sporadic attacks and kidnappings. The group had claimed an alliance with al-Qaeda, but it recently publicly proclaimed allegiance to the Islamic State.

The group, which is holding more than 20 foreign captives, has increasingly turned to kidnapping and ransom to raise funds.

A kidnapped German couple was released in 2014 for a reported ransom of \$5.1 million.

Murphy reported from Washington. Stephanie Kirchner in Berlin contributed to this report.

## Clashing Agendas: Antidoping Officials vs. U.S. Olympics Leaders (UNE)

Rebecca R. Ruiz

COLORADO SPRINGS — Executives at the United States Anti-Doping Agency here are agitating for a forceful response to Russia's state-run doping program, lobbying international sports officials for more aggressive sanctions and for an overhaul of the global regulatory system.

Executives at the nearby United States Olympic Committee's headquarters have a different agenda. They are lobbying the same officials to award the 2024 Summer Games to Los Angeles, a likely financial boon for the committee, and have pressured Congress not to amplify the antidoping concerns.

The competing agendas have put some of the most powerful sports executives in the world in conflict as the Olympic Committee enters the final months of its effort to bring the Games back to the United States for the first time since 2002.

"Fighting with an organization responsible for giving future Olympic Games — it's a big

mistake," said Vitaly Smirnov, an influential Russian Olympic official.

He singled out criticisms by Travis Tygart, America's antidoping chief, who has argued for severe penalties against Russia. "This gentleman is doing a very counterproductive job with respect to the Los Angeles bid," Mr. Smirnov said.

The choice for the 2024 Games is down to Los Angeles and Paris, and United States Olympic officials and other powerful interests involved with the bid have expressed concern to members of Congress that the clean-sports crusade could alienate some of the global officials who will make the decision.

Mr. Tygart is to continue his crusade on Tuesday, when he is scheduled to address a House subcommittee about the doping scandal and the ways in which the global sports system could be improved.

Testifying alongside him will be Michael Phelps, the world's most decorated Olympian; Adam Nelson, an American shot putter who was

awarded a gold medal nearly a decade after his 2004 Olympic performance when a competitor was disqualified for doping; as well as officials from the I.O.C. and the World Anti-Doping Agency, to which the United States contributes \$2 million annually.

Scott Blackmun, chief executive of the United States Olympic Committee, acknowledged that over the last year his organization had discussed the pending bid, along with a range of other issues, with both the House and the Senate.

The Senate Commerce committee, which has not called a hearing but confirmed that its parallel inquiry was continuing, said on Saturday that it had "challenged suggestions that the 2024 bid is a legitimate rationale for stopping or delaying necessary oversight of doping in international competition."

Mr. Blackmun said he thought a congressional hearing would be "more productive" after international sports officials had signaled how they planned to address the scandal, and that he supported lawmakers' desire to stay informed.

He also said he supported the fight for clean sports, but that his organization prefers a quieter approach.

As the Russian doping scandal was roiling global sports weeks ahead of the Rio Olympics, with sports officials scrambling to respond to the pressure Mr. Tygart and others were applying in calling for extreme sanctions, the American Olympic committee worked to stave off congressional attention.

"We were not saying hearings were inappropriate, but instead that right in front of the Olympic Games is not the right time," Mr. Blackmun said.

"Travis's style, I would be lying if I told you it wasn't having an impact," he said of Mr. Tygart and the nation's Olympic bid. "At the end of the day, he's doing his job, and he's doing it really well. Would we like him to be a little bit more of a silver-tongued devil? Yes, we would."

Mr. Tygart shrugged off the critiques of his methods. "It's not unusual when you're trying to do the right thing that there are attempts to

pressure you to back off these fundamental values," he said.

Though based mere miles apart, the two prominent officials rarely cross paths in person. If ever, it might happen at the airport, since each travels frequently. They speak by phone every two to three months.

While both organizations are aimed at serving American athletes, their pursuits are not always in harmony. The tension over the last year has not surprised American athletes who have expressed frustration at what they call global officials' hesitancy to discipline Russia for systematic cheating.

Travis Tygart, America's chief antidoping official, will address a House subcommittee about the Russian doping scandal and the ways in which the global sports system could be improved. John Thys/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

"The I.O.C. is responsible for the integrity of the Olympics and keeping it functioning, and they're not doing it," said Sarah Konrad, an American biathlete who until last month was chairwoman of the United States' Olympic Committee's athlete advisory council. "I know Scott Blackmun thinks more needs to be done by WADA and the I.O.C., but he's not willing to get out and stand on a pulpit and say that because of the bid."

Asked to respond to Ms. Konrad's statement, Mr. Blackmun called her "a very smart person."

The host for the 2024 Games will be determined in September by secret ballots cast by the roughly 100  
*Write to O'Grady@wsj.com.*

members of the International Olympic Committee, representing countries from Brazil to Liechtenstein to North Korea. Russia has three members.

The global officials are accustomed to autonomy and may bristle at this week's scrutiny from the American government, prompting some like Ms. Konrad to wonder if a hearing could cause more harm than good.

"We want the I.O.C. to be independent, nothing to do with politics," Gerhard Heiberg, a longtime I.O.C. member from Norway, said. "That is of course not possible, but it could be very difficult to have one nation getting involved in how we are handling doping and putting pressure on us."

Mr. Heiberg said that whims often guided the individual votes of I.O.C. decision-makers. "On Sept. 13, when we choose between Los Angeles and Paris, a lot of people will vote with their hearts," he said.

Congress's interest in the doping scandal, Mr. Tygart's activism and the United States' inquiries into international sports corruption — from the FIFA case focused on soccer's global governing body to a Justice Department investigation into the Russian doping scandal — could inform how some of his colleagues voted, he said.

"It could affect some members — 'you want the Games, fine, but don't mix things up,'" Mr. Heiberg said.

Gian-Franco Kasper of Switzerland, who sits on the I.O.C.'s executive board, also said that Mr. Tygart's outspokenness, coupled with Donald J. Trump's election, could

diminish Los Angeles's attractiveness as host.

Mr. Trump has expressed public support for the Olympic bid, though some of his policies — most notably on immigration, including his recent executive order barring visitors from seven predominantly Muslim nations — have caused concern among sports officials.

Mr. Blackmun said the American Olympic committee had received assurances from the State Department and Homeland Security that global athletes and officials would have no trouble entering the United States in 2024.

"The Games are more than seven years away at this point and, candidly, the I.O.C. has been through this a number of times," Mr. Blackmun said. "I think they have the ability to look past what I would call the short-term political or situational environment."

As a dwindling number of cities have expressed willingness to host the Olympics, the I.O.C.'s president has suggested he would like to see fewer "losers" in the bid process, setting off recent speculation that both Paris and Los Angeles could be chosen at the same time to host two future Summer Olympics, for 2024 and 2028.

Even so, Mr. Blackmun emphasized last week in his fifth-floor office in downtown Colorado Springs, decorated with oversized photographs of American athletes marching in various opening ceremonies, that the United States was exclusively focused on hosting in 2024. If Los Angeles receives the bid, Mr. Blackmun said, the

Summer Games could make an example of the country's strong antidoping system.

A 10-minute drive north, Mr. Tygart walked into the antidoping agency's staff kitchen and pointed to an array of motivational words decorating the wall. "Courage," he said, gesturing above the refrigerator. "That's the most important one."

Mr. Tygart's colleague Edwin Moses — an Olympic medalist and chairman of the American antidoping agency's board — expressed consternation that the agency's principled positions might undermine the bid.

"If standing up for the rights of athletes and fair play somehow makes a country less likely to host the Olympic Games — wow," he said. "That says about all you need to know about that process. It's also exactly why sport has no business trying to police itself."

Ms. Konrad, the Olympic biathlete, said she appreciated that Mr. Tygart had sacrificed a cozy relationship with Olympic officials, displaying the independence he and others have called for regulators to embrace at the global level.

"I can sympathize with people showing restraint because they want L.A. to happen," Ms. Konrad said. "But a clean playing field is more important to me than a home playing field."

## ETATS-UNIS



### Trump touts spending plan, but promise to leave entitlements alone puts GOP in a quandary (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/kelsey.snell.3>

President Trump is preparing a budget that would fulfill some of his top campaign promises by boosting military spending while cutting domestic programs.

But his reluctance to embrace cuts to entitlement programs could lead to sharp tensions with Republicans in Congress who have long argued that Medicare and Social Security must be overhauled to ensure the government's fiscal health.

The White House on Monday announced the first details of the president's spending plan, highlighting a \$54 billion increase in defense spending and equal cuts to domestic programs, such as the Environmental Protection Agency, and foreign aid.

"We are going to do more with less and make the government lean and accountable to the people," Trump told reporters at the White House on Monday morning. "We can do so much more with the money we spend."

White House officials skirted questions about whether the budget would include proposals to slow the growth of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid — the largest drivers of federal spending. But Republican lawmakers, including House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (Wis.), have for years argued that spending increases must be accompanied by significant changes to entitlements.

White House press secretary Sean Spicer insisted Monday that the president intends to keep his campaign promise to preserve the

programs, but avoided commenting on whether there is any wiggle room, such as protecting current beneficiaries while implementing future changes.

"Let me get back to you on the specifics," Spicer told reporters.

Republicans have long advocated significantly changing the programs to address the nation's debt, which is now nearly \$20 trillion.

Independent budget analysts said policy proposals the administration

has released would do little to fix the growing red ink.

"This is a president who loves to talk about easy choices and pretty much runs away from any hard choices when it comes to the budget," said Maya MacGuineas, president of the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. "This president has pointed out that our national debt is an important metric of this country's health, but he has not put forward a plan for how to deal with it."

Monday's announcement was the first indication of spending priorities by the new administration, with the president set to arrive on Capitol Hill on Tuesday to address a joint session of Congress.

In his speech, Trump is expected to outline an optimistic vision for the country, touting his intent to replace the Affordable Care Act, implement policies to help working parents and address national security concerns, including rebuilding the U.S. military.

Ryan and other Republican leaders have avoided weighing in on the specifics of the budget, saying they are waiting to see all the details that will be released in the coming weeks, while speaking positively of the president's overall agenda.

But Ryan has long advocated changing entitlement programs, arguing that their finances are in a perilous state.

"Medicare and Social Security are going bankrupt," he said in October 2012, during a vice presidential debate when he was Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney's running mate. "These are indisputable facts."

White House Budget Director Mick Mulvaney in many ways embodies the fiscal quandary Republicans face under Trump. As a conservative member of Congress from South Carolina, he fashioned himself a deficit hawk who opposed big increases in defense funding and advocated cutting spending for Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and other entitlement programs. Now he is overseeing Trump's effort to greatly increase defense spending while offering no plan to address entitlements.

On Monday, he avoided answering specific questions about the upcoming budget, noting that the first part will be finalized by mid-March with more details set to arrive in May.

Speaking to reporters at the White House, Mulvaney emphasized that the military and domestic spending priorities outlined Monday are intended to send a clear signal that Trump is seeking to fulfill his campaign promises.

"We are taking his words and turning them into policies and dollars," Mulvaney said. "A full budget will contain the entire spectrum of what the president has proposed."

Other tea party Republicans of Mulvaney's ilk may be harder pressed to support a plan calling for defense spending increases not accompanied with more wide-ranging fiscal reforms.

On the other side of the spectrum is Trump, who has long resisted changing entitlements, but also has accumulated a long list of spending priorities.

Speaking at a gathering of governors Monday, Trump said the budget proposal would include "historic" increases in spending to bolster the country's "depleted military," and he said it also would support law enforcement to reduce crime.

He spoke at length about boosting funding for infrastructure projects, which during his campaign he said should receive as much as \$1 trillion in new financing.

"We spent \$6 trillion in the Middle East, and we have potholes all over our highways and our roads," Trump said. "Infrastructure, we're going to start spending on infrastructure — big," he added.

Democrats are gearing up to oppose Trump's agenda and Senate Democrats, in particular, will be under considerable pressure from the party's base to block the president's spending cuts if congressional Republicans support them.

Although the administration has yet to detail the reductions being contemplated, Senate Minority

Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) said they probably will affect key domestic programs.

"A cut this steep almost certainly means cuts to agencies that protect consumers from Wall Street excess, and protect clean air and water," he said.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said the reductions could have a major impact on programs that keep the U.S. workforce competitive.

"The President is surrendering America's leadership in innovation, education, science and clean energy," she said in a statement.

Republican defense hawks, meanwhile, are calling Trump's request for defense spending inadequate.

"With a world on fire, America cannot secure peace through strength with just 3 percent more than President Obama's budget," Senate Armed Services Chairman John McCain (Ariz.) said in a statement. "We can and must do better."

Some Republican veterans of past budget battles also questioned whether the proposed cuts are realistic.

Rep. Mike Simpson (Idaho), who chairs a House Appropriations subcommittee, said flatly that spending bills cutting upward of \$50 billion in nondefense spending could not pass the Republican House.

"You can't get there from here," he said, noting that increases are needed to implement GOP priorities in the departments of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security. "There's more to the government than defense."

Individual agencies were expected to begin the customary process of negotiating budget requests for the upcoming fiscal year with the White House beginning Monday, the aides said. The White House budget office will then begin drafting an official request for fiscal 2018 and submit it to Congress in the coming weeks.

But already, federal agencies and advocates are preparing for potential cuts.

Foreign aid, mostly housed in the State Department, was singled out by the White House as an area that would be targeted. But eliminating all foreign aid would amount to only a 1 percent reduction in discretionary spending — compared with the 10 percent cut the White House is seeking.

The State Department cuts, reportedly as much as 30 percent, would force significant changes in staffing.

"The department is working with the White House and OMB to review its budget priorities," State Department spokesman Mark Toner said. "The department remains committed to a U.S. foreign policy that advances the security and prosperity of the American people."

He did not address the size of the potential cuts.

Politics newsletter

The big stories and commentary shaping the day.

Please provide a valid email address.

The cut to State Department funding comes on top of several signals that the White House is reducing the role and influence of the department and the diplomatic corps.

More than 120 retired three- and four-star generals sent a letter to House and Senate leaders protesting any large reduction in funding for diplomacy.

"Elevating and strengthening diplomacy and development alongside defense are critical to keeping America safe," they wrote.

"We know from our service in uniform that many of the crises our nation faces do not have military solutions alone — from confronting violent extremist groups like ISIS in the Middle East and North Africa to preventing pandemics like Ebola and stabilizing weak and fragile states that can lead to greater instability."

Philip Rucker, Anne Gearan and Mike DeBonis contributed to this report.

**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.**

Timiraos and Louise Radnofsky

Updated Feb. 27, 2017 10:02 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump, in an address to Congress

## Donald Trump is set to boost military spending (UNE)

Michael C. Bender, Nick

on Tuesday, will call for a \$20 billion boost in current military spending and sharp cuts in other programs, and insist on raising budget caps that call for future cuts to defense outlays.

The prime-time speech is Mr. Trump's first opportunity to formally address the nation since Inauguration Day, and aides said he will use that platform to highlight actions during his first month in office and set an affirmative vision for the future with a theme focused

on the "renewal of the American spirit."

"The president will lay out an optimistic vision for the country, crossing traditional lines of party, race, socioeconomic status," White

House press secretary Sean Spicer on Monday.

Mr. Trump is expected to make the case for more defense spending during the address. The White House plan calls for \$603 billion in military spending, which is a 2% boost from current levels. That sum would also represent a \$54 billion, or 10%, increase over budget caps set in law.

Nondefense spending is already set to fall under those budget caps, and to offset the increase in military spending, the Trump administration is proposing to cut discretionary domestic and foreign-aid programs by \$54 billion.

In proposing a boost for the Pentagon, which would be counterbalanced by the cuts, Mr. Trump will signal a significant reordering of America's programs at home and abroad. The proposal also would defer for now an economic stimulus, which Mr. Trump promised during his presidential campaign.

The funding request faces an uncertain fate in Congress, which must pass spending bills with 60 Senate votes and often adopts pieces of the president's budget proposal while discarding others. Democrats are certain to oppose drastic cuts in nondefense spending, and Republicans are split between pressing for deficit reduction and higher military spending.

"Enacting appropriations law—as opposed to proposing nonbinding budget resolutions—will likely require Democratic votes," just as they have in recent years, said New York Rep. Nita Lowey, the top Democrat on the

House Appropriations Committee. "Democrats will not help pass laws that shift more economic burdens onto hard-working American families."

Senior Republican lawmakers said Mr. Trump's proposal didn't push Pentagon spending high enough. After years of automatic spending curbs, "We can and should do more than this level of funding will allow," said Texas Rep. Mac Thornberry, the chairman of the House Armed Services panel. "The administration will have to make clear which problems facing our military they are choosing not to fix."

His Senate counterpart, Arizona GOP Sen. John McCain, said the defense budget should reach \$640 billion. The funding request announced on Monday, he said, was only \$18.5 billion above the level President Barack Obama had proposed for the same year.

With the latest Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll showing Americans sharply divided over Mr. Trump's job performance, the president has little reason to change his approach for major speeches, predicted Fred Yang, a Democratic polling expert who conducted the survey with Republican Bill McInturff.

"The poll suggests he will change few hearts and minds," Mr. Yang said, adding that the current political climate "is not a time for nuance or shading in our politics, policies or presidents.... This sentiment, which is really a quarter-century in the making, is realistically a permanent part of our national dialogue."

Mr. Trump also will use his speech to describe what he views as a round of accomplishments that have

been ignored by the mainstream media, Mr. Spicer said.

He sought to do that in a speech last week to the Conservative Political Action Conference, as he highlighted executive orders that cleared the way for the Keystone and Dakota Access pipelines, withdrew the U.S. from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, and required two regulations to be eliminated for every new one that is created.

While he used the CPAC speech to declare that "the era of empty talk is over," he also said the U.S.-Mexico border wall that he promised on the campaign trail is "way, way, way ahead of schedule," despite lacking the required legislative approval. He also insisted that "jobs are already starting to pour back into our country," without providing any evidence.

Mr. Trump's penchant for what he has called "truthful hyperbole" tends to lead his supporters and opponents to opposite conclusions. His senior policy adviser, Stephen Miller, said on ABC this month that the Trump administration "has done more in three weeks than most presidents have done in an entire administration."

Meanwhile, House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi said on Sunday: "They've done nothing except put Wall Street first, make America sick again, instill fear in our immigrant population in our country, and make sure that Russia maintains its grip on our foreign policy."

The speech will also give Mr. Trump a chance to reset the debate on some top issues facing Congress.

While Republicans in control of the House and Senate have said they are mostly on the same page with Mr. Trump about repealing President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act and overhauling the tax code, there has been little visible progress on those issues after one month.

The address will focus on public safety, including increased border security and improving care for military veterans, Mr. Spicer said. It will also touch on economic opportunities in education and job training, he said.

The president may also weigh in on Republicans' bid to overturn Mr. Obama's health law and enact their own vision of health policy. Republicans in the House, Senate and statehouses have fractured over how to handle the issue, though they remain unified in their desire to see the law overturned, and members from all factions have looked to Mr. Trump to try to settle the dispute in their favor.

The issue has dominated Mr. Trump's activities in the days leading up to the speech, including at White House meetings with governors and health insurers Monday. The president told them that he would say more about his ideas on Tuesday. But aides have said he is likely to stick to more general points about his vision for health policy.

**Write to** Michael C. Bender at [Mike.Bender@wsj.com](mailto:Mike.Bender@wsj.com), Nick Timiraos at [nick.timiraos@wsj.com](mailto:nick.timiraos@wsj.com) and Louise Radnofsky at [louise.radnofsky@wsj.com](mailto:louise.radnofsky@wsj.com)



## Why the EPA faces big cuts under Trump budget proposal

The Christian Science Monitor

February 27, 2017 Washington—Last weekend, President Trump's pick to lead the Environmental Protection Agency told a conservative audience that calls for the agency to be eliminated are "justified."

Key Obama policies — notably the Clean Power Plan to reduce utilities' carbon dioxide emissions — should be dismantled, Scott Pruitt said.

On Monday, the president gave a glimpse of how far his administration is prepared to go to bring that vision about.

The president's proposed budget calls for sizable budget cuts across the government — averaging of 10 percent of nondefense discretionary spending — to pay for a \$54 billion

boost in defense spending. The EPA looks set to be hit particularly hard. One report suggests its budget could be reduced by 24 percent.

Republicans have long had little love for the EPA. But the early days of the Trump administration appear to be something more. George W. Bush, after all, quoted scientists saying the rise in heat-trapping greenhouse gases was "due in large part to human activity." He even sometimes expanded federal funding for climate research.

By contrast, the Trump administration has taken a much harder line.

The evolution of climate change into a badge of intense partisanship has contributed to the widening rift. Moreover, a new strain of the right's

ardently anti-regulatory philosophy has taken hold among many influential conservatives.

To some observers, that's partly a reaction to an Obama administration that pulled environmental policy sharply to the left through executive actions. Now, the question appears to be: How far will the Trump administration go?

"They challenged science in the Bush administration, but it wasn't this constant drumbeat," says Christine Todd Whitman, who was the Bush administration's EPA chief from 2001 to 2003. The Trump team is "undermining the credibility of science, and that is certainly very concerning."

Among the Obama-era decisions that could be reversed or amended:

- United States participation in the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.
- The Clean Power Plan, which calls on states to reduce power-plant emissions to 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.
- The "endangerment finding" by which the EPA identifies carbon as a threat to public health — and therefore to be regulated as a pollutant.
- The "social cost of carbon," a policy-guiding estimate of the long-term costs of greenhouse gases to society and the economy.

Mr. Pruitt says he backs the goal of clean air and water but says it can be accomplished with a much leaner EPA and with responsibilities pushed back to the states. As



Oklahoma attorney general, he sued the EPA 14 times.

### A different vision of regulation

Trump's signature energy proposal so far is to revive the highest-emission fossil fuel, coal. "Miners are going back to work," he told a cheering crowd at a summit for conservatives Friday.

In his first address to EPA employees last week, Pruitt laid out elements of that vision.

"Regulations ought to make things regular. Regulators exist to give certainty to those that they regulate," Pruitt said, emphasizing job growth while not using the words "health," "climate," or "pollution."

The Republican Congress appears to be on a similar tack.

At a recent House Science, Space and Technology Committee hearing, Republican lawmakers accused scientists with federal grants of being biased. They want to add more industry representatives to the independent scientific panels that advise the EPA as a counterweight academics on those panels.

Some Republicans have pushed back at the comments coming from their own party. Sen. Susan Collins of Maine – the only GOP vote against Pruitt's confirmation – says that eroding trust in science is dangerous.

"I certainly respect the right of people to protest, but I think we also

need to listen to one another," Senator Collins said. "That includes listening to experts in the world of science and not assuming that everyone has a political agenda when they're presenting scientific findings."

The partisan gap on green issues has widened for several reasons, she and others say.

Well before the term "fake news" roared into the lexicon, right wing commentators dismissed climate change as an Al Gore-driven, George Soros-funded conspiracy to expand regulatory control of the economy and daily life.

Ever larger infusions of cash from interest groups on both sides of the aisle haven't helped (though amounts on the Democratic side pale in comparison efforts by conservatives).

### Heightened urgency

All the while, the rising stakes have ramped up a sense of urgency.

As scientists have voiced greater conviction that human-caused emissions are the leading cause of global warming – and something must be done – many conservative Americans dismiss the warning as politically biased.

James Connaughton, who ran George W. Bush's Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ), says climate policy needs to weigh economic costs as well as the promised benefits of policy, and that policymakers should beware "the

onboarding of opinions coming out of the academies."

There was tension over science in the Bush years, as now. Mr. Connaughton's CEQ was accused of emphasizing the uncertainties in climate research to avoid drafting regulations.

Bud Albright, a former Energy Department undersecretary for Bush, says he expects the Trump administration to "open up the data" to include viewpoints that may not include urgent pleas to address emissions. He suggests that some scientists felt they'd be "blacklisted" for sharing contrarian views during the Obama administration. They might find a friendlier White House for the next four years.

Some scientists, he adds, "clearly have a bias that they're unwilling to acknowledge."

According to a Pew survey, just 15 percent of conservative Republicans and 32 percent of moderate Republicans say they trust climate scientists, compared with 70 percent of liberal Democrats and 45 percent of moderate Democrats. More than half of conservative Republicans believe career advancement and political leanings are the primary influences behind climate scientists' findings.

### Backlash to the Obama years

Some say the Obama administration played a part in the partisanship.

After failing to win legislative approval for his cap-and-trade

emissions plan, and then seeing Congress pass into Republican control, Obama used executive powers to advance climate initiatives. Republican opponents contend the actions amounted to regulatory overreach. Federal courts are currently considering his Clean Power Plan.

"They went back and reinterpreted old laws in new ways that weren't interpreted that way for the first 20 or 30 years of existence. And I think that was an overreach," says Sen. John Barrasso (R) of Wyoming, who chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee.

Even some Democrats acknowledge the role Obama played.

"If you have a scale of 1 to 100, you had the Bush EPA that seemed generally fairly balanced.... You had the sense in general that it was a responsible organization," says Rep. Don Beyer (D) of Virginia. "Then Obama came in and ratcheted it up to an 80 or 85 and tried to be much more aggressive about dealing with things."

But Representative Beyer, who sits on the House Science Committee, sees the early tone of the Trump administration as quite different from the Bush years.

Beyer personally doesn't prefer Bush to Obama on the environment, but says "I was much more comfortable with the Bush EPA than I am with a ... Scott Pruitt EPA."



## Editorial : A Blank Check Won't Make the U.S. More Secure

The Editorial Board

\$42.4 billion, much of it for American-made weaponry.

President Trump's plan to raise military spending for the coming fiscal year by \$54 billion, or nearly 10 percent, won't strengthen America's security, and might, in fact, undermine it. To pay for this unjustified increase, Mr. Trump reportedly plans to cut spending on other agencies, most notably the State Department and foreign aid, whose contribution to American security is at least as important as more armaments and troops.

Slashing support for diplomacy would leave the government with fewer tools to prevent conflict. For that very reason, former Defense Secretary Robert Gates argued vigorously for increases in the State Department budget and the foreign aid account. Jim Mattis, the new defense secretary, should do the same. Foreign aid amounts to about 1 percent of federal spending, or

President Trump speaking about the budget on Monday at the White House. Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

The \$600 billion yearly Pentagon budget is certainly not too low, given the drawdown of troops fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Mr. Trump should be asking himself not how to heave more billions at the Pentagon but how to make sure it is spending its existing budget wisely.

The United States already spends more on the military than the next seven countries combined, and maintains the most advanced fighting force in the world. For nearly a decade after Sept. 11, the Pentagon had a virtual blank check, receiving an 11 percent increase in 2002 and a 10 percent increase in 2008, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

President Barack Obama's proposed increase for the 2018 fiscal year, at 6 percent, was already excessive, and now Mr. Trump has gone significantly higher.

While he argued in a speech on Friday for making "one of the greatest military buildups in American history," Mr. Trump has offered no coherent case for more money or how it would be spent. Certainly, he hasn't suggested that the United States should prosecute another war, having talked broadly about avoiding new conflicts and retreating from international leadership.

Yet, experts say the \$54 billion increase, which he is expected to unveil formally in a speech to Congress on Tuesday night, could only be justified by a whole new level of force deployment in regions where the American military presence is relatively limited. One administration official said Mr. Trump's request would include

more money for new ships and aircraft and for establishing a "robust presence in key international waterways and choke points," like the Straits of Hormuz and the South China Sea, Reuters reported. This appears at odds with Mr. Trump's rhetoric about prompting allies to take more responsibility for defending themselves while America focuses on securing its own borders.

Mr. Trump's plan, administration officials say, would impose spending cuts on nondefense programs — while sparing Social Security and Medicare from any cuts — to pay for the gigantic Pentagon increase. That's a choice that would harm millions of Americans while shoveling more profits to military contractors.

Of course, the president may not get very far with his proposal. Congress may well refuse to lift budget caps it imposed in 2011 on defense spending and on domestic

programs. The United States is not made stronger by over-investing in the military, but by making smart

choices about defense while investing in its people, seeking peaceful solutions to conflicts and

respecting the democratic institutions that Mr. Trump is working to erode.

**NATIONAL  
REVIEW  
ONLINE**

## Editorial : Trump's Unrealistic Budget

Ahead of his address to a joint session of Congress on Tuesday, President Trump has released the first details of his broad budget goals for fiscal year 2018, the headline-grabbing element of which is a proposed 10 percent increase in defense spending. To offset this additional \$54 billion for the Pentagon, the president is recommending across-the-board cuts in as-yet-unspecified discretionary-spending programs.

The specifics are still forthcoming, but the president's budget preliminaries suggest that his fanciful campaign promises — to solve the nation's pecuniary woes by targeting "waste, fraud, and abuse" and cutting foreign aid — have not been adapted to fiscal reality. It's still in the earliest stages, but his plan portends a significant increase to an already massive federal debt.

It goes without saying that the federal government is chock-full of waste. Bureaucracies are beset with bloat — duplicative or ineffective programs,

overstaffing, and more — that can and ought to be trimmed. However, deep cuts to the EPA, the Department of Education, the Department of State, and the rest, which the White House's budget outline partly relies on, are not only politically unrealistic but also unlikely to balance out the administration's proposed spending.

Beyond the \$54 billion heading to the Pentagon — which is welcome after the neglect of the Obama years — the president continues to promote large-scale infrastructure spending. On Monday, meeting with several governors at the White House, he promised: "We're going to start spending on infrastructure — big." (On the campaign trail, Trump proposed \$1 trillion in roads, bridges, and more.)

Again, where the money is to come from is anyone's guess, especially as the White House and congressional Republicans pursue tax cuts. If reports are accurate, the administration seems to be predicating its budget on optimistic annual growth projections.

In reality, the specter looming over America's financial prospects is not waste or foreign aid. Foreign aid amount to \$42.4 billion per year, or less than 1 percent of the federal budget; but some of this aid is in the interest of the U.S., and not the uniform waste the president sometimes suggests. The graver menace is our entitlement programs, which at present constitute 60 percent of federal government spending; they are expected to reach two-thirds of federal spending within a decade. The president's budget, though, is designed to protect the largest of those programs — and not just from cuts to benefit levels, but from any cuts at all. This is silly. Ensuring that Social Security benefits are paid out at expected levels (for many current beneficiaries, a sudden cut would be untenable) should not mean that the Social Security Administration is exempted from budgetary oversight.

Until Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and our host of other unsustainable programs are reconfigured, the country will continue adding to its debt burden.

What is ultimately needed, of course, is long-term entitlement reform. Until Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and our host of other unsustainable programs are reconfigured, the country will continue adding to its debt burden.

From what we know so far, though, the administration is proposing no change in the trajectory of the federal budget. In the meantime, an increase in (disciplined) defense spending and an aggressive approach to administrative excess are fine priorities. But without setting itself to the country's most pressing financial problems, the White House will never succeed in making its math add up.



## Editorial : Trump's bad math on the budget

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

to emergencies such as war or recession. The cause of the escalating debt would be a chronic excess of spending over revenue; the spending would be driven primarily by entitlement programs such as Medicare, plus interest on the debt. Discretionary spending, which includes defense, would dwindle to a mere 5.3 percent of output, the lowest level since comparable data reporting began in 1962.

This impending squeeze could be averted with a relative modicum of shared sacrifice: raise revenue through selective measures targeted at those most able to pay; trim entitlement spending; right-size or eliminate inefficient programs.

As President Trump prepared to address Congress Tuesday on his policy agenda, however, it was becoming distressingly likely that the plans he has would make the fiscal situation far worse. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Sunday that the president's first

budget, due March 13, would not touch entitlements, but would cut taxes for business and the middle class. On Monday, White House officials told reporters to expect Mr. Trump to call for \$54 billion in additional defense spending to shore up the admittedly stressed military. The president followed that up with an impromptu lecture on the crumbling ceiling tiles of tunnels in New York City, a reminder that he has also pledged to support a major increase in spending on infrastructure.

Please provide a valid email address.

As for paying for all of this, the closest thing to a specific proposal was the notion, floated by the White House, of offsetting the big defense hike by cutting foreign aid, the Environmental Protection Agency and other discretionary programs. Reality check: The combined budget for the EPA and the State Department was only about \$46 billion in the current fiscal year.

Even eliminating them entirely could not pay for the defense boost Mr. Trump is apparently contemplating.

To govern is to choose. To govern populistically is to promise favored constituencies — in Mr. Trump's case, the military, corporations and construction unions — the moon, then pass the tab to future generations. In country after country around the world, this has been a formula for short-term political gain — and long-term economic trouble. The only thing standing between the United States and a similar spiral may be Congress, dominated by Mr. Trump's uneasy Republican allies.

Will the GOP's leaders on Capitol Hill stand up for the principles of fiscal responsibility they so loudly proclaimed when a Democrat, Barack Obama, occupied the White House? Or will they capitulate to Mr. Trump on this issue, as they have on so many others before?

By Editorial Board

The Post's View

Opinion

**Opinion** A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

February 27 at 7:10 PM

A FAIR assessment of the nation's fiscal predicament would be: troubling but fixable. That is the picture that emerges from the latest Congressional Budget Office budget report, released just after President Trump took office on Jan. 20. Absent changes in current law, federal debt held by the public will rise from 77 percent of national output to 89 percent by 2027 — far above post-World War II norms, and threatening the government's ability to fund existing military and domestic needs, let alone respond



## Bret Stephens: Clear, clarify, hold, build, from

Bret Stephens 7:15 p.m. ET  
Feb. 27, 2017

The Spanish viceroys who governed the New World in the 16th and 17th centuries had a saying

when it came to the edicts—usually ill-judged and invariably late—from their sovereign across the sea:

*Obedezco pero no cumpro.* I obey but I do not comply. It could be the motto of Donald Trump's cabinet, at least on the foreign-policy side.

Last week, Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly said during a visit to Mexico that there would be "no, repeat, no, use of military force in immigration operations. None." This was a few hours after Mr. Trump had described his deportation policy as "a military operation." A few days earlier, U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley insisted "we absolutely support a two-state solution" for Israelis and Palestinians, just a day after the president said he was agnostic on the subject.

Before that, it was Mike Pence affirming the centrality of NATO, after his boss had called it obsolete. And Jim Mattis, promising Iraqis that the administration does not intend to take their oil, despite the countless times Mr. Trump has lamented our failure to do so. And Mike Pompeo reiterating that, yes, it was Russia that was behind the DNC leaks, and not, as Mr. Trump speculated last year, a 400-pound man in New Jersey.

Apologists for the administration say all this is evidence of an open-minded president cultivating a team of rivals. Whatever. As Alexander Hamilton noted in the *Federalist Papers*, "unity of the Executive" is essential to

effective government. What we have in this administration is incoherence verging on chaos.

Which brings us to Herbert Raymond McMaster, the president's new national security adviser. As a colonel in the Iraq war, Lt. Gen. McMaster oversaw the first sustained effort to implement a classic "clear, hold, build" strategy in the city of Tal Afar. It succeeded, at least for a while. He should try it again in his new job, with one modification.

Start with "clear." In counterinsurgencies, it means clearing out thugs and guerrillas. On the National Security Council, it means clearing out Steve Bannon.

This is not because Mr. Bannon's foreign-policy views are generally bad, though they are. It's because his presence on the National Security Council poisons two things at once: the Council's insulation from partisan political pressure, and Gen. McMaster's relationship with the president as the voice he listens to most closely on foreign policy. Anyone with doubts on this score should recall the fate of Gen. Jim Jones, undermined by political hacks during his ill-fated stint as Barack Obama's first national security adviser.

After the clearing comes clarification—not the usual post facto mop-ups of whatever pops out from the president's mouth, but

clarifications on basic points of policy.

Should the administration support a two-state solution? It should—provided Palestinians can shut down Hamas, end anti-Semitic incitement, live in peace with their neighbors, and respect their own people's civil liberties. Is NATO obsolete? Not at all—unless its cheapskate members make it obsolete by refusing to spend on defense. Is the U.S. in favor of the crack-up of the European Union? No again—but that's where the EU is headed unless European elites heed legitimate popular grievances about unassimilated immigrants and the economic crush of Mother State. Does the U.S. mean to get serious about border security? Absolutely—but that does not have to be done at the expense of the interests, or honor, of other countries.

Such points belong in carefully written presidential addresses, starting with Mr. Trump's speech to Congress on Tuesday. This would allow the administration to know its own mind as something more than a series of grunted instincts translated into rash executive orders. And it would give the cabinet, to say nothing of the world, touchstones by which to distinguish actual policy from tweeted presidential pique.

Big speeches won't keep this president from pursuing bad

policies. But they are a uniquely useful mechanism for thinking things through; for consulting widely, culling the worst ideas, distilling the best, and broadcasting them globally. Without having clarity about policy, you can't hold on to it. You end up with fiascos like the refugee order, which matched shamefulness to incompetence in a manner almost reminiscent of Mussolini's invasion of Greece.

Finally, build. It will not be lost on Gen. McMaster that this is the part of counterinsurgency that often fails, because new policies and institutions usually collapse under the weight of old habits. They succeed only when three things come together: a well-understood national interest; a persuasive moral rationale; and sustainable bipartisan support. That's how NATO survives; that's why the Iran deal will fail.

Gen. McMaster may not have any larger ambition than to answer the call of his commander in chief. It would be achievement enough for him to stabilize a troubled and troubling administration. But while he's there, this talented officer might make good use of the opportunity of being a wise head in a White House currently short on wisdom.

Write [bstephens@wsj.com](mailto:bstephens@wsj.com).



## Catherione Rampell 'America first' really means 'Americans last'

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

ell

For months we pundits have been puzzling over "America first." The phrase has an ugly history, having once been the rallying cry of Nazi sympathizers. This time around, its meaning is more opaque, perhaps a vague allusion to isolationism and a reconfiguring of the postwar international order.

But now, as more information about the president's budget proposal comes out, the motto's meaning is becoming clearer.

"America first" really means "Americans last."

Read These Comments

The best conversations on The Washington Post

Please provide a valid email address.

On Monday, the Trump administration told reporters that the president's budget will boost annual defense spending by 10 percent, or about \$54 billion. This is part of his

commitment to "a historic increase in defense spending to rebuild the depleted military of the United States of America at a time we most need it," as he said at the National Governors Association meeting.

Trump is nominally a fiscal conservative (with the help of some fuzzy math). So he also promised that his increase in defense spending would be offset by equivalent cuts to non-defense spending.

And who suffers as a result? Regular Americans, including millions who voted for Trump.

That's not how White House officials like to explain things, of course. They've provided little detail about the rest of the budget. But they have nonetheless emphasized that much of the offsets will come from "foreign aid," with the implication that foreigners will mainly feel the pinch.

One might argue that foreign aid supports our moral and humanitarian values, as well as our own security interests. We allocate such assistance to help strengthen

democracies, deter war and contain epidemics.

Perhaps more relevant for this budgeting exercise, though, is the fact that "foreign aid" represents less than 1 percent of the federal budget, or about \$36.5 billion planned for fiscal 2017. It also seems unlikely that Trump would completely zero out this paltry spending, given that some categories (such as the \$3 billion we've committed to Israel) would cause him major political headaches.

Even if Trump *does* decide to eliminate the rest of our foreign aid, that still leaves tens of billions of dollars of cuts that must be found elsewhere in the budget.

Where is that elsewhere, exactly?

Not from Social Security and Medicare, according to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin. That's despite the fact that entitlements are by far the biggest components of non-defense spending, and have been gobbling up an ever-larger share of federal budgets.

Other, smaller programs will face the fiscal guillotine instead.

Cuts are said to be coming for the usual Republican bogeymen, such as the National Endowment for the Arts and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. But those grant-making agencies get peanuts in the grand scheme of things.

Total appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts in fiscal 2016 were \$148 million. Note that that's with an "m" and not a "b," the breed of "illion" that the non-defense spending cuts are supposed to add up to.

What's left? Reportedly the Trump team plans to slash the budget of the Environmental Protection Agency, which was appropriated just \$8 billion last year. Making it easier to pollute hardly seems to be in most Americans' best interest. And again, the EPA budget represents a tiny sliver of federal spending.

By process of elimination, then, the biggest target must be our already frayed social safety net.

That includes means-tested programs such as food stamps, Medicaid, housing assistance and lots of other programs relied on by tens of millions of Americans. In fact, the most recent census data found that about a fifth of Americans participate in at least one of the biggest federal means-tested poverty programs each month. Many of those beneficiaries also

happen to be Republicans, believe it or not.

It's difficult to argue that reducing Americans' access to food, health care, housing and other necessities is putting their needs "first."

Carving billions out of these programs to offset defense increases will be painful, and it's just the beginning of the suffering to come.

After all, the defense spending spike isn't the only cost for which Republicans will soon need offsets. Recall that an enormous tax cut is coming down the pike.

We don't know yet exactly what that tax plan will look like. If it's anything like Trump's campaign promises, though, it will cost in the ballpark of \$7 trillion over the next decade.

If Republicans plan to pay for any portion of those tax cuts — and these days, admittedly, that's a big if — expect those cuts to be balanced on the backs of struggling families, too.

The  
Washington  
Post

## Justice Department changes its position in high-profile Texas voter-ID case (UNE)

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

The Justice Department on Monday dropped its long-standing position that Texas intended to discriminate when it passed a strict voter-ID law, a sharp turn from the Obama administration's push to challenge restrictive state voting laws.

The Texas case is the first window into how the Trump administration and Attorney General Jeff Sessions will approach the highly charged issue of voting rights. President Trump has alleged without evidence that massive voter fraud led to his loss of the popular vote in November to Democrat Hillary Clinton. Voter advocates fear that these claims will be used to justify more restrictions on voters.

The new position on the Texas law, one of the strictest in the country, came in advance of a court hearing scheduled before a federal judge in Corpus Christi on Tuesday. In its motion filed Monday, the department sought to "dismiss the discriminatory purpose claim," or, in other words, abandon its argument that the Texas law is intentionally racially discriminatory.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

Please provide a valid email address.

The law, passed in 2011, requires that voters present certain forms of identification, such as a driver's license, a military ID, a passport or a weapons permit, in order to cast their ballots. Compared with voter rules passed elsewhere in the country, the Texas law is particularly stringent since it does not accept some IDs, such as those issued by universities, that other

states consider valid.

Critics said these restrictions target voters, such as young people and minorities, who are more likely to vote Democratic. Several courts have found the Texas law to be unconstitutional.

Justice Department lawyers said in their filing Monday that rather than continuing to litigate the question of the Texas legislature's intention in passing the law, the federal government wants to give state lawmakers an opportunity to adjust the rule. The Texas legislature is now considering an amendment to its voter-ID law.

While a number of states, such as North Carolina, have passed new requirements for voter IDs in recent years, Texas in particular has attracted attention because of the large number of people affected. A federal court in Texas found that 608,470 registered voters did not have the IDs the state required for voting.

The practical effect of the Justice Department's decision is that civil rights groups will continue, without the backing of the federal government, to contest the purpose of the Texas law.

"DOJ's reversal in position defies rationality after years of vigorously defending the case," said Kristen Clarke, president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, who vowed to continue challenging the Texas law.

The Justice Department, which had wanted more time, had to take a position because of the deadline for the Tuesday hearing on whether the law was intended to be racially discriminatory. The department did not withdraw altogether from the Texas lawsuit. It remains to be seen

whether the government will change its position on whether the effect of the law is discriminatory — a separate claim in the lawsuit.

But election law expert Rick Hasen said that the department's action Monday indicates a "pullback of the DOJ ... and a sign of possible things to come."

"This development is notable," Hasen said in his Election Law Blog. "It means DOJ is pulling back from aggressive defense of voting rights. And I predict, in cases like Texas and North Carolina, eventually DOJ will be on the other side of this issue, supporting the right of states to make it harder to register and vote."

Government lawyers who challenged the Texas law under President Barack Obama said the Trump administration is failing to protect the right to vote.

"While elections are inherently political, protecting the franchise should never be," said Vanita Gupta, who served as head of the Justice Department's civil rights division under Obama. "The Justice Department's reversal of its longstanding position, advocated by career lawyers, in a case they've been litigating since 2011, troublingly advocates letting Texas off the hook before state officials fix a voter ID law that courts have deemed discriminatory."

On Jan. 20, the day of Trump's inauguration, the department asked for and was granted a one-month delay of the hearing. Government lawyers asked for another delay until at least June, but last week the judge denied that request.

The Justice Department, under then-Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr., sued Texas in 2011. Last summer, the full U.S. Court of

Appeals for the 5th Circuit, which is one of the most conservative in the country, ruled that the Texas law, which requires certain IDs to vote, discriminated against minority voters.

The 5th Circuit ordered a lower court to come up with a fix in time for the November elections, to allow voters who lacked the specific ID required by the law to cast votes. The federal court also asked the lower court to determine whether the law was "intentionally" discriminatory.

The Justice Department's move undercuts perhaps the most critical argument by advocates in the Texas case. If the court ruled that the legislature passed the law with the intention to discriminate, judges could throw out the entire law, and Texas could be put under federal supervision regarding any voting laws for up to 10 years, Hasen said.

Wendy R. Weiser, director of the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice, said that her group is "extremely disappointed that DOJ is abandoning this claim after spending years building such a strong case that the Texas law was intended to discriminate against minority voters."

"Fortunately, the other voter advocates will continue to press the case in court and will make clear that this kind of discrimination is unacceptable in our democracy," said Weiser, whose organization co-represents the Mexican American Legislative Caucus and the Texas NAACP.

**Read more:**

Appeals court says Texas voter-ID law has discriminatory effect

The  
Washington  
Post

## Editorial : The evidence backing Trump's travel ban simply isn't there

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

The Post's View

Opinion

**Opinion** A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

February 27 at 7:10 PM

TRY AS it might, the Trump administration has made scant progress in its effort to find intelligence that might justify its

By Editorial Board

proposed temporary travel ban on citizens from seven predominantly Muslim countries. Even as it scours the federal government for data to validate its proposed policy — an inversion of a systematic, rational decision-making process — the administration keeps running into obstacles in the form of stubborn facts that provide no basis for a ban.

The latest such example arrived in the form of a report from the Intelligence and Analysis branch of the Department of Homeland Security. Tasked with compiling a report on the terrorist threat posed by citizens of the seven countries in President Trump's crosshairs, the DHS study found, first, that citizenship itself is an "unlikely indicator" of danger to the United States and, second, that very few people from the seven nations in question have been linked to terrorism in the United States over

the past six years.

That's a damning conclusion, and one that eviscerates the rationale for Mr. Trump's proposed ban, issuing as it does from an agency intimately involved with safeguarding the United States from terrorist attacks. A DHS spokeswoman hastened to belittle the analysis as mere "commentary," based on unclassified sources and lacking the full weight of what she called "an official, robust document with thorough interagency sourcing." Specifically, said the spokeswoman, Gillian Christensen, the report "does not include data from other intelligence community sources."

Politics newsletter

The big stories and commentary shaping the day.

Please provide a valid email address.

Fair enough. Fortuitously, a former top CIA official, Michael Morell, who twice served as the agency's acting director, and an intelligence scholar, Robert Pape, weighed in days later with a conclusion widely shared in the U.S. intelligence community: that the most serious terrorist peril to America is home-grown, from U.S. citizens who have been radicalized by Islamic State propaganda. (Similarly, most of the bloodiest terror attacks in Europe, including the 2015 carnage in Paris, were carried out by individuals born in Europe, not the Mideast.)

Citing comprehensive research by the Chicago Project on Security and Threats, a program associated with the University of Chicago, Mr. Morell and Mr. Pape pointed out that of 125 terrorists in the past three years who had either been indicted for crimes tied to the Islamic State or died before they could be indicted, more than 80 percent were U.S. citizens; of them,

more than three-quarters were born in the United States. Of the handful who remained, just over one-third were from the seven countries singled out by Mr. Trump's executive order.

That report jibed with the DHS report, as well as with other intelligence analyses that agree that the administration's proposed ban does virtually nothing to enhance national security — and in fact may have the opposite effect.

Undeterred, the administration is preparing to release an updated travel-ban order this week. The idea is to convince federal courts that the proposed ban is more than a manifestation of a prejudice against Islam masquerading as the legitimate exercise of the executive branch's responsibility to promote national security. It remains to be seen what evidence can be mustered to make that case.

**The  
New York  
Times**

## Thomas Ricks : Are U.S. Immigration Centers the Next Abu Ghraib?

Thomas E. Ricks  
Cristóbal Schmal

By all accounts, Gen. John Kelly was a fine Marine. He served with Gen. James Mattis, now the secretary of defense, and was seen as being in the Mattis mold — a low-key, prudent, rigorous thinker. So it is with surprise that I see Mr. Kelly, in his new role as secretary of Homeland Security, presiding over a ham-handed crackdown on immigrants.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents are operating aggressively under President Trump, feeling, as *The New York Times* reported, "newly emboldened" and "newly empowered." Officials' use of detention powers is widening, with some people being held who have no criminal history at all. The government raids often are conducted around dawn, to catch people as they leave for work. The uniformed agents are wearing body armor and carrying semiautomatic weapons. The morning raids and the military appearance may not be new developments, but they are especially worrisome when ICE and Customs and Border Protection, domestic law enforcement agencies, are overseen by a former general.

And there definitely seems to be recklessness in the way Homeland Security is operating. In recent days, agents have taken a woman

with a brain tumor out of a hospital, almost deported a distinguished French scholar flying into Houston to deliver a university lecture and scared the daylights out of an Australian children's author who vowed after the experience never to visit the United States again.

This isn't being done solely to foreigners. The son of the boxer Muhammad Ali, a citizen, was questioned upon arriving in Florida from Jamaica about his religion, which would seem to be a clear violation of the First Amendment's guarantee of religious freedom. And passengers on a domestic flight from San Francisco to New York were required to show their identity documents to customs officials because ICE thought a person with a deportation order might be on the plane.

For people who witnessed the American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, such an aggressive stance is all too familiar. Over the weekend, Brandon Friedman, a former officer in the 101st Airborne Division, questioned on Twitter why Homeland Security officers were operating without constraints. He added, "In the military, it happens to aggressive units with poor leaders." Erin Simpson, a political scientist who worked on strategic assessments for the United States military in the Afghan war, added in another tweet that the federal agents seem to enjoy "near impunity."

Most chilling of all was the comment by Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, last Tuesday that President Trump wants to "take the shackles off" federal agents.

All this reminds me eerily of the words and actions by United States military officers who helped create the conditions that led to the abuses of Iraqi detainees at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison, where a detainee abuse scandal in 2004 undercut the American effort in Iraq. I'm not suggesting that immigrants are being tortured in the horrific way that prisoners at Abu Ghraib were, but I do see parallels in the aggressive stance of Homeland Security agents and the message this carries abroad.

Even the language is similar. On Aug. 14, 2003, as the Iraqi insurgency was mushrooming, an Army officer in the Human Intelligence Effects Coordination Cell at American military headquarters in Iraq sent out a directive saying that "the gloves are coming off regarding these detainees." In case that wording left any doubts, he added, "We want these individuals broken."

In response to orders like that, some Army units became far more aggressive. Like the Homeland Security operations, these Army missions often were conducted as night or dawn raids. Those hundreds of roundups wound up swamping the Abu Ghraib prison.

Six weeks after the "gloves are coming off" memo, it held some 3,500 Iraqis. Four weeks later, that number had doubled.

When Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski, the commander of the demoralized Army unit running the prison, complained about the numbers of prisoners arriving, she was dismissively told to "cram some more tents into the compound." Perversely, this undercut the intention of collecting more precise intelligence, because there weren't enough interpreters and interrogators on hand to detect the bad actors among the thousands of people being held. A subsequent investigation by the Pentagon found that some prisoners were held for months before being questioned.

What puzzles me is that Secretary Kelly surely knows all this. In his first tour in Iraq, he was General Mattis's deputy commander. General Mattis was eloquent in his public comments about Abu Ghraib. "When you lose the moral high ground, you lose it all," he said.

Secretary Kelly would be wise to think back on his years as a Marine, and to keep his honor clean, as the "Marines' Hymn" admonishes service members. If he doesn't, the United States may through the actions of his department lose far more than it gains.

**The  
New York  
Times**

## Editorial : Who Belongs in Trump's America?

The Editorial Board

João Fazenda

"I have a question in my mind," Sunayana Dumala said after her husband, an Indian engineer, was shot dead last week in a Kansas bar. "Do we belong?"

There is no satisfying response to her concern, which is widely shared. The gunman reportedly yelled "get out of my country" before killing Ms. Dumala's husband, Srinivas Kuchibhotla, as he was having a glass of whiskey after work with a friend, who was wounded.

President Trump and his administration have not only tried to keep many immigrants and foreign visitors out of the country, they have done so by casting them as criminals, potential terrorists and trespassers, out to steal the jobs and threaten the lives of Americans.

Ms. Dumala and millions of other members of minorities are integral to the United States, which is almost entirely made up of immigrants and their descendants. But this history might not comfort marginalized groups who hear the administration's

words and see what is happening in this country and wonder if it is safe to stay here, or come here.

Mr. Trump's denunciations of and policies targeting Mexicans, Muslims and others have reawakened and energized the demons of bigotry. Hate crimes and other incidents of bias have flared up, as documented by many news organizations. Mr. Kuchibhotla's murder is one end of a continuum of hate. Elsewhere, people have defiled or threatened violence at Jewish cemeteries and synagogues.

Mr. Trump has been shockingly slow to condemn these acts of hate. When asked about anti-Semitic threats on Feb. 15, he talked about his election victory. The next day he told a Jewish reporter who asked a similar question to sit down. It was not until last week that Mr. Trump called the rise of anti-Semitism "horrible." He has not said anything about the Kansas shooting. The White House press secretary, Sean Spicer, initially dismissed as "absurd" any link between it and Mr. Trump's rhetoric, but on Monday called the anti-Semitic attacks and the Kansas shooting "equally

disturbing." Each act of hate is easily explained away as the work of a disturbed person. Yet, had these attacks been perpetrated by a Muslim or an undocumented immigrant, the president would surely have claimed that he was right all along.

Rather than tamp down hate, the president has stoked it. He has given immigration officials greater discretion to deport otherwise law-abiding undocumented immigrants and to harass travelers with valid papers. Some foreigners are avoiding the United States, and immigrants already here say they are not going abroad, to avoid being hassled at the border on their return.

One Oscar winner, the Iranian director Asghar Farhadi, refused to collect his award in protest of Mr. Trump's executive order banning travelers from seven Muslim-majority countries, which was stayed by federal courts. "Dividing the world into the 'us' and 'our enemies' categories creates fears — a deceitful justification for aggression and war," Mr. Farhadi said in a statement.

The administration has an obligation to convince people like Ms. Dumala that they do belong. If Mr. Trump does nothing, he will enable the perpetrators of hate crimes and he will damage the vitality and strength of the country. Science magazine recently reported that applications by international students to graduate engineering programs were down by as much as 30 percent at some schools because of fear that the United States is closing its doors. Some Indian parents now say they are advising their children not to study or work in this country.

Perhaps Mr. Trump can learn from Ian Grillot, a 24-year-old who confronted the Kansas killer and was shot. In a video from his hospital bed, Mr. Grillot said: "I was just doing what anyone should have done for another human being. It's not about where he was from or his ethnicity."

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## Billionaire investor Wilbur Ross confirmed as Trump's secretary of commerce

<https://www.facebook.com/anaclaire swanson>

The U.S. Senate voted to confirm President Trump's nomination of Wilbur Ross to be commerce secretary by a vote of 72-27. (Reuters)

The U.S. Senate voted to confirm President Trump's nomination of Wilbur Ross to be commerce secretary by a vote of 72-27. The U.S. Senate voted to confirm President Trump's nomination of Wilbur Ross to be commerce secretary by a vote of 72-27. (Reuters)

Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., a former banker and investor who earned billions during decades of buying and selling industries and who President Trump has touted to lead his trade negotiations, was confirmed as secretary of commerce by the Senate in a 72-to-27 vote on Monday night.

Dubbed the "king of bankruptcy" for his leveraged buyouts of battered

companies in the steel, coal, textile and banking industries, Ross has generated a fortune of \$2.5 billion, ranking him among the wealthiest 250 people in America, according to Forbes.

Ross worked for decades at the New York investment bank of Rothschild, during which time he represented Trump's failing Taj Mahal casino and helped forge a deal that allowed Trump to retain ownership.

In the early 2000s, Ross purchased some of America's largest steel mills, including Pennsylvania's Bethlehem Steel and Cleveland's LTV Corp. He later sold his steel conglomerate to India's Mittal Steel, helping to form what is now the world's largest steel company.

Ross's confirmation was largely uncontroversial, though Sen. Cory Booker (D.-N.J.) and other Democrats asked the billionaire in recent days to clarify his business ties to Russian shareholders while

serving on the board of directors of a Cypriot bank.

Some critics have condemn Ross for taking over troubled companies and shipping jobs overseas, while his supporters claim he saved the companies from going under and preserved American jobs in the process. Trump has praised Ross as a savvy businessman and one of the most valuable advisers in his administration.

Wonkbook newsletter

Your daily policy cheat sheet from Wonkblog.

Please provide a valid email address.

Ross agreed to divest of nearly all of his personal holdings and resigned from dozens of boards and organizations to take the Commerce Department post.

Trump has said that Ross will help to lead the administration's trade policy, a position typically held by the U.S. trade representative, rather

than the commerce secretary. His role will presumably include helping to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement and other deals to win better terms of trade for the United States.

"I am not anti-trade, I am pro-trade, but I am pro-sensible trade, not pro-trade that is to the disadvantage of the American worker in the American manufacturing community," Ross said in his confirmation hearing before the Senate commerce committee on Jan. 18.

"I think we should provide access to our markets to those countries who play fair, play by the rules and give everybody a fair chance to compete. Those who do not, should not get away with it, they should be punished and severely," he said.

The Commerce Department has more than 40,000 employees and oversees wide-ranging government services, including the Census Bureau, weather forecasting, trade and fishery management.

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL**

## William McGurn : The "shaming" of Betsy DeVos,

Feb. 27, 2017  
7:14 p.m. ET

Here's a suggestion for America's new secretary of education: Forget about federal education policy.

Not that policy isn't important. But if Betsy DeVos wants to make her time count, she'd do best to use what her critics fear most: her bully pulpit. Because if Mrs. DeVos does

nothing else in her time but lay bare the corruption of a system failing children who need a decent education most—and shame all those standing in the way of

reforming it—she will go down as an education secretary of consequence.

"The temptation for an education secretary is to make a few earnest speeches but never really challenge the forces responsible for failure," says Jeanne Allen, founder and CEO of the Center for Education Reform.

"But the moms and dads whose children are stuck in schools where they aren't learning need better choices *now*—and a secretary of education who speaks up for them and takes on the teachers unions and the politicians on their own turf."

Excellent advice, not least because education is (rightly) a state and local issue and Secretary DeVos has neither the authority nor the wherewithal to transform our public schools from Washington. What she does have is the means to force the moral case out into the open.

New York City would be a good place to start. In Bill de Blasio, the city boasts, if that is the right word, a mayor who fancies himself the nation's progressive-in-chief, along with a schools chancellor who has all the credentials Mrs. DeVos is accused of lacking, including experience teaching in public schools.

Unfortunately, these credentials haven't done much to help students. Only 36% of New York City district-school pupils from grades 3 to 8 passed math, and only 38% English. For black students the numbers drop to 20% proficient in math and 27% in English. As a general rule, the longer New York City kids stay in traditional public schools, the worse they do.

It can't be for lack of resources. Figures from the city's independent budget office list New York as spending \$23,516 per pupil this school year, among the most in the U.S. And instead of closing bad schools, Mr. de Blasio has opted for the teachers-union solution: More spending!

The result? More than two years and nearly half a billion dollars after his "Renewal" program for chronically failing schools was announced, there's little to show for it.

How might Mrs. DeVos respond? How about a trip to the South Bronx, where she could visit, say, MS 301 Paul L. Dunbar, St. Athanasius and the Success Academy Bronx 1 grade and middle schools. These are, respectively, a traditional public middle-school for grades 6-8, a K-8 Catholic school, and a pair of Success charters serving K-7.

Imagine how Mrs. DeVos might change the conversation by speaking publicly about the differences among these schools? Or by meeting with neighborhood kids languishing on the 44,000-long wait list for a seat at a city charter? Or by asking the non-Catholic parents at St. Athanasius, whose children are there because of a scholarship program, to talk about the difference this school is making in their children's lives?

Mayor de Blasio would howl. The teachers unions would show up to protest. But the furor a DeVos visit provoked would underscore her point about just whose interests are being sacrificed—and provide a tremendous force equalizer for outgunned parents and reformers taking on the education establishment.

Now imagine Mrs. DeVos making this same kind of visit to other cities where the public-school systems for decades have effectively been consigning their poor and minority students to a future on the margins of the American dream: Baltimore, Detroit, Fresno, Calif., etc. And not just the cities: Rural districts have their own share of complacent pols of both parties who need to be called to account.

Certainly the teachers unions and the Democrats they hold in their

pockets account for the core of the opposition to the choice and accountability. But the GOP has made its own grim contributions to our two-tiered public-school system. This includes in Illinois in 2010, when nearly half the Republicans in the state House provided the margin needed to kill a Chicago voucher program.

In "The Wizard of Oz," Dorothy has to be reminded that the ruby slippers she wears must be very powerful or the Wicked Witch wouldn't want them so badly. Mrs. DeVos finds herself in a similar position. She will do well to remember that the nastiness of her confirmation was in fact a backhanded recognition by her foes that they have lost the moral argument.

"The opposition to change is not polite and always on the offense," says Eva Moskowitz, founder and CEO of Success Academy Charter Schools in New York. "Betsy's going to need to play offense or we will lose another generation of children."

Write to [McGurn@wsj.com](mailto:McGurn@wsj.com).



## Trump urges insurers to work together to 'save Americans from Obamacare'

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

In a meeting with health insurance CEOs Feb. 27, President Trump touted expanded savings accounts and the ability to purchase health care across state lines as parts of a new health care proposal to replace the Affordable Care Act. (The Washington Post)

In a meeting with health insurance CEOs Feb. 27, President Trump touted expanded savings accounts and the ability to purchase health care across state lines as parts of a new health care proposal to replace the Affordable Care Act. Trump included expanded savings accounts and the ability to purchase healthcare across state lines as parts of a new healthcare proposal to replace the ACA. (The Washington Post)

*This story has been updated.*

President Trump met with major health insurers Monday morning, in the midst of political divisions over how to dismantle and replace President Obama's signature health-care law, the Affordable Care

Act, and intensifying public pressure to preserve the policy.

The meeting included leaders from Blue Cross Blue Shield, Cigna, Humana, UnitedHealth Group, Aetna, Anthem, Kaiser Permanente and the industry lobbying group, America's Health Insurance Plans.

"We must work together to save Americans from Obamacare," Trump said in public remarks before the closed-door meeting. The remarks came shortly after Trump lambasted the health-care law at the National Governors Association, telling the audience that health care was "an unbelievably complex subject."

"Nobody knew that healthcare could be so complicated," Trump said, in a statement that quickly ricocheted across the Internet.

He criticized the Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare, for creating minimal health coverage requirements that restricted the types of plans insurers could sell.

"Obamacare forced providers to limit the plan options they offered to

patients and caused them to drive prices way up," Trump said. "Now a third of U.S. counties are down to one insurer, and the insurers are fleeing. You people know that better than anybody."

Over the past month, more insurers have warned that they could pull out of the Affordable Care Act's health-care exchanges where individuals can buy government-subsidized insurance. Aetna chief executive Mark Bertolini has described the exchanges as being in a "death spiral."

Humana — which insures about 150,000 people on the exchanges this year — announced in mid-February it would exit the exchanges in 2018. In an earnings call, Molina Healthcare disclosed that its exchange business lost \$110 million in 2016 and said it would evaluate its participation for next year on a state-by-state basis. A Molina spokeswoman said the company, which insures 1 million members through the exchanges, was not invited to the meeting.

Trump gave few details about his health-care plan, which he promised would increase competition and decrease costs. He said the replacement would allow insurers to sell plans across state lines and include increased flexibility for states. He also called for expanded health savings accounts, which are tax-exempt financial accounts used to pay for medical expenses. He said there would be a smooth transition.

In remarks to the National Governors Association before the meeting with insurers, Trump said the plan to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act would give states the flexibility they need to make health care work. He also said the politically wise thing for Republicans would be to let the law "implode" so that its failure can be blamed on the Democrats.

"Let it be a disaster, because we can blame that on the Dems that are in our room — and we can blame that on the Democrats and President Obama," Trump said. "But we have to do what's right, because Obamacare is a failed disaster."

[A divided White House still offers little guidance on replacing Obamacare]

The president assured insurance executives that he would provide greater details on his health policy plan during his speech in front of Congress Tuesday night, according to a health industry official briefed on the meeting who asked for anonymity to describe a private discussion.

Insurers, for their part, emphasized the need to maintain market stability during the transition to a new health-care policy, while keeping the enrollment numbers at their current levels.

Trump called insurers to the White House at a time when the short-term future of the Affordable Care Act's exchanges, where people buy individual health coverage, is in a precarious position. Although Republican lawmakers have vowed to replace the law, the prospect of millions of people becoming uninsured in the interim has become a major worry.

But Trump joked at the conclusion of his opening remarks that if the new plan didn't work out, the companies would bear the blame.

"If things aren't working out, I'm blaming you, anyway, you know that," Trump said to laughter.

Before the closed-door portion of the meeting, Joe Swedish, the chief executive of Anthem, praised proposed actions the administration announced earlier this month to stabilize the Affordable Care Act exchanges—a business in which he said his company was "deeply embedded."

He was referring to a proposed rule that would tighten up the qualification for "special enrollment periods," which allow people to sign up for insurance after the enrollment period is over. Insurers have said that people are misusing those periods, waiting to sign up for health coverage only when they're sick.

"I don't want to miss the opportunity to thank you for the swift and decisive actions that occurred most recently," Swedish said.

"It was going to be an implosion," Trump responded. "We had to step in."

After the meeting, America's Health Insurance Plans released a statement saying the meeting was focused on both "short-term stability and long-term improvement."

Bertolini, the Aetna chief executive, said in a statement that the company looks forward to collaborating with the administration and Congress.

"Everyone who took part in today's meeting shares a common goal—ensuring every American has access to affordable health care," Bertolini said.

Trump's meeting with major insurers comes on the heels of private meetings the president has held with a handful of Republican governors, including John Kasich (Ohio), Rick Scott (Fla.) and Scott Walker (Wis.), and as governors from both parties have gathered in Washington for their annual winter conference.

Wonkbook newsletter

Your daily policy cheat sheet from Wonkblog.

Please provide a valid email address.

Several governors have drafted their own proposal to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, which they shared Sunday with Vice President Pence and Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price. The plan is still being finalized and has not yet been

unveiled, but it aims to preserve more of the law than is currently envisioned by some congressional Republicans while also providing states with additional flexibility.

Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), who spoke with Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder (R) last week, said Snyder and others seeking a middle way believe that a combination of moving more Medicaid recipients into managed care plans and having them take personal responsibility for their care with modest fees could cut costs. But such a move, Portman emphasized, should be combined with ensuring that those covered under the ACA remain insured with the help of federal subsidies.

At the same time, however, governors who did not expand Medicaid under the ACA are anxious that they are not penalized under whatever plan replaces it.

"You can't treat an expansion state better than a non-expansion state," said Scott, who discussed the issue with Trump over lunch on Saturday. "Because you did an expansion, you should not get more dollars."

"He's convinced there can be significant saving there, if they have a chance to make that transition," Portman said of Snyder.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

# Trump calls health care 'so complicated' but vows to forge ahead in replacing Obamacare

Louise Radnofsky, Anna Mathews and Michelle Hackman

Updated Feb. 27, 2017 9:17 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump, heading into a critical stretch of Republicans' push to rewrite the Affordable Care Act, acknowledged Monday the effort would be complex and politically risky, but said he is determined to forge ahead because the ACA is a "disaster."

"Nobody knew that health care could be so complicated," Mr. Trump told a group of Republican governors after meeting with them and insurers—two groups whose cooperation could make or break the attempt to overturn the law some call Obamacare.

A spirited campaign by Democrats to preserve the law by warning that repealing it would be catastrophic has boosted support for it and led to raucous town-hall meetings held by members of Congress across the country. That has rattled some GOP lawmakers whose votes the party cannot afford to lose. The president alluded to such political perils in his remarks.

"As soon as we touch it—if we do the most minute thing, just a tiny little change—what's going to happen?" Mr. Trump told the governors. "They're going to say it's the Republicans' problem. That's the way it is, but we have to do what's right, because Obamacare is a failed disaster."

Noting the ACA's increasing popularity, Mr. Trump said, "People hate it, but now they see that the end is coming, they say, 'Oh, maybe we love it.' There's nothing to love, it's a disaster, folks, OK? So you have to remember that."

The comments came at a pivotal moment in Republicans' efforts to undo the ACA after seven years of decrying it as a government takeover of health care. Congressional Republicans are pushing ahead with their repeal effort this week, counting on momentum to force wavering GOP lawmakers to unify despite deep divisions on how to proceed.

Mr. Trump is set to deliver an address to a joint session of Congress Tuesday night, and aides have said that among topics he is likely to generally outline his priorities on health policy.

Rep. Mark Walker (R., N.C.), who heads the 170-strong Republican Study Committee grouping of conservative members, said Monday evening he couldn't support or recommend a House GOP proposal to repeal premium subsidies in the ACA and replace them with a different system of individual tax credits.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) seized on the president's meeting with insurers to advance Democrats' argument that the Republican plan is certain to make things worse, not better.

"Today, President Trump is meeting with the insurance companies about this plan. What happened to the president we saw on the campaign trail railing against the special interests?" Mr. Schumer said on the Senate floor. "Turns out, the special interests are getting their way at the expense of working Americans—less coverage, higher premiums, fewer sick people insured."

Various GOP factions are wrestling to win the president's favor and put their stamp on the still-unformed Republican plan, with frequent calls and visits to the White House. Mr. Trump said Monday he and fellow

Republicans had "taken the best of everything" they had heard.

The Republican strategy involves setting the legislative process in motion, even without agreement on a bill, in hopes that few Republicans will be willing to block the ACA's repeal once it is moving forward, even if they disagree with elements of a replacement plan.

The move is a gamble, not least because it jeopardizes the party's tax overhaul hopes if it fails. GOP leaders plan to use the budget process to repeal the health law with a simple majority vote, under a process called reconciliation. They plan to use a 2018 budget to pass tax reform, their other major legislative goal, but voting on a new budget means they can no longer take advantage of the reconciliation tool to pass health reform.

"The whole tax plan is wonderful, but I can't do it until we do health care," Mr. Trump said. He added that he wished he could do things the other way around, because while "tax-cutting has never been that easy, it's a little tiny ant compared to what we're talking about with Obamacare."



Monday's meetings were part of a White House campaign to calm the fears of governors and insurers about disruptions from a potential ACA repeal. Governors worry they will feel the impact first, given that the states generally oversee the Medicaid program and the individual insurance market within their borders.

Republican states are split between those that accepted ACA funding to expand Medicaid eligibility and those that didn't, a division cited by Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin as he left their meeting. He said the governors were counting on "leadership" to resolve the differences.

Other governors said after the meeting that Mr. Trump shared their goal of maintaining coverage levels gained through

the Medicaid expansion, though they didn't provide details on the president's plans.

"The conversation that we had today was to ensure that those who have their coverage are going to continue to have coverage," said Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval, a Republican who serves as vice chair of the National Governors Association. "For me, that's an issue of over 300,000 lives."

Insurers worry about losing the ACA's requirement that Americans must buy insurance or otherwise obtain it, especially if some of the law's costly insurance regulations remain in place. That could leave insurers with fewer healthy customers to help pay the medical costs of sicker ones.

The White House hosted CEOs from big-name insurance

companies who have already begun pulling back on their participation in the ACA insurance exchanges, where middle-income people can choose plans and apply for tax credits to subsidize their premiums.

Mr. Trump opened the meeting by praising the insurers, saying, "You are the big ones. You are the biggest of the big, right?"

UnitedHealth Group Inc., Aetna Inc., Cigna Corp. and Humana Inc. were represented by CEOs Stephen Hemsley, Mark Bertolini, David Cordani and Bruce Broussard, respectively.

CEOs also came from some of the Blue Cross/Blue Shield plans that have been the backbone of many of the exchanges, including Joseph Swedish of Anthem Inc., Patrick Geraghty of Florida Blue, Dan Hilferty of Independence Blue Cross

and Brad Wilson of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina.

Mr. Wilson's health plan is the only one on offer on the exchange in most parts of North Carolina.

Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price attended the insurers' meeting, as did White House aides Gary Cohn, Katy Talento and Kellyanne Conway.

**Write to** Louise Radnofsky at [louise.radnofsky@wsj.com](mailto:louise.radnofsky@wsj.com), Anna Mathews at [anna.mathews@wsj.com](mailto:anna.mathews@wsj.com) and Michelle Hackman at [Michelle.Hackman@wsj.com](mailto:Michelle.Hackman@wsj.com)

## The New York Times

### David Leonhardt : The Fight for Obamacare Has Turned

David Leonhardt

A protest at the Trump International Hotel and Tower in Manhattan in January. Demetrius Freeman for The New York Times

The campaign to let 20 million Americans keep their health insurance is working.

It still has a long way to go, and it's not guaranteed to succeed. But the progress of the last couple months is remarkable.

Thanks in part to a surge of activism — town hall meetings, online postings, calls to Congress — the politics of Obamacare have flipped. Many Americans have come to realize that the *care* part of the law matters much more than the *Obama* part. As a result, the Republicans no longer have a clear path to repeal.

President Trump, in his speech to Congress on Tuesday night, will probably pretend otherwise. He may repeat the same magical promises to pass a bill that's better and cheaper and covers everyone. Privately, though, he and his aides have begun to realize the mess they have made by promising the impossible.

On Monday, Trump himself lamented that health care was "complicated." The clearest sign of anxiety came in a Washington Post report: Four top advisers — Stephen Bannon, Gary Cohn, Jared Kushner and Stephen Miller — "have emphasized the potential political costs to moving

aggressively." Those costs include taking the blame (fairly or not) for every problem in the insurance market.

Meanwhile, congressional Republicans have their own troubles. As of now, they don't have the votes to pass a plan.

Unable to agree on a policy, the party's leaders have settled on what The Wall Street Journal called a "gamble" and a "dare." They will push ahead with a now-or-never repeal bill, hoping that party loyalty will ultimately overcome substantive disagreements.

Why are Republicans suddenly having such a hard time agreeing about their No. 1 priority? They've run into two obstacles: reality and public opinion.

Let's start with reality. Republican leaders are now paying the price for their dishonest approach to fighting Obamacare.

To be clear, there are honest conservative attacks to make on Obamacare. Republicans could have said that Americans who can't afford health insurance aren't entitled to it, just as people are not entitled to own a home. Or Republicans could have tried to alter the law — say, with less generous insurance plans.

But Republican leaders chose the easy political route instead. They blamed Obamacare (sometimes fairly, mostly not) for almost every health care problem. They've promoted the same fallacy for which

conservatives often mock liberals: the free-lunch fallacy.

There is no free lunch on health care. Your health "costs" pay for my health "benefits," and vice versa. If Trump promises a less expensive system, he is also promising to eliminate some care. He could cut wasteful care — and should — but Republicans caricatured the Obama administration's attempts as "death panels" without offering their own steps.

Now that they're running the government, free-lunchism has consequences. Their promise to scrap taxes on the wealthy, for example, leaves them without money to cover people. That's why the independent Congressional Budget Office keeps concluding that the various Obamacare replacement plans would deprive millions of people of insurance.

More Americans have begun to understand these realities, and everyone engaged in the grass-roots campaign to protect health insurance deserves to take pride in the change. People have seen YouTube clips of town hall meetings at which members of Congress have no good answers. Some people are also starting to see through Trump's wait-till-next-month timetable.

Most Americans still have complaints about Obamacare. So do I. (Some subsidies are too small, as are the penalties for not signing up.) But they increasingly realize that no serious alternative exists —

still. Getting rid of Obamacare means taking away health insurance, and medical care, from millions of people.

No wonder the polls have flipped, and more than half the country now supports the law.

One group to watch is Republican governors. They met in Washington this weekend and tried to come up with an approach that would help their colleagues in Congress. But they couldn't. Too many Republican governors understand that a repeal would create major trouble. To their credit, some aren't willing to fake it.

Still, this is no time for complacency. Republicans have spent so long promising repeal that failure would leave them vulnerable to primary challenges and make them look weak. They have many incentives to pass a bill.

But aficionados of irony will appreciate the fundamental source of their struggles. In drafting his health care plan, Barack Obama chose a moderate, market-based approach. It was to the right of Bill Clinton's and Richard Nixon's plans and way to the right of Harry Truman's — and yet Republicans still wouldn't support it.

Many liberals regret that decision. Obama, for his part, believes that a more left-wing version would not have passed. Either way, the version that did pass doesn't leave Republicans much room to maneuver.

## The Washington Post

### Eugene Robinson : Does Trump know he's president?

<https://www.facebook.com/eugenerobinson.columnist>

The Washington Post's Philip Rucker, Ashley Parker and Chris Cillizza explain what President Trump wants to accomplish in his first joint address to Congress on Feb. 28. What to expect from Trump's joint address to Congress (Peter Stevenson/The Washington Post)

(Peter Stevenson/The Washington Post)

The Trump administration so far has been smoke and mirrors, sound and fury, self-proclaimed victimhood and angry tweets. Where is the substance? Where is the competence? And where — increasingly — is the public support?

President Trump's approval rating of 42 percent is the lowest that Gallup has ever measured for a president this early in his term. It should be no surprise that Trump isn't having a hearts-and-flowers honeymoon, given that his inauguration was followed a day later by the biggest mass protest in the nation's history. But it usually takes more than a few weeks for the relationship between POTUS and populace to become so curdled.

It is true that most of those who voted for Trump are sticking with him. But they, you will recall, were in the minority — try as he might, Trump will never erase the fact that he lost the popular vote. And he has done essentially nothing to bring skeptics over to his side.

**The  
New York  
Times**

## David Brooks :The Enlightenment Project

David Brooks

Being around a college classroom can really expand your perspective. For example, last week we were finishing off a seminar in grand strategy when one of my Yale colleagues, Charles Hill, drew a diagram on the board that put today's events in a sweeping historical perspective.

Running through the center of the diagram was the long line of Enlightenment thought. The Enlightenment included thinkers like John Locke and Immanuel Kant who argued that people should stop deferring blindly to authority for how to live. Instead, they should think things through from the ground up, respect facts and skeptically re-examine their own assumptions and convictions.

Enlightenment thinkers turned their skeptical ideas into skeptical institutions, notably the U.S.

Read These Comments

The best conversations on The Washington Post

Please provide a valid email address.

Instead, he has worried his political allies and galvanized his opponents. To me, House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) sound a bit uncertain and defensive these days. By contrast, the House and Senate minority leaders, Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), seem full of energy and purpose. It's awfully hard to tell from body language who won the election.

Why wouldn't the Republican leadership be nervous, given the performance of the Trump White House?

The administration's boldest and most sweeping action — the executive order barring U.S. entry to refugees worldwide and foreign-national travelers from seven majority-Muslim countries — was so amateurishly written and implemented that it was promptly blocked in federal court. Trump, who says the measure is needed to prevent terrorist attacks, rashly tweeted that judges will be to blame "if something happens." It was a typical reaction: lashing out at others to cover for his own failings.

Trump said that another order, greatly expanding the number of undocumented immigrants prioritized for deportation, meant the start of a "military operation" to

expel "really bad dudes." Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly quickly clarified that there would be "no mass deportations" and "no use of military force." White House press secretary Sean Spicer later said that Trump was using "military" as an adjective, apparently intending it to mean "non-military."

The question is inevitable: How much does the president even know about his administration's policies?

Not much, it appears. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told reporters in Baghdad that the United States was "not in Iraq to seize anybody's oil" — after Trump had said in a speech at the CIA that U.S. troops should have done just that. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said that "we absolutely support a two-state solution" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — after Trump opined that either one state or two states would do. And Vice President Pence reassured European leaders that the United States remains "fully devoted" to the NATO alliance — even as Trump continues to pine for warmer relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who seeks to destabilize and ultimately destroy NATO.

Speaking of Russia, questions continue to mount about contacts between the Trump campaign and Russians working for or connected to the Putin regime. The issue is potentially explosive because, according to U.S. intelligence officials, the Russian government actively meddled in the November

election in an attempt to boost Trump's chances of winning.

Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.), a staunch conservative not known as a voice for bipartisan compromise, called Friday for a special prosecutor to investigate the Russia allegations; Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Issa said, should recuse himself because he was part of the inner circle of the Trump campaign. Republican leaders in Congress are resisting calls for full-blown public congressional probes, but the drip-drip-drip of revelations may wear them down.

Meanwhile, the fate of the Affordable Care Act is emerging as potentially a massive political crisis. At packed town halls across the country, Republicans have been hearing from constituents who will lose health insurance if the ACA is repealed but not immediately replaced, which had been the GOP's plan. The party has come to realize that when it comes to health care, no deed (good or bad) goes unpunished.

You might think the president would be fully engaged in some of these issues, but you'd be wrong. Instead, he has been waging a ridiculous war against the media. His cries of "fake news" may play well with the base, but he's not running for president at the moment. He's supposed to be doing the job.

*Read more from Eugene Robinson's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook. You can also join him Tuesdays at 1 p.m. for a live Q&A.*

Constitution. America's founders didn't trust the people or themselves, so they built a system of rules, providing checks and balances to pit interest against interest.

De Tocqueville came along and said that if a rules-based democratic government was going to work anywhere it was going to be the United States. America became the test case for the entire Enlightenment project. With his distrust of mob rule and his reverence for law, Abraham Lincoln was a classic Enlightenment man. His success in the Civil War seemed to vindicate faith in democracy and the entire Enlightenment cause.

In the 20th century, Enlightenment leaders extended the project globally, building rules-based multilateral institutions like the European Union and NATO to restrain threatening powers and preserve a balance of power.

The Enlightenment project gave us the modern world, but it has always had weaknesses. First, Enlightenment figures perpetually tell themselves that religion is dead (it isn't) and that race is dead (it isn't), and so they are always surprised by events. Second, it is thin on meaning. It treats people as bland rational egoists and tends to produce governments run by soulless technocrats. Third, Enlightenment governance fails from time to time.

At these moments anti-Enlightenment movements gain power. Amid the collapse of the old regimes during World War I, the Marxists attacked the notion of private property. That brought us Lenin, Stalin and Mao. After the failures of Versailles, the Nietzscheans attacked the separation of powers and argued that power should be centralized in the hands of society's winners, the master race. This brought us Hitler and the Nazis.

Hill pointed out that the forces of the Enlightenment have always defeated the anti-Enlightenment threats. When the Cold War ended, the Enlightenment project seemed utterly triumphant.

But now we're living in the wake of another set of failures: the financial crisis, the slow collapse of the European project, Iraq. What's interesting, Hill noted, is that the anti-Enlightenment traditions are somehow back. Nietzschean thinking is back in the form of Vladimir Putin. Marxian thinking is back in the form of an aggressive China. Both Russia and China are trying to harvest the benefits of the Enlightenment order, but they also want to break the rules when they feel like it. They incorporate deep strains of anti-Enlightenment thinking and undermine the post-Enlightenment world order.

Hill didn't say it, but I'd add that anti-Enlightenment thinking is also back in the form of Donald Trump, racial

separatists and the world's other populist ethnic nationalist movements.

Today's anti-Enlightenment movements don't think truth is to be found through skeptical inquiry and debate. They think wisdom and virtue are found in the instincts of the plain people, deep in the mystical core of the nation's or race's group consciousness.

Today's anti-Enlightenment movements believe less in calm persuasion and evidence-based inquiry than in purity of will. They try

en workers.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## Dana Milbank : Trump wants 'no more sources.' Here's how his speech might sound without them.

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

It has long been said — though perhaps never by Abraham Lincoln — that “you can fool some of the people all of the time.” Now, thanks to the wonders of modern social science, we can quantify this aphorism:

You can fool 37 percent of the people 100 percent of the time.

This is to be extrapolated from last week's Quinnipiac University survey, which found that 37 percent of the public and, alas, a large majority of Republicans, trust President Trump more than the media “to tell you the truth about important issues.”

The Daily 202 newsletter

A must-read morning briefing for decision-makers.

Please provide a valid email address.

But Trump is unlikely to be satisfied with this achievement. Once you can fool some of the people all of the time, a natural follow-up goal is to fool most of the people most of the time. Expand deportations and you've got a shot at all of the people all of the time.

Hence the escalated attacks on the press. Renewing his charge that the “fake news media” are the “enemy of the American people” on Friday, Trump also suggested that “we're going to do something about it” and proposed that the media “shouldn't be allowed” to

to win debates through blunt force and silencing unacceptable speech.

They don't see history as a gradual march toward cooperation. They see history as cataclysmic cycles — a zero-sum endeavor marked by conflict. Nations trying to screw other nations, races inherently trying to oppress other races.

These movements are hostile to rules-based systems, multilateral organizations, the messy compromises of democratic politics and what Steve Bannon calls the “administrative state.” They prefer the direct rule by one strongman

use anonymous sources — or perhaps any sources at all.

“Let there be no more sources,” Trump declared.

No sources: Nobody and nothing to contradict Trump, to refute his claims, to blow the whistle on misconduct. Trump would be the sole source of information, never contradicted by lawmakers, bureaucrats, experts, documents or even Google searches. It would go something like this:

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP TO A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Thank you for that applause, which was the longest, loudest and most enthusiastic applause any president has ever received from Congress — period. It is probably the most applause that anybody has ever received anywhere.

As you know, I won the largest electoral college victory in history, even though 11 million illegal immigrants in this country voted illegally for my opponent — some of them twice. Even some of the dead people who voted for Hillary now regret their vote and say they should have voted for me. One of them is seated in the gallery tonight with Melania, and more and more people are recognizing him lately. Ladies and gentlemen, please recognize Frederick Douglass.

My fellow Americans, I inherited a mess. I heard this statistic: Ninety percent of Americans were starving.

who is the embodiment of the will of the people.

When Trump calls the media the “enemy of the people” he is going after the system of conversation, debate and inquiry that is the foundation for the entire Enlightenment project.

When anti-Enlightenment movements arose in the past, Enlightenment heroes rose to combat them. Lincoln was no soulless technocrat. He fought fanaticism by doubling down on Enlightenment methods, with charity, reason and patience. He

worked tirelessly for unity over division. He was a hopeful pessimist who knew the struggle would be long but he had faith in providence and ultimate justice.

We live in a time when many people have lost faith in the Enlightenment habits and institutions. I wonder if there is a group of leaders who will rise up and unabashedly defend this project, or even realize that it is this fundamental thing that is now under attack.

School bathrooms were jammed with transgender students. Ceiling tiles were falling from tunnels and killing people. Almost everybody in Chicago had been murdered. We had been attacked by terrorists 78 times and the media didn't report it. Each month, millions of jobs were shipped overseas, where American workers were murdered and tortured by ISIS.

But now that we have eliminated all sources of information other than me, we are making America great again. I agreed to pay Boeing only one dollar for the new Air Force One. Lockheed-Martin is paying me \$600 million to let them build the F-35. Carrier is now employing millions of people at its plant in Indiana. My cabinet nominees were all confirmed unanimously, and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos was just offered membership in Mensa.

The FBI, under new director Steve Bannon, has completed its review and determined that the Democratic National Committee was not hacked by Russia but by some guy in his bedroom who weighs 400 pounds. The FBI also said that the disruptions that occurred in American cities the day after my inauguration, followed by actions at airports after my travel ban, were because of frustration with Delta's reservation system.

Internationally, ISIS has been defeated, Mexico has paid for the wall in advance, China has abolished its currency, and Australia has apologized for treating us so

badly. Our military action in Yemen was a huge success. The incident in Sweden is finally under control.

Here at home, crime has stopped, and there are no more drugs. Calm has returned to Bowling Green. Thousands of Muslims in New Jersey cheered when I issued my travel ban. We have replaced Obamacare with something much better that costs nothing. Vanity Fair has given the Trump Grill in Trump Tower 5 stars, and a major retailer has been rebranded “Nordstrom by Ivanka Trump.” My support is 98 percent in a Rasmussen poll.

My budget has a huge tax cut and the largest military expansion and infrastructure spending program in history. It also protects Medicare and Social Security, eliminates the federal debt and buys every American a pony. I have eliminated dangerous leaks by abolishing the CIA and saved costs by having Russia maintain our nuclear arsenal. I deregulated the environment and left it to the states to set spelling rules.

The State of the Union is great. If anybody says otherwise, consider the source.

**Twitter: @Milbank**

Read more from Dana Milbank's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## George W. Bush critiques Trump on travel ban, free press

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

Former president George W. Bush rarely weighs in on current political

events, but on Monday, he offered some of his most pointed critiques of President Trump's statements and policies in an interview with NBC News' “Today” show.

Asked about Trump's claim that the media is the “enemy of the people,” Bush warned that an independent press is essential to democracy and that denouncing the press at home

makes it difficult for the United States to preach democratic values abroad.

“I consider the media to be indispensable to democracy,” Bush

said. "We need an independent media to hold people like me to account.

"Power can be very addictive and it can be corrosive and it's important for the media to call to account people who abuse power, whether it be here or elsewhere," he added.

Bush noted that during his presidency, he sought to persuade people like Russian President Vladimir Putin to respect a free press.

"It's kind of hard to tell others to have an independent free press when we're not willing to have one ourselves," Bush said.

On Russia, Bush added that "we all need answers" about whether Trump campaign officials had contact with Russian officials in the election. But he did not endorse the idea that an independent prosecutor was necessary. Bush said that

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr was an "independent thinker" capable of handling the inquiry.

"If he were to recommend a special prosecutor, then it'd have a lot more credibility with me," Bush said of Burr.

Democrats and Republicans on Feb. 26 reacted to comments by Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) that a special prosecutor should investigate apparent Russian meddling in the 2016 election. (Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

Democrats and Republicans on Feb. 26 reacted to comments by Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) that a special prosecutor should investigate apparent Russian meddling in the 2016 election. Democrats and Republicans react to comments by Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) that a special prosecutor

should investigate Russian meddling in the 2016 election. (Video: Bastien Inzaurrealde/Photo: Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

Bush's interview was pegged to the release of his new book of oil paintings of wounded veterans. But the former president seemed unusually willing to offer criticism of the sitting president from his own party, a departure from his longtime practice of staying out of the fray.

Bush even chuckled as host Matt Lauer reminded him of Trump's colorful description of "American carnage" during his inaugural address, which Bush attended.

Please provide a valid email address.

Lauer sought to pin Bush down on his position on Trump's travel ban, which Bush refused to endorse.

Instead, he offered a defense of religious freedom, warning that the terror threat is not a religious war but an ideological one.

"I think it's very important for all of us to recognize one of our great strengths is for people to be able to worship the way they want to or to not worship at all," Bush said. "A bedrock of our freedom is the right to worship freely."

"I understood right off the bat that this was an ideological conflict and people who murder the innocent are not religious people — they want to advance an ideology and we have faced those kinds of ideologues in the past," he added.

Pressed to state clearly whether he supports or opposes the ban, Bush would only say "I am for an immigration policy that's welcoming and upholds the law."



## Michael Gerson : Bannon's reckless pursuit of ethno-nationalist greatness

Two sets of remarks, a day apart, by two men more accustomed to being behind the scenes.

Stephen K. Bannon, appearing Thursday at the Conservative Political Action Conference, made the case for "economic nationalism" and called President Trump's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership "one of the most pivotal moments in modern American history." The passage of the Civil Rights Act and the defeat of the Soviet Union finally have some company.

As the ideologist in Trump's inner circle, Bannon is a practitioner of Newt Gingrich's mystic arts. Take some partially valid insight at the crossroads of pop economics, pop history and pop psychology; declare it an inexorable world-historic force; and, by implication, take credit for being the only one who sees the inner workings of reality.

Read These Comments

The best conversations on The Washington Post

Please provide a valid email address.

For Bannon, it has something to do with "the fourth turning," or maybe the fifth progression, or the third cataclysm. At any rate, it apparently involves cycles of discontent and disruption. Lots of disruption. Across the West, as he sees it, the

victims of globalization — the victims of immigration, free trade and internationalism in general — are rising against their cosmopolitan oppressors. Institutions will crash and rise in new forms. And this restless world spirit takes human form in . . . Nigel Farage and Donald Trump.

Like many philosophies that can be derived entirely from an airport bookstore, this one has an element of truth. The beneficiaries of the liberal international order have not paid sufficient attention to the human costs of rapid economic change. (Just as the critics of internationalism have not paid sufficient attention to the nearly 1 billion people who have left extreme poverty during the past two decades.)

But there is a problem with the response of economic nationalism and ethno-nationalism. It is morally degraded and dangerous to the country.

Which brings us to the second set of remarks, at a State Department retirement party, complete with cake. This speech was from one of the most distinguished diplomats our nation has recently produced, Ambassador Dan Fried. Fried was on diplomatic duty for 40 years, focusing mainly on Europe. He was ambassador to Poland and pulled into the White House as a special adviser on Central and Eastern

Europe to both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

Most populists would probably view Fried as the pinstriped enemy. I came to know him in the Bush administration as a freedom fighter, deeply and personally offended by oppression. He had been an enemy — not an opponent, but an enemy — of the Soviet Union, and remains a committed friend to 100 million liberated Europeans.

Fried used his retirement remarks to describe "America's Grand Strategy." For decades, the U.S. has stood for "an open, rules-based world, with a united West at its core." Despite occasional failures and blunders, "the world America made after 1945 and 1989 has enjoyed the longest period of general peace in the West since Roman times."

What would happen if the United States were to leave the global order and pursue its own ethno-national greatness? This is the proposal that the populists have placed on the table, in which blowing up the TPP is a sign of things to come. "By abandoning our American Grand Strategy," argued Fried, "we would diminish to being just another zero-sum great power." This would result in a system entirely based on "spheres of influence," which are "admired by those who don't have to suffer the consequences." And accepting spheres of influence would "mean

our acquiescence when great powers, starting with China and Russia, dominated their neighbors through force and fear."

"Some so-called realists," said Fried, "might accept such a world as making the best of a harsh world, but it is not realistic to expect that it would be peaceful or stable. Rather the reverse: A sphere of influence system would lead to cycles of rebellion and repression, and, if the past 1,000 years is any guide, lead to war between the great powers, because no power would be satisfied with its sphere. They never are."

This is a foreign policy cycle more substantial than a "fourth turning." The disrupters of international order — the liberal democratic order built and defended by FDR, Truman, Kennedy and Reagan — are thoughtless, careless and reckless. And they must be resisted.

The founding fathers of the ethno-state are also in violation of the country's defining values. The United States was summoned into existence by the clear bell of unifying aspirations, not by the primal scream of blood and soil. And this great ideal of universal freedom and dignity is not disrupted; it disrupts.

Read more from Michael Gerson's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.

Edward P. Lazear

Feb. 27, 2017 6:55 p.m. ET

Can President Trump deliver on his economic promises? The administration is forecasting 3.2% annual growth in America's gross domestic product over the next 10 years. Most analysts' forecasts are far lower—in the range of 2%, the rate that has prevailed since the end of the 2007-09 recession.

Generally, White House forecasts are prepared by highly capable career professionals at the Council of Economic Advisers, the agency I led from 2006-09. How is it possible for serious forecasters to convert 2% growth into the administration's rosier picture of better than 3%? The answer is threefold: Productivity growth must return to its long-term average or better; slowing labor growth caused by an aging population must be offset; and tax cuts that favor investment must have the predicted positive effects.

First note that 3% growth is the long-term norm, not the exception. The average annual growth rate in the 30 years preceding the 2007 recession was 3.1%. GDP growth is the sum of two components: growth in productivity and in labor hours. Historically, productivity has grown at about 2% a year, and labor at about 1%. But in recent years productivity growth has slowed, and an aging workforce implies that hours of labor are likely to rise more slowly in the future. That's why the

Congressional Budget Office, the Federal Reserve and others are forecasting economic growth below 2%.

To push that figure higher, Mr. Trump will have to tackle the productivity slowdown. Nonfarm labor productivity rose by a total of about 7% between 2009 and 2016, which amounts to 1% a year, or half the historical average. By contrast, it rose 18% between 2001 and 2008, or 2.3% a year. Part of this decline may be bad luck. Productivity growth jumps around, with the average deviation between any single year's productivity and the 30-year average being 1.2 percentage points. But seven years of low growth would be bad luck of biblical proportion.

Productivity grows when technology improves and when the human capital of the workforce increases. The Trump administration's plans include changes in K-12 education that may enhance human capital. But even if successful, that would be a slow process, not likely to boost dramatically the 10-year growth rate.

Technology, on the other hand, responds more quickly to investment and improves when more resources are put into research. That gives the Trump administration an opening, since it can change investment incentives by overhauling the tax structure. As I have argued before on these pages, the best way to stimulate growth is to move toward a

consumption tax, starting with full expensing—allowing companies to deduct investment expenditures from their taxes.

Expensing was part of the Trump campaign's tax proposal. George W. Bush's Treasury Department estimated that this change in policy would induce a permanent increase in GDP of 5%. An even larger effect of 9% was predicted in the American Economic Review. Spread those estimates over 10 years, and the forecast of 2% economic growth suddenly becomes 2.5% to 2.9%.

The other drag on growth is demographic change. The Social Security Administration projects no increase in the U.S. population age 20 to 64 between 2020 and 2030. Without more labor hours, it will be difficult to achieve overall growth above 3%.

But there are still policies that can encourage work. The proportion of working-age Americans who are employed, has fallen during this recession and recovery to 59.9% from 63.4%. Most alarming is the decline of two percentage points among Americans between 25 and 54. At least some of this is driven by government policies that subsidize leisure over work. One is the Affordable Care Act. The CBO estimated that ObamaCare "will reduce the total number of hours worked [annually], on net, by about 1.5 percent to 2.0 percent during the period from 2017 to 2024,

almost entirely because workers will choose to supply less labor."

The number of Americans 65 and over is expected to increase by 15 million between 2020 and 2030. Given longer life expectancies, it is important to encourage them to stay in the workforce. Changing the structure of Social Security benefits to reward later retirement could help.

Beyond that, the Trump administration believes that it can increase labor demand by eliminating burdensome regulations on business. The White House is already moving in this direction. Increasing immigration could enhance labor hours, but that seems counter to administration policy.

A return to historical gains in productivity, coupled with policies that completely offset slower labor growth, would bring the economy back to the norm of 3% GDP growth. It's unlikely, but possible with some luck on the technology front and if augmented by investment-friendly tax policy. These are big ifs. They require an active president, an active Congress and some good fortune. But Mr. Trump seems willing to give it his best shot.

*Mr. Lazear, who was chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers from 2006-09, is a professor at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business and a Hoover Institution fellow.*

An unlikely ally for President Trump: Liberal actress Jennifer Garner

<https://www.facebook.com/paul.kane.3367>

Jennifer Garner has not given up on Donald Trump's Washington.

The 44-year-old actress spent the weekend lobbying the town's pillars of power to support early education for poor rural children. She spent Friday on Capitol Hill meeting dozens of top staff members. On Saturday, she delivered the keynote address before the annual National Governors Association winter meeting here. A potential sit-down with Ivanka Trump, who is advocating for more funding for child care, fell apart because of scheduling conflicts, but Garner remained optimistic about a face-to-face discussion soon.

Other Hollywood liberals have shunned the new commander in

chief — notably during Sunday's Academy Awards ceremony, when many jokes were told at President Trump's expense. But Garner, a true-blue Democrat who campaigned for Hillary Clinton last year and held a fundraiser for Barack Obama in 2008, is taking a unique approach: pushing a cause that would benefit the new administration's political base.

The West Virginia native has long worked to bring assistance to poor, rural communities in desperate need of it. She has no plans to change that just because most of those communities went big for Trump in last year's election. In fact, she sees an opportunity to hold the president accountable for the pledges he made to the country's rural working class.

"I'm looking forward to helping him make good on what they saw as

promises, a mandate from him, that he was going to make their lives better," Garner said in a 45-minute interview with The Washington Post.

It's another indication of how Trump has changed the rituals of Washington. For decades, Hollywood celebrities have used the glow of the Capitol dome to advance personal causes. Some may be less inclined to do so now, when legislative gains might help burnish Trump's image.

That makes Trump's presidency a psychological test of sorts for some members of the Hollywood elite, who can either demonstrate their true commitment to the causes they push — or expose their charity work here as more about bolstering themselves.

Very much in the former camp, Garner acknowledged that some of her friends "want to turn their back to this administration ... [and] just wouldn't even want to engage."

Not her. "If he's willing to help the poor kids who got him elected, then let's do it. They certainly think he's going to," she said.

*Is Ivanka Trump building bridges — or walking a tightrope?*

For nine years, Garner has been on the board of Save the Children, a nonprofit organization. Mark Shriver is president of its political advocacy arm, Save the Children Action Network. Save the Children is known primarily for its international projects, but it has also built out a niche focus on U.S. education programs, particularly in poor rural communities.

That's Garner's personal story. She grew up solidly middle class, but she knew plenty of poor children who started elementary school behind and never caught up. They lived in the same sort of communities that Robert F. Kennedy, Shriver's uncle, visited in the mid-1960s along the Mississippi Delta, shaping the ideas of his 1968 presidential campaign.

Together, Garner and Shriver have urged Congress and state governments to fund reading and literacy programs that include all-day kindergarten. The organization has its own reading programs that it administers in schools and during in-home visits.

They found that children in rural areas are 60 percent more likely to be placed in special education programs when they start kindergarten. Garner has her own intuitive test when she meets small groups of rural children to determine which come from homes where parents have more time and resources to engage with them.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### A new polarization is hardening around Donald Trump

Gerald F. Seib

Updated Feb. 27, 2017 5:22 p.m. ET

It was possible, not so long ago, to imagine Donald Trump to be such an unconventional figure that he could bust apart traditional partisan alliances and use his populist approach to create new kinds of political coalitions.

As President Trump gets set to appear before a joint session of Congress for the first time Tuesday night, that possibility seems a long way off.

Instead, just over a month into his term, Mr. Trump stands as an exceptionally polarizing figure. He inspires intense support among his admirers and equally intense animosity among his detractors, with remarkably few Americans standing in the middle without a strong view. Everybody appears to have an opinion about Donald Trump, and those opinions already appear locked in.

Perhaps more surprising for this nontraditional political figure, this polarization is falling along traditional partisan lines, with those calling themselves Republicans lining up solidly behind him and those calling themselves Democrats lining up solidly against him. That may be the biggest sign that he is well on his way to remaking the composition of the two political parties. Out in the country, if not necessarily in Washington, it

"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall," she said, singing the nursery rhyme out loud. "Humpty Dumpty had a great ..."

Some children shout "fall." Others offer blank stares, because they're from homes with less educational nourishment. "You just wouldn't believe the number of kids who have never heard a nursery rhyme," she said.

Garner and her allies aren't asking for assistance only for rural America, they're also pressing for a rewrite of the tax code. And they're not shy about the approach: political shame.

If a tax package is going to cut rates and red tape for corporations and Trump's fellow billionaires, the thinking goes, the president had better find a way to expand credits and deductions for the education needs of the families that formed the bedrock of his support.

"If there is tax reform and there's nothing for poor, working families in this country, and families that are

middle class and struggling, that's not good," Shriver said.

Garner calls their cause the "bobblehead issue," because everyone loves to tell her that they support children, but in the end it sometimes seems as though they just enjoy being around a beautiful celebrity.

"Everyone's nodding and couldn't agree more, and shaking your hand and want their picture," she said. "But when the vote is cast, nobody's out there screaming and yelling for poor kids."

The Daily 202 newsletter

A must-read morning briefing for decision-makers.

Please provide a valid email address.

Garner returned home to West Virginia last year to help raise money after devastating flooding in the state. Reliably Democratic during her childhood, West Virginia ended up giving Trump his largest margin of victory — something she

could see coming by talking to people in economically depressed areas.

"People felt like Trump really understood them, that he was going to come in and create jobs for them," she said. "They felt like they needed something to just turn everything upside down."

It's that level of despair that leaves Garner willing to deal with Trump when some of her friends want to offer nothing but resistance. She may even be willing to meet the president.

"Send me a ticket to Mar-a-Lago. I'm ready to go down and have a steak and a good chat," she said, only half joking about the prospect. "I really think it's great, if he's willing to help the poor kids who got him elected."

*Read more from Paul Kane's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.*

appears that Republicanism is increasingly defined as support for Mr. Trump, while being a Democrat is being defined as opposing Mr. Trump.

For the president as well as the lawmakers arrayed before him in the Capitol Tuesday, this picture poses some stark challenges. How can anyone find bipartisan common ground in such an environment? To the extent it once seemed Democrats actually would agree with Mr. Trump's impulse to spend hundreds of billions of dollars on job-producing infrastructure projects, or his quest for a new path on trade, has that possibility already evaporated?

In short, is the country already locked into an entirely new but equally paralyzing phase of political polarization?

Those questions emerge in a new Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll. Almost 9 in 10 self-identified Republicans, and just over 9 in 10 Trump voters, say they approve of the job the president is doing, while almost 9 in 10 Democrats, and just over 9 in 10 Hillary Clinton voters, say they disapprove of his job performance.

Usually, at such an early stage in a presidency, a fair number of Americans say they just aren't sure yet what they think of the job their new president is doing. Yet now, just 8% say they aren't sure whether they approve or disapprove of the job Mr. Trump is doing.

Similarly, it would be normal for a large chunk of Americans to hold positive views of even a new president they don't agree with. At this stage of Republican George W. Bush's presidency, one-third of Democrats said they had positive feelings toward the new White House occupant. By the same token, at this phase of Barack Obama's presidency, one-third of Republicans said they had positive feelings toward the new Democratic president

Today? Only 9% of Democrats say they have positive feelings about Mr. Trump.

This picture creates some problems for the lawmakers who will assemble in the Capitol for Mr. Trump's address. Congressional Republicans have the numbers, barely, to power through pieces of a Trump agenda on their own, just as Democrats, early in Mr. Obama's term and with bigger majorities, powered past unified Republican opposition and passed an economic stimulus package and the Affordable Care Act.

But the Democratic president and his party discovered over time that the complete absence of bipartisan support provides a fragile foundation for big and important national initiatives—a problem illustrated starkly at loud and angry town halls filled by health-law opponents in the summer of 2009. Ultimately, the stiff GOP antipathy toward Mr. Obama's agenda rallied

conservatives and fueled Democrats' big losses in midterm elections in 2010 and 2014.

Fast forward to today. Mr. Trump and Republicans in Congress may be able to muscle through on their own big changes to the Affordable Care Act, a broad tax cut, billions of dollars to fund that controversial wall along the Mexican border and a budget likely to call for a big jump in military spending and significant cuts in some domestic programs. Yet even some Republicans are squeamish about details of that agenda, and the raucous town halls members of Congress have been holding in recent days have put them on notice that changes in the government's health program, in particular, carry some significant downside risks.

Those risks could be diminished if Mr. Trump could find some common ground with Democrats. But it isn't clear that Democrats whose grass-roots supporters now demand wall-to-wall opposition to all things Trump are even interested. Their animosity toward the man, and toward his appointees in areas such as the environment and education, seem to be blocking potential common ground elsewhere.

The bottom line is this: Political polarization helped produce the voter anger that in turn produced President Trump. A new version of the same old cycle may be starting.

**Write to** Gerald F. Seib at [jerry.seib@wsj.com](mailto:jerry.seib@wsj.com)



# Trump Hopes for a Reset With Speech to Congress

After a troubled first month in office, President Trump aims to reset his agenda with the American people through his first speech to a joint session of Congress Tuesday.

The Joint Address to Congress—not technically called a State of the Union because he's in his first year—comes at a pivotal moment for the new President, who is preparing for the crushing reality of implementing his agenda. Even with once-in-a-generation unified control over the White House and Congress, Republicans are a party divided at a time when the country is already polarized.

Unlike some past presidential addresses, the speech won't be a laundry list of his legislative priorities, officials said, but rather an opportunity to regain control of how those issues are viewed by the American people.

"The theme will be the renewal of the American spirit," White House spokesman Sean Spicer said Monday. "He will invite Americans of all backgrounds to come together in the service of a stronger and brighter future for our nation."

A novice politician whose longest meeting in the Capitol was the luncheon following his inauguration, Trump has largely remained on the sidelines as House Speaker Paul Ryan has taken the lead on drafting the detailed bills to repeal and replace Obamacare and reform the nation's tax code. Trump, who has never been one for details, will instead try to outline his populist vision for a more nationalistic America, in which borders are secure, ISIS is crushed, trade agreements are reworked and alliances are subject to renegotiation, aides said.

The speech will mark Trump's latest effort to regain his footing after a rocky first five weeks in office, in which he has been stymied by the courts, the inertia of the federal government and his own team's clumsiness. Trump, who has called his Administration a "fine-tuned machine," will seek to rebut reports of chaos and indecision in the ranks.

Previewing the speech, White House officials said the it would feature a "recounting of promises made and promises kept." That will include a list of executive actions

he's signed on everything from reducing regulations to his controversial ban on travel from seven Muslim-majority countries. (The latter remains blocked by a federal appeals court, though the White House promises a replacement order shortly after the speech.) The White House emailed a list of some of Trump's early accomplishments to supporters Monday afternoon, along with information on how to watch the address.

The optics of the staid House chamber may not favor the novice politician, whose workmanlike speaking style and penchant for sometimes-furious digressions in response to perceived slights could come off as inappropriate for the venue.

And already there are signs that the message he will be offering to the public will differ from the agenda Republicans in Congress are preparing for. Trump told the nation's governors this weekend that he will discuss a plan to boost infrastructure spending—one that won't be included in his budget and likely won't be taken up in Congress until next year, if at all.

On Monday, the White House distributed talking points for the speech to Republican allies, declaring, "It will be a speech addressed to ALL Americans AS Americans—not to a coalition of special interests and minor issues." Officials said Monday that Trump is not slated to repeat his recent name-calling against Democrats and members of the news media.

"It's fair to say that this is a look forward," one official told reporters.

Aides said Trump is looking to tell the story of "real Americans" who have been affected by both the accomplishments of his first 38 days on the job and who would benefit from his proposals. The invitees highlighted the prominence of the president's anti-illegal immigration message is likely to take in his remarks.

Asked by reporters how he hopes the speech will be received, Spicer echoed his boss' focus on symbolism Monday, "I hope a very robust and applause-filled reception."



## Tom Cole : What the G.O.P. Wants Trump to Say Tonight

Tom Cole

President Trump in the Oval Office on Friday. Doug Mills/The New York Times

WASHINGTON — When he addresses Congress for the first time on Tuesday night, Donald J. Trump will do so as one of the most untraditional and unexpected presidents in American history. The election, however close, was a decisive statement by the American people against the status quo, an expression of the hope that he would break the stalemate in Washington and lead the country in a new direction.

Mr. Trump can take pride in his cabinet choices, the deregulatory thrust he and the Republican Congress have initiated and the boldness he has shown in shaking up the established order and the elites in Washington. His decision to push ahead on the Keystone pipeline is the triumph of common sense over environmental orthodoxy. And his nomination of Judge Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court is a master stroke that conservatives celebrate and even liberal jurists respect.

I have no doubt that President Trump will spend much of his

speech making the case for three initiatives that are already underway in Congress: the rebuilding of the military, the repeal and replacement of the failing Affordable Care Act and the long overdue reform of the tax code. And he will surely discuss his proposals for something most Americans strongly favor — enhanced border security.

However, President Trump will need to do more than merely wait upon a Republican Congress to produce the legislation he has championed. He must become an active participant in the legislative process.

There are many knotty issues that must be resolved with respect to all these points in his agenda. How much money will be pumped into the Pentagon, and will it be offset by reduced spending on domestic priorities such as early childhood education, biomedical research and clean drinking water?

Do Republicans finance their new health care system by keeping some of the Obamacare taxes or, as some suggest, taxing upper-end health insurance plans — an idea they previously opposed?

And will the tax cuts Republicans have advocated be made permanent and paid for by a "border

adjustment tax" on imports, or phased out at the end of a decade, as was the case with the George W. Bush tax cuts?

There are divisions within Republican ranks in Congress on all these issues. Many support a border-adjustment tax, for example, but a large number passionately oppose the idea. Only presidential leadership can resolve them. And resolving each issue will require President Trump to take ownership of the final decision and sell it to different factions within the Republican Party, and to the country as a whole. Presidents must lead, and leadership will be required to meet the objectives Mr. Trump has laid out.

There are other initiatives I hope the president addresses in this speech and those to come. In the opinion of many on both sides of the aisle, President Obama conducted unauthorized and therefore illegal wars in Libya, Syria and other parts of the Middle East. A new effort against the Islamic State requires a new congressional authorization for the use of force. President Trump should ask for it.

Preserving Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid and putting

America on a sound fiscal footing requires the reform of the entitlement system. President Trump should embrace that cause. Ronald Reagan did it with respect to Social Security, and won 49 states in his re-election. And as much as all Americans embrace President Trump's call for enormous new investments in infrastructure, he owes the country an explanation of how he is going to pay for it. President Dwight D. Eisenhower did just that when he built the Interstate System of highways.

Finally, there is the vexing issue of illegal immigration. President Trump is right to focus first on border security. Previous administrations have promised to do so, yet failed to deliver. And he is correct to demand that those who entered America illegally and committed serious crimes be deported.

But that's just the start. Once the public is convinced that these tasks are being undertaken, the president will have to decide what to do with those who entered the country illegally but, once here, have obeyed the law, contributed to our economy and often had children who are citizens. Eventually, the president will have to address this issue in a manner which is practical,

just and comprehensive. No previous president has managed to do so. Given his reputation for toughness on immigration, Mr. Trump might have the credibility to

create a consensus.

Our last two presidents tried and failed to unite the country. Indeed, each left it more divided than he

found it. President Trump instead has opted to do big things in the hope that by achieving them he can renew the American spirit and bring the country together through deeds,

not words. It is a worthy goal. Every American should hope he succeeds.



## Robert Lehrman : I hope Trump surprises me Tuesday

Robert Lehrman  
Published 12:07  
p.m. ET Feb. 27, 2017 | Updated 19  
hours ago

President Trump at the National Harbor outside Washington on Feb. 24, 2017. (Photo: Pool photo by Olivier Douliery)

Everyone was friendly, but I was scared.

It was a winter's day in 1989. The new president, George H.W. Bush, would give his first speech to Congress. After that, Sen. Lloyd Bentsen of Texas would deliver the Democratic response — and I, his new speechwriter, had written it.

The speech's tone was civil. Bentsen wanted to disagree with Bush about a number of things, but say nice things about him. The senator's main worry seemed to be whether he should end with what was in the draft: a tribute to his father, who had just died.

It wasn't all that different from the approach President Reagan had pioneered seven years earlier, ending his State of the Union Address with a tribute and perfectly executed salute to Lenny Skutnik, an unknown 29-year old who dove into the freezing Potomac River after a plane crash to save a drowning passenger.

Bentsen wanted to pay tribute. But what if he started to cry?

"I'll just read it again and again, till I know I can get through it," he said, finally, surprising me by how much he cared.

Looking back, those days seem like they happened in another universe. This week, as



President Trump gets set for his first speech to Congress, should we expect civility from him, or anger?

For a president who should be in a good mood, Trump's mood is bilious, especially in last week's gloating and mean-spirited speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference. He smeared the news media ("They make up sources."), insulted immigrants ("bad dudes"), and praised his voters in a way that implied Hillary Clinton's voters don't share their virtues ("A win for everyone who believes it's time to stand up for America!").

Democrats are furious, too — about his appointments, jingoism, misogyny, and what they consider lies. Some won't line up for the usual handshake as the president comes down the aisle. To embarrass him, some will bring people hurt by Trump policies to the speech: a quadriplegic; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender men and women; and maybe undocumented immigrants. They will sit on their hands when in other years they might at least tepidly join in clapping. We probably won't hear much even of the rhetoric of unity, much less anything felt.

This doesn't mean Americans shouldn't listen. Critics rightly mock the vacuous parts of these speeches, but there is also a clash of ideas. As Trump lays out his agenda and former Kentucky governor Steve Beshear — a health care hero in his party — gives the Democratic response, there will be plenty to show where the parties differ.

Will the president repeat his campaign pledges to

repeal Obamacare? Give any details about his plans for education, tax reform, climate change or stopping crime in cities? It's not just lobbyists who pore over the sentences devoted to each issue. Voters can, too. That's valuable.

But not as valuable as what else Trump could accomplish. The president could reach out. Why not assure us that those 20 million people insured by Obamacare will stay insured? Insert a paean to the strength of diversity, including Muslims? In a month when Republican legislators have introduced a measure to slash legal immigration in half, why not assert a belief that those who come legally — like his own grandparents — are an asset for the country?

This would not give Trump a big boost in the polls; Americans vastly overestimate the effect of political speech. But neither would it give Trump's base heart failure. It might even give him a small start towards expanding it.

Or is it naive to think that the president feels any of these things?

It is not. That's why I remember that moment with Bentsen so vividly.

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

As most people who spend a lot of time with politicians find, those one-dimensional characters railing at each other behind lecterns are more complex than they allow themselves to show. I don't expect Trump to display much nuance Tuesday night, but it would be useful for Americans to see.

Whether or not it promotes any tangible step towards unity, I hope the president surprises me. I even hope that at the end of his speech, Trump preserves the tradition of paying tribute to those State of the Union heroes. Flinty-eyed writers can scoff. But these heroes almost always deserve recognition. It's OK to honor them.

And in this bleak time, such tributes might remind us that this country is molded by those who feel emotions the rest of us do, that despite our differences we are similar, too. Human. As we see when they salute those who dive into icy waters to save a life — or doggedly plow, too fast, through a tribute to a beloved father.

*Robert Lehrman, former chief speechwriter to Vice President Gore, teaches public speaking and political speechwriting at American University. He has published four novels and The Political Speechwriter's Companion, and co-wrote and co-edited the new book Democratic Orators From JFK to Barack Obama. Follow him on Twitter: @RobertLehrman1*

*You can read diverse opinions from our Board of Contributors and other writers on the Opinion front page, on Twitter @USATOpinion and in our daily Opinion newsletter. To submit a letter, comment or column, check our submission guidelines.*

Read or Share this story:  
<http://usat.ly/2mwbz2p>

## Molly Ball : Trump Promised to Bend Congress to His Will—but Is Congress Taming Trump Instead?

Molly Ball

Just over a month ago, Donald Trump thundered into the White House with a bold declaration. "We will no longer accept politicians who are all talk and no action, constantly complaining, but never doing anything about it," he said. Instead, he contended, "Now arrives the hour of action."

Trump promised to steamroll the Washington status quo, disrupting both Republicans and Democrats. He would replace the elite consensus of both parties with a new, populist-nationalist philosophy, and bully Congress into submission.

One month in, Trump has certainly succeeded in kicking up a frenzy of news and controversy. It surrounds him at all times, like the cloud of dust around Pig-Pen in *Peanuts*.

But when it comes to taming Washington, the results are decidedly mixed. Instead, it is the Republican Party—in the form of Congress and conservative institutions—that seems mostly to be in charge, and Trump who is being tamed.

The things Trump has succeeded in doing have largely been things Republicans already wanted before he came along: naming a strongly

conservative Cabinet and Supreme Court nominee. At the points where Trump's platform clashed with GOP elites—trade, immigration, and foreign policy—he has softened or been rebuked.

On the big-ticket items he vowed to force through—health-care and tax reform—he has found himself at the mercy of the usual slow-moving, politically balky congressional processes. And on economic policy,



it is not at all clear the GOP will go along with Trump's calls for building infrastructure and preserving entitlements, particularly if these priorities come at the cost of balanced budgets.

Meanwhile, much of Trump's attention has been consumed with trash-talking tweets, complaints about his treatment by the press, and executive orders that do little to move policy. Beyond all that bluster, who's really in charge? Here's a breakdown of some major policy areas:

#### **A Conservative-Pleasing Cabinet:**

The "deconstruction of the administrative state," as Trump's strategist, Steve Bannon, put it at the Conservative Political Action Conference last week, is underway via Trump's executive branch. Agency heads like Scott Pruitt, at the Environmental Protection Agency, and Betsy DeVos, at the Department of Education, seem inclined to dismantle the departments they've been tapped to lead. This leaves liberals aghast, but to conservatives, it is a feature, not a bug. They are glad to see Trump dialing back a federal bureaucracy that, in the Obama era, exceeded its legislative mandates to accomplish through regulation what it couldn't get through Congress, like curtailing carbon emissions.

#### **The Republican Establishment's Dream Supreme Court Pick:**

To replace the late Antonin Scalia, Trump named Neil Gorsuch, a federal judge with impeccable credentials, an Ivy League pedigree, and membership in the Federalist Society. Gorsuch's nomination gladdened the most Trump-skeptical conservatives, especially the evangelical Christians who held their noses and voted for Trump because the Supreme Court hung in the balance. And it vindicated Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's strategy of refusing to consider Obama's nominee, Merrick Garland.

#### **No Real Shift in Trade Policy:**

Trump's campaign-trail opposition to major trade deals was a significant departure from conservative dogma. One of his first actions was to pull the United

States out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. But that was a purely symbolic action, as Congress had never ratified the deal and members of both parties had soured on it. Trump has not pulled the U.S. out of the North American Free Trade Agreement or imposed tariffs on imports. When he briefly floated a 20 percent Mexican-import tax, Republicans swiftly condemned it, and his administration quickly disowned the idea. Congressional Republicans have been working on a border-adjustment tax proposal that they say would accomplish something similar, but Trump has yet to get firmly behind it—and it, too, appears to be on the rocks due to opposition from business.

#### **Immigration Actions Less Than Meets the Eye:**

Trump's hard line against immigration broke with the GOP's business wing. His administration has intimidated the undocumented with deportations and raids that have created a climate of fear. But the actual number of deportations is small. Meanwhile, Trump has yet to roll back Obama's protections for the young immigrant "Dreamers," frustrating some immigration hawks. He has ordered the Mexican border wall to be built, but Congress has yet to fund it, and Mexico is still refusing to pay for it.

#### **A Muslim Ban Dialed Back:**

Despite promising in no uncertain terms to temporarily ban all Muslim immigrants, an arguably constitutional measure, Trump instead ordered a rushed and ham-handed ban on travelers from certain Muslim countries. When the ban was shot down by the courts, Trump rescinded it, and the refined ban that was supposed to replace it has been delayed, in part because his own intelligence community won't supply evidence for it. Meanwhile, Trump's new national-security adviser, H.R. McMaster, dislikes the term "radical Islamic terrorism."

#### **Foreign Policy Outrages Subside:**

Trump's supposed willingness to challenge stale foreign-policy orthodoxies has mostly been tempered. When his December call to Taiwan defied the U.S.'s long-

held one-China policy, his aides insisted the policy was overdue for reconsideration. This month, Trump backed down and reaffirmed the one-China policy. Campaign-trail Trump made a lot of noise about questioning America's commitment to NATO, and some experts agreed. But as president, he has given assurances to the alliance: He told British Prime Minister Theresa May he was "100 percent behind" it, and Vice President Mike Pence pledged the U.S.'s "unwavering" commitment. On Israel, Trump rattled the longstanding consensus by questioning the two-state solution—only to have United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley call that an "error." Even the Russians who once cheered Trump's friendliness now see him bending against Vladimir Putin, and there has been no move to roll back sanctions.

#### **A Health-Care Policy at the Mercy of Congress:**

Trump's day-one order on Obamacare decreed the administration's opposition without actually accomplishing any meaningful rollback of the law. He has confused Republicans in Congress by seeming to want to preserve some parts of his predecessor's signature health-care overhaul even as he demanded they repeal and replace it in short order. Trump has shown little appetite for wading into the details of Republicans' debates on the issue, and on Monday, he told a group of CEOs at the White House, "It's an unbelievably complex subject. Nobody knew health care could be so complicated."

#### **Tax Reform Flailing in Congress:**

Lowering tax rates and simplifying the tax code has been a longtime GOP talking point—but in practice, it always proves impossible to slaughter the sacred cows of the many competing special interests. Of all the policy areas that could benefit from a fearless negotiator willing to bang heads together and infuriate big-money lobbies, tax reform is number one. But as noted above, Trump appears leery of the border-adjustment tax at the center of the House Republican proposal. White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus recently told the Associated

Press the administration was "discussing and debating" what to do on taxes.

#### **Infrastructure Shelved by Congressional GOP:**

A major pillar of Trump's departure from GOP orthodoxy was his supposed intent to propose a trillion dollars in government spending to, as he put it in his inaugural address, "build new roads and highways and bridges and airports and tunnels and railways all across our wonderful nation." Democrats agreed that this would be a great way to accomplish Trump's goals of rebuilding hollowed-out inner cities and small towns. But Republican leaders have made clear such a plan is not on their agenda anytime soon. Trump appears not to have noticed.

#### **Budget Blueprints Left at Odds:**

The blueprint Trump promised Monday hewed to Trump's promise not to touch Social Security and Medicare while pumping money into the military. It runs contrary to the long-held priorities of House Speaker Paul Ryan, who wants to reform entitlements and balance the budget. It would require lawmakers to gut domestic spending while lifting spending caps, two difficult political pills to swallow. And Democrats are already arguing that Trump's agenda of corporate tax cuts and safety-net-slashing is more pro-Wall Street than pro-worker.

Governing is hard, and every new president faces a learning curve and procedural hurdles. Obama, Trump's predecessor, also swept into office with big promises and, despite majorities in Congress, took more than a year to enact health-care reform and financial regulation.

But much of Trump's appeal was that, as a businessman and artist of *The Deal*, he could cut through the dithering and gridlock and partisan bickering. Instead, in his first month, Trump has mostly been the loser in his battles against entrenched institutions. Rather than bend Washington to his will, Trump has, in his first month, mainly bent his priorities to the will of Republicans in Washington.

## **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

### **White House dismisses Russia ties**

Alan Cullison and Siobhan Hughes

President Donald Trump and Russia, while dismissing calls for a special prosecutor to investigate.

The House and Senate intelligence committees both have begun investigations into Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election, including contacts between Russian officials and former National Security Adviser Mike

Flynn, who resigned this month after acknowledging he mischaracterized his contacts with Moscow's ambassador to the U.S.

The contacts also involve alleged ties between other Trump associates and Moscow that officials have said are part of a federal counterintelligence investigation. The White House has

disputed some of the accounts and has asked Federal Bureau of Investigation officials and top lawmakers to help rebut the reports.

"What we're doing is actually urging reporters to engage with subject-matter experts who can corroborate whether something's accurate or not," White House press secretary Sean Spicer said.

Updated Feb. 27, 2017 11:28 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—The White House defended Monday its decision to ask lawmakers and intelligence officials to help rebut allegations of ties between associates of

## TRUMP'S FIRST 100 DAYS

Asked about calls for a special prosecutor, Mr. Spicer dismissed the notion, saying, "My question would be a special prosecutor for what." "When ... reporters had questions, we let them know what subject matter experts were available to discuss the accuracy of a newspaper story."

Rep. Devin Nunes (R., Calif.), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee and leader of one of the main congressional probes, confirmed he was one of the lawmakers asked by the White House to combat a New York Times story earlier this month that alleged frequent contacts between Mr. Trump's associates and Russian officials.

Mr. Nunes denied there was anything unusual about the request—he had made it clear before to journalists that he didn't believe the story. The White House, he said, gave him the telephone number of a reporter to call, but didn't coach him on what to tell that reporter.

"It was just 'This person wants to talk about the New York Times story,'" he said. "And I got the number and I called the reporter."

Over the weekend, Sen. Richard Burr (R., N.C.), the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said he also had held conversations with reporters.

Mr. Nunes said Monday that he had made inquiries to "appropriate agencies" about the alleged ties between Mr. Trump's associates and Russia.

"I don't have any evidence," he said.

But Rep. Adam Schiff (D., Calif.) suggested that Mr. Nunes was prejudging the outcome of the probe by saying that there is no evidence showing Mr. Trump's campaign colluded with Russians during the elections.

"You don't begin by stating what you believe to be the conclusion," said Mr. Schiff, adding it was too early to know whether members of Mr. Trump's campaign collaborated with the Russians or not.

The House Intelligence Committee, Mr. Schiff said, hasn't yet called witnesses or received testimony or various documents. "We're not in a position to reach any conclusions," he said.

Over the weekend, Rep. Darrell Issa (R., Calif.) called for the appointment of a special prosecutor to probe the alleged ties between

Mr. Trump's associates and Russia, although by Monday he dropped that language and instead called for an independent review. On Monday, other Republican lawmakers, while not going as far as Mr. Issa, expressed concern about the independence of congressional investigations.

"For the public to have confidence in our findings, it is important that the committee work in a completely bipartisan fashion and that we avoid any actions that might be perceived as compromising the integrity of our work," said Sen. Susan Collins (R., Maine), a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, in a statement.

During a rare interview on NBC, former President George W. Bush, a Republican, said he supports an investigation into possible links between Russia and Mr. Trump's campaign, saying "I think we all need answers."

But Mr. Bush didn't say whether he favored a special prosecutor for the job. "I'm not sure the right avenue to take," he said. "I am sure, though, that that question needs to be answered."

Sen. Marco Rubio (R., Fla.), another member of the panel, said in an interview with a Miami

television station over the weekend that he plans to ask Mr. Burr for more information and that he didn't want to make any judgments based on a single article.

"I think it's very important that the work of the Senate Intelligence Committee be 100% credible—that when we issue our report, everyone on both sides of the aisle looks at it and says this was a serious effort free from politics," Mr. Rubio said.

While disputing evidence of ties between Mr. Trump's associates and Russia, Mr. Nunes voiced concern about leaks of sensitive information. He said he was optimistic that officials would soon learn who leaked details of a conversation between Mr. Flynn and Russia's ambassador last year, a conversation that he said should have remained secret.

Mr. Nunes said that "a relatively small number of people" in the U.S. government could have known about Mr. Flynn's conversation and made it public.

—Carol E. Lee  
contributed to this article.

**Write to** Alan Cullison at  
alan.cullison@wsj.com and Siobhan  
Hughes at  
siobhan.hughes@wsj.com

## POLITICO Marc Bennetts : What if Donald Trump played the Kremlin?

Marc Bennetts

MOSCOW — Ever since U.S. intelligence officials accused Russia of interfering in November's presidential elections, President Donald Trump has been forced to deny accusations that he is a Kremlin puppet.

There's another explanation for the Kremlin's meddling, one that may seem counterintuitive, but — in the absence of a smoking gun proving that Trump is in Russian President Vladimir Putin's pocket — is equally viable. What if Trump played Putin?

Consider the possibility that Trump misled the Kremlin with vaguely positive statements on issues crucial to Russia, such as lifting economic sanctions and recognizing Crimea, with no intention of following through. In the process, he would have gained, without overtly asking for it, assistance in his White House bid, in the form of cyberattacks and fake news.

Entirely speculative and without watertight proof? Definitely. But so is the oft-repeated trope that Trump is a Manchurian president, his every move controlled by coded messages from Moscow. And

Trump's recent reversal on previously Kremlin-friendly positions increases the probability that Putin was the pawn in this game all along.

Trump and his campaign team might not even have believed the Kremlin could decisively tip the elections in his favor. But, as the outsider with the longest shot at the White House, anything that had the potential to damage Hillary Clinton's chances would have been worth entertaining.

Trump's startling transformation from hero to villain was complete when he vowed last week to make the U.S. nuclear arsenal "top of the pack."

And keeping the Russians on Trump's side wouldn't have required much beyond the occasional nebulous reassurances that he, as president, would deal with Russia as an equal partner, rather than as an adversary. Putin, desperate to rescue Russia's ailing economy and restore its status as a great power, could plausibly have done all the rest himself.

\*\*\*

After all, the Russians need Trump more than he needs them. U.S. and European sanctions imposed by the

Obama administration over the Kremlin's seizure of Crimea, twinned with low global prices for oil, have hit the country's economy hard.

Around 20 million people — some 15 percent of the population — are living below the poverty line, defined by the government as an income of just \$174 a month. That's a rise of 3 million people since 2014, when sanctions were first imposed.

There's also next year's presidential election in Russia to consider. No one doubts that Putin will secure a fourth term of office, taking him into 2024, but Russian media have reported that the Kremlin is worried a low turnout could undermine his authority. The White House's recognition of Russian authority in Crimea, whose seizure by Russian forces triggered wild celebrations in Moscow, would have given Putin a major boost ahead of the vote.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has been assumed to benefit from Trump's election | Aleksey Nikolskyi/AFP via Getty Images

A U.S. president who vowed to "look into" both issues, as Trump did on the campaign trail, is a candidate in which Putin would

have deemed worth investing time, funds, and effort.

It's worth noting too that the Russians are certainly acting as though they've been cheated. When the White House declared on February 14 that the U.S. would not scrap sanctions until Russia handed Crimea back to Ukraine, pro-Kremlin politicians and state media reacted with indignant confusion.

Fawning coverage of Trump by Russian state television, which hailed the U.S. president as an "alpha male" after his election triumph in November, vanished overnight. "A complete Trump blackout," tweeted Alexey Kovalev, a well-known Russian journalist who monitors state media propaganda.

Russian officials, already angered by the resignation of Michael Flynn as National Security Adviser over his contacts with Sergei Kislyak, the Russian ambassador in Washington, then heard James "Mad Dog" Mattis, the newly appointed U.S. defense secretary, announce that NATO needed to deal with Russia from a "position of strength."

And just when it seemed things couldn't get any worse for Moscow,

Trump filled the vacancy left by Flynn's sudden departure by hiring General Herbert Raymond McMaster, a Russia hawk whose appointment was cheered by Senator John McCain, arguably Putin's biggest critic in the U.S.

Trump's startling transformation from hero to villain was complete when he vowed last week to make the U.S. nuclear arsenal "top of the pack," triggering warnings of a new arms race in Moscow.

\*\*\*

The disappointment in Russia is palpable. Is this really the same Trump who seemed so promising during the election campaign? The man who praised Putin as a strong leader and dropped heavy hints he was ready to dismember "obsolete" NATO? Where is the Trump whose election win they had toasted with champagne?

H.R. McMaster is a Russia hawk whose appointment was cheered by

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## James Downie : Tom Perez's biggest problem as DNC chair: His backers

By James Downie

February 27 at 4:14 PM

The race for chair of the Democratic National Committee was cast as a contest between the more centrist establishment and the left. Yet even though the left's preferred candidate, Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minn.) lost, the winner was no moderate. Tom Perez had a solidly progressive record serving in the Obama White House as head of the Justice Department's civil rights division and secretary of labor. Yes, Perez supported the Trans-Pacific Partnership and is friendlier to financial interests than Ellison, but he will still easily be the most progressive DNC chair in years.

Given that there was little difference between Perez and Ellison on policy, why was Perez pushed to enter by the Obama White House and supported by the more establishment wing? Comparing résumés doesn't answer the question: Ellison has more experience organizing in state and local races than Perez. The smears claiming Ellison was anti-Semitic were largely

Senator John McCain, arguably Putin's biggest critic in the U.S. | Nicholas Kamm/AFP via Getty Images

The Kremlin, as it has done since November, insists it never saw Trump through rose-tinted glasses. But senior officials are now openly decrying the U.S. president's pivot on Russia policy, often in insulted tones reminiscent of a businessman swindled by his wheeler-dealer rival.

"Focus on implementing your campaign pledges. Everything was said during the campaign: fixing relations with Russia, with China, fighting terrorism," Vyacheslav Volodin, Russia's parliamentary speaker, said in parliament on February 15. "When you implement your campaign program, everything will be fine."

Leonid Slutsky, head of the Russian parliament's foreign affairs committee, was bleaker, admitting that Trump's about-turn on Crimea and other issues was worrying

senior officials. "Like a cold shower, it has cooled some of our hasty and inflated expectations with regard to Trump and his team," he told state media that same week.

And yet, Putin may still have reason to smile. Even if Trump did hoodwink the Russians, his presidency isn't completely without its advantages for the Kremlin.

Some, such as Alexei Pushkov, a prominent Russian senator, appear to be in denial, suggesting Trump remained committed to improving relations with Moscow but faced "monstrous resistance" from the U.S. political establishment.

Others have argued Trump simply wants to put some daylight between himself and Russia to silence his critics. But the president's actions will leave an indelible mark on Washington's relationship with Russia — and not the kind pro-Kremlin lawmakers had expected when they cheered his move into the White House.

And yet, Putin may still have reason to smile. Even if Trump did hoodwink the Russians, his presidency isn't completely without its advantages for the Kremlin.

According to Stanislav Belkovsky, a former Kremlin insider, Russian officials were ecstatic over Trump's election win because they believed it proved the "weakness of American democracy." Trump's first few weeks in office will only have strengthened that conviction.

"In this respect," Belkovsky said. "Putin is the winner."

*Marc Bennetts is a Moscow-based journalist and author of "I'm Going to Ruin Their Lives: Inside Putin's War on Russia's Opposition."*

missing from the campaign. The only remaining reason for Perez's entry and victory was simple: In defeating Ellison, the establishment wanted to rebuke the progressive wing and retain control of the party.

Therein lies Perez's — and the party's — biggest problem. The Democratic Party needs the progressive wing's energy and new ideas if it is to recover. The hole is quite deep: Even if Hillary Clinton had squeaked out an electoral college victory, in the last 10 years Republicans gained both houses of Congress, 12 governorships and 850 state legislature seats. It's fashionable to blame this entirely on President Barack Obama, but these across-the-board losses suggest the leadership issues run deeper. More than 800 state legislature seats lost is particularly remarkable in a such short period of time, something that could not have happened without institutional issues at multiple levels.

Read These Comments

The best conversations on The Washington Post

Please provide a valid email address.

The fact is that the party establishment doesn't want to admit its failings. As The Post's David Weigel pointed out, the DNC establishment felt that "the death blows to the party's 2016 campaign were struck by Russian hacking and by FBI Director James B. Comey." To be fair, the data does suggest that Comey decisively affected on the election. But it was still the Clinton campaign's fault that the gap was narrow enough that Comey's indefensible actions made a difference. Most presidential campaigns have an October surprise — Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the acceleration of the stock market's collapse in 2008, the Osama bin Laden tape in 2004 and so on. Campaigns may not know which way the surprise will cut, but that doesn't excuse working to shore up key states to withstand a worse-case scenario, which the Clinton team did not do. And Comey and Russia certainly don't explain the party's poor record outside presidential races. Clearly a new approach is needed, particularly in

terms of increasing turnout and pushing policies that motivate a larger number of voters to be enthusiastic about the party.

Rescuing the Democrats from this deep hole requires grass-roots energy — energy that clearly is most prevalent in the more liberal wing of the party, as seen in the surprisingly successful campaign of Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.). Capturing it means working with outside groups and listening to new ideas, not doubling down on establishment control. One of the great mistakes Democrats made in the Obama years was trying to channel the energy of his campaign through establishment groups such as the DNC, where it simply petered out. Perez made a symbolic gesture in the direction of a new way forward by appointing Ellison as deputy chair. If he and party officials at the state and local level can follow up on that — rejecting the "it's not our fault" establishment attitude and being open to new ideas and to the energy sparked by Sanders and others — the party will be a much stronger opponent to President Trump.

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL**

## Paul Tudor Jones' new hedge fund pitch: low, low prices (UNE)

Rob Copeland

Updated Feb. 27, 2017 6:41 p.m. ET

Paul Tudor Jones for years charged some of the highest fees in the hedge-fund industry. Now the

billionaire is cutting them for the second time in eight months.

The move is a dramatic retreat by one of Wall Street's best-known investors. The former cotton trader

rose to fame with a big score during 1987's stock-market crash.

His fund's only annual loss in the past three decades came during the 2008 financial crisis.

But in recent years, clients have pulled billions from Tudor Investment Corp. as Mr. Jones struggled to equal the profits of earlier years. Last summer, the firm eliminated 15% of its staff. Its flagship fund was roughly flat in

2016 despite a run-up in the U.S. stock market.

Some of Tudor's wealthy investors objected to paying hefty fees to the hedge fund without gaining much profit in return, people close to the firm said.

Tudor responded by recently informing clients that it would now be charging as low as a 1.75% management fee and 20% of any profits, the people said. Those are down from 2.75% and 27% at the start of 2016.

Shallower fee cuts were made last July, when Tudor dropped to a management fee of 2% or 2.25%, with the lower charge for larger investments, and a 25% slice of any profits.

Tudor is hardly the only hedge fund to lower the price of admission in recent months as investors are turning away from an industry with persistent underperformance compared with the broader market.

Pension funds, endowments and other deep-pocketed hedge-fund backers are increasingly shifting to lower-cost, simpler investing approaches.

London's Brevan Howard Asset Management last year told clients it would charge 0% management fees for some investors. Louis Bacon's Moore Capital Management also reduced its management fee last year as a "reflection of our sensitivity to

changes in the industry as a whole," the firm said.

Just this past weekend, Berkshire Hathaway Inc. Chairman Warren Buffett declared victory in his bet that low-cost index funds would out earn hedge funds over the span of a decade.

He likened high-fee managers like hedge funds to "monkeys" whose random guesses produced "a seemingly all-wise prophet."

The average hedge fund collects a 1.49% management fee and 17.5% performance fee, down from years past, according to research firm HFR.

What is particularly notable about the Tudor reductions is that Mr. Jones long helped set the pace for high fees, charging up to a 4% annual management fee and 27% cut of investment gains in various arrangements. That was among the highest in the industry.

"Times have changed," said Trip Keuhne, a Tudor investor at Double Eagle Capital Management in Westlake, Texas. In the past, hedge funds pointed to high fees as a bragging right—which "used to make them more in demand," Mr. Keuhne said. "Now you have to come down on your fees to stay competitive and help your investors who have been with you for a long time."

Mr. Jones rose to prominence after making an estimated \$100 million

profit on Black Monday, Oct. 19, 1987, when the Dow Jones Industrial Average plummeted 22%. He helped launch the Robin Hood Foundation, a charity targeting poverty in New York, and was one of many managers who turned Greenwich, Conn., into a hedge-fund hub.

For years, he turned away new investors as he recorded big profits. Tudor's flagship fund has recorded average annual return of 17% in its three-decade history, after fees, compared with a 7% return for the S&P 500 over the same period.

The fund's only down year in the past 30 was a 4% loss in the throes of the 2008 financial crisis because of a sizable cash position that year.

But in recent years, Mr. Jones hasn't been able to make a lot of money for his investors. The firm's funds have been roughly flat for the past three years. The firm at times cited a dearth of market volatility encouraged by low central-bank interest rates world-wide.

Some investors began withdrawing money, dropping Tudor to \$10 billion under management this year from \$13.5 billion two years ago. Investors yanked around \$1 billion in the past six months alone, according to investor documents and people close to the firm. Last summer, the firm reduced its workforce by about 15%, or 60 employees, including some money

managers, and more staff has departed this year, the people said.

Mr. Jones, 62, has no imminent plans for retirement, people close to the firm say. Despite having set up personal residence in Florida last year, he is still a regular presence in Tudor's Connecticut and New York offices, some of the people said.

Over the past year, he has shifted to trading more of the firm's money personally—handing off less to subordinates—and poured resources into developing more quantitative strategies.

In the fourth quarter, Tudor's flagship fund rose 4.5%, turning around what was on track to be a losing year. In investor communications, Mr. Jones credited an increase in bets on the U.S. dollar and wagers against fixed income in the wake of the U.S. presidential election. He wrote in a recent letter he now has "stronger conviction in trading opportunities" than in the recent past.

The fee cuts are designed to ensure the firm has ample money left to drive a potential comeback, people close to Mr. Jones say.

"Those guys who are a little gray behind the ears instead of wet behind the ears are going to do very well," said Mr. Keuhne, who is keeping his money with the firm.

**Write to** Rob Copeland at [rob.copeland@wsj.com](mailto:rob.copeland@wsj.com)



## New wave of anti-Semitic bomb threats rattle the U.S.

Kate King and Scott Calvert

Updated Feb. 27, 2017 11:07 p.m. ET

Jewish organizations and schools in more than a dozen states were evacuated Monday after receiving threatening phone calls, marking the fifth wave of such incidents this year.

Police investigated bomb threats against Jewish community centers in New York and New Jersey, all of which were deemed safe and reopened for business. Jewish centers and day schools in Pennsylvania, Delaware and Indiana also received such threats, and they returned to regular operations Monday, according to the JCC Association of North America.

Locations in states including Alabama, Florida, California and Michigan also received phone threats.

The JCC Association called on federal officials to "speak out—and

speak out forcefully—against this scourge of anti-Semitism impacting communities across the country," David Posner, the group's director of strategic performance, said in a statement.

In total, 90 bomb threats have been phoned in to 73 Jewish community centers and schools across 30 states and one Canadian province on five different days since the beginning of the year.

"Members of our community must see swift and concerted action from federal officials to identify and capture the perpetrator or perpetrators who are trying to instill anxiety and fear in our communities," Mr. Posner said.

Monday's incidents came after hundreds of headstones were vandalized at two Jewish cemeteries this month. In Philadelphia, police said more than 100 headstones were damaged or knocked over this weekend at Mount Carmel Cemetery. Earlier in the month, about 200 headstones were vandalized at a Jewish cemetery in Missouri.

At a press briefing Monday, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said President Donald Trump was "deeply disappointed and concerned" by the reports of vandalism, and that the White House believed it should use its platform to condemn them in the "strongest terms."

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Monday he ordered the state police to investigate the threats to the Jewish community centers in New York.

In Wilmington, Del., the Siegel community center was evacuated Monday morning after receiving a bomb threat, which came as Delaware Democratic Sen. Tom Carper and local Jewish community leaders met there to discuss the recent wave of anti-Semitic acts across the U.S. The center, which reopened later in the morning after a sweep by police, received two bomb threats last month.

"These acts must end," Mr. Carper said. "It is heartbreaking for such a flash of fear to overtake a place of strong community and joy that

brings together people of all ages under one roof—from the babies in the day-care center to the senior citizens taking part in exercise classes."

In San Francisco, the Anti-Defamation League's regional office was evacuated Monday afternoon after a bomb threat. The call to the San Francisco office was made at 4:19 p.m., the group said, and the San Francisco Police Department reported the threat on its official Twitter account about an hour later, warning the public to stay away from the area.

The regional office is located on the city's main commercial thoroughfare, Market Street.

Officer Grace Gatpandan, a spokeswoman for SFPD, said officers had shut down the block, evacuated the building and were searching with bomb-sniffing dogs.

It was the second such threat received by an office of the Anti-Defamation League in the past week, according to the organization. The group has called on the

president to adopt a plan of action to address the incidents aimed at Jewish institutions, including ordering the Justice Department to investigate.

“One threat or evacuation is one too many, and yet we’ve now seen more than 20 incidents in a single day not just to ADL, but to children’s schools and community centers—and more than 90 incidents since the start of this year,” said Jonathan A. Greenblatt, chief executive of the organization. “The level of threats and incidents is astounding, and must not stand. We will do everything in our power to combat this wave of anti-Semitism.”

The New York Police Department evacuated and cleared three Jewish community centers on Staten Island after receiving a bomb threat

Monday morning, a law-enforcement official said.

An anonymous call came in at about 10:30 a.m., saying there was a bomb containing C-4 explosive material at one of the centers. The caller said the device would explode within two hours, the official said.

Police are investigating the threat. The NYPD has recorded 68 hate crimes so far this year, 35 of them anti-Semitic.

The Katz JCC in Cherry Hill, N.J., received a threat by phone at 10:45 a.m. Monday, according to marketing director Stephanie Dworkin. Local and county police inspected the property before allowing people to re-enter about an hour later, she said.

“We have people coming back in, taking classes and it’s business as usual,” Ms. Dworkin said.

Police in New York’s Nassau County said a threat made against a Jewish community center in Plainview on Monday morning was being investigated. In neighboring Suffolk County, police have beefed up patrols at Jewish synagogues, cemeteries and religious institutions.

In suburban Philadelphia, a bomb threat phoned in to the Perelman Jewish Day School in Wynnewood prompted an evacuation of the school and the adjacent Kaiserman JCC, said Steven Rosenberg, chief marketing officer at the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia.

The school has received threats in the past in the form of robocalls, he

said. A police spokesman said students returned to class after investigators used bomb-sniffing dogs to check the campus.

“There’s fear, there’s anxiety, there’s anger,” Mr. Rosenberg said of the overall climate. “You don’t know if these are real threats, if these are a bunch of crazy people just trying to scare everybody. You have to go to Defcon IV and take it as seriously as you can.”

—Zolan Kanno-Youngs, Joseph De Avila, Alejandro Lazo and Louise Radnofsky contributed to this article.

**Write to** Kate King at [Kate.King@wsj.com](mailto:Kate.King@wsj.com) and Scott Calvert at [scott.calvert@wsj.com](mailto:scott.calvert@wsj.com)