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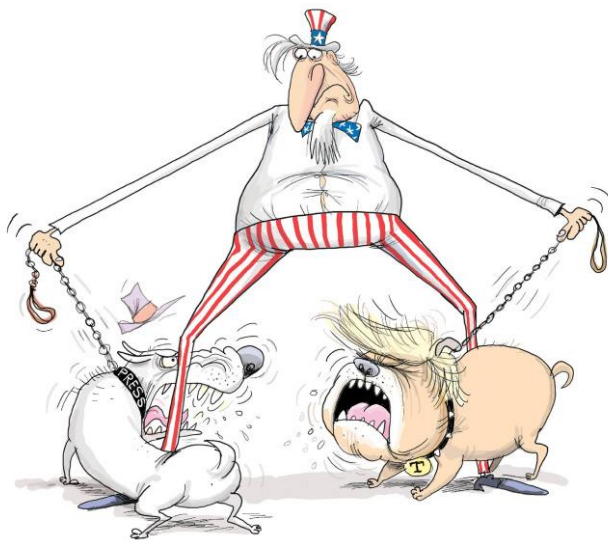
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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

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FRANCE - EUROPE

The
Washington
Post

France's Marine Le Pen refused to wear a headscarf to meet with Lebanese religious leaders

By Amanda Erickson based activist, told the outlet.

Today's WorldView

France's Marine Le Pen meets Maronite Christian Church Head, Patriarch Beshara Al-Rai in Lebanon after canceling an earlier meeting with the country's grand mufti after refusing to wear a headscarf. (Reuters)

France's Marine Le Pen meets Maronite Christian Church Head, Patriarch Beshara Al-Rai in Lebanon after canceling an earlier meeting with the country's grand mufti after refusing to wear a headscarf. Le Pen refuses to wear headscarf to meet Lebanon's Grand Mufti (Reuters)

She was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted.

French far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen walked away from a meeting with Lebanon's top Sunni Muslim leaders after she refused to wear a headscarf. The move sparked an outcry across the Arab world. "Observers, pundits and voters here say that they believe that this was planned on her part because it would play very well to her far-right base at home, and also because they say it might detract from a growing scandal she is facing," Lebanon-based reporter Natasha Ghoneim told al Jazeera.

"This was a trap and a setup because she wanted to send a message to her own voters and supporters that she somehow refused to respect the local customs in a Muslim-majority country," Yasser Louati, a Parisian-

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

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Onlookers say Le Pen was offered a white shawl to cover her hair, which she refused. She then returned to her car and left. As she departed, she told journalists that she's refused to cover herself in the past, including with a meeting with the Grand Mufti of Egypt's Al Azhar. "I have no reason to," she said, noting that she warned officials in advance that she wouldn't wear a scarf. "They did not cancel the meeting, so I thought they would accept that I will not wear the scarf. ... They wanted to impose this on me, to present me with a fait accompli. Well, no one presents me with a fait accompli."

The Grand Mufti offered a slightly different story. In a statement, his press office said it had informed Le Pen in advance that she'd need to cover her head in accordance with the rulings of Dar al-Fatwa, the highest Sunni authority in Lebanon.

Le Pen's decision fits in well with her politics. She has run a staunchly populist campaign, one that has parlayed fear of Islam into aggressive opposition to all refugees and migrants. Her party has repeatedly opposed France's membership in the European Union and called for a Trump-style ban on immigration from Muslim-majority countries.

But to veil or not has always been a political decision.

As Harvard Prof. Leila Ahmed explained in "A Quiet Revolution," Muslim women began unveiling in the early 20th century. At the time, foreign forces had taken control of much of the Arab world, and occupiers sought to rescue Muslim women from what they saw as "the oppression of Islam." At the same time, the forces of modernity encouraged many women to bare their heads. "Unveiling," Ahmed explains, "would become ever more clearly the emblem of an era of new hopes and desires, and of aspirations for modernity: the possibility of education and the right to work for both women and men, and of equal opportunity and advancement based on effort and merit."

That began to change in the 1970s. At that time, Arab leaders like the Muslim Brotherhood pushed to re-Islamize society. That included urging women to cover their heads. Scholars who interviewed women at the time reported that most women adjusted their dress willingly. "Islamic dress gave them new authority as strictly observant religious women, and in a society where men and women were expected to maintain a certain separateness, it gave them the freedom to attend school and go to work — in offices, for example, shared with men — in ways that were socially acceptable," Ahmed observed. "It certainly had some positive outcomes."

As European countries took to banning Islamic dress for women,

wearing a headscarf took on an extra political edge. It was a defense of religious liberty, of the right to practice one's faith as one wanted. But to Westerners, the hijab has become a symbol of something else — it's been tinged by associations with violent strains of fundamentalist Islam. These assumptions, Ahmed says, "were quite mistaken."

Foreigners, in turn, have chosen whether to cover their heads based on local politics. Michelle Obama did not wear a headscarf when visiting Saudi Arabia (though citizens must cover up, the country's law does not require foreign women to do so). Nor did then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Obama did, however, cover her head on a visit to a mosque in Jakarta. As first lady, Hillary Clinton covered her head in Eritrea, the West Bank and Pakistan. She did not in Saudi Arabia. Clinton, Obama and Bush often wore a veil while visiting a mosque, but not when meeting with officials in Muslim countries. State Department protocol requests that female diplomats cover up in meetings with religious leaders.

Michelle Obama wore a lacy black veil in a meeting with the pope in Vatican City. So did Nancy Reagan.

A willingness to understand the hijab in its context is important. "The veil today has no universal meaning," Ahmed said. "Its meanings are always local."

Bloomberg

Fox : What's So Great About Europe?

Justin Fox

A man in the audience was going on and on in a Swabian accent and a querulous tone when I walked into the Stuttgart Playhouse on Tuesday night a few minutes after the start of a discussion titled "Do We Really Need the European Union?" I couldn't understand what the guy was getting at, but then the moderator, veteran German television journalist Joerg

Armbruster, summed it up in easy-to-understand TV-Deutsch:

"So the bureaucracy bothers you."

"Yes," the man responded.

"Any specific examples?"

"No, I don't have any."

This was great, I thought. I was witnessing Europe's malaise, in the flesh. Even the Germans are cranky about the EU! And they don't exactly know why!

But then, after one more monologue of Swabian complaint (all I got of it was Armbruster's translation: "If I understand you correctly, you don't have much trust in the European Union"), the tone changed. Armbruster kept polling the audience ("collecting voices," he called it), but people stopped complaining.

A woman said that maybe the problem with the European Union -- or at least the common currency, the

euro -- was that it was too advantageous to Germany. "Because we have a common currency, we get an edge in exports," she said. "I profit from this. Thanks!"

"Do you think this is harming our neighbor countries?" Armbruster asked.

"Yes, definitely," she responded.

"Germany was always a problem in Europe," interjected Andre Wilkens,

a Berlin-based policy wonk who was one of the evening's featured speakers but mostly sat and listened. "The EU was formed to solve that problem."

Others got up to say that Europe needed more solidarity, with Germans leading the way. It needed more of a sense of community. More attention needed to be paid to the millions of jobless young people in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

Then things shifted to straight-out Euroenthusiasm. "To be totally honest, I think Europe is super," said a woman sitting in the front row. Added a man a few rows back: "There are problems that we Germans alone can't solve." By working together with the rest of Europe, he went on, Germany had a better shot at fighting climate change and preventing war.

It isn't exactly news that a bunch of people gathered in a theater in downtown Stuttgart support the idea of Europe and even, for the most part, the reality of the European Union. The home of Daimler AG, Porsche Automobil Holding SE and Robert Bosch GmbH is one of the

continent's great economic success stories -- and its residents' political views aren't necessarily shared by other Germans. On the whole, Germans see the EU in a more positive light than the citizens of most other European countries (I've included the 10 most populous EU member countries in the chart below), but they're still pretty negative about it.

Who Still Likes the European Union

Percentage of respondents with a "positive image" of the EU

Source: Autumn 2016 Eurobarometer

The gang at the Stuttgart Playhouse was well aware of this. About two-thirds of the way through the discussion, Armbruster called on Ronan Collett, an English baritone who sings with the Stuttgart Opera in the building next door. Collett, who acquired Irish citizenship via his grandparents after the U.K.'s Brexit vote to ensure against career derailment, said -- in English -- that the parts of the discussion that he'd been able to follow seemed reasonable and relevant. But, he added, "what I can say from

experience is that for the people who want to destroy Europe, they're not relevant."

So that became the new focus of the discussion: How do we make Europe relevant, and attractive, to more Europeans? Similar people have been asking themselves similar questions all over the Western world lately. And while I know that such exercises must come across to some as absurd and out of touch, I have to admit that I found the Stuttgart version pretty endearing.

There was no cursing out of backward-thinking xenophobes, just suggestion after suggestion: Give the European Parliament, the EU's main democratic institution, more power and take some away from the appointed European commissioners. Let people vote for the parliament on a Europe-wide basis, not country by country. Take to the streets to show support for Europe (there's a march planned for Sunday in Stuttgart). Create more exchange programs between European countries (several people pointed out after that suggestion that there are already a lot of such programs).

Build more Europe-wide institutions ("We have the Champions League," joked Armbruster). Come up with a true common language and get everybody in Europe to learn it. Establish a holiday to celebrate Europe. And so on.

One major theme that emerged was that Europe needs a defining idea or set of ideas. Wilkens suggested at one point that while the European Union has come to be seen mainly as an economic institution, more emphasis should be given to its founding idea: "After centuries of war, how about peace?" His fellow panelist, Heidelberg-based novelist and journalist Jagoda Marinic, said the quest for unifying European ideas ought to reach back much further. You know, *liberté, égalité, fraternité* and all that.

Modern Europe has delivered remarkably well on liberty, and for a while there it seemed to be making big strides on equality. Fraternity, though -- that's the tough one.



El-Erian : Political Risk Hampers the ECB

Mohamed A. El-Erian

The European Central Bank just can't get a break. After many years of unconventional monetary measures that have drawn lots of political criticism and attacks and forced it to intervene uncomfortably in the functioning and pricing of financial markets, it was hoping that a pickup in euro-zone economic activity would allow it to declare victory and gradually normalize policy.

Well, the economic pickup is materializing, but it is being accompanied by lower, rather than normalizing yields on risk-free government bonds.

The beginning of the week brought a spate of data releases that spoke to the health of the euro-zone economy, with several readings surpassing consensus expectations. On Tuesday, the Purchasing Managers Index for manufacturing and services pointed to higher

growth and inflation. This was followed on Wednesday by a relatively strong reading of the Ifo business climate index for Germany, the economic area's biggest and most influential economy.

Admittedly, these better cyclical data are, at least as of now, not strong enough or sufficiently sustained to lift concerns about the structural headwinds to high and more inclusive growth. But according to most economic theory and market models, they should have led to an uptick in interest rates. Instead, the opposite has tended to happen.

Registering another new record low, the yield on two-year German government bonds touched an eye-popping minus 0.92 percent on Wednesday. And this was part of yet another downdraft in risk-free rates in the euro zone that will not just complicate the ECB's conduct of monetary policy but also increase its vulnerability to popular dissatisfaction and the political

attacks on its operational autonomy and its credibility.

Add to the ECB's discomfort a spread differential between yields in France, the second-largest economy, and those of Germany that is more reminiscent of the dark days of Europe's debt crisis than of increasing economic growth. This unwelcomed dispersion renders even more complex the design and implementation of a "one-size-fits-all" monetary policy.

The challenges are not limited to the ECB and the euro zone.

Notwithstanding the more encouraging economic readings, lower yields translate into a weaker euro, adding to the currency appreciation pressures pushing the dollar higher. The longer this continues, the greater the complications for the Federal Reserve, which is facing an economic context suggesting that markets are too complacent in playing down so much the timing of

likely interest rate hikes. Dollar appreciation also acts as a headwind to U.S. economic growth and corporate earnings, which risks sparking renewed protectionist political rhetoric.

Higher political risk in Europe is the proximate cause for this latest decoupling between economic data and market pricing. As I argued in Tuesday's Bloomberg View column, market participants have no choice but to pay greater attention to the phenomenon of "angry politics" and how it can influence some of the parameters governing the functioning of economy.

This phenomenon cannot be ignored. And its resolution requires European policy-makers to step up to their governance responsibilities and deal more effectively with the turmoil's fundamental cause: too many years of growth that has been both excessively low and insufficiently inclusive.



Eurozone Finally Finds Itself Free of Deflation

Paul Hannon

Updated Feb. 22, 2017 10:08 a.m. ET

For the first time in almost four years, none of the eurozone's 19 members was in deflation during January, an encouragement to the

European Central Bank in its long struggle to lift inflation to its target and keep it there.

The European Union's statistics agency Wednesday confirmed an earlier estimate that showed consumer prices in the currency

area were 1.8% higher than a year earlier, a jump from the 1.1% inflation rate recorded in December 2016 and within touching distance of the ECB's target, which is close to, but below 2%.

Eurostat also recorded that consumer prices were higher on the year in all of the eurozone's members, for the first time since February 2013. Ireland, the last member to have been in deflation, saw prices rise by 0.2%, having

experienced a fall of the same magnitude in December.

As recently as May 2016, consumer prices were down on the year in the eurozone as a whole. Since then, a recovery in energy prices has driven inflation steadily higher, bringing an increasing number of countries out of deflation.

ECB policy makers have celebrated the waning of a threat that spurred them to launch the first in a series of stimulus measures in June 2014. Central bankers fear deflation, because once it takes hold and becomes self-sustaining, it is difficult

to escape from, as Japan's experience has shown.

"While some of the recent bounce [in inflation] can be explained by base effects in the energy sector—and inflation should remain well behaved—there are clear signs that deflation is a thing of the past," Julien Lafargue, European equities strategist at J.P. Morgan, said.

Nonetheless, there remain wide divergences across eurozone members regarding the rate of inflation. In January, the highest rate of inflation was the 3.1% recorded in Belgium, with Spain close at 2.9%.

Spanish prices were falling as recently as last August.

In inflation-averse Germany, prices were 1.9% higher than a year earlier in January, amplifying calls for an end to ECB stimulus. The central bank has said it won't consider a tapering of its stimulus programs until it is clear that inflation will remain around its target, even after energy prices have stopped rising. That would require a pickup in the pace at which prices of other goods and services are rising. However, there were few, if any, signs of a buildup in underlying inflationary pressures during January. The core

rate of inflation, which excludes energy, food, alcohol and tobacco, was unchanged at 0.9%, and lower than in January 2016.

"The ECB has set out its asset-buying program until the end of the year and we suspect it will not revisit it until late on in 2017—very possibly waiting until the German election is out of the way in September," Howard Archer, an economist at IHS Global Insight, said. "We suspect the ECB will end up extending its monthly asset purchases in 2018, but at a reducing rate."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Election to Test Depth of U.K. Labour Party's Decline

Jenny Gross | Photographs by Abbie Trayler-Smith for The Wall Street Journal

By Jenny Gross | Photographs by Abbie Trayler-Smith for The Wall Street Journal

STOKE-ON-TRENT, England—Gary Kemp has voted for the Labour Party since he was old enough to vote. But in the coming election in this northern city, long dominated by the traditionally working-class party, he is switching allegiance.

"I think Labour has had it too long around here," said the 54-year-old Mr. Kemp, who was laid off last year from a catering job and hasn't found new work. "They've lost touch with the people."

Labour's struggles in postindustrial areas like Stoke-on-Trent, the bedrock of its support for more than 50 years, illustrate how dramatically the political landscape has shifted in the wake of Britain's movement to leave the European Union.

The center-left party, which reinvigorated itself in the 1990s by reaching out to cosmopolitan Britons, is scrambling to hold on in areas where voters, including Mr. Kemp, widely supported Brexit and feel left behind as London's economy surges.

They are increasingly turning to the anti-EU UK Independence Party and even Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservatives, long anathema to large swaths of northern England, as she pushes forward with plans for

a definitive break from the EU.

Stoke-on-Trent voted in favor of Brexit by one of largest majorities in the country, defying Labour's pro-EU stance. Thursday's by-elections here and in Copeland, another northern constituency, will give an early indication of support for Mrs. May's strategy—as well as Labour's future in the region.

Though there have been no public polls in either constituency, they are expected to be close races.

Among working-class voters nationally, the Labour Party, with just 23% support, was neck-and-neck with UKIP and far behind the Conservatives, according to a poll by YouGov PLC published Friday. That is down from 31% nearly two years ago. Among all voters, Labour polled about the same while UKIP's support fell to 15%.

A former hub for British pottery making and coal mining known as "the Potteries," Stoke-on-Trent has floundered in a global economy. Unemployment was at 6.2% as of September, above the U.K. average of 4.8%, according to the most recent data available.

In the town center, vendors sold items like hair extensions, fruit and vegetables and roast chicken, while empty storefronts and run-down buildings marked some streets. Reflecting on the scene, Mr. Kemp had a simple explanation for turning to the centrist Liberal Democrat party: "Look at the state of this town—it is in shambles."

The election here is wide open after incumbent Labour lawmaker Tristram Hunt quit to head the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. The main rival to Labour candidate Gareth Snell is Paul Nuttall, the leader of UKIP.

Mr. Snell turned down requests for comment. If Mr. Nuttall won, it would be only the second seat for UKIP in Parliament.

Jack Dromey, a Labour member of Parliament who campaigned in Stoke-on-Trent last weekend, said his party needed to regain the trust of working-class people in the north and ensure that it isn't viewed as London-centric.

"There is a big challenge for Labour at the next stage," he said. He also accused UKIP of seeking "to exploit discontent. It is an ugly, divisive politics."

Nigel Farage, the former leader of UKIP and one of the drivers behind Britain's vote to leave the EU, said Labour is facing an existential crisis.

"This is about dissatisfaction," Mr. Farage said in a recent interview. "Are they a party of North London intellectuals, or are they a party of postindustrial Britain in the Midlands and the North?"

Other center-left parties in Europe are going through similar upheavals, and there are parallels in the U.S. Just as the Brexit campaign drew support from working-class Labour voters, President Donald Trump found backing in states like Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin—which went Republican

for the first time in about three decades.

UKIP appeals to some Labour voters, but while the party has risen in popularity, it has also struggled with internal scandals and is still trying to define itself beyond its opposition to the EU and immigration.

Labour faces a much bigger threat from the Conservatives.

Mrs. May, who campaigned in Stoke-on-Trent on Monday, has made clear she is actively pursuing Labour's core voters, saying she wants to make life better for people who are "just about managing."

Her message is resonating with voters like Alan Jervis, 69. "I know the Conservatives look after the rich and I'm only working class, but I just think they're better with the economy," said Mr. Jervis, who was let go from his job at a pottery company after 33 years.

Annette Wareham, a 53-year-old shop assistant who voted for Brexit, said she used to vote for Labour but won't in this election.

"They give you all these promises and never go through with it," said Ms. Wareham, who is concerned about worsening poverty in the subsidized housing where she lives. She is wavering between UKIP and the Liberal Democrats, which has been bringing up the rear in polls.

The New York Times

Election in Britain's 'Brexit Capital' Poses Test for Labour Party

Stephen Castle

On the other hand, Labour's other core constituency — younger, urban liberals mainly in London and some other cities — strongly advocated remaining in the union.

A defeat here in Stoke-on-Trent Central or Copeland could imperil Mr. Corbyn's standing and add further weight to the argument that Labour as currently constituted is incapable of acting as an opposition party, let alone winning a national election.

Even Labour figures see it as a defining moment, and Jack Dromey, a senior lawmaker, described the Stoke by-election as "arguably the most important for 20 years."

By-elections, called when sitting lawmakers leave the House of

Commons (as in these cases) or die, are unpredictable events often attracting low turnouts.

In Copeland, a large area that spans scenic landscape and urban decay, Labour's main threat is thought to be from the Conservative Party of

Prime Minister Theresa May. Were its candidate, Trudy Harrison, to win, she would be the first challenger from a governing party to win a seat from the opposition since 1982.

In Stoke, Labour's main challenger is believed to be UKIP, whose new leader, Paul Nuttall, is standing for the seat, but who has stumbled during the campaign.

Despite its grimy image, there is some positive news in Stoke, where a gambling firm, bet365, is a big employer, and where the ceramics industry, which made the city famous, remains, albeit on a smaller scale. But there are reminders too of the factories that have disappeared, with greenery sprouting from the roofs and windows of derelict buildings.

Speaking in Labour's campaign office in Stoke, Mr. Dromey said that voters here have legitimate discontents — a lack of secure jobs, low pay and squeezed education and health care provision — but that these were being exploited “by a grotesque populism” that Labour has a chance to thwart in the elections.

“Either UKIP breaks through in Labour's midland and northern heartlands, or we turn the tide on UKIP,” he said.

That will be decided in places like the huge Bentilee housing estate, built in the 1950s, where at the Hollybush pub two angry-looking dogs pad up and down on a flat roof at the front of the building.

=

“If you think they are fierce you should see their

owner,” joked Tony Ginty, 59 and unemployed, a former Labour voter who said he had lost faith in the party and its “plastic” politicians.

Outside the Lidl supermarket, on Dividy Road, Jeffrey Hartshorn, 31, said he wants to work to support his children, “but there is nothing at the moment. I apply but I never hear anything back.” For now, Mr. Hartshorn is sticking with Labour but analysts believe that its problems go deep.

“The fact that Labour is so vulnerable in both these seats is an indication of the party's parlous standing,” said Mark Wickham-Jones, professor of political science at the University of Bristol.

“It's also clearly an indication of the party's failure to recover from the shock both of the general election in 2015 and from the trauma created by the outcome of the referendum last year,” he added, referring to the Brexit vote and a national election in which Labour lost all but one of its seats in Scotland, a traditional stronghold.

A lifelong critic of the European Union, Mr. Corbyn campaigned only tepidly to remain and has since ordered his legislators to vote with Mrs. May to trigger withdrawal talks — prompting further internal discord. So poisonous is the atmosphere that some Labour lawmakers are rumored to hope that Labour loses on Thursday, believing that may prompt their leader's departure.

Mr. Corbyn appears a bigger issue in Copeland, where the Sellafield nuclear power station is a big employer and where there are

hopes of a new nuclear development at Moorside.

Although he has sounded more positive recently, Mr. Corbyn is not an enthusiast for nuclear energy, either. Battling the wind and rain in a bus shelter outside a hospital at Whitehaven, Labour's candidate, Gillian Troughton, repeatedly batted away questions about her leader. She insisted that support for the nuclear industry is Labour Party policy, and added: “I'm 100 percent behind it — we need nuclear to keep the lights on as part of the low-carbon energy mix. We need it for good jobs in this area.”

She prefers to concentrate on health care — traditionally a strong subject for Labour — and warns that threats to downgrade maternity services at the local hospital will mean babies dying.

In the pharmacy at nearby Egremont, Carol Spedding, said that worries about the hospital will probably tilt her vote to Labour. But she believes that the north of England is “getting totally ignored” by politicians. “We don't matter,” she added.

In Copeland, the contest has been more low-key than in Stoke, where Mr. Nuttall has made headlines as he seeks to craft a new identity for UKIP, after the Brexit referendum, one that is less about Europe and more about representing the left-behind voters in depressed urban areas.

The headlines have not generally been positive, however. Mr. Nuttall has been on the defensive since registering his address on his by-election nomination papers as a

newly rented house in the constituency, making him appear more local than he is. Things got worse when he was challenged over incorrect claims on his website that he lost close personal friends at the Hillsborough disaster in 1989, when 96 people were crushed to death at a soccer stadium.

At a public meeting organized by Hartshill and Harpfields Occasions, a community group, Mr. Nuttall mixed defiance with contrition when accused of lying. After blaming the news media and the establishment of smearing him, Mr. Nuttall, admitted that the Hillsborough claim was wrong, adding: “I have apologized to the people that matter, to the people involved. They have accepted it, and now there is nothing else I can really do.”

Mr. Nuttall's Labour opponent, Gareth Snell, has also been in trouble, after sexist Twitter messages made several years ago resurfaced.

“I was out of order,” said Mr. Snell, opting to get an apology in before one was demanded. His mea culpa out of the way, Mr. Snell acknowledged that times have changed and that in Stoke he can no longer “rely on the fact that generations of grandparents and parents have continued to vote Labour.”

“The Labour Party,” he said, “doesn't deserve loyalty. The Labour Party should be working hard for every single vote that it gets.”



In Britain's working-class heartland, a populist wave threatens to smash the traditional order

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

STOKE-ON-TRENT, England — For hundreds of years, this small-scale city in England's industrial north has been synonymous with pottery — colorful plates, bowls and tiles fired by workers in the heat of the local kilns and sold in fine ceramics shops the world over.

But come Thursday, Stoke-on-Trent could be known less for shaping crockery than for smashing it.

The British political order, virtually unchanged for a century as the Conservative and Labour parties have traded control, is under threat of a populist-infused realignment as the U.K. Independence Party seeks to capitalize on its success in last year's Brexit campaign.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

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Having helped to push Britain toward the departure lounge of the European Union, the anti-immigration UKIP is now seeking to displace Labour as the country's natural home for working-class voters.

And a Thursday election here to fill a vacant parliamentary seat, while minor in the overall calculus of British power, could be a telling indicator of just how far the country's politics have shifted in Brexit's wake.

To the right-wing UKIP, the seat represents a prime opportunity to break through with working-class

voters who have for decades habitually backed the center-left Labour Party but who feel increasingly disconnected from the party's cosmopolitan, white-collar outlook.

Known for its pottery — the area is blessed with exceptional clay — Stoke still produces vast quantities. But its once-burgeoning coal industry has disappeared, and the area's tidy central shopping district is pocked with vacant storefronts.

Like Rust Belt residents who helped deliver the White House to Donald Trump, Stoke's working class last year defied the pleas of Labour leaders who advocated for Britain to stay in the E.U. and instead made this city “the Brexit capital of Britain” — with nearly 70 percent of voters opting for “out.”

Now UKIP is hoping to convert those Brexit voters into supporters and in the process win just its third parliamentary seat since its founding nearly a quarter-century ago.

“Politics is changing,” said Paul Nuttall, a mild-mannered academic who succeeded the bombastic Nigel Farage as UKIP leader and is campaigning to represent Stoke. “It's not just changing in this country. It's changing all over the world.”

Unlike Farage, who focused UKIP firepower in the more traditionally conservative country landscapes of southern England, Nuttall has zeroed in on the struggling postindustrial centers of England's north. Traditionally Labour strongholds, they have become vulnerable as the party has become more detached from its roots, Nuttall

said in an interview at the party's purple-streaked offices in the city's center.

"The Labour Party is more London-centric than it's ever been. They talk about the issues that may concern an Islington dinner party — climate change, Palestine, free trade, human rights," Nuttall said, referring to the trendy north-London neighborhood that happens to be home to Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. "But those are not the issues on the doorstep in working-class areas. Those issues are immigration, cutting foreign-aid budgets, law and order, and putting British people first."

The echoes of Trump are no accident, even if Nuttall insists that, unlike Farage — an enthusiastic Trump booster — he didn't support the New York billionaire.

UKIP is hoping to use at least part of the Trump playbook and ride a populist wave to power.

But Labour has recognized the threat and is waging a determined battle to keep a seat it has held for nearly 70 years from falling into the hands of the far right.

"This is a defining moment," said Jack Dromey, a Labour member of Parliament who is directing the party's campaign here. "It's the moment where either UKIP breaks through or we turn the tide" against "a grotesque populism purporting to be the party of the working class."

The New York Times

Brexit holds enormous implications for British businesses, which stand to lose the right to move goods to and from continental Europe without tariffs or paperwork. Banks will probably have to relinquish the right to use London as a base from which to sell financial services across the European Union's 27 other member nations.

In the days after the vote, businesses, unprepared for the outcome, were in shock.

There was a "huge hunger for clarity," said Alan Leaman, the chief executive of the Management Consultancies Association, which has around 60 members.

Mr. Leaman compared the referendum result to the business equivalent of a highway pileup, with consultancies acting as the emergency services.

"When something very major breaks out, it is hugely disruptive," Mr.

Dromey, a former union leader, said voters in areas such as Stoke were right to feel discontent with a political establishment that hasn't always defended the interests of the working class.

"There's a distinct pride in Stoke. There's also a sense that Stoke is not the city it once was," he said as party activists rushed in and out of party headquarters bearing stacks of red Labour leaflets. "I understand why people feel the way they do."

But he depicted UKIP and Nuttall as opportunists, seeking to capitalize on the working class's grievances for their own gains.

"UKIP is a party with no answers," he said. "They simply seek to exploit discontent."

Analysts say the outcome of Thursday's contest is impossible to predict, with Labour, UKIP and even the ruling Conservatives jousting over a seat that is normally so comfortably in Labour's column that a vote count is hardly needed.

Rob Ford, a University of Manchester political scientist who co-wrote a book on UKIP, said that Stoke, with its high concentration of white, working-class and less-educated voters, is exactly the sort of seat UKIP has long coveted.

"On paper, it's an area where UKIP should do well," he said.

But paradoxically, its success in pushing Britain toward Brexit — and Prime Minister Theresa May's

insistence on following through on UKIP demands for a clean break with Europe — may have blunted the party's appeal. By promising to deliver on UKIP's core demand, May and her ruling Conservative Party have co-opted the anger that fed last year's referendum vote, at least for the time being.

"The large dissatisfied and distrustful element is still out there. It's just that they're unusually happy right now," Ford said. "They won't stay that way for too long."

If UKIP comes up short in Stoke, it would mark a significant setback to Nuttall's strategy of broadening UKIP's appeal by targeting working-class voters. The UKIP leader — who was Farage's longtime deputy — has already been damaged by claims he inflated his connections to the 1989 Hillsborough disaster, when 96 soccer fans were crushed to death at a crowded stadium.

But in many ways, Labour and its leader, Corbyn, have more on the line. The party is suffering from historically bad polling figures that, should they hold, point to a Tory rout in the next general election, in 2020.

On Thursday, Labour faces the prospect of losing not only Stoke but also another traditionally safe Labour seat, Copeland, where the Tories are running hard.

Corbyn, who shocked Britain by emerging from the far-left backbenches to become party leader in late 2015, has been unable to

satisfy the party's pro-E.U., progressive wing or its Euroskeptical, working-class base. If his party loses both seats Thursday, Labour could drift even further into the political wilderness.

"Corbyn is not their only problem," Ford said. "But he's made all their problems worse."

Those problems are easy enough to see on the streets of Stoke.

To Peter Doyle, a cheerful pub and hotel owner, Corbyn is "a waste of space" who hasn't used his role to defend Britain from the most dire impacts of Brexit. Instead of Labour, which sometimes gets his vote, Doyle will be backing the ardently pro-E.U. Liberal Democrats.

"I'm in business," Doyle said. "I've just come through one of the biggest recessions in British history. I don't want to go through another one."

But to Graham Patrick, a longtime pottery worker who is now retired, Labour's opposition to Brexit marks it as out of touch.

"Labour hasn't done much for us," said Patrick, who wore a faded blue Yankees cap with a purple UKIP rosette pinned to his chest as he walked through the pedestrianized city center Wednesday. "I just want a change. That's all."

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Karla Adam in London contributed to this report.

The Big 'Brexit' Winners? Lobbyists and Lawyers (UNE)

Stephen Castle

Leaman said. "For a period, what people want to understand is, 'What are the options, and what potential challenges are associated with this?'"

It is not just businesses that need advice. The British government had not prepared for Brexit, which may prove to be the Civil Service's biggest single task since World War II.

Since the European Commission covers trade negotiations on behalf of its member countries, there is an acute shortage of negotiators in London.

Tom Brake, the foreign affairs spokesman for the Liberal Democrats who campaigned to remain in the European Union, has so far failed to extract meaningful figures from the government about its consultancy spending, though he says that top trade experts charge up to \$10,000 a day.

"I suspect the government is racking up phenomenal costs," he said. "I am sure that the people who voted

to leave, who had genuine grievances about the lack of job opportunities, did not envisage that one of the side effects of Brexit would be many jobs for highly powered legal and consulting firms."

In one well publicized episode last year, Deloitte, the advisory company, apologized after a memo leaked by one of its employees suggested that the government had no plan for Brexit, estimating that up to 30,000 extra civil servants might be needed. After the leak, which infuriated ministers, Deloitte agreed not to bid for government contracts for six months, the British news media reported.

But where there is confusion there are opportunities. Most big advisory firms now offer Brexit advice, and smaller companies promote themselves as experts. One firm calls itself "Article 50 Associates," named for the European Union treaty article that Britain will use to withdraw, and describes itself as "a specialist political consultancy focusing on helping individuals,

enterprises, agencies and others navigate the twists and turns in the Brexit process."

All this activity has started a race to hire what is known in the consultancy world as "Brexit talent." Sometimes it almost seems as if the vote's campaign teams, have largely transferred to the private sector, where former rivals often work side by side. And the vote's outcome has not prevented some high-profile Remain campaigners from emerging as winners in the consultancy world.

Teneo, an advisory firm that has a "Brexit client transition unit," has taken on Craig Oliver, Mr. Cameron's former director of communications, as well as William Hague, a former British foreign secretary.

Portland Communications, a political consultancy and communications company, recruited Victoria Dean, a former British diplomat with experience in Brussels, to head up its so-called Brexit team; Henry Cook, a former aide to Michael

Gove, who was a cabinet minister and Leave campaigner; James Starkie, the network manager of Vote Leave; and Amy Richards, a former press office manager for the Remain camp.

Adam Atashzai, a former deputy political director to Mr. Cameron, went to Finsbury, a communications and public affairs firm, while Mats Persson, a former adviser to Mr. Cameron on European issues, is with EY, the professional services firm. David Chaplin, the director of strategic communications for the Remain camp, has joined Hill & Knowlton, a public relations group.

Edelman, a communications marketing firm (whose website asks clients, "Are you ready for Brexit?"), hired Lucy Thomas, a former deputy director of the Remain camp, and

Will Walden, a former adviser to Boris Johnson, a major figure in the Leave camp who is now the foreign secretary.

"It's no surprise agencies are snapping up people from the Remain and Leave campaigns given the huge complexities of Brexit for businesses," Ms. Thomas said. "For those of us who worked on the Remain side, it is bittersweet to have to advise on the big challenges ahead now that Brexit is a reality, but it is important that businesses have the best advice and are able to make their case loud and clear."

Generally, those who were employed by government as civil servants cannot lobby the government for two years, though that does not prevent them from giving strategic advice.

Though consultants normally charge less than trade lawyers, their fees can still run to several tens of thousands of pounds a month, with a top consultant asking more than \$6,000 a day, industry insiders say.

Some doubt that the Brexit bounce will last. Mr. Leaman noted that the health of the sector is related to the strength of the economy, which may suffer after the withdrawal. He also says that there are anecdotal reports that continental European companies are more reluctant to approach British companies for advice. But for now, he says, there is "a lot of activity."

Mr. Stephenson, too, accepts that Brexit work will likely be limited to the next few years, but said he thinks that withdrawal from the European Union will mean more

regulation in Britain's Parliament, an area in which his company specializes.

He rejected the idea that he is cashing in on uncertainty that he helped to create, arguing that he originally opposed holding the referendum but, when it was called, had to choose which side to support.

Mr. Stephenson still believes that Brexit will be good, not just for his company, but also for Britain. But he conceded that the views of his business partner, Mr. Gill, may be more nuanced.

"He vacillates," he said. "We don't agree on everything, but that's part of our strength. I think we do give a balanced picture."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Trump Is Right: Sweden's Embrace of Refugees Isn't Working

Jimmie Åkesson and Mattias Karlsson

Karlsson

Feb. 22, 2017 6:43 p.m. ET

When President Trump last week raised Sweden's problematic experience with open-door immigration, skeptics were quick to dismiss his claims. Two days later an immigrant suburb of Stockholm was racked by another riot. No one was seriously injured, though the crowd burned cars and hurled stones at police officers.

Mr. Trump did not exaggerate Sweden's current problems. If anything, he understated them. Sweden took in about 275,000 asylum-seekers from 2014-16—more per capita than any other European country. Eighty percent of those who came in 2015 lacked passports and identification, but a majority come from Muslim nations. Islam has become Sweden's second-largest religion. In Malmö, our third-largest city, Mohamed is the most common name for baby boys.

The effects are palpable, starting with national security. An estimated 300 Swedish citizens with immigrant

backgrounds have traveled to the Middle East to fight for Islamic State. Many are now returning to Sweden and are being welcomed back with open arms by our socialist government. In December 2010 we had our first suicide attack on Swedish soil, when an Islamic terrorist tried to blow up hundreds of civilians in central Stockholm while they were shopping for Christmas presents. Thankfully the bomber killed only himself.

Riots and social unrest have become a part of everyday life. Police officers, firefighters and ambulance personnel are regularly attacked. Serious riots in 2013, involving many suburbs with large immigrant populations, lasted for almost a week. Gang violence is booming. Despite very strict firearm laws, gun violence is five times as common in Sweden, in total, as in the capital cities of our three Nordic neighbors combined.

Anti-Semitism has risen. Jews in Malmö are threatened, harassed and assaulted in the streets. Many have left the city, becoming internal refugees in their country of birth.

The number of sex crimes nearly doubled from 2014-15, according to

surveys by the Swedish government body for crime statistics. One-third of Swedish women report that they no longer feel secure in their own neighborhoods, and 12% say they don't feel safe going out alone after dark. A 1996 report from the same government body found that immigrant men were far likelier to commit rape than Swedish men. Last year our party asked the minister of justice to conduct a new report on crime and immigration, and he replied: "In light of previous studies, I do not see that a further report on recorded crime and individuals' origins would add knowledge with the potential to improve the Swedish society."

Our nation's culture hasn't been spared either. Artists accused of insulting Islam live under death threats. Dance performances and art exhibitions have been called off for fear of angering Islamists. Schools have prohibited the singing of traditional Christian hymns because they don't want to "insult" non-Christian immigrants. Yet reports made with hidden cameras by journalists from Swedish public media show mosques teaching fundamentalist interpretations of Islam.

Sweden's government now spends an incredible amount of money caring for newly arrived immigrants each year. The unemployment rate among immigrants is five times as high as that of native Swedes. Among some groups, such as Somalis, in places like Malmö unemployment reaches 80%.

Our party, the Sweden Democrats, wants to put the security and welfare of Swedish citizens first. We are surging in the opinion polls and seem to have a good chance of becoming the country's largest party during the elections next year. We will not rest until we have made Sweden safe again.

For the sake of the American people, with whom we share so many strong historical and cultural ties, we can only hope that the leaders in Washington won't make the same mistakes that our socialist and liberal politicians did.

Mr. Åkesson is party chairman of the Sweden Democrats. Mr. Karlsson is the party's group leader in Parliament.

THE DAILY BEAST

How Boko Haram's Sex Slaves Wind Up as Sex Workers in Europe

Philip Obaji Jr.

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria—It's

minutes past 4:00 p.m. local time, and Sarah, as we'll call her, has just returned to her tent in an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp at the outskirts Maiduguri, the capital of Nigeria's war-torn Borno state.

She had spent much of her day in the heart of town meeting with a

woman who's promising to take her to Italy and find her a job. The young girl, who said she was 17, hasn't been told where she'll be working once she arrives at her destination. Yet she isn't bothered. All she wants is to get to Europe.

Sarah is not naïve. She knows that many of the girls who are taken from Nigeria to Italy end up as sex workers. She even suspects that will be the job she'll be asked to do once

she arrives in Europe, given the way her would-be benefactor has been communicating with her.

"She always tells me 'you are a fine girl,' whenever we are discussing," she told The Daily Beast at the camp where she has been for about a year now. "She says it wouldn't be difficult for a girl like me to find a job."

Living a life of abuse is what Sarah has faced since 2015, the year Boko Haram militants invaded her compound in Bama, about 50 miles southeast of this city, and dragged her from her home. She says she was taken to the terrorists' hideout in the Sambisa Forest where a number of jihadists took turns raping her.

Weeks after her abduction, she escaped from her captors in the

middle of the night when those guarding the camp had fallen asleep. She walked for long hours before reaching a settlement from which she was able to make her way to Maiduguri.

But the difficult life in many IDP camps here, where food is hardly enough for everyone, forced Sarah to turn to prostitution to survive.

"I was looking for money to feed myself and to buy medicine as I kept falling ill," she said. "Men don't give money without first sleeping with you."

Reports of female IDPs in Maiduguri prostituting for money and food have been on the rise for months.

A survey taken last September by NOI Polls, a Nigerian research group, indicated that almost 90 percent of people displaced by Boko Haram in the northeast of the country do not have enough to eat. The survey discovered that many women are trading sex for food and the freedom to move in and out of IDP camps.

State officials have been accused of stealing food rations, and also of raping and sexually exploiting women and girls living in the IDP camps in Maiduguri.

NOI Polls reported in the survey that 66 percent of 400 displaced people in the northeast said that camp officials sexually abuse the displaced women and girls.

Human Rights Watch in a report it released last October, that in July 2016 it documented sexual abuse, including rape and other exploitation of 43 women and girls living in IDP camps in Maiduguri.

Sarah is one of the many young girls who say they have suffered sexual abuse by men giving out aid in the camp.

The first time she had sex after arriving in Maiduguri was with a member of the city's vigilante group who sometimes distributed food to displaced persons.

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"I had to [agree to the man's advances] because I thought he will stop giving me food if I didn't." She said. "He kept putting pressure on me to go to bed with him."

After that first incident, Sarah continued to offer sex to those she thought had the money to pay, moving deep into the heart of Maiduguri to look for clients. It was in one of her outings that she met the woman who is promising to take her to Italy.

"She saw me enter a small restaurant to buy food and then came after me," Sarah said. "She said she had been seeing me in the area for some time and was monitoring me."

While Sarah is excited about traveling to Italy, she is anxious to find out what exact role she'll be playing once she gets to Europe, and what those helping her achieve expect to gain in return. The teenager is likely to be deceived in the same way thousands of vulnerable girls like her have been tricked in the past.

Usually, Nigerian women are fooled into believing they'll be given good jobs once they get to Europe. Often, traffickers take them to traditional shrines where they are forced to undergo a juju oath-swearing ritual that commits them to repay the money they owe to their smugglers on pain of death or insanity, and not to denounce them to the police.

Once in Europe, the women are told by their benefactors that they must work as prostitutes until they pay off debts ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000, according to a number of girls who returned recently to Nigeria after working for years as prostitutes in Italy.

Should Sarah make it to Italy, she'll be adding to the over 11,000 women

who have crossed the Mediterranean within the last 13 months, of whom 80 percent go on to live a life of forced prostitution, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Their journey isn't easy. The nearly 3,000-mile trip across the Sahel in pick-up trucks, in minivans and on motorcycles that will take Sarah to Libya's Mediterranean coast usually takes months to complete, and migrants on this route face possible beatings, rape, and forced labor by criminal networks in North Africa (PDF). At the end of it, not everyone seeking to reach Europe is successful.

Recently, over a hundred female migrants voluntarily returned to Nigeria after being detained for several months in Libya by border authorities as they tried to get to Italy. Some of the returnees said they were abused by Libyan immigration officials while in detention. It took the intervention of the IOM for them to be freed returned home.

"Most of the young ladies in detention camp were raped by Libyan officials," Bridget Akeama, who returned from Libya four months pregnant, reportedly told the News Agency of Nigeria. "If you refused their advances, it will be hell for you."

Nearly all the women who arrived at the Lagos airport come from southern Nigeria, a predominantly Christian region that has for years been a hub for smugglers taking advantage of girls desperately in need of "lucrative" jobs. Figures show that 80 percent of women trafficked to Italy come from Benin City, Edo State, in the same region.

But Sarah's impending move to Italy is an indication that traffickers have created a solid base in the northeast region where an eight-year-old insurgency has created a huge refugee crisis and made thousands of women vulnerable.

Stories of trafficking of women displaced by the Boko Haram

insurgency began to circulate more than two years ago when the jihadists seized a part of northeast Nigeria about the size of Belgium, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to flee to overcrowded IDP camps in relatively calm cities. The vulnerability of these women and poor structuring of these camps created an opening for traffickers to explore.

A report by Nigeria's Abuja-based International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR) published in 2015 alleged that hundreds of young girls have been trafficked from IDP camps, although most victims were from unregistered, makeshift camps established when official camps could no longer cope.

The report quoted an unnamed nurse as saying many children were brought to her hospital after being raped in the IDP camps, and it also alleged that refugees were being sold as unpaid domestic workers, raped repeatedly, and in some cases burned and wounded with knives.

One of the patients admitted to the hospital was a 15-year-old girl who said some government officials came to the camp she stayed in and took many young girls away and later sold them as slaves. She ended up in the house of a man whose brother repeatedly raped her.

As IDP camps offer little protection to inhabitants, they are growing concern that more young girls like Sarah will be exploited, a major concern for aid organizations and for the United Nations, which is offering extensive help in the region.

"Many [camps] are in fact the settings for violence, exploitation and abuse of the most vulnerable," Chaloka Beyani, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, said in a statement at the end of his visit to Nigeria last year. "The situation of women and girls in IDP camps and conflict affected areas is of particular concern and requires urgent action."



The Only Thing That Can Beat Merkel Is Anti-Merkel

Paul Hockenos

BERLIN — In early February, when Angela Merkel announced her fourth straight candidacy for Germany's chancellorship, she was a sure bet to walk away with it. She looked unbeatable — well on her way toward tying the record with Helmut Kohl as Germany's longest-serving leader. But that was a whole three weeks ago.

Since then, a peripheral figure from Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD) named Martin Schulz has unexpectedly stepped into the race and turned it inside out. In a matter of days, he shot up like a meteor in the polls, landing neck-and-neck with the chancellor. He outscores Merkel on credibility and likability. There's suddenly a real campaign on in Germany in advance of the national vote in September, and Germans say thank goodness.

The average German knows Schulz, a bald and bearded, 62-year-old Rheinlander with unglamorous, metal-frame glasses, mostly from what they've seen of him on television politicking in the European Parliament, the European Union's legislature, where he, very uncharacteristically for a German politico, made his career. In fact, his entire political biography is anomalous: Schulz, the youngest of five, was born to a Catholic, working-class family in the

diminutive village of Würselen, which lies just kilometers from the Dutch and Belgian borders. He dropped out of one of Germany's elite high schools to attempt a professional soccer career. He was a defender for local amateur side Rhenania Würselen until his career hopes were dashed by an injured knee — and upon failing at that ran a used book store with his sister in their hometown. His defeats and his demons drove him to the bottle, derailing his life.

But Martin Schulz picked himself up, ran for village mayor (a volunteer post for which he was the sole candidate) as a Social Democrat, and served in that office for a decade before winning a seat in the European Parliament in 1994. The Rhineland branch of the SPD had already discerned something special about Schulz when it lifted him out of Würselen and placed him on the Brussels stage.

He was a likeable, wily, gregarious man of the people with a penchant for doing battle in the political ring.

He was a likeable, wily, gregarious man of the people with a penchant for doing battle in the political ring. He could talk and talk, and in multiple languages, too. An autodidact, he already knew French and Dutch, and then on the job learned to speak Italian and Spanish — all fluently.

In Brussels, he flew up the scaffolding, heading Germany's social democratic faction first, then the parliament's all-EU socialist bloc. At the time, the EU legislature, which had so little power that critics mocked it as a jumped-up debating society, didn't usually make prime-time German news. Schulz briefly copped headlines in 2003 when he went toe-to-toe with Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who was then the president of the European Council president — though it was less for what he'd said or done than what was said to him. Schulz took the Italian to task for sponsoring an immunity law in Italy while he was on trial for bribery charges. "Mr. Schulz," Berlusconi shot back with a smile on his face, "I know there is a man in Italy producing a film on the Nazi concentration camps. I would like to suggest you for the role of leader. You would be perfect." (Later, Berlusconi falsely claimed that the Germans don't even acknowledge that Nazi death camps existed.) Other than that, however, in Germany at least, Schulz kept a low profile. In 2014, Schulz led the EU social democrats to a strong second-place finish in elections and was named the legislature's president.

Schulz's abrupt departure from Brussels and arrival in German politics was so astonishing because the SPD already had a top dog. Sigmar Gabriel was the party's designated *Kanzlerkandidat*. But under the rotund economy minister and vice-chancellor in the Merkel-led "grand coalition" of social and Christian democrats, the SPD's numbers went from bad (26 percent in the 2013 election) to worse (around 20 percent in polls in early 2017) — and appeared to be falling further by the month, despite a

booming economy and record-low unemployment.

"Gabriel realized that he simply stood no chance," says Stefan Reinecke of the left-wing daily newspaper *Die Tageszeitung*. "His downfall was due, largely, to the contradiction between his role as SPD frontman and, at the same time, as economy minister in Merkel's cabinet. He couldn't champion German business and the government, on the one hand, and speak out for workers, the unions and the have-nots, on the other."

Gabriel's demise was not out of the blue, but Schulz's dramatic appearance in Berlin and the overnight trajectory change in the fortunes of the SPD has observers scrambling for explanations and suddenly wondering what might be next. After all, the chancellor's sky-high popularity had dropped to mortal levels during and after the refugee crisis in 2015, but Merkel was still a shoo-in, most believed, as long as there wasn't another viable candidate. Then, out of nowhere, there was.

In terms of personality, Schulz is in many ways the "anti-Merkel."

In terms of personality, Schulz is in many ways the "anti-Merkel." He's a showman, loquacious, demonstrative, folksy, and empathetic — everything she isn't. Moreover, and more obviously though not less important, he's a man, from western Germany, a former athlete, father of two, and one of the guys. And there's a bit of populist in Martin Schulz from Würselen, too. He can shoot the breeze with the little man, and he appears to listen, too. Even the Rhinelander's name is down to earth: There are thousands of "Martin Schulzes" in Germany, Schulz being one of the most common surnames.

Moreover, in striking contrast to the ever-cautious, dispassionate Merkel, Schulz speaks his mind forthrightly, often from the cuff. The chancellor's patient, restrained response to U.S. President Donald Trump was classic Merkel. Her tough talk took the form of reminding Trump of the human rights content of the Geneva Conventions. Schulz, on the other hand, opted for an in-his-face approach from the get-go, calling Trump an "irresponsible man" and a threat to democracy. "Trump isn't just a problem for the EU," he said, "but for the whole world."

Schulz's energy is another factor that distinguishes him from an Angela Merkel who is nearing the end of a third, grueling term. "Schulz is pure adrenaline compared to Merkel," one EU insider close to the think tank community told me. Right

after Gabriel's sober resignation in the Willy-Brandt-Haus in Berlin, Schulz bounded onto the stage, seemingly gleeful about the prospect of taking on Merkel and becoming chancellor — as if he had been waiting his entire life for the opportunity. Since then, he's been crisscrossing the republic non-stop to meet with the common burgher, gauge their mood, hear their stories.

Merkel, by contrast, appeared lethargic and worn-out when she declared her candidacy. Had you turned off the television's sound, you might have thought she was reading her schedule for the following week. Her body language was tired. In fact, she had waited until just recently to announce because, insiders say, she was hesitant to run again. "Merkel's first two terms in office were pretty easy going," said Markus Feldenkirchen of the weekly magazine *Der Spiegel*, noting that the 2008 banking crisis was a legitimate, high-tension brouhaha. "But then came the whole migration crisis with so many of her allies against her. The battling with the CSU [Bavaria's Christian democrats] in particular took a lot out of her."

Apparently, Merkel was ready to hand over the baton — but there was no clear successor in the party to take it, so thoroughly had she expunged the CDU of rivals. Moreover, the shock of Brexit and the Trump presidency convinced Merkel that she was still needed in Europe at such a precarious moment. The CDU is betting on this, too — namely that in such volatile times, Germans want a steady hand on the rudder — and Merkel has proven she's that. But now it looks like, rather than finding an electorate seeking stability, the party underestimated the extent of Merkel-fatigue, and is now flailing in the wind, trying desperately to knock Schulz down to size.

Schulz's campaign material is straight out of the old SPD canon: pensions, wages, welfare, progressive taxation, social justice, the plight of the *kleiner Mann*. These are traditional social-democrat fare, which the SPD — to its distinct misfortune — has been unable to capitalize on since the early 2000s, when Germany's Social Democratic chancellor at the time, Gerhard Schröder, oversaw the passage of wide-ranging reforms that curbed worker's rights and cut taxes for the wealthy. Although supporters of the Schröder reforms, including Gabriel, claim they're largely responsible for the German economy's dramatic upswing since then, others say they were inconsequential and served only to alienate the SPD from its working-class constituencies. Indeed, the party still hasn't recovered. That is, unless Schulz,

who had nothing to do with measures, can woo back traditional SPD voters who either don't vote or drifted to other parties.

These are also the issues on which Schulz has to prove that he knows and cares deeply about. For two decades now he's hobnobbed around Europe's capitals, strategizing in the sanitized EU bubble of Brussels. There he didn't do anything for the little man. His credentials as a statesman — and a true-blue European — are flawless, but can he win elections, drive forward policy, and outfox German politicians who know the ropes in Germany?

Schulz has so far, and probably will in the future, steer as wide a berth as possible from the hot-button issues around refugees and migration. Essentially, he is on Merkel's side, but realizes that there's nothing to gain in these waters: Many traditional, blue-collar Social Democratic voters see migrants as a threat to their well-being, so much so that a slice of SPD faithful has peeled off to the party of the far right, the Alternative for Germany (AfD), which is almost certain to win seats in the Bundestag this year. Schultz does Merkel an enormous, though unintentional, favor by directing discourse away from the right-wing topics of security, integration, crime, terrorism, borders, and refugees that have hurt her so badly. A campaign centered on these topics plays right into the AfD's hands. But no candidate can ignore them forever, and Schulz may drop down some in the polls when he finally does engage.

Klaus Linsenmeier of the Brussels office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, a think tank close to the Greens, is of two minds about Schulz, who he's observed closely in the EU's capital. "He's no St. Martin but rather a cagey character who understands power and isn't bashful about vying for it," said Linsenmeier. "But I ask myself: What has Schulz ever really accomplished?" Linsenmeier admits that Schulz did help wrest significant competencies for the EU parliament, giving it real power in lawmaking, which raised its profile and made it much more than a debating society. "But neither in Würselen nor Brussels does he have much to his credit. And then he picked up and left Brussels last year, causing the grand coalition in the European Parliament to fall apart and now we have a very conservative president [Antonio Tajani] in his place. The left lost everything."

Schulz's campaign strategy isn't to attack Merkel directly. "This is what the far right is doing," says

Reinecke, referring to the AfD. "Schulz says he wants to do things differently, but not that differently. German voters are conservative and although Merkel's not fresh anymore, most Germans trust her," adds Reinecke. Schulz's strategy, says Reinecke, is to win back traditional SPD voters, a plan of attack that has its pitfalls in an essentially healthy economy with

record-low unemployment.

Moreover, Schulz and Merkel could well wind up collaborating closely in the chancellery. All signs point to a renewed grand coalition between the major parties. While Schulz and the Social Democrats claim that their preference is a leftist coalition of the SPD, the Greens, and Die Linke (the Left), the three parties will probably fall short of a majority. The

Christian Democrats' best bet will be the SPD, again. In fact, another grand coalition, one led by Merkel and Schulz — a liberal Christian democrat and a conservative social democrat — would probably work quite well. Even though Schulz is the anti-Merkel in terms of temperament and demeanor, he diverges only very little from the centrist Merkel on politics. On EU reform, eurozone politics, relations

with Russia, the rise of the far right, ecology, and the trans-Atlantic relationship, there seems to be precious little that separates Merkel and the Anti-Merkel. The two might offset and complement each other deftly — making Merkel's fourth, and last, term her most productive yet.



Bershidsky : Why the Dutch Turned Against Immigrants

Leonid Bershidsky

Soon after she moved into her new neighborhood, Ijburg, on the eastern outskirts of Amsterdam, in 2005, Xandra Lammers started a blog about it. Ijburg is a curious place, an architectural wonder, built in the middle of a lake on reclaimed land and partly on water. She still keeps the blog alive, but curiosity has given way to frustration: It's all about the unpleasantness of living next to Muslim immigrants.

"I used to vote Labor," Lammers told me. "I was quite politically correct. But now I no longer am." She is a determined supporter of Geert Wilders and his anti-immigrant, anti-Islam party, PVV, the front-runner in the Netherlands' March 2015 election. She is also a character in a book by nationalist writer Joost Niemoeller, called "Angry," published this month and already on the bestseller list. The anger fueling the Wilders campaign is real and tangible in the Netherlands, but -- like the anger of Donald Trump's voters in the U.S. -- it's rooted in the existence of parallel realities in a society where efforts at social and cultural integration have run into major obstacles.

Lammers' reality is stark. The owner of a translation bureau, she's a native Amsterdammer, forced out of the city center by steeply rising real estate prices. When she and her husband bought their house on the water in Ijburg, she says the real estate agent didn't tell her the neighborhood would become the arena of what she calls a "social experiment" -- an effort by the city government to put middle class homeowners and social housing renters in one innovative urban development. Initially, Ijburg had a village feel: People with similar backgrounds bought the houses so they could stay in Amsterdam, and soon they all knew each other. Then the immigrants started moving in, brought over from suburbs where their cheap housing was demolished; 30 percent of Ijburg housing turned out to be earmarked for the social renters.

"We have to share the gardens in some blocks, elevators in others," Lammers says. "So people started experiencing bad things -- cars scratched, elevators urinated in. There's now a mosque on my street, a radical one." (The mosque's Facebook page, removed since locals complained to the authorities, contained references to a radical preacher and to Islamic Brotherhood, an organization some countries consider terrorist).

Some of Lammers' immigrant neighbors soon found out what she was writing on her blog, and Moroccan youths started yelling "cancer whore" at her on the street, she says. According to the Amsterdam city government, Ijburg has one of the highest youth crime rates of all the city neighborhoods. Immigrants living in Ijburg have one of the lowest scores in Amsterdam on the Dutch government's integration scale.

Niemoeller, who presented the first copy of his book to Wilders, says the anger he described had to do with a sense of displacement. In Amsterdam, the middle class can no longer afford to live in the city center because of gentrification and the growing influx of tourists, but the cheaper neighborhoods where they have moved have been rapidly filling with families from Turkey, Morocco, Suriname and the Dutch Antilles. "The atmosphere on the street changes, and people feel they no longer belong," Niemoeller says. "But there's no place else to go." Lammers says she can't afford to leave her house and still stay in Amsterdam, where her small business operates.

Wilders became an anti-immigrant politician in part because he witnessed a similar change in his neighborhood. In the 1980s and 1990s, he lived in Kanaleneiland, an Utrecht neighborhood that, in those two decades, was transformed from nearly all-white to international, then to Muslim-dominated. Wilders has said in speeches that he was mugged and had to run for safety more than once. A long-time admirer of the Israeli far right, he blamed the changes on the nature of Islam. To

him and his supporters, mosques are "hate palaces" and North African muggers are "street terrorists."

Though Wilders supporters say the immigrants run the streets, they themselves don't feel that way. Murat, a car mechanic who moved to the Netherlands from Turkey 30 years ago, lives in the city of Almere, built from scratch since 1980 on a drained swamp east of Amsterdam. Almere is multiethnic, with about 30 percent immigrant population -- and a city council in which Wilders' PVV is the biggest party.

"If I tried to write a book about all the times when I was stopped in the street by the police for nothing, just because I have dark hair, or pulled over in my car for no violation, the book would be this thick," says Murat, spreading his palms about a foot apart. "If I could save enough money, I'd move back to Turkey, but good luck with that here." Murat says his Turkish name prevents him from getting better-paying jobs, and there are facts to support this: Last year, a Dutch think tank sent out identical resumes under different names and found that a native-born Dutch person's probability of being invited for a job interview was almost twice as high as a Moroccan immigrant's.

Then there's a third perspective -- that of the "leftist elite" Wilders is fond of denouncing. Rob Wijnberg, founder of the investigative journalism website De Correspondent, has written columns reaching out to Wilders voters in search of a common ground. When I ask him about the Muslims in his neighborhood -- he says there are many -- he shrugs. "They're just my neighbors," he says.

There's a factual basis for this worldview, too. The Netherlands is an exceptionally safe country. It has one-third the rape rate and one-fifth the murder rate of the U.S. Amsterdam is a safe city by European standards, too. I wandered in Ijburg after dark and saw no Moroccan teenage gangs hanging out on street corners. The streets were clean and largely

deserted. In Utrecht, I walked around Kanaleneiland. The kids frolicking on the Anne Frank School playground were dark-skinned, and the Turkish mosque next to the shopping center lacked a minaret. I felt safe and comfortable.

The problem is bringing all the conflicting -- and somewhat justified -- worldviews together. It's especially different in the Netherlands with its history of a pillared society, in which people of different religions and backgrounds never mingled. Marriages between Catholics and Protestants were frowned upon, but the general attitude was live and let live -- "liberalism as apathy," as Wijnberg puts it.

In part because of this traditional attitude, when the immigrants arrived as guest workers in the 1950s to rebuild the Netherlands after World War II and then jumpstart its industries, they just formed a separate pillar. They were especially easy for the Dutch to put up with because the government promised to send them back when their work was done. It never happened, of course -- but neither really did integration.

"The Netherlands is a segregated society," Wijnberg says. "It's not just black vs. white, it's also higher-educated vs. lower-educated. Because there are no churches, no schools, even no pubs to which to go together, the only place where we can bump into each other is probably a soccer game."

As in the U.S., Wilders supporters and their left-wing opponents read different newspapers and watch different TV channels. The idea of integration is less about melding the two sides than forcing one to adopt the other.

Wilders supporters are telling immigrants to adopt the host country's culture -- which, in the Netherlands' case, includes gay marriage, widely available abortion and euthanasia -- or leave. The immigrants say little, but they have closed the corner pub and replaced the traditional butcher's with a halal one. The leftists want the Wilders supporters to be less xenophobic

and more accepting of other cultures -- just like them. "We are intolerant of people who are intolerant of our tolerance," as political historian Hubert Smeets put it.

This being the Netherlands, a trading nation that prides itself on its ability to find a consensus, this tug of war will eventually result in some kind of compromise. Though Wilders probably won't govern after the March election since no big party

wants to form a coalition with PVV, Niemoeller expects his strong showing to shift the national consensus. "We have these almost mystical changes," he says. "Our elite changed to a 60's liberal mentality in one summer. We went from rejection to acceptance of euthanasia in one summer -- nobody could see why. So maybe we'll end up agreeing that Islam is a big problem in the same way."

The consensus is already shifting: The Netherlands has toughened its immigration policies in recent years, making family reunification more difficult, criminalizing illegal residence and moving to stricter curbs on dual nationality. With more Wilders representatives in parliament, further strictures are almost a certainty. Lammers doesn't expect Wilders to be able to ban all mosques as he promises, but she

hopes there will be a crackdown on immigrant crime, and one could see it happening despite a strong Dutch leftist tradition. To swing the pendulum back, the leftist and centrist political forces would need to put forward a unifying agenda of their own, and so far, it has eluded them.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Andrea Thomas

Updated Feb. 22, 2017 2:25 p.m. ET

BERLIN—Greece must embrace further structural overhauls before the International Monetary Fund can provide financial assistance, the fund's chief said Wednesday, adding that if more reforms are conducted, less debt relief will be needed.

"There is a lot of work that needs to be done before we can actually submit to the board of the IMF, which represents the international community, a proposed program," IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde said in an interview with German public broadcaster ARD.

Greece cannot have a "special deal," Ms. Lagarde said. Any deal "has to be evenhanded," she said, adding that "this is the mission and the duty we have to the whole membership" of the IMF.

Greece Needs Further Overhauls Before IMF Can Provide Funds, Lagarde Says

Ms. Lagarde said various areas of Greek policy need an overhaul.

"What we need now is discipline and is structural reforms that will help the country going forward in the medium- and long-term," she said.

"There is a pension [system] that is crying for reform," Ms. Lagarde said. "There is an income tax system which has such a narrow base that it is not sustainable in the long-term," she said, adding that it "needs change as well."

Ms. Lagarde's comments come after an earlier meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose government has called the IMF participation in the present Greek bailout "indispensable" and promised parliament the fund would participate.

European officials have said they are confident the Washington-based fund, which hasn't lent Greece money since 2014, will rejoin the

bailout program as a lender around the time of Europe's next disbursement.

The IMF, however, continues to insist that it first needs Europe to commit to relieving Greece's debt burden because the fund believes the country's debt level isn't sustainable.

Ms. Lagarde said Greece doesn't need a so-called haircut, or debt write-down, at present and international lenders have agreed on debt relief at the end of the program that expires in summer 2018.

If Greece completes its overhaul, it will only need "significant operation on the maturity and on the interest rate," she said.

Greece received its first bailout in 2010.

A small step forward in the negotiations on the country's next bailout tranche was made Monday

when eurozone finance ministers agreed that creditors would return to Greece to review its latest bailout of up to €86 billion (\$90.56 billion) in loans.

The return is expected to kick off actual negotiations on deep-ranging overhauls of the country's tax system, labor market and pensions system.

Creditors disagree on what level of budget surplus Greece must sustain and the sort of economic overhauls it should undertake.

Greece has agreed on drafting legislative measures for after 2018 but also for measures that should be taken in case the economic growth target of 3.5% of GDP isn't sustained this year, according to Greek officials.

The Washington Post

Ex-CIA officer jailed in Portugal for her alleged role in kidnapping a terrorism suspect

<http://www.facebook.com/ianshapira>

A former CIA officer was jailed this week by Portuguese authorities and expects to be extradited within days to Italy, where she faces four years in prison for her role in the kidnapping of a terrorism suspect in Milan 14 years ago, according to her attorney.

Sabrina De Sousa, 61, was one of 26 Americans convicted in absentia by the Italian judicial system for the February 2003 extraordinary rendition of Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr, also known as Abu Omar.

So far, none of the Americans have actually served time for their convictions because they had returned to the United States long before Italian courts ruled against them in 2009. But De Sousa, who holds dual American and Portuguese citizenship, moved to Lisbon in April 2015 to live near

relatives. She was briefly detained that year in Portugal on a European arrest warrant but released. Since then, she has lived with her husband in Lisbon but has been bracing for Portuguese courts to issue an official decree to ship her to Italy.

In an interview with The Washington Post on Wednesday, her attorney Manuel Magalhaes e Silva said the Portuguese judicial authorities recently handed down that final order, prompting her arrest at her home on Monday night.

"As always, she has a very good temper. Sabrina is a strong woman. She was expecting this. We knew at any time it could happen," Magalhaes e Silva said.

[Ex-CIA officer faces extradition from Portugal to Italy]

She is being held at a facility in Porto, the country's second-largest city. The attorney said De Sousa will

probably be flown to Italy within the next "four to six days."

De Sousa could not be reached immediately. The CIA declined to comment.

But De Sousa's attorney also said that Portuguese courts agreed to detain and extradite her to Italy on one condition: that she be given a new trial with a chance to present new evidence. He worries that the Italian government will not comply with the stipulation.

"If the Italian authorities don't comply with these conditions, that's a violation of the European arrest warrant," her lawyer said. "It's a political situation. It depends on the Portuguese government making a complaint, saying Italy is not respecting the rules of the warrant. The intention at this moment of the Italian authorities that there will be no second trial."

It is unclear what will happen if and when De Sousa lands in Italy. Her Italian attorney, Dario Bolognesi, told The Post that he has already asked Italian justice ministry officials for a pardon. If De Sousa is not pardoned, Bolognesi has asked local authorities that she be required to perform community service rather than serve out a four-year incarceration.

[A kidnapping in Milan unravels a spy's career]

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The saga began almost exactly 14 years ago, on Feb. 17, 2003, when two men snatched Abu Omar off the streets of Milan while he was walking to a mosque. He had been deemed a terrorist suspect and was

wanted by the CIA. He was flown to Egypt, where he was tortured in a prison but eventually released.

At the time of the kidnapping, De Sousa was registered as a State Department officer at the U.S. Consulate in Milan but technically worked as a CIA officer. She believed she possessed diplomatic protection because she did not serve as an "NOC," a covert operative with "nonofficial" cover who lacks immunity from a foreign government's prosecution.

In 2005, Italian prosecutors began investigating the case on the grounds that the operation violated local and international laws for arresting terrorist suspects in Europe. In early 2009, De Sousa resigned from the CIA, and later that year, Italian courts convicted her and two dozen other Americans for the rendition, based largely on emails and cellphone records. The episode embarrassed the agency for poor tradecraft, and it strained relations between the two countries,

alarming U.S. officials. They worry De Sousa's case shows how little diplomatic protection American government employees have while working overseas.

De Sousa has fiercely maintained she did not participate in the rendition and was chaperoning her son's ski trip that day. She has, however, said that she flew to Italy in 2002 as part of a group of CIA officers who met with their Italian counterparts to discuss the logistics of renditions. De Sousa said she

served as an interpreter between the services.

"This has set a terrible precedent," De Sousa told The Post last year. "This rendition was funded by Congress with approval of senior government officials in the U.S., Italy and Egypt."

INTERNATIONAL

The
Washington
Post

Away from Iraq's front lines, the Islamic State is creeping back in (UNE)

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

RAMADI, Iraq — The Islamic State is nearing defeat on the battlefield, but away from the front lines its members are seeping back into areas the group once controlled, taking advantage of rampant corruption in Iraq's security forces and institutions.

Police officers, judges and local officials describe an uneven hand of justice that allows some Islamic State collaborators to walk, dimming Iraq's chances of escaping the cycle of violence that has plagued the country since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

In the western city of Ramadi, retaken a year ago, officials say evidence against the accused disappears from police files, while witnesses are too scared to testify. A bribe of as little as \$20 can buy a laminated security pass granting access to the city.

Politics newsletter

The big stories and commentary shaping the day.

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In Salahuddin province, a mayor recounted how Islamic State members had returned to his small town, later saying he had received death threats. In Kirkuk, a woman said police were asking for tens of thousands of dollars to release her son, who is accused of helping the militants.

After three years of fighting, security forces are on the cusp of clearing the Islamic State out of Iraqi towns and cities, launching an offensive Sunday for the western half of Mosul, the group's de facto capital in

Iraq. But weakened by graft, the state is struggling to maintain control as the Islamic State and rival groups like al-Qaeda attempt to reestablish themselves in areas where they were once supported.

The plight of those majority Sunni areas also provides fodder for extremist groups to drive their recruitment. Parts of towns and cities have been reduced to rubble, with pitiful assistance for reconstruction and hundreds of thousands still displaced from their homes. Meanwhile, accusations of revenge attacks and human rights abuses by security forces have the potential to perpetuate rifts with the government.

The chaos risks unraveling the progress made by Iraqi forces backed by a coalition of allies including the United States, which spends \$12.5 million a day on air operations against the Islamic State and has spent billions more training and equipping Iraqi security forces.

"We are very concerned we will end up back at square one," said Eid al-Karbouli, a spokesman for Anbar's provincial council. He said Islamic State members have already started to seep back into the city, adding: "The locals know and recognize them."

It was in the Sunni cities of Anbar province that the Islamic State first gained a hold three years ago, seizing control of Fallujah and Ramadi and capitalizing on frustration with the Shiite-led central government that had manifested in months of protests.

Those areas are back under state control, but the U.S. military's previous struggle against militants in the province is still fresh in the collective memory. Following a U.S. surge in troops and the co-opting of Sunni tribal fighters, then-President

George W. Bush traveled to Anbar province in 2007 to highlight the "military success" against al-Qaeda. Five years later, the Islamic State formed out of the remnants of the group.

So far, the U.S.-backed campaign has focused on defeating the Islamic State militarily rather than addressing the reasons so many of Iraq's minority Sunnis initially turned to the group.

President Trump has said he instructed his administration to develop a "comprehensive plan" to defeat the Islamic State, but so far he has said little about what that might entail.

Iraqi commanders spearheading the fight complain that they don't have enough competent forces to hold recently recaptured areas. Reformed police forces are again riddled with corruption, and governance has been left to chronically weak institutions.

In Ramadi, Anbar's provincial capital, buildings are scarred by the two-year-long struggle for control between security forces and the Islamic State, the longest period of street-to-street fighting against the group. The government declared victory a year ago, but allegations that the militants are returning are widespread.

At checkpoints on the edges of the city, cars wait in long lines to be allowed in and out. A white laminated pass from Iraq's Interior Ministry allows residents who are not wanted by authorities to travel through freely. But officials say the cards can be bought easily, opening the city up to attack by allowing militants to move in and out.

In his office next to Ramadi's police station, Col. Ahmed Hussein Mohammed, the leader of a

regiment of tribal forces in the city, pointed at one of the small cards.

"The most important document right now is this," he said, adding that it costs as little as 25,000 dinars on the black market, or about \$20. He says many of the people his forces arrest are soon back out on the streets, with witnesses too afraid to give evidence against them.

Col. Yassir Ismail Moussa, a spokesman for the Anbar police, conceded there was "some corruption at checkpoints" and said there are plans to introduce new identity cards to deal with the issue. Some detainees are rumored to be Islamic State members, he said, but without witnesses or evidence, they must be released.

"This is our problem. Most witnesses don't have courage to come forward," he said, denying that police take bribes to release people or hide evidence.

But others say those problems are rife.

"There is a cancer in the body of the police. We need to get it out, otherwise it will kill us all," Karbouli said. "Right now it's a small fire, but we need to put it out before it becomes a major fire that will burn the whole province."

The Islamic State lost much of the support it had garnered after people experienced living under the group, making it difficult for it to take territory again. Still, there is a problem with "sleeper cells," Moussa said.

In majority Sunni areas like Ramadi, the Islamic State is not the only group attempting to reassert itself.

Last August, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri called on Sunnis in Iraq to reorganize and wage a "long-term guerrilla war" to oust the government from their cities. He

urged al-Qaeda members in Syria to assist, criticizing the mistakes of his rival, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State.

"No way can al-Qaeda come back," Moussa said, adding that al-Qaeda members have all switched allegiance to the Islamic State and are on the run in the province, pushed out to its border areas.

But the Institute for the Study of War warned last week that a Sunni insurgency is forming in Iraq and that al-Qaeda is trying to gain traction in it. Other Sunni extremist groups, including the Naqshbandis and the 1920s Revolution Brigades, are likely to take advantage, it said.

At the courthouse in Ramadi, Judge Ali Fadhawi said the system is overwhelmed. The ceiling sags from the impact of explosions, a reminder that not too long ago, the building was in the middle of a war zone.

The court tries to dispense justice as best it can, said Fadhawi, but there are not enough judges or police officers.

"All this is not normal. We are sitting here, with the destruction all around us," he said. "What can we do? Life must go on."

Fadhawi said the investigatory court here is dealing with more than 300 terrorism-related cases, but no one has been convicted. He said some of the accused bribe their way out of the system.

"That exists, to be honest, it's happening," he said. But most of the Islamic State's leaders have been killed or have fled, he added. "We

do our best in order for none to get away without punishment."

Some residents have taken matters into their own hands.

One warm evening last summer, Mustafa al-Alwani pulled his truck to the side of the street near his home in Ramadi and fired three bullets into another man's chest.

He said the man was an Islamic State member responsible for killing his brother.

"There is no justice here," the 31-year-old policeman explained. "You have to make your own."

The men were members of the same tribe, and Alwani said it was well known that the man was part of a sleeper cell that ambushed police forces in the days before the city fell to the militants. More than a dozen officers were killed, including his brother, whose body was later found in a mass grave, he said.

Alwani filed a legal complaint, but no arrest was made. So he informed the leader of their tribe that he would kill the man unless he left the city.

"After the government didn't do anything, I decided to take my revenge," he said, adding that his brother's killer was previously affiliated with al-Qaeda.

Three of Alwani's brothers have been killed by the Islamic State or al-Qaeda and another one lost his legs in an attack since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

An arrest warrant has now been issued for Alwani, though he said he's not worried and has continued

to fight the Islamic State with his police unit in Mosul.

"In Anbar, the law of the tribes is stronger than the law of the government," said Sheikh Omar al-Alwani, a tribal leader. He said that if 10 people signed a petition saying a house belonged to an Islamic State member, the tribe would blow it up.

With tribes and militias often acting as judge, jury and executioner, complaints of extrajudicial killings, beatings and detentions are increasing.

Innocent people inevitably get swept up in the fray.

Lists of accused collaborators contain "an indescribable number" of names, said one intelligence official in Ramadi, who spoke on the condition of anonymity in line with protocol. "On mine there are tens of thousands, but national security, police stations, they all have their own lists."

Those with family members in the Islamic State are often banned from returning home and face revenge attacks. One young man, whose brother was an Islamic State member, described how he was pulled out of his car by tribal militiamen south of Mosul and beaten and robbed because of his family's links to the group. He's now too afraid to be named for fear of reprisals.

In an open letter to Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, a Facebook page called Mosul Eye, which has chronicled life in the city under the Islamic State, warned that abuses by some parts of the security forces

were creating humiliation for the local population, while "huge corruption" meant that Islamic State members were going free.

Fadila Abdelaziz Saleh said her son was accused of working on an Islamic State water tanker in her village south of Mosul. She denies that he did, saying her family fled the village just weeks after the militants arrived.

She discovered the accusations when the village was retaken and families began returning. A list of the wanted circulated on Facebook, and he was on it.

A year ago, security forces arrested her son at their temporary home in a half-constructed building in Kirkuk.

After he was tortured, she said, he confessed to joining the Islamic State for three days and working on the tanker. He also said he guided the militants to two police officers' houses, which were then destroyed.

Sitting on the floor of her icy home, Saleh tried to negotiate her son's release from prison. "I don't have the money to pay \$20,000," she cried into her cellphone. "If it was \$1,500, maybe I could pay that, maybe a bit more. Maybe if it was \$5,000 we could find it."

She said the police had first asked for \$35,000.

"If you have money, you can get away with anything," she said.

The New York Times **ISIS Says British Militant Carried Out Suicide Attack in Iraq**

Kimiko de Freytas-Tamura

"It is correct that Jamal al-Harith was released from Guantánamo Bay at the request of the British government in 2004," Mr. Blair said. "This followed a massive media and parliamentary campaign, led by The Daily Mail, the very paper that is now supposedly so outraged at his release, and strongly supported by the then-Conservative opposition."

Mr. Blair added that the compensation was agreed to in 2010 by the government of the Conservative prime minister at the time, David Cameron.

"The fact is that this was always a very difficult situation where any government would have to balance proper concern for civil liberties with desire to protect our security, and we were likely to be attacked whatever course we took," Mr. Blair said.

"The reason it did take a long time for their release was precisely the anxiety over their true affiliations," he added, referring to Mr. Harith and other Britons who had been held at Guantánamo.

Mr. Blair did not say he knew for certain that Mr. Harith was the man who carried out the bombing claimed by the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL. His comments were limited to pushing back against criticisms of Mr. Harith's release.

The Islamic State released a photograph of a militant it said was the bomber. The Times of London quoted a man named Leon Jameson as saying that the person in the photograph was his brother, Mr. Harith. "It is him, I can tell by his smile," Mr. Jameson said. "If it is true, then I've lost a brother."

However, neither American nor British officials verified that the

militant was Mr. Harith, who was also known as Ronald Fiddler.

"There is no independent confirmation of the identity of this man who is believed to be dead in Mosul," the prime minister's office said in a statement.

Maj. Ben Sakrison, a spokesman for the Pentagon, said in a statement: "I can confirm that an individual named Jamal Malik al-Harith was detained in the Guantánamo Bay detention facility from February 2002 to March 2004, when he was released to the United Kingdom. However, we cannot confirm his death, as the occurrence of the same name does not necessarily equate to this being the same individual."

According to Defense Department documents, Mr. Harith was born in 1966 in Manchester. He was detained by the Taliban in Pakistan, and then held by the Taliban in Kandahar, Afghanistan, where he

was detained by American forces in October 2001.

He was transferred to Guantánamo Bay in February 2002. That September, Maj. Gen. Michael E. Dunlavey, who was in charge of intelligence operations at Guantánamo, recommended that Mr. Harith be approved for release or transfer, based on an assessment that he "was not affiliated with Al Qaeda or a Taliban leader."

Nonetheless, Pentagon officials had their doubts about the man. They noted that he had traveled extensively in the Middle East from 1992 to 1996, and that he had joined a Qaeda operative who went to Sudan in 1992 at the same time that Osama bin Laden was active there. The recommendation that he be released was overruled by Maj. Gen. Geoffrey D. Miller, the commander of the Guantánamo operation from November 2002 to March 2004.

However, the case of Mr. Harith and several other British citizens held at Guantánamo became divisive, and the British government — then led by Mr. Blair — helped secure their release.

On Wednesday, Alex Carlile, a lawyer and member of the House of Lords who served as an independent reviewer of terrorism legislation in Britain from 2001 to 2011, explained the reasons for the financial settlement with Mr. Harith. He said that the settlement “should

not have been necessary,” but that if the government had not made the payment, it would have had to disclose national security secrets.

Mr. Carlile said it was disturbing that the government did not appear to have knowledge or control of Mr. Harith’s movements after he returned to Britain. “It’s a quandary,” he said. “It is absolutely plain and clear that he had significant radical associates.”

He added: “He was in this country, and he was able to leave and fight

for ISIL, and that raises questions on border checks. That said, he had lain low, so attention was put on people who were more active.”

A number of Britons have gone off to fight for the Islamic State. Perhaps the most prominent was Mohammed Emwazi, nicknamed Jihadi John, who was killed in a November 2015 airstrike near Raqqa, Syria. Mr. Emwazi was shown in videos in late 2014 and early 2015 killing several American and other Western hostages.

According to the Islamic State communiqué, the fighter who went by the name Britani blew himself up in a car bomb on Monday during an attack on the Iraqi Army and allied militias in the village of Tal Kisum, southwest of Mosul. It was not clear if others were wounded or killed.

In a related attack, an Iraqi militant detonated a car bomb targeting a Russian-made tank in the area, according to the memo.

**The
New York
Times**

More U.S. Troops May Be Needed Against ISIS in Syria, a Top General Says

Michael R. Gordon

But one option being considered is for American troops to step up their support of the fighters by firing artillery, shooting mortars, helping with logistics and significantly expanding efforts to advise them, much as the United States is doing for Iraqi forces in the battle for Mosul.

In late January, President Trump gave the defense secretary, Jim Mattis, 30 days to develop a “preliminary plan” to defeat the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL. That deadline is fast approaching.

Mr. Trump has not said what steps he is prepared to take to make good on his campaign vow to hasten the defeat of the Islamic State. But he has a high regard for American generals and for Mr. Mattis, and he is likely to be receptive to their recommendations.

General Votel’s trip to the region and a visit Mr. Mattis recently made to Iraq are intended to help the Pentagon refine the plan that is presented to the White House.

The United States has about 500 Special Operations troops in Syria. If the American military presence were to be expanded, additional personnel could come from

conventional combat units, though General Votel stressed that he would not recommend deploying large combat formations.

“We want to bring the right capabilities forward,” he said. “Not all of those are necessarily resident in the Special Operations community. If we need additional artillery or things like that, I want to be able to bring those forward to augment our operations.”

Raqqa has long been an objective for the American-led campaign. In addition to serving as the Islamic State’s capital, it has been a sanctuary for militants who have plotted to carry out terrorist attacks in Europe.

But the mission to seize Raqqa has been seriously complicated by Turkey’s vociferous objections to any effort by the United States to arm the People’s Protection Units, a Kurdish militia in northern Syria known by its Kurdish initials, Y.P.G.

American military officers have said that the Y.P.G. is the most capable Syrian fighting force and the best hope for mounting an attack to capture Raqqa in the coming weeks. To conduct urban warfare, however, the group needs to be equipped with armored vehicles, heavy machine guns and other arms.

Turkey, however, has denounced the Y.P.G. as a terrorist group. The United States ambassador in Ankara, American officials say, has cautioned that proceeding with the plan to arm the Kurdish group could prompt a major Turkish backlash, which could ultimately undermine American military efforts in Syria.

After months of sharp debate within his administration, President Barack Obama concluded during his final week in office that the United States should arm the Y.P.G., former administration officials said. But Mr. Obama left the ultimate decision to the Trump administration, which had informed his national security adviser that it wanted to conduct its own review of military strategy.

Many observers say that if arming the Y.P.G. is ruled out, it could take a long time to cobble together an alternative force that could draw on Turkish-backed Syrian militias and other fighters. How effective that force might be is unclear. The Turkish military and the Syrian fighters it backs have had a difficult time trying to seize the northern town of Al Bab from the Islamic State even though American teams have been inserted with Turkish units to call in American airstrikes.

General Votel did not detail how the United States might proceed if the White House ruled out equipping the

Y.P.G. in deference to Turkish concerns. But he asserted there were several ways to keep up the pressure against Raqqa, including making greater use of American troops.

“We might bring potentially more of our assets to bear if we need to, as opposed to relying on our partners,” he said. “That’s an option.”

“There could be other forces that we potentially bring in to do this,” General Votel added. “It could be a different approach to how we go after the city in terms of changing our tactics.”

Toward the end of his administration, Mr. Obama approved the use of three Apache attack helicopters to support the Raqqa offensive. Expanding the use of Apaches, which have yet to be deployed in Syria, could be an option as well, observers say.

What has been successful “for us in the campaign thus far, I think, has been simultaneous pressure on the Islamic State and continuing to present them with lots of dilemmas,” General Votel said.

**The
Washington
Post**

New anti-Islamic State plan could change U.S. strategy in Syria

By Karen DeYoung

President Trump’s developing plan to defeat the Islamic State may lead to significant alterations in the Syria strategy that Trump inherited from Barack Obama, including a reduction or elimination of both long-standing U.S. support for moderate opposition forces fighting against the Syrian government and the use of Syrian Kurdish fighters as the main U.S. proxy force against the militants, according to U.S. officials.

A memorandum signed late last month by Trump ordered the Pentagon and other national security agencies to draft a new proposal by late February. Trump has made clear in public statements both before and since his inauguration that he is eager to increase U.S. firepower against the militants, and willing to add more troops beyond about 500 U.S. Special Operations troops currently on the ground in Syria.

In addition to calling for “new coalition partners,” possibly to include operational coordination with Russia, Trump also ordered recommendations to change any existing military rules of engagement that are more stringent than what is required by international law.

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The most prominent of these are a series of restrictions, contained in an executive order Obama signed last summer, designed to limit the number of civilian casualties caused by U.S. air attacks.

Senior officials familiar with the effort said the overall goal is to narrow the U.S. lens to focus more intensely on the Islamic State and other terrorist groups, without the distractions of Syria’s civil war, the needs of “nation-building,” or the promotion of democracy.

"We're still sorting it out," Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said of the Syria planning during a Monday visit to Baghdad. "It's not been all decided on who's going to do what and where. We're working together to sort it out."

[Syria has secretly executed thousands of political prisoners, right group says]

On the table when Obama left office was an urgent Pentagon request for approval of its existing plan to conquer Raqqa, the Islamic State's de facto capital in Syria. The plan called for arming the Syrian Kurds of the People's Protection Units, or YPG, whose fighters have been the main force in U.S.-assisted efforts to clear the Islamic State from northern Syria, along the Turkish border.

Backed by U.S. and coalition air power and Special Operations advisers behind the front lines, the YPG and a smaller group of Syrian Arab fighters are now within a few dozen miles of Raqqa, where they are awaiting a final White House decision.

The Obama approach has been vehemently opposed by Turkey, which considers the YPG an extension of its own separatist and outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. U.S. cooperation with the Syrian Kurds caused a significant breach between the Obama administration and the government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and there have been high hopes in Ankara that the Trump White House would be more receptive to its concerns.

In a Feb. 7 phone call with Erdogan, Trump was noncommittal. Since then, top U.S.

national security officials — including CIA Director Mike Pompeo, Mattis and the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr. — have been told in face-to-face talks with their Turkish counterparts how important the issue is to Ankara, according to those Turkish officials.

In a meeting in Munich on Monday, Vice President Pence reportedly told Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim that the United States wants a "fresh start" in relations with Turkey. Yildirim told Turkish reporters he was optimistic that a new approach will emerge for Raqqa.

Turkey has proposed several different versions of a plan to take the city, all of which involve Turkish troops, more U.S. personnel and Syrian Arab fighters, and exclude the YPG. It has also pushed for establishing a safe zone in a 25-mile deep strip along the border — including territory in which the YPG is already operating with U.S. acquiescence.

The proposals are politically attractive to the Trump administration, which has issued its own call for a safe zone in which displaced Syrians could be lodged. They also potentially open the door to cooperation with Russia, whose warplanes have aided Turkish troops that have already moved into Syrian territory to the town of al-Bab, west of the area of Kurdish control.

Turkey could also provide artillery and transport considered crucial for the fight against the Islamic State in Raqqa. In the operation to eject the militants from the city of Mosul, in next-door Iraq, conventional Iraqi army ground forces have made

good use of heavy weaponry, but no such equipment is available in Syria.

Gen. Joseph Votel, head of the U.S. Central Command, referred to the problem during a visit Wednesday to Amman, Jordan, telling reporters traveling with him that the Raqqa offensive might require more U.S. troops. Local forces in Syria "don't have as much firepower," he said, apparently referring to the Kurdish-dominated force, "so we have to be prepared to fill in some of those gaps for them."

But Turkey's plans also pose significant challenges. In addition to assuming a larger U.S. force on the ground, they require the U.S. military to abandon a trusted force that has played the leading role in driving the Islamic State from much of northern Syria, in exchange for Turkish and Syrian Arab forces about which there are significant reservations. A midstream change of that magnitude could also mean a significant delay in a Raqqa offensive, initially anticipated to take place this spring.

Both the U.S. military and the intelligence community have doubts about the wisdom of cooperating with Russia, whose primary interest is preserving its own strategic equities in Syria and whose principal ally there is Iran.

As it considers Turkey's proposals, the Pentagon is maintaining a constant dialogue with Ankara to ensure that there is a feasible way forward to secure Raqqa, said a senior Defense official, one of several who discussed planning and were not authorized to comment publicly.

Also to be decided is the future of a three-year-old CIA program to train and equip the moderate opposition fighting against the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his Russian and Iranian allies. Its scope has been limited by unease over sending sophisticated weaponry to groups that fight in proximity to an al-Qaeda affiliate also attacking the government.

During his presidential campaign, Trump regularly disparaged the opposition fighters, saying, "We have no idea who these people are." Instead, he suggested that the United States should shift its attention away from Syria's civil war and join forces with Assad and Russia against the Islamic State.

Since then, Russian and Syrian bombing — bolstered by Iran, Lebanon's Hezbollah, and Shiite militia forces from Iraq — has driven thousands of opposition fighters from Aleppo and other parts of Syria into rural enclaves and into northwest Syria's Idlib province, an area dominated by Jabhat al-Nusra, the al-Qaeda group now known as Jabhat Fatah al-Sham.

In recent weeks, opposition groups have complained that their supply lines appear to be frozen, although it is unclear if that is a temporary state or the administration has already made a more permanent decision to cut them off.

Michael Birnbaum in Brussels and Dan Lamothe and Thomas Gibbons-Neff in Washington contributed to this report.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

John McCain Makes Secret Trip to Syria in Midst of U.S. Assessment

Dion Nissenbaum

Updated Feb. 22,

2017 4:13 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) secretly traveled to northern Syria last weekend to speak with American military officials and Kurdish fighters at the forefront of the push to drive Islamic State out of their de facto capital of Raqqa, according to U.S. officials.

The unusual visit, which officials said was organized with the help of the U.S. military, came as the Trump administration is debating plans for an accelerated military campaign against Islamic State, also known by the acronyms ISIS and ISIL.

Mr. McCain, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, first traveled to rebel-controlled Syria in 2013, when he met with leaders of the Free Syrian Army, the umbrella

group supported by America and its allies. This was believed to be his first visit to Syria since then.

U.S. officials familiar with Mr. McCain's trip said that the senator traveled to Kobani, the Syrian town on the Turkey border controlled by Kurdish forces since 2012.

In a statement, Mr. McCain's office confirmed that a trip took place, saying the senator "traveled to northern Syria last week to visit U.S. forces deployed there and to discuss the counter-ISIL campaign and ongoing operations to retake Raqqa."

Mr. McCain is believed to be the first U.S. lawmaker to travel to the Kurdish-controlled area of northeastern Syria since it became a hub for American special-operations forces who are aiding local forces in the fight against Islamic State.

The short visit came in the middle of a regional trip that took Mr. McCain from Saudi Arabia to Turkey, where he discussed evolving plans to counter Islamic State in the Middle East.

After traveling to Syria, Mr. McCain met with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the Turkish capital. Mr. Erdogan is pushing the Trump administration to sideline the Kurdish fighters that U.S. military leaders view as a vital ally in the fight against Islamic State.

It is rare for U.S. politicians to travel to Syria. Last month, Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D-Hawaii), secretly traveled to Damascus, where she held a controversial meeting with President Bashar al-Assad. Last year, Brett McGurk, America's special envoy for the international coalition to defeat ISIS, traveled to Kobani and met with Kurdish

fighters, creating an uproar in Turkey.

Ankara views the U.S.-backed Kurdish forces in Syria as terrorists aligned with Kurdish separatists in Turkey embroiled in a yearslong battle for more autonomy. Mr. Erdogan and other Turkish leaders criticized Mr. McGurk after he was photographed receiving a plaque from a leader of the Syrian Kurdish force.

Mr. McGurk, who was asked by the Trump administration to stay on in his job, is in the thick of a debate over when and how to launch an assault on Raqqa.

President Donald Trump has asked the U.S. military to present him with a new plan to destroy Islamic State, and the report is supposed to be finished by the end of the month.

Central to the debate is whether or not to rely on Kurdish forces to take Raqqa, a city with a Sunni majority that is likely to be wary of Kurdish control.

U.S. officials involved in the debate say that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to launch a successful assault on Raqqa in the coming months without working with Kurdish

forces. Turkish leaders have been pushing the Trump administration to sideline the Kurdish fighters, but they have not presented a viable alternative plan, U.S. officials said.

**The
New York
Times**

El-Haddad : I Am a Member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Not a Terrorist

Gehad El-Haddad

TORA, Egypt — I

write this from the darkness of solitary confinement in Egypt's most notorious prison, where I have been held for more than three years. I am forced to write these words because an inquiry is underway in the United States regarding charges that the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization to which I have devoted years of my life, is a terrorist group.

We are not terrorists. The Muslim Brotherhood's philosophy is inspired by an understanding of Islam that emphasizes the values of social justice, equality and the rule of law. Since its inception in 1928, the Brotherhood has lived in two modes: surviving in hostile political environments or uplifting society's most marginalized. As such, we have been written about, spoken of, but rarely heard from. It is in that spirit that I hope these words find light.

We are a morally conservative, socially aware grass-roots movement that has dedicated its resources to public service for the past nine decades. Our idea is very simple: We believe that faith must translate into action. That the test of faith is the good you want to do in the lives of others, and that people working together is the only way to develop a nation, meet the aspirations of its youth and engage the world constructively. We believe that our faith is inherently pluralistic and comprehensive and that no one has a divine

mandate or the right to impose a single vision on society.

Since our inception, we have been engaged politically in the institutions of our country as well as socially to address the direct needs of people. Despite being the most persecuted group under former President Hosni Mubarak's rule in Egypt, our involvement in the Parliament, either in coalitions with other political groups or as independents, is a testament to our commitment to legal change and reform. We spoke truth to power in an environment full of rubber-stamp parties. We worked with independent pro-democracy organizations against plans to hand the presidency to Mr. Mubarak's son. We also worked closely with an array of professional syndicates and labor unions.

During the one year of Egypt's nascent democracy, we were dedicated to reforming state institutions to harbor further democratic rule. We were unaware of the amount of pushback we would receive from hard-liners in these institutions. We were ill-equipped to handle the level of corruption within the state. We pursued reforms through government, ignoring public protest in the streets. We were wrong. By now I am sure many books have been written about what we got wrong, but any fair analysis of the facts will show that we are fundamentally opposed to the use of force. Our flaws are many, but violence is not one.

Nothing speaks more to our unequivocal commitment to nonviolence than our continued insistence on peaceful resistance, despite unprecedented state violence. Over the last four years, Gen. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has taken power, clamped down on the opposition and presided over a campaign of brutal repression. State authorities are responsible for extrajudicial killings, disappearances of hundreds of civilians and the detention of tens of thousands of political prisoners. This continued escalation in repressive measures has been described by independent human rights organizations as constituting crimes against humanity. Despite all of that, we hold on to our belief that political disagreements should be settled with deliberation, not fear-mongering and terror. We remain committed to our ideals of community development, social justice and nonviolence.

We have long heard that violent groups were "spawned" by the Muslim Brotherhood or were our "offshoots." This is wildly misleading. In the cases where people did leave the Muslim Brotherhood to embrace violence, they did so specifically because they found no path in our philosophy, vision of society or movement for such extremism. A great many of these extremists — if not all — consider us apostates and politically naïve. This is not an issue as simple as distaste for our political naïveté, but is in fact recognition that our philosophy renders their

extremist ideology irrelevant. Not only is our movement based on a deep conviction that morally upright societies prosper, but its peaceful reformist approach has also guaranteed its longevity, as history has demonstrated. Our movement has outlived intolerant societies, repressive regimes, violent rebel groups and the rapid drive to a clash of civilizations by extremists the world over. To attribute terrorism to us is akin to attributing the violence of Timothy McVeigh, who set off a deadly bomb in Oklahoma City in 1995, to patriotism, or white supremacist ideologies to Christian teachings.

The Muslim Brotherhood has devoted the larger part of its involvement in public life to providing social service programs in poor neighborhoods, including free clinics, food banks and academic and logistic support to poor college students. We fill a void created by corruption, absence of state provision and lack of an adequate civil society.

In hindsight, I regret that political maneuvering created distance between us and the people we have long lived to serve, a hard-learned lesson from the Arab Spring. We recognize our political mishaps, but the leap from public deliberation to detentions and fallacious designations is preposterous, shortsighted and an alarming precedent.

**The
Washington
Post**

Editorial : South Sudan's man-made famine demands a response

FOR VICTIMS of

hunger in South Sudan, the world has been tilted into a bleak tableau of want. By international standards, 42 percent of the population is now classified as "severely food insecure," an unprecedented level, and many are enduring the most severe trial of all, famine. By the peak of the lean season in July, nearly 5.5 million people could be in crisis.

South Sudan was already vulnerable to climate-related shocks to agriculture, but this crisis is largely man-made, as the humanitarian group Oxfam and the State Department both pointed out this week. Newly independent in 2011, South Sudan was split by a senseless and destructive civil war

in 2013, and now the country is fragmenting into violence-racked shards that are impeding humanitarian aid, collapsing markets, disrupting traditional agriculture and consigning millions to hunger and malnutrition. The United States, its allies and the United Nations could have done more, and done it earlier, to stop the fighting, curtail the flow of weapons and bring about better conditions for humanitarian aid. Last year's effort to impose an arms embargo failed in the U.N. Security Council for a variety of reasons, including lack of willpower. Will the Trump administration care at all about a nation the United States helped found after years of war and that now seems to be falling ever deeper into the abyss?

Opposition leader Riek Machar, who battled President Salva Kiir over the past few years, has fled the country but left behind forces that are still fighting. Mr. Kiir's troops are also engaged in a campaign of violence and coercion that has forced hundreds of thousands to flee into camps and across South Sudan's borders. Separately, fighting has intensified in the southern Equatorias, where disaffected tribes have taken up arms. The violence has terrible spillover effects: roadblocks, suspicion and other obstacles that make it very difficult for humanitarian aid to be delivered. Mr. Kiir's government has waged a particularly nasty crackdown on civil society, too, that has put aid workers in the crosshairs.

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The latest food-shortage projections are particularly worrisome because they show the food crisis is enveloping areas in the south that were once considered a reliable breadbasket. We're told this kind of food insecurity hasn't been seen in three or four decades. In the north-central part of the country, two counties are classified as being in "famine" from February to July, and a third is likely to experience it.

The United States has provided more than \$2 billion in humanitarian

relief from 2014 until now. More will be necessary, but just as important is stopping the violence that is driving more people into

displacement and desperation and making it more difficult to help those who need it. The impetus rests on Mr. Kiir first of all. He has rebuffed

many appeals from Washington and elsewhere in recent years, but the United States must not abandon efforts to curb the fighting that is the

man-made core of this expanding misery.

The Washington Post Editorial : Mexico may strike back. Here's how.

TRUMP has a good idea of the power the United States wields over Mexico, and the pain it may inflict — the construction of a wall Mexico fiercely opposes; taxes that could be slapped on Mexican imports, wreaking havoc on its economy; deportations of undocumented Mexican immigrants living in the United States, who would be thrust back into a country that would struggle to absorb them. Mr. Trump might have a fuzzier idea of the pain Mexico, its people furious and its pride wounded by his taunts and contempt, might inflict on the United States.

Start with those deportations. At least half of America's 11 million unauthorized immigrants are Mexican, but many have no documents proving their nationality. For the Trump administration to deport them, it would need cooperation from Mexico, which cannot be forced to accept deportees without certifying that they are Mexicans. As former Mexican foreign minister Jorge G. Castañeda has already warned, Mr.

Trump can round up hundreds of thousands or millions of migrants, but without Mexico's cooperation, they could clog U.S. detention centers and immigration courts — at enormous cost and, conceivably, for years.

Consider, too, the effect on America's southern border if Mexico were to loosen immigration controls on its own southern border — the one over which Central American refugees are already streaming north in near-record numbers. Even with what U.S. officials say are aggressive interdiction efforts by Mexican authorities, the Border Patrol detained more than 220,000 mainly Guatemalans, Hondurans and Salvadorans crossing from Mexico into the United States in the fiscal year ending last fall, exceeding the number of Mexicans apprehended, which has fallen to a 45-year low. If you think the Border Patrol is swamped now, as Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly insists, imagine if Mexico, which last year sent home more than 140,000 Central Americans, simply stepped aside.

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U.S. and Mexican officials work closely on an array of other bilateral concerns, from drug trafficking and organized crime to human smuggling and antiterrorism programs. Privately, U.S. officials may grouse that their counterparts aren't always paragons of efficiency; they also acknowledge that, without Mexico's help, combating crime and controlling the border would be infinitely more difficult.

In launching his presidential campaign, Mr. Trump called Mexicans rapists, and he has taunted the Mexican government at every turn. Those displays of public humiliation are not constructive elements in diplomacy; they may easily come back to haunt Washington. Already, his disdain has inflamed Mexican popular opinion, improving the prospects of

Mexico's anti-American left in next year's presidential elections.

(Reuters)

Just one day after the White House unveiled sweeping plans to ramp up deportations of illegal immigrants, Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson are set to meet with high ranking Mexican officials. Tillerson and Kelly in Mexico amid hostile relations (Reuters)

Mr. Kelly, who as a Marine led U.S. Southern Command, said in his confirmation hearing that partnerships "as far south as Peru" are more important to U.S. border security than building a wall. Along with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, he headed to Mexico on Wednesday, just after the Department of Homeland Security released its new deportation guidelines. If the goal was to widen bilateral cooperation and soothe the harsh feelings Mr. Trump has engendered with our neighbor and ally, the timing was pitiable.

The New York Times Rex Tillerson Arrives in Mexico Facing Twin Threats to Relations (UNE)

Gardiner Harris and Kirk Semple

The timing adds to the deep tensions between the two countries. Mr. Tillerson, the top American official to visit Mexico since Mr. Trump's inauguration, arrived with John F. Kelly, the secretary of Homeland Security, only a day after the Trump administration released documents ordering a crackdown on immigration in the United States.

Newspapers here have described the Trump administration's new deportation policies in apocalyptic terms, saying in some cases that they represented "war" on the millions of Mexicans in the United States.

Mexico's foreign minister, Luis Videgaray, said Wednesday that the package of immigration directives is "something that, without doubt, worries all of us Mexicans" and will be "the first point on the agenda" when he meets with his American counterpart.

Nothing about the meetings this week is likely to be easy, for either side. Mr. Tillerson met with Mr. Trump in the Oval Office just before his departure, but there have been

few signs that the secretary of state plays a pivotal role in setting the administration's foreign policy agenda. He has largely been absent from important White House meetings with foreign leaders, has uttered few words in public since his confirmation and was not even allowed his choice of a top deputy.

Instead, Mr. Tillerson has largely been assigned to tidy up the confrontations Mr. Trump has had with longtime allies. Last week, he went to Germany to reassure his European counterparts that Mr. Trump valued NATO and the European Union, despite the president's statements to the contrary.

Mr. Trump's rift with Mexico is not only deeper, but also is likely to worsen.

For the Mexicans, the meetings will be an important step toward deciding whether to battle or appease an administration that has consistently excoriated their country.

It is a choice leaders around the world are grappling with. Japan's prime minister, Shinzo Abe, courted and flattered Mr. Trump, seeming to succeed in reversing decades of Mr.

Trump's criticisms of Japan. China's president, Xi Jinping, seemed to publicly ignore Mr. Trump for weeks before Mr. Trump reversed himself on questioning the "One China" policy that nation holds so dear.

The Mexicans seem to be using a combination of outreach and complaint that has so far proved ineffective, as the twin blows this week demonstrated.

The review of American aid due on Friday, for instance, is likely to highlight about \$1 billion that has been allocated but not yet spent under the Merida Initiative, a bilateral partnership begun in 2007 that focuses on fighting organized criminal groups, re-engineering the judicial system, modernizing the border between the two countries and strengthening civil society groups.

Most of the American foreign aid to Mexico is provided under the aegis of the initiative. Since it was signed, Congress has appropriated more than \$2.8 billion for those programs, of which at least \$1.6 billion has been delivered to Mexico, according to a report in January by the Congressional Research Service.

Some Mexican officials and civil society leaders have been alarmed by the suggestion that Mr. Trump could cut assistance to key initiatives that bolster community-building and the rule of law to help pay for a wall that many on both sides of the border say would probably fail to stop the flow of illegal drugs, weapons and immigration.

But perhaps even more worrisome to Mexico is the threat to deport to millions of its citizens who, with settled lives and jobs in the United States, provide most of the nearly \$25 billion in remittance payments to Mexican families every year.

The Trump administration also said it planned to detain non-Mexicans who had crossed the southwest border with the United States and send them back to Mexico to await the outcome of their deportation proceedings.

Though American officials said that this measure would be done only after discussions with the Mexican government, Mexican officials and legal experts rejected the idea as a violation of Mexican law and international accords.

At an event in Mexico City on Wednesday, Mr. Videgaray said, "I want to make clear, and in the most emphatic way, that the Mexican government and the Mexican people do not have to accept orders that a government seeks to impose unilaterally on another."

That threat to saddle Mexico with other countries' migrants is one reason Mexican officials could emerge from their meetings this week deciding to fight rather than appease the Americans. For months, in the face of a hostile stance by Mr. Trump, President Enrique Peña Nieto adopted a

largely conciliatory strategy, not allowing himself to be provoked by the American president despite increasing calls from the Mexican electorate for a tougher stance.

Then last month, Mr. Peña Nieto canceled his meeting in Washington with Mr. Trump, prompting a rare uptick in his woeful approval ratings. The Trump administration responded by accusing Mexico of burdening the United States with undocumented immigrants, criminals and a trade deficit.

If relations worsen significantly, Mr. Peña Nieto could make life difficult

for Mr. Trump by limiting or stopping Mexican cooperation on a range of fronts, analysts said.

Beyond the billions in trade, the two countries cooperate on many security issues. Mexico could limit its sharing of information, like the lists of passengers aboard international flights, and loosen visa rules for citizens of nations suspected of harboring terrorists.

It could also limit its cooperation in the realm of migration by, for example, detaining fewer unauthorized migrants traveling from Central America and allowing more

people to reach American borders. Mexico, which has long provided a militarized buffer against the flow of drugs to the United States, could also relax its prosecution of the drug war.

Mexico "has many cards to play," said Carlos Heredia, a professor at CIDE, a Mexican research center. "Mexico must approach these conversations knowing the issue of bilateral cooperation and security is deeply intertwined with immigration issues and regional, commercial integration."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Córdoba

Updated Feb. 22, 2017 11:14 p.m. ET

MEXICO CITY—Top U.S. officials arrived for talks here Wednesday to find a defiant Mexican government refusing to accept President Donald Trump's tougher immigration and deportation policies.

"I want to make it emphatically clear that neither Mexico's government or the Mexican people have any reason to accept provisions that have been unilaterally imposed by one government on the other," Mexico's Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray said at a ceremony on Wednesday.

"We won't accept it because we don't have to," he added, in an apparent reference to U.S. plans to return illegal migrants to Mexico, regardless of their nationality.

Mr. Videgaray's declaration spelled trouble for Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly, who a White House official said were sent to "talk through the implementation" of Mr. Trump's guidelines.

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Felicia Schwartz and José de

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- Trump Administration Tightens Deportation Rules

Almost everybody living in the U.S. illegally is now subject to deportation, and more undocumented arrivals at the southern border would be jailed or sent back to Mexico, under memos issued Tuesday by the Trump administration.

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The battle over the next Supreme Court justice will soon shift into a higher gear with less than a month to go before Judge Neil Gorsuch appears before a Senate panel considering his nomination.

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President Trump selected Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, an active duty Army officer now director of a key military integration and operations center, as his next national security adviser.

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TRUMP'S FIRST 100 DAYS

Mexico City's objection was the latest blow to U.S.-Mexico relations, which have frayed amid Mr. Trump's vow to build a border wall estimated to cost \$21 billion at Mexico's expense and his plan to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement between the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The rupture

resulted in the cancellation of a state visit last month by Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto.

The White House on Wednesday brushed aside the ramped-up tensions between the two countries. "The relationship with Mexico is phenomenal right now," White House press secretary Sean Spicer said.

Messrs. Tillerson and Kelly met with Mr. Videgaray and other government officials Wednesday night, and were scheduled to meet with Mr. Peña Nieto Thursday. Mr. Tillerson also will meet again with Mr. Videgaray and other officials then.

Mr. Trump's new guidelines, which flesh out executive orders signed by the president last month, call for enlisting local U.S. authorities to enforce immigration law, jailing more people pending hearings, and sending border-crossers back to Mexico to await proceedings, even if they aren't Mexican.

It is that detail of the new plan that has kindled the most acrimony in Mexico. Mexican officials said it meant the U.S. would deposit Mexicans and non-Mexicans alike on the southern side of the border, whether Mexico agreed to the plan or not. Mexican officials view the plan as an affront to Mexican sovereignty.

U.S. statistics show most of those entering the U.S. illegally through the southwest border are from countries other than Mexico.

Of more than 400,000 people apprehended in the year ending Sept. 30, more than 220,000 weren't from Mexico, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Most were fleeing violence and poverty in Central America.

Mr. Videgaray said Wednesday that the new guidelines would be the main topic of the high-level discussions with Messrs. Tillerson

and Kelly. He said Mexico would use all legal means to protect the rights of Mexicans in the U.S., and could call on the United Nations and other international institutions to that end.

At a news conference in Guatemala before continuing to Mexico, Mr. Kelly said Mr. Trump's executive order in January was aimed at returning undocumented immigrants to their countries of origin. He said the order "emphasized the mission of intercepting irregular immigrants from many countries on our borders, treat them humanely and return them to their countries of origin as fast as possible."

Mr. Kelly's message in Guatemala was aimed at discouraging people from making the trip to the U.S. by telling them they would quickly be returned, officials said. The guidelines issued separately this week suggested the U.S. would seek to have people arriving from countries other than Mexico await their deportation proceedings in Mexico rather than in the U.S. At the end of that process, those people would be returned to their country of origin, officials said.

Ahead of the trip by Messrs. Tillerson and Kelly, senior administration officials sought to play down the rift with Mexico, saying Mr. Tillerson and Mr. Kelly aimed to clarify U.S. policy and find ways to work together with the country.

"This trip is focusing on how we can build a constructive relationship, work through our common interests on security, on migration, on the economic elements of the relationship," a senior administration official said. "The wall is just one part of a broader relationship that we have."

Another administration official said the visit aimed to "help our counterparts in Mexico understand clearly what is happening and how

we see things, and not just relying on rumor or stories that they hear elsewhere.”

Tuesday’s directive also includes a review of all federal aid the U.S. provides to Mexico. In his Jan. 25 executive order, Mr. Trump ordered every executive department and agency to identify and quantify all sources of direct and indirect aid to the Mexican government over the last five years. That includes funding for development projects as well as economic, humanitarian and law-enforcement assistance.

Agencies have until the end of this month to report back to Mr. Tillerson, who is to submit a summary report to the White House.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Feb. 22, 2017 12:00 p.m. ET

MOSCOW—Ukraine’s former president, living in self-imposed exile in Russia, has sent President Donald Trump a peace plan on ending the conflict in Ukraine, in the newest freelance effort by a Ukrainian politician to reach out to the White House.

The proposal by Viktor Yanukovich, who fled Ukraine amid protests against his rule in 2014, will land in Washington amid a breakdown of the current European-brokered deal to end the three-year conflict and an unclear foreign-policy direction in the Trump administration.

The letter is unlikely to be taken seriously or have much chance of success, analysts said, because Mr. Yanukovich has little support in Ukraine and little credibility in the West after he fled to Russia, from where he makes infrequent statements that chime with the Kremlin’s positions.

But separate efforts by Mr. Yanukovich and a Ukrainian lawmaker who wanted Mr. Trump’s lawyer to deliver a peace plan to the White House are underscoring the discord in Ukraine and uncertainty in international capitals over how to end the conflict, which has cost some 10,000 lives.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Updated Feb. 23, 2017 12:28 a.m. ET

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia—The hit squad assembled here quickly from three countries and practiced at least twice at posh shopping

U.S. officials said trade would be part of the talks in Mexico, but top U.S. and Mexican trade officials aren’t attending the meetings. Ahead of the visit, Mexican officials suggested that a U.S. pullout from Nafta would affect all aspects of U.S.-Mexico ties.

“Logically, there wouldn’t be incentives to continue collaborating on the issues most important to national security in North America, such as the issue of migration,” Mexico’s economy minister, Idefonso Guajardo, told local newspaper Milenio in an interview published Tuesday.

In addition to tariff-free cross-border trade, Mexico and the U.S. have

collaborated for decades on efforts to fight drug cartels, police the border and prevent terror attacks.

Mark Feierstein, a former senior aide to President Barack Obama on Latin America, said the measures represent a “dramatic and frankly unnecessary shift.”

“It’s pretty hard to screw up the U.S.-Mexico relationship and they managed to do it in a matter of days,” he said.

Mexican officials want to use issues including national security and migration as leverage for future talks about Nafta, experts said. The U.S., in examining aid to Mexico, also appears to be searching for leverage in future talks. The U.S.

pledged \$135 million in assistance to Mexico this year.

“Mexico wants to link those issues in a way that has rarely been done before,” said Duncan Wood, director of the Mexico Institute at the Wilson Center, a Washington think tank. “There’s never been a need for that and Mexico has avoided it as much as possible, but now there is a need, so they’re doing it.”

—Laura Meckler and Robbie Whelan contributed to

Ukraine’s Ex-President Viktor Yanukovich Pushes Peace Proposal

James Marson

Fighting between Ukrainian government troops and separatist forces backed by Russia flared again in Ukraine’s east this month, the latest blow to a peace deal thrashed out by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France two years ago.

“It’s a sign that the implementation of the current agreement is untenable,” said Balazs Jarabik, a nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “People are fed up with war, but the Ukrainian government can’t agree to anything that could be seen as a betrayal.”

Mr. Yanukovich, in an interview with a handful of Western reporters on Tuesday, shared a 10-page letter he said he’d sent to Mr. Trump and other Western leaders. He called for pressure on Ukraine’s government to fulfill its side of the peace deal by handing broad autonomy to separatist-held territories, and floated the idea of a referendum on the status of the eastern Donbas region, partly held by the militants with covert Russian backing.

In Donbas, “the wounds are still bleeding, the war is continuing,” he said. “In order to bring peace, time is needed ... for the wounds to heal.”

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko says that Russia should withdraw its troops and hand back

control of the border before Ukraine will hold elections and give more powers to the region. Russian officials, who deny their troops are there, say elections should take place first.

Earlier this year, Andriy Artemenko, a lawmaker with limited profile in Ukraine, tried to send a separate peace plan to the White House via a group of Trump associates in a move that has angered some in his country.

Mr. Artemenko sought to get the proposal to the White House through Felix Sater, a Russian-born New York developer who has worked with Mr. Trump on real-estate projects, and Michael Cohen, a Trump Organization lawyer whose wife was born in Ukraine and who is a close confidant of the U.S. president.

It is unclear if the plan, first reported by The New York Times, ever reached the White House. Mr. Cohen said in an interview that he didn’t deliver it.

Ukrainian prosecutors opened a criminal investigation into whether Mr. Artemenko’s proposal amounted to treason for offering to lease Crimea, which Moscow annexed in 2014, to Russia. Mr. Artemenko denies any wrongdoing.

Oleh Lyashko, leader of the Radical Party, kicked Mr. Artemenko out of his parliamentary faction.

“Russia is an aggressor, Russia is an occupier, and Russia should get the hell out of Crimea and Donbas,” he said.

At a meeting with military commanders Wednesday, Mr. Poroshenko criticized Ukrainian politicians for “weaving intrigue and impeding diplomacy” in Washington.

But Mr. Poroshenko is facing a dilemma. He has dwindling popular support and has taken a tough line on Russia, narrowing his options to make a deal. At the same time, surveys show that Ukrainians are tired of war and the accompanying economic pain.

Some 65% feel that the conflict is continuing because it is beneficial for the government and oligarchs, according to a December survey by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology. Activists and some lawmakers are blocking coal shipments from separatist-held regions, saying it enriches tycoons and fuels the conflict.

—Michael Rothfeld in New York and Alexandra Berzon in Los Angeles contributed to this article.

How the Hit Team Came Together to Kill Kim Jong Nam

Ben Otto and Yantoultra Ngui

malls before executing their brazen assault at the airport.

Such emerging details are feeding suspicions here and in South Korea that the killing last week of Kim Jong Nam, half brother of North Korea’s mercurial dictator, was a well-orchestrated plot directed from Pyongyang.

An official at the North Korean Embassy here and an employee of the country’s state-owned airline were identified by police on Wednesday as among the seven suspects still at large.

And the intrigue continues: Police also said that someone tried to break into the morgue where Mr.

Kim’s body is being kept, leading them to tighten security there.

Malaysia’s Inspector General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar rejected claims by two women, now in police custody, who said they thought they were playing a prank for a hidden-camera TV show in attacking Mr. Kim on Feb. 13.

The suspects “knew what they were doing” when they smeared a toxic substance on his face, he said, and had rehearsed the operation with some of the North Korean suspects, still at large, at two upscale malls, including one at the Kuala Lumpur City Center, site of the iconic Petronas Twin Towers.

One of the women, 28-year-old Doan Thi Huong of Vietnam, was lodging near the airport with a giant teddy bear that she had carried from hotel to hotel, witnesses said.

The other, Siti Aisyah of Indonesia, had just celebrated her 25th birthday with friends at the Hard Rock Cafe here, one friend told The Wall Street Journal. The night before the killing, she hadn't been feeling well, she told her mother in Indonesia by phone.

On the day of Mr. Kim's death, the group reassembled at the airport terminal. Four North Korean male suspects sat with Ms. Huong in a cafe, chatting in a mix of Malay and English, an airport worker told the Journal. Several associates moved around nearby, including Ms. Aisyah, who sat with a young Malaysian caterer who police said was her boyfriend, this person said.

Just before 9 a.m., Mr. Kim arrived to catch a 10:50 a.m. AirAsia flight to Macau. Ms. Huong and Ms. Aisyah applied a toxic cream or liquid to their bare hands, police said, and moved into position.

The next sequence has been viewed millions of times in a surveillance video posted on YouTube and news sites around the world: Mr. Kim paused to look up at a giant departures board before walking past the restaurant to a self-check-in kiosk. There, the two women approached him from different sides and in swift movements at least one appears to apply something to his face.

The footage seemed to show Mr. Kim rocking back on his heels, stunned or confused, as the women slipped quickly away in opposite directions. He started toward a bathroom before doubling back and going to the departure hall's main

information counter. Police said that he told an airport employee what had happened and that he was feeling dizzy.

The women washed their hands, police said Wednesday, and then left the airport, at least one of them by taxi. Four of the North Koreans passed through immigration, three of them flying to Jakarta, Indonesia, and later that night to Dubai, Malaysian and Indonesian officials said.

The North Korean who had provided Ms. Huong with the toxic substance left the airport by taxi, one official told the Journal.

Mr. Kim was escorted downstairs to the airport's medical clinic, where he had a seizure. He was carried by stretcher to an ambulance and died en route to the hospital.

Malaysian police say they suspect Mr. Kim was poisoned but are still awaiting the results of a toxicology report and an autopsy.

South Korea's spy chief has described Mr. Kim's death as the fulfillment of his half-brother Kim Jong Un's assassination order.

Malaysian authorities are trying to determine why Mr. Kim visited the country on Feb. 6, arriving on a North Korean passport with the fake name Kim Chol. It was a trip Mr. Kim had made several times before, often staying near the North Korean Embassy, until 2013, when the ambassador, a friend, was recalled to North Korea and executed.

Investigators have struggled to assess the scale of the alleged plot. “We looked through everything, the trash, too,” one officer said. Complicating the matter, the security camera closest to the assault wasn't working at the time of the assault and the others captured events unclearly.

Police caught a break two days after the killing when Ms. Huong returned to the airport, planning to fly to Vietnam, and security personnel recognized her from security footage.

Later in the day, police tracked down the Malaysian man, 26-year-old caterer Muhammad Farid Jalabuddin, who they said was Ms. Aisyah's boyfriend. A few hours later, at 2 a.m., they arrested Ms. Aisyah at a hotel far from the airport, setting in motion a chain of arrests that ultimately led to the arrest of a North Korean man, Ri Jong Chol, at a Kuala Lumpur condominium. Officials said they planned to release Mr. Jalabuddin.

Investigators have since tried to piece together how the various players interacted, especially the role of the North Korean men who sat at the departure hall restaurant, a Malaysian-themed outlet called Bibik Heritage, and the others nearby.

Ms. Huong, from a coastal province near Hanoi, once studied pharmacology in Hanoi, her father told local media in Vietnam. Police told the Journal they believed she had traveled to North Korea with one of the men at the airport. She flew from Hanoi to Kuala Lumpur just before Mr. Kim arrived, then checked into a \$20-a-night transit hotel near the airport two days before the assault.

“She had this huge stuffed teddy with her,” one of the employees there recalled.

Over the next few days, Ms. Huong would stay in three different hotels, the teddy bear in tow, and cut her shoulder-length hair into a bob. Ms. Huong could speak Malaysian, police said, but appears to have spoken English at the hotels.

Ms. Aisyah, a quiet divorcee whom police called a spa masseuse, had recently arrived in Malaysia by boat from Indonesia, just weeks after flying to Cambodia, Malaysia and Indonesia.

She seemed to work regularly and have a full social life in Kuala Lumpur. Her family thought she worked in a clothing store on an Indonesian island near Singapore and occasionally traveled to Malaysia to shoot hidden-camera style prank videos they had never seen.

The women told police they believed they had been taking part in such a video prank involving Mr. Kim, a claim police rejected Wednesday.

One of the North Korean suspects, Mr. Ri, lived in Malaysia since late 2013, having dabbled in palm oil and other exports, a man who helped arrange his visa said.

“He's a very humble man, not aggressive,” the man said. “Didn't talk much. Didn't talk about other subjects. Only mushroom and palm oil.”

But Mr. Ri had never worked for the company listed on his work permit, and other reports suggested he was a trained chemist. Police described Mr. Ri, 46, as a driver for the other North Koreans.

Police say another North Korean man appears to have given Ms. Huong a poisonous substance to use on Mr. Kim.

One of the eight North Korean suspects was identified Wednesday as second secretary at the North Korean embassy, who last entered the country in September, police said. Officials said another was employed by Air Koryo, an airline that no longer has an office in Malaysia.

On Wednesday, police urged the North Korean Embassy to hand over the suspects from the embassy and the airline to help the investigation. Air Koryo couldn't be reached for comment.

“We submitted the request today,” Mr. Khalid said. “If they refuse to cooperate, then we will issue warrants of arrest on both of them.”

A staff member at the North Korean embassy in Kuala Lumpur said Thursday that the embassy had not received any such request.

—Gaurav Raghuvanshi, Jake Maxwell Watts and Celine Fernandez in Kuala Lumpur and Anita Rachman in Jakarta, Indonesia, contributed to this article.

**The
New York
Times**

Choe Sang-Hun

Kim Jong-nam's Death: A Geopolitical Whodunit (UNE)

Richard C. Paddock and

In the days since the killing was caught on video, the drama has had an ever-expanding and multinational cast of characters — women from Indonesia and Vietnam accused of carrying out the attack, one of whom was apparently wearing a white shirt emblazoned with the letters LOL; a Malaysian boyfriend; and others believed to be North Korean agents.

On Wednesday, Malaysia's police chief, Khalid Abu Bakar, said a senior diplomat at the North Korean Embassy and an employee of the North Korean state-owned airline, Air Koryo, were also wanted for questioning. Another North Korean, who was not identified, was also being sought. Mr. Khalid also said that extra police officers had been sent to the morgue where Mr. Kim's body was being kept after an

attempt to break into the facility was detected.

North Korea has refused to even acknowledge that the dead man was Kim Jong-nam and has accused Malaysia of carrying out a politically motivated investigation to placate South Korea and the United States.

North Korea has nonetheless demanded that the body be sent

there and, in a statement on Wednesday, the North Korean Embassy said the two women were innocent and should be freed.

If the women really had poison on their hands, the embassy statement said, "then how is it possible that these female suspects could still be alive?"

One possible theory is that each woman used a single chemical that became lethal only when mixed with another. The Malaysian police, however, said that the substance or substances used in the attack had not yet been identified.

North Korea has denied any involvement in the killing, which is likely to anger China, its main ally, which has been seen as a protector of Kim Jong-nam.

Mr. Kim had long been on a hit list drawn up by his half brother, Kim Jong-un, according to South Korean intelligence. The younger Mr. Kim, 33, has ordered the execution of scores of senior officials, including at least one disfavored relative, and may have been prompted to act if he believed that Beijing saw his half brother as a possible replacement for him.

Malaysian authorities say the two women arrested, Doan Thi Huong, 28, and Siti Aisyah, 25, were recruited, trained and equipped by four North Koreans who have since fled to their home country.

If the attack was a plot by North Korea, it would not be the first time it had tried to kill Kim Jong-nam.

In 2010, according to South Korean investigators, a North Korean agent based in China received a special order from Pyongyang: "Terminate" Kim Jong-nam and bring his body to the North.

That agent, Kim Young-soo, was told that Kim Jong-nam was going to travel to China from Singapore, where he was then living. The agent's boss gave him a bundle of cash and ordered him to bribe a taxi driver to run over Mr. Kim in a fake traffic accident.

The plot was scrapped when Mr. Kim failed to arrive as planned. But it came to light in 2012, when the agent was caught entering South Korea and confessed under interrogation.

Since 2011, when Kim Jong-un succeeded his father as North Korea's ruler, there has been a standing order to assassinate his half brother, South Korean intelligence officials said last week. There was another assassination attempt against him in 2012.

Mr. Kim was so afraid that he begged for his life in a letter to his half brother in 2012.

"Please withdraw the order to punish me and my family," Mr. Kim was quoted as saying in the letter. "We have nowhere to hide. The only way to escape is to choose suicide."

A Troubled Family

The Kim family, which has ruled North Korea since its founding in 1948, has presided over a Shakespearean nest of internecine plots and family intrigue. Rival relatives have been sent into exile and occasional bloody purges have killed off anyone of questionable loyalty and set an example for others.

Kim Jong-nam was an early dropout in the Kim dynasty's third-generation power struggle. Sidelined from the race to succeed his father since the 1970s, when his mother was abandoned by his father, he had been effectively shut out of power and shut off from his father since he was a teenager. South Korean officials say he never met his half brother Kim Jong-un.

The final straw for Kim Jong-nam was when he was caught entering Japan on a false Dominican Republic passport in 2001, embarrassing the family. He told Japanese officials that he wanted to visit Tokyo Disneyland.

Mr. Kim lived in exile, mostly in Macau, but enjoyed the affluent life of a globe-trotting playboy, sometimes traveling with a female bodyguard. While his father was still alive, the government in Pyongyang sent him cash allowances.

His uncle, Jang Song-thaek, became a father figure and his main connection to his country. South Korean officials said Mr. Kim was thought to have used that connection to conduct business for himself, like handling contracts involving North Korean minerals.

Mr. Kim often visited Kuala Lumpur, where Mr. Jang's nephew, Jang Yong-chol, served as North Korean ambassador until 2013.

Mr. Kim sometimes stayed at an embassy guesthouse and sometimes at five-star hotels, according to Steve Hwang, a restaurant owner who became a friend.

Mr. Kim often came to the restaurant, Koryo-Won, with his wife, dressed casually and always wearing a baseball cap. A bodyguard sat outside in the mall, visible through the window.

"He was very humble, very friendly, a very nice guy," Mr. Hwang said.

Mr. Kim never gave his name, but Mr. Hwang, who is from South Korea and has family in the North, recognized him. To be certain, he said he collected Mr. Kim's dishes after a meal and sent them to the South Korean Embassy for fingerprint and DNA analysis, he said. The word came back that it was indeed Mr. Kim.

When Kim Jong-un took power, he cut off his half brother's allowance. In 2013, he executed their uncle, Mr. Jang, on charges of corruption and sedition. Mr. Jang's nephew, the ambassador, was recalled the same year and is thought to have been executed.

Kim Jong-un may have been angered by reports that his half brother had once considered defecting to South Korea. After Kim Jong-nam's assassination, some defectors claimed that he had been asked to serve as head of a government in exile. But Kim Jong-nam never formally proposed to defect, according to South Korean officials, and he had told reporters that he had no interest in politics, although he also criticized the dynastic succession in Pyongyang.

The Setup

When Mr. Kim arrived in Kuala Lumpur on Feb. 6, he was using a diplomatic passport with the name Kim Chol.

By then, it appears, the plot against him was already underway.

Four North Korean men accused of organizing the attack had begun arriving on Jan. 31, nearly a week before Mr. Kim, the police say. Each one landed on a different day. The last one arrived Feb. 7, a day after Mr. Kim.

Unlike most countries, Malaysia allows North Koreans to enter without a visa and makes it relatively easy for them to work. North Koreans have established a number of businesses in Malaysia to export products to other parts of the world and earn foreign currency to send home.

The four North Korean conspirators apparently recruited Ms. Huong and Ms. Siti from entertainment establishments. Ms. Siti worked as a "spa masseuse," the police say, and Ms. Huong as an "entertainment outlet employee."

Ms. Huong grew up in a small farming village in Vietnam about three hours south of Hanoi and studied pharmacy at a community college. Ms. Siti grew up in a farming village east of the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. She quit school after sixth grade, was married at 16 and divorced at 20, before she left for Malaysia.

There were reports that the women were duped, that they had been told they were participating in a prank. Indonesian officials said they thought Ms. Siti was tricked into thinking that she was part of a comedy video involving spraying liquid onto unwitting victims in public.

But Mr. Khalid, the police chief, said they knew what they were doing. The women had practiced the attack at two malls, he said.

"We strongly believe it is a planned thing and that they are being trained to do that," he said. "It is not just shooting movies or a play thing. No way."

The police say the plotters also brought in Ri Jong Chol, a North Korean who had been living and working in Kuala Lumpur since at least August. He was almost certainly a government agent, according to Thae Yong-ho, a North Korean diplomat who defected to the South last summer, because he was allowed to live with his family abroad.

On the morning of Feb. 13, Mr. Kim went to the airport to catch his flight home.

Security videos show him entering the departure hall at Terminal 2 carrying a shoulder bag, checking the departure board and walking toward the check-in counter for AirAsia, a budget airline.

After his encounter with the women, Mr. Kim approached airport staff and security officers, waving his hands toward his face repeatedly as he told them of the attack. They walked with him to the airport clinic one level down.

Within minutes, he was in an ambulance, but by then the poison was taking effect. He was dead before he reached the hospital, the police said.

His last words were, "Very painful, very painful. I was sprayed liquid," China Press, a Malaysian Chinese-language newspaper, reported.

The police say the four North Korean conspirators watched the attack unfold. Soon after, they passed through immigration, had their passports stamped and left the country before the authorities realized Mr. Kim had been murdered. All are now believed to be in North Korea.

Mr. Hwang said Mr. Kim had stopped coming to his restaurant around 2014, after his uncle's execution, and may have fallen on lean times — which may explain why he had no bodyguards last week as he prepared to fly home on a budget carrier.

Mr. Hwang didn't see him during his final trip to Kuala Lumpur and was surprised by his appearance in the

security video. He was wearing a blazer, instead of his usual T-shirt, and no hat.

It was the first time Mr. Hwang saw that he was bald.

"Nobody could protect him," he said.

ETATS-UNIS



In age of Trump, apocalyptic rhetoric becomes mainstream

The Christian Science Monitor

February 22, 2017 Los Angeles—The longer President Trump is in office, the more Cat Deakins worries about the future – for herself and her children.

With every executive order and cabinet appointment, she envisions another scenario: an America that rejects immigrants, that succumbs to climate change, that erupts in war.

"It's scary to me that [people within the administration] are promoting this idea of, 'We are at war with Islam.' That's the kind of thinking that leads to World War III," says Ms. Deakins, a cinematographer in Los Angeles. "I don't think we can be alarmed enough."

It's a strain of thought that's begun to take root in leftist narratives as the Trump administration enters its second month. The idea is that since taking office, the president has led the nation – and continues to lead it – down a path that will culminate in a dictatorship, a police state, or both. As Slate columnist Michelle Goldman writes, "To talk about Trump as a menace to our democratic way of life understates the crisis."

To some degree, such statements reflect the pendulum swing of political power; conservatives made similar claims during former President Barack Obama's tenure. And observers warn against reacting in an apocalyptic way to policies that are merely partisan.

Still, Mr. Trump is unpredictable, a president unprecedented in modern times, who has already used an expanded set of executive powers to pursue his agenda – one that many see as threatening widely held democratic principles.

"There is legitimate basis for concern," says John Pitney Jr., a professor of politics at Claremont McKenna College in Claremont, Calif. "While apocalyptic rhetoric might be exaggerated, there have been real invasions of civil liberties, deep threats to civil rights. It's

perfectly appropriate to be watchful and wary."

A sense of alarm

Sinister talk and ominous rumors are not new to American politics – from Ronald Reagan's supposed propensity toward nuclear war with the Soviet Union to the Clintons' purported involvement in the death of White House attorney Vince Foster.

"It was on the fringes," Professor Pitney says. "But what we've seen since the turn of the century is the mainstreaming of apocalyptic rhetoric."

During former President Barack Obama's tenure, conservative pundits regularly made apocalyptic pronouncements about his heritage and religion. Some on the far right predicted his presidency would transform America into an Islamist or communist state.

Those prophecies proved groundless – and fed into a dangerous cycle of partisan antipathy, political analysts say.

Today, the sense of alarm has trickled down into the lives of some Americans who face a constant barrage of headlines and disputes, especially on social media.

Olaf Wolden, a documentary filmmaker in New York City, says he worries about Trump's strained relationship with the press and the truth. "When information doesn't fit the narrative he needs, he attacks it," Mr. Wolden says. "That's a classic move out of the playbook of [Joseph] Stalin or [Augusto] Pinochet."

Others, like Deakins, are troubled by the upheaval in the administration's early days, such as the resignation of National Security Adviser Michael Flynn. "It's horrifying to watch it roll out," she says.

Still others point to the president's attitude toward immigrants, which they say stokes racism and xenophobia.

"Building a border wall, scapegoating immigrants as one of

the major problems for folks here in America – that is a threat to democracy," says Alex Montances, an advocate for the rights of Filipino migrants in Long Beach, Calif.

That said, a line must be drawn between critiques of poorly crafted policies and apocalyptic concerns, says Peter Berkowitz, an expert on US conservatism and progressivism at Stanford University's Hoover Institution.

There's a difference, he says, between those who harshly criticized Mr. Obama because they saw the Affordable Care Act as government overreach and those who cast him as un-American and a tyrant based on false allegations about his race or religion.

Likewise, a distinction must be made between those who are horrified by Trump's immigration policy – like his border wall and temporary ban on refugees from seven Muslim-majority countries – and those who say that the US is now a fascist state.

Journalists remain free to cover the news as they see fit, the Supreme Court to block executive orders it deems unconstitutional, and Congress to wrangle over laws they disagree about, he points out.

"Some of Trump's rhetoric provides reason for heightened concern," Professor Berkowitz says. "That we are already fascistic – none of the evidence I see brought forward suggests that."

Not being judicious in one's criticism risks losing credibility, says Erik Fogg, co-author of the 2015 book, "Wedge: How You Became a Tool of the Partisan Political Establishment, and How to Start Thinking for Yourself Again."

"Regardless of what party you come from – but in particular for the left right now – the key is to be very, very selective about where they raise the alarm," says Mr. Fogg.

A dangerous cycle

A key consequence – and driving factor – of apocalyptic rhetoric is political polarization.

In 2004, only about 1 in 10 Americans were consistently liberal or conservative across most values, the Pew Research Center reports. By 2014, the figure had doubled. The same year, Pew found that 27 percent of Democrats saw the Republican Party as "a threat to the nation's well-being." Thirty-six percent of Republicans said the same of the Democratic Party.

Such mistrust has paved the way for more extreme partisanship.

In one of countless tirades against the former president, conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh – whose program remains one of the most popular talk shows on the air today – lambasted Obama in 2012 for saying that the rich often have help earning their wealth.

"Barack Obama is trying to dismantle, brick by brick, the American dream," Mr. Limbaugh said. "This is what we have as a president: A radical ideologue, a ruthless politician who despises the country and the way it was founded and the way in which it became great."

Progressive pundits have since made their own proclamations of Trump's evil intentions.

In January, Salon politics writer Chauncey DeVega accused the GOP of mobilizing "anti-black and anti-brown animus for political gain" and blamed "obsolete journalistic norms of 'fairness,' 'balance,' and 'objectivity'" for failing to call out Trump's fascism.

"Donald Trump and his supporters represent the tyranny of minority opinion," Mr. DeVega wrote. "Consequently, they are the worst example of the will, spirit and character of the American people."

"You have extremity on both sides of the spectrum. That's what leads to apocalyptic thoughts about politics," says Barbara Perry, director of presidential studies at the University of Virginia's Miller Center. "But there are probably apocalyptic thoughts that lead to polarization. It's all rather cyclical."

By making caricature monsters of the other side, "you make

reconciliation harder and harder," says Fogg, the author. And it also could affect both parties' ability to see the real threat, he adds.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Henninger : Trump vs. Trump

Daniel Henninger

Donald Trump is right that the media is making a mountain out of every Trump molehill. Despite the "resistance," it also remains true that most Americans want the Trump presidency to succeed.

These Trump Hopefuls, whose number includes people who didn't vote for him, want the *presidency* to succeed because they understand that if it fails, the social and economic condition of their country will be in a bad place.

Despite this reservoir of goodwill for the Trump presidency, the degree of anxiety about it is palpable. You have to be living in Netflixed isolation not to have had conversations with people wondering what the hell is going on at this White House.

Beyond the Beltway bubble, I think most people look upon the pitched battle between Mr. Trump and the news media as they would a playground fight between sixth-graders.

"He hit me first."

"You hit first."

"You're a liar."

"No, you're the liar."

Millions of Americans simply gape.

We could spend the next several years arguing whether Mr. Trump or the dishonest mainstream media started this, but a more productive question is, why is the mayhem

"You can't write off the other team's apocalyptic ideas as pure hysteria and embrace our own, and then when it doesn't come to pass let it go," he says. "I think the trick is

happening?

It is happening mainly because the presidential campaign didn't end last November. The political culture of the 2017 campaign endures inside the White House and among the press and the Trump opposition.

Presidential campaigns are an essential feature of the American political system—long, raucous, fiercely contested. But that glorious tumult is supposed to give way to the more substantial, harder politics of the presidency.

The permanent campaign has been with us a long time, and Barack Obama was the first president who didn't disband his campaign operation after winning. But we're in a different dimension today.

Propelled by new media, campaign politics has become a national addiction. It's similar to the way people drive cars into trees because they can't stop texting. No one will let go—not the tweeting president, not the surly press and not the hooked, agog public.

Still, there's a political casualty waiting to happen inside the great American thrill ride—the presidency. Trump the president is looking like he's trapped inside Trump the campaigner.

To be sure, the Trump presidential machine is executing the president's orders and making fine appointments. The president's downward ratchet on the vast Obama regulatory state is the main

going to be ... figure out the real threat, and counter that. If we don't, we'll be scattered."

reason for the upward-bound stock market.

But Mr. Trump himself can revert in an instant to campaign mode—Hillary's failures, voter fraud and past media transgressions. Or a Florida presidential rally that looks just like a Florida campaign rally. Bill Clinton once said that to win an election you do what you've gotta do. But are the tactics of a campaign transferrable to the daily life of a presidency?

Some will say the political world underestimated Donald Trump from day one. That's true—but as a candidate. The presidency, by contrast, is one part of a large and complicated political system, complicated because the Founders wanted the process to be difficult and to require getting buy-in from unavoidably divided factions.

Mr. Trump and his White House are justified in wondering how it is their politics get hammered, while the factions of the alt-left are generally misrepresented as a benevolent children's crusade.

A further Trump argument would be that they owe their distraught opposition nothing. That's mostly true. It isn't Mr. Trump's responsibility to provide kumbaya solace to a political left whose street bullies turned Chuck Schumer into a progressive factotum.

The argument here isn't that Donald Trump as president has to step up to "heal" a divided nation, not least because our age of limitless sentimentality has turned the

phrase "heal the nation" into soap bubbles. But it's obvious that the hyper-hot emotions in the country's political life now are unsettling many normal people who don't wish Mr. Trump ill.

There are risks, to the Trump presidency, its goals and the system itself, if the volatile personality-driven politics of the Trump campaign remain the norm for the 45th presidency.

Yes, we know it's a populist movement. Populism, though, is what gets you elected. The president who tries to govern with populism inside the U.S.'s system of distributed, three-branch authority will fail.

There are going to be tough votes soon in Congress on the president's tax bill, ObamaCare reform, a Dodd-Frank revision, the budget, infrastructure and the rest. That agenda, intended to raise the U.S. from its doldrums, is the reason so many different kinds of people want this presidency to succeed.

The Trump margin for delivering victory to these hopeful Americans is narrower than it should be. The president's goals could falter or fail if enough Republicans running for election in 2020 decide their own needs require putting distance between themselves and the permanent volcano of the Trump White House. There will be no moral victories for a presidency that cannot produce 50 votes in the Senate.

THE DAILY BEAST

At CPAC 2017, 'Revolution Is Here & It's Bloody'

Asawin Suebsaeng

Big Tent Turns

Big Top

The Conservative Political Action Conference has long been a parade of the Republican fringe. But in 2016, the fringe took over and now they have the main stage all to themselves.

Last year, shortly after the 2016 Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, the board of directors of the American Conservative Union convened a conference call to discuss the party's newly minted presidential nominee Donald J. Trump.

The GOP had just undergone a brutal, bruising primary, and the call focused on whether or not the board would back the ACU if the group endorsed Trump, a hugely divisive and hardly traditionally conservative figure within the Republican Party.

According to two sources with direct knowledge of the conference call, a slight majority were for endorsing—after all, Trump was the Republican presidential pick. Many others were, however, not so forgiving.

"If [ACU endorses] him, it will be the darkest day in this organization's history," Thomas Winter, first vice chairman of the ACU and former *Human Events* editor, warned on the call, according to the sources

speaking on the condition of anonymity. Winter could not be reached for comment on this story.

This year, Trump is scheduled to return to the ACU-hosted Conservative Political Action Conference—but now not just as a mainstage speaker but as President of the United States and the Republican Party's standard bearer.

Still, tensions remain in the ACU at the beginning of the Trump era—and they're perhaps stronger than ever.

Last week, CPAC nearly went full alt-right, with a much-publicized invitation extended by ACU Chairman Matt Schlapp to Breitbart editor and professional troll Milo

Yiannopoulos for a prominent speaking slot.

Over the weekend, the ACU board and others revolted against the decision: "This mental patient enjoys playing footsie with Nazis—I'm not into that, and neither are many on the [ACU] board, it's that simple," one board member told *The Daily Beast* earlier this week as the controversy was ongoing.

By Monday, Schlapp and CPAC had kicked Yiannopoulos to the curb. But to many on the board, damage had already been done.

On Wednesday, the ACU board of directors held a meeting at a conference room at the Gaylord Hotel in National Harbor, an event

complex just outside of Washington, DC, where the four-day conference is held. During the final third of the nearly two-hour meeting, several board members started grilling Schlapp, who was in attendance, about the alt-right's infiltration into mainstream conservatism.

According to two sources with knowledge of the meeting, multiple board members—such as Winter, Sabrina Schaeffer of the Independent Women's Forum, and Ned Ryun of American Majority—passionately voiced their objections and concerns, with much of the room concurring. Some even called out the ACU chairman not only for inviting, then ditching, Yiannopoulos, but for inviting Stephen Bannon, Yiannopoulos's former boss, as well.

Schlapp, Schaeffer, and Ryun did not respond to requests for comment.

Bannon, who now serves as President Trump's chief strategist in the White House, has called his Breitbart site "the platform" for the racist American alt-right. On Thursday afternoon, Bannon is slated to speak alongside Reince Priebus, the White House chief of staff, in a chat moderated by Schlapp.

Ryun, in particular, was vocal during Wednesday's meeting about his opposition to

Bannon's inclusion, as well as the GOP's continued coddling of what he deems "white supremacist" alt-right voices. Schlapp did not address the Bannon criticisms head-on, though he did point out that he "didn't know half the stuff" about Yiannopoulos that made him such a despised figure.

Some in the meeting told Schlapp that he could have simply "Googled it."

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Multiple board members told The Daily Beast that many attendees left the private meeting continuing to gossip and vent about the "fascist" and "Jew-hating" and "white nationalist" elements that have "infected" the Republican Party, and how the conservative movement had a long way to go to purge them.

On Thursday morning, CPAC will also host a speech by the ACU's Dan Schneider in the main ballroom area titled, "The Alt-Right Ain't Right at All."

Still, the alt-right might as well be doing victory laps at National Harbor this week: their guys are in the White House, and moderate

Republicans and liberals are still fuming and humiliated.

Trump's rise to power, as well as the schedule for speakers at this year's conference, plainly show this is no longer the party of Mitch McConnell, or Paul Ryan, or any "establishment" icon. Today, it is more than ever the party of Trump, Bannon, Bannon's former flagship Breitbart, and all of the wild, unchecked right-wing excesses that come along with them.

For example, Sheriff David Clarke, Jr. is speaking on the mainstage, as he did last year. In the time between the last CPAC and this year's, Clarke has gone from simply being Fox News's favorite sheriff who said Black Lives Matter would team up with ISIS, to someone who had been considered by Trump to head the Department of Homeland Security.

"The revolution is here, and it's bloody, man," one ACU board member told The Daily Beast. "The craziest elements of the [party] have managed to get every single thing they wanted over the past year. I care about the [conservative] movement and I care where it goes. This is the shape our movement is in today."

This year, the fringe is the center of power.

While the Breitbart crew and Bannon stand tall, the Republican establishment has by and large gone into hiding. There are no senators speaking in the ballroom, except for Ted Cruz on Thursday, and GOP heavyweights such as McConnell and Ryan are nowhere to be found on the schedule.

Spokesmen for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Paul Ryan said neither leader had planned to attend the conference this year due to other scheduled events during the congressional recess.

Last year, Sen. Ted Cruz briefly became the GOP establishment's brightest hope at stopping Trump. A year ago, when he spoke at CPAC, Cruz won the conference's presidential straw poll—after all, the Evangelicals were supposed to be his people. Trump, on the other hand, was scheduled to speak at CPAC 2016, but ditched it short notice. Cruz is still slated to deliver remarks this year on Thursday morning.

But Trump, on Friday morning, makes his CPAC homecoming as leader of the free world, and is the clear main event.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Editorial : Trump's Deportation Surge

Feb. 22, 2017
7:09 p.m. ET 408

COMMENTS

President Trump campaigned on enforcing immigration law, and Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly plans to deliver. On Tuesday Mr. Kelly ordered a deportation surge that will cost billions of dollars and expand the size and intrusiveness of government in ways that should make conservatives wince.

In a pair of memos the Secretary fleshes out the Administration's immigration priorities to protect public safety. By all means deport gangbangers and miscreants. But Mr. Kelly's order is so sweeping that it could capture law-abiding immigrants whose only crime is using false documents to work. This policy may respond to the politics of the moment, but chasing down maids and meatpackers will not go down as America's finest hour.

Under Mr. Kelly's guidelines, any undocumented immigrant who has committed even a misdemeanor could be "subject to immigration

arrest, detention and, if found removable by final order, removal from the United States." So a restaurant worker with an expired visa or driver without a license who is caught rolling a stop sign could be an expulsion target.

One question is whether all this effort is needed. More than 90% of the 65,000 undocumented immigrants removed last year from the U.S. interior were convicted criminals, and about 2,000 were affiliated with gangs. This suggests that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is already targeting and removing as many bad guys as it can locate.

To assist with removals, the memos call for hiring an additional 5,000 border patrol and 10,000 ICE agents, which represent a roughly 25% and 50% increase in their respective workforces. The increase in the agencies' operating budgets would cost about \$4 billion annually.

Mr. Kelly has also ordered a plan to "surge the deployment of immigration judges and asylum officers," and he's going to need them. The backlog of cases in the Justice Department's 58

immigration courts has already swelled to more than 540,000 from 325,000 in 2012. Some 250 immigration judges were assigned 200,000 cases in 2015. The average wait time for a case is 677 days and can hit five years at some locations.

More than 500 judges—who would each require an entourage of translators, paralegals and clerks—would need to be hired to eliminate the backlog within a year. Each full-time position costs about \$200,000, so taxpayers could be billed more than a half billion dollars for this surge of government attorneys. Add all this to the cost of Mr. Trump's border wall, and the bill rises into the tens of billions.

While awaiting a hearing, many nonviolent immigrants are released on parole because detention centers are overburdened and expensive to operate. Housing an immigrant costs the feds \$125 per day—Holiday Inn could provide better service for less—so the 31,000 beds in detention centers are generally reserved for convicted criminals and immigrants caught near the border.

Mr. Kelly, however, instructs ICE agents to grant parole sparingly and on a case-by-case basis, and "the burden to establish that his or her release would neither pose a danger to the community, nor a risk of flight remains on the individual alien." So immigrants whom ICE agents fear might not show up at their hearing could potentially be detained for years while judges work through the backlog.

Procuring additional space in facilities that meet government contracting requirements also won't be easy. County jails and state prisons are overcrowded, and federal government unions will fight "outsourcing."

Thus, Mr. Kelly expands the criteria for expedited removal. Under the Obama Administration, any unauthorized immigrant who was detained within 14 days of entry or 100 air miles of the border would get fast-tracked for deportation. From now on, anyone who can't prove that he's lived in the U.S. continuously for the past two years could be expelled immediately.

Homeland Security officials were at pains this week to say all of this will

be done humanely, with a special focus on criminals, and let's hope so. Mr. Trump also deserves credit for not repealing President Obama's order sparing from expulsion some 750,000 "dreamers" who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children. This is an act of genuine compassion, but Mr. Trump will get little political credit because the

news is buried in the larger deportation story.

Mr. Trump's voters want the rule of law enforced, but the exit polls showed that even most of them oppose mass deportation. The U.S. already has a labor shortage in many areas, and if Mr. Trump's

policies spur faster growth that shortage will worsen. Yet he has no policy in place that would let legal immigrants enter the U.S. to serve the needs of a growing economy.

Perhaps if Mr. Trump succeeds in reducing immigrant crime, the anti-immigration mood will ebb. Meantime, conservatives in

Congress who care about fiscal probity should ask if Mr. Kelly really needs to make government so much bigger to expel genuine criminals.

The New York Times

Immigrants Hide, Fearing Capture on 'Any Corner' (UNE)

Vivian Yee

It has kept Meli, 37, who arrived in Los Angeles from El Salvador more than 12 years ago, in a state of self-imposed house arrest, refusing to drive, fearing to leave her home, wondering how she will take her younger son, who is autistic, to doctor's appointments.

"I don't want to go to the store, to church — they are looking everywhere, and they know where to find us," said Meli, who asked that her last name not be used out of fear of getting caught. "They could be waiting for us anywhere. Any corner, any block."

It has washed ever-larger tides of immigrants in Philadelphia, New York, Los Angeles and beyond to the doors of nonprofit advocacy and legal services groups, which report hearing the same questions: What should I do if I am stopped by an officer from Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE? How quickly can I apply for citizenship if I am already a legal permanent resident? How can I designate someone with legal status as my children's guardian if I am deported?

"There's a real fear that their kids will get put into the foster care system," said Mary Clark, the executive director of Esperanza Immigrant Legal Services in Philadelphia. "People are asking us because they don't know where to turn."

The new policies call for speedier deportations and the hiring of 10,000 ICE agents, and direct them to treat any offense, no matter how small, as grounds for deportation. For Mr. Trump's supporters and longtime advocates of stricter immigration enforcement, they are a welcome move toward restoring law and order to a system that they say offered no deterrent to entering the

country illegally. Undocumented immigrants, in their view, have filled jobs that belong to Americans, drained public resources and skipped the line for visas on which others waited for years.

But for the undocumented, the atmosphere in Washington is a signal to prepare for the worst.

In the parking lot of a Latino shopping strip in Austin, Tex., one couple who were walking with their two children out of a pediatrician appointment said they had picked a friend with documentation to serve as their children's guardian if they were sent back to Mexico.

"And we're getting our kids U.S. passports so they can come visit us in Mexico," said the man, a stocky restaurant worker in a gray baseball cap, who has lived in Texas for 15 years and declined to give his name.

He said he was not afraid to leave, but wanted to be prepared. "If they're going to take me," he said, "they're going to take me."

Two Roman Catholic nuns with the Sisters of Loretto, who did not want to be identified because they did not want to put the people they serve in jeopardy, said they were already seeing the undocumented people they knew change their habits out of fear.

They know a woman who has stopped going out to buy medication. They know a couple, restaurant workers, who have lived in the country for 25 years and are now taking turns going shopping. That way, they figure, their children will still have one parent if the other is picked up.

Some low-income families in New York with children who are citizens have declined to re-enroll in a program offering food assistance worth several thousand dollars, said

Betsy Plum, director of special projects for the New York Immigration Coalition, an advocacy group.

"There's a real isolationist reflex that's happening now," Ms. Plum said.

On a good Sunday, the Staten Island tamale restaurant run by Cesar Rodriguez and his mother makes \$3,000. Since the start of the year, it has averaged only \$1,500, and this past Sunday only \$700.

Mr. Rodriguez, who was brought to New York when he was 13 and has temporary protection from deportation under an Obama-era program called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, said he thought undocumented residents were saving their money in case they were detained. They may also be reluctant to leave the house for fear of immigration agents stalking outside.

"They are listening to fake news," he said. "Even if it's not true, they are afraid."

Empty chairs inside classrooms have become increasingly common in Ceres, Calif., a Central Valley city where 75 percent of students are Hispanic, according to school administrators.

The schools there are surrounded by dairies and almond orchards, which are predominantly staffed by undocumented workers. School administrators attributed the absences to parents who were worried they could be identified through the school records of their citizen children.

In response, school officials have asked teachers to reassure students that the district does not collect data on immigration status.

In some cases, fear has lapped fact.

For Graciela Nuñez Pargas, 22, who came here when she was 7 and is protected under DACA — which covers immigrants brought to the United States by their parents as children — the prospect of taking her driver's test has become daunting. Minor driving infractions are unlikely to lead to deportation proceedings, but Ms. Nuñez, who lives in Seattle, was nonetheless anxious.

"They're expanding what it is to be criminal," she said. "Things that a normal person would do by accident could land me back home in Venezuela."

The Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, a nonprofit legal services group in Seattle, has issued thousands of business cards in recent days, advising undocumented immigrants what they should do, or not do, if a law enforcement agent knocks.

"Do not answer questions about where you were born or about your immigration status," the cards advise.

The group is also telling immigrants that if a knock does come, sliding a card under the door is acceptable.

One side of the card reads, "To whom it may concern: Before answering any questions, I want to talk to an attorney."

Correction: February 22, 2017

Because of an editing error, an earlier version of this article misstated the location for two Roman Catholic nuns with the Sisters of Loretto. The nuns, who did not want to be identified or their location revealed because they did not want to put the people they serve in jeopardy, are not in Austin, Tex.

The New York Times

Editorial : The Reach of the Constitution at the Border

When a 15-year-old boy named Sergio Hernández Guereca was shot to death by a United States border agent in 2010, he was crouching behind a concrete pillar a few steps inside the Mexican

border. Had he been on American soil, there's no question constitutional principles could be invoked in seeking justice for his death. Should those principles not apply because he was standing on the other side of the border?

That was the question the Supreme Court considered on Tuesday, during oral arguments in a lawsuit brought by Sergio's parents, who believe they should have a right to get justice for his killing.

The court's decision in this case could have implications for President Trump's travel ban, which targets noncitizens who are outside the country.

On the day he was killed, Sergio, a Mexican citizen, was playing with friends in the culvert separating El Paso, Tex., and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. The agent who shot him, Jesus Mesa Jr., claimed it was self-defense, but cellphone videos of the shooting refuted that account, showing that Sergio was 60 feet away, and unarmed, when Mr. Mesa shot him in the head.

American prosecutors declined to charge Mr. Mesa because his bullet hit Sergio in Mexico. Mexican prosecutors charged Mr. Mesa with murder, but the Obama administration refused to extradite him. Sergio's family filed a civil suit against Mr. Mesa for violating Sergio's rights under the Fourth Amendment, which prohibits the unreasonable use of lethal force, and the Fifth Amendment, which

bars the taking of life without due process.

In 2015, a federal appeals court in Texas threw out those claims because, it said, Sergio was not an American citizen, and didn't have enough "voluntary connections" with the United States to be covered by the Constitution. But core constitutional rights aren't so easily cordoned off — the Supreme Court said so in 2008 when it ruled that noncitizen prisoners held in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, had the right to challenge the legality of their detention.

In that case, the court rejected a rigid test for deciding when the Constitution applies outside American borders, favoring instead a context-specific approach. "To hold the political branches have the

power to switch the Constitution on or off at will," Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote for the majority, would lead "to a regime in which Congress and the president, not this court, say 'what the law is.'"

The Hernández case clearly would benefit from considering context, like the fact that there was no marked border in the area where Sergio was shot. Nor is the Hernández killing unique in the border area; one 2013 report found that border agents and officers killed at least 42 people in the preceding eight years. Another report found that at least six Mexicans were shot and killed in cross-border shootings by American agents between 2008 and 2013. In all those cases, including Mr. Mesa's, there were no criminal or civil penalties.

Justice Kennedy suggested during oral argument that the issue of cross-border shootings should be addressed by the political branches. The problem is that there is now no accountability and no remedy. Currently an unarmed boy standing just south of the border can be killed with impunity by an American border agent, but not if he happens to be a few feet to the north. As Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg asked, "That doesn't make a whole lot of sense, does it, to distinguish those two victims?"

The Constitution should be broad enough to apply to people like Sergio, and his family should be allowed to sue in American courts.

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

Hanson : Illegal Immigration

Activists portray illegal immigration solely as a human story of the desperately poor from south of the border fleeing misery to start new, productive lives in the U.S. — despite exploitation and America's nativist immigration laws.

But the truth is always more complex — and can reveal self-interested as well as idealistic parties.

Employers have long sought to undercut the wages of the American underclass by preference for cheaper imported labor. The upper-middle classes have developed aristocratic ideas of hiring inexpensive "help" to relieve them of domestic chores.

The Mexican government keeps taxes low on its elite in part by exporting, rather than helping, its own poor. It causes little worry that some \$25 billion in remittances sent from Mexican citizens working in America puts hardship on those expatriates, who are often subsidized by generous U.S. social services.

Mexico City rarely welcomes a heartfelt discussion about why its citizens flee Mexican exploitation and apparently have no wish to return home. Nor does Mexico City publicize its own stern approaches to immigration enforcement along its southern border — or its ethnocentric approach to all immigration (not wanting to impair "the equilibrium of national demographics") that is institutionalized in Mexico's constitution.

The Democratic party is also invested in illegal immigration, worried that its current agendas

cannot win in the Electoral College without new constituents who appreciate liberal support for open borders and generous social services.

In contrast, classically liberal, meritocratic, and ethnically diverse immigration might result in a disparate, politically unpredictable set of immigrants.

La Raza groups take it for granted that influxes of undocumented immigrants fuel the numbers of unassimilated supporters. Measured and lawful immigration, along with rapid assimilation, melt away ethnic-based constituencies.

Immigration activists often fault the U.S. as historically racist and colonialist while insisting that millions of foreigners have an innate right to enter illegally and reside in such a supposedly dreadful place.

Undocumented immigrants themselves are not unaware that their own illegal entry, in self-interested fashion, crowds out legal immigrants who often wait years to enter the U.S.

Increased demands on social services often affect Mexican-American communities the most grievously — a fact that explains why sizable numbers of Latinos support border enforcement.

What does all this complexity mean for the Trump administration's plans to return to the enforcement of existing immigration statutes?

There is one red line to Trump immigration policies that otherwise are widely supported.

Most Americans want the border enforced. And, depending on how the question is worded, most voters

likewise favor the completion of a wall on the southern border and an end to all illegal immigration.

There is little public support for sanctuary cities. They are seen as a form of neo-Confederate nullification — insurrectionary and unsustainable in a republic of laws.

Where controversy arises is over the more difficult question of the fate of at least 11 million foreign nationals currently residing illegally in the U.S.

Most Americans agree that if such immigrants are able-bodied but have no work history and are on public support, have just arrived hoping for amnesty, or have committed crimes in the U.S., they should be deported to their countries of origin. Nearly 1 million such people were already facing pre-Trump government removal orders.

Yet for those undocumented immigrants who are working, crime-free, and have established residence, the Trump administration will learn that the public supports some sort of accommodation that might lead to a fine, followed by the opportunity to apply for a green card.

Given those realities, the next immigration fault line will hinge on the definition of a "crime."

Rural or inner-city poor American citizens would go to jail for identity theft or lying on state and federal documents.

For most Americans, identity theft, falsification of government affidavits, or trafficking in fraudulent Social Security numbers are the

sort of violations that would end their own careers and unwind the very cohesiveness of government.

Rural or inner-city poor American citizens would go to jail for identity theft or lying on state and federal documents. Yet immigration activists sometimes seek to downplay these sorts of crimes as simply inherent in the desperate plight of the immigrant.

In sum, after the border is closed, and as long as the Trump administration does not summarily deport employed, crime-free, undocumented immigrants who have lived here for years, its reform agenda will quickly win the debate and at last return immigration to a legal enterprise.

In turn, Trump opponents will discover that while a small percentage of the undocumented have committed violent crimes, a far larger percentage than is commonly reported may have committed identity theft or falsified government documents.

Arguing to Americans that these are neither real crimes nor deportable offenses will prove no more a winning message for Trump's critics than would deporting productive and law-abiding residents who entered the U.S. illegally win support for Trump himself.

— Victor Davis Hanson is a classicist and historian at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and the author, most recently, of *The Savior Generals*. You can reach him by e-mailing author@victorhanson.com. © 2016 Tribune Media Services, Inc.

Editorial : Trump is setting the stage for mass deportations. If Congress has sense it will fix our immigration system instead

The Times
Editorial Board

The Trump administration is about to learn the difference between rhetoric and reality, and could be setting itself up for a spectacular policy failure. SAD!

Earlier this week, Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly released his new guidance for immigration enforcement, effectively dismantling years of federal policy and sending a shiver of fear through millions of people living in the U.S. without permission. Even before Kelly's official directives came out, undocumented immigrants had begun moving into the shadows, thanks to President Trump's mean-spirited and misguided campaign threats and executive orders. Some families were apparently keeping children out of school to avoid encountering immigration agents. Now that process will surely continue.

White House officials tried to argue that there was nothing to panic about in the policies released this week because the administration has no plan for imminent mass deportations or detentions. That's disingenuous, though. The directives are a blueprint for both; all Homeland Security lacks are the staffing and infrastructure to carry them out. The new rules narrowed the pool of immigrants protected (by the Obama

administration) from deportation so that now, nearly everyone living in the country illegally is at risk unless they qualify for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. The directives also say anyone deemed inadmissible at the border must be detained during deportation proceedings.

Actually ramping up apprehensions and deportations will take more government workers, more detention cells and a bigger immigration court system, as well as cooperation from local law-enforcement officials — many of whom balk at the idea — and the backing of a spending-averse Congress. Trump wants to hire 5,000 more border agents and 10,000 more ICE agents for enforcement in the interior of the country, and he expects to vastly increase the number of detainees from the current 41,000 people. The detention system — particularly the part run under contract by private prison companies — has been condemned by human rights groups over living conditions, detainees' access to lawyers and lack of adequate healthcare.

Even before Trump's proposed enforcement surge, agents apprehended 415,816 people at the border last year; the immigration courts have 542,000 pending cases. And that represents just a tiny fraction of the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the

country. Surely they can't all be detained; even the entire federal prison system only holds 189,130 inmates. Trump might want to consider appointing a Secretary of Reality Check.

Adding bodies to the border patrol carries its own risks. The number of agents nearly doubled from 2002 to 2009 and, according to former Customs and Border Patrol internal affairs chief James Tomsheck, new hires were not fully vetted, leading to problems with corruption (some new hires actually turned out to be moles working for the cartels). Independent reports found an internal Border Patrol culture that downplayed corruption and the use of excessive force. Conditions had been improving over the past year or so, and the Obama administration in October hired Mark Morgan, a former assistant director of the FBI, as the first Border Patrol director to come from outside the organization. But Morgan, unpopular with the border agents' union (which had strongly endorsed Trump), was fired in January, raising doubts about whether the reforms will continue as the department seeks to increase staffing by 25%.

It's simply not believable that the government is going to round up and deport even a majority of the people living in the U.S. without permission — many of whom who are guilty of nothing more than

violating the civil immigration laws. And beyond the inherent coldheartedness of uprooting and, in many cases, dividing families that have spent decades in this country, it's manifestly bad policy. The center-right American Action Forum has estimated that deporting all undocumented immigrants would cost the government between \$400 billion and \$600 billion, shave \$1 trillion from GDP, cause labor shortages and damage families — including the 4.5 million American citizens under age 18 with at least one parent living in the country illegally. Even a "lite" version of Trump's deportation policy would deliver unjustifiable agony to an unacceptably large number of people.

If the Republicans in Congress had any sense, they'd refuse to allocate money to pay for Trump's counterproductive proposals and instead insist the administration work with them on the only rational solution to this problem: A humane and comprehensive overhaul of the system that would create a path to citizenship for people who already have roots in the country while also setting reasonable immigration quotas and allowing the U.S. to regain control over its border. Otherwise, Congress will become complicit in Trump's odious, ill-conceived plan.



Editorial : Trump's mixed message on immigration: An opening for a deal?

The Christian Science Monitor

February 22, 2017 —Despite a raw partisanship in American politics right now, a new poll by Morning Consult/Politico finds that both Democratic and Republican voters — about 70 percent — want political leaders to compromise to "get things done." If lawmakers choose to reflect that cooperative spirit among voters, they could start with immigration.

That broad topic has so many moving parts, from better border security to improved legal immigration, that compromise is almost inevitable in order to "get things done." A good example has already been set. Despite President Trump's executive actions on immigration — a travel ban on those from certain countries, an order to

build a wall with Mexico, and a wider net to catch those in the country illegally — he has also begun to walk back some of his rhetoric on unauthorized migrants.

During the campaign, for example, he said he would end an Obama administration program that promised not to deport some 750,000 migrants brought to the United States as children. Now the president is open to accommodating the so-called Dreamers. Even more, he recently met with a group of senators and said he would consider a comprehensive solution on immigration. "There was an almost universal interest in addressing our lauded immigration system," Sen. John Cornyn (R) of Texas told CNN about the White House meeting.

Mr. Trump's official moves so far offer only a piecemeal approach. Yet he knows not all the estimated 11 million people in the US illegally can be deported. Instead many would probably need to pay a penalty for violating US law and perhaps return to their home country to wait in line before earning a chance at US residency. He also knows he'll need help from Congress to upgrade current laws that set priorities on types of legal immigrants allowed into the US.

In other words, dealmaking is necessary and, along with it, goodwill on all sides.

One model is a grand compromise reached in 2013 by a bipartisan group of senators known as the "gang of eight." It was the best attempt at immigration reform in a

generation. The plan passed the Senate by a wide margin but stalled in the more conservative House. Its range of reforms, however, might not be exactly right in 2017. Migration from Mexico has slowed. The US economy has gained strength. And the politics of immigration is even more divisive.

Nonetheless, if Congress and the president want to "get something done," they can work together and lessen two sets of fears: a fear among Americans about unauthorized migration and a fear of deportation among millions of migrants who have been in the US illegally for years.



Julian Zelizer : How to score the candidates for DNC chair

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." Tune in at 10 p.m. ET Wednesday as CNN hosts a debate with candidates for chair of the Democratic National Committee. The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely the author's.

(CNN)Democrats are about to make one of their first big decisions since the election. They will be selecting a new chair of the Democratic National Committee. At 10 p.m. ET Wednesday, CNN will host a debate in Atlanta to learn how the candidates plan to shape the party's future.

The pick is significant since the winner will be one of the point persons, along with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, in taking on the GOP and building support for Democratic candidates in the 2018 midterm campaign and the 2020 presidential election. He or she will also be a public spokesperson for the party who will be pivotal to challenging the administration as it finally begins to move forward with its legislative agenda.

As Democrats listen to the CNN debate, what are some of the key criteria they need to consider? What

should the party be looking for?

Rebuild the party

This is the biggest challenge that the Democrats face after the devastating loss of seats they have experienced at the federal, state and local levels as well as in gubernatorial races. Many of the losses have come from the weak state of the party outside Washington. When President Barack Obama was in the White House, the DNC did not devote enough resources to building the kind of organizational infrastructure that the party needed to compete in local races. With an eye toward the White House and a focus on this transformative party, many critics argue the Democrats allowed the local base of their party to whither. The result was that Republicans were able to turn blue parts of the map red. In the coming years, Democrats will need to reverse these losses, or they will be unable to retake majorities on Capitol Hill and regain control of state governments. And state governments are critical in the fight against redistricting, which is usually designed to disadvantage Democrats.

Public advocacy

In the modern era, party leaders have to be adept at handling the media. They are expected to go on television, radio and the Internet and be one of the prominent voices for their side. In an era when many Democrats feel they have lost control of the message, including on issues such as the economy, where

they should have a natural advantage, this job is more important than ever before. They are also facing off against a Republican President who might be considered the master manipulator, a leader totally comfortable in the chaotic and fragmented environment of the modern news media. The Democrats need to elect a figure who will be able to strike back and who won't be swallowed alive by a President content to exist in this new reality.

Connect the party to the grass roots

The Republicans rebuilt after the devastating losses of 2008 by forging connections between party leaders and grass-roots organizations, leading to the emergence of the tea party. The connections that the Republican National Committee built between the citizens who were part of this movement and the main elements of the party organization were instrumental in obstructing the Obama presidency.

Democrats have started to mimic some of these tactics, following the playbook of the Indivisible Guide produced by some ex-congressional staffers. This can only be a start. The march on Washington that took place after the inauguration, combined with the ferment in the town halls, suggests there is a lot of anger and frustration to harness.

Sen. Bernie Sanders demonstrated in the Democratic primaries just how much political energy this kind of movement-based approach can

achieve for the party, even though he was fairly left of the mainstream and didn't have the same kinds of financial resources as his opponents.

Avoid unnecessary controversy and scandal

The party now faces a President who brings with him to the White House an immense amount of political baggage. Thus far, his early record suggests that controversy won't go away. Democrats will need to keep the focus on Donald Trump's problems, not their own. The titular leader of the party needs to have a clean record and needs to be someone who will work with extraordinary care to stay out of trouble.

Democrats are at a crossroads, not just for their own party but for the policies that their party has been fighting for since Franklin Roosevelt was in office. This Republican President and Congress are intent on rolling back many of the gains that have been made over these decades. The party can't afford to put someone in this position who will drown their efforts to push back against this Republican line of attack.

It's time for Democrats to make a decision, and this is a big one. As Democrats watch the debate unfold Wednesday night, they might want to keep a score sheet by their side as they determine who can meet all of these criteria.



Bernie Sanders Loyalists Are Taking Over the Democratic Party One County Office at a Time (UNE)

Reid J. Epstein and Janet Hook

Feb. 22, 2017 11:19 a.m. ET

In Washington, Democrats are grappling with what it means to be a minority party in the age of Donald Trump. In the rest of the country, populist followers of Sen. Bernie Sanders are mounting a sustained effort to answer the question from the bottom up.

In California, supporters of the 2016 presidential contender packed the obscure party meetings that chose delegates to the state Democratic convention, with Sanders backers grabbing more than half the slots available.

They swept to power in Washington state at the Democratic state central committee, ousting a party chairman and installing one of their

own in his place. Sanders acolytes have seized control of state parties in Hawaii and Nebraska and won posts throughout the party structure from coast to coast.

Those gains come from an under-the-radar blitz in a debate over the future of the party following its bruising 2016 losses. While Democrats nationwide have put the focus on President Trump, the Sanders wing of the party has engaged in an intramural fight to remake the party in a more populist, liberal mold.

- Trump Administration Rescinds Obama Rules on Transgender Bathroom Use

The Trump administration formally withdrew Obama administration guidance enabling transgender

individuals to use sex-segregated facilities, including bathrooms, of their choice.

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Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin laid out ambitious goals to secure a tax-code overhaul by August and to deliver economic growth at rates not seen in more than a decade.

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Two cabinet members arrived for talks here Wednesday to find a defiant Mexican government

refusing to accept President Donald Trump's tougher immigration and deportation policies.

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- Trump Administration Tightens Deportation Rules

Almost everybody living in the U.S. illegally is now subject to deportation, and more undocumented arrivals at the southern border would be jailed or sent back to Mexico, under memos issued Tuesday by the Trump administration.

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President Trump selected Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, an active duty Army officer now director of a key military integration and operations center, as his next national security adviser.

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TRUMP'S FIRST 100 DAYS

"It is absolutely imperative that we see a major transformation of the Democratic Party," Mr. Sanders said in an interview last week. The party has "to do what has to be done in this country, to bring new energy, new blood."

The party will choose its new chairman on Saturday at a meeting in Atlanta. Some in the Democratic old guard harbor concerns that a sharp turn to the left could alienate centrist voters, jeopardize the party's position in the next presidential election and, before then, lead to primary challenges to incumbent Democrats in the 2018 midterm elections.

"Is the Bernie Sanders-Elizabeth Warren wing of the party going to push us too far to the left?" asked former Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell, who also served as chairman of the Democratic National Committee. "Only if they start going after incumbent moderate Democrats in primaries like the tea party did."

Last week, a group of former Sanders campaign aides launched a super PAC with the explicit goal of mounting primary challenges to Democratic incumbents. Party leaders are urging Democrats to focus on fighting Mr. Trump and his GOP allies instead of turning their fire inward.

For now, the strategy of Mr. Sanders's followers is to infiltrate and transform the Democratic Party's power structure, starting with the lowest-level state and county committee posts that typically draw scant attention.

"From where I come from in the Bernie movement, people believe that there are permanent obstacles

to change," said Larry Cohen, the board chairman of Our Revolution, the political organization that grew from the 2016 Sanders presidential campaign.

The broader goal is not only to pull the party to the left on policy, but also to fundamentally alter how it operates by eschewing corporate donors, shifting resources from television advertising to neighborhood organizing and stripping power from longtime party elders—including the "superdelegates" who can tip presidential primary contests—ahead of the 2020 election.

Mr. Sanders said the mobilization efforts are a legacy of his presidential campaign. "You have meetings where, in the old days, 20 people would show up. Now hundreds of people are showing up, in terms of competing for seats on Democratic state committees," he said. "That is the goal—to bring more people into the political process."

The primary vehicle is Our Revolution, which with its database of five million supporters has a trove of information about the left wing of the Democratic Party. Mr. Sanders and Our Revolution have no plans to share the list with the DNC, Mr. Cohen said.

The group taps a movement reminiscent of the tea party, which upturned the GOP establishment after Barack Obama's election in 2008 sent Republicans to a historic defeat. Republican grass-roots insurgents toppled centrist GOP incumbents and forced others to adopt more conservative political positions to win their primary contests, in a running battle for control of the party that lasted years.

Our Revolution's top goals include making party officials and elected Democrats more accountable to activists, and replacing them if they aren't.

The tool is a crowdsourced tracking system of officer elections and schedules of local Democratic Party meetings around the country. It collects information on events from state and county meetings to legislative and congressional district gatherings, which elect members of state central committees and delegates to state party conventions. The group's goals aren't subtle—the web address for the database is transformtheparty.com, and the default password for new users is bernie2020.

The system was built and is operated by Jon Culver, a 30-year-old web developer who worked for

the Sanders presidential campaign from Seattle. Mr. Culver can text or email members of Mr. Sanders' supporter list within a specific jurisdiction and urge them to attend meetings and vote for Our Revolution-backed candidates.

"This is a nationwide push to try and better understand and map out how the party works," Mr. Culver said. "Before, people were reliant on local resources being good and up-to-date."

The highest-profile test of the clout of the Sanders faction will come when DNC members gather this week in Atlanta to choose their next party chairman. Mr. Sanders, his supporters and Our Revolution are backing Minnesota Rep. Keith Ellison. Most of the party's establishment, loyal to Mr. Obama and 2016 presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, support former Labor Secretary Tom Perez.

Whichever candidate prevails in Atlanta, he will preside over a party that is rapidly being populated by activists partial to the Sanders brand of liberal populism. "A lot of people are concerned that if Keith [Ellison] is not elected, there could be a backlash," said Michelle Deatrick, a former Sanders campaign staffer from Michigan who last year won a seat on the DNC.

The Ellison organizing effort risks a backlash of its own. Pennsylvania Democratic Party Chairman Marcel Groen was annoyed recently when a group tweeted to urge followers to call him to show support for Mr. Ellison. More than 300 calls came in, jamming his line.

"They are putting an awful lot of pressure on people; it's over the top," said Mr. Groen, who subsequently endorsed Mr. Perez. "It's counterproductive."

Our Revolution last month emailed California supporters, urging them to attend the state Democratic Party's Assembly District conventions, and included an approved slate of candidates. Delegates elected will attend the California Democratic Party's May state convention, where they elect the party's chairman and determine its rules and platform.

In the Sacramento suburb of Elk Grove, more than 1,000 people showed up to stand in line outside a bowling alley in a torrential rainstorm to vote in the obscure party election.

Facing a slate of local establishment Democrats that included Elk Grove Mayor Steve Ly and his wife, the Our Revolution-backed team swept all 14 slots to the state convention. The feat was repeated across the state: Our

Revolution's candidates won more than 600 of 1,120 convention slots up for grabs in California in January.

Amar Shergill, an Elk Grove attorney, led the Our Revolution-backed slate. He has already begun pushing local Democrats to move to the left. When the local Democratic congressman, Ami Bera, held a town-hall meeting at Elk Grove city hall in late January, Mr. Shergill and others packed it to press him on a 2015 vote to restrict entry from Syrian refugees.

Eric Bauman, a longtime Clinton supporter and party activist from Los Angeles who is running for California state chairman, backed Mr. Ellison for DNC chairman three weeks after the state's assembly district elections.

The chairman of the Los Angeles County Democratic Party since 2000, Mr. Bauman said his decision to back Mr. Ellison was influenced by the new wave of California activists. "The Democratic Party has to be a living and vibrant organization, and it has to re-image itself regularly," he said.

Hawaii Democrats chose Tim Vandevener, a Sanders delegate to last year's convention, as party chairman last May. Jane Kleeb, an environmental activist who is a member of Our Revolution's board of directors, became chairwoman of the Nebraska Democratic Party in December. Ms. Kleeb hasn't been shy about chiding Democrats for not being sufficiently liberal.

"We are here in the states and in the streets," she said. "Trump and D.C. Dems do not seem to care."

In January, Washington state's Democrats ousted incumbent chairman Jaxon Ravens, a longtime party official, in favor of Tina Podlodowski, a former Microsoft Corp. executive who lost a 2016 campaign for Washington secretary of state.

Ms. Podlodowski won 70% of the vote from the Washington Democratic Party's state central committee, whose members were chosen by precinct committee officers elected last May. Overall in Washington, Sanders acolytes won a majority of state central committee posts after Our Revolution encouraged Sanders supporters there to run last year for the precinct committee officers.

Mr. Culver built a website that described the positions and spelled out how to run. "It showed a runway of success when you can give people clear instructions of how to participate," Mr. Culver said. "We can tell them where to show up and what's relevant to them and they will deliver."

In Florida's Brevard County, a GOP stronghold Mr. Trump won by 20 percentage points, a few dozen Sanders-campaign alumni were surprised in December when they swept elections for the local Democratic Party officer positions.

"We didn't know that 60 folks would be enough to take the majority," said Stacey Patel, who got involved in politics organizing for the Sanders presidential campaign and was elected Brevard County's Democratic Party chairwoman.

In Iowa, Our Revolution experienced resistance. It endorsed

Blair Lawton, the Sanders campaign's political director in the state, for its Democratic Party chairman race. But he couldn't generate enough support to win, so the Sanders group shifted its allegiance to Derek Eadon, a top aide to Mr. Obama's 2012 Iowa campaign.

In Michigan, a central battleground during both the 2016 presidential primary and general election, Democrats were rocked by ongoing divisions between the establishment and Sanders loyalists. Before the January filing deadline to attend Michigan's state party convention,

Our Revolution urged Michiganders on its email list to register to vote in the party's election for chairman and state central committee.

Brandon Dillon, chairman of the Michigan Democratic Party, faced criticism from Sanders-campaign alumni. He consolidated his position by accommodating the left wing of the party in its platform and by endorsing Mr. Ellison for DNC chairman. Mr. Ellison returned the favor by endorsing his re-election as party leader.

But Sanders forces still got a bigger voice in the party: Ms. Deatrack was

named to the DNC. At the state party convention Feb. 11, Sanders supporters won at least seven leadership posts within the state party, with more on the state central committee.

Mr. Dillon was re-elected Michigan Democratic Party chairman by acclamation. He didn't face opposition.



Dionne : The next DNC chair will have a huge opportunity — and a huge burden

The most striking aspect of the vast and swiftly organized movement against President Trump is how little it had to do with the Democratic Party. Whoever is elected to chair the Democratic National Committee this weekend should draw two conclusions from this, and they are in tension.

First, the anti-Trump effort, while broadly motivated by a progressive worldview, is diverse in both philosophy and experience. Trump incites antagonism from the center and the left. Those protesting him include citizens who have long been engaged in politics but also many recently drawn to activism by the sense of emergency this dreadful administration has created.

Second, Democratic leaders need to organize this discontent into a potent electoral force at a time when the very words "party" and "partisanship" are in disrepute, particularly among young Americans who are playing a key role in the insurrection. Democrats will not be up to what has become a historic responsibility if they indulge their tendencies toward heaping blame on the factions they oppose ("It's Hillary's fault" vs. "It's Bernie's fault") or relishing the narcissism of small differences.

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Thus the political tightrope the incoming head of the DNC will have to walk: A political party should not get in the way of a spontaneous and principled uprising rooted in so many movements across civil society. But in the end, as the tea party understood, power in a democratic nation comes from winning elections. And a two-party system, like it or not, requires picking sides.

As Ryan Grim and Amanda Terkel reported this week for the Huffington Post, this process is starting to happen on its own as once-moribund local Democratic parties suddenly find themselves inundated with recruits inspired by the urgency of resisting Trump. Whoever wins the DNC job will have to do far more than national leaders have done in the past to nurture this energy in the precincts and neighborhoods, and to build party structures in places where they don't even exist.

Almost as important will be fighting misleading assumptions about why Democrats failed in 2016. At the top of the list: the idea that Trump brought together a brand-new coalition and scrambled politics entirely.

Wrong. Trump largely rallied the Republican base (he carried 88 percent of Republicans, according

to exit polls, and 81 percent of conservatives) and received only 2 million more votes than Mitt Romney did in 2012 (62.98 million for Trump against 60.93 million for Romney). Those 2 million were crucial, of course, and they were distributed in the right states, but 2016 was not a realigning earthquake. The contours of politics remain familiar. And, yes, remember that Trump ran 2.9 million votes behind Hillary Clinton.

This underscores how false the choice is between a strategy based on increasing turnout among core Democratic constituencies and an emphasis on converting swing voters. It's not dramatic to say it, but what's required is some of both.

The best analysis I've heard suggests that Clinton fell just short because she underperformed in three ways: Democratic base turnout was a bit lower than it should have been; working-class white defections were slightly higher than her campaign expected; and she did not do quite as well as she hoped with upscale whites. There will be trade-offs over which of these problems is most urgent, but this is not some grand do-or-die choice.

Given how the candidates are converging, the DNC race isn't do-or-die, either.

Former labor secretary Tom Perez, whose candidacy was encouraged

by the Barack Obama/Clinton forces, appears to be in the lead. He has a stoutly progressive record and has reached out to Bernie Sanders enthusiasts.

Rep. Keith Ellison (Minn.), who has Sanders's strong support, has gone out of his way to talk the language of building broad coalitions and enjoys a lot of backing from congressional colleagues.

And Pete Buttigieg, the talented 35-year-old mayor of South Bend, Ind., has made a name for himself by promising a "fresh start" and arguing that the last thing the party needs is to keep refighting the 2016 primaries. In the eight-person field, Buttigieg seems to have the best chance of emerging as the alternative if neither Perez nor Ellison wins early.

Whoever prevails will have an unusual opportunity and a large burden. The grass-roots vitality Trump has unleashed against him in just a month is already close to matching the positive enthusiasm Obama nurtured during his 2008 campaign.

The hard part will be convincing the newly mobilized that the Democratic Party knows what to do with their commitment.

POLITICO DNC is a nail-biter

By Daniel Strauss and Brent Griffiths

The consensus among Democratic officials is that former Labor Secretary Tom Perez is the slight favorite to win election as the next chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Perez himself

claims that he is far-and-away the front-runner — and that he is less than 50 votes away from victory.

But a POLITICO email survey of the 447 DNC voting members and follow-up interviews with close to a dozen national and state Democratic leaders finds a considerably closer race, with

Minnesota Congressman Keith Ellison holding a narrow advantage in a contest that seems likely to last through several rounds of balloting before determining a winner.

Story Continued Below

"Based on the constant calls from surrogates on both sides I would say that it is close," said Missouri

Democratic Party Chairman Stephen Webber, one of the remaining undecided state chairs. "Those two front-runners and other candidates are aggressively calling around to get votes. My sense is that almost everyone who has voted is going to have an opportunity to talk to both the two front-runners and, myself included, I think

everybody really likes both of them. Most of the discussion I've heard is it's really people voting for one of them but not against everybody."

The email survey reveals what is essentially a two-candidate race in the final days before the Feb. 25 vote in Atlanta. Ellison, a Bernie Sanders supporter during the 2016 Democratic primary, holds a modest lead over Perez, with the rest of the field lagging far behind, according to the 176 DNC members who responded. After Ellison and Perez, the next largest group of respondents is undecided.

Perez's team announced last week he had secured 180 pledged votes, just 44 votes short of the amount needed to win a majority. In response, Ellison accused his rival of trying to "exert pressure" on DNC members. But the Minnesota has not released his own vote count, making it unclear how much pledged support he can point to.

Still, Ellison boasts a long roster of prominent supporters and major labor groups, and recently added a key late endorsement from New Hampshire Democratic Party Chairman Raymond Buckley, a well-known party veteran who currently leads the Association of State Democratic Chairs.



Editorial : What Democrats should resist

Democrats are showing signs of life after November's shocking election losses. They are energized and turning out in large numbers for marches and town halls. Their chief adversary, Donald Trump, has record-low approval ratings for a new president and is prone to self-inflicted wounds.

Yet, as they convene in Atlanta to select a new party chair this weekend, the Democrats should resist the temptation to let their far left wing control too much and to assume that indignation alone can win elections.

The first few weeks of the Trump administration reinforce a key point that Hillary Clinton failed to drive home: Many of Trump's policies will not help many of the people who voted for him.

The most prominent example of this is Trump's plan to repeal Obamacare, which allowed 20 million people to get health coverage, and replace it with a to-be-determined

Labor Secretary Tom Perez is considered a slight favorite to win election as the next chairman of the Democratic National Committee among party officials. | Getty

From the beginning of the race, Ellison has sought to position himself as the unity candidate and quickly picked up support from top Democrats in both the progressive and establishment-oriented wings of the party. Perez, who joined the race after it was well underway, has since won some of the most coveted endorsements in the race from former administration officials including Joe Biden and former Attorney General Eric Holder.

"I think Tom's campaign — I think they're pretty confident at the end of the day but they believed that this was always going to go to Atlanta," said Maria Cardona, a voting member backing Perez. "Tom has done a pretty good job of cementing a topnotch campaign given the timing of when he got in but he remains very aware that this is not his for the taking and I think that's smart of him to think that."

While he trailed far behind Ellison and Perez in the survey, South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg has gotten traction recently in his own bid for the chairmanship. On Wednesday, former Vermont

Governor and DNC Chair Howard Dean announced his support for Buttigieg, joining several other former DNC chairs — including Steve Grossman, Ed Rendell and Joe Andrews — who are backing the 35-year-old Indiana mayor.

"Of the many challenges we face, the most important key to our future success is to cement the loyalties of the age group that has voted for us in the greatest numbers in every presidential election since 2008. They vote Democratic, but they do not consider themselves Democrats," Dean wrote in a statement sent to DNC members. "If we fail to bring this generation into electoral politics now, the DNC will become irrelevant. This is our last chance...Our future is now if Pete is our chair."

Between Buttigieg and the other top contenders — South Carolina Democratic Party Chairman Jaime Harrison, Idaho Democratic Party Executive Director Sally Boynton Brown, and Democratic strategist Jehmu Greene — many DNC members expect the vote will go beyond a first ballot Saturday.

"They believed this was always going to go to Atlanta, that he didn't have it locked up in the first round by any means," Cardona said of Perez's campaign.

The email survey suggests that if the chairmanship race continues through several rounds of balloting, Perez might be in a better position to prevail than Ellison. While Ellison's supporters had few qualms about backing Perez as their second choice, the same didn't hold true for Perez backers -- few who ranked Perez as their first-choice candidate said they would back Ellison as their second choice.

"I'm surprised that Perez supporters are not picking Ellison as a second choice," said Washington state Democratic Party Chairwoman Tina Podlodowski, a Ellison supporter. "I wonder if it's this desire for less dramatic change."

It might also be a sign of lingering resentment from the Democratic presidential primary. Ellison was an early and prominent Sanders surrogate. While he eventually came on board and worked hard for Clinton, there is still some bad blood among establishment Democrats who believe the Vermont senator's tenacious primary challenge damaged Clinton's chances in the general election.

"something terrific." Recent polls suggest the Republicans' repeal-and-replace message isn't nearly as popular as they might think.

Beyond defending the Affordable Care Act, Democrats also have a chance to press a message of economic fairness on taxes. Like the Obamacare repeal, the Republicans' tax reform plan would send money flowing away from Americans of modest means and back toward the rich.

Trump and House Republicans have proposed raising the lowest tax bracket (from 10% to 12% for individuals with annual taxable income less than \$9,325) while reducing the top bracket (from 39.6% to 33% for those making more than \$418,400). They also want to remove all taxes on inherited wealth.

It ought to be easy for Democrats to point out the hypocrisy of Republican populism and provide an alternative vision, one that should help them appeal to some of

the white working-class voters who deserted them in 2016.

Nor is it hard to imagine a backlash against Trump immigration and refugee policies that harm families and otherwise sympathetic neighbors, colleagues, friends and relatives.

What Democrats should not do is write off Middle America and become the party of coastal elites and unarticulated rage. The "not my president" theme of marches on Presidents Day strikes the wrong chord. So does reflexive opposition to everything Trump does.

There is, to be sure, something to be gained from stern resistance to Trump, especially going into a midterm election cycle. Just as the Republicans' scorched-earth tactics helped them to major wins in 2010 and again in 2014, Democrats could rack up gains in 2018 and beyond simply by being the alternative to an unpopular president.

At the same time, Democrats need to be more than a resistance movement. They need younger leadership, policies that appeal to moderates and independents, voters who actually turn out, and a compelling and coherent vision for how they'd be different from Trump. Above all, they need to follow their principles where they lead — in support of Trump in some cases, likely in opposition in many more.

Much will be made of who wins the party chairmanship, and how much the new leader is associated with establishment or insurgent camps. But the vast majority of the important decisions will be made by officeholders, candidates and activist groups far from Democratic National Committee headquarters.

Democrats have at their disposal some strong arguments with broad appeal. They should make them.



At a town hall in Trump country, an America that's pleading to be heard (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/MrDanZak2/>

BLACKSTONE, Va. — Main Street had some new fixtures Tuesday alongside the quiet antique stores, the sturdy masonry, the bright gas stations, the Baptist churches.

There was the Clinton supporter who had breast surgery six weeks ago and drove an hour and 25 minutes, during rush hour, to be heard. There was the Trump supporter who stuck around despite the cane in his hand and the cancer in his body. There were the teenagers wearing Planned Parenthood shirts, the Republicans who are aghast at the 45th president, and the mothers carrying signs that say “Women for Dave Brat,” the Virginia Republican who was scheduled for a town hall at 7 p.m. in this placid town of 3,500, a few hours — and a world away — from Washington.

Kimberly Wyman was first in line, eight hours early. She wore a black T-shirt with pink letters declaring: “A woman’s place is in the revolution.” She represented many of the people who would queue up behind her on Blackstone’s Main Street: newly involved in politics, hostile to both President Trump and any Republican who supports him, and propelled to action by loose online organizing — such as local “huddles” birthed by January’s women’s march, action plans propagated by the “Indivisible” grass-roots movement and outgrowths of the Facebook group Pantsuit Nation (like Together We Will).

“If you live in a small town, you think no one’s going to come and join you — and people do,” said Wyman, 41, who deals antiques in Spotsylvania County. Her home is at the northern end of Rep. David A. Brat’s sprawling 7th District, which begins near Culpeper and skirts Richmond on the way to its southern terminus here in Blackstone, 45 minutes from the North Carolina border in Nottoway County.

“This is a female-driven movement,” said Alsuin Preis, 44, an Irish woman who became a U.S. citizen in August and lives in Richmond. “These are female concerns. We were shocked, stunned and horrified that the nerdy, informed woman was pushed aside for the infantile man-boy.”

Congress is off this week, which means its constituents are on. During visits to their home districts this month, lawmakers have hosted dozens of town halls — and felt the wrath of liberals (and of some conservatives) who are terrified of Trump’s divisive rhetoric and swift executive actions.

[The women got up in Brat’s grill, and then some]

Not all elected officials have scheduled town halls, but those who have are enduring protests, sharp rebukes and emotional questions about what they see as a sharp turn in governance as well as the House and Senate’s willingness to check the White House.

This town hall in southern Virginia attracted both supporters and detractors of Trump and Brat. Everyone interviewed for this story said they were a constituent of the 7th except one Brat supporter from Hanover County, which was redistricted to Rep. Rob Wittman (R) last month. Some had heard about the town hall via Brat’s Facebook page. Some had heard through online activism groups, and some had been hounding Brat’s office for a Richmond event and had to settle for Blackstone. The only visible organized effort on the scene was a volunteer who handed out pro-Brat posters to empty-handed supporters in line.

The scene in Blackstone on Tuesday featured an America that’s peaceful but pleading to be heard, that promises not to relent. Many of Brat’s constituents traveled more than an hour to engage and pressure him. Some were there to show Brat support, and to remind their fellow Americans that they knew who Trump was when they voted for him and continue to support him now.

(Jorge Ribas/The Washington Post)

Congressman Dave Brat (R-Va.) faced a raucous group of detractors and supporters at a town hall meeting in tiny Blackstone, Va. Congressman Dave Brat (R-Va.) faced a raucous group of detractors and supporters at a town hall meeting in tiny Blackstone, Va. (Jorge Ribas/The Washington Post)

By 5:50 p.m., about 130 people lined Main Street outside Blackstone Herb Cottage, a restaurant with 150 chairs. No. 20 in line was Chesterfield resident Sandy Pettengill, who had heard there would be agitators and wanted to support Brat, a star of the tea party who took down House Majority Leader Eric Cantor in 2014.

“After Obama’s election you didn’t see us out in the streets,” said Pettengill, who was born in the District, retired from corporate banking, supports strict voter ID laws and considers Hillary Clinton a traitor.

A couple of spots in front of Pettengill was Daphne Cole, a retired teacher who voted for libertarian Gary Johnson because she found Clinton’s Benghazi

testimony disqualifying (specifically her line “What difference, at this point, does it make?”). “We don’t have much time left,” said Cole, 63, a longtime Blackstone resident who planned to press Brat on climate issues. “I’m going to advocate strongly [for the environment] until I die.”

Redistricting brought Blackstone into Brat’s care just last month. He pledged to hold his first town hall this year among his newest constituents, though his critics say Blackstone was a more cynical calculation; it is friendly territory (its county went 55 percent for Trump) and a hassle for a lot of folks to get to from the less sympathetic suburbs of Richmond, especially on a weeknight.

“Basically this guy says women are in his grill, and I wanted to be in his grill,” said retired nurse practitioner Judy Howell, 68, who drove the 90 minutes from Richmond. “I hope [Brat] gets an earful to make him realize that not everyone is gung-ho for Trump.”

Brat, like other Republicans in Congress, has become a stand-in for the president. Rep. Jim Jordan was hounded by hecklers Monday at a town hall in Marion, Ohio. On Feb. 9, Rep. Jason Chaffetz could barely get a word in at a raucous town hall in a suburb of Salt Lake City. Blackstone, with a quaint commercial strip that looks imported from a Hollywood back lot, seemed on Tuesday like the latest setting for “America: The Movie,” complete with peaceful assembly, wholesome setting and wry indignation at the suggestion that protests were an artificial spectacle financed by special interests.

“I had to look up George Soros. I didn’t know who he was. I don’t travel in his circles,” said Karen Peters, 49, a stay-at-home mom in Midlothian who voted for Brat in 2014 but now views him (and Trump) as dangerous.

Blackstone, which has only 10 officers in its police department, was prepared for 1,000 people. It looked like somewhere near 300 showed up.

[Republicans are facing the ire of the anti-Trump movement this week. Will it last?]

“This is what I like to see,” said Blackstone Mayor Billy Coleburn, a “proud independent,” as he stood in the middle of Main Street near twilight. “Passion about government’s a good thing, isn’t it? I’ve been mayor for 10 years and I can maybe get a crowd of 50. He’s our congressman for a month and he gets hundreds.”

Blackstone’s history is that of small-town America: a crossroads settlement established in 1888 and nourished by tobacco and rail, made prosperous by the textile and furniture industries and then gutted by brain drain and the movement of manufacturing abroad. Many residents now commute to Richmond for work. A town hall meeting hosted by a congressman is a big deal for such a quiet town.

“Nothing really happens here,” said Amanda Key, a manager at the Brew House on Main Street. “There’s nothing to do. Everybody knows you. We’re just — here.” She didn’t vote in November but supports Trump because it “seems like he’s going to do more for us.”

Good news arrived last February: nearby Fort Pickett, a Virginia National Guard base, will be the home of a new State Department training facility for embassy security, which could bring up to 10,000 trainees through Blackstone every year, according to the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

“They need to bring back the jobs and stop the jobs from leaving,” said Darrell Webb, 61, an owner of an upholstery business whose family has been in Blackstone for generations. He likes Brat and Trump, and he hopes their fulfillment of campaign promises extends to the local economy. “It’s little towns like this that really need the help. . . . The Walmart stores come in and everything you buy is from overseas and none of it is any good.”

Brat arrived on Main Street around 6:30 p.m. and worked his way up the line, starting from the back. He shook hands. He hugged. He answered or deflected question after question on the Affordable Care Act, which he wants to repeal. Richmond resident Alice Dixon, a 56-year-old retired teacher who calls herself a Reagan Republican, trailed Brat down the line, repeating an incantation: “What about Russia? What about Russia? What about Russia?”

Those who couldn’t fit inside the restaurant massed outside against its big glass windows, in Brat’s line of sight. They listened to Brat’s comments through an outdoor speaker, and they shouted at him through the glass. A staffer collected written questions and brought them inside, where Coleburn read some of them aloud. The crowd was agitated inside and boisterous outside.

“They’re booing so they can’t even hear them,” muttered a Brat supporter in a neon-yellow hoodie after Brat addressed a question

about the Environmental Protection Agency.

"We could hear him if he had a larger venue," snapped a woman in a puffy winter jacket.

When Brat invoked Judeo-Christian values as the foundation of modern law, a group of three Brat supporters applauded from the opposite sidewalk — then refused to chat with a Washington Post reporter because

they believed he wouldn't report the truth.

The Daily 202 newsletter

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The town hall went just a few minutes past the scheduled end time of 8 p.m. Before the last

question, Brat tried to lighten the mood by asking, "Anybody got a good joke?"

"You!" attendees yelled outside.

After the event, Brat posed for pictures and answered questions for another hour. Then he left via the restaurant's back door, emerged in the alley and pointed to a Blackstone police officer. "Thank you, man," Brat said. "I'm alive! No tomatoes." The congressman

ducked into the passenger seat of a silver Lexus with a "Don't Tread on Me" license plate. His route out of town, and out of trouble, was the same way into it: Main Street.

The New York Times Trump Rescinds Rules on Bathrooms for Transgender Students (UNE)

Jeremy W. Peters, Jo Becker and Julie Hirschfeld Davis

But Ms. DeVos initially resisted signing off and told Mr. Trump that she was uncomfortable because of the potential harm that rescinding the protections could cause transgender students, according to three Republicans with direct knowledge of the internal discussions.

Mr. Sessions, who has opposed expanding gay, lesbian and transgender rights, pushed Ms. DeVos to relent. After getting nowhere, he took his objections to the White House because he could not go forward without her consent. Mr. Trump sided with his attorney general, the Republicans said, and told Ms. DeVos in a meeting in the Oval Office on Tuesday that he wanted her to drop her opposition. And Ms. DeVos, faced with the alternative of resigning or defying the president, agreed to go along.

Ms. DeVos's unease was evident in a strongly worded statement she released on Wednesday night, in which she said she considered it a "moral obligation" for every school in America to protect all students from discrimination, bullying and harassment.

She said she had directed the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights to investigate all claims of such treatment "against those who are most vulnerable in our schools," but also argued that bathroom access was not a federal matter.

Gay rights supporters made their displeasure clear. Outside the White House, several hundred people protested the decision, chanting, "No hate, no fear, trans students are welcome here."

Individual schools will remain free to let transgender students use the bathrooms with

which they are most comfortable. And the effect of the administration's decision will not be immediate because a federal court had already issued a nationwide injunction barring enforcement of the Obama order.

The dispute highlighted the degree to which transgender rights issues, which Mr. Trump expressed sympathy for during the campaign, continue to split Republicans, even as many in the party argue that it is time to move away from social issues and focus more on bread-and-butter pocketbook concerns.

Within the administration, it also threatened to become another distraction for Mr. Trump after a tumultuous first month in office. And it showed how Mr. Trump, who has taken a more permissive stance on gay rights and same-sex marriage than many of his fellow Republicans, is bowing to pressure from the religious right and contradicting his own personal views.

Social conservatives, one of Mr. Trump's most loyal constituencies, applauded him for honoring a pledge he had made to them during the campaign. They had argued that former President Barack Obama's policy would allow potential sexual predators access to bathrooms and create an unsafe environment for children.

"The federal government has absolutely no right to strip parents and local schools of their rights to provide a safe learning environment for children," said Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council.

But supporters of transgender rights said the Trump administration was acting recklessly and cruelly. "The consequences of this decision will no doubt be heartbreaking," said Chad Griffin, president of the Human Rights Campaign. "This isn't

a states' rights issue; it's a civil rights issue."

Bathroom access emerged as a major and divisive issue last March when North Carolina passed a bill barring transgender people from using bathrooms that do not match the sex on their birth certificate. It was part of a broader bill eliminating anti-discrimination protections for gay and transgender people.

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues became a point of attack for opponents of Ms. DeVos's nomination last month, as Democrats questioned her about the extensive financial support that some of her relatives — part of her wealthy and politically active Michigan family — had provided to anti-gay causes. Ms. DeVos distanced herself from her relatives on the issue, saying their political activities did not represent her views.

While Wednesday's order significantly rolls back transgender protections, it does include language stating that schools must protect transgender students from bullying, a provision Ms. DeVos asked for, one person with direct knowledge of the process said.

"All schools must ensure that students, including L.G.B.T. students, are able to learn and thrive in a safe environment," the letter said, echoing Ms. DeVos's comments at her confirmation hearing but not expressly using the word transgender. Ms. DeVos, who has been quietly supportive of gay rights for years, was said to have voiced her concern about the high rates of suicide among transgender students. In one 2016 study by the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, for instance, 30 percent reported a history of at least one suicide attempt.

Mr. Trump appears to have been swayed by conservatives in his

administration who reminded him that he had promised during the campaign to leave the question of bathroom use to the states.

But he had given conflicting signals on the issue, and on gay rights more broadly. He said last April, for instance, that he supported the right of transgender people to "use the bathroom they feel is appropriate," and added that Caitlyn Jenner, perhaps the most famous transgender person in the country, could use whichever bathroom at Trump Tower she wanted. He has also called the Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage settled law. "And I'm fine with that," he told CBS News after the November election.

Despite his personal views, Mr. Trump's decisions in office have been consistently conservative on social issues. And he has shown considerable deference to the religious right, naming many religious conservatives to top cabinet posts and pledging to fight for religious freedom protections and restrictions on abortion.

The Justice Department is eager to move quickly in laying out its legal position on transgender policy, to avoid confusion in cases moving through the courts.

The dispute has underscored the influence that Mr. Sessions, an early and ardent supporter of Mr. Trump, is likely to exercise over domestic policy. As someone who has a long record of opposing efforts to broaden federal protections on a range of matters under his purview — immigration, voting rights and gay rights, for example — he has moved quickly to set the Justice Department on a strikingly different course than his predecessors in the Obama administration.

The Washington Post Northrup and Tiven : If abortion rights fall, LGBT rights are next

By Nancy Northrup and Rachel B. Tiven

By Nancy Northrup and Rachel B. Tiven

February 22 at 7:40 PM

Nancy Northrup is the president and chief executive of the Center for

Reproductive Rights. Rachel B. Tiven is the chief executive of Lambda Legal.

We represent the organizations that won leading Supreme Court cases in recent years on sexual and reproductive rights: *Obergefell v. Hodges* in 2015, which secured legal protections for the marriage of same-sex couples, and *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt* in 2016, which struck down Texas's attempt to use sham health regulations to shut down 75 percent of the state's abortion clinics.

President Trump has taken sharp aim at the rights affirmed in those cases. During the campaign, he attacked the *Obergefell* opinion and repeatedly and unambiguously promised to put justices on the Supreme Court who would overturn *Roe v. Wade*. According to the president, it's the government, not each individual, that should hold the power to decide who can get married and whether women can terminate a pregnancy.

In a post-election interview on "60 Minutes," Trump reaffirmed that *Roe v. Wade* should be reversed and then deflected questions about his view of the Supreme Court's marriage equality decision. He declared the issue "already settled," explaining: "It's law. It was settled in the Supreme Court. It's done." Was

this a tactic to divide and conquer? To throw under the bus the tens of millions of American women who have had an abortion and hope marriage equality supporters would stand by in silence?

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Perhaps the president simply does not understand the foundations of these constitutional law decisions. Whatever the reason for the president's view of what is and is not settled Supreme Court precedent, the fact of the matter is that the court cannot reverse the cases guaranteeing access to safe and legal abortion and leave recognition of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights unharmed.

Obergefell and *Whole Woman's Health* are part of a long line of Supreme Court cases elucidating the bedrock principle of our individual rights guaranteed by the 14th Amendment: that highly personal decisions about our family and personal lives — decisions central to our equal dignity and rights of conscience — are for each of us, not the government, to decide.

One of the earliest cases began almost a century ago, when Nebraska, swept up in anti-German sentiment after World War I, banned the teaching of foreign languages to anyone under high-school age in any school, public or private. The court struck down the law, reminding us in words worth remembering today that "the protection of the Constitution extends to all, to those who speak other languages as well as those born with English on the tongue." Subsequent decisions protected parental rights to educate their children and couples' rights to get married and use contraception to plan their families.

This right to personal decision-making was summed up in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, a 1992 follow-up to *Roe* in which the Supreme Court affirmed the right to access legal abortion. It is the right firmly rooted in the 14th Amendment's promise that there is "a realm of personal liberty which the government may not enter." That realm of personal liberty protects our autonomy to decide for ourselves in matters "involving the most intimate and personal choices a person may make in a lifetime" — including decisions about love, marriage, procreation and family.

Casey's articulation of the liberty at stake was quoted a decade later in

2003's *Lawrence v. Texas*, Lambda Legal's landmark case ending the criminalization of sodomy. *Lawrence* then showed up in 2013, cited in the court's decision to strike down the Defense of Marriage Act in *United States v. Windsor*.

This long chain of case law means that both *Obergefell* and *Whole Woman's Health* rest on a shared foundation of legal precedent, which is the often unseen root structure of the law that guides the decisions of judges at all levels.

What is at stake is more than LGBT rights or abortion rights. It's our right under the Constitution to decide who we are and to make the most intimate and personal decisions in our life without government interference — and to do so with dignity.

The Senate Judiciary Committee needs to know if Trump's Supreme Court nominee, Judge Neil Gorsuch, stands with precedent and with each of us. Given the president's promise to take our rights away, we must ensure that full, detailed questions are asked of this nominee and that we get the answers we deserve. We will not allow ourselves to be divided. The rights of all here in this nation — not just women, not just same-sex couples — depend on our vigilance.



Trump administration rolls back protections for transgender students (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/moriah.balting>

The Trump administration on Wednesday revoked federal guidelines specifying that transgender students have the right to use public school restrooms that match their gender identity, taking a stand on a contentious issue that has become the central battle over LGBT rights.

Officials with the federal Education and Justice departments notified the U.S. Supreme Court late Wednesday that the administration is ordering the nation's schools to disregard memos the Obama administration issued during the past two years regarding transgender student rights. Those memos said that prohibiting transgender students from using facilities that align with their gender identity violates federal anti-discrimination laws.

The two-page "Dear colleague" letter from the Trump administration, which is set to go to the nation's public schools, does not

offer any new guidance, instead saying that the earlier directive needed to be withdrawn because it lacked extensive legal analysis, did not go through a public vetting process, sowed confusion and drew legal challenges.

The administration said that it would not rely on the prior interpretation of the law in the future.

[Read the Trump administration's letter to schools]

17-year-old student Gavin Grimm, a transgender male, was banned from using the boys' restroom by the Gloucester County School Board. Grimm gave The Washington Post his perspective on what led to the legal battle. 17-year-old student Gavin Grimm, a transgender male, was banned from using the boys' restroom by the Gloucester County School Board. (McKenna Ewen, Adriana Usero/The Washington Post)

(McKenna Ewen, Adriana Usero/The Washington Post)

The departments wrote that the Trump administration wants to

"further and more completely consider the legal issues involved," and said that there must be "due regard for the primary role of the States and local school districts in establishing educational policy." Although it offered no clarity or direction to schools that have transgender students, the letter added that "schools must ensure that all students, including LGBT students, are able to learn and thrive in a safe environment."

Attorney General Jeff Sessions said in a statement that his department "has a duty to enforce the law" and criticized the Obama administration's guidance as lacking sufficient legal basis. Sessions wrote that the Department of Justice remains committed to the "proper interpretation" of the anti-discrimination law known as Title IX but said deference should be given to lawmakers and localities.

"Congress, state legislatures, and local governments are in a position to adopt appropriate policies or laws addressing this issue," Sessions said.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos echoed that sentiment, saying that this is an issue "best solved at the state and local level. Schools, communities, and families can find — and in many cases have found — solutions that protect all students."

DeVos also gave assurances that the department's Office for Civil Rights "remains committed to investigating all claims of discrimination, bullying and harassment against those who are most vulnerable in our schools," and she noted that she considers "protecting all students, including LGBTQ students, not only a key priority for the Department, but for every school in America."

The decision — delayed in part because DeVos and Sessions hit stalemates regarding timing and specific language — drew immediate condemnation from gay and transgender rights advocates, who accused President Trump of violating past promises to support gay and transgender protections. Advocates said the withdrawal of the federal guidance will create

another layer of confusion for schools and will make transgender students, who are already vulnerable, more so.

"Attacking our children . . . is no way to say you support and respect LGBTQ people," said Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality.

Transgender rights supporters demonstrated in front of the White House late on Feb. 22 after President Trump's administration revoked guidance issued to public schools last year that allowed transgender students to use bathrooms that match their gender identities. Demonstrators included Gavin Grimm, whose landmark transgender rights case is being considered by the Supreme Court. Protesters gather at White House after Trump revokes guidelines on transgender bathrooms (Reuters)

(Reuters)

Others said the practical effect on the nation's schools would be muted, in part because a federal judge already had blocked the Obama guidance in response to a lawsuit from 13 states that argued it violated states' rights. And it is possible the U.S. Supreme Court could settle the matter soon, as it plans to consider a Virginia case involving a transgender teenager who was barred from using the boys' bathroom at his high school.

[Gavin Grimm just wanted to use the bathroom. He didn't think the nation would debate it.]

The Trump administration's move drew cheers from social conservatives who oppose the idea that a student can identify as a gender that differs from their anatomy at birth.

Vicki Wilson, the mother of a child at Fremd High School in Palatine, Ill., said she sympathizes with children who have "difficult personal issues" to deal with, but thinks that "young men shouldn't be permitted to deal with those issues in an intimate setting like a locker room with young women."

School district officials in Palatine, bowing to federal pressure, allowed a transgender girl to change in the girls' locker room at her school. "No school should impose a policy like this against the will of so many parents," Wilson said during a news conference organized by the Alliance Defending Freedom, a Christian legal organization.

[Illinois group sues Obama administration over transgender students' bathroom access]

The administration's letter was the source of some disagreement

between the two issuing departments, with Sessions eager to rescind the Obama administration's guidance as court proceedings in related cases approached, and DeVos keen to leave it in place. Unlike Arne Duncan, Obama's education secretary for seven years, DeVos does not have a close personal relationship with the president she serves; she also lacks the experience and political capital Sessions garnered as a Republican senator.

Sessions is widely known to oppose expanding gay and transgender rights, and DeVos's friends say she personally supports those rights. The new letter is sure to ignite another firestorm for DeVos, who is fresh off her contentious nomination fight and has drawn protests from parents and teachers who believe she is unqualified for the job.

The letter also puts Trump squarely in the middle of the civil rights debate: Despite a flurry of activity in the early weeks of his presidency, Trump had not previously waded into the issue of gay and transgender rights.

[Trump: Rescind Obama's transgender directives, but 'protect everybody']

Trump declined to sign an executive order last month that would have dramatically expanded the rights of people, businesses and organizations of faith to opt out of laws or activities that violate their religion, such as same-sex wedding ceremonies. Many took it as a sign that he would take a more liberal approach on gay issues than his Republican cohorts.

But in an interview with The Washington Post last year, then-candidate Donald Trump had indicated he would rescind the guidance based on the belief that it was a matter best left up to the states.

In the daily news briefing Wednesday, White House spokesman Sean Spicer played down the reports of disagreement within the administration — saying the debate came down to timing and some specific wording — and reiterated the states' rights argument.

"The president's made it clear throughout the campaign that he's a firm believer in states' rights," Spicer said.

The Obama administration's guidance was based on the position that barring students from bathrooms that match their gender identities is a violation of Title IX because it amounts to sex discrimination.

Many advocates contend the guidance merely formalized what courts have increasingly recognized: That discrimination against gay and transgender people is a form of sex discrimination because it is rooted in stereotypes about men and women. As a result, they believe transgender people already have the right under Title IX to use their preferred bathroom.

The new letter scrambles the calculus for a number of lawsuits working their way through the courts, particularly the case of Gavin Grimm, a transgender Virginia teen who sued his school board for barring him from the boys' restroom. The case is scheduled for oral arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court next month. A lower court cited the Obama administration's position on transgender student rights in siding with Grimm.

Grimm said he was disheartened that the Trump administration is withdrawing the guidance. The Gloucester, Va., school board continued to bar him from the boys' bathroom even after the Obama guidance was issued, but Grimm said the directive was "incredibly empowering."

"It certainly bolstered hope that the future for transgender students was looking up in a way that it hadn't been previously," Grimm said.

Amber Briggie, the mother of a 9-year-old transgender boy in Denton, Tex., said she views the Trump administration's position as a temporary setback and hopes that the Supreme Court will affirm transgender students' rights. But the withdrawal of the Obama directive is a blow, she said, because the guidance made her feel that Washington cared about children like hers and understood the support they need.

"I just don't think my family matters to the Trump administration," she said.

Catherine Lhamon, who headed the Obama Education Department's Office for Civil Rights, said in a sworn declaration that the administration developed the guidance after receiving discrimination complaints from parents of transgender children and questions from teachers and administrators who were having to develop policies with regard to their transgender students.

In 2011, the Education Department received two complaints of discrimination against transgender students in schools. By 2016, that number had leapt to 84, according to the declaration filed in federal court.

In a kindergarten class where students line up by gender to go to the bathroom, "a student has to decide which line to get into, and the teacher has to decide which line to accept that student into, and both of them have to field questions from other students in the class," Lhamon said in an interview. "Any of those choices raises potential for discrimination and potential for harm that all of the students and teachers in a school have to navigate. It's not an abstraction for the people who live it every day."

Lhamon said the withdrawal of the guidance and the notion that the federal government needs more time to consider the issue of transgender accommodations creates chaos in schools and sends a damaging message to children.

Without federal guidance, schools are likely to look to their state governments for clarity, said Francisco Negrón Jr., chief counsel for the National School Boards Association.

That could open up battles across the country similar to one last year in North Carolina, when the legislature voted to require people in public buildings to use the restrooms that correspond with the sex listed on their birth certificates.

Local Headlines newsletter

Daily headlines about the Washington region.

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Fifteen states have explicit protections for transgender students, according to the Human Rights Campaign, a gay rights group; lawmakers in several other states are working to restrict bathroom access for transgender students. The American Civil Liberties Union, which tracks the legislation, said legislators in 14 states filed 20 bills that could lead to restroom restrictions for transgender people, with some proposing that states penalize schools that violate those restrictions. So far, five of those bills have failed.

Many school districts held off on writing restroom policies as they waited for the outcome of the Grimm case. Among them was Fairfax County, Va., one of the largest districts in the nation, which was preparing to draft regulations on restroom access for transgender students to reflect its nondiscrimination policy.

Elizabeth Schultz, a Fairfax County School Board member who opposes expanding the protections, said she hopes the new Trump

administration action will lead the district to abandon its efforts.

If the threat of revoking federal funds "is no longer wielded against our local authority, there's no

precipitating reason to continue," she said.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin Sees Tax Overhaul by August (UNE)

Rebecca Ballhaus and Nick Timiraos

Updated Feb. 22, 2017 9:37 p.m. ET

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin laid out ambitious goals to secure a U.S. tax-code overhaul by August and to deliver economic growth at rates not seen in more than a decade.

Mr. Mnuchin, in his first interview since his confirmation last week as Treasury secretary, said slower economic growth since the financial crisis had primarily been an anomaly and a result of Obama administration policies that can be reversed. He said the Trump administration is aiming for a sustained 3% or higher annual growth rate, a projection not widely shared by other forecasters.

"We think it's critical that we get back to more normalized economic growth. More normalized economic growth is 3% or higher," Mr. Mnuchin said.

Sustained growth at rates above 3% could be difficult to achieve. The Federal Reserve projects a long-run annual growth rate of 1.8% and the Congressional Budget Office has a similar view.

The U.S. faces slower economic growth in part because the labor force is expanding less briskly than in the past as baby boomers retire. Slow worker productivity growth has also held back the economy. Output has grown about 2% on average annually over the past decade, and other wealthy economies facing similar demographic challenges have seen slower growth rates.

Still, a strong reversal of weak productivity growth or an upturn in labor force growth could send output growth higher. The Trump administration is betting tax and regulatory reform could spark such changes.

Stronger growth would make it easier for the Trump administration to balance competing goals of cutting taxes and boosting spending on the military and infrastructure without sending deficits much higher. The new administration is

working on a budget blueprint due out next month that will be a first step toward reconciling its objectives.

"We will have our own set of financial projections," he said.

Mr. Mnuchin said the administration was working with House and Senate Republicans to smooth over differences among them on tax policy, with the aim of passing major legislation before Congress leaves for its August recess. He added, "that's an ambitious timeline. It could slip to later in the year."

In his first week on the job, Mr. Mnuchin has spoken with around 10 foreign counterparts and other leaders, including International Monetary Fund Director Christine Lagarde. He also has met with Mel Watt, the director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, the independent regulator of mortgage companies Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which are under the effective control of that agency and the U.S. Treasury as a result of their 2008 bailouts.

Mr. Mnuchin, whose confirmation process was the longest for a Treasury secretary of a new administration in U.S. history, brought a handful of advisers to the agency with him, but it will likely be months before other senior positions that require Senate confirmation are filled. The White House hasn't nominated anyone for other posts at the department that require Senate approval.

The secretary has been in close contact with National Economic Council director Gary Cohn, his former colleague at Goldman Sachs Group Inc., who emerged as a powerful economic policy maker while Mr. Mnuchin awaited confirmation. The two men have a close relationship, a Treasury official said.

One big question is whether the Trump administration will go along with House Republican plans to make a tax overhaul revenue neutral—meaning lower tax rates won't add to the deficit. Mr. Mnuchin wouldn't discuss the administration's view on that

question and instead pointed to stronger economic growth as an engine that will reduce the urgency for major trade-offs in any tax bill.

The House GOP plan doesn't count solely on growth. It also features limited deductions and a border-adjustment provision that taxes imports and removes taxes from U.S. exports. The plan is projected to generate about \$1 trillion over a decade.

The border adjustment provision has run into criticism from large retailers and other importers. U.S. Senators have piled on, too, leaving the idea in trouble without a major presidential push that hasn't happened and might never come.

Mr. Mnuchin said the administration is "looking seriously" at the House plan that includes border adjustment and was well aware of concerns raised by specific industries. The Treasury Department had its own concerns, he added, "about what the impact may be on the dollar" from a border-adjusted tax.

His comments underscored the challenge the new administration and congressional Republicans face reconciling competing objectives.

With the House plan in potential trouble, a Senate plan nonexistent and the Trump plan incomplete, the GOP's tax agenda is in search of a guidepost at a crucial moment. Mr. Mnuchin called for a combined plan that would address developing fractures in the party over tax policy.

As Treasury secretary, Mr. Mnuchin also takes on the role as the Trump administration's leading voice on U.S. currency policy, meaning his every word on the dollar will be closely followed in financial markets.

Mr. Trump has expressed frustration that other countries—most notably China—have used weak currency policies to boost exports. The comments during his campaign and since his election carried with them an implication that the new administration might favor a weaker currency to support the U.S. trade position.

But Mr. Mnuchin avoided taking confrontational positions on the dollar. He said the strong U.S. dollar is a reflection of confidence in the U.S. economy and its performance compared with the rest of the world and was a "good thing" in the long run. The comments echoed remarks Mr. Mnuchin made in a confirmation hearing last month.

The dollar has appreciated by 23% over the past three years and added to those gains since the November election.

"I think the strength of the dollar has a lot to do with kind of where our economy is relative to the rest of the world, and that the dollar continues to be the leading currency in the world, the leading reserve currency and a reflection of the confidence that people have in the U.S. economy," Mr. Mnuchin said.

The past several administrations have for the most part signaled support for a strong dollar, even though at times an appreciation of the currency has hurt exports.

Mr. Mnuchin demurred when asked about China's currency and said he looked forward to "healthy bilateral relations" with the world's second-largest economy.

"There's trade issues that will make sense to look at, and I think there's investment issues that will make sense to look at," he said. "There are many things that we will need to collaborate on."

During the campaign, Mr. Trump repeatedly promised to brand China as a currency manipulator, but over the past 18 months, China has taken steps to bolster its currency. The Obama administration said that was a sign Beijing had moved away from seeking an unfair trading advantage by keeping the yuan undervalued.

Mr. Mnuchin said those were two separate issues. "One is the issue of currency manipulation, and then one is the issue of whether there's unfair trading advantages," he said Wednesday. "They may or may not be related."

**The
Washington
Post**

In first month of Trump presidency, State Department has been sidelined (UNE)

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

The Trump administration in its first month has largely benched the State Department from its long-standing role as the preeminent voice of U.S. foreign policy, curtailing public engagement and official travel and relegating Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to a mostly offstage role.

Decisions on hiring, policy and scheduling are being driven by a White House often wary of the foreign policy establishment and struggling to set priorities and write policy on the fly.

The most visible change at the State Department is the month-long lack of daily press briefings, a fixture since John Foster Dulles was secretary of state in the 1950s. The televised question-and-answer session is watched closely around the world, and past administrations have pointed proudly to the accountability of having a government spokesman available to domestic and foreign press almost every day without fail.

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Tillerson has also been notably absent from White House meetings with foreign leaders. The State Department was represented by the acting deputy, Tom Shannon, at the president's discussions with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Because he was en route to Bonn for a Group of 20 meeting, Tillerson did not join Trump's meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, although the two had a working dinner the night before.

It is still early in Tillerson's tenure, and former State Department officials, from Republican and Democratic administration alike, say his performance reflects the disarray in the White House. The administration had sent mixed signals on key issues such as U.S. policy toward China and commitment to the NATO alliance even before Trump's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, was forced to resign last week.

Just one day after the White House unveiled sweeping plans to ramp up deportations of illegal immigrants, Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson are set to meet with high ranking Mexican officials. Tillerson and Kelly in Mexico amid hostile relations (Reuters)

(Reuters)

Some of the State Department's lack of public diplomacy is probably due to the learning curve of the former oil executive turned diplomat. Other factors appear to be at play, including an aversion to freewheeling questions from reporters and the many department vacancies.

But the biggest factor is the confusing lines of communication and authority to the White House, and Trump's inclination to farm out elements of foreign policy to a kitchen Cabinet of close advisers.

Chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon attends national security meetings and recently spoke with the German ambassador, and Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, has been given a major role in getting Israeli-Palestinian talks on track, a job usually the preserve of the State Department. When asked about foreign policy developments, State Department officials often have referred reporters to the White House.

"Tillerson isn't being purposefully sidelined; he's just caught up in an administration with too many competing power centers and a president who's unwilling or unable to decide who he wants to play the lead role in implementing his foreign policy," said Aaron David Miller, a former diplomat who advised Republican and Democratic presidents about the Middle East. "The problem is letting a thousand flowers and tweets bloom isn't the best way to run the foreign policy of the world's most consequential power."

So far, most of Tillerson's diplomacy has been conducted out of sight. He has met with several visiting foreign ministers, spoken on the phone with dozens of other diplomats and met more at the G-20 meeting last week in Bonn.

[Rex Tillerson eases concerns over foreign policy under Trump]

Unlike in previous administrations, the State Department has not always made brief accounts of those conversations public. After Tillerson met with European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini this month, the State Department said nothing while Mogherini held a detailed on-the-record briefing for reporters.

"I think it's hard to go out and talk to the press if you don't know what to say," said Richard Boucher, a retired career diplomat and former spokesman for Republican and Democratic administrations.

"I think they're struggling to get back to square one and reassure people

they aren't undercutting the foundations of what America stood for," he added. "So they don't have a lot to say and don't know how to use the press to influence getting there."

In some cases, governments of countries that are not democracies have been more transparent than the State Department. Phone conversations Tillerson had with the foreign ministers of Russia and Egypt as well as a phone conversation with Saudi Arabia's King Salman came to light only when the officials told their local press about them.

"It behooves the administration to give our side of any conversation," said Richard Stengel, the undersecretary for public diplomacy and public affairs from 2014 through 2016 in the Obama administration. "Having someone put points on the scoreboard and not taking the shot yourself seems peculiar to me."

Tillerson speaks frequently with Trump and met with him before leaving Washington on Wednesday for meetings in Mexico that will include Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly. A senior State Department official said Tillerson has also had several working meals with the president and provided Trump a debriefing on the meetings in Bonn.

Still, the new secretary of state has maintained an extremely low profile since taking office Feb. 1. His influence appears muted, at least for now, and he suffered a public embarrassment just a week into the job when Trump rejected his choice of a deputy, Republican foreign policy veteran Elliott Abrams, as insufficiently loyal to Trump.

"Tillerson is pretty clearly a decent character and would be a perfectly normal Republican secretary of state, but he's clearly hampered in all kinds of ways, including in making his own appointments," said Eliot Cohen, who was a top aide to former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice. "The Elliott Abrams example is pretty horrifying."

[Trump rejects veteran GOP foreign policy aide Elliott Abrams for State Dept. job]

Tillerson has a small group of aides clustered around him, including chief of staff Margaret Peterlin, a former deputy director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office; R.C. Hammond, who was press secretary in Newt Gingrich's 2012 presidential campaign; Matt Mowers, a former aide to New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie who worked on the Trump campaign; and Jennifer Hazelton, who worked

at CNN and Fox News before joining the Trump campaign.

Asked whether the absence of top officials at State — Tillerson and U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley are the only Trump-selected officials on the job — is hampering the work of diplomacy, the department referred to earlier comments from White House press secretary Sean Spicer.

"The secretary is having an ongoing and productive exchange with the president and his team that is identifying very talented individuals to serve and help the department execute its mission," Spicer said.

Though the president always sets foreign policy, often it is considered better for tactical reasons to have policies explained by the State Department and the secretary of state instead of the president.

Former secretaries of state were viewed as the primary public face of U.S. foreign policy, a role Tillerson has yet to fill.

"I support Secretary Tillerson and believe everyone should be patient while he defines his operating style," said Jim Wilkinson, who was a senior adviser to Rice.

Tillerson has not taken the usual complement of beat reporters with him on either of his foreign trips so far, opting instead for small "pools" that send reports to others. Other recent secretaries of state have made a point of orchestrating a long, symbolic first trip, showcasing their own agendas with news conferences and interviews.

State Department officials have said the daily press briefings are only temporarily shelved while the new administration gets its footing, but there has been no announcement about when they will resume or whether they will still be held every day.

"The Department of State continues to provide members of the media a full suite of services," acting department spokesman Mark Toner said Wednesday. "In addition to regular press briefings conducted by a department spokesperson, reporters will soon have access to additional opportunities each week to interact with State Department officials."

Other incoming administrations have called a hiatus of a few days at most before the briefings resumed. In 2001, the last time a Republican took over after a Democratic administration, there was no break at all. Boucher briefed on Monday, Jan. 22, answering questions about the Philippines, Iraq and Colin L. Powell's first day on the job as secretary of state.

The silence from the State Department is all the more notable for the combative and sometimes adversarial stance Spicer has adopted and Trump's own denunciations of major news

organizations as biased. Last week, Trump used his favorite bypass, Twitter, to call the news media "the enemy of the American people."

The former ExxonMobil chief executive has made no speeches

beyond a well-received address to State Department employees on his arrival and has held no news conferences. He made only one brief, substantive remark on policy within reporters' earshot during an

intensive round of meetings in Bonn last week and ignored shouted questions that other foreign ministers attending the G-20 session gladly answered.

**The
New York
Times**

Editorial : Trump Takes Aim at the Environment

President Trump brandished executive pen and fresh hyperbole last week in blessing the coal industry's decades-old practice of freely dumping tons of debris into the streams and mountain hollows of America's mining communities.

"Another terrible job-killing rule," Mr. Trump declared at a signing ceremony that struck down the Obama administration's attempt to regulate surface mining wastes. He insisted he was saving "many thousands of American jobs" in sparing coal companies the expense of cleaning up their environmental messes.

The signing ceremony was not just an insult to the benighted coal hamlets of Appalachia, where the industry's dumping of debris down the mountainsides has created a wasteland. It also ignored two truths. One is that by official estimates the rules, while helping the environment, would in fact cost very few jobs — 260 on average a year offset by almost the same number of jobs for people hired to comply with the rules. What's been costing jobs in the industry for years — and this is the second and larger truth — is a shifting global market in which power plants have turned to cleaner natural gas. In cynically promising the resurgence of King Coal, Mr. Trump might as well have been signing a decree that the whaling industry was being restored to Nantucket.

Americans can expect more such delusional signing ceremonies in the days ahead as Congress avails itself of a little-used statute known as the Congressional Review Act to strike down environmental rules that are vulnerable to reversal because they were enacted in the waning months of the Obama administration. Any such rule labeled "job killing" or "executive overreach" seems doomed, especially if seen as a threat to campaign donors in the fossil fuel industry. It matters little that the rule may be widely supported by the public.

A case in point is a rule that seeks to reduce wasteful emissions of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, at thousands of oil and gas wells across the West. Though the industry cries bankruptcy, the Interior Department calculates the

cost of the rule at less than 1 percent of revenues. Another target is an Interior Department rule that would invite greater public input in designing resource management plans across the West to achieve a fair balance between conservation and commercial development. Representatives Rob Bishop of Utah and Liz Cheney of Wyoming — two reliable industry supporters — have managed to persuade their colleagues that this would undercut state authority, which is nonsense.

Picking off these easy targets is only the beginning of the administration's retreat from environmental sanity, using fantasy claims of job creation to cater to the Tea Party's resentment of federal regulation. One leader of this retreat will be the new boss of the Environmental Protection Agency, Scott Pruitt, the former Oklahoma attorney general and aggressive skeptic of climate change who made his political career out of suing the agency he now leads. Within days of his swearing-in, demoralized E.P.A. workers were reminded of Mr. Pruitt's close working ties to the fossil fuel industry as thousands of his emails were released showing his office dealing hand in glove with industry lobbyists.

Mr. Pruitt quickly riled critics by daring to quote John Muir, the patriarch of the environmental movement and founder of the Sierra Club: "Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in." Left unmentioned were his orders from Mr. Trump to rewrite, rescind or at least challenge any important environmental rules left standing when Congress has finished with its current demolition job.