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FRANCE - EUROPE3

Editorial : How to Defeat Marine Le Pen	3
Top French Presidential Candidate François Fillon Battered by Growing Scandal	3
Why France now bans unlimited soda refills	4
Trump's Far-Right Feedback Loop Is Shaking Europe to Its Core	4
Kirchick : Trump is destabilizing Europe from within and without	5
Theresa May Gets Parliament's Backing on 'Brexit' Bill	6
British lawmakers give go-ahead for Theresa May to trigger Brexit talks	6
Fearful of Hacking, Dutch Will Count Ballots by Hand.7	
Terror Raids in Germany Reap More Doubts Than Results (UNE)	7
Turkey and Greece Trade Jabs in Island Dispute	8

INTERNATIONAL..... 9

U.S. acknowledges civilian deaths in Trump-authorized Yemen raid	9
Raid in Yemen: Risky From the Start and Costly in the End (UNE)	9
Israel Defiantly Cranks West Bank Settlement Plans Into High Gear	10
Israel Begins Clearing Illegal West Bank Outpost	11

Israeli police begin forced removal of Amona settlers in the West Bank (UNE)	11
Trump administration says it's putting Iran 'on notice' following missile test	12
Trump White House Puts Iran 'On Notice' After Missile Launch (UNE)	13
Iran Is Threatened With U.S. Reprisals Over Missile Test	14
With Flynn putting Iran 'on notice,' the first days of President Trump's foreign policy set a combative tone (UNE)	15
NATO Shelves Plan to Meet With Ukraine	16
Krauss : Let's Make a Deal on Russia and NATO	17
Ukraine fighting could pose early challenge to Trump.17	
U.S. and Mexico appear to take first steps toward renegotiating NAFTA, document suggests	18
Grillo : Trump's Mexican Shakedown	19
Sharma : Mexico's Bad Luck Gets Even Worse	19
Mattis Heads to Asia on Trump Administration's First Overseas Trip	20
U.S.-Australia Rift Is Possible After Trump Ends Call With Prime Minister	20
No 'G'day, mate': On call with Australian prime minister, Trump badgers and brags (UNE)	21
Trump Pushes Dark View of Islam to Center of U.S. Policy-Making (UNE)	22
Editorial : Trump and American 'Self-Confidence'	23

ETATS-UNIS..... 24

Editorial : Hypocrisy on executive orders	24
Dionne : It's time to make Republicans pay for their supreme hypocrisy	24
Editorial : Gorsuch deserves a hearing. These are the questions he should answer	25
McConnell : Democrats, ditch the apocalyptic rhetoric on Judge Gorsuch	25
Trump Says 'Go Nuclear' as Democrats Gird for Gorsuch Fight (UNE)	26
Donald Trump Urges Senate GOP to Scrap 60-Vote Rule for Court Pick (UNE)	27
Greenhouse : Neil Gorsuch and the Search for the Supreme Court Mainstream	28
Editorial : The Myth of the Stolen Supreme Court Seat28	

Draft of Executive Order Looks to Re-Examine Visa Programs (UNE)	29
Rove : Amateur Hour at the White House	30
Trump backers like his early moves: 'It's what executives are supposed to be' (UNE).....	31
A Visa Ban—but Not for Trump's Foreign Workers ...	32
O'Brien : 'Trump Adviser' Is a Contradiction in Terms	32
Trump team building a wall inside National Security Council.....	33

Rex Tillerson Is Confirmed as Secretary of State Amid Record Opposition	34
Zelizer: What Democrats should learn from Republicans	35
Dollar Caught Between President Trump's Tough Talk, Policy Plans (UNE).....	36
Editorial : White House Inc.....	36

FRANCE - EUROPE

Bloomberg

Editorial : How to Defeat Marine Le Pen

The Editors

Marine Le Pen could be France's next president. Sure, her lead in [some polls](#) exaggerates her strength before the field narrows to two candidates -- but voters' discontent with normal politics isn't subsiding. Failing to take the anti-immigrant, populist insurgent seriously would be a huge mistake.

For France's sake, and Europe's, Le Pen must be defeated. Her party's blend of virulent xenophobia and economic statism makes Donald Trump seem moderate. But with her support still building, defeating her calls for more than a show of contempt. Her rivals need to understand why she's so popular.

The National Front is no longer just a fringe movement of bigots and extremists. It is now a refuge for disenchanted working-class voters, the unemployed and young people unable to find their first jobs. In response to their concerns about terrorism, economic stagnation and joblessness, the party has an

appealing list of scapegoats: immigrants, globalization and a corrupt establishment in Paris and Brussels.

Aping this message -- as Republican candidate and former President Nicolas Sarkozy [did](#) during his unsuccessful primary campaign -- won't do. It's wrong on the merits and bad tactics as well, because voters sense crass opportunism.

Lavish promises of handouts and action against greedy capitalists are no better. Socialist Party candidate [Benoit Hamon promises](#) a 750 euro (\$809) monthly universal basic income, and a tax on job-stealing robots. This may appeal to some die-hard socialists, but most French voters know it's unrealistic.

Unfortunately, the most promising anti-Le Pen platform is championed by Republican candidate Francois Fillon, who's currently embroiled in a [scandal](#).

An avowed Thatcherite, Fillon offers something fresh, even radical, for

France. His Socialist counterpart wants to reduce the workweek to 32 hours; Fillon wants to scrap the 35-hour workweek, raise the retirement age, reduce benefits, and ax 500,000 civil-service jobs. (There's scope: About one in five French employees [works](#) for the government).

He's trying especially to attract moderates away from Le Pen, calling for caps on immigration and limits to social benefits for immigrants. He's outspoken on confronting terrorism. Whereas Le Pen wants to take France out of the euro system, Fillon argues for reforming the European Union -- by reducing the European Commission's powers and better coordinating national fiscal policies. Most French voters are unimpressed with the EU right now, but don't like Le Pen's reckless remedies.

Thanks to the scandal, Fillon has lost ground to former economy minister and investment banker Emmanuel Macron, and has

talked of dropping out. Macron's center-left platform remains vague, but he too has championed the labor-market deregulation that France so badly needs, while calling for more public investment in technology, renewable energy and education. His platform needs work, but Macron, like Fillon, has something to offer those drawn by Le Pen's promise of radical change.

The crucial thing for every candidate opposing Le Pen is to speak to the moderates among her supporters without surrendering to her bleak and dangerous vision. Deploing Trump and his supporters didn't work in the United States. Deploing Brexit and its supporters didn't work in the Britain. Le Pen's opponents can't say they weren't warned.

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**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Top French Presidential Candidate François Fillon Battered by Growing Scandal

William Horobin and Inti Landauro

Updated Feb. 1, 2017 1:36 p.m. ET

PARIS—The campaign of François Fillon, once the clear front-runner to become France's next president, is in crisis.

On Wednesday, [the conservative candidate](#) huddled with his party's top brass, seeking to steady a campaign buffeted by a deepening criminal investigation into whether his wife [collected a state salary](#) without performing any work.

"It is a destabilization operation seeking to rob French people of their presidential election," Bernard Accoyer, head of the center-right Les Républicains, said as he left the meeting.

The probe cuts to the core of public frustration with the country's establishment, which many voters say privileges political insiders with jobs and benefits. Mr. Fillon [won the conservative primary](#) in November on a pledge to overhaul that system,

vowing to slash a half-million public-sector jobs.

Now the candidate is fighting to defend his decision to have placed his wife, Penelope, and two children on the public payroll. Polls suggest the accusations have improved [centrist Emmanuel Macron](#)'s chances of becoming France's next president.

Earlier in the week, police grilled Mr. Fillon for five hours and searched his parliamentary offices for evidence his wife performed work in exchange for the salary she received as an aide to Mr. Fillon and another member of parliament.

On Tuesday, Le Canard Enchaîné, the French satirical weekly that sparked the scandal last week, published a second report on the Fillon family's activities. This one alleged his wife received €831,440 (about \$892,000) for stints as a parliamentary aide dating back to 1988. Mr. Fillon also paid his two children a total of €83,735 to assist him from October 2005 to June

2007 while in the Senate, the newspaper reported.

Mr. Fillon on Wednesday dismissed the grumblings of [some lawmakers in his party calling for a new candidate](#), rejecting the report as "very professional slander" and a "constitutional coup d'état."

"I will stand up to attacks right to the end. I will be the candidate for this election," he said.

Ms. Fillon and her children haven't commented on their parliamentary employment and the family's lawyer, Antonin Lévy, didn't respond to requests to comment.

The couple will provide investigators with further evidence of his wife's parliamentary work later this week, Mr. Lévy told French TV after police questioned the couple on Monday.

In an emotion-filled TV interview last week, the candidate insisted his British-born wife was a valuable, hardworking staff member who edited his speeches and kept him in touch with his constituency.

"I will defend her, I love her and I will protect her," Mr. Fillon said. His children, he said, were hired as lawyers to provide him with legal advice while he was a senator. Neither, however, were trained lawyers at the time, records show.

Polls show the scrutiny has imperiled Mr. Fillon's status as front-runner in the May 7 election, fueling support for his two main rivals, [National Front leader Marine Le Pen](#) and Mr. Macron, an investment banker turned politician.

In November, pollster Elabe predicted Mr. Fillon would garner 30% of the first-round vote this spring, allowing him to cruise to victory. A national survey of 993 people Monday and Tuesday by the same firm showed him heading for defeat in the first round with 20% of the vote—behind Ms. Le Pen at 27% and Mr. Macron at 23%. The poll showed Mr. Macron winning the resulting runoff with 65% of the vote.

Ms. Le Pen, who serves in the Strasbourg-based European Parliament, has also faced scrutiny

over her employment of an assistant. On Tuesday, the nationalist politician publicly refused to reimburse €300,000 to the EU's legislative body after its antifraud office deemed a salary paid to her parliamentary assistant unjustified.

The investigation regarding Mr. Fillon harms his candidacy especially, some analysts say, because it calls his public image into question. He has run as an honest broker with the credibility to radically change France's labor system.

His supporters emphasized that Mr. Fillon doesn't have a criminal record during his [successful run in November's conservative primary](#) against former Prime Minister Alain Juppé, who was convicted of misuse

of public funds while serving at the Paris mayor's office in the 1990s.

Mr. Fillon has said he would pull out of the race if prosecutors bring preliminary charges against him. Even if prosecutors don't take the investigation further, however, the disclosures hurt his chances, said Charles Lichfield, France analyst at Eurasia Group, a political-risk consulting firm.

"This removes one of Fillon's key positive attributes, his integrity, and makes his commitment to cutting social spending and public-sector jobs seem hypocritical," Mr. Lichfield said.

Le Canard Enchaîné reported that Mr. Fillon first hired his wife to assist

him between 1988 and 1990 when he served as a lawmaker in the lower house of parliament. She also served on Mr. Fillon's parliamentary staff from 1998 until 2002 when he became a government minister.

When Mr. Fillon left parliament, however, his wife stayed on to work for Marc Joulaud, who filled her husband's seat, until 2007. Mr. Joulaud, who was questioned by investigators Wednesday, has declined to comment on the probe.

She was rehired by Mr. Fillon when he returned to the lower house in 2012, but that stint was brief.

In the TV interview, Mr. Fillon said he dismissed his wife in 2013, "because I understood that

fundamentally public opinion had changed on these questions and there were suspicions."

In January 2014, a new law obliged lawmakers to disclose information about their financial situations and the employment of their spouses.

Corrections & Amplifications

Le Canard Enchaîné is a French weekly newspaper. An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated it was a daily. Also François Fillon's center-right Les Républicains don't have a majority in the French National Assembly, as incorrectly reported in an earlier version. (Feb. 1, 2017)



Why France now bans unlimited soda refills

The Christian Science Monitor

January 28, 2017 —Five years after passing a tax on soft drinks, France now officially bans unlimited refills of sugary drinks across the country.

Aiming to fight obesity, France's new all-you-can-drink ban is the latest move amidst a growing global trend, as cities and countries try to reduce overconsumption of sweetened drinks. In the United States, however, where several cities have tried to impose soda taxes, such attempts have faced a difficult fight.

"We're definitely seeing more interest in taxing sugary sweet beverages both in the United States and around the world, as there's a growing awareness about the health consequences of overconsumption of sugary sweet beverages," Julie Aoki, the director of healthy eating and active living at the Public Health Law Center in St. Paul, Minn., tells The Christian Science Monitor.

The new regulation, which was adopted in April 2015 as part of a larger public health law, went into

effect on Friday. France has already had a tax on sweetened beverages since 2012. The law intends to further the government's fight to limit obesity and related problems, particularly among young people.

The mandate states that it will be illegal to sell any drinks with added sugars or sweeteners on an unlimited basis, either for a fixed price or for free. In addition to soda, some other affected beverages include flavored non-carbonated soft drinks, sports drinks, and energy drinks.

Following the order, soda fountains at school cafeterias, hotels, and restaurants will no longer be available.

A 2014 Eurostat survey shows that [15.3 percent of France's adults are considered obese](#), just below the average of 15.9 percent across the European Union as a whole, and much lower than the [36.5 percent obesity rate](#) in the United States.

The new French law, the first of its kind in the world, is in line with the recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO). In

October, the WHO, an agency of the United Nations, urged countries around the world to [raise taxes on sugary drinks by 20 percent](#) to reduce their consumption as a way to fight obesity and health issues that have been tied to obesity.

Some countries have already implemented similar propositions. Mexico, with one of the [highest rates of obese adults](#) in the O.E.C.D., introduced a roughly 10 percent "soda tax" in 2014. Britain, where about 25 percent of the adult population is labeled obese, is introducing a sugary drinks tax in 2018.

Yet, as the popularity of taxing sugary drinks spreads around the world, it has met with much resistance in the United States. Opponents of such laws call them government obtrusion into consumers' personal choices, and question the effectiveness of these taxes.

In June, when Philadelphia's City Council gave approval [for its 1.5 cent-per-ounce tax on sugared beverages](#), the American Beverage Association released a statement

calling the move "discriminatory and highly unpopular."

"The tax passed today is a regressive tax that unfairly singles out beverages, including low- and no-calorie choices," the association said.

In Mexico, at least, [the tax may be working](#) to reduce the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages. Researchers identified a 6 percent decrease in the sale of sugary beverages in 2014; by the end of the year, that had grown to 12 percent. Meanwhile, sales of bottled water were up by 4 percent.

In the November 2016 election, four US cities passed new soda taxes (San Francisco, Oakland, Calif., Albany, Calif., and Boulder, Colo.,), bringing the total to seven US cities with a soda tax. Berkeley, Calif., was the first US city to pass a sugary drinks tax in 2014, and a [2016 study showed that consumption of soda fell 21 percent in low-income neighborhoods](#).



Trump's Far-Right Feedback Loop Is Shaking Europe to Its Core

James Traub

Monde editorialist Sylvie Kauffmann put it.

Last week, Frank-Walter Steinmeier made his last visit to Paris as Germany's foreign minister (he is about to become president) in order to [issue](#) a plea to the French people: "Please do not surrender to the siren song of populism." His meaning was plain: Do not elect Marine Le Pen, leader of the nativist National Front, in the presidential election this spring. If France falls, Germany, which votes in September, could be next. And if Germany turns against Chancellor Angela Merkel, "it is Europe itself that will founder," as Le

There is one crucial player missing in this dire feedback loop; that, of course, is President Donald Trump. The announcement last weekend that the United States was blocking all refugees from Syria, temporarily suspending all other refugee admissions, and blocking entry to citizens of seven predominantly Muslim countries, while roundly condemned by world leaders, has been welcomed by the populist forces of whom Steinmeier warned.

Geert Wilders, the head of the Dutch Party for Freedom, which is currently leading polls ahead of the Netherlands's pending parliamentary election in March, [tweeted jubilantly](#): "No more immigration from any Islamic country is exactly what we need.... For islam [sic] and freedom are incompatible." Trump's decision was also cheered on by Le Pen, Germany's far-right Alternative for Germany party, Italy's Northern League, and others. (See [this Breitbart piece](#) for a helpful compilation of far-right celebration.)

For the one-half or so of Americans who believe that welcoming immigrants as well as refugees advances America's national interests and affirms its core principles, Trump's executive orders have provoked painful questions about America's role as the leader of the democratic world. We have not given much thought, however, to the damage that those orders, and a Trump presidency generally, will inflict upon the allies who share our values. In fact, it is all too possible that Trump will push Europe over the edge.

Is that a self-centered exaggeration of American influence? During the Cold War, American leaders were deeply convinced that the example they set at home was itself a crucial weapon in the war of ideas with the Soviet Union. For “Cold War liberals” like Arthur Schlesinger or Hubert Humphrey, civil rights legislation not only served the cause of justice but offered a demonstration project in the virtues of democracy for people in poor nations who might otherwise be attracted to the communist vision of salvation. As John F. Kennedy said in the closing days of the presidential race against Richard Nixon, “If we don’t provide an example of what freedom can do in the 1960s, then we have betrayed not only ourselves and our destiny but all those who desire to be free.”

Since that time, Americans have become far more jaded about their supposed moral leadership. Yet the rapturous response to the election of Barack Obama, in Europe as well as in much of the developing world, shows how much the world continues to want the United States to serve as an example. Obama himself capitalized on that feeling by telling audiences abroad that if a man like him could become president of the United States, they should not abandon their deepest hopes — say, for a nuclear weapons-free world — simply because they seem too improbable.

Perhaps if Obama had been able to move opinion at home on denuclearization or closing the military prison at Guantánamo Bay or ramping down the war on terror, he might have been more

successful in changing it abroad. Because he couldn’t, his deeds never matched his words. So far, Trump is not having that problem: He has spent his first week in office making good on his most awful promises. Indeed, in an appearance Saturday on the French news channel TF1, Le Pen [gushed](#) that “what galls the media and political elites is that Donald Trump honors his promises and implements his program.”

Trump has persuaded people who fear the forces that drive the modern world that those forces really can, in fact, be put back in a bottle. All you need do is elect the man who is prepared to do it.

Trump has persuaded people who fear the forces that drive the modern world that those forces really can, in fact, be put back in a bottle. All you need do is elect the man who is prepared to do it. Trump is the Barack Obama of the other half — the “yes, we can” of the “no, we won’t.”

I can hardly contemplate what it would mean if the feedback loop continues to gain velocity. If Le Pen wins, she has said she would submit a referendum for France to leave the EU, as Britain has done. The EU can live without Britain; it did so for 20 years. It cannot live without France. The French might well vote to stay, but the EU would suddenly feel terribly fragile. If Wilders wins in the Netherlands — a country deeply proud of its European identity and of European values — it would become, like Poland or Hungary, an outlier on core issues of refugees and immigration, on free speech and

the free movement of people and tolerance of minorities. But an outlier in the heart of Europe. Should Merkel lose, she would be replaced as chancellor not by the far-right, which remains far too weak to win a national campaign, but by a surprise challenge from a conservative who has pledged to scale back Merkel’s commitments on refugees and perhaps her willingness to stand up to both Vladimir Putin and Trump. The disintegration of the EU might be the least of the damage. The Europe that would founder would be the community of values, not just the administrative apparatus.

I am leaving this week for Paris, where I will spend the next three or four months. (We foreign-policy columnists have to make terrible sacrifices for our craft.) I will be writing about what looks like the enclosing darkness. But I will also be searching for impediments to the negative feedback loop. We have seen how, simply by carrying out his promised agenda, Trump has sparked a wave of dissent not seen in the United States since the 1960s. Whether it will carry beyond the elites and the blue states against which Trump has rallied his supporters remains to be seen. The question for Europe will be whether voters will have to elect right-wing leaders of their own in order for liberals to bestir themselves or whether, in a strange reversal of America’s erstwhile role as a beacon of liberal democracy, Europeans will rally to liberals to forestall Trumpism at home.

I see a few hopeful signs. The election in France remains wide open. François Fillon, the candidate

of the center-right Les Républicains, has been [hounded](#) by allegations that he put his wife on his payroll for a no-show job. And Emmanuel Macron, leader of his own faction — known as En Marche! — has been moving up on the outside lane. Macron is a self-described liberal, typically a term of abuse in France. (See this [excellent profile](#) in Foreign Policy.) Macron favors stronger ties with the EU and reminds the French of their obligations to refugees. He seems, in short, to be committing political suicide, yet [recent polls](#) show that his support is growing rapidly, not only among urban professionals but among retirees and the less educated. Polls currently [show](#) both Fillon and Macron beating Le Pen in a final, two-person round.

Liberalism is under siege, and the change has been so abrupt, and so deep, that we cannot help but feel that the game is over. Perhaps it is; perhaps the social and economic forces that made liberalism the consensual politics of the postwar period have changed in such a way that liberalism will survive only as the tattered standard of a discredited elite. But it’s not only impersonal forces that matter. Had 80,000 or so votes gone another way, and Hillary Clinton won the presidency, we would be having a very different conversation. And come this spring, if Macron wins, or — still more likely — Fillon, France, Europe, and the West itself will be in a very different place. This is a frightening moment, but let’s not despair just yet.



Kirchick : Trump is destabilizing Europe from within and without

James Kirchick

Since the end of World War II, the transatlantic relationship has been the bedrock of American foreign policy. Presidents of both parties, from Harry Truman to Richard Nixon, [Ronald Reagan](#) to [Barack Obama](#), all supported a politically and economically integrated Europe bound to the United States by shared democratic values, robust trade and a military alliance — [NATO](#) — rooted in the principle of collective security. It is no exaggeration to say that the postwar effort to build a liberal democratic Europe has been America’s most successful foreign policy achievement, helping to ensure peace and prosperity on a continent once racked by total war, genocide and economic privation.

That consistent, bipartisan commitment to a “Europe whole,

free and at peace” is at stake now that [Donald Trump](#) is president of the United States. Like no American leader before him, Trump has questioned the very foundations of transatlanticism, openly rooting for the dissolution of the [European Union](#) and repeatedly denigrating NATO as “obsolete.” Trump’s ascension to leadership of the free world could not have come at a worse time. With Russia’s ongoing war against Ukraine, massive migratory waves from the Middle East and North Africa, stubbornly low economic growth, rising Islamic terrorism, political disintegration in the form of Brexit and the rise of nationalist movements across the continent, Europe is facing a series of challenges that collectively pose its greatest crisis since the Cold War. By providing succor to anti-EU populists and forging a new diplomatic entente with Russia, Trump may aggravate these

tensions, destabilizing Europe from within and without.

Trump’s opposition to European integration breaks with more than seven decades of U.S. foreign policy tradition. In a recent joint interview with the Sunday Times and Germany’s Bild, Trump disparaged the EU, saying, “I don’t really care whether it’s separate or together, to me it doesn’t matter.” Echoing claims one normally hears from Mediterranean socialists, Trump said the multinational body is “basically a vehicle for Germany,” when in reality it restrains German power. Whereas the outgoing U.S. ambassador to the EU warns that 2017 may be “the year in which the EU is going to fall apart,” Trump’s likely replacement looks upon the prospect with glee. “I had in a previous career a diplomatic post where I helped bring down the Soviet Union,” Ted Malloch told the

BBC. “So maybe there’s another union that needs a little taming.”

The driving force behind Trump’s antagonism toward Europe is White House senior counselor Stephen K. Bannon. One of the president’s closest political advisors, Bannon’s recent elevation to the National Security Council suggests his portfolio has been expanded to include foreign policy. And it’s in this realm where his influence could be most disruptive.

In 2014 remarks to a conference held at the Vatican, Bannon praised the “global tea party movement” formed in “reaction to centralized government” like the EU. “Strong nationalist movements in countries make strong neighbors,” Bannon asserted, ignoring the entirety of Europe’s 20th century history, which suggests exactly the opposite. When he was executive chair of the website Breitbart.com, Bannon

provided favorable coverage to all manner of far-right, anti-EU political parties, including the United Kingdom Independence Party, or UKIP, France's National Front and Alternative for Germany. In a break with diplomatic protocol, Trump's first meeting with a foreign leader after his election victory was UKIP's Nigel Farage, whom he encouraged London to appoint as its ambassador to Washington.

Planned Breitbart bureaus in Berlin and Paris will bring the brand's nativist conspiracy-mongering to continental politics, stoking the forces determined to tear Europe apart. Because of her (since-abandoned) open-door policy to Syrian refugees, German Chancellor [Angela Merkel](#) is a bete noire for Bannon and his European allies, the symbol of everything they hate about so-called globalism. On the campaign trail, there was no world leader whom Trump attacked more often or vituperatively than Merkel. Asked whom he trusts more, Merkel

or Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#), Trump responded, "I start off trusting both," thus equating one of the world's most admired and pro-American leaders with a ruthless ex-KGB officer who invades his neighbors and kills his enemies.

Europeans, then, must face the prospect of an American president using his bully pulpit to work over the heads of their elected governments in collusion with anti-establishment political factions resolutely opposed to the European project. Simultaneously, they must contend with Trump's proposed strategic rapprochement with Moscow: an external threat potentially even more dangerous to Europe than nationalism.

Trump has indicated that he might lift sanctions placed on Russia for its aggression against Ukraine and recognize Moscow's annexation of the Crimean peninsula. Either of these moves would undermine the fundamental tenet of Europe's postwar political settlement — that

nations may no longer use force to change borders.

What's more, the new president has repeatedly expressed reservations about NATO Article 5, which mandates that an attack on one member is an attack on all. Notwithstanding Trump's promises to rebuild the military, deterrence ultimately depends upon credibility; that is, an adversary's belief that one will indeed defend allies and uphold treaty guarantees. By sowing doubts, Trump — intentionally or not — gives Putin a green light, increasing the possibility of conflict.

To Europe's detriment, it seems Trump and Putin have similar, zero-sum outlooks. Trump's inaugural pledge to put "America First," combined with his dismissal of alliances built upon liberal democratic values — like the EU and NATO — neatly correlates with Putin's preferred world order: Every country for itself. Trump and Putin are already simpatico in their support for anti-EU firebrands;

traditionally pro-American Europeans will now find themselves politically stranded, stuck in a vise-like grip between a militarily aggressive Moscow and an indifferent Washington.

The peace and prosperity Europeans take for granted is not the normal state of things; American commitment to Europe has been the precondition for its stability. Were Washington to reject its traditional role as offshore balancer, it could have a disastrous effect on Europe's political dynamics, reigniting disputes and perhaps even armed conflicts between countries where such tensions have long been unthinkable.

James Kirchick is author of "The End of Europe: Dictators, Demagogues and the Coming Dark Age."

The New York Times

Theresa May Gets Parliament's Backing on 'Brexit' Bill

Stephen Castle

Most analysts now expect the bill to complete its passage through Parliament in time for Mrs. May to begin exit negotiations under Article 50 of the European Union's governing treaty by the end of March, as she has promised.

The debate before Wednesday's vote underlined the extraordinary pace of change in British politics during the past year.

Before last year's referendum on whether to quit the 28-nation bloc, more than half of the elected members of the British Parliament wanted to remain.

Wary of the opposition she might face, Mrs. May tried to avoid going to Parliament before invoking Article 50 and agreed to do so only when instructed by the country's Supreme Court.

In hindsight, that looks like a battle she need never have fought.

The June 23 plebiscite, in which around 52 percent of those voting chose to leave, has transformed the Conservative Party, which had been split over a British exit, into an enthusiast for it.

Though the opposition Labour Party campaigned last year to remain, its leader, Jeremy Corbyn, is a lifelong critic of European integration and never seemed fully convinced about

the pro-European case. On Wednesday, he instructed his lawmakers to vote to allow Brexit negotiations to start, an order that prompted a rebellion within his party.

Yet, that was limited to less than 50 people, because even Labour's most ardent proponents of remaining know that some of their usual supporters ignored their advice and voted to leave.

That has provoked an almost existential crisis for Labour, one hinted at on Tuesday when Keir Starmer, the Labour politician responsible for dealing with the British exit, noted that two-thirds of Labour lawmakers represent constituencies that voted to leave in the referendum.

"This is obviously a difficult decision," he said. "I wish the result had gone the other way — I campaigned passionately for that — but as democrats, we in the Labour Party have to accept the result," Mr. Starmer said. "It follows that the prime minister should not be blocked from starting the Article 50 negotiations."

That stance has left the Scottish National Party as the clearest source of opposition, but one with insufficient numbers to change the parliamentary arithmetic. On Wednesday night, Stephen Gethins, who speaks for the party on

European issues, described the vote as "a devastating act of sabotage on Scotland's economy and our very social fabric."

David Davis, the minister in charge of negotiating the British exit, told lawmakers that "a point of no return already passed." Britons, he said, were asked "whether they wanted to leave the European Union, and they decided they did."

"At the core of this bill lies a very simple question: Do we trust the people or not?" Mr. Davis said.

Kenneth Clarke, a veteran Conservative lawmaker and former chancellor of the Exchequer, said before the vote that he would vote against invoking Article 50. "I personally shall be voting with my conscience content, and when we see what unfolds hereafter as we leave the European Union, I hope that the consciences of other members of Parliament will remain equally content," he said.

All the same, it looks increasingly likely that winning British parliamentary approval may be the least of Mrs. May's problems.

Before Parliament's Northern Ireland affairs select committee, a former senior European Union customs official, Michael Lux, warned of the likelihood of checks at the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, something Mrs. May and

Northern Ireland officials dearly want to avoid.

Speaking to a separate committee, Ivan Rogers, who resigned recently as Britain's permanent representative to the European Union, said the exit talks would be on a "humongous" scale and would be conducted with "name-calling" and in an "extremely feisty atmosphere."

Mr. Rogers left his post after his assessment of the complexity of leaving the bloc fell out of step with the government's, prompting him to send a [resignation letter](#) urging his former colleagues to "challenge ill-founded arguments and muddled thinking, and that you will never be afraid to speak the truth to those in power."

He has said that British politicians in charge of the exit are not grappling with the true costs and enormous scale of the task. European Union officials were suggesting that Britain should pay from \$43 billion to \$65 billion to resolve its outstanding liabilities before leaving, and reaching a trade deal between Britain and the bloc could take until the mid-2020s, he said.

"It's a negotiation on the scale that we haven't experienced ever, certainly not since the Second World War," Mr. Rogers added.

The Washington Post

British lawmakers give go-ahead for Theresa May to trigger Brexit talks

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

LONDON — Britain's House of Commons voted decisively Wednesday to authorize Prime Minister Theresa May to trigger the start of the country's exit from the European Union.

The outcome of the vote was never in doubt, even as lawmakers spent a second consecutive day arguing the merits of a departure that the bitterly divided country approved in a June referendum.

The margin of Wednesday evening's roll call, 498 to 114, gives May a convincing mandate as she prepares to launch divorce talks with the E.U. by the end of next month. Once that is done, Britain will have two years to negotiate the terms of its departure.

The Daily 202 newsletter

A must-read morning briefing for decision-makers.

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Wednesday's vote was necessitated by a British [Supreme Court ruling](#) last week that Parliament, not the prime minister, should have the final say on whether Britain leaves the E.U.

May's government had vigorously contested that notion, pursuing appeals in a bid to keep the departure, known as Brexit, from becoming entangled in parliamentary debate.

Her reluctance stemmed from simple arithmetic: Although the British public voted 52 percent to 48 percent to quit the E.U., most members of Parliament had favored staying in.

[\[Should Britain host Trump for a state visit? More than 1 million say no.\]](#)

Even so, many pro-remain lawmakers calculated that the political cost of blocking Brexit would be high, and they chose to align themselves with the public's will.

May had the resounding support of her ruling Conservative Party, which has been divided over Britain's E.U. membership for decades. She also won backing from opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn and his Labour Party, though a significant number of Labour members bucked their leadership by voting no on Wednesday.

"Those of us who campaigned for remain know that Brexit is to happen," said Stella Creasy, a

lawmaker who was among the Labour rebels. Voting no, she said, was "the only chance to send the prime minister back to the drawing board."

The Scottish National Party — the third-largest in the House of Commons — and the Liberal Democrats also lined up against Wednesday's legislation. But they came nowhere near stopping the bill, and amendment proposals intended to influence May's position in the exit talks also fell short.

The bill was written as simply as possible to minimize debate and maximize May's latitude for negotiation. In a mere two clauses, it gives May permission to trigger Article 50, the never-before-used mechanism for leaving the E.U.

[\[Transcript: Theresa May's speech on Brexit\]](#)

The public "voted leave because they wanted to leave," said Conservative lawmaker David Warburton, urging his colleagues to back the vote.

The bill still needs approval from the upper chamber of Britain's Parliament, the House of Lords, but that is considered a formality.

Despite the lack of suspense in Wednesday's vote, lawmakers staged a passionate debate over some 16 hours, with more than 150 members weighing in.

May has signaled she intends to push for [a clean break](#) from the E.U., with Britain leaving behind the common European market for goods and services as well as the customs union that regulates members' trade within and outside the bloc.

The prime minister has insisted that Britain intends to transform its ties to Europe, not sever them. But European leaders have taken a hard line, saying that Britain will not be able to cherry-pick the best parts of E.U. membership while shunning the responsibilities.

May has also annoyed European allies by seeming to cozy up to President Trump. While other European leaders took a cautious approach to a leader seen by many on the continent as erratic and politically toxic, May [flew to Washington](#) within a week of Trump's inauguration and proclaimed her desire to strike a trade deal with the new administration.

The New York Times

Fearful of Hacking, Dutch Will Count Ballots by Hand

Sewell Chan

Concerned about the role hackers and false news might have played in the United States election, the Dutch government announced on Wednesday that all ballots in next month's elections would be counted by hand.

The decision to forgo electronic counting is a stark response to warnings that outside actors, including [Russia](#), might try to tamper with pivotal elections this year in the [Netherlands](#), France and Germany — three major democracies in which establishment parties are facing pressure from right-wing populism of the kind that fueled Britain's vote to leave the European Union and [Donald J. Trump's](#) triumph in the United States election.

"The cabinet cannot exclude the possibility that state actors might gain advantage from influencing political decision-making and public opinion in the Netherlands and might use means to try and achieve such influence," Interior Minister Ronald Plasterk said in a statement. "We're talking about actors that both have the intention and ability to do this."

Parliament recently discussed the [finding by intelligence agencies](#) that the Russian government tried covertly to help Mr. Trump, and [Mr. Trump's allegations](#) — made without evidence — that millions of undocumented immigrants had cast ballots, costing him the popular vote.

Ronald Van Raak, an opposition member for the Socialist Party, demanded guarantees from Mr. Plasterk that the Dutch elections, set for March 15, would not be hacked — and said that if the government could not provide such a guarantee, it should resort to paper ballots.

In a report on Monday, [the broadcaster RTL concluded](#) that the Dutch election would be "easy to hack," citing interviews with experts and an in-depth investigation of the vote-tallying software the nation has used since 2009.

On Wednesday, Mr. Plasterk said the government was looking into the electoral system's vulnerability to fraud, but was taking pre-emptive action to remove "any shadow of a doubt" about electoral integrity. So it will abandon the use of computer technology for vote tallying. Voting in the Netherlands, a nation of 17

million, will occur the old-fashioned way: Voters will use red pencils to mark paper ballots, which will be hand-counted in each voting precinct and then tallied across the nation's 20 voting districts. The results are then submitted to the central voting office and the nation's electoral council.

[Herbert Bos](#), a computer scientist at the University of Amsterdam and an expert on election integrity, said it was essential that the country maintain a voter-verifiable paper audit trail, to allow voters to ascertain that their vote was cast correctly and to allow the checking of the stored electronic results.

"In the Netherlands the whole system was frighteningly insecure," Mr. Bos said in an email. Although the country still uses paper ballots, "the rest of the chain, from the polling stations all the way to the announcement of the final election results," has been "completely computerized" since 2008, he said.

"You did not even need to be super sophisticated to manipulate the counts," Mr. Bos said. "Could a foreign country such as Russia, China or indeed any advanced state

do this? Oh yes. Easily. Will the decision to pull the plug on the computerized vote counting improve integrity? Yes. You need manual counting and a paper trail that is checked."

He added: "Election results are the heart of our democracy. You cannot risk any of this. Even if the vulnerabilities were small, you do not want to take any chances. And in this case they were not small. And there were many." As for elections since 2008, Mr. Bos said he could not be certain that no tampering had occurred.

Kees Verhoeven, a member of Parliament for D66, a centrist party that supports marijuana legalization, welcomed the government's decision but said that Mr. Plasterk should have acted sooner. "The elections will be held in six weeks, and only now the minister sees that the software is not secure," Mr. Verhoeven said, adding that election integrity is at "the core of our democracy."

The New York Times

Terror Raids in Germany Reap More Doubts Than Results (UNE)

Alison Smale

Like Anis Amri, the Tunisian suspected of killing 12 by [plowing a truck through a Christmas market in Berlin](#) last year, the latest Tunisian suspect, who was not identified, entered Germany as an asylum seeker. He then slipped through the fingers of the authorities while his deportation was thwarted by bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of documents, even after Tunisian authorities had alerted their German counterparts.

The good news this time was that the police, after thoroughly tracking their suspect, say they broke up a suspected plot in its early stages.

Yet that success did little to ease the pressures on Chancellor [Angela Merkel](#), who faces a stiff election challenge this year, for her decision to allow in nearly a million migrants and refugees in 2015. Even as Ms. Merkel's government praised the police for the crackdown, prosecutors conceded that the Tunisian's tale exposed persistent shortcomings.

Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière presented two new laws on Wednesday designed to break down bureaucratic barriers in Germany's federal system and better monitor people officially identified as a threat to public security. But the announcement was swamped by questions about the latest Tunisian suspect, who, [like Mr. Amri](#), had long been on the radar of the authorities.

Mr. Amri [was killed in a shootout](#) with the Italian police days after the Berlin attack. The latest suspect had lived in Germany from 2003 to April

2013, the authorities said on Wednesday. What he was doing during that decade and why and how exactly he left or returned, federal officials admitted, they do not know.

The Tunisian who was arrested on Wednesday returned in summer 2015, using an alias, Mr. de Maizière said, and apparently seeking asylum.

Among the many open mysteries was whether the Tunisian had again slipped across German borders in 2016. Frankfurt prosecutors cited Tunisian officials as saying the suspect not only had taken part in the 2015 museum attack, but also was linked to another, in early March 2016, on [the Tunisian border town Ben Gardane](#).

It was not clear if he was suspected of just planning that assault or actually taking part, in which case he would have again left Germany, and re-entered by August, when he was detained in Frankfurt and ordered to serve 43 days of an outstanding 2008 sentence for grievous bodily harm.

After that, from Sept. 27, the man was detained nearly 40 more days before what was supposed to be his deportation to Tunis, the Frankfurt prosecutors said.

But, as with Mr. Amri, who slipped through the Germans' fingers several times over two years, the Germans said they could not deport the latest suspect because the authorities in his country did not supply the necessary papers.

He was therefore released Nov. 4, said Alexander Badle, a spokesman

for the Frankfurt state prosecutors. The suspect was watched around the clock until his arrest early Wednesday, Mr. Badle said, declining to comment on what led the authorities to order the giant raids in Frankfurt and eight surrounding cities and districts in the vast conurbation where the Rhine and Main Rivers meet.

The Tunisian was the only person arrested in the raids, Mr. Badle said. He was held under a warrant issued Jan. 26 accusing him of supporting a foreign terrorist group. Investigation on that charge started in October, even before his release, according to the Frankfurt prosecutors' office.

It was not clear if any of the remaining 15 suspects were held even briefly by the police.

Mr. Badle said in a telephone interview that the main Tunisian suspect had no fixed address and had slept variously at the homes of friends and contacts apparently made in mosques.

German authorities routinely lament that they cannot watch all those suspected of Islamic extremism, but they appear to have kept unusually tight 24/7 surveillance on the Tunisian, which presumably yielded the names or locations of other suspects across the Rhine-Main area, home to millions.

The suspects listed on Wednesday include a 17-year-old German Iraqi who in July tried to head for Dubai and from there to Syria for training in using weapons and explosives by unspecified terrorist groups, Mr. Badle said.

Another would-be recruit, identified only as a 16-year-old German Afghan, tried to leave Frankfurt last September and head to Dubai and then Afghanistan before going to Syria for training in weapons and explosives, the prosecutor said.

In Berlin, up to 250 police officers and three heavily armed antiterror units took part in the raid on a mosque in the Moabit district. Mr. Amri, the Christmas market assailant, had visited that mosque at least twice before his Dec. 19 attack, and recorded a video dedicating himself to the Islamic State on a nearby bridge.

The police said three men who frequented the mosque were detained on the street. They were ages 21, 31 and 45 and were suspected of being about to travel to Syria and Iraq to train and fight with the Islamic State, the police said. Two hold Turkish citizenship, and the third is German, said Martin Steltner, a spokesman for the Berlin state prosecutors.

Ms. Merkel was far away in southwest Germany, receiving an award for showing charity toward the refugees from a group that honors a German Christian who took part in the unsuccessful plot to kill Hitler in 1944 and was executed by the Nazis in 1945.

News media accounts from the ceremony said neither Ms. Merkel nor other speakers referred to the refugees. Instead, their speeches concentrated on what they called the new threat to Europe: populism and the danger of a fissuring European Union.

The New York Times Turkey and Greece Trade Jabs in Island Dispute

Patrick Kingsley

ISTANBUL — [Turkey](#) and [Greece](#) have reignited a decades-old disagreement over the sovereignty of a pair of uninhabited Aegean Islands, in a spat that analysts say risks aggravating other diplomatic disputes between the two countries.

The Greek defense minister, Panos Kammenos, flew over the two disputed islands on Wednesday, the Greek government said, in a pointed response to [a visit three days earlier](#) to nearby waters by the commander of the Turkish armed forces, Hulusi Akar.

The exchange is the most public disagreement over the tiny islands' sovereignty since 1996, when soldiers from both countries landed on them before American-led mediation persuaded both sides to leave the area.

Turkey disputes Greece's claim that the islands — known as Imia in Greece and Kardak in Turkey — entered Greek ownership in 1947, after first being assigned to Italy in 1923 following the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

Analysts said that Turkey's recent incursions were a response to the [decision by the Greek Supreme Court](#) last week to block the extradition of eight Turkish airmen accused of participating in the failed attempt last July to oust the Turkish government. They also warned that the dispute risked complicating negotiations over the reunification of Cyprus.

Turkey has itself said the case could derail a migration pact between Greece and Turkey that has helped to stem the flow of migrants between Turkey and Europe significantly.

[Sinan Ulgen](#), a Turkey scholar at Carnegie Europe, said he did not believe the dispute would spiral into military conflict.

"But there certainly may be other consequences, because it comes at a very inopportune time for the Cyprus talks, for instance," Mr. Ulgen said by telephone.

A spokesman for the Turkish Foreign Ministry said he was unavailable for comment, while the Turkish presidency did not respond to enquiries.

A spokesman for the Greek Foreign Ministry declined to link the escalation over the islands to last week's court decision, but said his government had no ability to deport the airmen against the wishes of the Greek judiciary.

"From the very first moment, the Greek government condemned the

July coup," the spokesman said by telephone. "We said the people who participated in the coup are not welcome in our country, but of course the Greek government is different to the independent Greek judiciary."

Turkey has already sent a second request for the airmen's extradition, suggesting that the dispute has room to grow, said [Soner Cagaptay](#), who heads Turkey research at the Washington Institute, a policy research organization.

"If Greece rejects the second request, then Erdogan will escalate further, and this could include the Cyprus talks, the migration pact and military escalation along the Aegean," Mr. Cagaptay said, referring to the president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

"Turkey's toolbox is full of items that are almost infinite in nature," Mr. Cagaptay added.

INTERNATIONAL

The
Washington
Post

U.S. acknowledges civilian deaths in Trump-authorized Yemen raid

By Karen
DeYoung

President Trump's helicopter arrived at Dover Air Force Base on Feb. 1. Trump's helicopter arrives at Dover Air Force Base (The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

The U.S. military said late Wednesday that civilians "were likely killed" during a Navy SEAL raid in Yemen on Saturday, a ground operation that erupted into a massive firefight that also took the life of an American sailor.

A statement issued by the U.S. Central Command said that an investigatory team "has concluded regrettably" that an unspecified number of civilians "appear to have been potentially caught up in aerial gunfire that was called in to assist U.S. forces" that were "receiving fire from all sides."

Media reports from the region said that at least 10 Yemeni women and

children were killed in the raid, the first counterterrorism operation authorized by President Trump.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

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[\[In deadly Yemen raid, a lesson for Trump's national security team\]](#)

"You never want to call something a success 100 percent when someone's hurt or killed," White House press secretary Sean Spicer said Wednesday, referring to the death of Chief Special Warfare Operator [William "Ryan" Owens](#), whose remains arrived Wednesday at Dover Air Force Base. Trump traveled to the Delaware base for the ceremony.

The speed with which the military acknowledged the civilian deaths was in stark contrast to the investigations after most previous

allegations of civilian casualties, which have often taken months, if not years.

The goal of the operation was to detain Yemeni tribal leaders allegedly collaborating with al-Qaeda in Yemen and to gather intelligence about the group. Instead, a massive firefight ensued that brought in U.S. aircraft to strike the fighters and rescue the military team.

One of the aircraft, an MV-22 Osprey from a U.S. naval ship offshore, lost power and hit the ground hard enough to disable it and wound two service members. The \$70 million aircraft was then intentionally destroyed by a U.S. bomb to ensure that it did not fall into militant hands.

The Central Command statement said that "determined enemy" forces "included armed women firing from prepared fighting positions," and U.S. special operators were fired on from houses and other buildings.

"Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has a horrifying history of hiding women and children within militant operating areas and terrorist camps, and continuously shows a callous disregard for innocent lives," Central Command spokesman John J. Thomas said in the statement. "That's what makes cases like these so especially tragic."

The statement also said that "the raid resulted in the seizure of materials and information that is yielding valuable intelligence to help partner nations deter and prevent future terror attacks in Yemen and across the world."

Although U.S. forces have conducted airstrikes against al-Qaeda in Yemen in recent years, the operation was the first U.S.-led ground raid in Yemen since 2014.

The
New York
Times

Raid in Yemen: Risky From the Start and Costly in the End (UNE)

Eric Schmitt and
David E. Sanger

The death of Chief Petty Officer William Owens came after a chain of mishaps and misjudgments that plunged the elite commandos into a ferocious 50-minute firefight that also left three others wounded and a \$75 million aircraft deliberately destroyed. There are allegations — which the Pentagon acknowledged on Wednesday night are most likely correct — that the mission also killed several civilians, including some children. The dead include, by the account of [Al Qaeda's](#) branch in Yemen, the 8-year-old daughter of Anwar al-Awlaki, the American-born Qaeda leader who was killed in a targeted drone strike in 2011.

Mr. Trump on Sunday hailed his first counterterrorism operation as a success, claiming the commandos captured "important intelligence that will assist the U.S. in preventing terrorism against its citizens and people around the world." A statement by the military's Central Command on Wednesday night that

acknowledged the likelihood of civilian casualties also said that the recovered materials had provided some initial information helpful to counterterrorism analysts. The statement did not provide details.

But the mission's casualties raise doubts about the months of detailed planning that went into the operation during the Obama administration and whether the right questions were raised before its approval. Typically, the president's advisers lay out the risks, but Pentagon officials declined to characterize any discussions with Mr. Trump.

A senior administration official said on Wednesday night that the Defense Department had conducted a legal review of the operation that Mr. Trump approved and that a Pentagon lawyer had signed off on it.

Mr. Trump's new national security team, led by Mr. Flynn, the former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency and a retired general with experience in counterterrorism raids, has said that it wants to speed the

decision-making when it comes to such strikes, delegating more power to lower-level officials so that the military may respond more quickly. Indeed, the Pentagon is drafting such plans to accelerate activities against the Qaeda branch in Yemen.

But doing that also raises the possibility of error. "You can mitigate risk in missions like this, but you can't mitigate risk down to zero," said William Wechsler, a former top counterterrorism official at the Pentagon.

In this case, the assault force of several dozen commandos, which also included elite soldiers from the United Arab Emirates, was jinxed from the start. Qaeda fighters were somehow tipped off to the stealthy advance toward the village — perhaps by the whine of American drones that local tribal leaders said were flying lower and louder than usual.

Through a communications intercept, the commandos knew that the mission had been somehow

compromised, but pressed on toward their target roughly five miles from where they had been flown into the area. "They kind of knew they were screwed from the beginning," one former SEAL Team 6 official said.

With the crucial element of surprise lost, the Americans and Emiratis found themselves in a gun battle with Qaeda fighters who took up positions in other houses, a clinic, a school and a mosque, often using women and children as cover, American military officials said in interviews this week.

The commandos were taken aback when some of the women grabbed weapons and started firing, multiplying the militant firepower beyond what they had expected. The Americans called in airstrikes from helicopter gunships and fighter aircraft that helped kill some 14 Qaeda fighters, but not before an MV-22 Osprey aircraft involved in the operation experienced a "hard landing," injuring three more American personnel on board. The

Osprey, which the Marine Corps said cost \$75 million, was badly damaged and had to be destroyed by an airstrike.

The raid, some details of which were [first reported by The Washington Post](#), also destroyed much of the village of Yakla, and left senior Yemeni government officials seething. Yemen's foreign minister, Abdul Malik Al Mekhlafi, condemned the raid on Monday in a post on his official Twitter account as "extrajudicial killings."

Baraa Shiban, a Yemeni fellow for Reprieve, a London-based human rights group, said he spoke by phone to a tribal sheikh in the village, Jabbr Abu Soraima, who told

him: "People were afraid to leave their houses because the sound of choppers and drones were all over the sky. Everyone feared of being hit by the drones or shot by the soldiers on the ground."

After initially denying there were any civilian casualties, Pentagon officials backtracked somewhat on Sunday after reports from the Yemeni authorities begin trickling in and grisly photographs of bloody children purportedly killed in the attack appeared on social media sites affiliated with Al Qaeda's branch in Yemen.

Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said on Monday that

some of the women were combatants.

The operation was the first known American-led ground mission in Yemen since December 2014, when members of SEAL Team 6 stormed a village in southern Yemen in an effort to free an American photojournalist held hostage by Al Qaeda. But the raid ended with the kidnappers killing the journalist and a South African held with him.

That mission and the raid over the weekend revealed the shortcomings of secretive military operations in Yemen. The United States was forced to withdraw the last 125 Special Operations advisers from the country in March 2015 after

Houthi rebels ousted the government of President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi, the Americans' main counterterrorism partner.

The loss of Yemen as a base for American counterterrorism training, advising and intelligence-gathering was a significant blow to blunting the advance of Al Qaeda's branch in the country and keeping tabs on their plots. The Pentagon has tried to start rebuilding its counterterrorism operations in Yemen, however; last year, American Special Operations forces helped Emirati troops evict Qaeda fighters from the port city of Mukalla.

The New York Times

Israel Defiantly Cranks West Bank Settlement Plans Into High Gear

Ian Fisher and Isabel Kershner

Near midnight on Tuesday, the Israeli government approved 3,000 more settler housing units in the occupied West Bank. That roughly doubled the amount of proposed [new housing units announced in recent days](#). Then, on Wednesday, Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), who has come under heavy pressure from rival politicians on the right to take bolder steps to expand settlements, announced that he would promote the establishment of an entirely new West Bank settlement.

Palestinians reacted with weary opposition, in the long absence of any real hope for the renewal of talks working toward a two-state solution, with a full Palestinian state alongside Israel.

"This is a government of settlers that has abandoned the two-state solution and fully embraced the settler agenda," said Husam Zomlot, the strategic affairs adviser to Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority.

It was a revealing and dramatic day on the chilly hilltops of the West Bank, now occupied for 50 years after Israel's capture of it from Jordan in the Arab-Israeli War of 1967.

The new construction announcements seemed timed to soothe hard feelings among the Israeli right as hundreds of soldiers and police officers converged early Wednesday on the unauthorized settlement outpost of Amona to evacuate it, days ahead of a court-ordered deadline for its demolition and after more than a decade of legal wrangling. It was built, the courts here say, on privately owned Palestinian land and has become a minefield for Israeli politicians.

But as young activists barricaded themselves inside some trailer homes and tried to resist the evacuation, settler leaders appeared largely upbeat: Despite the evacuation, they said the day's events represented only a minor setback in what they see as a larger battle, in which many Israelis doubt there is any deal the Palestinians will ever accept.

Shilo Adler, the head of the Yesha Council, which represents settlers in the area, said the transition to the Trump administration in the United States had provided an unprecedented opportunity for wider expansion — an opportunity he said should be pressed especially hard before Mr. Netanyahu is to meet Mr. Trump in Washington on Feb. 15.

"Now we have a historical time to build in all of Judea and Samaria," he said. "Take this very bad story, and think what we can do now, like after the rain."

Mr. Netanyahu's office said he had promised the settlers about six weeks ago that he would establish a new settlement. On Wednesday, as another sweetener to compensate for the removal of Amona, he appointed a team to begin work on locating a site for it.

During previous American administrations, Israel made a commitment not to build new settlements. For years, Israel made a point of describing housing developments and outposts dotting the West Bank as new "neighborhoods" of existing settlements.

World leaders have denounced the settlements in the West Bank, home to an estimated 400,000 Israeli settlers, arguing that they are choking off the hopes for two states. In December, the United Nations Security Council [rejected settlement](#)

[building](#) as a "flagrant violation" under international law — a position that the United States tacitly supported in the waning days of the Obama administration.

Mr. Trump seems not to share former President Barack Obama's opposition: He has said nothing about the new construction, and his administration has shown signs of tightening ties between the two countries.

The latest plans for the new units in about a dozen settlements came a week after Israel approved 2,500 homes in the West Bank and 566 in East Jerusalem. At the same time, the Israeli Parliament is scheduled to vote next week on legislation that would retroactively legalize scores of other settlement homes and outposts built on private Palestinian land and prevent any future evacuations and demolitions.

At the hilltop outpost of Amona, about 3,000 soldiers and police officers took part in the operation to evacuate about 40 families who lived in the outpost and hundreds of supporters, who lit fires and littered the roads with large rocks to try to prevent the authorities from advancing.

The government had been working to conduct the evacuation without bloodshed, and hundreds of Israeli police officers, wearing caps and blue fleece jackets but carrying no weapons, moved into position in the early morning.

Around 2 p.m., the police began taking away settlers who would not leave voluntarily, ripping up the makeshift barricades and smashing the windows of trailers used by activists.

As the police tried to gain entry to one house, people inside responded by throwing some kind of liquid, and one man screamed, "You are

supposed to protect us, not break into our homes!"

Jewish Settlers Resist Outpost Evacuation

Israeli security forces were met with resistance as they began removing people from Amona, a big unauthorized outpost in the West Bank.

By CAMILLA SCHICK on February 1, 2017. Photo by Sebastian Scheiner/Associated Press. [Watch in Times Video »](#)

Ayelet Videt, 35, who moved to the windy outpost from Jerusalem nine years ago, said she had packed a few bags, but not the entire house. She was waiting for a final order to leave, and left later in the day.

"I didn't believe this terrible thing would happen," said Ms. Videt, who had sent her four children, all born in Amona, to their grandparents' house in central Israel. "This is our land, this is our forefathers' land. For 50 years, they've related to it in a confused way. They should have declared sovereignty over it."

Ms. Videt's husband, Hillel, had to be carried out by security forces.

By evening, with about half the outpost emptied, the police had reported at least 20 injuries from objects being thrown at them, and they said that about a dozen people described as rioters had been arrested.

The new settlement announcements could help ease the pressure on Mr. Netanyahu, who is [under investigation on several fronts](#) and is trying to push back against politicians further to the right. The education minister, Naftali Bennett, is pressing for legislation — not yet fully embraced by Mr. Netanyahu — to take the drastic step of the first annexation of a West Bank

settlement, [Ma'ale Adumim](#), just east of Jerusalem.

Speaking in the Parliament on Wednesday as the outpost evacuation began, Mr. Bennett said of Amona, "We lost the battle, but we are winning the campaign for the land of Israel."

Mr. Netanyahu is also now pushing for the contentious legislation that would retroactively legalize the illegal outposts, although he originally opposed it. Israel's attorney general has said that the bill is unconstitutional and contravenes international law, and

that he would refuse to defend any challenges in court.

"Instead of making peace with the Palestinians, Prime Minister Netanyahu and his cabinet spend time making peace with the settlers, which at the end of the day, is their preferred partner for the future of the Jewish state," said Mitchell Barak, a pollster and political consultant.

Mr. Zomlot, the adviser to Mr. Abbas, said Mr. Netanyahu was using this time of political transition in the United States to test how the new administration's stance might differ from that of Mr. Obama.

There are already signs that Mr. Trump intends to be more sympathetic to Israel's claims: He appointed as ambassador to Israel [David M. Friedman](#), who opposes a two-state solution and has supported settlements.

Mr. Trump has also promised to move the American Embassy to Jerusalem — a move that Palestinians and Arab leaders have denounced as de facto recognition of Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem after capturing it from Jordan in the 1967 war. Mr. Trump has since said that the move requires further study.

Nonetheless, Mr. Zomlot said his "working assumption" was that the Trump administration would ultimately fall more in line with past American administrations, which have seen two states as the only solution.

"We are looking forward to working with this administration to find a formula for peace — the ultimate deal, as Trump called it," he said.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Israel Begins Clearing Illegal West Bank Outpost

Rory Jones

Updated Feb. 1,

2017 4:09 p.m. ET

OFRA, West Bank—Israeli security forces began clearing an illegal Jewish settler outpost in the West Bank on Wednesday, as the government pressed ahead with settlement expansion elsewhere in the territory Palestinians claim for a future state.

A column of buses, police vehicles and ambulances, led by hundreds of police officers on foot, converged in the early morning hours on the hilltop outpost of Amona. The enclave, which overlooks the settlement of Ofra, has for years been a symbol of the legal and political struggle over Jewish settlements.

Hundreds of Israeli settlers packed inside trailers and cabins, refusing to move. People in one home linked arms, sang songs and cried. Unarmed police hauled some residents out, carrying them to waiting buses to be evacuated.

Oriel Pniel, 29 years old, used wood, trees and rocks to barricade himself, his wife and two children inside their trailer cabin.

"We won't be violent to the police but won't leave willingly," Mr. Pniel said as police ascended to the hilltop outpost. "They are giving a prize to the Arab enemy."

About 16 police were injured in clashes with protesters, but by nightfall residents of 12 houses in the outpost had been moved and a dozen more families had agreed to leave, police said. The evacuation was continuing. In all, about 300 residents were expected to be transferred.

Hundreds more people, who had traveled to Amona to protest, would also be forced to leave, the police said.

Following their departure from Amona, the families were to be taken temporarily to a guesthouse in the northern West Bank settlement of Ofra, officials said.

Israeli authorities warned settlers earlier Wednesday to leave the hilltop enclave voluntarily or be removed by force. Luba Samri, a spokeswoman for the police, said police had urged the outpost's leaders to allow the court-ordered evacuation to proceed peacefully.

Proponents of Jewish settlement of the West Bank described the evacuation of Amona as a mere setback in a battle that is turning in their favor.

"We lost the fight over Amona, but we are winning the battle for the Land of Israel," tweeted Naftali Bennett, the conservative leader of the Jewish Home party and a member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ruling coalition.

The newly installed Trump administration has indicated it won't pressure Israel to cease settler building and emboldened the settlement movement, reversing the stance of former President Barack Obama, who opposed the construction.

The evacuation of Amona was taking place just hours after Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman announced plans to build some 3,000 new housing units in the West Bank.

"We are in a new era of life in Judea and Samaria," Mr. Lieberman said in a statement, using the Israeli government's name for the West

Bank, based on biblical terms for the area.

Last week, Israel's government also [approved a 2,500-unit settlement expansion](#), amid the [encouraging signs from the new U.S. administration](#).

Palestinian leaders on Wednesday condemned the moves.

"We warn the international community of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's attempts to take advantage of Amona's eviction to cover up more settlements expansion in order to undermine the two-state solution, and foil any chance for the establishment of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state," the Palestinian Authority, which governs parts of the West Bank, said in a statement.

In recent days, calls by Israeli lawmakers for the annexation of the West Bank have swelled. Israel's parliament, or Knesset, is also set to pass a bill that would legalize thousands of West Bank homes that like those in Amona are considered illegal under Israeli law.

If the legislation is approved, dozens of outposts such as Amona would be legalized, said Shilo Adler, head of the Yesha Council, which was formed in the 1970s to promote Jewish settlement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In Amona on Wednesday, Mr. Adler said settlement supporters were pressing Mr. Netanyahu to approve more settlements and potentially annex parts of the West Bank ahead [of his meeting on Feb. 15](#) with President Donald Trump in Washington.

"The Israel government needs to understand that something happened in the world," he said. "It's

no longer Obama. We have a tailwind."

The nongovernmental organization Peace Now criticized the Netanyahu government's latest building plans in the West Bank.

"Instead of acting responsibly and protecting the rule of law, Netanyahu gave in to pressure from the extreme right and is leading Israel toward one state...that won't be Jewish and won't be democratic," said a spokesman, Yaniv Shacham.

Some 40 settler families reside in Amona, which is built on private Palestinian land in violation of Israeli law. Israel's high court ordered it evacuated in 2014.

Mr. Netanyahu later Wednesday said he had instructed officials to explore locations to build an entirely new settlement that would eventually house the evacuated residents of Amona.

There are about 570,000 settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, according to a report last year by the so-called Mideast Quartet—U.S., Russia, the European Union and the United Nations—that promotes the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Jewish settler communities authorized by the Israeli government are considered settlements, while unauthorized ones such as Amona are designated outposts.

Most of the world considers both settlements and outposts illegal under international law. The Obama administration called them "illegitimate" and "unhelpful" to the peace process.

**The
Washington
Post**

Israeli police begin forced removal of Amona settlers in the West Bank (UNE)

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

AMONA, West Bank — Waves of police on Wednesday surrounded a Jewish settlement in the West Bank deemed illegal by the Israeli high court and began dragging angry residents, sputtering curses and prayers, out of their mobile homes.

After years of delay, the evacuation of the [hard-line Amona settlers](#) commenced, as youths in skullcaps burned tires, hurled rocks, and pushed and shoved authorities, alternately taunting police and pleading with them to disobey their orders to empty the community.

The day's bitter clashes transfixed the nation, as Jews evicted Jews, with the democratic state fighting to uphold the rule of law as religious, messianic settlers claimed the rule of God. The scenes played out live on television and the Internet, as Israeli politicians promised this would not happen again.

Today's WorldView

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Even the settlers seemed to know that this may be a last eviction, saying that now President Trump would support them. They were zealous in their resistance, but there was more the feeling they had lost a battle — even a skirmish — and not a war.

Israeli society and its leaders have struggled since the 1970s with the growth of settlements in the occupied territories. The state always protects, often abets but sometimes thwarts the pioneers. Many Israelis withhold full-throated support, in part from fear of angering the Americans, and the rest of the world, which condemn the building as illegal or worse. There is the sense that big changes are coming.

[\[Israel plans settlement expansion amid policy shifts in Washington\]](#)

The Israeli Supreme Court ordered the demolition of the village of 40 families in 2014 because it was built on land privately owned by Palestinians from the neighboring villages.

Many settlers and their supporters who climbed the rocky hill to defend Amona blamed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the community's imminent destruction.

As the thousands of police officers carried red-faced settlers and demonstrators from the homes, bulldozers idled down the hill, ready to knock down the cheap metal caravans, as well as playgrounds, vineyards, olive groves and a synagogue.

The settlers said the government should have defied the court order or found a solution that would allow Jews to remain on biblical land that they believe was promised to them by God.

Settlers also said they hoped Amona would be the last of hundreds of settlements and outposts built in part on private Palestinian land to be evacuated.

"We will be the last to be dragged from our homes," said Eli Greenberg, 43, a father of eight who was barricaded inside his family's trailer on the bitterly cold mountaintop.

"Why give this land to the Palestinians, who preach nothing but hate and violence, and want to destroy Israel?" he asked, speaking by cellphone as police surrounded his home. "We feel good vibrations from Trump. This is the end of this terrible time."

[The razing of Amona](#) and the eviction of its families has been more than a decade in the making. The long timeline underscored the political challenges for Israeli leaders, who count on the support of 600,000 settlers now living in the West Bank and East Jerusalem but have feared U.S. condemnation under both Republican and Democratic leadership.

[\[Trump picks a supporter of West Bank settlements for ambassador to Israel\]](#)

By the early evening, Israeli security forces had removed 20 families from their homes and arrested a handful of activists who had turned out to support the residents.

Israeli police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said 15 police officers had been lightly injured in scuffles with settlers and their supporters.

In an attempt to calm the settlers' fury, Israeli leaders promised that the dismantling of Amona would bring renewed building in the West Bank.

Last week, Netanyahu and Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman announced that [2,500 new homes](#) would be built in the West Bank. On

Tuesday, in anticipation of the Amona clashes, they promised 3,000 more.

[An announcement](#) of 5,500 new homes would have brought swift, harsh condemnation from the Obama administration, which for eight years branded such building "illegitimate" and "an obstacle to peace" between Jews and Arabs.

The Trump administration has so far remained silent.

"This is a very difficult day," Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked, a member of the ultranationalist Jewish Home party, said in an interview with the Israeli news site Walla. "We have tried and tried to prevent this from happening, but now we are watching 40 families being evicted from their homes."

"But we need to remember that this terrible day will eventually bring about new building in the West Bank," she said.

Shaked highlighted her party's efforts to pass a bill now being debated in parliament that would retroactively legalize Jewish settlements, such as Amona, that were built on private Palestinian property.

Israel's attorney general said the bill violates Israeli and international law and would probably be reversed by the Supreme Court. Netanyahu and the government vowed to pass it anyway.

Still, promises of new houses to come did little Wednesday to douse the anger of hundreds of young activists who had trudged up the hillside overnight to protect Amona's residents and slow down the demolition.

Zvi Sukkot, a settler from the hard-line Yitzar community and an organizer with a bullhorn, said, "We are here to show everybody our strong Jewish connection to the land as told in the Bible."

He didn't blame former president Barack Obama for the evacuation; he blamed Netanyahu. But other settlers turned their eyes toward Trump as the new beginning.

"After eight years of Obama, who didn't let us build, now we'll say, 'We will build and build,'" said Shilo Adler, who heads the Yesha Council, which represents the Jewish settlers in the West Bank.

"Now is history-making time," Adler said. "This is the moment. This is

when we tell Netanyahu: 'This is what we want. This is why we elected you.'"

Adler said the settlers were seeking 100,000 new homes — which would at least double the Jewish population in the West Bank — on land the Palestinians seek for a future nation under the two-state solution.

Last month, after the Supreme Court's eviction order was postponed one last time, the government announced that it had reached an agreement with the Amona settlers — a hefty payout and promises of another spot on the same hillside in exchange for a low-key, peaceful move.

But as the days wore on, residents of Amona saw no new community being built for them, and Israeli human rights groups filed additional legal petitions on behalf of Palestinians who claim to own that land, too.

The agreement broke down, and this week, the army gave the settlers 48 hours to leave peacefully.

Most of the world considers the Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank to be illegal, not just those built on Palestinian private property. Israel disputes this.

Inside Amona, young Jewish men and women hunkered down in abandoned houses, barbed wire strung up around doors and windows. They climbed on top of the caravans, waving Israeli flags, and protesters screamed at the police, "Shame on you, this is the land of Israel" and "Jews should not evict Jews."

In the neighboring Palestinian village of Silwad, the Arabs clapped and shook hands.

"It feels great to see settlers being taken off my land and their caravans removed. The court has done a good thing, although it has taken a long time," said Ibrahim Yakoob, 56, a Palestinian farmer who is part owner of the land.

"The question now is whether I will be allowed to return to my land and farm it again," he said. "I don't think so. The ultimate suffering as a farmer is to see your land but not be able to use it."

Egflash reported from Jerusalem. Sufian Taha in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

The
Washington
Post

Trump administration says it's putting Iran 'on notice' following missile test

By Karen DeYoung

(Reuters)

During the White House daily briefing on Feb. 1, President Trump's national security advisor Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn spoke about Iran's ballistic missile test. During the White House daily briefing on Feb. 1, President Trump's national security advisor Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn spoke about Iran's ballistic missile test. (Reuters)

The Trump administration said Wednesday that it would hold Iran "accountable" for its recent ballistic-missile launch, threatening an unspecified response to what it called a violation of U.N. restrictions.

In a brief statement read during the regular White House press briefing, Michael Flynn, President Trump's national security adviser, said the administration was "officially putting Iran on notice" for the test launch and for what he called Iran's threatening and destabilizing actions in support of Houthi rebels seeking to overthrow a U.S.-backed government in Yemen.

The statement marked the new administration's first public foray into an issue on which Trump had promised to take a hard line. It followed U.S. military ground action Saturday against al-Qaeda's affiliate in Yemen — the first counterterrorism mission approved by Trump — in which a U.S. service member was killed.

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Flynn said Iran had been "emboldened" by "weak and effective" U.N. and Obama administration policies, including agreements such as the 2015 deal designed to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

[\[Republicans cheer Flynn putting Iran 'on notice'\]](#)

9 foreign policy issues the Trump administration will have to face

In a background briefing after the statement, senior administration officials emphasized that what they called Iranian "provocations," and the threat to do something about

them, were unrelated to the nuclear agreement.

"These missile concerns are separate and apart" from the nuclear deal, one official said. "We're keeping a very big line between these issues. There should be no doubt about that."

While a number of Republican lawmakers have called for the agreement to be torn apart, Trump avoided that language during his campaign, calling it a "bad deal" that he intended to review.

Iran made no public statement in response but said the missile test was discussed during a high-level national-security meeting Wednesday.

"We discussed Iran's missile tests and ... reaffirmed that Iran would not wait for any country's permission in defense issues," Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Ravanchi said, according to Iran's Mehr News Agency. He also repeated an earlier statement that Tehran plans to take "reciprocal measures" in response to Trump's new temporary ban on U.S. entry for individuals from seven Muslim-majority countries, including Iran.

Iran's launch Sunday of a medium-range Khorramshahr missile ended in failure, with the missile reportedly traveling about 600 miles before exploding in the air.

The United States called for an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council. Following the Tuesday session, Nikki Haley, the new U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said the world should be "alarmed" by the test and called for unspecified U.N. action.

Flynn and other officials said the launch violated U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231, which gave international blessing to the Iran nuclear deal. Part of the deal was the elimination of previous resolutions prohibiting all ballistic-missile activity. Instead, an annex to the deal calls on Iran "not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology" for the next eight years.

Iran maintains that, because it does not have a nuclear weapons program, development and testing of non-nuclear-related ballistic missiles — which it says are for conventional defense — are not prohibited.

A senior Trump administration official said that the nuclear capability of the missile was a "factual and technical question that doesn't depend upon what procedural mechanism has or has not been used in the past to make decisions on what to do about it."

"These are things that are inherent in the physics," the official said. "It is an objectively knowable thing, irrespective of what governments decide to do."

Suzanne Maloney, deputy director of the foreign policy program at the Brookings Institution, said that there is widespread international consensus, without the United States, that Iran's missile test is not an explicit violation of the resolution, but that "there is a wider consensus about the undesirability of Iran's missile activities than there is about how to respond."

Some U.S. lawmakers who have questioned the nuclear deal were quick to praise the administration for taking a tough line. Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said in a written statement that Iran will "no longer ... be given a pass for its repeated ballistic missile violations, continued support of terrorism, human rights abuses and other hostile activities that threaten international peace and security."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also congratulated the administration for its words about Iran, saying the missile test was a "flagrant violation" of the U.N. resolution. "Iranian aggression must not go unanswered," he said.

Flynn and other officials also held Iran responsible for "destabilizing" activity in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia is defending a government under attack from what it says are Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. The Obama administration had criticized Iran for helping to arm the rebels but did not consider the aid decisive in what has become a years-long war.

On Monday, a Saudi warship patrolling off the Yemen coast was attacked by a rebel "suicide boat" that exploded after striking the ship. Two Saudi sailors were killed.

The Trump administration's statements hewed closely to the views of the Saudi government, whose King Salman spoke with Trump on Sunday, in holding its archenemy Iran responsible for the Houthi rebellion.

"We assess Iran seeks to leverage this relationship with the Houthis to build a long-term presence in Yemen," said a Trump official, who like others at the briefing spoke on the condition of anonymity imposed by the administration. "This support risks expanding and intensifying the conflict in Yemen, which is not good for the people of the area, creates further instability, risks greater violence and will lead to unending conflict."

In response to repeated questioning, the officials declined to specify what actions were under consideration. "There are a large range of options available ... from financial and economic to pursuing other options related to support for those that are challenging and opposing Iranian malign activity in the region," one official said. "We are in a deliberative process."

The official said that the White House had received "input" from the State Department and other agencies before making the Iran announcement and that they would be included in ongoing deliberations about further steps.

"There are a large number of options available to the administration," he said. "We're going to take appropriate action, and I will not provide any further information today."

"The important thing here is, we are communicating that Iranian behavior needs to be rethought by Tehran," he said, adding that the administration was "considering these things in a different perspective."

Carol Morello contributed to this report.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Bender

Updated Feb. 1, 2017 10:53 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—The White House sharply condemned [a recent Iranian ballistic missile test launch](#) and warned of consequences including

Trump White House Puts Iran 'On Notice' After Missile Launch (UNE)

Carol E. Lee and Michael C.

the possibility of new U.S. sanctions, in a more confrontational approach to Tehran that lays the groundwork for a potential early clash between the two countries.

Calling Iran a "destabilizing influence" in the Middle East, National Security Adviser Mike Flynn declared Wednesday: "As of

today, we are officially putting Iran on notice."

The pronouncement marked a pivot away from the Obama administration's policy of diplomatic engagement, which led to a 2015 multinational nuclear deal that has been denounced repeatedly by

President Donald Trump and his aides.

Iran has warned that new U.S. sanctions could constitute a violation of the nuclear deal, setting up a scenario in which the agreement could unravel—something that hardliners in both countries would welcome.

Administration officials, while providing few specifics, said Mr. Trump has begun a process of reviewing current U.S. policy and is "considering a whole range of options," including tougher sanctions. Asked if military force also was one of the options, the officials didn't rule it out.

One set of options has been outlined by Congress, which is preparing a measure targeting Iran's elite military unit, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard. Congressional staff working on the legislation said it could be ready as early as March.

A number of Trump administration officials have acknowledged new sanctions could prompt Tehran to claim the U.S. violated the nuclear agreement. They have said the White House is prepared for such a confrontation over the sanctions in the months ahead.

The warning from the new U.S. administration came just hours after Iranian Defense Minister Brig. Gen. Hossein Dehghan confirmed the missile launch, though he provided no additional details on when and where it happened, according to the semiofficial Iranian Students' News Agency.

Gen. Dehghan said the launch didn't violate the 2015 deal between Iran and six world powers, including the U.S., under which Iran agreed to limit its nuclear program in exchange for relief from international sanctions.

Senior U.S. officials agreed Wednesday the launch didn't violate the nuclear deal, a position that was also taken by the Obama administration.

"The important thing is here is that we're communicating that Iranian behavior needs to be rethought by

Tehran," one senior official said. "That is something Tehran needs to think through, because we are considering these things in a different perspective."

Mr. Flynn said the latest missile launch was a violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the nuclear deal and "called upon" Iran to avoid any activity related to missiles designed to be capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif on Tuesday said none of Iran's missiles had been designed to carry a nuclear warhead and that therefore the program didn't conflict with the U.N. resolution.

The program only has "conventional warheads that are within the legitimate defense domain," Mr. Zarif said.

The Security Council held a closed meeting on Tuesday but took no action, referring the issue for further investigation. U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley, in her debut at the Council, told reporters the U.S. would be warning "people across the world" about the risks of Iran's actions in the region.

The U.K.'s ambassador to the U.N., Matthew Rycroft, said Wednesday that the missile test is "inconsistent" with the U.N. resolution.

Mr. Trump was highly critical of President Barack Obama's diplomatic outreach to Iran, particularly the nuclear deal, and Iran was among seven Muslim-majority countries whose citizens he barred from the U.S. in an [executive order Friday](#) the White House said is aimed at keeping terrorists from entering the country.

Mr. Flynn said agreements Iran has made with the Obama

administration and the U.N. are "weak and ineffective."

"Instead of being thankful to the United States for these agreements, Iran is now feeling emboldened," he said.

Mr. Flynn said Iran's missile tests and other actions, including its backing of Houthi forces in Yemen and confrontations with U.S. military vessels, were not met with a sufficiently stern U.S. response during the Obama administration.

The U.S. has blamed Iran in the past for helping fuel an uprising among Houthi rebels in Yemen. In October, missiles fired from Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen unsuccessfully targeted U.S. ships off the country's coast in the Red Sea, and Gen. Joe Votel, commander of U.S. Central Command, which oversees U.S. forces in the Middle East, said he suspected Iran played a role in the attempted attack.

The Houthis denied attacking the ships. Iran has denied playing any part in the attempted attack. The U.S. is providing support to a Saudi-led coalition of Sunni nations fighting against the uprising. It is also targeting al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP, in Yemen directly.

The Obama administration imposed new sanctions on 11 Iran-linked entities over Tehran's missile development in January 2016. In December, Mr. Obama allowed for a renewal of the Iran Sanctions Act, which passed Congress with broad bipartisan support, though he did so with a procedural protest by deciding to let the legislation, which imposes U.S. restrictions on Iran's missile program, to become law without his signature.

The White House said at the time that a 10-year extension of the law "does not affect in any way our ability to fulfill our commitments" in the nuclear agreement.

Mr. Trump hasn't said how he plans to approach the nuclear deal, which [as a candidate he threatened to back out of or renegotiate](#). Several of his national security nominees have testified that the U.S. should aggressively enforce the agreement, but not seek to end it.

The senior U.S. officials briefing reporters on Mr. Flynn's comments said the president at the moment doesn't want "to take any action that would foreclose options or unnecessarily contribute to a negative response." They also sought to separate the nuclear deal from U.S. concerns about Iran's other actions such as ballistic missile tests.

Tehran has maintained its nuclear program is for peaceful power generation and research, and that its missiles are conventional and for defensive purposes.

Also on Wednesday, Mr. Trump tweeted, "Iran is rapidly taking over more and more of Iraq even after the U.S. has squandered three trillion dollars there. Obvious long ago!" The Iranian government's influence in Iraq has grown since the U.S. withdrawal in 2011, and U.S. officials have worried that Iran, while fighting Islamic State, will use that influence to fuel sectarian tensions. But there is no evidence Tehran is taking over any part of Iraq in the sense of annexing pieces of the country.

—Jay Solomon, Farnaz Fassihi and Paul Sonne contributed to this article.

**The
New York
Times**

Iran Is Threatened With U.S. Reprisals Over Missile Test

Mark Landler and
Thomas Erdbrink

His blunt tone — and lack of specifics — offered an early sign of how President Trump plans to deal with Iran: pushing back against Tehran on multiple fronts and leaving all options, including military action, on the table.

Mr. Flynn singled out Iran's support for Houthi rebels in Yemen, who recently attacked a Saudi naval vessel.

To that end, Defense Department officials said they have been directed to explore ways the United States can challenge Iran in Yemen, where the Houthis have been [battling Saudi Arabia and other American allies](#).

"In these and other similar activities," Mr. Flynn said, "Iran continues to threaten U.S. friends and allies in the region."

At a subsequent official briefing, a senior administration official said the White House was considering a range of options — and he did not rule out military force. But he also said the administration, in its second week, did not want to be premature or rash in how it confronted Tehran.

The challenge for the administration in contemplating economic pressure is that it would be all but impossible to reassemble the international coalition that imposed draconian sanctions on Iran's oil and banking industries — and drew Iran into negotiations that resulted in the

[agreement limiting its nuclear program](#).

Mr. Flynn pinned much of the blame for Iran's aggressiveness on former President Barack Obama, saying his administration "failed to respond adequately to Tehran's malign actions — including weapons transfers, support for terrorism and other violations of international norms."

He also noted that Mr. Trump had criticized agreements between Iran and the Obama administration as "weak and ineffective." During the campaign, Mr. Trump spoke of ripping up the Iran nuclear agreement, though his aides now say their focus is less on abrogating

that deal than on constraining Iran's behavior in the region.

In Yemen, for example, the Pentagon is considering stepped-up patrols and perhaps even airstrikes, aimed at preventing [Iranian weapons from getting to the Houthis](#). In addition, Saudi officials are pushing for more support for their air campaign in Yemen, an administration official said. But officials said on Wednesday that there had been no change in the military's posture.

While the Obama administration targeted Houthis and conducted airstrikes against forces aligned with Al Qaeda in Yemen, current and former officials say Mr. Obama was wary of deepening American

support for the Saudi air campaign because of concerns about the accuracy of targeting and the large number of civilian casualties.

"Obama said all the time, 'Aim before you shoot,'" said Derek Chollet, who served in the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department during the Obama administration. "Anytime there was one of these heated discussions, and people said, 'We've got to do something,' he said, 'O.K., what does the intel say, and where will this take us?'"

The Trump administration, however, said it would continue to criticize and draw distinctions with its predecessor.

"This president is seeking to make the country safer, stronger, more prosperous," Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, said. "I think the president, when it comes — came — to the Iran nuclear deal, was very, very adamant in his

opposition to the deal and to its implications."

Mr. Flynn's tough words left some Iran analysts troubled.

Cliff Kupchan, a political risk analyst at the Eurasia Group in Washington, said the tone was "very worrisome." He and others also questioned how Iran's missile test had violated the Security Council resolution in question, in which Iran is "called upon" to refrain from missile tests but is not forbidden to conduct them.

"It's all Michael Flynn, Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller right now," Mr. Kupchan said in an email, referring to the national security adviser and two other hard-line Trump aides. "The 'revolutionaries' are running the Trump administration."

Other analysts, however, said the stiffer tone was overdue.

"It was very sensible for the administration to early on warn Iran of its malign activities," said Ray

Takeyh, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. "The fact is that Iran is probably testing the administration to see if there is any pushback. Over the past few years they have not been given too many stern warnings."

Earlier on Wednesday, Iran confirmed that it had recently conducted a missile test, but it rejected accusations that the launch had violated a Security Council resolution.

The confirmation by the Iranian defense minister, Hossein Dehghan, was the first by an official there since the country was accused of violating the 2015 resolution because the test involved a ballistic missile that could theoretically carry a nuclear warhead.

His remarks came a day after President Hassan Rouhani disparaged Mr. Trump for his order barring refugees, as well as citizens of seven predominantly Muslim countries including Iran. "Banning

visas for other nations is the act of newcomers to the political scene," Mr. Rouhani said.

Mr. Dehghan emphasized that the missile test did not, in Iran's view, violate the resolution, or the 2015 nuclear agreement that preceded it. No country will be allowed to interfere in Iranian domestic affairs, he said, adding that tests would definitely continue. "Our nation has tested itself in this path," Mr. Dehghan said.

The United States called an urgent meeting of the Security Council on Tuesday to discuss the matter.

"You're going to see us call them out as we said we would, and you are also going to see us act accordingly," Nikki R. Haley, the new United States ambassador to the United Nations, said on Tuesday.



With Flynn putting Iran 'on notice,' the first days of President Trump's foreign policy set a combative tone (UNE)

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

President Trump is advancing a combative and iconoclastic foreign policy that appears to sideline traditional diplomacy and concentrate decision-making among a small group of aides who are quickly projecting their new "America First" approach to the world.

Just before the Senate confirmed Trump's new secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, on Wednesday, national security adviser Michael Flynn made a surprise appearance in the White House briefing room to deliver a [tight-lipped warning to Iran](#) over its most recent ballistic missile test.

"As of today, we are officially putting Iran on notice," Flynn said.

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He blamed the previous Obama administration for failing to confront Iran forcefully enough over its "malign actions" and said Trump was changing course.

Tillerson takes office after a chaotic first dozen days for the Trump administration that saw big swings away from national security and foreign policy stances in place under the Obama administration. The rise

of figures such as Flynn and senior counselor Stephen K. Bannon in the White House calls into question whether someone like Tillerson, a former oil company executive who is perceived to be a more mainstream Republican, will wield much influence.

Trump campaigned on blowing up business as usual in Washington, apparently including the courtly traditions of U.S. diplomacy. Still, the administration's tone has surprised allies and government employees who expected the new president to first spend time offering diplomatic niceties.

The severity of an order suspending the country's refugee resettlement program and temporarily banning entry from seven Muslim-majority nations blindsided even Republican supporters in Congress.

Even before the order Friday, Trump's first days in office were marked by actions and statements that former U.S. officials and some foreign diplomats saw as intentionally confrontational, such as a public spat with the Mexican president and dismissive comments about the European Union.

[\[No 'G'day, mate': On call with Australian prime minister, Trump badgers and brags\]](#)

Trump used his inauguration address to blast America's trade partners and global outlook, and his first hosting of a foreign leader to praise Brexit as a stroke for British

"sovereignty." He recounted his own frustrations dealing with the European Union in a real estate deal. "I had a very bad experience," he said. He called the 28-member body "the consortium."

In between, his administration floated and then backed off a 20 percent tariff on Mexican goods to pay for his promised border wall. Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto canceled a planned White House visit in protest, but Trump said the feeling was mutual.

"Unless Mexico is going to treat the United States fairly, with respect, such a meeting would be fruitless, and I want to go a different route," Trump told Republican senators last week. "I have no choice."

A day later he stood beside British Prime Minister Theresa May for an event that is a staple of world leader diplomacy — the cordial and mutually congratulatory joint news conference. Trump largely used the forum to congratulate himself, and he sounded less than zealous about courting other countries.

"We look to have a great relationship with all countries, ideally," Trump said Friday, as May looked on, a hint of apprehension visible in her smile. "That won't necessarily happen, unfortunately probably won't happen with many countries."

Trump added that he hoped for "a great relationship with Russia and with China and with all countries, I'm

all for that. That would be a tremendous asset."

He noted that he believes torture tactics work against terrorism — a position anathema to most U.S. allies — but that he would defer to his defense chief, who opposes it.

Tillerson did not attend, since he had not yet won the job at State.

While Tillerson is an unorthodox choice, the recently retired ExxonMobil chief executive has been generally viewed as one of Trump's less provocative hires.

Even so, Tillerson drew scant Democratic support with a vote of 56 to 43. Only four members of the Democratic caucus voted in favor of confirmation: Sens. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.), Angus King (I-Maine), Joe Manchin III (D-W.Va.) and Mark R. Warner (D-Va.).

[\[Former Pentagon chief Robert M. Gates says new travel restrictions complicate Tillerson's job\]](#)

The 64-year-old Texan has no prior government experience. His admirers, however, say he has a vast knowledge of world affairs and geopolitics born of years of international energy exploration and production.

He has remained publicly silent about Trump's controversial immigration order, and it's not clear whether Tillerson was even given a say over its scope or wording. His absence from the rollout of a policy that significantly affects the

country's place in the world has sown doubts about the State Department's role in shaping White House decisions.

A group of diplomats lodged a formal complaint against the order Tuesday in the State Department's "Dissent Channel," set up during the Vietnam War as a way for diplomats of all ranks to convey disagreement with foreign policy decisions. The communications are typically confidential and may be done anonymously.

"They should either get with the program or they can go," White House press secretary Sean Spicer said Monday.

He later said diplomats have a right to raise concerns.

One of Tillerson's chief outside backers, former defense secretary Robert M. Gates, said Sunday that the immigration order is likely to make his friend's job harder. Gates, a Republican who recommended Tillerson to Trump as a dark-horse candidate, is among a long bipartisan list of foreign policy

experts who have argued that actions appearing to target Muslims play into the hands of extremists who claim that the United States is at war with Islam.

Tillerson had said at his confirmation hearing that he does "not support a blanket-type rejection of any particular group of people," but he did not rule out a registry or database of Muslims. New United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley went further, rejecting the idea of a ban on Muslim immigration and calling a registry out of the question.

Haley, who like Tillerson has no formal foreign policy experience, had also startled some U.N. diplomats in her first address at the world body Friday.

"You're going to see a change in the way we do business," the former South Carolina governor said. "Our goal with the administration is to show value at the U.N., and the way we'll show value is to show our strength, show our voice, have the backs of our allies and make sure our allies have our back as well."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

NATO Shelves Plan to Meet With Ukraine

Julian E. Barnes in Brussels and Nathan Hodge in Moscow

Updated Feb. 1, 2017 6:31 p.m. ET

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has shelved a plan to meet with Ukrainian officials about the alliance's missile-defense system, Western officials said, a new sign the alliance is trying to avoid provoking Russia.

NATO had considered meeting with Ukraine to discuss the possibility that debris or an errant interceptor could fall on their territory if the alliance's missile-defense system were used.

The decision not to meet with Ukraine comes as the alliance is at an awkward moment with Russia. NATO is beginning to [build up its deterrent force on Russia's border](#)—the first German forces set out on Tuesday—even as President Donald Trump looks to build relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Inside the alliance, diplomats are discussing ways to expand dialogue with Russia, with some officials expecting that Mr. Trump may seek to have the alliance cooperate more with Moscow.

But an escalation of fighting in eastern Ukraine is complicating efforts in Brussels and Washington to recalibrate relations with Russia.

Violence has grown in recent days in the Donbas region of Ukraine, where Russian-backed separatists have fought Ukrainian government troops since 2014. Artillery fire and rocket attacks from separatists have increased in the city of Avdiivka, killing at least 12 Ukrainian soldiers and injuring dozens more.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine on Wednesday said the fighting was as severe as it had seen in the area, recording more than 10,000 explosions in the wider Donetsk region. The Ukrainian government said separatists had employed Grad rocket launchers and heavy artillery in the latest fighting.

Kate Byrnes, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim for the U.S. mission to the OSCE, said the outbreak of fighting had left 17,000 people in Avdiivka without water, electricity, or heat, amid winter conditions. "We understand 2,500 of these individuals are children."

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg on Wednesday said it was a dire situation and called for a return to a cease-fire in the region.

Mr. Trump has promised better relations with Russia, raising hopes in Moscow that the U.S. and the European Union will lift sanctions related imposed over Russia's backing of separatists and the annexation of the Black Sea Peninsula of Crimea from Ukraine.

"For those who don't have our back," she added, "we're taking names."

Haley spoke hours before the immigration order was issued.

The White House also issued a scathing indictment of the United Nations last week, vowing to strip some U.S. funding and condition other money on reform and compliance with U.S. objectives.

Trump is breaking with the practices of both Republican and Democratic administrations by including a political adviser, Bannon, in National Security Council meetings with Cabinet officials.

On Tuesday, European Council President Donald Tusk included "worrying declarations" from Trump among the challenges or threats to the E.U., along with China, Russia and radical ideologies.

"Capitals around the world are anxiously looking at how the new administration starts engaging with friends and foes," said Arturo Sarukhan, a former Mexican

ambassador to Washington. "If the U.S. treats a neighbor, partner and ally like Mexico, a nation so relevant to the prosperity and security of the U.S., with ultimatums and bullying, they will probably feel that they themselves may be in for a rough ride."

A European diplomat who recently met with Trump aides and pressed for cooperation at the United Nations and elsewhere to promote peace in the Middle East recounted a startling exchange with Jason D. Greenblatt, then Trump's in-house lawyer and now his chief of international negotiations.

"We are business people," the diplomat quoted Greenblatt as saying. "We are not going to govern this country with diplomatic niceties. We are going to govern it as a business."

Carol Morello contributed to this report.

The Ukrainian government, in turn, is worried that Mr. Trump may strike a deal with Russia to lift sanctions, giving Mr. Putin a freer hand to encourage separatists.

"The shelling is massive," Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said on Tuesday. "Who would dare talk about lifting the sanctions in such circumstances?"

He said the Ukrainian military was sending in tents, field kitchens and power supplies to assist civilians.

Some diplomats said a cautious approach to discussing missile defense with Ukraine makes sense if the alliance wants to avoid further undermining relations with Russia. But other allies worry that the alliance risks inadvertently signaling that its resolve to help partners such as Ukraine may waver.

A NATO diplomat said the decision didn't close off future discussions with Ukraine. But the alliance is moving carefully, given Russia's history of using any development in the missile-defense system to stoke controversy, officials said.

"There is some political sensitivity in the engagement of Ukraine because obviously that could fuel an overreaction by the Russians," the diplomat said.

NATO plans to use its missile-defense system to only defend allied nations and doesn't intend to intercept missiles headed to Ukraine, allied officials said. But

should the alliance fire a ground-based interceptor in Romania, debris from the intercept could land in Ukraine, or, in the event of a miss, the interceptor could strike Ukrainian territory.

The system is designed to intercept ballistic missiles fired from Iran, which, U.S. officials said, recently conducted a new test.

While not confirming the test, NATO officials said Iran's capability demonstrates the importance of the missile-defense system. "Several nations, including Iran, are developing different kinds of ballistic missiles. They are testing and strengthening their systems," Mr. Stoltenberg said on Tuesday. "That just underlines that NATO has to continue to develop a ballistic missile-defense system."

The missile-defense system—which consists of radar and interceptors in Romania as well at sea—came under full alliance control last year.

NATO officials have long insisted the system is neither designed for nor capable of shooting down Russia's numerous and sophisticated nuclear missiles.

But Moscow has viewed such assertions with deep suspicion and long called on NATO to agree to limits to its missile shield—agreements rejected in Washington and Brussels.

Some current and former officials said there is concern at the

Pentagon that Mr. Trump may seek to shut down or cancel all or part of the missile-defense system in a deal with Russia. Other Pentagon officials said there is no indication of any [policy changes](#) for missile defense—long a key priority of Republicans in Congress.

The Obama administration, while trying to reset relations with Russia in 2009, scaled back the planned European missile-defense system.

Mr. Trump has been critical of NATO, both in the campaign and after, calling it obsolete. But he has also warned about the dangers of

Iran.

It is technically possible for the NATO system to intercept some missiles headed toward Ukraine or other non-alliance countries.

Because the current system has limited numbers of interceptors, NATO would intercept only missiles that were heading toward alliance territory, and only if they were likely to hit a population center or military command post, NATO officials said.

Still an intercept could occur over a neighboring country or debris from an interception could fall outside alliance territory. There is also a

possibility if an interceptor misses it could land on the territory of a neighbor, according to officials.

As a result, NATO has been holding talks with partner countries about the missile-defense system.

NATO had considered extending those conversations to Ukraine, but French officials raised concerns that the conversations could complicate relations with Moscow, Western officials said.

Officials familiar with the internal NATO discussions said relations with Moscow were at a sensitive point and reaching out to Ukraine on

missile defense could easily be misunderstood.

A French diplomatic official declined to comment, as did Ukrainian and Russian representatives to NATO.

NATO in the past has discussed its missile-defense system with Japan and European partners. The NATO diplomats said the new round of discussions would begin with Finland, Sweden and partners in the Middle East.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Krauss : Let's Make a Deal on Russia and NATO

Melvyn Krauss

Feb. 1, 2017 7:11

p.m. ET

President Trump's controversial "love-in" with Russian President Vladimir Putin isn't merely personal. What we are witnessing is a new round of détente between Washington and Moscow, with potentially disastrous results for Europe.

Mr. Trump has talked of a new nuclear-disarmament agreement with Russia. He may also seek Mr. Putin's help in the Middle East, especially in fighting Islamic State. In return, Mr. Trump might be willing to remove the economic sanctions imposed on Russia for its aggression in Crimea and eastern Ukraine.

The lifting of sanctions could pose serious problems for Europe. It would give Mr. Putin additional resources to meddle in the

Continent's affairs. Economic sanctions are the one effective weapon Europeans have for keeping Mr. Putin in line. Without them, Europe would stand virtually naked in the face of a newly assertive Russia.

But instead of thinking seriously and strategically about how to forestall the détente with Russia that clearly is on Mr. Trump's mind, Europeans are experiencing a true moment of fiddling while Rome burns. They're doing little more than moralizing about the foibles and alleged inadequacies of America's new "deplorable" president.

There's a better option. The most consequential thing Europe can do to gain influence over Mr. Trump's foreign-policy thinking is to cough up more money for the common defense provided by NATO.

Making Europe pay more for NATO was one of Mr. Trump's more popular promises during the

presidential campaign. If Europe responded to his election by raising defense spending, it certainly would be appreciated by Mr. Trump's team as early proof of his effectiveness as a world leader. Besides, a wide spectrum of informed European opinion now is coming around to the view that Europe must contribute more to the common defense.

European governments should propose a deal to Mr. Trump that directly ties increased defense contributions to reciprocal actions by the U.S., such as maintaining sanctions on Russia unless Mr. Putin grants a major concession in return—which of course he won't. That would effectively box in Mr. Trump on the sanctions, since such an offer would be almost impossible for him to refuse.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has been the strongest advocate of punishing Russia for its 2014 annexation of Crimea, would be a major beneficiary of a deal with

Mr. Trump. If the U.S. lifts sanctions on Moscow, it would seriously undermine the German chancellor's campaign for a fourth term, which is premised on the idea that she is the sole European leader willing to stand up to up to Russia. If Mr. Trump strips her of that weapon, Mrs. Merkel would look like a NATO anachronism.

Righting a longstanding inequity in the financing of NATO and the common defense of the West seems a small price to pay for American help in keeping Mrs. Merkel in power and the Russian bear off Europe's back. That's not a bad deal for both parties.

Mr. Krauss is an emeritus senior fellow at the Hoover Institution.

The Washington Post

Ukraine fighting could pose early challenge to Trump

By Christian Borys

AVDIIVKA, Ukraine — Russian-backed separatists kept up a rocket and artillery attack on this frigid city Wednesday, in a surge in violence that could pose an early and difficult foreign policy challenge to the new Trump administration.

A planned evacuation of Avdiivka, organized by the Ukrainian government, found few takers Wednesday. Only 145 residents chose to board buses that would take them away from the fighting; 88 were children.

Sporadic shelling of Avdiivka, on the front line between separatists and regular Ukrainian forces, [had intensified early this week](#), shortly after President Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin had their first phone conversation. The

sudden eruption in the long-running conflict in eastern Ukraine threatens to put Trump, who has said he wants better relations with Moscow, on the spot.

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Analysts say both Putin and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko appear to be trying to exploit the intensification of the fighting as a means of influencing the new U.S. administration: Putin could be daring Washington to do something about it; Poroshenko can play up Ukraine's image as the aggrieved nation.

Small-arms fire and heavier detonations were audible Wednesday throughout the city

center. The barrage was indiscriminate; on the outskirts of town, Katya Volkova, 60, was killed by shrapnel from a Grad rocket at 7:30 a.m. as she was out for a walk; her distraught daughter Nadya was kneeling over the body and weeping.

At the evacuation point, Ania Bohatysh, a 69-year-old pensioner, waved goodbye to her daughter and 17-month-old grandson. "It's much stronger shelling than it was before, so that's why I wanted them to leave," she said. "And now we don't even have water or heat. It's simply impossible to sleep anymore because of the shelling."

But Bohatysh stayed. Avdiivka is her home, she said, and she would rather die here than try to start life over again elsewhere.

Six Ukrainian soldiers have been killed here since Sunday, and 48 have been wounded, while unconfirmed reports indicated that the separatists suffered heavy losses. The number of civilian casualties is not clear.

The 20,000 people who remain here, out of a prewar population of 35,000, are without heat and water after heavy shelling took out electricity lines and wreaked havoc on the city's Soviet-era coke plant. It is the largest coke producer in Europe and critical to Ukraine's steel industry.

The plant is working at 20 percent capacity now, according to plant director Musa Magomedov, who said that the town is on the precipice of a humanitarian disaster if the fighting continues.

For the first time since last summer, videos on social media purported to show protracted use of MLRS Grad rockets. The Grad, an imprecise and indiscriminate weapon, was banned under the Minsk II peace agreement, signed nearly two years ago. That agreement also prohibits the use of tanks and heavy artillery. However, according to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and reports from soldiers, all of these weapons were back in action over the past few days.

Alex Kokcharov, an analyst at IHS Jane's, said he believes that the

escalation could be a show of force by Russia.

"Russia is willing to use the controlled escalation in Donbas to demonstrate its control of the conflict to the new U.S. administration," Kokcharov said. "This is likely to be part of the wider Russian strategy of foreign and military assertiveness."

However, the surge also seems to have some political benefit for the administration in Kiev, bringing attention back to a seemingly forgotten conflict. In an unusual step, the bodies of soldiers killed in

the latest battles were included in a procession Monday morning in Kiev, on the site of the country's 2014 revolution.

Trump's election sent shock waves across Ukraine because of his stated willingness to cut a deal with Russia that could give Moscow a free hand in the region, spelling disaster for Kiev. The administration in Kiev is adamant that [discussions of lifting sanctions](#) are entirely premature.

Both sides hope to capitalize on the fighting, said Alexander Clarkson, a lecturer in European studies at

Kings College in London. "My suspicion is that the Ukrainian army and government are not averse to playing up the impact of Russian shelling and general military activity. Poroshenko can now turn around and point to current developments to argue that any removal of sanctions is betrayal against an aggressor."

At the same time, he said, "Putin's trap is to dare Trump to do anything about attacks in Donbas after Trump has made such a big deal over partnering with Russia."



U.S. and Mexico appear to take first steps toward renegotiating NAFTA, document suggests

<https://www.facebook.com/josh.partlow1>

The United States and Mexico appear to have taken the first steps toward renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement, according to a Mexican government document, walking down a path that would fulfill one of President Trump's big campaign promises and potentially transform the hemisphere's economy.

A communique posted by Mexico's foreign and economic ministries on a government website on Wednesday said that the Mexican government had begun a series of consultations with the private sector, a process which it said would take 90 days. "The consultation in Mexico will start simultaneously with the internal process being carried out by the government of the United States," the document said.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment and officials in the U.S. Congress said they had not yet been notified of any formal action. But trade economists said the process might be tied to U.S. legislation passed under former president Barack Obama that gives the president power to quickly broker a new trade agreement. Called fast-track authority, it requires the president to notify Congress 90 days before entering into negotiations for a new agreement.

If the White House is indeed proceeding under fast-track authority, that suggests Trump could intend to scrap NAFTA altogether and forge bilateral trade deals with Mexico and Canada instead, said Gary Hufbauer, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics. Trump and his administration have expressed a preference for bilateral deals, which they say allow the United States to

better wield its economic heft at the negotiating table.

"I think they want to retire the name NAFTA, say they got rid of it, then put it into the history books," said Hufbauer.

It's still possible, however, that the process will be terminated if the U.S., Mexico and Canada agree to terms overhauling NAFTA.

Renegotiating NAFTA was one of the major promises Trump made on the campaign trail, where he criticized the trade pact, which took effect in 1994, for hollowing out America's manufacturing sector. The news comes as Trump reassesses America's system of trade and immigration. He has already pulled out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a Pacific Rim trade deal crafted by the Obama administration.

This historic shift in trade policy is likely to have wide-ranging implications for multinational companies, which have strung factories and facilities across the North America to take advantage of NAFTA's terms. It could also portend changes for American consumers, who for decades have enjoyed cheap goods manufactured just over the border.

The specific effects on American businesses and consumers would hinge on the terms of the trade deals that replace it. But if tougher barriers to Mexican imports were to provoke retaliatory action by Mexico, the effect could be damaging to American manufacturing communities, said Hufbauer. "There would be a lot of localized pain of going down this path, and there may be some products that are suddenly more expensive than they otherwise would have been."

For Mexico, the ultimate goal in the trade negotiations with the United States is to maintain the flow of free trade that NAFTA has created between the two countries. The United States is Mexico's largest trading partner and the destination of 80 percent of its exports.

"We want to arrive at an agreement," Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray told reporters on Wednesday.

Mexican officials plan to use the 90 day consultation period to meet with domestic industry leaders in farming, manufacturing, textiles, petroleum, and other sectors, to see what aspects of NAFTA could be improved. The discussions will be coordinated by the secretary of the economy.

"This gives us a very solid preparation to enter the dialogue once the 90 days passes," Videgaray said.

At the same time, Mexico is also looking to expand trade ties with other countries, in case trade with the United States gets restricted. Mexican officials have already begun talks with Argentina and Brazil, and are interested in discussions with Malaysia, Australia, Singapore and others.

Trump has already clashed publicly with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto. Following a spat on social media on Jan. 26 over who would pay for Trump's border wall, Peña Nieto called off a scheduled visit to Washington the following week. The next day, Trump and Peña Nieto discussed the U.S.-Mexico relationship by phone for an hour.

During the campaign, Trump announced his intention to renegotiate the sweeping trade deal between the United States, Canada and Mexico on his first day in office.

"If I win, day one, we are going to announce our plans to renegotiate NAFTA," he told a crowd in Greensboro, N.C., [in October](#).

Influential in the negotiations are likely to be two men who are not yet confirmed for their positions: Commerce Secretary nominee Wilbur Ross and Trump's pick for the U.S. Trade Representative, Robert Lighthizer.

NAFTA became a divisive issue in the 2016 campaign, as critics on both the left and the right disparaged it for siphoning off good-paying American manufacturing jobs. Trump repeatedly criticized former President Bill Clinton's role in negotiating NAFTA, calling it "the worst trade deal maybe ever signed anywhere."

Economists have generally disagreed, or expressed more nuanced concerns. In a panel of 41 prominent economists [surveyed](#) in 2012 by the University of Chicago, 85 percent agreed or strongly agreed that Americans were better off under NAFTA than previously existing trade rules among the U.S., Canada and Mexico, while only 5 percent said they were uncertain. None disagreed with the statement.

More recent research by John McLaren of the University of Virginia and Shushanik Hakobyan of Fordham University [has shown](#) that blue-collar workers in industries most affected by NAFTA had lower wage growth over the 1990s compared with other workers. The study concluded that the overall impact of NAFTA on American wages was small, but heavily concentrated in some communities.

The trade pact dates to 1992, when President George H.W. Bush negotiated it in his final year in office. Congress approved the deal the next year under Clinton, and it finally took effect in 1994,

establishing an unprecedented free-trade zone across North America.

Over the next decade, the flow of goods and services between the U.S. and Mexico more than quintupled.

By reducing barriers to trade, the deal aimed to knit the countries of North America closer together and expand their economies. It also specifically aimed to help the struggling Mexican economy. By raising the standard of living, many supporters argued the deal would cut down on illegal immigration from Mexico to the United States.

The New York Times

Grillo : Trump's Mexican Shakedown

Ioan Grillo

President Trump claims Mexico should pay because it has an annual trade surplus of \$60 billion with the United States.

This is utter madness. By the same logic, the United States should be paying billions to all the countries it has a trade surplus with, including Australia, the Netherlands, Singapore and Qatar.

The demand is especially perverse because the United States is so much richer than Mexico, which is the reason migrants head north in the first place. Mexico's [minimum wage has just risen](#) to about \$4 per day, and 28 million Mexicans can't afford a healthy diet.

President Trump has not made it clear how he will collect the money. The idea he floated of a 20 percent tax on goods coming from Mexico fell like a ton of bricks when it was

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In his criticism of trade deals, Trump has formed an unusual alliance with labor-friendly figures on the political left. Former Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders has said he hoped "very much that President Trump will come on board and work with us as we revamp in a very fundamental way our trade policies."

pointed out that American consumers would be the ones paying. In the campaign, Mr. Trump released a memo saying the United States could force Mexico to pay by blocking remittances, the nearly \$25 billion sent home by Mexicans every year, money earned from hard labor that supports the poorest communities south of the border. It has also been suggested he will try to tax those transfers. Either action would be challenged in the courts, especially as most of that money has already been taxed, and migrants would look for alternative ways to move it. But he might succeed in getting some of his funds this way.

A note in the executive order to build the wall may offer a clue to another fund-raising tactic. [Section 9](#) of the order demands that all the aid that has been given to Mexico over the past five years — probably around \$320 million a year — be tallied up

Republicans, however, have been more traditional defenders of open trade. who have traditionally viewed free trade as a driver of economic growth. "As I frequently tell my friends in Mexico, we can't get a divorce. We need to figure out how to make this marriage work," Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Tex.) told CNN recently.

Trump does not require Congressional approval to exit NAFTA. Article 2205 of the agreement allows any party to withdraw six months after providing written notice to the other parties.

in a report for the president. Perhaps Mr. Trump is thinking of canceling future aid, or perhaps he's going to claim that the money sent in the past has to be paid back to finance his "beautiful wall."

If Mr. Trump runs up the [national debt](#), he will be under increasing pressure to get back his wall dollars. And the way the wall is financed now could determine how the shakedown plays out. If Congress passes a bill to fund the wall, lawmakers need to force out any wording that commits to collecting the money from Mexico.

The demand that Mexico pay for the wall was the breaking point in other negotiations on trade and immigration. It was the issue that forced President [Enrique Peña Nieto](#) into a corner, so he had no choice but to cancel his meeting in Washington. Money aside, it

Trump would have to take additional steps to raise tariffs on imports from those countries.

Ross echoed the need to renegotiate the deal in his Senate confirmation hearing on Jan. 18. He criticized the deal for its weak enforcement on environmental and labor standards, and said that NAFTA was "logically the first thing" for the Trump administration to work on.

"All aspects of NAFTA will be put on the table," Ross said.

became a question of national humiliation.

But perhaps this idea of humiliating Mexico is what really appeals to President Trump and his most fervent supporters. As María Eugenia Valdés, a political scientist at Mexico's Autonomous Metropolitan University, said to me: "He wants to make an example of Mexico to show how he will deal with countries around the world."

Shakedowns are cemented through violence. Behind Mr. Trump's rhetoric, many Mexicans sense the implicit threat of American force, backed by a history of occupations and wars. "There is a real risk of the conflict turning into violence," Ms. Valdés said. "This man is capable of anything."

I hope such fears are crazy. They should be.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Sharma : Mexico's Bad Luck Gets Even Worse

Ruchir Sharma

Jan. 31, 2017 7:28 p.m. ET

Mexico is the unlucky country. Time and again its economy has been poised to take off, only to stumble into crisis, sometimes of its own making but often a result of the forces unleashed by its gradual opening to the U.S. The latest shock arrived with Donald Trump and peaked last week when a spat over who will pay for "the wall" compelled Mexico's president, Enrique Peña Nieto, to cancel his first meeting with the new White House. Economists are already rushing to downgrade Mexico's growth prospects for 2017.

Mr. Trump's worldview is built on a gut feeling that bad trade deals allow Mexico to profit at America's expense. Atop his agenda is renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement, the 1994 deal that turned the continent into a

free-trade zone. But it is difficult to argue that Nafta unfairly enriched Mexico.

The big mystery, actually, is why Mexico has not done better since Nafta launched. Opening to the U.S. did help to modernize the country, putting it on track to emerge as the most important manufacturing power in Latin America. But it hardly made Mexico rich.

Since 1994, Mexico's economy has grown at an annual rate of about 2.5%—half the average for emerging countries over the same period. The average Mexican's income is only a quarter the average American's, no higher in relative terms than 20 or even 100 years ago.

Mexico's string of unlucky stumbles dates to at least 1994. As Nafta went into effect, a sharp rise in U.S. interest rates prompted investors to

pull money out of Mexico, leading to the peso crash that December. Because Mexico's government had begun issuing bonds that it promised to pay in dollars, it needed a bailout when the peso collapsed. Bankruptcies spread, and the economy fell into a massive recession.

As often happens after a crisis, Mexico recovered sharply, and in the late 1990s its economy grew in close sync with America's. But right as its luck started to turn, the next shocks hit. In 2001 the U.S. fell into recession, dragging Mexico along, and China entered the World Trade Organization. Manufacturers began moving to China at an accelerating pace to take advantage of wages that were a fraction of Mexico's.

Over the next decade, many emerging economies were lifted by surging prices for oil and other commodities, as well as a tide of

easy credit from Western banks. Mexico was not among the lucky, its growth stymied by the declining production of its state oil company, Pemex, and by a cultural fear of debt contracted during the peso crisis. While other emerging economies grew rapidly by exporting to booming China, Mexico grew moderately by exporting to the U.S. When the 2008 financial crisis began in America, Mexico became one of the first casualties in the emerging world.

Still, Mexico had not given up on closer ties to the U.S. Its elites remained believers in the Washington consensus of open borders, free markets and budget discipline. In 2012 Mexicans elected Mr. Peña Nieto, a growth-oriented reformer who promised to reduce the influence of monopolists, including Pemex.

By 2014 these reforms looked ready to generate the long-sought boom. The government expected huge revenues from an auction of oil drilling rights, including to big American firms. But later that year oil prices collapsed and dragged the growth rate down to 2%.

Mr. Peña Nieto persisted, and by the middle of last year, the oil shock had faded. Mexico was growing at a healthy 3%, and unemployment was falling sharply. Then came President Trump. Now businesses are putting investment on hold until they see what the White House will do. But shoving Mexico too hard on trade could backfire.

Economists already expect Mexico's growth this year to dip below 2%, and unemployment could start rising again. This would send more Mexicans northward. The flow of immigrants had slowed significantly in recent years as job opportunities and wages rose in Mexico. More than the wall, the best way to keep immigrants from crossing the border is to give them reasons to stay home.

North American supply chains are so tightly interwoven that 80% of Mexican exports go to the U.S.—and 40% of the parts those exports contain are made in the U.S. Fourteen states now count Mexico as their main trading partner,

including anchors of the angry middle class like Michigan, which catapulted Mr. Trump to victory.

Mexicans also have an intense streak of anti-gringo patriotism. This had waned in recent years as the two countries' economies became intertwined. The feeling I got during a recent visit is that many Mexicans felt they had been moving toward becoming the honorary 51st state before Mr. Trump barged in vowing to expel them.

Delivering on Mr. Trump's threats could revive latent Mexican nationalism and play into the hands of a populist politician like Andrés Manuel López Obrador, a firebrand who is gaining momentum as

Mexico's 2018 presidential elections approach. Mr. Peña Nieto's approval rating has fallen to 12%, partly because many Mexicans fault him for failing to stand up to Mr. Trump. Still, nationalism can't fill an empty stomach. If Washington pushes Mexico into a deeper slump, no wall could be high enough to prevent Mexican immigrants from trying to escape their unlucky land.

Mr. Sharma, the chief global strategist at Morgan Stanley Investment Management, is the author of "The Rise and Fall of Nations: Forces of Change in the Post-Crisis World" (Norton, 2016).

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Gordon Lubold in Washington and Julian E. Barnes in Brussels
Feb. 1, 2017 5:30 a.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Defense Secretary Jim Mattis is headed to Asia this week as the first member of the Trump cabinet to venture abroad amid the administration's tumultuous start.

Mr. Mattis will have the daunting task of representing a government that has [upended a longstanding alliance with Mexico](#) and antagonized much of the Middle East with [new blocks on immigration](#), and must reassure jittery allies that the U.S. will continue to be their friend, according to U.S. officials.

In Asia, Mr. Mattis, a retired Marine four-star general who spent years leading troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, will confront steadily [deteriorating security conditions on the Korean Peninsula, in the South China Sea](#) and [across the Taiwan Strait](#). All are complicated by fraying ties among traditional U.S. allies in the region and confusion over the new administration's approaches.

But his trip is commanding attention beyond the region. Later this month, the U.S. defense chief is expected at a pair of security meetings in Europe, where allies see him as someone who can act as a buffer between some of President Donald Trump's more impetuous moves and U.S. interests abroad. If Mr. Mattis

Mattis Heads to Asia on Trump Administration's First Overseas Trip

were to leave the job or lose influence within the administration, it would be seen as a troubling omen, said one foreign official.

"Mattis is the canary in the coal mine," the official said.

Mr. Mattis departed Wednesday for South Korea and Japan. North Korea is on the shortlist of countries seen as most likely to try to test the new administration.

The U.S. wants to [deploy an antimissile system in South Korea](#), a move China opposes. At the same time, the U.S. wants China to exert its influence to stop North Korea from developing an intercontinental nuclear missile.

South Korea's [internal political struggles](#) represent a potential distraction from bigger security concerns, as does its renewed acrimony with Japan. Cooperation between the two, both hosts to thousands of American troops, is essential to U.S. goals.

China's next moves in the South China Sea, where it has made claims to a number of artificial islands, remain unknown. And the fragile regional alliance assembled by the Obama administration has begun unwinding, with [Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte turning away from the U.S.](#)

Messrs. Trump and Mattis spoke earlier this week with their South Korean counterparts to pledge the "full range" of U.S. support. Mr.

Trump spoke over the weekend with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Later this month, Mr. Mattis will take part in meetings at North Atlantic Treaty Organization headquarters in Brussels and at the Munich Security Conference in Germany.

Many allies are looking to Mr. Mattis for assurance that for all of Mr. Trump's talk of "America first," there is still room for them. Mr. Mattis hasn't minced words when asked about the importance of friends overseas: "My view is that nations with allies thrive and nations without allies don't," he told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Jan. 12.

Mr. Trump has sent mixed messages, [supporting NATO in conversations with British Prime Minister Theresa May](#) on one hand and "repeating the O-word, the obsolete word, in regard to NATO" on the other, said a senior diplomat in Brussels. "We don't really know where he stands."

But Mr. Mattis's strong support for the alliance has been enthusiastically cheered by diplomats there.

"It is not just what Mattis says about NATO, it is that he has actually worked at a NATO command," said a senior NATO diplomat, referring to when Mr. Mattis served in uniform as the Supreme Allied Commander for Transformation. "Mattis will in

some ways be NATO's best ambassador to Washington."

Allied diplomats have noted that Mr. Mattis seems willing to moderate Mr. Trump. That has been most evident on interrogations of terror suspects using techniques that have been equated to torture. Mr. Trump has said he believes such techniques work but is willing to let Mr. Mattis "override" him. Mr. Mattis has said he doesn't think torture is an effective way to elicit information.

But Mr. Mattis's sway may have limits. He stood behind Mr. Trump at the Pentagon on Friday as the president signed an executive order suspending travel to the U.S. by citizens from seven Muslim-majority nations the U.S. has cited as posing significant security risks. It is a restriction that Mr. Mattis himself criticized in a speech last year at the Hoover Institution, a think tank he was associated with at the time.

Adam Thomson, a former U.K. ambassador to NATO and head of the European Leadership Network, said allies will be trying to judge how much the Trump administration will defer to Mr. Mattis.

"They don't know what to make of the new administration's attitudes toward NATO and are therefore finding it very hard to plan in a sensible way to whatever the new administration's policy turns out to be," Mr. Thomson said.

The New York Times

Glenn Thrush and Michelle Innis

The flare-up — and conflicting characterizations of the call from Mr. Trump and Mr. Turnbull — threatened to do lasting damage to

U.S.-Australia Rift Is Possible After Trump Ends Call With Prime Minister

relations between the two countries and could drive Canberra closer to China, which has a robust trading relationship with Australia and is competing with Washington to

become the dominant force in the Asia-Pacific region.

A senior Trump administration official said the president told Mr. Turnbull on Saturday that the

refugees could include the "next Boston bombers." He also said he was "going to get killed" politically by the deal, given that the day before he signed an [executive order](#) to stem the refugee flow into the

United States and refuse visas for all citizens from seven Muslim countries.

The Trump administration official said the call was shorter than planned, and ended abruptly after Mr. Turnbull told the president it was necessary for the refugees to be accepted.

The details of the call were confirmed by a senior administration official with direct knowledge of the exchange who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to publicly discuss the diplomatic talks.

Mr. Turnbull, speaking Thursday at a press briefing in Australia's southern state of Victoria, refused to comment at length on the telephone call, or say whether it had ended sooner than expected. But he did acknowledge that it had been candid.

"I've seen that report," Mr. Turnbull said of the [Washington Post account](#), "and I'm not going to comment on the conversation, other than to say that in the course of the conversation, as you know and as was confirmed by the president's

official spokesman in the White House, the president assured me that he would continue with, honor the agreement we entered into with the Obama administration with respect to refugee resettlement."

Pressed about Mr. Trump's tone, and whether the president ended the call by hanging up, Mr. Turnbull refused to comment. "It's better that these things, these conversations are conducted candidly, frankly, privately," he said.

Mr. Turnbull again stated that Australia's relationship with the United States remained robust, but if the deal to resettle the refugees falls through, Canberra will be left with a seemingly intractable political problem at home.

The Australian government has a policy that bars any refugees who attempted to arrive by boat from ever setting foot in the country. The majority of the refugees being held on the Pacific islands of Nauru and Manus are from Iran and Iraq. Both are Muslim-majority nations that are among the seven countries — including Libya, [Somalia](#), Sudan, Syria and Yemen — whose citizens are barred from entering the United

States for at least 90 days under an executive order signed by Mr. Trump last week.

"I can assure you the relationship is very strong," Mr. Turnbull said. "The fact that we received the assurance that we did, the fact that it was confirmed, the very extensive engagement we have with the new administration underlines the closeness of the alliance."

"But as Australians know me very well — I stand up for Australia in every forum — public or private."

Bill Shorten, the leader of Australia's opposition Labor Party, said there were two versions of the conversation between Mr. Turnbull and Mr. Trump over the refugee deal, and Mr. Turnbull should be "straight with the Australian people."

Mr. Turnbull "made it clear he had a constructive discussion" over the refugee deal, Mr. Shorten said. "But now it appears another, different version of the same conversation has emerged."

Kim Beazley, a former Australian ambassador to the United States who served in Washington during much of the Obama administration,

said the impact of the flare-up would be "minimal" if the refugee deal remained in force. But he added, "If the tonality is true you wouldn't want to have too many conversations like that."

It was not the only awkward call last week between Mr. Trump and a world leader. Earlier, on Friday, Mr. Trump joked to President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico that he would deploy troops to Mexico if the Mexican government failed to control "bad hombres down there."

On Wednesday night, the senior Trump administration official said the president's comments to Mr. Peña Nieto were made in jest and the comments reflected Mr. Trump's standing offer to help Mexico battle drug gangs and control border crossings. The official said the conversation between the two presidents was friendly, and Mr. Peña Nieto did not appear to be offended.

The Mexican government issued a statement denying the A.P. report and said it did not "correspond to reality."



No 'G'day, mate': On call with Australian prime minister, Trump badgers and brags (UNE)

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

(Video: AuBC via AP / Photo: AP and Bloomberg)

After what President Trump reportedly called "the worst call by far," with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on Jan. 28, Turnbull gave sparse details at a news conference on Feb. 2, but said, "I stand up for Australia in every forum, public or private." After what President Trump reportedly called "the worst call by far," with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Turnbull spoke at a news conference. (Video: AuBC via AP / Photo: AP and Bloomberg)

It should have been one of the most congenial calls for the new commander in chief — a conversation with the leader of Australia, one of America's staunchest allies, at the end of a triumphant week.

Instead, President Trump blasted Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull over a refugee agreement and boasted about the magnitude of his electoral college win, according to senior U.S. officials briefed on the Saturday exchange. Then, 25 minutes into what was expected

to be an hour-long call, Trump abruptly ended it.

At one point, Trump informed Turnbull that he had spoken with four other world leaders that day — including Russian President Vladimir Putin — and that "this was the worst call by far."

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

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[\[Trump orders ISIS plan, talks with Putin and gives Bannon national security role\]](#)

Trump's behavior suggests that he is capable of subjecting world leaders, including close allies, to a version of the vitriol he frequently employs against political adversaries and news organizations in speeches and [on Twitter](#).

"This is the worst deal ever," Trump fumed as Turnbull attempted to confirm that the United States would honor [its pledge to take in 1,250 refugees](#) from an Australian detention center.

Trump, who one day earlier had signed an executive order temporarily barring the admission of refugees, complained that he was

"going to get killed" politically and accused Australia of seeking to export the "next Boston bombers."

Trump returned to the topic late Wednesday night, writing in a message on Twitter: "Do you believe it? The Obama Administration agreed to take thousands of illegal immigrants from Australia. Why? I will study this dumb deal!"

U.S. officials said that Trump has behaved similarly in conversations with leaders of other countries, including Mexico. But his treatment of Turnbull was particularly striking because of the tight bond between the United States and Australia — countries that share intelligence, support one another diplomatically and have fought together in wars including in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The characterizations provide insight into Trump's temperament and approach to the diplomatic requirements of his job as the nation's chief executive, a role in which he continues to employ both the uncompromising negotiating tactics he honed as a real estate developer and the bombastic style he exhibited as a reality television personality.

[\[Trump's refugee ban is a matter of life and death for some, including a 1-year-old with cancer\]](#)

The depictions of Trump's calls are also at odds with sanitized White House accounts. The official readout of his conversation with Turnbull, for example, said that the two had "emphasized the enduring strength and closeness of the U.S.-Australia relationship that is critical for peace, stability, and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and globally."

Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto has canceled an upcoming visit to the United States as tensions are brewing between both governments over President Trump's plans to construct a border wall at the financial expense of Mexico. Mexico's president has canceled a visit to Washington as tensions are brewing over U.S. plans to build a border wall at the financial expense of Mexico. (Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

A White House spokesman declined to comment. A senior administration official acknowledged that the conversation with Turnbull had been hostile and charged, but emphasized that most of Trump's calls with foreign leaders — including the heads of Japan, Germany, France and Russia — have been productive and pleasant.

Trump also vented anger and touted his political accomplishments in a tense conversation with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto, officials said. The two have sparred for months over Trump's vow [to force Mexico to pay](#) for construction of a border wall between the two countries, a conflict that prompted Peña Nieto to cancel a planned meeting with Trump.

Even in conversations marred by hostile exchanges, Trump manages to work in references to his election accomplishments. U.S. officials said that he used his calls with Turnbull and Peña Nieto to mention his election win or the size of the crowd at his inauguration.

[\[In fight with Trump, Mexico has plenty of ways to punch back\]](#)

One official said that it may be Trump's way of "speaking about the mandate he has and why he has the backing for decisions he makes." But Trump is also notoriously thin-skinned and has used platforms including social-media accounts, meetings with lawmakers and even [a speech at CIA headquarters](#) to depict his victory as an achievement of historic proportions, rather than a narrow outcome in which his opponent, Hillary Clinton, won the popular vote.

The friction with Turnbull reflected Trump's anger over being bound by an agreement reached by the Obama administration to accept refugees from Australian detention sites even while Trump was issuing an executive order suspending such arrivals from elsewhere in the world.

The New York Times

Scott Rosenberg and Eric Lipton

This worldview borrows from the "clash of civilizations" thesis of the political scientist Samuel P. Huntington, and combines straightforward warnings about extremist violence with broad-brush critiques of Islam. It sometimes conflates terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State with largely nonviolent groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoots and, at times, with the 1.7 billion Muslims around the world. In its more extreme forms, this view promotes conspiracies about government infiltration and the danger that [Shariah](#), the legal code of Islam, may take over in the United States.

Those espousing such views present Islam as an inherently hostile ideology whose adherents are enemies of Christianity and Judaism and seek to conquer

The issue centers on a population of about 2,500 people who sought asylum in Australia but were diverted to facilities off that country's coast at Nauru and Manus Island in Papua New Guinea. [Deplorable conditions at those sites](#) prompted intervention from the United Nations and a pledge from the United States to accept about half of those refugees, provided they passed U.S. security screening.

[\[After years of hosting a notorious refugee camp for Australia, Papua New Guinea says: Enough.\]](#)

Many of the refugees came from Iran, Iraq, Sudan and Somalia, countries listed in Trump's order temporarily barring their citizens from entry to the United States. A special provision in the Trump order allows for exceptions to honor "a preexisting international agreement," a line that was inserted to cover the Australia deal.

But U.S. officials said that Trump continued to fume about the arrangement even after signing the order in a ceremony at the Pentagon.

"I don't want these people," Trump said. He repeatedly misstated the number of refugees called for in the agreement as 2,000 rather than 1,250, and told Turnbull that it was "my intention" to honor the agreement, a phrase designed to leave the U.S. president wiggle room to back out of the deal in the future, according to a senior U.S. official.

Before Trump tweeted about the agreement Wednesday night, the

U.S. Embassy in Canberra had assured Australian reporters that the new administration intended to take the refugees.

"President Trump's decision to honour the refugee agreement has not changed," an embassy spokesman had told the reporters, according to an official in the Sydney consulate. "This was just reconfirmed to the State Department from the White House and on to this embassy at 1315 Canberra time."

The time the embassy said it was informed the deal was going ahead was 9:15 p.m. in Washington, one hour and 40 minutes before Trump suggested in a tweet that it might not go ahead.

During the phone conversation Saturday, Turnbull told Trump that to honor the agreement, the United States would not have to accept all of the refugees but only to allow each through the normal vetting procedures. At that, Trump vowed to subject each refugee to "extreme vetting," the senior U.S. official said.

Trump was also skeptical because he did not see a specific advantage the United States would gain by honoring the deal, officials said.

Trump's position appears to reflect the transactional view he takes of relationships, even when it comes to diplomatic ties with long-standing allies. Australian troops have fought alongside U.S. forces for decades, and the country maintains close cooperation with Washington on trade and economic issues.

Australia is seen as such a trusted ally that it is one of only four countries that the United States includes in the "Five Eyes" arrangement for cooperation on espionage matters. Members share extensively what their intelligence services gather and generally refrain from spying on one another.

There also is a significant amount of tourism between the two countries.

Trump made the call to Turnbull about 5 p.m. Saturday from his desk in the Oval Office, where he was joined by chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon, national security adviser Michael Flynn and White House press secretary Sean Spicer.

At one point, Turnbull suggested that the two leaders move on from their impasse over refugees to discuss the conflict in Syria and other pressing foreign issues. But Trump demurred and ended the call, making it far shorter than his conversations with Shinzo Abe of Japan, Angela Merkel of Germany, François Hollande of France or Putin.

"These conversations are conducted candidly, frankly, privately," Turnbull said at a news conference Thursday in Australia. "If you see reports of them, I'm not going to add to them."

A. Odysseus Patrick in Sydney, contributed to this report.

Trump Pushes Dark View of Islam to Center of U.S. Policy-Making (UNE)

Shane, Matthew

nonbelievers either by violence or through a sort of stealthy brainwashing.

The executive order on immigration that Mr. Trump signed on Friday might be viewed as the first major victory for this geopolitical school. And a second action, which would designate the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist political movement in the Middle East, as a terrorist organization, is now under discussion at the White House, administration officials say.

Beyond the restrictions the order imposed on refugees and visitors from seven predominantly Muslim countries, it declared that the United States should keep out those with "hostile attitudes toward it and its founding principles" and "those who would place violent ideologies over American law," clearly a reference to Shariah.

Rejected by most serious scholars of religion and shunned by

Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, this dark view of Islam has nonetheless flourished on the fringes of the American right since before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. With Mr. Trump's election, it has now moved to the center of American decision-making on security and law, alarming many Muslims.

Mr. Trump has insisted that the executive order is not a "Muslim ban," and his supporters say it is a sensible precaution to safeguard Americans. Asked about the seeming antipathy to Islam that appeared to inform the order, the White House pointed to Mr. Trump's comments in the August speech and on another occasion that signaled support for reform-minded Muslims. His administration, Mr. Trump said in August, "will be a friend to all moderate Muslim reformers in the Middle East, and will amplify their voice."

James Jay Carafano, a security expert at the Heritage Foundation who advised the Trump transition at the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department, said the executive order was simply "trying to get ahead of the threat." As pressure increases on the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, he said, "tens of thousands of foreign fighters" will flee. Some could try to reach America, perhaps posing as refugees, he said, so stronger vetting of those entering the country is crucial.

But critics see the order as a clumsy show of toughness against foreign Muslims to impress Mr. Trump's base, one shaped by advisers with distorted ideas about Islam.

"They're tapping into the climate of fear and suspicion since 9/11," said Asma Afsaruddin, a professor of Islamic studies at Indiana University and chairwoman of the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy. "It's a master narrative that pits the

Muslim world against the West," appealing to Trump supporters who know nothing of Muslims or Islam beyond news reports of terrorist attacks, she said.

The executive order, she said, will backfire by reinforcing the jihadist line that the United States is at war with Islam. "The White House is a huge soapbox," she said. "The demonization of Muslims and Islam will become even more widespread."

Those in the administration with long records of criticizing Islam begin with Mr. Bannon and Mr. Flynn. Mr. Flynn last February tweeted a link to an anti-Muslim video and [wrote](#), "Fear of Muslims is RATIONAL." In an interview, he said that "Islam is not necessarily a religion but a political system that has a religious doctrine behind it."

Trump's Controversial Security Appointee

Gen. Michael T. Flynn served in the military for 33 years before becoming a singular and divisive figure in the intelligence community during the Obama administration. Matthew Rosenberg looks at Donald J. Trump's choice for his national security adviser.

By DAVE HORN and SHANE O'NEILL on January 18, 2017. Photo by Kevin Hagen for The New York Times. [Watch in Times Video »](#)

Mr. Bannon has spoken passionately about the economic and security dangers of immigration and took the lead role in shaping the immigration order. In a 2014 talk to a meeting at the Vatican, he said the "Judeo-Christian West" is at war with Islam.

"There is a major war brewing, a war that's already global," he said.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

COMMENTS

In 2015 David Petraeus surfaced from political exile to warn about the "geopolitical Chernobyl" of Syria and other rising global dangers. Barack Obama ignored the counsel, and let's hope President Trump won't repeat the error.

International order, Mr. Petraeus said Wednesday before the House Armed Services Committee, is facing "unprecedented" and "increasingly complex and serious threats" from what he called "revisionist powers." By that he

"Every day that we refuse to look at this as what it is, and the scale of it, and really the viciousness of it, will be a day where you will rue that we didn't act." Elsewhere, on his radio show for Breitbart News, Mr. Bannon said, "Islam is not a religion of peace — Islam is a religion of submission," and he warned of Muslim influence in Europe: "To be brutally frank, Christianity is dying in Europe and Islam is on the rise."

Others with similar views of Islam include Sebastian Gorka, who taught at the National Defense University and is a deputy national security adviser. Mr. Gorka's wife, Katharine, who headed think tanks that focused on the dangers of Islam, now works at the Department of Homeland Security. Tera Dahl, who was an aide to former Representative Michele Bachmann, Republican of Minnesota, is a National Security Council official. Walid Phares, a Lebanese American Christian who has advised politicians on counterterrorism, advised Mr. Trump's campaign but does not currently have a government post. All four have written for Breitbart News, the right-wing website previously run by Mr. Bannon.

They all reflect the hard-line opinions of what some have described as the Islamophobia industry, a network of researchers who have warned for many years of the dangers of Islam and were thrilled by Mr. Trump's election.

They warn about the danger to American freedoms supposedly posed by Islamic law, and have persuaded several state legislatures to prohibit Shariah's use. It is a claim that draws eye rolls from most Muslims and scholars of Islam,

since Muslims make up about 1 percent of the United States population and are hardly in a position to dictate to the other 99 percent.

"The majority of Muslims don't interpret the Quran literally," said Shadi Hamid of the Brookings Institution. "You can have five Muslims who all say we think this is God's exact words, but they all disagree with each other on what that means in practice."

Got a confidential news tip?

The New York Times would like to hear from readers who want to share messages and materials with our journalists.

Among the most outspoken of those warning about Islam are [Pamela Geller](#), of Stop Islamization of America, Robert Spencer, of [Jihad Watch](#), and Frank Gaffney Jr., of the [Center for Security Policy](#).

All three were hosted by Mr. Bannon on his Breitbart radio program before he became chief executive of the Trump campaign in August. Mr. Gaffney appeared at least 34 times. His work has often been cited in speeches by Mr. Flynn. Kellyanne Conway, now counselor to Mr. Trump, did polling for Mr. Gaffney's center. Last year, the center gave Senator Jeff Sessions, who has warned of the "totalitarian threat" posed by radical Islam and is Mr. Trump's nominee for attorney general, its annual "Keeper of the Flame" award.

Mr. Gaffney has been labeled "one of America's most notorious Islamophobes" by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The Anti-Defamation League describes him as a "purveyor of anti-Muslim

conspiracy theories." And even the Conservative Political Action Conference, an annual meeting of right-wing politicians and activists, banned Mr. Gaffney temporarily after he accused two of its organizers of being agents of the Muslim Brotherhood.

In an interview, he explained his view of Islam, which focuses less on the violent jihad of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State than on the quieter one he sees everywhere. By his account, potential enemies are hidden in plain sight — praying in mosques, recruiting at Muslim student associations and organizing through mainstream Muslim rights groups — and are engaged in "this stealthy, subversive kind of jihad."

"They essentially, like termites, hollow out the structure of the civil society and other institutions," Mr. Gaffney said, "for the purpose of creating conditions under which the jihad will succeed."

The day after the election, Mr. Gaffney [told](#) the Breitbart radio show how pleased he was with Mr. Trump's win. "It is a great blessing literally from God, but also I think obviously from the candidate himself, [Donald Trump](#)," he said. He praised the "superb people" around Mr. Trump, naming Mr. Bannon and Mr. Flynn, who he said "are actually going to lead us to saving the Republic."

Correction: February 1, 2017

An earlier version of this article misspelled the surname of an Islamic studies professor at Indiana University. She is Asma Afsaruddin, not Asfaruddin.

Editorial : Trump and American 'Self-Confidence'

Feb. 1, 2017 7:20 p.m. ET 50

means actors challenging the postwar status quo—the system of global alliances with the U.S. as the anchor; the open, rules-based trading system; and an American foreign policy that promoted freedom and human rights.

Mr. Petraeus's revisionist powers include China, Iran and Russia, which are "working to establish a kind of sphere of influence over their respective near-abroads." Another is Islamic radicalism, whose power owes to its "conviction, resilience, resourcefulness and ferocity. In its hydra-like qualities, it is unlike any adversary we have faced before."

This analysis won't be news to anyone paying attention. But Mr. Petraeus's more troubling warning was about "a loss of self-confidence, resolve and strategic clarity on America's part about our vital interest in preserving and protecting the system we sacrificed so much to bring into being and have sacrificed so much to preserve."

World order can't be taken "for granted," he said. "It did not will itself into existence. We created it. Likewise, it is not naturally self-sustaining. We have sustained it. If we stop doing so, it will fray and, eventually, collapse."

Mr. Trump sent conflicting signals during the campaign, sometimes seeming to endorse Mr. Obama's withdrawal from the world militarily and on trade, other times pledging a stronger assertion of American power such as rebuilding the military. But "Make America Great Again" was a promise of patriotic renewal, and the world order that has protected U.S. peace and prosperity sure could use some repair. Mr. Petraeus is offering advice that the new President ignores at America's peril.



Editorial : Hypocrisy on executive orders

Remember when Republicans were dead set against sweeping executive actions? Remember when they called Barack Obama an imperial president, and worse, for issuing a string of executive orders, presidential memoranda and national security directives?

That was so yesterday.

In his first 10 days in office, President Trump issued 20 executive actions, more than any incoming president in the modern era. And for the most part, Republicans have adopted a position of silence or support, conveniently forgetting their past practice of denouncing executive decrees as a threat to constitutional governance.

Obama, for his part, issued 18

president actions (executive orders, memoranda, national security directives and proclamations) during his first 10 days in office. Obama's actions included measures on government ethics, waterboarding and a move to close the prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (an action he was never able to complete during his eight years in office).

Obama's most far-reaching executive order, announced in 2014, granted deportation relief to millions of undocumented workers. Democrats cheered the president for going around GOP hard-liners in Congress, but [courts quite appropriately](#) saw this as an overreach and struck it down.

Trump's most controversial directive so far also has to do with immigration: It suspends refugee

resettlement in the United States and entry by citizens of seven Muslim-majority nations. No duly enacted law has changed America's immigration policy as much since the [1986 immigration reform](#) act. Trump's order has stranded thousands of people abroad and been so jarring that leaders from close allies have taken the unusual step of denouncing it.

In addition to the immigration order, Trump needlessly damaged relations with Mexico with his wasteful order to build a border wall and his demands that Mexico pay for it. He also signed an order to cut regulation, a directive so poorly conceived that it could result in more confusion than regulatory relief.

All of this has happened with minimal input from the U.S. Congress. You'd think there

would be resistance to a president who bypasses the supposedly separate and equal legislative branch of government. Think again.

Yes, Sens. John McCain and Lindsey Graham have called the immigration order "a self-inflicted wound in the fight against terrorism." And a handful of other lawmakers have called it hastily executed or poorly vetted. But none has noted the obvious hypocrisy in a Republican president issuing so many sweeping executive orders after criticizing those from Obama.

As the new president's Oval Office signing spree continues, members of Congress need to show some more spine, not to mention more consistency.



Dionne : It's time to make Republicans pay for their supreme hypocrisy

You want bipartisanship on Supreme Court nominations? Let's have a consensus moment around Sen. Ted Cruz's idea that having only eight Supreme Court justices is just fine.

"There is certainly long historical precedent for a Supreme Court with fewer justices," the Texas Republican [said last year](#) when GOP senators were refusing even to give a hearing to Judge Merrick Garland, President Barack Obama's nominee.

Cruz cited a Democratic court appointee, Justice Stephen Breyer, to give his case heft. He noted that "Justice Breyer observed that the vacancy is not impacting the ability of the court to do its job."

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If that argument was good in 2016, why isn't it valid in 2017? After all, some Republicans were willing to keep the seat vacant indefinitely if Hillary Clinton won the presidential election. "I would much rather have eight Supreme Court justices than a justice who is liberal," Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) [said in October](#).

Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.) [went further](#): "If Hillary Clinton becomes president, I am going to do everything I can do to make sure four years from now, we still got an opening on the Supreme Court."

Yes, Republicans do have a principle on nominations: When the Supreme Court's philosophical majority might flip, only Republican presidents should be allowed to appoint justices.

We are in for a festival of GOP hypocrisy in the debate over President Trump's nomination of Judge Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court.

Republicans will say that because he is decent and well-qualified, Democrats have no business blocking him. But it's hard to find someone more decent or qualified than Garland, [as many Republicans acknowledged](#). Garland's experience, temperament and character mattered not a whit to the GOP. In fact, the party seemed to fear that in a hearing, he'd come off as too sensible.

And you can count on charges that Democrats are being "partisan" in their concern that Gorsuch, based on his record, is a conservative judicial activist who will tilt sharply toward corporations [over workers](#), and [against environmental](#) and other forms of protective regulation.

But conservative judicial mavens have already made clear that outcomes-oriented jurisprudence is their thing now, even if they disguise it behind grandiloquent words such as "originalism" and "textualism." Trump, after all, picked Gorsuch from a roster prepared for him [by right-wing interest groups](#).

Let this nomination also be the end of any talk of Trump as a pro-worker "populist." Gorsuch is neither. Trump could have made things harder for Democrats and progressives by nominating a genuine moderate. Gorsuch may be nice and smart, but "moderate" he isn't.

At least I understand Republican and conservative hypocrisy on this subject: They are focused on power and who will wield it. I find it harder to understand well-meaning people who were appalled by the hyper-politicization involved in the Garland blockade but now claim that an effort to stop Gorsuch's confirmation will only make matters worse.

Worse? Really?

If someone slugs you, should you be condemned if you defend yourself by swinging back? If a bully makes someone's life miserable, will taking him on and calling his bluff only make matters worse?

Perhaps you think the above is hyperbolic, and I accept that my line

of thinking won't appeal to pacifists. But if you are not a pacifist, ask yourself how this procedural extremism will be halted if one side is rewarded for violating all the conventions and rules of fair play and the other side just meekly goes along.

The Rubicon was crossed with Garland. Conservatives complain about the treatment of Robert Bork when he was nominated to the court in 1987, and they turned the word "[Borked](#)" into a battle cry. But Bork got a hearing and a vote on the Senate floor, which he lost. To be "[Merricked](#)" is to be denied even a chance to make your case.

The Garland case was only a particularly egregious example of what we have to fear even more of in the months to come. The road to the outrages we are seeing from Trump was paved by his party's violation of long-standing norms. Such norms were brushed aside again Wednesday when the Senate Finance Committee [suspended the rules](#) to ram through two Trump Cabinet nominees. How often will Republicans run roughshod over their opponents to do Trump's bidding?

There comes a time when the only way to stand up against future abuses is to insist that there will be no reward for the abuses that have

led us to this point. If not now, when?

The Washington Post

Editorial : Gorsuch deserves a hearing. These are the questions he should answer.

PRESIDENT TRUMP'S nomination of [Judge Neil Gorsuch](#) for the Supreme Court elicited an immediate, furious and depressingly predictable reaction. Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) [called him](#) an ideologue in a tweet sent a mere half-hour after Mr. Trump made his announcement, and liberal senators such as [Sherrod Brown \(D-Ohio\)](#) and [Elizabeth Warren \(D-Mass.\)](#) announced they would oppose the nomination shortly after that. Conservative activist groups, meanwhile, vowed to go on an election-year-style campaign to advance Mr. Gorsuch's nomination. The politicization of the judiciary, in other words, continues apace.

We do not blame Democrats for feeling sore about how the GOP Senate last year froze out [Judge Merrick Garland](#), President Barack Obama's nominee for the seat Mr. Gorsuch would take. Yet many Republicans at least based their opposition on a procedural argument — that the president should not fill Supreme Court seats that come vacant during election years — and refrained from tarring

Mr. Garland personally. If Democrats want to retaliate against Republicans for their cynical power play, they should be upfront about that motivation. If they end up voting against Mr. Gorsuch because they think he would rule one way or another on a hot-button issue, such as [overturning Roe v. Wade](#), they should be clear about that, too.

But trashing Mr. Gorsuch as an outlandish radical, despite his impeccable credentials, the wide respect he commands in his field, his long service as an appeals court judge and the [unanimous voice vote](#) he received the last time the Senate considered him for the federal bench, is at the very least premature. Democrats should at a minimum give him a chance to appear before the Senate, keeping in mind that the judicial "mainstream" is not composed exclusively of liberals.

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The question, then, is what Mr. Gorsuch should be asked about during his confirmation hearings. As with many other Supreme Court nominees before him, the judge will no doubt be loath to discuss specific cases and take stands on issues the court is likely to hear, a defensible position that promotes judicial independence and the appearance of impartiality. Senators should nevertheless demand that Mr. Gorsuch describe his views on when it is appropriate to overturn standing court precedent. A preference for judicial Jacobinism would, indeed, put him outside the mainstream.

Senators should probe Mr. Gorsuch's ["originalist"](#) legal philosophy, asking him what happens when history and legal text do not offer clear guidance. Originalism should not always lead to ideologically conservative outcomes, as some originalists would have it.

They should ask Mr. Gorsuch about handling cases in which general laws conflict with individuals' religious practices, given his previous rulings on [Obamacare's](#)

[contraception mandate](#). They should insist he explain when courts should defer to the [executive branch](#) in interpreting the law. He appears to have views that, if acted upon, would significantly expand court power to quash executive actions.

Senators should also ask Mr. Gorsuch about his selection process. Did he make any private commitments to Mr. Trump or his staff? Was he asked to? While on the subject of Mr. Trump, they could ask the judge to articulate his views on libel law, which the president has chillingly proposed to ["open up"](#) in order to assail journalists, and they could ask him to discuss what would happen if the president ignored a court order.

The process of filling Antonin Scalia's Supreme Court seat has already been unreasonable enough. Making it more so would hurt all sides in the long run.

The Washington Post

McConnell : Democrats, ditch the apocalyptic rhetoric on Judge Gorsuch

Mitch McConnell, a Republican, represents Kentucky in the Senate and is majority leader.

The president made an outstanding choice with his nomination Tuesday of [Judge Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court](#). Justice Antonin Scalia's passing was a significant loss for the court and for our country. Gorsuch's impressive background and long record of service, however, give me confidence he will carry forward Scalia's legacy of faithfully applying the law and the Constitution.

Like Scalia, Gorsuch understands the constitutional limits on his authority, and he knows that the duty of a judge is to apply the law evenhandedly rather than ruling with bias toward one party or another. When the Senate confirmed Gorsuch to his current judgeship, the bipartisan support was so overwhelming that he was approved without a single vote in opposition. I hope he can expect fair consideration again now.

[\[Hugh Hewitt and Ronald Klain: How will Neil Gorsuch change the Supreme Court?\]](#)

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Recent actions by Senate Democrats, however, do not inspire confidence.

Hear that sound?

It's the far left hitting rewind on the Supreme Court attack eight-track they've been [playing for more than 40 years](#). When Gerald Ford nominated John Paul Stevens, they attacked Stevens as anti-woman. When Ronald Reagan chose Anthony M. Kennedy, they said Kennedy was unqualified. When George H.W. Bush put forward David Souter, they declared Souter a threat to minorities. The attacks seem ridiculous today, but they're an important reminder that no matter who a Republican president nominates, the far left will say the same things. If you think you've heard moldy oldies like "Extremel," "Scary Quotes!" and "Anti-[Fill in the blank]!" before — well, you have, and you're about to hear a lot more

of the left's apocalyptic rhetoric, on repeat and remastered in full digital surround.

Let's focus on the facts instead.

When our nation lost Scalia in the middle of a contentious presidential election, I looked to the precedent set forth by Democratic [Vice President Joe Biden](#), who as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee declared that Supreme Court vacancies arising in the midst of a presidential election should not be considered until the campaign ended. It was, [he said](#), "what history supports [and what] common sense dictates" and the only way to prevent the nomination process from being further "racked by discord and bitterness." It's what we know today as the Biden Rule.

[\[Gorsuch's judicial philosophy is like Scalia's — with one big difference\]](#)

(The Washington Post)

Vice President Pence and former senator Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.) escorted Supreme Court nominee Judge Neil Gorsuch to the U.S. Capitol on Feb. 1, introducing him to

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.). McConnell meets Supreme Court nominee Gorsuch at Capitol. (The Washington Post)

I decided to follow this precedent — just as [President Barack Obama's former legal counsel](#) admitted she would have recommended to Senate Democrats had the shoe been on the other foot — and was clear all along that the next president, whether Democrat or Republican, would name the next justice. I maintained that position even when it seemed inevitable to many that Hillary Clinton would be making that choice.

The election is now behind us. The precedent for these circumstances is to respect that result and give the nominee of the new president due consideration followed by an up-or-down vote. That's how Republican senators treated the nominees of newly elected Democratic Presidents Bill Clinton (Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen G. Breyer) and Obama (Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan), and that's how Democratic senators should treat

the newly elected president's outstanding nominee today.

Gorsuch is respected on both sides of the aisle as a consistent, principled and fair jurist. He "has a sense of fairness and impartiality that is a keystone of being a judge," as [one Democratic senator](#) and former Obama Cabinet official put it, and he's right. Gorsuch follows the law where it leads him, not where he wants it to, which is a true testament to the man he'll succeed. "Perhaps the great project of Justice

Scalia's career," [Gorsuch said last year](#), "was to remind us of the differences between judges and legislators." Indeed it is. Scalia will be a tough act to follow, but Gorsuch will continue his legacy of fair and impartial justice.

Of course, as history teaches, we already know that the far left will throw hyperbolic attacks at this nominee regardless of his credentials. It actually started before he was even nominated. While it might be difficult for Democratic

senators to resist this siren song, for the sake of our country they must. This is not the time for further division. This is not the time for political revenge. This is the time for bringing our country together after a difficult election. As [Biden recently implored](#) his fellow party members, they should "give the nominee a hearing and a vote."

Justice Antonin Scalia's seat on the Supreme Court does not belong to one president or one political party. It belongs to the American people.

We now have a new president who has nominated a superbly qualified candidate to fill that ninth seat. I invite Democrats, who spent months insisting "we need nine" justices, to join us in following through on that advice by giving the new president's nominee fair consideration and an up-or-down vote — just as we did for past presidents of both parties.

The New York Times Trump Says 'Go Nuclear' as Democrats Gird for Gorsuch Fight (UNE)

Matt Flegenheimer

"That would be an absolute shame if a man of this quality was put up to that neglect," he said from the Roosevelt Room of the White House.

For the Democrats, who have struggled to match the fury and zeal of the party's base during the wave of anti-Trump activism since the election, a full-scale showdown may prove unavoidable, doubling as a referendum on resistance tactics to a White House that liberals fear.

Democrats intend to repeatedly remind the public about the Republicans' treatment of Merrick B. Garland, President Barack Obama's nominee to fill the vacant seat last year, who was blocked from even receiving a hearing. Mr. McConnell had said a justice should not be seated during an election year, even though there is no prohibition on such action.

Now, their gambit successful, Republicans will seek to capitalize on the groundwork laid since Mr. Trump's election. Leading conservative groups have united for a multimillion-dollar campaign to help Judge Gorsuch, producing television commercials, planning gatherings at megachurches and contacting supporters to encourage them to demand a vote from their senators.

For Republicans who were leery of Mr. Trump's campaign last year, the prospect of adding a conservative to the court was often a powerful motivator to stay in line. He has rewarded their faith.

On Wednesday, as Judge Gorsuch made his initial courtesy visits to senators on Capitol Hill, Republican lawmakers assumed the tone of a party in power, appealing for unity and adherence to Senate custom.

Trump Selects Gorsuch for Supreme Court

Judge Neil M. Gorsuch, if confirmed, will take the seat

vacated by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia.

January 31, 2017. Photo by Stephen Crowley/The New York Times. [Watch in Times Video »](#)

Judge Gorsuch's first call after the announcement of his nomination was to Mr. Garland, as a gesture of respect, according to Ron Bonjean, a spokesman for the nomination effort.

The nominee was also joined on Wednesday by Kelly Ayotte, a well-liked former Republican senator from New Hampshire, who is helping to shepherd him through the nominating process months after losing her re-election bid.

After greeting Judge Gorsuch during his visit, Mr. McConnell asked Democrats to heed their own calls to restore the court to its rightful size.

"I would invite Democrats who spent many months insisting we need nine to join us in following through on that advice," he said from the Senate floor.

So far, Democrats have appeared unmoved, and occasionally seething.

Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the minority leader, said Judge Gorsuch — who sits on the United States Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit — must meet the 60-vote threshold required to overcome a [filibuster](#) in the Senate.

History — and especially recent history — demand it, he suggested.

"This is nothing new. It was a bar met by each of President Obama's nominations," Mr. Schumer said. He argued that if Judge Gorsuch could not attract enough support, "the answer will not be to change the rules of the Senate, but to change the nominee to someone who can earn 60 votes."

He added that Mr. Trump's White House had demonstrated "less respect for the rule of law than any in recent memory," placing a

"special burden on this nominee to be an independent jurist."

Breaking a filibuster would require eight members of the Democratic caucus to join the 52 members of the Republican majority to advance the nomination, or force Republicans to change longstanding rules and push through the nomination on a simple majority vote.

Transfers of power from one party to the other often compel lawmakers to shift their perspectives, leaning on arguments they once rejected. But the bipartisan whiplash in the Senate has been especially striking.

Since Mr. Trump's announcement, the two parties have rushed headlong into an embrace of the other's former talking points. Republicans have cast Judge Gorsuch as an unassailable choice, as Democrats did with Judge Garland, trumpeting his appeals court record and his impressive credentials.

They reminded some Senate Democrats that they had voted to confirm Judge Gorsuch to a lower court once upon a time, as some Republicans had for Judge Garland. Senators like Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas — who, before the election, raised the possibility of blocking a nomination indefinitely if Hillary Clinton won the presidency — have insisted on swift action.

And some Democrats have argued, after nearly a year spent lamenting the vacancy on the court since Justice Antonin Scalia's death, that Judge Gorsuch must not be allowed to assume the seat.

"The Democrats should treat Trump's SCOTUS pick with the exact same courtesy the GOP showed Merrick Garland," Dan Pfeiffer, a former senior adviser to Mr. Obama, [wrote on Twitter](#). "Don't flinch, don't back down."

Reactions to Judge Gorsuch's nomination among Democrats seemed to sort themselves into

three camps: There were some cautious statements, often from moderate Democrats in states that Mr. Trump won, urging careful consideration of the pick. There were policy-based concerns raised about Judge Gorsuch's trail of conservative opinions and leanings. And there were arguments that did not focus much on Judge Gorsuch at all, instead framing the choice of any judge not named Merrick Garland as illegitimate.

"This Supreme Court seat was stolen from the Obama administration," Senator Jeff Merkley, Democrat of Oregon, said on Wednesday. "It casts a big shadow over it. If this seat is filled in this manner, it's going to undermine the integrity of the court, the legitimacy of the court, for decades to come."

Senator Richard Blumenthal, Democrat of Connecticut and a member of the Judiciary Committee, struck a more conciliatory note, to a point.

"Republicans were outrageously wrong in denying Merrick Garland a hearing and a vote. But two wrongs don't make a right," he said in an interview. "We should support a hearing and a vote for Neil Gorsuch. It's part of the Senate's job."

He added, though, that Judge Gorsuch should be required to clear 60 votes.

In the interim, Democrats and progressive activists have begun zeroing in on elements of Judge Gorsuch's record. Among their concerns is the fact that he has voted in favor of employers, including Hobby Lobby, who cited religious objections in refusing to provide some forms of contraception coverage to female workers.

Mr. Schumer said Judge Gorsuch had "repeatedly sided with corporations over working people" and demonstrated "a hostility toward women's rights."

Even before many Democrats weighed in, Republicans dismissed any complaints about Judge Gorsuch as empty posturing. Some senators were

more creative than others.

"Senator Schumer is about to tell Americans that Judge Gorsuch kicks puppies and heckles piano

recitals," Senator Ben Sasse, Republican of Nebraska, said.

That, he hastened to add, was untrue.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Donald Trump Urges Senate GOP to Scrap 60-Vote Rule for Court Pick (UNE)

Byron Tau, Siobhan Hughes, and Brent Kendall

Updated Feb. 1, 2017 7:26 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump, one day after introducing his nominee for the Supreme Court, urged Republicans in the Senate to make a major change to the chamber's voting rules if [Judge Neil Gorsuch](#) can't attract the necessary Democratic support to win confirmation.

Mr. Trump's suggestion that Senate Republicans "go nuclear," as the [last-resort option](#) is known, came amid early signs that the two parties were headed for a major showdown over the nomination.

Democrats are under pressure from their liberal base to thwart the nomination and bitter about Senate Republicans' blockade last year of former President Barack Obama's pick for the same court seat. Republicans are under equal pressure from their conservative base to push ahead.

Judge Gorsuch held his first meetings with senators on Wednesday, as allies began running advertisements meant to win support from centrist Democrats. Their goal was to draw enough Democratic support to pass the 60-vote threshold needed to move Supreme Court picks forward.

Many conservatives joined Mr. Trump in calling for Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) to eliminate the 60-vote hurdle, one of the few rules that give the minority party a say.

- Senate Panel Advances Three Trump Nominees, but DeVos Hits Bump

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TRUMP'S FIRST 100 DAYS

"It's up to Mitch, but I would say, 'Go for it,'" Mr. Trump said.

While some Democrats said they wanted to give Judge Gorsuch a hearing before deciding how to proceed, at least five said they would oppose the nomination, providing few signs that Republicans would pick up enough support. The GOP controls 52 Senate seats while Democrats have 48, meaning that eight Democrats must agree to advance the nomination to meet the 60-vote threshold.

Sen. Joe Manchin (D., W.Va.) said Judge Gorsuch had "impeccable" credentials and should have a chance to make his case. "I think it's wrong not to be civil and have meetings and find out if you're for somebody, find out why, go home and explain it," said Mr. Manchin, who is up for re-election next year in a state Mr. Trump carried in November.

But other Democrats said they harbored deep reservations. "There is going to be a tremendous concern from across America about this far-right nominee," said Sen. Jeff Merkley (D., Ore.), who said he wouldn't vote for Judge Gorsuch. "I don't think it will be an easy confirmation."

In addition to Mr. Merkley, senators who already oppose Judge Gorsuch include Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Ron Wyden of Oregon.

Mr. Trump chose Judge Gorsuch to fill the Supreme Court vacancy caused by the death of conservative Justice Antonin Scalia a year ago, which left the court with four conservatives and four liberals. The Senate easily confirmed Judge Gorsuch to the Denver-based 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in 2006, but the stakes are far higher for a Supreme Court nominee, and the environment is much more partisan than a decade ago.

The fight unfolded on a day of all-out partisan warfare in the Senate, as Democrats used parliamentary tactics to tie up business on the floor and delay votes on Mr. Trump's cabinet nominees. By the afternoon, Democrats had forced Mr. McConnell to hold hours of consecutive votes on traditionally noncontroversial matters, such as whether to skip a reading of the Senate journal.

One of Mr. Trump's nominees, Betsy DeVos, fell into jeopardy as GOP Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine said they would oppose her bid to lead the Department of Education. Democrats forced a delay in voting on the confirmation in hopes of finding the third GOP vote needed to block the pick. Another nominee, Rex Tillerson, was confirmed as secretary of state on Wednesday.

Republicans say that Judge Gorsuch is a qualified nominee who

should be confirmed easily. Sen. Ted Cruz (R., Texas), who endorsed Mr. Trump for president after assurances about potential Supreme Court picks, called Mr. Gorsuch "brilliant and immensely talented." Republican Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska called him "a highly regarded jurist with a record of distinguished service, rooted in respect for the law."

As a result of the fight over the Supreme Court vacancy, both parties appear to be careening toward a showdown over Senate rules that neither says it wants—and that both acknowledge would do damage to the Senate as an institution.

"Partisanship and intensity have ratcheted up another notch. These are not normal times, and this is not a typical president. And I think we have to be thoughtful in the Senate about the role we play and how we can better play that role," said Sen. Chris Coons, a Delaware Democrat who said he hasn't made up his mind on how to vote on Judge Gorsuch.

"My concern is how we ever find our way back towards being able to work together," said Mr. Coons.

The Senate Judiciary Committee, which will examine Judge Gorsuch's record and vote whether to advance his nomination to the full Senate, is aiming for a start to confirmation hearings in mid-March. That sets off a roughly six-week timeline for the Trump administration to try to build both public and congressional support for the nomination.

Democrats say their caucus is united behind maintaining Senate rules that require a Supreme Court nominee to clear a 60-vote threshold. But already, Republicans are anticipating they won't get enough Democratic support to clear that hurdle and will take the "nuclear option."

Republicans could use a simple majority vote to scrap the traditional voting procedures and invoke rules that would allow confirmation of Supreme Court nominees on a simple majority vote. That would mirror a rules change Democrats made in 2013 that eliminated the 60-vote requirement for lower-court judges and other executive branch nominees, a change made to overcome Republican opposition to

Mr. Obama's nominees. Democrats left the requirement in place for Supreme Court picks.

"We'll get more than just the Republicans, I believe, but you'll never get to 60," said Sen. Jim Risch (R., Idaho), suggesting that the Senate would ultimately change the rules.

Already, pressure is being applied by conservative groups to

Democrats up for re-election in 2018 in states carried by Mr. Trump. Among them are Mr. Manchin and Sens. Joe Donnelly of Indiana and Claire McCaskill of Missouri. The Judicial Crisis Network, a conservative group, said it had begun targeting some of those members with a \$10 million broadcast, cable and digital ad campaign—one element of a large lobbying element that both sides are expected to deploy.

Coordinated email and phone-call campaigns to Senate offices, rallies in their home states and social-media campaigns are planned on both sides of the political spectrum.

Recognizing the looming fight over the nomination, the White House has moved to mend fences with both Capitol Hill Democrats and others in Washington. Mr. Coons, the Delaware Democrat who sits on the Judiciary Committee, said that

the White House counsel's office called him last month to solicit his input on a nominee. According to Ron Bonjean, a communications strategist working on the nomination, the first call Judge Gorsuch placed after being chosen was to U.S. Circuit Judge Merrick Garland, whose nomination by Mr. Obama was blocked by Senate Republicans last year.

The New York Times

Greenhouse : Neil Gorsuch and the Search for the Supreme Court Mainstream

Linda Greenhouse

The declaration Tuesday night by Senator Chuck Schumer, the leader of Senate Democrats, that "the burden is on Judge Neil Gorsuch to prove himself to be within the legal mainstream" poses a crucial question: Where is today's mainstream?

In the coming confirmation battle over President Trump's nomination of Judge Gorsuch to the Supreme Court, we're about to find out.

The New York senator's implied threat is a resonant one, harking back to the titanic battle 30 years ago over President Ronald Reagan's nomination of Robert H. Bork. Judge Bork was "out of the mainstream" and would "turn back the clock" on civil rights, his opponents charged as they succeeded in marshaling a [bipartisan coalition](#) that defeated his nomination with 42 votes in favor and 58 against.

By framing the goal as preserving the constitutional mainstream, the Bork opposition's success necessarily defined the mainstream that existed in 1987. And the success seemed to go deeper, not only identifying but ratifying certain principles as being correct and beyond debate: that contrary to Judge Bork's view, the Constitution encompasses a right to privacy that includes abortion; that the First Amendment protects much more than the political speech that Judge Bork claimed as its only legitimate

focus; that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is valid in all particulars. Judge Bork, in a notorious article in *The New Republic*, had denounced the public accommodations provision of the law as based on "a principle of unsurpassed ugliness," namely that government can override personal choices and "coerce you into more righteous paths."

But just as the Mississippi River changes course over time and [redefines the boundary](#) between Mississippi and Louisiana, the constitutional mainstream isn't static. No participant in the Bork battle could plausibly have maintained, for example, that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to own a gun, as the Supreme Court [would decide](#) two decades later. Few if any anticipated the degree to which the First Amendment's protection for commercial speech [would be turned](#) into a powerful deregulatory tool.

The notion that a Supreme Court majority would invoke the Constitution [to cut the heart out](#) of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 would have been dismissed out of hand. The idea that the Commerce Clause was [insufficient to empower Congress](#), as an aspect of regulating a national market for health care, to require people to acquire health insurance, would have seemed bizarre; the court had not invalidated a federal law on Commerce Clause grounds since the 1930s. And only a year before the Bork nomination, the Supreme

Court [rejected as "facetious"](#) the claim that the Constitution prohibits criminalizing consensual gay sex.

Judge Bork's insistence that the Constitution must be interpreted in light of the original understanding of its authors, a view Judge Gorsuch is said to share, was a fringe notion in 1987. Anthony M. Kennedy, the federal judge confirmed to the seat after Judge Bork's defeat, reassured the Senate by rejecting originalism; the Constitution's framers had "made a covenant with the future," he declared at his confirmation hearing. The originalism championed by Justice Antonin Scalia — who was a year into his own tenure when Justice Kennedy joined the court — and Justice Clarence Thomas has never gained a Supreme Court majority. But along with the propositions embodied in majority opinions over the past three decades, originalism has indisputably moved from "off the wall" to "on the wall," to borrow an image from Prof. Jack Balkin of Yale Law School.

All of which is to say that mainstreams respond to the gravitational pull of an evolving social consensus and to the push of political mobilization. Does President Trump's bypassing of Judge William H. Pryor Jr., the shortlisted nominee favored by most social conservatives, mean that the current mainstream does not include the view that *Roe v. Wade* was "the worst abomination of constitutional law in our history," the

pitiful characterization that Judge Pryor has never disavowed? Or do the president's judge-veters have reason to believe that Judge Gorsuch shares a dim view of *Roe* but would approach its dismantling with greater subtlety?

Progressives emerged from the Bork battle confident that the mainstream was theirs, that they had leveraged a constitutional consensus to defeat a nomination that threatened it. The past 30 years have shown that consensus to be evanescent, if it ever really existed. But it's important to emphasize that the conservative victories of recent years were razor-thin and remain deeply contested. The Republicans' shameful blockade of the Merrick Garland nomination was an effort to freeze those victories in place while waiting for a resurgent conservative majority to ratify and strengthen them.

Supreme Court confirmation hearings are justly derided for the scripted questions from senators and the nonanswers from nominees. But in their clumsy way, they serve to define the mainstream of the day. It may be scant comfort to progressives — perhaps the only comfort available to them at this fraught moment — that today's mainstream is not necessarily tomorrow's.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Editorial : The Myth of the Stolen Supreme Court Seat

Feb. 1, 2017 7:29 p.m. ET 451

COMMENTS
The confirmation battle over Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch is off and running, and opponents already know he's superbly qualified with a fine judicial temperament. But Democrats are still itching for a fight, and their first line of offense is the myth of the "stolen" seat.

"This is a seat that was stolen from the former President, Obama, that's never been done in U.S. history before," declared Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley in announcing that he will attempt to filibuster Judge Gorsuch. "To let this become normal just invites a complete partisan polarization of the Court from here to eternity." The "stolen" line is echoing across Progressive

Nation, but it's a complete political invention.

The "theft" is supposedly the GOP Senate's refusal last year to vote on President Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland to fill Antonin Scalia's seat. But the standard of not confirming a Supreme Court nominee in the final year of a Presidency was set by . . . Democrats. And by no less a Beltway monument than the current

Senate Minority Leader, Chuck Schumer.

"We should not confirm any Bush nominee to the Supreme Court, except in extraordinary circumstances," Mr. Schumer declared in a July 2007 speech to the American Constitution Society. Democrats then held the Senate and Mr. Schumer was putting down a marker if someone on the High Court retired. George W. Bush

didn't get another opening, but Mr. Schumer surely meant what he said.

The Democratic theft standard goes back further to Joe Biden's days as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. In June 1992 in President George H.W. Bush's final year, Robber Joe opined that the President "should consider following the practice of a majority of his predecessors and not name a nominee until after the November election is completed."

Naming a new Justice, he said, would ensure that a confirmation "process that is already in doubt in the minds of many will become distrusted by all." If Mr. Bush made an election-year nomination, Mr. Biden said his committee should consider "not scheduling confirmation hearings on the nomination until after the political campaign season is over."

Does anyone outside the MSNBC audience think that had the roles been reversed in 2016, and a Democratic Senate faced a

Republican Court nominee, Harry Reid would have held a confirmation vote? As John McEnroe liked to shout, "You can't be serious!"

The "stolen" myth is being used to justify a filibuster that could block Judge Gorsuch's confirmation with as few as 41 votes. Mr. Schumer said Tuesday that "the Senate must insist upon 60 votes for any Supreme Court nominee, a bar that was met by each of President Obama's nominees."

There he goes again. Republicans never invoked the trigger for a filibuster known as "cloture" against either Sonia Sotomayor, who was confirmed 68-31 in 2009, or Elena Kagan, who was confirmed 63-37 in 2010. Republicans also helped to whoop through Bill Clinton nominees Ruth Bader Ginsburg 96-3 and Stephen Breyer 87-9.

The only recent attempt at filibustering a Supreme Court nominee was by Democrats against George W. Bush nominee Samuel Alito in 2006. Twenty-five

Democrats filed for cloture, led by then Senator Obama, Hillary Clinton and Mr. Schumer. They lost that vote, but sometimes we fear that Senator Schumer's memory may be fading since he can't seem to recall his previous actions.

As for filibustering Judge Gorsuch, several Democrats up for re-election are saying they don't want to do it. And Republicans shouldn't invite a filibuster, notwithstanding President Trump's comments Wednesday that Majority Leader Mitch McConnell should change Senate rules to break a filibuster if he has to. If we're certain about anything in politics it is that Mr. McConnell doesn't need Donald Trump's advice about running the Senate. The Majority Leader has more guile than Mr. Trump has bluster, and he knows it's better politics to confirm the judge without breaking Senate rules.

But if forced to do so, Mr. McConnell can also invoke a Democratic precedent. Mr. Reid broke the filibuster to pack Mr.

Obama's nominees on the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, and last year he said Democrats would do the same for the Supreme Court if Mrs. Clinton won the election and his party held the Senate. "I have set the Senate so when I leave, we're going to be able to get judges done with a majority," he said. "They mess with the Supreme Court, it'll be changed just like that in my opinion."

Losing vice presidential candidate Tim Kaine promised the same last October. "If these guys think they're going to stonewall the filling of that vacancy or other vacancies," Mr. Kaine said, a Democratic majority "will change the Senate rules to uphold the law."

Judge Gorsuch is such a distinguished nominee that he ought to be confirmed 100-0, but if Democrats try and fail to defeat him, the world should know that they are the authors of their own political frustration.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Laura Meckler and Laura Stevens

Updated Feb. 1, 2017 8:04 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—The White House and lawmakers in Congress appear poised to take on another contentious slice of immigration policy: the visa programs favored by technology and other companies.

A draft of an executive order under consideration directs the government to re-examine a range of visa programs to ensure they prioritize and protect "the jobs, wages and well-being of United States workers."

The draft doesn't single out any industry, but many tech firms are clearly rattled by potential changes to the H-1B visa program for high-skilled employees. Industry leaders argue that foreign workers are needed and have long lobbied for an increase from the 85,000 such visas available each year.

The draft order, "if signed, risks serious consequences for US-based tech companies' ability to hire elite global talent," Blake Irving, chief executive of GoDaddy Inc., said in a [LinkedIn post](#) Wednesday. "To be clear, the entire US economy is at stake with this draft order and tech leaders need to speak out on its dangers."

- Trump Urges Senate GOP to 'Go Nuclear' Over High-Court Pick

Draft of Executive Order Looks to Re-Examine Visa Programs (UNE)

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TRUMP'S FIRST 100 DAYS

There are currently 500,000 unfilled high-skilled IT and computer science jobs in the U.S., Mr. Irving wrote.

The order, if issued, would be the latest effort by President Donald Trump to make good on his promise to preserve jobs and put "America first." It would also mark his fourth action on immigration, following moves on border security, deportations and refugee admissions.

At the same time, several congressional Republicans are crafting, or have introduced,

legislation aimed at overhauling visa programs and possibly decreasing the number of legal immigrants admitted into the country. It's a striking shift for the party, which has typically focused on enforcement measures to combat illegal immigration.

"There is a question to be asked—what is the proper level of legal immigration coming into our country to meet the needs of our economy?" Sen. David Perdue (R., Ga.) said in an interview Wednesday.

Mr. Perdue said the goal of legislation he is crafting with Sen. Tom Cotton (R., Ark.) is to bring legal immigration down to lower, historic levels. During his presidential campaign, Mr. Trump voiced the same goal.

Their legislation would reduce caps on immigration of extended family members and refugees and would eliminate the "diversity lottery" that offers the chance for green cards to people from underrepresented nations. Democrats typically oppose reductions in family-based immigration.

The White House appears to be focused on the employment programs. The draft order, for instance, mandates that the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security issue a new regulation within 90 days "to restore the integrity of employment-based nonimmigrant worker programs and better protect U.S. and foreign

workers affected by those programs.”

It also mandates new inspections of work sites that participate in visa programs, calls for regulations to “reform” an optional practical training, or OPT, program that helps foreign students after they graduate, and asks the secretary of Homeland Security for options to pressure employers to participate in the voluntary E-Verify program used to check the immigration status of potential workers. It also would immediately end “parole” policies that allow immigrants to remain in the U.S. and sometimes work after their visas expire.

A White House spokesman had no comment on the draft order, which is circulating among interested parties in Washington and was posted on Vox.com. It is possible Mr. Trump may make significant changes or even decide not to issue it.

White House press secretary Sean Spicer this week suggested that action was coming. He cast changes to legal work visas as “part of a larger immigration reform effort” that Mr. Trump will push through executive action and legislation. “I think there’s an overall need to look at all of these programs,” he said.

During the campaign, most attention was focused on Mr. Trump’s promises to restrict illegal immigration or to keep out potential terrorists. But he also promised to reduce overall levels of legal immigration and to enact rules that drive up wages and protect

American workers.

As a candidate, he was particularly critical of the H-1B program. The demand for these visas far outstrips the supply, but some say the program is abused.

“These are temporary foreign workers, imported from abroad, for the explicit purpose of substituting for American workers at lower pay,” he said in a statement last March. “I remain totally committed to eliminating rampant, widespread H-1B abuse.”

At other times he praised the program.

The draft executive order is mostly vague, and people on both sides of the debate are trying to figure out what to make of it.

Leon Fresco, an immigration attorney who worked in the Obama Justice Department, said he is advising clients to take the prospect of the order seriously. He mentioned hospitality, travel and tourism, and hospitals, as well as technology as industries that could be affected.

Many technology firms rely heavily on the H-1B program and are already angered by Mr. Trump’s order last week blocking entry to the U.S. by people from seven majority-Muslim nations as part of the administration’s antiterrorism efforts.

Companies, including [Alphabet Inc.’s Google](#), [Apple Inc.](#) and [Uber Technologies Inc.](#), [voiced concern](#) about last week’s order’s effect on employees, and some said that the

policy violated both personal and company principles. [Amazon.com Inc.’s Chief Executive Jeff Bezos](#) on Monday went a step farther, saying the company [would be working with lawmakers](#) to counter the order.

“Companies are starving for talent,” said Vivek Ravisankar, chief executive of developer recruitment startup HackerRank, which works with companies including Amazon, Uber and Twitter Inc. About 70% of the developers that are part of his community are from outside the U.S., many of whom would be seeking H-1B visas.

Still, companies such as Google and Facebook could also be winners under some of the draft’s proposals. The draft calls for a review of all existing regulations regarding foreign workers and directs the DHS secretary to “consider ways to make the process for allocating H-1B visas more efficient and ensure that beneficiaries of the program are the best and the brightest.”

Some read that directive as an effort to target the outsourcing firms, including several from India, that are heavily dependent on H-1B visas and generally pay lower salaries than tech firms.

In Congress, a bipartisan bill pending in the House would punish companies seeking H-1B visas by imposing burdensome requirements if they don’t pay workers at least \$100,000 a year. The current threshold to avoid those requirements is \$60,000.

“We ... need to make sure programs are not abused to allow companies to outsource and hire cheap foreign labor from abroad to replace American workers,” said Rep. Darrell Issa (R., Calif.), who is cosponsoring the measure with Rep. Scott Peters (D., Calif.).

Rep. Bob Goodlatte, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said in an interview Wednesday that he, too, favors changes to legal immigration programs. He said that the U.S. should admit more people for employment purposes and fewer for other reasons, but also overhaul programs such as the H-1B and other visa targeted at investors known as EB-5.

Some Democrats agree. Sen. Charles Schumer of New York, the Senate minority leader, has long taken aim at outsourcing companies, which he contends displace American workers. But a spokesman said he backs the H-1B program when it helps foreign students stay in the U.S.

The losers could be outsourcing giants such as the [Tata Consultancy Services](#) Ltd. and [Infosys](#) Ltd. The companies employ most of their low-cost labor force in India, but keep some employees in the U.S. to be closer to consumers, and a rise in wages would mean [a hit to margins](#). These firms don’t typically sponsor their temporary workers for permanent green cards. Tata and Infosys declined to comment.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Rove : Amateur Hour at the White House

Karl Rove

Feb. 1, 2017 7:11

p.m. ET

No one should have been surprised when President Trump followed through on his Aug. 15 campaign call for “extreme vetting” of visitors to America from dangerous parts of the globe. But the details of the president’s executive order—as well as the timing and the confusion that accompanied the rollout—are disconcerting.

The administration issued its policy Friday afternoon, a time normally used in Washington to bury bad stories. Moreover, it came unaccompanied by briefing papers and talking points, and no officials immediately explained it. It took two hours before reporters received copies of the final order—and another two before White House officials answered their questions.

The policy was effective immediately, leaving hundreds of visa holders from seven countries in limbo. Some were detained as they flew into U.S. airports from abroad, others turned back or were not allowed to board their planes overseas. The administration even applied the policy to green-card holders—legal permanent residents, most of whom have studied, worked or lived in the U.S. for years.

Chaos and controversy predictably followed. Thousands of protesters turned up at airports around the country. Lawyers rushed to courthouses and were rewarded with judicial orders hobbling the policy’s execution. The administration reversed itself a day later, allowing green-card holders to be exempted on a case-by-case basis.

Now imagine if the president had waited and implemented the policy carefully and deliberately. Mr. Trump, surrounded by the

secretaries of homeland security and state, delivers a presidential speech. He announces the immediate suspension of new visas for travelers from the seven listed countries, and explains clearly why they were chosen. He directs the secretaries to develop “extreme vetting” standards within 90 days, while halting Syrian refugee flows indefinitely.

Mr. Trump then adds that current visa holders from the seven countries could still travel to the U.S.—but they would be subject to additional monitoring upon arrival. None of these new rules, he reassures Americans, apply to green-card holders. After speaking, Mr. Trump has his two secretaries field questions from the press. Congressional leaders are already well-informed and able to defend the policy, because Vice President Mike Pence gave them a heads-up before the announcement.

This probably would have produced virtually all the benefits the administration sought with much less controversy. A Quinnipiac University poll last month showed that 48% of Americans favor “suspending immigration from ‘terror prone’ regions.” Only 42% oppose it.

A well-executed decision-making process and rollout might have improved those numbers, giving the administration an early political win. There likely would have been fewer, smaller protests. There would not have been stories like the one about Hameed Khalid Darweesh. The Iraqi interpreter had received a visa to come to America after working with the U.S. military for years. He was detained at Kennedy Airport over the weekend for around 18 hours.

It’s conceivable White House aides wanted controversy, believing it helps the president by provoking hysteria among political opponents

and the press. But if Mr. Trump's critics looked bad, he came off poorly too. It helped Mr. Trump's cause that former President Obama decided Monday—only 10 days after leaving office—to unleash his inner community organizer by publicly encouraging the protesters. No decent interval of silence for his successor from Mr. Obama.

This controversy will soon recede. Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly's press conference Tuesday calmed the situation, and Mr.

Trump's nomination of Judge Neil M. Gorsuch to the Supreme Court will now grab the headlines.

White House aides should still view this as a teaching moment. They ought to run deliberative processes in which cabinet members fully participate and can express reservations directly to the president before decisions are made. They need not ignore Capitol Hill allies while secretly drawing on congressional staff (and forbidding them from telling their bosses). And

the White House should space out major policy announcements so Americans have time to digest them. Or they can delude themselves that—as one White House aide told the Washington Post—the travel ban's implementation was a “massive success story.”

Some presidents got off to a bad start—think John F. Kennedy and the Bay of Pigs. But Kennedy recovered by learning from mistakes. Mr. Trump and his aides

should do the same. Next time, the stakes could be much higher, with graver consequences for the Trump presidency and the country.

Mr. Rove helped organize the political-action committee American Crossroads and is the author of “The Triumph of William McKinley” (Simon & Schuster, 2015).

The Washington Post

Trump backers like his early moves: ‘It’s what executives are supposed to be’ (UNE)

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

While protests against President Trump's executive order barring refugees erupt nationwide, his supporters in Garrett County, Md., say he's fulfilling his campaign promise to make America safer. While protests against President Trump's executive order barring refugees erupt nationwide, his supporters in Garrett County, Md., say he's fulfilling his campaign promise to make America safer. (Zoeann Murphy/The Washington Post)

(Zoeann Murphy/The Washington Post)

ACCIDENT, Md. — In this tiny town of rolling hills in far western Maryland, many of President Trump's supporters have a message to those protesting his policies: Take a deep breath and stop yelling.

Many here say the president is simply doing everything he promised to do and that he was elected to do — fight political correctness, protect the country from terrorists, crack down on illegal immigration, make Washington's swamp dwellers uncomfortable and show strength to other countries. Critics are unfairly exaggerating the effect of Trump's executive orders and complaining without giving him a fair chance, supporters say, just as critics blew some of his comments and jokes out of proportion during the campaign.

“I think people are just picking sides and not really getting all of the facts that they need,” said Charisse Smith, 25, a waitress at Annie's Kitchen Country Restaurant on Main Street who voted for Trump. “They just go along with their side. They're not digging into what they're actually saying.”

There's wide support in this town of roughly 320 for the president's rapidly implemented ban on

refugees and on citizens of seven countries that are predominantly Muslim, along with Trump's decision Monday night to dismiss the acting attorney general who refused to defend the executive order.

“Did you really think he was going to go too long without those two words: ‘You're fired?’” said Buz Gosnell, 71, a retired helicopter pilot who had fried fish for lunch at Annie's on Tuesday. “He's the first president since Teddy Roosevelt to really do what he says he's going to do. ... It's what executives are supposed to be.”

Others at the restaurant that afternoon agreed. A 60-year-old who works in the oil and gas industry said he is relieved to have a “tough businessman” in the White House and hopes Trump will “slam the door shut” on all Middle Easterners. A 26-year-old IT worker with a bushy beard said everyone should support “enhanced screenings” at airports and struggles to take protesters seriously, referring to them as “an entertaining show” that keeps airing new episodes.

[‘Trump is right in a way’: These Christian Syrians in Pa. back the travel ban](#)

Accident — yes, that's really its name — is located in Garrett County, surrounded by West Virginia and Pennsylvania. Most versions of the story of how the town got its name involve two groups of surveyors who accidentally assessed the same patch of land.

This county has long been deeply conservative, and Trump won here with more than 77 percent of the vote — while the blue state of Maryland went to Hillary Clinton, who received 60 percent of the vote statewide. One local pointed out that even the weekly newspaper is named the Republican.

The mountainous area is also dotted with expensive weekend

homes that belong to residents of Philadelphia, Washington and Baltimore, who tend to be more liberal. During the Women's March on Washington the day after Trump's inauguration, a bus filled with women from St. Louis broke down in Accident — and the pink-hat-wearing passengers decided to march there, instead.

Accident's Main Street features the staples of a small, rural community — a credit union, a white clapboard Lutheran church, a decades-old car dealership, a laundromat and Annie's, which serves breakfast all day. There's also a creamery that produces goat cheese sold at Whole Foods and Wegmans, an organic grocery store that carries almond milk, and Moonshadow, a restaurant known for its craft brew list and locally sourced ingredients.

“It's peaceful,” said Smith, who has worked at Annie's for 10 years. “And the people are nice and it's not too crowded.”

In high school, Smith traveled with her church youth group to Columbus, Ohio, and “got a little glimpse into what life's like in the cities.”

“It was a pretty big culture shock from what I'm used to,” she said. “There's no way I could do it. I like my country life.”

Smith and her husband, who works for the county health department, live comfortably in a house they own just outside of Accident. They make enough money to cover their mortgage, car payments and other bills. She thinks America should be more like Accident.

[‘These Muslim families sought refuge in America's heartland. Now Trump's visa ban is tearing them apart.’](#)

“I think a lot of city people always think that we're so ignorant, and we're just hillbillies, and I don't believe that at all,” Smith said. “We might not always be super-educated

in politics, but we're just human beings like everyone else.”

Religion guides Smith's life, and she acknowledges that Christianity has its own extremists, like those who violently attack gays. So she understands that the horrific acts committed by Islamic State terrorists cannot be held against all Muslims. But, she asks herself, can the United States protect itself while helping Muslims from other countries, especially those fleeing war?

“I think as Christians we definitely need to be reaching out to these people, and I think our country should be helping them,” she said, “but I don't think letting them come in and just have free rein of our country.”

Karen Engel, a retired hairdresser who lives in the next town over, said her niece attends West Virginia University and has a co-worker who is from Syria and is nervous about what could happen. This summer, Engel was in Ocean City and skipped the fireworks display for fear that the crowd could be targeted by terrorists.

Before the election, Engel said, she was discussing Trump's proposed “Muslim ban” — at that point a wholesale barring of foreigners of Islamic faith — and a friend posed a hypothetical: Three people show up at your house, starving and needing a place to stay. Engel said she would help them. Then the friend asked what she would do if there was a chance one might stab her. Engel changed her answer.

“I don't know who's the bad person in the bunch, but I'm not willing to let anyone in,” said Engel, 58, a lifelong Democrat who voted for Trump.

[‘The tale of a Trump falsehood: How his voter fraud claim spread like a virus’](#)

Engel was one of nearly two dozen women, mostly retirees, who

gathered at Accident's library on Tuesday afternoon to sample various teas from around the world. One woman gave a spirited defense of Trump but declined to give her name, for fear that someone on the Internet would come to her home.

Patrice Wells, 63, is one of the county's rare liberals and said she is horrified by the president's ban and other actions he has taken.

"In my opinion and in my heart and in my stomach, America is the place for refugees and immigrants. That's what our country was built upon," said Wells, who lives about two miles outside of town.

Wells has lived in the county since 1982 and has slowly seen the overwhelmingly white area gain some diversity thanks to seasonal workers from South America who work at the nearby ski resort and to international students at Garrett College. She said her neighbors could benefit from learning more about the world.

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"If you live in an area that's all white and all Christian and you think that that's the only way that there is, then those other people are scary, and so in trying to keep their families safe and keep their surroundings safe, then the thought is: I don't want them here," Wells said.

As the older women drank tea and chatted, Casandra Kinzey applied for jobs using one of the library's computers. Kinzey, a 24-year-old mother of two, remembers being in fourth grade on 9/11. Her teachers turned off the lights and turned on the news.

"It terrified me because we didn't know what was going to happen," she said. "That's the scariest part — not knowing."

Trump's aggressive personality makes her feel safer, and she's glad he implemented the travel ban.

"It's to protect our people," she said. "There's been a lot of trust when it comes to that situation and obviously we made the wrong decisions. I honestly feel there could have been more security."



A Visa Ban—but Not for Trump's Foreign Workers

Brandy Zadrozny

Trump's own businesses, which rely on immigrant labor, won't be affected by the visa restrictions proposed in a new draft executive order.

Lest you think [Donald Trump](#) is through [targeting immigrants](#), a new draft executive order suggests the president is interested in making life harder for legal, working immigrants, the businesses that want to hire them, and the average Americans who have [been shown to benefit](#) from the higher wages and economic stability that unskilled immigrant workers provide.

The vaguely worded order, first published by [The Washington Post](#), proposes the elimination of the "jobs magnet" that is supposedly attracting immigrants and harming American workers. But one thing is clear about President Trump's proposed order: The [Trump Empire](#) won't be affected.

In a continuation of candidate Trump's "Fine for me, but not for thee," approach, his "Executive Order on Protecting American Jobs and Workers by Strengthening the Integrity of Foreign Worker Visa Programs" contains nary a mention of the specific guest-worker visa programs that his companies have profited from for decades.

For as long as he's been in business, Trump has relied on immigrants—both

legal and without documentation—to [build his towers](#), [walk catwalks](#) for his modeling agency, [manage his hotels](#), [clean his hotel rooms](#), [pick grapes](#) in his vineyard, [cook meals](#) in his clubs, [wait tables](#) at his restaurants, and [tend to his golf course lawns](#).

Trump properties have asked the government to grant temporary visas to some 1,200 foreign workers since 2000, according to an investigation [by Reuters last year](#) and updated data provided by the U.S. Department of Labor. Most of these visas fell under the H-2A or the H-2B category, for seasonal workers.

[In his campaign](#), President Trump ran on the promise that he would enforce a "requirement to hire American workers first," railing against Disney and employers like it that "replace any worker with cheaper foreign labor."

"It legalizes job theft," Trump said in [a 2015 interview](#) with Breitbart News's Steve Bannon. (Bannon is now President Trump's Chief Strategist.) "It gives companies the legal right to pass over Americans, displace Americans, or directly replace Americans for good-paying middle class jobs."

Despite Trump's claims that Americans didn't want the jobs Trump was offering to immigrants, a 2016 report in *The New York Times* showed that since 2010 some 300 Americans had applied to the

positions that ultimately went to foreign workers at Mar-a-Lago, the exclusive Palm Beach club President Trump [has dubbed](#), his "Winter White House."

According to Trump, all of those American applicants "weren't qualified, for some reason."

But a month after his win, he [tweeted his dedication to the policy](#): "My Administration will follow two simple rules: BUY AMERICAN and HIRE AMERICAN!" Then in January, Trump winery [was granted approval](#) for six Mexican workers to tend to the grapes for \$10.72 an hour.

And that's just when Trump was playing by the rules.

In 1980, Trump built his eponymous golden tower [on the backs of some 200 undocumented Polish immigrants](#) working round-the-clock with no overtime to demolish the space where the behemoth now stands. Trump lost a case brought by the workers years later, and eventually settled for an undisclosed sum.

But his reliance on undocumented workers didn't end there. [A July report from the Washington Post](#) revealed some of the workers responsible for renovating D.C.'s Old Post Office Pavilion to make way for Trump's new \$200 million hotel had crossed the Mexican border and were in the country illegally. In a comment, longtime Trump attorney Michael Cohen said

the responsibility to legally hire workers fell to the contractor, not Trump himself.

And while Trump Model Management over the years has sought visas for some 250 models—some of whom could be included in the proposed sweeping order—four women formerly represented by Trump Models [told Mother Jones](#) they had been encouraged to work illegally in the U.S. and lie to customs officials about the reason for their visits in the states. (Neither Trump nor Trump model management responded to the story's claims.)

Should the draft order actually go into effect, the workers Trump relies on to skirt immigration law and the ones who take seasonal employment from American applicants shouldn't be bothered. [According to an analysis by Matthew Yglesias at Vox](#), the measure would focus on shortening the number of months a foreigner on a student visa would be allowed to work after graduation, tightening restrictions on companies that use H-1B visas (the kind [Melania Trump was once issued](#)) for technically skilled foreign workers making it "more merit based," and crackdown on lesser used visa categories.

In other words, the Trump organization is free to carry on as it likes. Just as it always has.



O'Brien

O'Brien : 'Trump Adviser' Is a Contradiction in Terms

Timothy L.

from seven mostly Muslim countries.

Rex Tillerson, who ran Exxon Mobil for a decade before signing on as Donald Trump's secretary of state, is reportedly ["baffled"](#) that the White House didn't consult with him on its controversial executive order restricting travel and immigration

James Mattis, who retired as a four-star Marine Corps general and supervisor of the U.S. Central Command before becoming Trump's secretary of defense, is said by the Associated Press to be

["particularly incensed"](#) about exactly the same thing.

Both men -- seasoned, thoughtful managers with bucketloads of experience and insight -- probably thought that Trump recruited them to his cabinet to be trusted advisers. They may be in for more surprises, however, because there's a good

chance that Trump merely sees them as hood ornaments atop the little engine of state he's building at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

For most of Trump's career he has only trusted a small group of longtime loyalists at the Trump Organization, and even then he has

often tightened the circle further to family members.

Advisers will come and go in the White House in coming years, but it's likely that the only permanent confidantes and counselors to the most powerful man in the world will be his 36-year-old son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and his daughter, Ivanka Trump, 35.

It will probably be [Javanka](#) to whom Trump turns for final gut checks on major decisions, and the Tillersons and Mattis of the world may have to shuffle along.

That's not to say that outside advisers won't ascend from time to time. Remember Chris Christie and Rudy Giuliani? Both men hovered in Trump's inner sanctum during the 2016 campaign before he passed them over for White House and cabinet posts they coveted. For a time they appeared to be close counselors before being [put out to pasture](#) once Trump [deemed](#) them to be [liabilities](#).

Trump hasn't enjoyed sharing credit or center stage for long stretches with anyone other than family. Advisers like Christie and Giuliani (and Cory [Lewandowski](#)) who are considered [overly ubiquitous](#) or assertive -- or both -- can find themselves out on the street. That's a reality that may eventually land hard on Trump's current leading media ambassador, [Kellyanne Conway](#), who seems to have enjoyed more airtime lately than her boss. Chief strategist [Steve Bannon](#), on the

other hand, has shrewdly managed to stay off TV and has avoided interviews (a posture Kushner also favors).

But Bannon, 63, had a coming-out of sorts over the last few days after it was revealed that he worked in [secrecy](#) with a White House youngster, 32-year-old Stephen Miller, to draft Trump's immigration order. Widespread [outrage](#) about the order and Bannon's apparent power to dictate policy -- along with his promotion to an influential position on Trump's National Security Council -- inspired a spate of recent headlines describing where [gravity now resides](#) in the Oval Office: with ["President Bannon."](#)

This creates some peril for Bannon. Trump has always enjoyed having street-smart brawlers like Bannon at his side (think of [Roy Cohn](#) and [Roger Stone](#)) but he's unlikely to countenance a pretender to the throne. (Even if Bannon is going out of his way *not* to pretend, the media has crowned him. Trump absorbs media coverage and it often sways him.)

Bannon and Conway may survive in the White House for as long as Trump does. But there are already [rifts](#) within Trump's senior team, as different [cliques jockey](#) for position. And Trump's inability to knit together advisers and managers, and his family-centric ways, will continue to be stumbling blocks for his administration.

Trump's [management experience](#) has been confined to the boutique

licensing and development business he and his children run from the 26th floor of Trump Tower. The only sizable enterprise he ever oversaw was his casino company, where success depended on sharing power with qualified managers, being emotionally and intellectually disciplined and thinking strategically. Trump did none of those things and ran that venture into the ground.

The practical implications of this for Trump's presidency have surfaced just 12 days into his tenure, with the word "chaos" a common [term](#) in many [accounts](#) of his [immigration ban](#), his [confrontation](#) with the Justice Department, his [random tweeting](#) about replacing Obamacare, his [fights](#) with U.S. intelligence services and federal agencies that are investigating him and his [allegations](#) of voter fraud in the general election.

"We've seen some problems," Republican Senator Rob Portman [told](#) CNN, diplomatically.

Trump, who famously [quipped](#) during the presidential campaign that he "knows more about ISIS than the generals do," on Sunday [launched](#) his first covert [military strike](#) against terrorists in Yemen -- an operation that apparently reflected the president's [desire to accelerate](#) the use of such actions. A Navy SEAL and an 8-year-old girl were [killed](#) and a U.S. aircraft [crashed and had to be destroyed](#).

Trump approved the military strike at a recent White House dinner,

[according to](#) the New York Times, and his guests included Bannon, Kushner, Mattis, Vice President Mike Pence, Trump's national security adviser, Michael Flynn, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford.

Some critics suggested the Yemen attack was too hastily arranged and proceeded, as [Reuters](#) put it, "without sufficient intelligence, ground support, or adequate backup preparations." Sean Spicer, Trump's press secretary, described the mission as a success, citing the number of terrorist casualties (about 14) and the valuable intelligence that U.S. forces secured.

Trump campaigned in part on the notion that he would bring managerial prowess to the White House. But his entire business career, his presidential [campaign](#), and now his presidency, have been routinely marked by chaos and seat-of-the-pants decision-making.

Some observers attribute this -- as well as Trump's haphazard tweeting and his fondness for confrontational or unsettling statements -- to various forms of the Trumpian dark arts and wily, strategic thinking. It's none of that. It's just Trump being Trump, and the country he's presiding over should brace itself accordingly.

POLITICO Trump team building a wall inside National Security Council

By Gregory Hellman and Bryan Bender

President Donald Trump's national security adviser is planning to rely on a new layer of hand-picked aides to serve as a "barrier" between the professional staff of the National Security Council and top White House officials, according to two sources with direct knowledge.

Such a move by retired Lt. Gen. Mike Flynn is stoking fears of an even more insular decision-making process than reigned during the Obama administration, which was roundly criticized for micro-managing national security and eroding the influence of the Pentagon, State Department and other agencies. And it is prompting some frustrated career staffers in the primary policymaking body inside the White House, who had been asked to stay on under Trump, to consider departing instead, say the sources.

Story Continued Below

"You will not have the experts in the room when the principals are having these discussions," worries one NSC veteran who has heard complaints from White House officials this week. The person, like others, agreed to speak on condition of anonymity.

"They are not being used," added another source with direct knowledge of the developments, who similarly expressed concern that the Trump team is "doubling down on cutting out the professional experts."

"They have been emasculated and have no authority," the source added. "But they are still getting hammered by agencies and allies and don't know what to tell them. ... Many are heading for the exits."

The concerns come after Trump granted his political strategist Steve Bannon, who is separately constructing his own power center inside the West Wing, membership of the highest rung of the National Security Council, traditionally

reserved for Cabinet chiefs. Permitting a political operative to participate in the high level meetings was seen by many as a dangerous break with tradition and prompted at least one member of Congress to recommend the 1947 law that created the body be changed.

The staffing deliberations also come after reports that the president and his senior aides did not fully consult with his secretaries of Homeland Security and Defense before issuing a controversial executive order temporarily banning travel to the United States from seven majority-Muslim countries.

The small coterie of advisers would be under Flynn -- and above the senior directors of the NSC staff who are organized around regions of the world and security threats such as terrorism or weapons of mass destruction.

One of them, according to two sources, is David Catler, who like Flynn worked at the Defense

Intelligence Agency and was the national intelligence manager for the Middle East at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. He now holds the broad title of deputy assistant to the president for regional affairs.

The White House declined to address questions about a new layer of personnel at the top rungs of the NSC structure -- and none was identified in an executive order that Trump signed on Saturday laying out its overall makeup and membership. Nor did it address specific questions about Catler's role and authority.

But a spokesman told POLITICO that Flynn intends to rely on a smaller staff and "run a very precise and orderly and quick process." The spokesman cited the fact that there is now one executive secretary for both the NSC and the companion Homeland Security Council, which includes many of the same members and relies on much of the same staff.

Officials regularly criticized the Obama administration for ballooning the size of the NSC and shutting out Cabinet level departments. In last year's defense bill, Congress passed a provision limiting future NSC staffs to 200 people to prevent overreach — although scholars have questioned whether such a limit is constitutional.

There is wide bipartisan support for shrinking the NSC.

"Everybody has been saying for years that the NSC was too big and too micro-managerial," said Steve Sestanovich, a top State Department official in the 1990s who served on the NSC in the administration of President Ronald Reagan. "If the new administration is willing to take that problem on, more power to them."

Flynn said at a think tank discussion last month that "our mission is to ensure the president and the national security community is committed to carrying out necessary reforms." And in a brief [memo](#) to Cabinet departments this week he pledged that he and his team "will be working closely with you and your teams."

But longtime participants on the National Security Council

deliberations from both parties expressed concern that the early signs portend the same type of micro-management under Trump as during Obama — or worse.

"What you're seeing here is two things: one, a total politicizing of the national security apparatus, and two, a second power center being created," said another Obama NSC veteran. "It's the place policy will get made and it will push aside career NSC staffers."

Indeed, in terms of the day to day operations, the Trump order issued on Saturday outlining the basic structure of the National Security Council is viewed by many as failing to address the Obama White House's management problems.

For example, it similarly mandates that members of the NSC staff chair regional and issue-related policy coordination committees, sometimes known as interagency working groups, and can invite representatives from executive departments where they deem appropriate.

"It means you've got the White House in the room the whole time," said Vikram Singh, who previously served as deputy assistant secretary of defense for South and

Southeast Asia during the Obama administration. "This sounds like a continuation, ironically."

Coupled with the rise of political influence in the body, the continuation of NSC control of policy coordination committees demonstrates that Republicans are casting aside previous criticisms now that they are in the White House, said Loren Schulman, who served as senior adviser to Obama's last national security adviser, Susan Rice. "It tells me they want to increase the amount of coordination through the White House," she said. "They haven't put their money where their mouth is."

Stephen Hadley, who served as national security adviser for President George W. Bush, said in the overall structure as laid out in the executive order "won't fix that problem" of micromanagement. "It depends on how it is used. But I know Flynn and company want to bring things back to the more strategic level and get out of the micro-managing detail."

Sestanovich, however, warned that a smaller organization could create its own problems. "If the NSC staff is smaller, does that mean other bureaucracies do what they want

with less oversight, or that the White House calls the shots from a smaller knowledge base and with less consultation?"

For others the unfolding set-up is even more concerning given the slow pace at which the Trump administration has staffed top security and intelligence posts in the Pentagon, State Department and other key agencies.

"What do you have to coordinate if you're having trouble staffing?" asked Heather Hurlburt, who previously served on President Bill Clinton's NSC. "It kind of gives another meaning to micromanage."

Coordinating more with Cabinet departments than was the case with the immigration ban will also make for better decisions, advises Nicholas Burns, who served on the NSC under presidents George H.W. Bush and Clinton.

"I would like to believe these are just the operational mistakes of the first ten days in office and they will do better," Burns said. "The system works best when the president trusts its leading secretaries and delegates to them."

The New York Times Rex Tillerson Is Confirmed as Secretary of State Amid Record Opposition

Gardiner Harris

Mr. Trump added, "It's time to bring a clear-eyed focus on foreign affairs, to take a fresh look at the world around us, and to seek new solutions grounded in very ancient truths."

Mr. Tillerson thanked him and promised to "represent the interests of all of the American people at all times."

Mr. Tillerson is expected to appear at the State Department's Foggy Bottom headquarters on Thursday morning, when he will address department employees.

Mr. Trump's unapologetically nationalistic approach has put into question the value of many alliances and multilateral institutions. How Mr. Tillerson's translates Mr. Trump's vow of "America First" into the kind of polite diplomatic parlance that will maintain vital ties will be a significant test.

Among his other challenges are dealing with Mr. Trump's promises to recast relations with China and Russia, move the American Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem

from Tel Aviv, and re-examine an international nuclear deal with Iran.

In a White House briefing on Wednesday, Michael Flynn, the national security adviser, issued a stern warning to Iran. "The Obama administration failed to respond adequately to Tehran's malign actions," he said.

Mr. Tillerson, 64, a Texan, earned an engineering degree from the University of Texas at Austin, got a job at Exxon in 1975 and climbed his way to the top, leaving only last year. Neither a diplomat, soldier nor politician, he is an unconventional choice for the job, but has vast international experience.

With operations on six continents, Exxon Mobil is in some ways a state within a state. As its chief executive, Mr. Tillerson struck deals with repressive governments — in at least one case, against the advice of the State Department. Environmentalists largely opposed his nomination.

But his views on international affairs are in many ways more conventional than those of Mr. Trump, which is why even Democratic-leaning foreign affairs experts said they welcomed his

selection in hopes he would bring ballast to a turbulent administration.

"Rex Tillerson will have the most demanding and complex agenda to face a secretary of state in a very long time," said R. Nicholas Burns, a Harvard professor and career foreign service officer.

Another crucial question will be how much influence Mr. Tillerson has on Mr. Trump. All cabinet secretaries must compete for power with White House aides who have long personal relationships with and frequent access to the president. But Mr. Trump's reliance on a close circle of advisers to write and vet executive orders while keeping departments that must implement them largely in the dark is without precedent.

Mr. Trump invited Mr. Tillerson for a private lunch at the White House on Wednesday, the first time Mr. Tillerson has appeared on the president's official schedule.

Mollifying allies infuriated by Mr. Trump's orders could be a full-time job. A ban on refugee arrivals and entries from seven Muslim countries, for instance, has enraged Iraqi officials whose cooperation is vital in the fight against the Islamic

State — a top administration priority. It has also infuriated many European leaders crucial to efforts not only in Syria, but Afghanistan and Libya as well, and it has tarnished [what had been viewed as a successful trip](#) by Prime Minister Theresa May of Britain, who on Monday said she opposed the ban.

Relations with Mexico have plunged to their lowest level in decades after Mr. Trump insisted he would build a border wall regardless of Mexican opposition.

The relationship with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany threatened to become toxic after Peter Navarro, the director of Mr. Trump's new National Trade Council, denounced the relatively low value of the euro as an unfair currency advantage for Germany.

"Tillerson faces the most difficult task of any secretary of state in the postwar era in trying to reconcile President Trump's intention to make a stark break from decades of bipartisan consensus U.S. foreign policy leadership with the reality that, if he succeeds, such a break could lead to global chaos," said Ryan C. Crocker, who served as the United States ambassador to five Muslim countries.

Mr. Tillerson may also face difficult internal hurdles. Much of his department's top leadership has departed — many because the Trump administration, like others before it, refused to keep political appointees. But the Trump transition team has been so short-

handed and the pickings among Republican foreign policy veterans who had not criticized Mr. Trump so slim that dozens of positions are likely to remain empty for some time.

More worrisome, morale among the department's rank-and-file career

officers has plunged, with a dissent memo against the administration's refugee and entry bans being submitted on Tuesday garnering more than 900 signatures, an extraordinary number.

Whether Mr. Tillerson meets these challenges with defiance or

moderation will be a telling indication of his leadership.

Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, said Monday that foreign service officers "can get with the program or they can go."



Zelizer: What Democrats should learn from Republicans

[Julian Zelizer](#) is a professor of history and public affairs at Princeton University and a New America fellow. He is the author of "[Jimmy Carter](#)" and "[The Fierce Urgency of Now: Lyndon Johnson, Congress, and the Battle for the Great Society](#)." He also is the co-host of the podcast "[Politics & Polls](#)." The opinions expressed in this commentary are his own.

(CNN)Politics ain't beanbag, so the saying goes. And Republicans live by these words.

When Senate Democrats on the Finance Committee finally showed some grit by [boycotting](#) the vote over President Donald Trump's nominees for secretary of treasury, Steven Mnuchin, and secretary of health and human services, Tom Price -- two of the most controversial picks to come from the White House -- Republicans simply changed the rules.

Although the committee rules stipulate that there needed to be a quorum with one member from the minority party present to vote on a nominee, Chairman Orrin Hatch of Utah and the committee Republicans suspended the rules by unanimous consent. With a statement that begged for the chyron "irony alert," Hatch [justified the action](#) as a response to the "unprecedented obstruction on the part of our colleagues."

Any Democrat who has experienced the hardball tactics of the tea party era couldn't help but roll their eyes.

Throughout the presidency of Barack Obama, Republicans on Capitol Hill were willing to practice a style of ruthless, smash-mouth politics where the legislative rules are used as a brutal weapon to stop their opponents from making any progress on their agenda.

Republicans threatened to send the nation into default by refusing to raise the debt ceiling. They used the filibuster as a routine tactic. They gridlocked many of President Obama's nominees, including Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland, who was never even

allowed a hearing, let alone a vote on the Senate floor. Almost any time that President Obama asked for bipartisan support, most members of the party stood firm and voted no.

Sen. Mitch McConnell is a brilliant practitioner of procedural warfare. He understands that the rules in Congress are not simply a backdrop to the action, they are the mechanism through which partisan combat takes place. What has been striking about McConnell and his colleagues in the House and Senate is that they are willing to use the rules in the most ruthless fashion possible.

While obstruction cost Republicans in the court of public opinion -- and didn't inspire much confidence that the party knew how to govern -- the Republicans were willing to take their chances.

In their minds, the benefits that came from stopping the President's agenda and energizing party activists around a combative, fighting style would eventually pay off. They also made the bet that in the end, voters blame the President when nothing gets done in Washington, not the Congress, even if the House and Senate are in the hands of the opposition.

Now that Republicans have control of the White House as well, they are using the tools to push the President's agenda forward. Despite some important points of contention, such as on free-trade agreements, the Republican Party is remarkably united and disciplined on most other issues. They know what they want, much of which President Trump is signaling that he will deliver and they are willing to do whatever it takes within the boundaries of the rules to get it done.

For all the chaos and tumult in the Trump White House, this is a strength upon which the entire party is depending.

With all the attention on President Trump, in many ways the real action is taking place in Congress, where they are smoothing the way for very

rightward leaning appointees, demonstrating almost no resistance to the President's most controversial actions, such as the executive order on refugees, and preparing to move forward with a legislative menu of tax cuts, deregulation and higher military spending that must be making Ronald Reagan smile in his grave.

If Senate Democrats dare to filibuster the [Supreme Court appointment of Neil Gorsuch](#), it's safe to bet that no Senate Republicans will defect from the President and the GOP will do whatever it takes to get enough Democrats from swing states to back the nominee.

It is not difficult to imagine that if there is a filibuster, Sen. McConnell would turn to Harry Reid's playbook to employ the nuclear option of jettisoning the right to endless talk altogether. Indeed, President Trump [has already encouraged him to do so](#).

So, as Senate Democrats start to make decisions about how they intend to fight this administration, they would do well to look at what Republicans achieved. They might see that even if obstruction and legislative grandstanding is ugly and turns off voters, it can be a useful tool toward larger partisan objectives.

On great matters of principle, which can include a Supreme Court nominee that stands for a set of values that they believe would move the nation in the wrong direction, the toughest legislative fight possible could be just the right elixir for mobilizing party activists -- and it could be an effective tool in forcing a president away from a particular direction.

If a party is willing to deal with the inevitable heat that comes from using roughhouse tactics, it's possible, as Republicans learned in 2016, to come out on the winning side of politics and policy. Indeed, the first serious crack in the Republican offensive has appeared, with two GOP senators, Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski, saying

they [would oppose](#) the confirmation of Betsy DeVos as education secretary.

And if Democrats are worried about the apparent hypocrisy of doing what they criticized Republicans for doing, they probably shouldn't. After all, Senate Republicans now insist that Democrats have an obligation to give Gorsuch a fair hearing, despite the obvious contradiction with how Republicans treated Garland.

The biggest danger, of course, is what all of this legislative warfare does to the democratic process. As both parties get deeper and deeper into the muck -- and this is something on the minds of many Democrats -- there will be growing concerns over how all this effects our ability to govern and responsibly resolve the great problems of the day.

Given that the Supreme Court has now only had eight members since Justice Antonin Scalia died last February 13, those risks are apparent to everyone in the upper chamber.

But Republicans have shown that there is a space between total destruction of the political process and old-fashioned congressional combat where Democrats have an opportunity to slow down the rapid fire activity of the White House.

Back in the 1960s, liberals like Missouri Democrat Richard Bolling discovered that the only way to fight the conservatives of the day, Southern Democratic committee chairmen who remained in office for decades, was to organize, mobilize and fight back through the rules upon which the Dixiecrats had depended to stop domestic policies like civil rights.

In short, if Democrats are going to stand any chance of stopping the transformational changes that are looming, they may well need to look much more closely at the Republicans as potential models for a path forward.

Dollar Caught Between President Trump's Tough Talk, Policy Plans (UNE)

Saumya Vaishampayan in Hong Kong, Ian Talley in Washington and Chelsey Dulaney in New York

Updated Feb. 1, 2017 7:40 p.m. ET

Major currencies are posting their largest swings in months, highlighting a growing difficulty for investors and traders to discern the likely path of Trump administration policy.

The U.S. currency rallied in the weeks following Donald Trump's election Nov. 8, reflecting in part investor expectations that deregulatory, tax-reduction and stimulus plans will push up U.S. growth.

But since the New Year, the dollar has declined and volatility has picked up, driven by statements by administration officials that have been interpreted by investors as advocating a lower dollar.

The remarks, from Mr. Trump and some important advisers, have surprised some investors and pushed many traders to take a more-defensive stance. Few analysts expect quick clarity on Washington policies that could settle the dollar's path, likely meaning more unpredictable trading in the months ahead.

"What markets are concerned about now is volatility," said Mark McCormick, head of North American FX strategy at TD Securities. "People are staying in trades for shorter periods of time, and they're not taking as much risk."

This week, a measure of volatility in the Japanese yen hit its highest level against the dollar since August, while volatility in the euro has recently touched its highest since July, according to Thomson Reuters.

The
New York
Times

As a candidate, President Trump spent contributors' money for office space that he owned, stays at his resorts and food at his restaurants. He spent contributors' money on Trump-branded wine and water. He displayed Trump merchandise at campaign events. Now he seems determined to milk the presidency, apparently synonymous with his brand in his eyes, for a fortune.

"The brand is certainly a hotter brand than it was before," Mr. Trump observed, with satisfaction, shortly after the election.

The ICE U.S. Dollar Index, which gauges the value of the dollar against a basket of six currencies, notched daily moves of 0.5% or greater nine times in January, compared with four such moves in October. The index last month posted its largest decline since March 2016. It is down about 2.4% for 2017.

In part, the moves reflect hints, though far from definitive signals, that the administration supports a weaker currency—a stance that many economists say would conflict with policies the administration has backed that would tend to boost the dollar.

Other factors likely sowing doubt in markets include expected battles between the White House and congressional Republicans, who hold the majority on Capitol Hill, over taxes and spending. Fiscally conservative lawmakers could help stymie Mr. Trump's infrastructure plans. There is also a fight over border taxes, a policy that could further enhance the dollar's strength.

President Trump, in an interview with The Wall Street Journal last month, said the dollar was too strong compared with China's currency. Peter Navarro, head of the National Trade Council, in an interview with the Financial Times, accused Germany of exploiting the euro for competitive trade gains. The president has vowed to label China a currency manipulator, a step some economists say likely precedes new import tariffs.

While Mr. Trump seems to want a weaker dollar against some trade partner currencies, most economists agree that his economic platform [could put strong upward pressure](#) on the greenback.

Last week, an executive of the Trump Organization, Eric Danziger, said it would [open Trump-branded hotels](#) in the 26 largest metropolitan areas in the country, up from five. The business, he said, would focus its expansion domestically for "the next four or eight years." The fee to join the Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Fla., which Mr. Trump calls the "Winter White House," just doubled [to \\$200,000](#).

This news came less than a week after Mr. Trump and his inauguration committee hosted parties and other events at the Trump International Hotel in

Washington, in the government-owned Old Post Office. Even his press secretary, Sean Spicer, has become a [pitchman](#): "It's an absolutely stunning hotel," he said recently. "I encourage you to go there if you haven't been by."

Self-dealing is such standard procedure for this White House that a cynic (or satirist) might say it's time to give in and try to put Mr. Trump's conflicts of interest to work for the public. Maybe if he had hotels in every nation, he'd have a financial interest in being less bellicose, and more supportive of the free flow of trade and of people,

It is hard to know whether the new administration will explicitly pursue a weaker currency, in part because its economic team still isn't in place. Traditionally, the top spokesman in Washington on the currency is the Treasury secretary, and Mr. Trump's pick, Steven Mnuchin, hasn't been confirmed yet. In confirmation hearings, Mr. Mnuchin suggested the Trump administration would remain committed to a strong dollar over the longer term, though he acknowledged a strong dollar would harm the U.S. in the short term.

There is confusion outside the White House about whose economic views will have predominance among officials with disparate opinions.

"It doesn't seem like they have sorted out amongst themselves who's going to deliver the message and what the message is on the dollar," said Brad Setser, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and a former top U.S. Treasury official in the Obama administration.

The dollar's twists and turns against the yen in the past two days show how sensitive markets have become.

During U.S. trading hours Tuesday, the greenback almost fell below ¥112, hitting its lowest level in two months, after Mr. Trump accused

Japan and China of persistently keeping their currencies weak.

The dollar recovered against the yen Wednesday, closing up 0.4% in U.S. trading at ¥113.252. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe hit back, saying the country's economic policy was aimed solely at raising domestic inflation, and that U.S. criticism "about inducing a cheaper yen misses the mark."

Mr. Trump isn't alone in saying one thing while pursuing policies that may have an opposite effect.

Japan's continuing experiment with extreme economic policies, instigated by Prime Minister Abe after his election in 2012 in a program nicknamed Abenomics, has implicitly favored a weaker yen. The hope is that will boost exporters' earnings, encouraging them to raise wages, in turn boosting inflation.

Ultimately, the jawboning by leaders will likely be overwhelmed by the force of economic fundamentals, analysts say.

While the Federal Reserve is expected to keep raising interest rates this year, major central banks from Europe to Japan will likely keep their rates ultralow to help their sluggish economies. That divergence should lead to a stronger dollar because higher rates tend to make a currency more appealing to investors seeking yield.

"Currencies are not driven by just the government," said Nizam Idris, head of strategy for fixed income and currencies at [Macquarie Bank Ltd.](#) in Singapore. "The market will become numb to this eventually."

even if they happen to be Mexican or Muslim.

But we really prefer the old-fashioned approach in which presidents put the public interest ahead of their own finances. Federal ethics officials have told Mr. Trump that he should divest his business interests to avoid allegations of bribery and to assure Americans that their needs are his only concern. Mr. Trump argues that he can put a "firewall" between his businesses and himself by having his eldest sons manage them. The president and the Trump Organization last week hired

lawyers to keep an eye on the Trumps, a laughable ploy that doesn't meet ethical or anti-corruption standards and constitutional requirements.

Mr. Trump has argued that the law permits the president to keep his business — even though no modern president has done so, and far poorer ones than he have sold off business interests to serve. He and his lawyers have [played down the importance](#) of the emoluments clause of the Constitution, which prohibits government officials from accepting [gifts or income](#) from foreign governments without the approval of Congress. And he refuses to release his tax returns and divest his assets and put the proceeds in a blind trust, as his cabinet nominees are doing right now.

Consider the Trump Hotel. Mr. Trump has a 60-year lease on the property with the General Services Administration. That contract states that no elected federal official “shall be admitted to any share or part of this lease, or to any benefit that may arise therefrom.” That unambiguous clause exists to prevent corruption and self-dealing by government officials.

Since Mr. Trump officially violated the lease when he assumed office, the agency is clearly obligated to cancel the lease or require that it be sold to another hotel operator. Ranking Democrats on the House and Senate committees with jurisdiction over the agency have for weeks been asking it to address the lease violation. So far, the agency, which reports to the president, appears to have done nothing. [Mr. Trump's lawyers](#) preposterously contend that because he was not an elected official when the lease was signed, he hasn't broken it.

Aside from violating the lease terms, Mr. Trump is very likely violating the emoluments clause by holding on to the hotel. His lawyers have said that he will donate profits from rooms rented to foreign governments to the Treasury, but that's no cure. Experts say it would be next to impossible to account for foreign “profits” — which, of course, would be based on the hotel's own calculations. Is the hotel prepared to open its books so the public can judge those numbers for itself?

Congress ought to demand that the G.S.A. uphold the terms of the hotel lease and shame Mr. Trump into selling his other businesses, the fortunes of which are now hitched to the presidency. [Democrats have](#) been trying to do this, but the Republicans who run the House and Senate have not joined them. So far, they lack the spine to challenge the president. Just

imagine how they would have reacted if Hillary Clinton had been elected and the Clinton Foundation were merely leasing a government building, let alone using it to generate revenue.

If the agency doesn't act, a competing hotel could sue to demand that it cancel the lease because the president's control of the hotel represents unfair competition. The Trump Hotel has been drawing business away from other hotels, precisely because its proprietor occupies the White House. Indeed, the hotel has [promoted itself on Twitter](#) with an image of a man relaxing in one of its rooms, gazing out upon a building that looks very like the White House (it's actually the Environmental Protection Agency, which Mr. Trump campaigned to abolish). Since the election, embassies from countries that include [Bahrain, Kuwait and Azerbaijan](#) have held receptions at the hotel, and [diplomats say](#) it's important that they be seen patronizing it.

[Mr. Trump has boasted](#) that the presidency boosts his brand. He should focus instead on how his commercial ambition is tarnishing the image of public service. If he continues to reduce the most powerful office in the world to a marketing scheme, ethical public servants, in Congress and across the government, can't stand by and watch.