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The New York Times

Deadly Attack Near U.K. Parliament; Car Plows Victims on Westminster Bridge

Katrin Bennhold and Stephen Castle

A knife-wielding assailant driving a sport utility vehicle mowed down panicked pedestrians and stabbed a police officer outside Parliament on Wednesday in a deadly assault, prompting the hasty evacuation of the prime minister and punctuating the threat of terrorism in Europe.

At least four people, including the assailant, were killed and at least 40 others injured in the confusing swirl of violence, which the police said they assumed had been "inspired by international terrorism." It appeared to be the most serious such assault in London since the deadly subway bombings more than a decade ago.

Throughout a turbulent afternoon, ambulances, emergency vehicles and heavily armed security officers thronged the area outside Parliament, as one of the busiest sections of London was cordoned off and evacuated.

Prime Minister Theresa May was rushed into a vehicle and spirited back to her office. She held a meeting of the government's emergency committee and issued a statement on Wednesday night from her 10 Downing Street residence denouncing "the sick and depraved terrorist attack on the streets of our Capital this afternoon."

Mrs. May also said that "the full details of exactly what happened are still emerging," but she confirmed that the attack had been carried out by a lone male assailant. As of late Wednesday, his identity had not been released, but Scotland Yard officials said they believed they knew who he was.

The attack unfolded around 2:40 p.m., Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley said at a news conference.

Driving a large sport utility vehicle, the assailant slammed into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge near Parliament, killing two people and injuring many others, before crashing into a railing.

After the crash, the driver left the vehicle and approached Parliament, where he stabbed an armed police officer to death and was fatally shot by the police.

The dead officer was identified as Keith Palmer, 48, a member of the Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection Command with 15 years of experience.

"This is the day we have planned for but we hoped would never happen," Mr. Rowley said. "Sadly, it's now a reality."

The attack came on the anniversary of suicide bombings in Brussels that killed 32 people, along with three bombers.

It confirmed fears among counterterrorism officials that London, which had largely escaped recent terrorist attacks in Europe, would join cities like Paris, Brussels and Berlin as targets of mass violence.

"Terrorism affects us all, and France knows the pain the British people are enduring today," President François Hollande of France said at a news conference in Villepinte, near Paris.

Mrs. May, who spoke with Mr. Hollande and President Trump, said in her statement that Parliament would meet as normal on Thursday. She vowed to never permit "the voices of hate and evil to drive us apart."

Cmdr. B. J. Harrington of the Metropolitan Police said at a brief news conference earlier Wednesday that a "full counterterrorism investigation is underway." He asked members of the public to report any suspicious activity and to share any images or video of the violence.

Commander Harrington said that the acting police commissioner, Craig Mackey, had been at the scene of the attack and was not injured, but was "being treated as a significant witness."

At least three police officers were among those injured on the bridge. Also among the injured were three 10th-grade boys from a group of visiting students from the Brittany region of France, and a woman who fell or plunged into the River Thames.

Mr. Hollande's government said it had chartered a plane to London with families of the French victims.

Tobias Ellwood, a minister in the Foreign Office, tried to save the life of the fatally stabbed police officer by giving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

The number of injured apparently included five South Korean tourists who were overwhelmed by a crowd fleeing the scene, South Korea's Foreign Ministry said Thursday morning. Three men suffered fractures, and a woman had surgery for a head injury, the ministry said.

For more than two hours, astonished lawmakers inside the House of Commons, some of whom had ducked for cover, were told to stay in place as officers searched the premises office by office.

"At the moment, the very clear advice from the police and the director of security in the house is that we should remain under suspension, and that the chamber should remain in lockdown until we've received advice that it is safe to go back to normal procedures," David Lidington, the leader of the House of Commons, or lower house of Parliament, told lawmakers in remarks broadcast live on the BBC.

Olly Grender, a member of the House of Lords, said that lawmakers were staying put. "We were in a meeting, I heard shouting through the window," she said, adding that a colleague came in to tell them that a serious episode had taken place.

Jayne Wilkinson, 59, from Birmingham, was near the statue of Winston Churchill in Parliament Square with her partner, David Turner, 56, when they saw people suddenly running from Parliament.

The couple said they had seen a middle-aged man holding a knife. He ignored warnings from the police, running though the gates into the Parliament compound, she said. "They were shouting to warn him," Ms. Wilkinson said. Soon after, she and her partner heard three gunshots and saw the man on the ground.

On the Scene in London

We gave live updates and responded to your questions in London, where a police officer was stabbed near the House of Parliament.

Three construction workers inside the grounds of Westminster Palace said they had heard shots fired in rapid succession before they were escorted off the premises. "It was bang-bang-bang," one said.

Reuben Saunders, an American student at Cambridge University who was visiting Parliament, said he had been leaving the building when he saw a police officer accosted by an assailant armed with two knives or similar weapons.

"He was at the gate, I heard screaming," Mr. Saunders said. "I saw the man on the ground being repeatedly stabbed, or pummeled."

Mr. Saunders said two or three other police officers arrived, and "there were two or three gunshots."

Corinne Desray, a teacher who was outside Parliament with 39 teenage students on a three-day school trip from northern France, said they had heard three shots. "My colleague saw bodies lying on the floor and someone said a policeman has been knived," she said. "I told the kids to leave quickly, we're heading back to the bus."

Kirsten Hurrell, 70, who owns a newsstand opposite Big Ben, said she had seen a car swerve across a bicycle lane and into a fence around Parliament. She saw a body lying on the ground and called emergency services. "At first I thought it was an accident, but then I was told the car had already mowed down quite a number of people on Westminster Bridge," she said, adding: "Now that it is a terrorist incident, it is a bit more daunting."

Robert Vaudry, 52, a fund manager from Stratford-upon-Avon, said he had emerged from the Westminster subway station around 2:40 p.m. for a meeting with a lawmaker when he realized that something was amiss.

"I came out of the Tube and there were two armed policemen," he said in an interview. "One grabbed my arm, pushed me to the left and said, 'Get out of here,'" he said. "They were shouting at everyone to get away." As he spoke, police officers were cordoning off the area. One officer shouted, "We need everyone to move back past Downing Street."

Radoslaw Sikorski, a former foreign minister of Poland who was in the area, was in a taxi on Westminster Bridge when the pedestrians were hit by the other vehicle. "I didn't see the impact, I heard it — it sounded like a car hitting a sheet of metal," he said. "I saw these people lying on the tarmac, on the pavement. I saw five people down, one unconscious and one bleeding heavily from his head. He was not moving. The taxi driver rang the emergency services, and people rushed to help."

Andrew Bone, the executive director of the Responsible Jewellery Council, an industry standards group, was on a bus heading toward Victoria Station when it was stopped at the edge of Parliament Square. Seeing the commotion, he initially thought an action movie was being shot, but quickly discerned the gravity of the situation as the bus was evacuated and he saw the vehicle that had crashed into a railing.

"We had a front-row seat as the first responders arrived," Mr. Bone said. "I am of the generation who remembers I.R.A. bombs in London during the Troubles," he said, referring to the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland. "We are not indifferent, but police have reacted with calm. I saw no panic."

Britain has not suffered a large-scale terrorist attack since July 7, 2005, when bomb attacks on subway trains and on a bus killed more than 50 people. Political violence is relatively rare in Britain, where gun ownership is stringently restricted.

Jo Cox, a Labour member of Parliament, was assassinated in her constituency in northern England on June 16, a week before the contentious referendum on whether Britain should leave the European Union.

In 1979, a lawmaker was assassinated near the Parliament building. Airey Neave, a Conservative Party member, was killed when his car was blown up.

Jeremy Shapiro, a former State Department official now at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said that the London attack was consistent with the recent pattern of attacks in which a vehicle was used to kill people, citing assaults in France, Germany and Israel.

"We've seen a gradual movement away from terrorist attacks on the West to attacks on softer and softer targets with more improvised weapons," he said. "In a way, it's a sign of desperation and a demonstration of the effectiveness of counterterrorism in the West. It's spectacularly easy to kill a bunch of people with a car or a truck if you don't care who they are."

The Washington Post

Four killed, 40 injured in vehicle and knife assault near British Parliament

LONDON — An assailant fatally stabbed a police officer at the gates to Britain's Parliament compound Wednesday after plowing a vehicle through terrified pedestrians along a landmark bridge. The attacker was shot and killed by police, but not before claiming a total of four lives in what appeared to be Europe's latest high-profile terrorist attack.

In a late-night statement, London Metropolitan Police said that they believed they knew who the attacker was, but declined to give a name. Speaking outside the Scotland Yard headquarters, Mark Rowley, the acting deputy police commissioner, said: "Our working assumption is he was inspired by international terrorism."

Police said the man traced a deadly path across the Westminster Bridge, running down people with an SUV, then ramming the vehicle into the fence encircling Parliament. At least 40 people were reported injured.

Finally, the attacker charged with a knife at officers stationed at the iron gates leading to the Parliament grounds, authorities said. The fallen police officer was identified as Keith Palmer, a 48-year-old husband and father who was unarmed at the time of the attack.

The dead and injured were left scattered on some of London's most famous streets.

Crumpled bodies lay on the Westminster Bridge over the River Thames, including at least two people killed. Outside Parliament, a Foreign Office minister — covered in the blood of the stabbed police officer — tried in vain to save his life.

"The location of this attack was no accident," British Prime Minister Theresa May said Wednesday evening, after chairing COBRA, the government's emergency committee. "The terrorist chose to strike at the heart of our capital city, where people of all nationalities, religions and cultures come together to celebrate the values of liberty, democracy and freedom of speech."

But she said that "any attempt to defeat those values through violence and terror is doomed to failure. Tomorrow morning, Parliament will meet as normal," she said.

The scene at Parliament earlier in the day was one of confusion while the Parliament chambers and offices were put on full lockdown for more than two hours.

"This is a day that we planned for but hoped would never happen. Sadly, it has now become a reality," Scotland Yard's Rowley said during one of his briefings.

As he spoke, the bells of Big Ben tolled six times to mark the hour.

Even before full details emerged, the attack and its chaos were certain to raise security levels in London and other Western capitals and bring further scrutiny of counterterrorism measures.

"We are treating this as a terrorist incident until we know otherwise," said a Twitter message from London Metropolitan Police.

The attack occurred on Parliament's busiest day of the week, when the prime minister appears for her weekly questions session and the House of Commons is packed with visitors.

The Palace of Westminster, the ancient seat of the British Parliament, is surrounded by heavy security, with high walls, armed officers and metal detectors. But just outside the compound are busy roads packed with cars and pedestrians.

The attack — a low-tech, high-profile assault on the most potent symbol of British democracy — fits the profile of earlier strikes in major European capitals that have raised threat levels across the continent in recent years.

It was apparently carried out by a lone assailant who used easily available weapons to attack and kill people in a busy public setting.

British security officials have taken pride in their record of disrupting such attacks even as assailants in continental Europe have slipped through. But they have also acknowledged that their track record would not stay pristine, and that an attack was inevitable. When it happened, it was shocking nonetheless. Cellphones captured scenes of carnage amid some of London's most renowned landmarks.

The target — Westminster — was heavily guarded. But the weapons of choice — an SUV and a knife — made the attack one of the most difficult kinds to prevent, requiring the assailant neither to acquire illegal weapons nor to plot with other conspirators.

Rowley said investigators believe that just one assailant carried out the attack, but he encouraged the public to remain vigilant.

Britain has been on high alert for terrorist attacks for several years. But until Wednesday, the country had been spared the sort of mass-casualty attacks that have afflicted France, Belgium and Germany since 2015.

Among those providing emergency aid was Tobias Ellwood, a senior official at the Foreign Office and a British military veteran. Photos showed Ellwood's face streaked with blood after attempting to revive the police officer who had been stabbed just inside the gates of the compound.

French Prime Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said that among those wounded in the vehicle attack were members of a group of French students. News media in France reported that three of the students, on a school trip from a high school in Brittany, were in serious condition and that their parents were being flown to London immediately.

In Washington, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said President Trump had been briefed on the attack and had spoken by phone with Prime Minister May.

"We condemn today's attack in Westminster," Spicer told reporters. He pledged "the full support of the U.S. government in responding to

the attack and bringing to justice those who are responsible."

Raffaello Pantucci, director of international security studies at the Royal United Services Institute think tank, said the rapid response suggested that police "were expecting that an attack was highly likely for some time."

Images from the bridge showed a man dressed in a suit lying on his back, his legs splayed to either side, as pedestrians huddled around him administering first aid. The shoe was off his right foot, and blood stained the sidewalk beneath his left.

In another image, a woman with long blond hair and running shoes lay in a pool of blood on the bridge's sidewalk. Blood stained the corner of her mouth as another pedestrian cradled her head.

Other photos showed people sitting on the sidewalk looking dazed amid broken glass and bits of automotive debris, with Big Ben looming beyond.

A spokesman for the Port of London Authority said a woman was pulled alive from the River Thames, and he confirmed reports that she had serious injuries.

As police investigated, much of the activity in the area around Westminster came to a standstill.

A nearby hospital was put on lockdown and the London Eye — the enormous Ferris wheel above the Thames — was stopped and visitors were slowly let off hours later. Those who were locked inside the Eye's capsules at the time of the attack were kept there, hovering above as emergency responders swarmed the scene below.

A witness, Kirsten Hurrell, 70, said she first heard the crash of a car hitting the fence outside Parliament before hearing noises that could have been gunshots.

"There was a lot of steam from the car," Hurrell told the Guardian newspaper. "I thought it might explode."

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said it was in "close contact with our British counterparts to monitor the tragic events and to support the ongoing investigation." It noted that U.S. security threat levels remained unchanged.

A year ago to the day, attackers carried out three coordinated suicide bombings in Belgium, killing 32 civilians and injuring more than 300 others in two blasts at Brussels Airport and one at a metro station in the Belgian capital. The Islamic State asserted responsibility for the attacks, in which three perpetrators were also killed.

As the aftermath of the London attack unfolded, the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament suspended their sessions. Scottish lawmakers had been due to debate legislation authorizing a new referendum on independence.

Specialists said the attack appeared to be in line with an emerging model of strikes involving simple, everyday instruments but carried out in locations sure to draw global attention.

"Terrorists rely on a lot of people watching — it can be even better than having a lot of people dead," said Frank Foley, a scholar of terrorism and counterterrorism at the Department of War Studies at King's College London.

Within a few hours of the attack, there were signs that normalcy was returning to London.

At the London Eye, a large crowd of tourists gathered.

Charles Thompson, a 21-year-old chef from Canada, wondered if there would be more attacks. "Usually it's a chain-reaction thing," he said.

His friend, Enrique Cooper, a 32-year-old officer manager originally from Italy, said he would not let the day's violence change his view of London. "I'm here all the time," he said. "You can't let something like this ruin your perspective."

THE DAILY BEAST

Four Dead in Terror Attack on U.K. Parliament

A terrorist struck at the historic heart of the "Mother of Parliaments" on Wednesday armed with nothing but rudimentary or makeshift weapons. He was brought down by armed officers, but not before he had careened into more than a dozen civilians in an SUV and stabbed a policeman to death at the gates of the House of Commons.

A blood-soaked member of Parliament battled to save unarmed officer Keith Palmer, 48, staunching his wounds and performing CPR, but his efforts came to naught.

At least four people, including the attacker, were killed with 40 wounded in the most deadly terror attack in London since the 7/7 bombings in 2005. Some of those being treated in hospital have catastrophic injuries.

The attack began on Westminster Bridge, where two centuries ago William Wordsworth was inspired to write:

Among those lingering to enjoy the views across the River Thames on a bright spring afternoon was a group of French schoolchildren. Three of them were injured as the vehicle mounted the sidewalk and sped into the crowds on the bridge.

One woman plunged over the railings into the dark river below. She was rescued from the water and rushed to hospital. Another woman was killed instantly on the bridge. One victim was slain at the foot of Big Ben.

Joanne and Brad Buck, on vacation from Marlborough, Connecticut, were coming up the escalators at Westminster Underground station when the attack took place.

As they emerged up the steps into the daylight, they saw the vehicle crashed into the railings opposite the Tube entrance. They first knew tragedy had struck when they looked into the eyes of a middle-aged man who was standing with his hands clamped to the sides of his head.

"His face was etched in terror," Joanne, 59, told The Daily Beast. "It was sheer horror. Something terrible had happened."

Almost immediately, dozens of Metropolitan Police officers carrying machine guns raced into sight and Brad, 63, ushered his wife behind one of the huge sandstone pillars of Portcullis House.

The vacationers had no idea that a burly close-protection officer was doing virtually the same thing 50 yards away. He had one arm around Prime Minister Theresa May as he bundled her into a silver Jaguar that soon sped away from the scene.

Seconds earlier, gunshots had rung out on the Parliamentary estate, killing the attacker, who had ditched his vehicle and run straight through the open gates opposite Parliament Square.

Eyewitnesses reported seeing him run up to an officer and make a series of stabbing motions before racing toward the House of Commons building. That's when he was shot two or three times by armed officers.

The building was packed on the busiest day of the week—just a few hours after a typically rowdy Prime Minister's Questions. While police secured the area, some members of Parliament were told to shelter inside the chamber itself.

Amine Mouad, 35, a kitchen porter from Algeria who lives in Edmonton, North London, told The Daily Beast he was on the phone with a friend close to the Houses of Parliament when he heard two gunshots.

"I heard 'bang bang,' and I started to run."

"Then I see a man—his head is down on the ground. I thought he was injured, but then I saw the blood. It was not normal blood. He was full of blood from his head," Mouad said, motioning with his hand to signify a river of blood.

Despite the first attack on the House of Commons for a generation, the prime minister announced that parliamentary business would go ahead as normal.

"These streets of Westminster, home to the world's oldest Parliament, are ingrained with a spirit of freedom that echoes in some of the furthest corners of the globe. And the values our Parliament represents—democracy, freedom, human rights, the rule of law—command the admiration and respect of free people everywhere," May said.

"That is why it is a target for those who reject those values. But let me make it clear today, as I have had cause to do before: Any attempt to defeat those values through violence and terror is doomed to failure."

Although the identity and motives of the attacker are as yet unknown, the incident bears a striking resemblance to attacks using vehicles as makeshift weapons of mass murder in Berlin last December, where 12 people died at Christmas shopping fair, and in Nice, France, last July, where 86 people died and more than 400 were injured. Both of those attacks were claimed by the so-called Islamic State as part of a campaign to inspire terror throughout Europe.

As ISIS has come under increasing pressure from the U.S.-led coalition and local forces in Syria and Iraq, its calls have increased for any sympathizers to take any action they can to strike back. In addition to the vehicle attacks, there have been knife and ax attacks in public places.

Some attacks have been directed remotely over encrypted messaging applications, most often Telegram; others, including the one in Nice, appear to have been inspired but not specifically directed. A lone assailant at Paris Orly airport last week tried to grab a patrolling soldier's assault rifle and said he was determined to die for Allah, but he was an ex-convict high on alcohol, cocaine, and marijuana, which suggests the attack was virtually spur of the moment.

London's Metropolitan Police said Wednesday's attack is being treated as "a terrorist incident until we know otherwise."

White House press secretary Sean Spicer said Wednesday that the commander-in-chief had been briefed on the situation almost immediately after it happened.

"I was just getting an update on London," Trump said. "Some big news having to do with London just happened."

Donald Trump Jr. was also quick to try and capitalize on the attack. He mocked London's Muslim mayor for his response to the attack.

Labour Member of Parliament Wes Streeting issued a furious response: "Use a terrorist attack on our city to attack London's Mayor for your own political gain," he wrote on Twitter.

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

London Terrorist Attack -- Parliament & Westminster Bridge Attack Draws Questions

By Tom Rogan

At 2:40 p.m. London time, a terrorist drove a vehicle into pedestrians on London's Westminster Bridge. Then, reaching the north side of the bridge over the River Thames, he smashed into the gates of the British Parliament. Leaving his vehicle, he fought with police officers just inside a Parliamentary checkpoint. He was then shot and killed by armed police. Regrettably, before he died, the terrorist murdered one police officer and two other individuals and injured at least 20 others.

By utilizing a motor vehicle and knife and by targeting police (though this may have been pursuant to a desire to enter the Houses of Parliament), this assault follows Daesh (a.k.a. ISIS) methodology. And coincidentally or not, today is also the first anniversary of the Daesh attacks in Brussels. It is so far unclear whether the attack is linked to or inspired by Daesh — but I would bet very strongly that it is.

Regardless, British officials must now answer three pressing questions.

First, was the suspect operating alone or as part of a larger cell? Here, we must recognize that Britain's terrorism environment is diverse. There are the loser-lone-wolfs in the vein of Omar Mateen, the Orlando nightclub shooter, but also skilled, multi-member cells. Daesh has previously planned highly compartmented, multi-stage attack plots in Europe. And in January 2016, it specifically threatened London's Tower Bridge (not Westminster Bridge) and the then-prime minister, David Cameron. Authorities must quickly identify the suspect's connections and learn whether (as with Daesh plots in France) he was advised by operatives abroad.

This leads us to the second question: Was the suspect known to the authorities? I suspect he was. British counterterrorism authorities retain a highly advanced database of jihadists and their sympathizers. This is helped by the fact that U.K. spy agencies have great latitude to identify and monitor terrorist suspects. The challenge, however, is that the number of terrorist suspects in Britain reaches into the thousands. Correspondingly, counterterrorism investigators must prioritize resources on those individuals they believe to pose the most significant threat. They cannot monitor everyone all the time. That said, if the suspect does turn out to be a known threat, political pressure will grow for a reintroduction of the now-defunct "control orders," which imposed electronic tagging on terrorist suspects in lieu of prosecution.

Third, the U.K. must consider how well it responded today. While the Paris and Brussels attacks led the British to improve their response capacity to so-called roaming attacks, more must be done. Until now, the specific focus has been on investment in improved SWAT counterterrorism capabilities. But those efforts have been prioritized for London. Two immediate issues for the British are that the physical security of Parliament and the personal security of the British prime minister and the Queen are inadequate.

Was the suspect known to the authorities? I suspect he was.

But further hardening of the capital's defenses won't solve the problem of other British localities lacking London's counterterrorism resources. Specifically, they do not have enough *armed* police officers (most British police do not carry firearms). Any major attack outside London would thus likely require a response from two military special-forces units that are kept on permanent standby. But aside from small forward-deployed elements, both of those units are based in western and southern England, leaving much of the United Kingdom vulnerable.

All this said, British officials will tonight privately breathe a sigh of relief. An attack of this kind has been expected for years. But it was expected to be far worse. Fortunately, London's first responders reacted with speed and exemplary courage. None more so than the officer who gave his life to defend his nation's Parliament.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

With Bloodshed on the Thames, a Lull in Terrorism Ends for the U.K.

Paul Hannon

It was July 7, 2005, that four Islamist extremists set off three bombs on the London Underground and another on a double-decker bus, killing 52 people, wounding more than 700 others and searing the date so deeply into the British psyche that it became known simply as 7/7.

Since then, the U.K. has been spared a major act of terrorism and staged Summer Olympic Games without incident, even as cities such as Paris and Brussels have been convulsed by spasms of terrorist violence.

Throughout the hiatus, senior U.K. counterterrorism and intelligence officials cautioned that it wouldn't last, and on Wednesday, under cloudy, early spring skies in the British capital, their warnings were realized.

"This is a day we planned for but hoped would never happen," said Mark Rowley, assistant commissioner for London's Metropolitan Police and the force's top counterterrorism official.

Little is yet known about the genesis of Wednesday's attacks. Still, even before the bloodshed on the Thames, signs that London wouldn't remain immune much longer to terrorism by Islamist extremists were accumulating bit by bit.

Police in London said last year they were increasing the number of officers trained to use firearms by almost a third, to 2,800, to enable the capital's mostly unarmed force to respond better to gun-wielding terrorists.

Drawing on the lessons of Paris, authorities said recently they were strengthening their capacity to respond to simultaneous attacks by gunmen and suicide bombers. Security funding and intelligence staff were increased, border controls were tightened and laws were put in place giving authorities more leeway to conduct surveillance.

But it was a rare speech in December by the head of MI6, the U.K.'s foreign intelligence service that, more than anything, signaled that the titanic, largely behind-the-scenes struggle to prevent another

7/7 couldn't insulate Britain from terrorist violence permanently.

In his address, the spy chief, Alex Younger, informed the British public that the scale of the terrorism threat to the U.K. was "unprecedented" and that the country's intelligence and security services had "disrupted" 12 terrorist plots since June 2013.

The 2005 bombings themselves marked the end of a period of peace that followed the end of three decades of attacks by Irish republican terrorists on London and other British cities, during which the Houses of Parliament and other symbols of British tradition and might were repeatedly targeted.

In June 1974, the Irish Republican Army planted a 20-pound bomb that exploded outside the Houses of Parliament, injuring 11 people.

Almost five years later, Conservative lawmaker Airey Neave, who managed Margaret Thatcher's campaign to become leader of the party, was assassinated by the Irish National Liberation Army, which planted a bomb in the chassis of his car that exploded as he drove out of the Palace of Westminster car park.

The last major attack in the heart of Britain's government occurred in 1991, when the IRA launched three homemade mortar shells at 10 Downing Street, the prime minister's office. Two shells overshot the building while one landed in the back garden, and four people received minor injuries.

For all their experience with violence by Irish republican militants, British security officials have characterized the 2005 attacks as a watershed in their approach to terrorist threats. The blasts at three Underground stations and aboard a bus marked the first suicide bombings in Britain and the country's first major attack by Islamist extremists.

The U.K. dramatically increased its spending on counterterrorism and intelligence, and within three years the budget for counterterrorism policing grew about 30% in three years to £570 million ($711 million).

Counterterrorism hubs consisting of police and intelligence service were formed around the country. Laws were amended to make it easier for authorities to prosecute people for planning attacks, distributing terrorist propaganda or attending training camps.

But while the U.K. had until Wednesday been free of attacks inflicting multiple casualties, the years since 2005 had not been entirely peaceful. In May 2013, serving soldier Lee Rigby was murdered by two British converts to Islam near Woolwich barracks in south London. And last year, lawmaker Jo Cox was stabbed and shot in the village of Birstall in northern England, a murder described by a judge as motivated by Nazism and by prosecutors as an act of terrorism.

A number of planned attacks have been foiled by the police. In 2012, nine men received prison sentences for a plot to attack the London Stock Exchange and other offenses.

A year later, 11 men from Birmingham received prison sentences ranging from 40 years to life after they were convicted of planning to carry out an attack even larger than the 7/7 bombings.

Until Wednesday, these prosecutions and other measures by British authorities succeeded in maintaining the peace.

the Atlantic Why Terrorists Target Government Buildings

Uri Friedman

If, as police suspect, the deadly attack near the British Parliament on Wednesday proves to be an act of terrorism, it will depart from the recent pattern of terrorist attacks in the West. In the post-9/11 world of the counterterrorism surveillance state and the internet-radicalized lone-wolf attacker, terrorists typically don't use sophisticated weapons that might tip off authorities, and it's easiest not to strike at heavily fortified targets. Instead, they often use easily accessible, relatively crude weapons (knives, guns, vehicles) against "soft" targets (nightclubs, Christmas markets, crowds celebrating Bastille Day).

After the 2015 Paris attacks, for example, *The Washington Post* marveled, "There was no pretense of attacking nodes of the power structure. They didn't try to blow up a naval vessel, an embassy, a military barracks. They did not attack government buildings or police stations. The killers went after people having fun—dining out on a Friday night, going to a concert or watching a 'friendly' between France and Germany at the soccer stadium."

In the case of the violence outside Westminster Palace on Wednesday, the weapons appear to have been crude—a car, a knife—but the target was one of the hardest in the nation. The result was not casualties on the scale of the Paris attacks—the authorities appear to have responded swiftly to the incident before an attacker could get into Parliament itself—but it was devastating nonetheless: lawmakers placed on lockdown and evacuated to Westminster Abbey, the British prime minister spirited away in a silver Jaguar, and several people, including a police officer, lying dead or injured just outside the seat of government.

While terrorists usually attack poorly defended targets, the terrorism scholar Benjamin Cole writes, a "key feature of terrorism is that terrorist groups will continually innovate in order to defeat defences around specific targets." And those targets include government facilities, since terrorists aim in part to "undermine the principal foundation of the state"—the "perceived invincibility that it cultivates amongst its people"—and to "demonstrate the failure of the state to protect its key leaders and strategic installations." (Government entities are the third-most common target of terrorist attacks around the world since 1970, after private citizens/property and and businesses.)

As Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism expert at Georgetown University, has noted, while the Provisional Irish Republican Army's attacks against the British leaders Margaret Thatcher and John Major in the 1980s and '90s technically failed, they "shone renewed media attention on the terrorists, their cause, and their impressive ability to strike at the nerve center of the British government even at a time of heightened security." The IRA, one Northern Irish police officer observed at the time, is "always that step ahead of you." The terrorist groups and their motivations have changed since then, but that enduring fact is one reason terrorism remains so difficult to prevent.

FP Foreign Policy Scots Vote on a Second Independence Referendum, Bucking Theresa May

By Emily Tamkin

On Wednesday, Scottish parliament was set to vote to give its government a mandate for a second referendum on Scottish independence from Great Britain.

This follows British Prime Minister Theresa May's declaration last week that "now is not the time" for a second referendum on Scottish independence, which she believes should not be held until after the completion of negotiations for Britain itself to leave the European Union. While May is set to trigger those talks by the end of the month, they'll likely take until at least 2019 to complete.

May's comments didn't sit well with Nicola Sturgeon, first minister of Scotland, and don't seem to have gone down well with the Scottish parliament, either. And since Sturgeon's Scottish Nationalist Party has roughly half the seats in parliament and will probably be joined in this matter by the Greens, it's likely to vote to back Sturgeon's plans for a second referendum before "it is too late to choose an alternative path."

Wednesday's vote marks the conclusion of two days of debate. Sturgeon opened it by saying, "As a result of the Brexit vote we know that change is now inevitable — the question is what kind of change is right for Scotland and whether that change is made for us or by us."

The first referendum on Scottish independence was held in the summer of 2014, and failed, with only about 45 percent backing independence. Then-prime Minister David Cameron urged Scots to look beyond his unpopularity when voting: a vote to break the 300-plus-year union would be permanent, he argued.

One reason the Scottish "no" vote prevailed: Scots wanted to stay in Europe, which would have been tougher if they bailed out of Great Britain. Now, the situation is reversed: Scots voted overwhelmingly against Brexit last summer, and many see Scottish independence as they only way to stay inside the EU. (Many in Europe are willing to welcome them with open arms, though Spain — with its own restless regions — is leery of setting a dangerous precedent.)

Lawmakers suspended their sitting out of respect for their "sister Parliament," outside of which there was an attack that Scotland Yard is at present treating as a "terrorist incident," delaying their decision as to whether the best way to remain really is to leave after all.

Germany set to deport native-born potential terrorists

The Christian Science Monitor

In a move without precedent in German history, the country will soon deport two German-born men accused of having discussed terrorist activity.

On Tuesday, the Federal Administrative Court in Leipzig threw out a case saying that the men, one an Algerian national and the other a Nigerian citizen, should not be deported because there was no proof they had committed a serious offense. In so doing, it cleared the way for deportations that the state government of Lower Saxony ordered last month, when it described the pair as a threat to national security.

It is the first time in the country's history that German-born residents will be deported, a spokesman for Lower Saxony's interior ministry told the dpa news agency. The ruling may be a sign of hardening attitudes in Germany, which has been facing the joint challenges of migrant inflows and terrorist attacks since 2015.

"You can count on us using all means at our disposal with full force," state Interior Minister Boris Pistorius said, the Associated Press reported. "It's completely irrelevant whether they grew up here or not."

In February, investigators detained both men, who have not been identified publicly, in Goettingen. Among the items they found were ISIS flags, a machete, and two weapons, at least one of which had been altered to fire live ammunition. Though there was no proof that they were planning a terror attack, the men were known to police through their affiliation with Salafists, Agence France Presse reported, and local authorities asked for them to be deported.

The deportations are sanctioned under a little-known and never-before-enforced law, passed as part of an anti-terrorism package after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks in the United States.

Deporting foreigners considered dangerous has become an increasing focus of German government efforts to protect its citizens, following three high-profile terrorist attacks claimed by the so-called Islamic State group (ISIS) last year. After the attack on a Berlin Christmas market by a Tunisian who had been denied refugee status, German Chancellor Angela Merkel asked North African states to expedite repatriation procedures.

Dual nationals who fight for extremist groups can also be stripped of their citizenship.

Unlike the United States, Germany does not confer citizenship on any child born in the country. Instead, citizenship follows the principle of *jus sanguinis*, or right of blood, in which citizenship is not determined by birthplace but by the citizenship of both parents. That means Germany can deport people to their country of citizenship even if they have lived in Germany all their lives.

The two men will be deported to Algeria and Nigeria, respectively, before Easter. The planned deportation to Algeria comes after an agreement with the Algerian government that the deportee would not be tortured or subjected to inhumane treatment, according to Deutsche Welle.

"This is a clear signal to all fanatics that we won't leave them one centimeter for their inhuman plans," Mr. Pistorius said.

Europeans Won't Follow Suit on Electronics on Flights

Robert Wall in London and Laurence Norman in Brussels

Countries in continental Europe said they won't for now adopt new U.S. and U.K. rules barring most electronic gear from the cabins of flights from the Middle East and North Africa—opening up an unusual split among Western security authorities over airplane safety.

France, Germany and the Netherlands—all home to major aviation hubs linking the U.S. to the Middle East and North Africa—said they weren't currently intending to introduce the new rules. Officials in continental Europe said on Wednesday they haven't received enough information from their U.S. and British counterparts to warrant following suit.

On Tuesday, U.S. officials said they would require passengers to check in laptops, tablets and other devices—but not phones and some medical devices—on direct U.S.-bound flights from airports in eight Middle Eastern and North African countries. U.S. officials cited terror worries, but didn't provide details. Britain followed with similar rules for U.K.-bound flights from a slightly different group of airports in many, but not all, of the same countries. The U.K. coordinated the timing of its action with the U.S. to ease implementation, a British government official said.

An official at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security said individual countries "make decisions for a variety of reasons and considerations that aren't always the same," which the official said in part explains why the nations on the U.S. and U.K. lists differ. The U.S., for instance, includes Qatar and the U.A.E. on its list, the U.K. doesn't.

The official said information about the risk behind the new electronics ban has been shared among various countries but that the level of intelligence sharing is less clear. The official said some European nations may seek more information in the coming weeks and potentially follow the leads of the U.S. and U.K.

Chris Grayling, Britain's transport secretary, said Wednesday that the decision was taken in response to an evolving threat. "We have taken the steps that we have taken for good reason," Mr. Grayling told Parliament on Wednesday.

German authorities Tuesday said U.S. authorities notified them of their planned action, but that, for now, they didn't plan to impose their own restrictions.

"Our picture is not yet complete," German Interior Ministry spokesman Johannes Dimroth said. "These conversations are continuing," he said, with both British and American officials. French and Dutch officials also said they were reviewing procedures, but have so far decided not to move ahead with any new rules.

The split between officials in continental Europe on one hand and U.S. and British officials on the other appears to hamper the stated aim of the new rules to protect inbound U.S. and U.K. flights from attack. The patchwork enforcement makes it possible for a passenger to bring a device into the cabin of a U.S.-bound flight simply by changing planes in Paris, Amsterdam or Frankfurt, said Matthew Finn, managing director of London-based security consultant Augmentiq.

"Regrettably, this is another poorly thought through, knee-jerk reaction that falls short of actually reducing a risk and improving security," he said.

The Homeland Security official declined to comment on the issue.

Governments in the Middle East affected by the new rules are reaching out to the U.S. Turkey has sharply criticized the rules and asked the U.S. to reconsider. The United Arab Emirates would try to convince the Trump administration that its security measures are sufficient, according to a local official. It was also trying to understand why the U.S. included the U.A.E. in its restrictions when the U.K. didn't, this official said. Saudi officials didn't comment on the new regulations.

Divisions on such issues are unusual among Western aviation officials, who have in the past mostly

walked in lockstep in terms of airport and airplane safety.

Specific procedures vary from airport to airport around the world—like whether shoes come off before machine screening. But Western airlines and aviation officials have typically been on the same page when it comes to critical decisions, such as what a passenger can take into a plane's cabin and what needs to be checked in.

The split is confounding security officials and angering travel experts.

"The restrictions make no sense," said Greeley Koch, executive director of the Association of Corporate Travel Executives, an Alexandria, Va.-based business group. The blow is particularly hard for business travelers, he said.

"The first rule in business travel is not to be separated from anything essential to the success of your trip," he said, with laptops and tablets among the main devices such passengers rely on.

Washington and London share sensitive data between themselves, and as members of the so-called Five Eyes intelligence alliance, which also includes Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Canada's transport minister, Marc Garneau, said late Tuesday that the country's cabinet will review information provided by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and others about the potential risk posed by electronic devices on commercial flights. So far, Ottawa hasn't said it would adopt the rules.

It wasn't clear whether European officials were seeking additional information that the U.S. and the U.K. considered in making the decision or whether the Europeans viewed the information differently.

A spokeswoman for the European Union's executive said they are "actively encouraging member states to share intelligence and coordinate their actions." There will be a security coordination next week with all 28 member states "to assess the new bans."

The spokeswoman said the bloc's transport commissioner, Violeta Bulc, plans to ask the U.K. to share threat information "in order to allow concerted mitigating action if so required."

The difference in what electronic gear airlines and airports will allow on board threatens to confuse affected passengers and raise costs for airlines flying those routes. At Riyadh's international airport, passengers for an early flight to Washington, D.C., were being screened on Wednesday a second time and required to pass through metal detectors and place carry-ons through an X-ray machine a second time, as well.

For U.S.-bound flights alone, the number of affected passengers in the next few months could number in the millions. According to data provider OAG Aviation Worldwide Ltd., the nine airlines that fly nonstop to the U.S. from 10 airports in eight Middle Eastern and North African countries affected by the U.S. rules are expected to offer 10,651 flights to the U.S. between Saturday, the U.S. deadline for compliance, and mid-October. That is an average of 52 flights a day.

Based on published schedules, the carriers are expected to offer 3.6 million seats on the affected routes to the U.S., OAG said. Of the nine affected carriers on routes to the U.S., the top carriers by seats and flights are Emirates Airline of Dubai, followed by Turkish Airlines, Doha-based Qatar Airways and Etihad Airways of Abu Dhabi. The number of affected flights to Britain could be significantly higher, though U.K. officials aren't estimating numbers, and U.K. officials so far haven't set a deadline for compliance.

THE DAILY BEAST

Europe's Failure to Stem Migration Is Costing More Than Lives

Death on the Mediterranean Sea is an all-too-common side note to the ongoing migrant crisis, a saga fueled by unchecked human trafficking in Libya that continues to challenge European leaders.

In 2016, more than 5,000 people are known to have lost their lives trying to make the passage from Libya to Europe by way of Italy; countless others have died along the way without anyone taking notice. The number of dead and missing is invariably overshadowed by the number of people who survive the journey to stake their claim on the European dream: 355,361 in 2016, more than 20,000 so far this year.

European leaders from the union's founding nations will meet here this weekend to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, which led to the creation of the ever-more divided European Union. While they sign a new treaty at a lavish ceremony at the Palazzo dei Conservatori on the Capitoline Hill overlooking the sumptuous Roman Forum, rescues at sea a few hundred miles away will be the elephant in the room. It is hard to escape the reality of the situation anywhere in Italy, not least of all Rome, where an increasing number of migrants and refugees are present almost everywhere you turn.

Last weekend, more than 6,000 people were rescued and brought to Italy; weather permitting, the weekend of the gala anniversary could see the same number of arrivals, or more. "We have yet to complete March, and we are already racing at a pace of arrivals that has exceeded anything we've seen before in the Mediterranean," Joel Millman, spokesman for the International Office of Migration said in a statement. "This is typical of spring, getting very busy, but it's not typical to have the numbers be so high this early and the corresponding deaths that go with it."

Europe has done a miserable job controlling the flow of irregular migration. Countless rescue boats now trawl the waters off the coast of Libya, essentially waiting for a smuggler's ship to send out a distress call to the Italian coast guard, which dispatches those closest for a rescue. But rather like putting a fleet of ambulances at a dangerous intersection with a broken stoplight, the rescue operations are there to save lives, but do nothing to actually fix the problem.

Those European countries that speak the loudest against the influx have argued the presence of rescuers at sea creates a "pull factor" for migrants. Those on the side of human rights argue that without the rescuers the death toll would be unthinkable. The traffickers have proven they care little about their human cargo, so it seems a stretch to think they are affected by whether or not the boats they send off once they are paid in full will make it or not.

The "pull factor" argument is impossible to prove either way, but it is almost certain that clamping down on the human traffickers who run free in Libya would be a more sensible first step in solving the problem than stopping the rescue boats from saving lives. On Monday, Italy held talks with the UN-backed prime minister of Libya, Fayez al-Seraj, and eight interior ministers from Europe's most powerful nations to do just that.

The agenda included a call for investments in Libya to fight the rampant smuggling. Seraj asked for €800 million and a grocery list of supplies that include boats, guns, and binoculars to help patrol the borders and stop the traffickers. He also wants 10 ambulances, 24 Zodiac speedboats, and 30 satellite phones in addition to jeeps, cars, and scuba gear.

The €800 million is in addition to commitments of €200 million made last month to stem trafficking, of which just €90 million was earmarked for Libya. Under the new investments, Libya would agree to set up patrols in its waters to turn back smuggling boats, placing the migrants and refugees on them in camps managed by the government in Tripoli rather than in cruel Libyan prisons, which is what often happens now.

Italy's interior minister Marco Minniti, who is pushing for the success of the endeavor, promised that the camps would be safe. "There will be camps that are created together with the humanitarian organizations in full respect for peoples' rights," he said. The Libyan camps would also have facilities to allow migrants and refugees to apply for political asylum in Europe that includes a safe corridor plan for those whose applications are accepted, he said.

The idea is marvelous on paper. It would undoubtedly save thousands of lives at sea. But the question of whether it would actually help those seeking asylum or a better life is debatable. Even in Europe, refugee camps are among the most lawless no-mans-lands anywhere. Thousands of people stuck on the Greek islands in camps live in conditions so miserable that many aid agencies have left—so that they would not be affiliated with the sites' violations against human rights. Suicide rates in the camps are skyrocketing and many people have decided to go back to Turkey or even Syria to escape the living hell while they wait for their applications to be processed.

If the migrants and refugees are turned back and forced to stay in Libyan camps, which could be dangerous and inhumane given the level of lawlessness in that country,

it might eventually deter others from making the journey to try. But one is justified in asking how many people might die or suffer during the transition phase.

Italy has pledged to invest €200 million into the African nations from which the highest numbers of asylum seekers originate as a more sane way to address the flows and initiate fixing the root of the problem. But bureaucracy on both sides of the Mediterranean has kept that pledge from being realized so far, which serves as an even bigger deterrent to other European nations who might consider doing the same.

There won't be much time this weekend between photo ops and self-congratulatory cocktail parties toasting the success of the European project to give much thought to anything else. But that doesn't mean the people will not be risking their lives for their very own version of the very European dream its leaders are celebrating.

Bloomberg

Europe's Murky Path to Normal Monetary Policy

Ferdinando Giugliano

Much like a father holding the hand of his anxious son through a dark alleyway, the European Central Bank is striving to give markets guidance over how it will normalize its monetary policy.

The ECB has told investors that it intends quantitative easing to continue at a pace of 60 billion euros a month from April until the end of 2017. Interest rates will also remain low, it has said, "for an extended period of time" and, anyway, well after the end of the central bank's asset purchases.

Can you take all that to the bank? There are reasons to wonder.

With euro-zone inflation now running at 2 percent -- nominally above the central bank's target -- the ECB's "forward guidance" is coming under scrutiny. Investors are wondering whether rising price pressures will force it to taper QE earlier than expected. It could also change the sequence of its exit, raising rates before scaling down asset purchases.

The central bank is understandably reluctant to discuss all this in public. A senior official told me, "The day we start talking about it, this will send a signal to the markets and they will react." Privately, individual governors have already begun to form their own opinions.

A lot will depend on how they see the recent spike in inflation, which most economists attribute largely to the stabilization in energy prices.

The ECB sets out four conditions for judging whether this increase points to the need to tighten policy. Inflation has to move towards the ECB's target of just below 2 percent in the medium term; this convergence must look durable; it must apply to the whole of the euro zone; and it must be self-sustaining (that is, expected to persist even without monetary stimulus).

The current thinking is that these conditions aren't yet met. Underlying price pressures and wage growth remain subdued and there's no certainty that changes in the price of energy will have second-round effects on other components of inflation. The future trajectory of oil prices is anyway unclear. Unemployment in the euro zone can probably fall a bit further without putting pressure on wages -- an issue the ECB is studying.

Setting inflation aside, political uncertainty within and outside the euro zone argues for a steady hand. By the end of 2017, Germany and France -- the euro zone's two largest economies -- will have held elections, and central bankers will have a clearer idea of Donald Trump's policy intentions. And another reason to stand pat for now is credibility. In the absence of a major shock to inflation, tapering before the end of the year would be seen as a volte-face.

What about a different kind of tweak -- such as raising rates before tapering? Some of the governors may be open to this. Last week, Ewald Nowotny, head of Austria's central bank, said the council hadn't decided. Bear in mind that, unlike the Fed, the ECB has lowered the rate on reserves parked at the central bank to less than zero. A negative deposit rate squeezes banks' profit margins, which troubles some governors. However, for now, most seem to favor tapering first, followed by higher rates.

Another possibility would be to drop the reference to keeping rates low "well past the horizon of the net asset purchases," as the current guidance puts it. Some hawkish governors favor that idea. On Monday, they found an unlikely ally in Ignazio Visco, governor of the Bank of Italy and a long-standing dove, who told Bloomberg in an interview that the gap could be shortened.

The safest bet for now is to take the ECB at its word: QE is likely to run until the end of the year and rates to stay low until tapering is over. But when you're stumbling up a dark alley, forward guidance isn't as safe a hand as you might wish.

Bloomberg

Why Nationalists Need Like-Minded Foreigners

Leonid Bershidsky

There's something disturbing about recent stories about the ideological kinship between Steve Bannon, U.S. President Donald Trump's chief strategist, and Marine Le Pen, the nationalist candidate running for French president. Isn't nationalism supposed to travel badly across borders? Isn't international solidarity the exclusive province of leftists crying "Workers of the world, unite!"? And aren't anti-elite nationalist populists fighting a rootless, globalist elite that has grown fat on the borderless movement of capital?

Finding the French roots of both Bannon's and Le Pen's ideology is a matter of connecting the dots. Bannon has reportedly expressed admiration for the ideas of Charles Maurras, an ideologist of the Nazi-collaborating Vichy regime in France who pitted the "legal state" -- embodied by governments and laws -- against a "real state" defined by the people.

Marion Marechal Le Pen, niece of Marine and one of the leading figures in the National Front party, also admired this notion in a speech to French Action -- a nationalist group of which Maurras was once a member. Bannon has also cited a French novel, "Camp of the Saints" by Jean Raspail, of which Marine Le Pen is also a longtime fan. The 1973 novel, which is often described as racist, describes "third world" immigrants taking over Europe after Western politicians prove too weak to stop them.

"The rats won't give up that cheese called 'The West' until they've devoured it to the very last crumb," goes a line in the novel. "Big and thick as it is, that will take them some time."

In turn, other European nationalist politicians owe certain ideological debts to U.S. conservative writers. Geert Wilders, whose nativist party came in second in this month's Dutch election, has taken inspiration from the American right. One of the first things Wilders did when trying to set up his Freedom Party was to take a trip to the U.S. to meet some of the people whose ideas he could borrow.

The ideological cross-pollination may not be surprising at first sight -- after all, most of us don't really care what country an idea comes from. Yet people such as Bannon, Le Pen and Wilders send a narrowly targeted, blood and soil message to voters. They promise to put their country first and everyone else second. Globalism and internationalism are dirty words to them. Unlike socialists, who easily set up international groups, the nationalists are "somewhere people" tied to a specific place. They don't work well together.

In the European Parliament, the nationalist parties are divided between two factions: Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (which includes Britain's UKIP) and Europe of Nations and Freedom (this includes Wilders' PVV and Le Pen's National Front). The German AfD party couldn't pick one of these and sent its members to both. The parties don't attend any regular gatherings together -- this year's meeting of Wilders, Le Pen and the AfD's Frauke Petry in Koblenz, Germany, was a rare event that may not be repeated.

The parties' leaders cheer each other on with encouraging tweets when there's an election; that, however, is not joint action but rather a show of hope that in their

own country, things will go well for them, too.

"Because of divergent nationalist agendas, the creation of a stable and unified alliance between right-wing populist parties seems highly unlikely," Leonid de Jonge, a Ph. D. student at Cambridge University who studies populism, wrote in a recent article about the potential for a "Brown network."

The nationalist, populist parties, indeed, are extremely different. Wilders has nothing against gay marriage because opposing it in the Netherlands is political suicide. It's unpopular with the French right, so Le Pen is against it. Nigel Farage, the former leader of UKIP, is openly pro-American (he even campaigned for Trump last year) while the AfD is trying to balance friendliness with a push for a smaller U.S. presence in Germany.

The supposedly nationalist parties may be selling local traditions, local heroes, and local nostalgia to local electorates. But the common references to a literature that contrasts elites and the national interest and which warns of dangers to a white, Christian-dominated Western society make for a deeper bond, a common perception of the enemy, and a kinship that goes beyond narrow patriotism. It is no accident that Farage has picked up an old Communist war cry about a "global revolution" that, he says, "is going to roll out across the rest of the free world."

Globalization can't be cheated or beaten back. The modern world's political battles are global, or at least multinational. Paradoxically, the nationalist populist parties of today can't achieve global success until they start openly recognizing this and forming a common agenda that is less grounded in local values than in a common ideology. For now, the centrist elites -- which have this advantage and powerful global structures -- can confine them to a few accidental local victories.

THE DAILY BEAST

Russian Lawyer Thrown From Window Was a Witness for the U.S. Government

A lawyer connected to murdered Putin foe Sergei Magnitsky has been thrown from a window in Moscow. He was a witness for the U.S.

Two common causes of death for contemporary Russians are heart attacks and falling to one's end from great heights. In some cases, these fatal tendencies even have something to do with high cholesterol or tragic mishaps.

In 2008, a clothing salesman called Semyon Korobeinikov lost his footing on a balcony somehow and tumbled to his demise.

A year later, Korobeinikov was named as the purchaser of Universal Savings Bank, a dubious financial institution that had been fingered by investigators as a way-station for stolen Russian money. Only he didn't buy the bank. It was part of a government ruse to exonerate the true owner, an ex-convict called Dmitry Klyuev, a reputed mob boss implicated in a series of massive tax frauds that cost Russian citizens $1 billion.

Korobeinikov might have therefore borne witness against Klyuev, if he wasn't conveniently already 6 feet under.

In 2009, in a related case, Russian tax attorney Sergei Magnitsky was beaten to death by eight prison guards, according to a report published by then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's own human rights commission. The Kremlin claimed he died of a coronary. Then it put him on trial *posthumously* for tax evasion.

The case prompted U.S. anti-corruption and human rights legislation, known as the Magnitsky Law, which put the Russian government under Vladimir Putin on notice that it could not always get away with such abuses.

Magnitsky was killed by a hybridized state-mafia organization for unearthing a $230 million tax fraud perpetrated against the Russian people. The mob had colluded with the same cops supposed to investigate the crime, tax officials who processed it, and a host of compromised judges in various jurisdictions tasked with covering it up. They were all members of the Klyuev Group, and many are now sanctioned under the Magnitsky Law.

In 2012, Alexander Perepilichny, a former member of the Klyuev Group, dropped dead while jogging in his adoptive home of Surrey, England. There was no cause of death stated, but the assumption by the British coroner's initial finding was that nothing looked suspicious, even though Perepilichny was a healthy 44-year-old with no known chronic or debilitating ailments.

Then Monique Simmonds, a researcher at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, hired by the coroner at the behest of Perepilichny's life insurance company, uncovered traces of a rare and toxic plant, gelsemium, in the victim's stomach.

Gelsemium, as it turns out, does not grow in the verdant climes of Surrey. It is only found in China, where it is a favored poison of assassins. Russian hitmen, too, have been known to access the flower's quiet, lethal capability.

At the time of his death, Perepilichny had been helping the Swiss government locate and freeze chunks of the missing $230 million, some of which, the U.S. government concluded, wound up in Manhattan real estate and American banks.

In an ongoing asset forfeiture and money-laundering case initiated by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, the alleged vehicle by which these dirty assets were washed clean was a Cyprus-registered company called Prevezon Holdings Ltd. (The U.S. attorney behind the case was Preet Bharara, fired by the Trump administration after refusing to resign.)

The Daily Beast has published half a dozen stories about *United States v. Prevezon*, including its star-studded and ever-evolving cast of characters.

So, now we come to the case of Nikolai Gorokhov, a lawyer entangled in the Prevezon case as a verification witness for the Justice Department who can expertly identify and authenticate Russian financial documents.

Gorokhov had intimate knowledge of the literature connected with the Magnitsky affair because he has represented the murdered lawyer's justice-seeking wife and mother for six years.

On Wednesday, he was due to testify in the Moscow City Appeals Court to argue against another court's refusal to re-investigate the conspiracy that Magnitsky uncovered, based on new evidence. That evidence suggested a former investigative head of the Russian Interior Ministry was fabricating or revising old files related to the case, and doing so at the behest of the Klyuev Group.

But on Tuesday, the 53-year-old Gorokhov plummeted from the fourth floor of his apartment building in Moscow. He was trying to move a bathtub to an apartment at the top of the building, according to the Russian press.

Curiously, first on the scene to report this as an accident involving a renovation gone wrong was LifeNews, a Russian outlet closely connected to the Russian security services and famous for inventing false news stories about the war in Ukraine and the murder of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov.

"There's still a lot of missing pieces to the whole story, but what we know for sure is that he was onto some of the most sensitive issues that the Russian government cares about in relation to the Magnitsky case," Bill Browder, Magnitsky's former client, told The Daily Beast in a phone call from London. "A lot of people weren't happy with what he was doing in the Prevezon case."

Gorokhov, Browder said, is currently in the intensive-care unit at Botkin Hospital with severe head trauma, although his injuries no longer appear life threatening.

So, we may yet learn if he fell or was pushed. Or if he will get his day in court as a witness for the U.S. government.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Lawyer for Russian Whistleblower's Family Falls Out of Window

Thomas Grove

MOSCOW—A lawyer representing the family of dead Russian whistleblower Sergei Magnitsky was in a serious condition after a fall from a four-story building ahead of a key court appearance, Mr. Magnitsky's former employer said Wednesday.

The lawyer, Nikolai Gorokhov, 53, was scheduled to appear in court on Wednesday to argue that new evidence was grounds to reopen the case into the death of Mr. Magnitsky, who was found dead in prison in 2009 with broken fingers and bruises all over his body.

Russian state media said Mr. Gorokhov fell late Tuesday out of the building window together with the bathtub he was helping workers carry to his apartment.

Justice for Sergei Magnitsky, the organization run by Bill Browder, who owns Hermitage Capital Management, which Mr. Magnitsky represented, cast doubt on this version of events.

"Russian state-controlled media contradict the information available from eyewitnesses," a statement from the organization said, adding that accounts differed over the whereabouts of various people at the scene of the alleged accident.

The Interfax news agency said the incident was caused by unsafe handling of the tub and that law enforcement agencies weren't investigating foul play.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that Mr. Magnitsky died of heart failure. However, the Russian presidential human rights council has said the lawyer was likely beaten to death in custody, aged 37.

The investigation into his death was closed in 2012, but Mr. Gorokhov was meant to appear in court to shed light on correspondence between men suspected of involvement in Mr. Magnitsky's death.

Mr. Magnitsky's death was the impetus for the creation of the so-called Magnitsky list, which prohibits anyone suspected of involvement in the lawyer's death or human-rights abuses from holding assets in the U.S. or traveling there.

Mr. Browder said that Mr. Magnitsky was targeted by authorities and charged with tax fraud after he accused state officials of stealing $230 million from the Hermitage Fund by setting up phony tax refunds.

The statement from the Justice for Sergei Magnitsky organization said that, as of Wednesday, Mr. Gorokhov was in intensive care in a serious condition, but that he was responsive and speaking to doctors.

INTERNATIONAL

The New York Times

Erdogan Warns Europeans on Their Safety as Tensions Rise With West

Patrick Kingsley

KASTAMONU, Turkey — President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey warned Europeans on Wednesday that they would no longer be able to walk safely in the street if Western politicians continued with perceived provocations against Turkish leaders.

Mr. Erdogan's warning turned out to be awkwardly timed, coming hours before a deadly attack outside the British Parliament.

In a Twitter post written in English, Turkey's foreign minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu, quickly condemned the assault in London, noting that Turkey had "suffered similar attacks many times."

Mr. Erdogan's comments were a response to restrictions placed on his surrogates in European countries including Germany and the Netherlands, where they have been barred from holding political rallies in support of a referendum in which Turks will decide whether to expand their president's powers.

"If you go on behaving like that, tomorrow nowhere in the world, none of the Europeans, Westerners will be able to walk in the streets in peace, safely," Mr. Erdogan said at a meeting in Ankara, the capital.

The outburst was his latest attempt to rally nationalist voters before the tightly contested referendum.

In Germany alone, 1.4 million residents have the right to vote in the referendum on April 16. Amid fears he might lose, Mr. Erdogan and his allies have issued near-daily diatribes against European countries, a tactic that they hope will play well among swing voters. In previous days, he has frequently accused German and Dutch politicians of Nazism.

He has also suggested that he might scrap the accord that restricted the passage of migrants through Turkey and send a new wave of migrants to Europe.

Western news organizations have been quick to report on these provocations, which are then read and condemned by European leaders — creating a feedback loop that in turn gives Mr. Erdogan more excuses to criticize Europe and to begin the cycle afresh.

The tactic appeals to some Turkish voters, including many of those who attended a rally on Wednesday in Kastamonu in northern Turkey, where Mr. Erdogan headed immediately after speaking in Ankara.

"He defends our country against the whole world," said Hasan Birgun, 59, a retired salesman in Kastamonu. "Until Erdogan, our leaders were just standing meekly in the outside world."

Hopes that the dispute would ease were raised on Tuesday, after Mr. Erdogan's party canceled plans to send more lawmakers to campaign in Germany. But the president's inflammatory comments on Wednesday suggested those hopes were premature.

In Turkey on Wednesday, the Foreign Ministry said it had summoned the Norwegian ambassador after Norway granted refuge to four Turkish asylum seekers accused by Turkey of being involved in the coup attempt in July, Reuters reported.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

The Cult of Erdogan Won't Guarantee Victory in Turkey Vote

Margaret Coker

ISTANBUL—In a cavernous movie theater in central Istanbul one recent evening, only two people had tickets to see the sweeping film about President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's rise from a saintly childhood to become one of Turkey's longest-serving leaders.

The cinematic extravaganza, "Reis," or "Chief" in Turkish, has been a box-office flop, illustrating the steep climb that the president and his party have in convincing the nation to vote "Yes" in an April 16 constitutional referendum that is very much a vote about Mr. Erdogan.

Opinion polls suggest a deadlock among likely voters over the series of proposed changes that would radically remake Turkey's democracy and could allow Mr. Erdogan to extend his 14-year rule by another decade. Some ruling party officials say they fear an uphill battle ahead.

A "Yes" result would support the transformation of Turkey's parliamentary system with the establishment of an executive presidency with significant power to shape legislation and appoint judges.

That is making for a heated campaign with large stakes for this once-thriving emerging market. Mr. Erdogan is now ruling under a state of emergency that followed a failed coup attempt last summer, but is struggling with an economic downturn and terror threats from Islamic State and the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK.

Opposition officials say the constitutional changes would cement what they see as a trend toward authoritarianism. Leaders of the "No" campaign, who are fragmented across the political spectrum, criticize what they say are unfair conditions for the vote, as it takes place when the government has jailed dozens of legislators and critics of the president and shut down 160 mostly opposition media outlets.

The "Yes" message dominates the airwaves of networks that are either pro-government or fear reprisal for showing anti-Erdogan views.

Mr. Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, says the referendum will herald a new, prosperous chapter for Turkey. The campaign aims to reach outside the party's base and draw voters from Turkey's nationalists—a group that generally spurns Mr. Erdogan but helped the AKP pass the constitutional reforms through parliament in December.

Most visibly so far, the ruling party has sought to whip up anti-European sentiment in a diplomatic spat with Holland over its refusal to allow AKP ministers to campaign among Turkish expatriates there.

The government has also raised fears of spies and fifth columnists. This past weekend, Mr. Erdogan called a detained journalist, a dual German-Turkish national, a spy whom he was glad was behind bars. Prime Minister Binali Yildirim tells rallies that there is no difference between the supporters of the "No" campaign and the terror groups threatening Turkey.

Pollsters see nationalistic rhetoric as one of the best avenues for the AKP to drum up more votes in a tight race. A large bloc of undecided likely voters fits into two demographics: nationalists and conservative Kurds who have supported the AKP in past elections, they say.

"Anyone who wants to succeed in this referendum should be analyzing these demographics," said Ozer Sencar, the founder of Metropoll Strategic and Social Research Center, which does monthly surveys across Turkey.

Some AKP officials say privately that they are worried that AKP voters and others will vote "No" because of their concerns about the economy, with unemployment at a seven-year high. A downturn threatens to dent Mr. Erdogan's legacy as a strong economic steward during his 14 years in power as prime minister and now president.

In Metropoll's February survey, 54% of respondents said the economy was poorly managed, and only 37% said they had a positive outlook for the economy. The survey shows Mr. Erdogan's popularity has flagged: In the wake of the failed coup last summer, his approval ratings soared to 67%. In February, he was at 50%.

One sign of voter apathy can be seen at the movies. "Reis," the hagiographic depiction of the president as a child and his early success as Istanbul's mayor, premiered in fourth place in the box office ratings, beaten by other Turkish movies including one by the country's best-known comedian.

The biopic had grossed only $1.3 million in the three weeks after its February premiere, compared with $24 million during the opening weekend of the comedy, "Recep Ivedik 5," which remains No. 1 at the box office after a month in theaters.

Some leaders of the "No" campaign believe the economic message is their best tactic to sway undecided voters.

On a sunny Saturday afternoon in a northern working-class Istanbul neighborhood, a crowd of 500 senior citizens gathered to hear a rostrum of retired government officials explain why voting "No" was their patriotic duty.

The audience laughed at jokes at Mr. Erdogan's expense, and clapped loudly for speakers who said Turkey faced economic collapse if the president's power wasn't reined in.

"Think of your grandchildren and their future," said Abdullatif Sener, a former AKP finance minister who left the party in 2008.

Mr. Sencar, the pollster, said he isn't ruling out a "Yes" victory, in part because Mr. Erdogan's record of successful campaigns. "They have information. They have money. They have ambition to win," he said of the ruling party and its leader.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Middle East Airports Race to Implement Laptop Ban on Flights

Margherita Stancati and Nicolas Parasie

DUBAI—Passengers and airlines in the Middle East scrambled to make sense of new rules banning many carry-on electronics on flights to the U.S. and Britain on Wednesday, as carriers roll out the new restrictions over the next few days.

On Tuesday, the U.S. and U.K. said they would require most electronic gadgets other than phones to be checked in on direct flights from a handful of Middle East and North African airports, citing worries over terrorism. The governments haven't cited specific threats.

U.S. officials have given airlines affected—including the Persian Gulf's big three, Emirates Airline, Qatar Airways and Etihad Airways—until Saturday to conform to the new rules. The U.S. rules affect airports in eight Middle East and North African countries, including flight hubs like Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

The U.K. rules affect a slightly different set of airports. Britain is exempting Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait City and Doha, Qatar, from its restrictions. The U.K. hasn't set a deadline for compliance yet.

Officials from some of the affected airlines said they were racing to introduce the new rules on Saturday, as planned. Some airlines appeared sanguine—hours after the restrictions were disclosed, Emirates tweeted "Who needs tablets and laptops anyway? Let us entertain you," along with a video of actress Jennifer Aniston channel surfing the airline's in-flight entertainment options.

The airline is also working on "a solution that will enable our passengers to utilize their electronic devices to the last possible moment" before boarding, said Emirates' President Tim Clark. Devices will then be stowed in the plane's cargo and returned when the flights lands in the U.S., he added.

"It will mean our passengers, particularly those traveling in the premium cabins or flying for business, can still work on their devices while enjoying our lounges at Dubai airport," Mr. Clark said.

Turkish officials have publicly criticized the new rules and said they are pushing Washington to change course. Shares in Turkish Airlines and Pegasus Airlines fell Wednesday, with investors fearing the ban could cost the Turkish carriers business. Turkey's tourism industry has already been hard hit

by political instability and a spate of terror attacks and airlines have been struggling to attract overseas passengers.

At least two airlines have already implemented the rules: Qatar Airways introduced them on Tuesday and Saudi Arabian Airlines, known as Saudia, on Wednesday. Kuwait Airways plans to implement them on Thursday and Etihad and Emirates said the new rules would apply on their U.S.-bound flights from Saturday.

At Riyadh's international airport, staff at Saudia's check-in counter instructed passengers boarding an early-morning flight to Washington, D.C. to pack laptops and tablets in their suitcases. At the gate, passengers had to undergo a second, full security inspection: metal detectors for travelers and an X-ray machine for carry-on luggage. That is standard procedure for U.S.-bound flights from Saudi Arabia, but this time they were also screening for electronic devices, according to lawyer Christopher Johnson, who was on the flight.

The process "was much better than I feared," Mr. Johnson said by email during the flight. He was planning to use his smartphone on the journey, saying it could do almost anything a laptop or tablet could, "so long as Wi-Fi works, as it is now, intermittently."

At Dubai's main hub, Emirates staff members were warning passengers about the Saturday start to the new restrictions. Some passengers, meanwhile, were rethinking travel plans. Faced with the prospect of not being able to work or watch movies on a laptop, travelers over the last two days have said they may consider connections in Europe to avoid the restrictions.

"I may decide to fly through a city in Europe to travel to the U.S. in the future to take advantage of 16 hours during which I could be working," said Bassam Islam, a Saudi software engineer, who Wednesday was preparing to board the 16-hour Emirates flight from Dubai to Los Angeles, laptop in tow. He said he hoped the U.S. and U.K. governments would rethink their restrictions.

"I have had things stolen from my luggage before during transit," he said. "I've had a digital camera disappear. My laptop is very important to me—and I don't like the risk of putting it in my checked-in luggage. I will avoid it if I can."

Business people in the Middle East have reacted strongly to the new rules, faced with the prospect of working on their phones rather than laptops, or not working at all, during the long flight to the U.S.

However, parents, too, are worried.

"These people making the decision to ban laptops and iPads clearly don't travel with young fidgety children," said Amanda Hodge, who is based in Jakarta, Indonesia and sometimes transits through Dubai. She has a 2½ year old daughter who often flies with her. "They will be responsible for the misery of millions of passengers traveling in close proximity to toddlers," she said.

The U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia have a long history of close military and security cooperation with the U.S., but the new restrictions have caused unease in the two countries, which are among the U.S.'s closed allies in the Gulf.

The U.A.E., in particular, has advanced security measures in place at airports. Abu Dhabi has invested in a pre-clearance facility for U.S.-bound passengers in its airport. This allows passengers to go through U.S. immigration and customs in Abu Dhabi International Airport, a step intended to give Etihad, its local carrier, an edge over its regional competitors.

The U.A.E. will seek to educate U.S. President Donald Trump's administration on the stringent security measures already in place at its airports, while also trying to understand why the U.S. included the U.A.E. in its restrictions when the U.K. didn't, according to a local official familiar with the matter.

Saudi officials didn't comment on the new regulations.

FP Foreign Policy

The Power Struggle for the Throne and the Saudi 'Reset' With Trump

By Simon Henderson

American media were rather muted about last week's visit to Washington by Saudi Arabia's Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman. They were unswayed by the juicy tidbit in the official statement reporting that the man known as MbS told President Donald Trump that Saudi intelligence "confirms … the existence of a plot against the United States of America that had been planned" in the six countries whose citizens had just been banned from entering the country. Nor were they moved by the effusiveness of an anonymous Saudi "senior advisor" who lauded the Oval Office meeting and luncheon with Trump as a "huge success," "a historic turning point," and "a significant shift in relations." The statement went on to describe "President Trump's great understanding of the importance of relations" and "his clear sight of problems in the region."

But it's no accident that much of the Arab media's coverage echoed this over-the-top line. The Saudi side was intent on using the visit to "reset" relations with Washington after the Obama years, as well as to introduce the new administration to the young man who seems destined to be the next king of Saudi Arabia.

The reset mission arguably succeeded. But judgment on the personal coming-out of MbS should be postponed. Inconveniently for the 31-year-old MbS, his older cousin Muhammad bin Nayef (MbN) is crown prince and appears reluctant to let MbS leapfrog over him. The Trump administration must deal with two alternative future Saudi leaders and may — and perhaps should — regard it as premature to decide whom it prefers.

Rivalry between the two men is not a figment of the imagination of foreigners. Last week, the anonymous but seemingly well-informed Saudi blogger who uses the Twitter handle @Mujtahidd re-emerged after several months. He reported that the two Muhammads were trying to avoid any public differences, but each was keen to win the approval not only of the wider House of Saud but also the United States.

On a point-scoring level, MbN probably had the last laugh on MbS's trip. Despite the photo opportunities and honor guards, MbS's departure from the United States was very low-key. No waves to crowds of fawning admirers, but rather a 2:30 a.m. flight to Riyadh a day after meeting with Defense Secretary James Mattis and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford, instead of heading to New York for business meetings as had been expected. What happened? King Salman, MbS's father, was returning to the kingdom after cutting short a month-long Asian trip, and the prince needed to be there to welcome him.

But the royal court's claim that the monarch's vacation in the idyllic Maldives had been canceled because of an outbreak of swine flu seemed too diplomatically convenient to be entirely believable. The *Financial Times* reported that local opposition politicians there were making a stink because of a putative arrangement for a group of islands to be ceded to MbS in perpetuity. The members of the king's entourage who had been hoping to take over two resort complexes and dip their toes in the Indian Ocean found themselves back in Riyadh early — which meant that MbS, whatever his self-appointed mission in Washington, was obliged to be back early, too. That may have been for the best. Despite the notional reset, the photos and video clips in Washington suggested coolness by Trump toward MbS. Perhaps the U.S. president was irritated that the young Saudi showed no apparent deference.

Ultimately, of course, policy differences, not personal ones, will matter most. Everyone in the Saudi leadership shares with the Trump administration a common view on the dangers posed by Iran. But there's a gap in their respective positions on the war in Yemen and how the kingdom can best be extricated from it. The Saudis have made scant progress there in fighting the Iranian-backed Houthis, and bureaucratic Washington is probably regretting its initial profuse support for the war — a political concession to Riyadh to placate Saudi concerns about the nuclear agreement with Iran. The Saudi military persists in demonstrating that it is, in the words of a Pentagon official during the Obama administration, a "paper tiger."

As if to underline the problem, as MbS flew back home, news emerged that a helicopter probably belonging to the Saudi-led coalition opened fire on a refugee boat carrying Somalis escaping the Yemen civil war. The death toll was given as 42, but, from Washington's point of view, the worst part was the report that a U.S.-made Apache helicopter was involved. That means it could have been either Saudi or Emirati, but the United Arab Emirates has issued an official denial. (Doubts about a Saudi role are based on the judgment that its pilots were too incompetent to have carried out the attack, at night and at sea.) The United States was already

in a quandary about resuming supplies of bombs to the Saudi Air Force following last year's suspension after concerns about Yemeni civilians being hit. Pictures of the dead and rescued refugees will further complicate this policy shift.

If Yemen remains a thorn in the side of the U.S.-Saudi relationship, the two countries seemed to find common ground over economic ties. The Saudi statement said Trump's changes to U.S. policy coincide "with the undergoing change in Saudi Arabia through 'Vision 2030,'" MbS's blueprint for the kingdom's economic transformation. The official White House readout spoke of "expanded economic cooperation [that] could create as many as one million direct American jobs within the next four years, millions of indirect American jobs, as well as jobs in Saudi Arabia." It also mentioned deals "worth potentially more than $200 billion in direct and indirect investments within the next four years."

This may be on the conservative side. Gossip in the financial markets suggests that the kingdom was dangling the notion of $1 trillion in investments in the United States over the next decade.

Such a deal may be tantalizing for Trump. But, as always, it comes at a price. As Saudi Oil Minister Khalid al-Falih told the *Wall Street Journal*, the 2016 Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act "stoked tension in U.S.-Saudi relations and threatens to chill Saudi investment in the U.S." Falih also said the law was a consideration in whether the kingdom would choose to list shares of the state-owned Saudi Aramco oil company, the 2018 initial public offering of which is expected to be the largest in history, in the United States.

The law, known as Jasta, came as a consequence of the large number of Saudis who were involved in the 9/11 attacks. It allows U.S. terror victims to file civil suits in federal court against the kingdom, which had been protected by sovereign immunity. Trump was a strong supporter of the measure. The Saudis want to at least neuter the measure but have worked on the issue to no avail, despite a multimillion-dollar lobbying effort.

This twist makes the calculus of what each side got from the Washington meetings more challenging. There is clearly agreement to work together, but Yemen is an immediate problem, skewing the discussion about how to tackle the broader threat posed by Iran as well as the Islamic State, al Qaeda, and other terror groups. Meanwhile, a public reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and the UAE with Israel over their fear of Iran remains elusive. The Saudi statement blamed Iran for obstructing a deal "to settle the Palestinian issue" but managed to avoid any mention of Israel.

It may fall to Trump's coterie of close advisors to grapple with these difficulties. His chief strategist, Stephen Bannon, and senior advisor (and son-in-law) Jared Kushner were at the Oval Office and Pentagon meetings as well as the White House luncheon. Meanwhile, Trump's lawyer and Israel advisor Jason Greenblatt was in Jerusalem and Ramallah talking to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas.

Occasionally, world events have a curious and perhaps prophetic irony. King Salman's trip to Asia concluded last week with a high-profile visit to China, where he and his delegation of Saudi business leaders were received by the top leadership and reportedly agreed to deals worth $65 billion. On March 19, the next foreign leader arrived in Beijing for similar discussions — Netanyahu. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang honored him by saying, "The Chinese people and the Jewish people are both great peoples of the world."

The trend lines are obvious. Business can be the key to deeper political alliances, and Saudi Arabia and Israel have more in common than the House of Saud wants to admit. Does a bigger deal await?

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Egyptian President Sisi to Visit Trump in April

Carol E. Lee and Felicia Schwartz

WASHINGTON—Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi will visit the White House on April 3 for a meeting with President Donald Trump, an administration official said Wednesday.

It will be the first meeting between the two leaders, who spoke days after Mr. Trump took office and agreed then on setting up a visit. They also spoke during the presidential transition after Mr. Trump won the November election, and met last fall during the presidential campaign.

Mr. Sisi has been intent on closer U.S. ties under the Trump administration, committing his help in countering terrorism. Mr. Trump in the January conversation pledged his full backing for Egypt.

Egypt is one of the largest recipients of U.S. military and foreign aid, getting about $1.5 billion a year Mr. Trump in his first federal budget has proposed a 31% cut in State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development funding, which stands to affect recipients.

State Department officials said the cuts, if approved by Congress, wouldn't affect funding to Israel, but that aid to other countries is being reviewed.

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

After ISIS: For Iraqis, reconciliation in Mosul will be challenging, and vital

The Christian Science Monitor

The colonel is a quintessential Iraqi military man: shaved head, bushy black mustache, and very proud of how the Iraqi Army has rebuilt and "proved it is professional" in the fight to oust the Islamic State from Mosul.

Yet even though he has no doubt that ISIS will soon be crushed in its last urban stronghold in Iraq – the old city warren of western Mosul, where the jihadists first declared their caliphate in 2014 – he lets out a big sigh when asked if he is optimistic about the future.

Like many in Iraq, the colonel is wary that the challenges of reconciliation and winning the peace in Mosul and across the complex ethnic mosaic of Nineveh Province will be harder than winning the war.

That matters, because this symbol of ISIS rule in Iraq was a mixed city with venerable institutions, and is a gauge of Iraq's ability to recover from its jihadist trauma. The stakes are high, to avoid a repeat of the ethnic and sectarian fighting and Sunni disenfranchisement that helped spawn ISIS and spread its reach in the first place.

"I can't guess or imagine the next stage, because everyone follows his own decisions, his own sect, his own interests," says the career officer, who asked not to be named but counts personally killing 35 jihadists in Iraq since 2007. Insurgents back then killed his father.

Military victory in Mosul is "progress for the Army itself, but politicians" create continuing barriers to reconciliation, he says.

Today in Washington, top officials from the US-led, 68-member alliance fighting ISIS, who are meeting for the first time in two years, are hearing a pep talk about the Trump administration's boosted effort to destroy ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

Analysts say military defeat of the jihadists in Iraq and eventually Syria may be inevitable. But they warn that the multiple strands of ethnic friction that predate ISIS remain, and have been exacerbated by years of the jihadists' occupation and their targeting of Christians, Kurds, Shiites, fellow Sunnis, and a host of minorities who inhabit this region of northern Iraq

That means, despite local reconciliation efforts that succeeded in liberated cities like Tikrit – where Sunnis and Shiites made amends despite a massacre in 2014, using a peacekeeping mechanism detailed by the Monitor – the task is far more complicated in and around Mosul.

"There are a lot of problems in Mosul and in Nineveh that have been disguised by IS. These problems are still there," says Renad Mansour, a fellow at Chatham House, the London think tank.

"Politicians have used [ISIS] as a way to excuse all these other problems, to excuse the economy, land claims, and disputed territories," says Mr. Mansour. "You do have the traditional inter-sect [problems] – Sunni-Shiite problems,

Shiite-Kurdish problems – but you also have intra-sect problems that I think are bigger now than they ever were since 2003."

Of those intra-sect problems, Shiite factions in Baghdad fight for influence, with some calling for national reconciliation with Sunnis and Kurds, while others don't. The northern Kurdish regional government also feels political divisions.

Mosul and its mostly Sunni population are still reeling from the shock of nearly three years under brutal ISIS rule. The initial welcome extended to the Islamic State in Mosul in 2014 had been a reaction to the heavy-handed security measures employed by Shiite-led security forces under orders from the Shiite then-prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki.

Political plan is lacking

And yet despite conciliatory, nationalist words from Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who is also from Iraq's majority Shiite sect, there is no plan in Baghdad to step up the minority Sunnis' representation in government. Nor is there any desire to compromise much with Kurds over disputed territories. And in Mosul and beyond, there are few Sunni leaders who can claim to speak for their people.

"We have a very clear military solution, a clear military victory ahead," says Mansour. "But there's not an accompanying actual [political] plan the sides are agreeing on."

That means the post-ISIS world of Mosul and the region is full of potential flashpoints, as professional peacemakers assess their best means of encouraging reconciliation, working with limited means to quell fires of revenge and anger made worse by the ISIS presence.

Kurdish peshmerga forces in recent weeks, for example, have clashed with a Yazidi militia in Sinjar, near Iraq's border with Syria, yielding casualties on both sides. Vetting returnees for ISIS collaborators – and separating fact from fiction in neighbors' accusations – is another challenge.

"Our main objective in this current environment of liberation is to prevent revenge acts of violence," says Osama Gharizi, Middle East program manager for the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), an architect of the Tikrit and other reconciliation efforts.

"We view reconciliation as a process, not as an outcome. It's long term, it has many phases," says Mr. Gharizi.

Mosul's symbolic value

Iraqi mediators supported by USIP and the UN can recognize potential local disputes and preemptively intervene in a bid to stop them spinning out of control. But strategic reconciliation for Mosul, which includes small but aggrieved minorities like Yazidis, Christians, Shabaks, and Turkmen, needs to be addressed as part of a broader political process that does not yet exist.

"That is where the national reconciliation needs to advance," says Gharizi.

Success in Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, is especially symbolic. Every aspect of its liberation has had sectarian overtones. The exception was when Prime Minister Abadi announced the anti-ISIS push on Mosul that began last October, saying all Iraqis would soon be able to unite under the national flag.

"What started with Mosul, it ends with Mosul. … It's the Shiites and the Kurds liberating the Sunnis from themselves," says a UN official, noting that the largely Shiite Iraqi Army, Kurdish forces, and Shiite paramilitaries are waging the offensive, with little Sunni Arab input from Mosul.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, says that dynamic, though welcomed by Mosul's ISIS-occupied Sunnis, did not bode well for Mosul's future.

"That furthers the notion that either Mosul will be fully under control of Baghdad, by a political elite friendly to Baghdad, or it will be destroyed and left in between the micro-conflicts, that it is not a city that is going to prosper and thrive again," the UN official says.

"There is no agreed upon process for this, for what reconciliation means," says the official.

'Vengeance is on their mind'

Indeed, a kaleidoscope of issues remain in Mosul – from big ticket items like Sunni complaints about Shiite-led rule from Baghdad, and the Kurds' capture of territories, including all of oil-rich Kirkuk, they have long disputed with Baghdad – to a bevy of micro-conflicts with and among minority groups.

Gharizi, of USIP, says even when agreements are reached, mediators need to follow up, monitor, and ensure the parties abide by them. "Otherwise trust is going to be thrown out the window," he says. "It's very labor intensive."

He says USIP and the UN, which provides support, are now assessing disputes between Christian and Shabak minorities. And they are developing a dialogue between Yazidis and Sunni Turkmen, whom the Yazidis viewed as helping facilitate the trafficking of women under ISIS, including as sex slaves.

"Vengeance is on their mind. So we want to address that in a way that it doesn't spill over into bloodletting," says Gharizi.

His organization's research indicates that Yazidis and other minorities recognize that some Sunnis helped them escape ISIS, for example, but "they still have a collective view. So we want to help them differentiate, get rid of that collective view that if you are Sunni, you must be ISIS."

"Peaceful co-existence is the objective right now, to get communities to live peacefully with each other," he says. "Then over time, you can get other milestones on the path to reconciliation."

The New York Times

U.S. Airlifts Hundreds of Militia Fighters in Attack to Cut Off Raqqa, Syria

Michael R. Gordon and Anne Barnard

"The fighting is raging on as I speak and is expected to last several weeks until the dam, airfield and city are free from ISIS control," said Col. Joseph E. Scrocca, a spokesman for the American-led command in Baghdad.

As the operation unfolded, Syrian state television and local residents asserted that at least 30 Syrian civilians were killed in an airstrike that hit a school where they had taken shelter in a rural area of Raqqa Province on Tuesday. American military officials acknowledged that the United States had been carrying out airstrikes in the area. These officials said they could not confirm the reports of civilian casualties, but would investigate.

As the battle for Raqqa has accelerated, the number of airstrikes has climbed. Colonel Scrocca said that over the past four months the American-led coalition had conducted more than 300 such strikes around Tabqa and west of Raqqa, and that enemy fighters, fortifications and vehicles had been targeted.

Describing the Tabqa operation, American officials said that a ground force of Syrian fighters was approaching the dam from the north. The airlift was carried out south of the dam, Colonel Scrocca said, and appeared to take the militants by surprise, Colonel Scrocca said.

Important details of the operation, including how many Syrian fighters and American advisers were involved, were not disclosed. News reports suggested 500 Syrian fighters had been deployed, but American officials hinted it could be much more.

"It could be 500; it could be a heck of a lot more," Colonel Scrocca said in a briefing that was broadcast into the Pentagon.

American artillery and attack helicopters have not previously been employed in Syria. With this Tabqa operation, the American strategy in Syria has come to resemble the operation to retake Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, where conventional American military forces have been combined with the use of advisers to support local forces who are doing the main fighting on the ground.

One big difference, however, is the complexity of the local forces with which the United States is aligning itself.

In Iraq, the United States is supporting Iraqi government forces, namely Iraq's Counterterrorism Service and its Army and Federal Police. In Syria, in contrast, the United States has been working with Arab fighters, the Kurdish Y.P.G. militia and local tribes.

Adding another layer of complexity, Turkey had objected vociferously to the role of the Kurdish Y.P.G. While American military commanders believe the Y.P.G. has some of the most experienced and proficient fighters, Turkey has denounced the organization as a terrorist group.

With Turkey's concerns in mind, American military officials emphasized that Syrian Arabs made up 75 percent of the fighters in the

Tabqa operation — while acknowledging that Syrian Kurds were also involved in the assault.

President Trump, who asserted during his campaign that he had a secret plan to defeat the Islamic State, has yet to outline a new strategy to "demolish and destroy" the militant group, as he told a joint session of Congress last month.

So far, the Trump administration has been operating within the broad contours of the approach by the Obama administration, which called for training and equipping local fighters, supporting them with American firepower and advisers — and, when deemed critically important, sending American commandos to hit high-value targets.

But the Trump White House has dispensed with the detailed and often prolonged review of operations and tactics that were conducted under the Obama administration. The change has allowed American commanders to step up the pace of their operations.

Pentagon officials said that Defense Secretary Jim Mattis was informed of the Tabqa operation, as was the White House, but the assault was being carried out within the authority that has been delegated to American military commanders.

More flexibility for American commanders appears to be coming. Representative Mac Thornberry, Republican of Texas Republican and the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, told reporters Wednesday that he expected the White House to remove "artificial troop caps" in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The current "force manning level" for Syria sets a limit on the number of American military personnel in Syria at 503. But the limit does not count temporary reinforcements, like the roughly 400 personnel who were deployed in Syria when the Marine artillery battery and Army Rangers were sent to the country.

There was another telling indication on Wednesday that American Special Operations would continue to play an important role. Col. Jonathan P. Braga, the chief of staff of the Joint Special Operations Command and the former deputy commander of Delta Force, has been named as the next senior operations officer for the American-led command that is leading the campaign against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

With the stepped-up pace of military operations against the Islamic State and Al Qaeda, which is also operating in Syria, there has also been an increase in reports of civilian casualties. In the Tuesday episode, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that at least 33 civilians were killed when a school in Mansoura, a town 15 miles from Raqqa, was struck.

The United States Central Command is investigating an airstrike last week in Al Jinah, a village in western Aleppo Province.

American military officials said they had struck a gathering of Qaeda leaders and operatives and had killed dozens of militants. But residents said the airstrike had struck a mosque that was used by civilians for a weekly religious meeting and that civilians had been killed and wounded.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

U.S. Weighs 'Zones of Stability' As Part of Anti-Islamic State Effort

Felicia Schwartz

WASHINGTON—Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the U.S. will work to establish "interim zones of stability" to protect refugees in Syria and Iraq as the international coalition against Islamic State works to retake territory from the extremist group.

Mr. Tillerson, speaking at a conference of the 68-member coalition against Islamic State, held at the State Department on Wednesday, said the coalition would intensify its efforts to confront the extremist group and called on other members to do more as the fight continues.

"The United States will increase our pressure on ISIS and al Qaeda and will work to establish interim zones of stability through cease-fires to allow refugees to return home," Mr. Tillerson said, using an acronym for the group.

The Trump administration has been exploring proposals for establishment of protected areas, sometimes called safe zones, in Syria. The idea has been pushed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, but the Pentagon has long opposed the idea of creating heavily guarded zones because of the cost and military commitment required.

There is growing receptiveness among U.S. and international officials to the idea of setting up unofficial Syrian safe zones, which some officials have dubbed "interim de-escalation areas," along Syria's borders with Turkey and Jordan.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault, who participated in the meeting, said he wasn't sure what Mr. Tillerson meant by "zones of stability," but thought they would cover areas retaken from Islamic State and help people to return to their homes.

A joint statement released at the end of the day's events by the participants included no mention of the zones.

Mr. Ayrault said he pressed Mr. Tillerson, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and other U.S. officials on specifics and a timeline for the fight, but the officials told him they need more time. Mr. Mattis told Mr. Ayrault that the campaign to retake Raqqa, Islamic State's de facto Syrian capital, must move quickly but the administration was still figuring out its strategy, Mr. Ayrault said.

"We've been asking for specific answers for a couple of weeks," Mr. Ayrault said. "I wish it went faster."

Mr. Tillerson said the coalition generally would intensify efforts as it moves from military operation to a stabilization phase in the fight against Islamic State, and urged greater intelligence sharing and law-enforcement cooperation as well as renewed focus on confronting the militant group online—efforts that the Obama administration also emphasized. Other than his suggestion of zones of stability, his policy prescriptions mostly tracked the Obama administration's playbook.

"We must increase the intensity of our efforts and solidify our gains," Mr. Tillerson said. "Soon our efforts in Iraq and Syria will enter a new phase."

Mr. Tillerson said the coalition would help to restore water and electricity and to clear land mines. He urged coalition members to contribute more militarily and financially.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi also spoke at the session. Mr. Mattis joined meetings in the afternoon and deputy national security adviser KT McFarland was also present.

The Washington Post

Iran's navy imperiling international navigation in Persian Gulf, U.S. commanders say

U.S. Navy commanders have accused Iran of jeopardizing international navigation by "harassing" warships passing through the Strait of Hormuz and said future incidents could result in miscalculation and lead to an armed clash.

They spoke after the U.S. aircraft carrier George H.W. Bush confronted what one of the commanding officers described as two sets of Iranian navy fast-attack boats that had approached a U.S.-led five-vessel flotilla as it entered the strait this week on a journey from the Indian Ocean into the Persian Gulf.

It was the first time a U.S. carrier had entered the narrow waterway since President Trump took office in

January pledging a tougher U.S. stance toward Iran.

U.S. commanders said Tuesday's incident, in which the George H.W. Bush sent helicopter gunships to hover over the Iranian speedboats as some came as close as 950 yards from the aircraft carrier, ended without a shot being fired.

But it underscored growing tension between the United States and Iran since the election of Trump, who has condemned the 2015 nuclear deal that predecessor Barack Obama and leaders of five other world powers struck with Tehran and labeled Iran "the number one terrorist state."

The encounter with the Iranian navy boats occurred as the USS George H.W. Bush was en route to the northern part of the Persian Gulf to participate in U.S.-led airstrikes against Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria.

"What I don't like about that is they were in the middle of international transit waters [while] we had a right to be there as we were exercising freedom of navigation on our way into the Arabian Gulf," Rear Adm. Kenneth Whitesell, commander of Carrier Strike Group 2, told journalists aboard the aircraft carrier.

"They also had weapons uncovered, as some of the cameras were able to tell. They had some of the weapons manned. We also have aerial data that they were arming all of these weapons."

Whitesell said Iran's position was that the U.S.-led flotilla had breached its territorial waters, which he denied.

There was no comment from Tehran.

In another incident, Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps said a U.S. Navy ship changed course toward Iranian vessels in the Strait of Hormuz on March 4 and accused Washington of "unprofessional actions . . . [that] can have irreversible consequences."

A U.S. official said March 6 that multiple Revolutionary Guard Corps fast-attack vessels had come within 600 yards of the USNS Invincible, a tracking ship, forcing it to change direction.

The New York Times

Mr. Modi's Perilous Embrace of Hindu Extremists

The Editorial Board

Since he was elected in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India has played a cagey game, appeasing his party's hard-line Hindu base while promoting secular goals of development and economic growth. Despite worrying signs that he was willing to humor Hindu extremists, Mr. Modi refrained from overtly approving violence against the nation's Muslim minority.

On Sunday, Mr. Modi revealed his hand. Emboldened by a landslide victory in recent elections in India's largest state, Uttar Pradesh, his party named a firebrand Hindu cleric, Yogi Adityanath, as the state's leader. The move is a shocking rebuke to religious minorities, and a sign that cold political calculations ahead of national elections in 2019 have led Mr. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party to believe that nothing stands in the way of realizing its long-held dream of transforming a secular republic into a Hindu state.

Mr. Adityanath has made a political career of demonizing Muslims, thundering against such imaginary plots as "love jihad": the notion that Muslim men connive to water down the overwhelming Hindu majority by seducing Hindu women. He defended a Hindu mob that murdered a Muslim man in 2015 on the suspicion that his family was eating beef, and said Muslims who balked at performing a yoga salutation to the sun should "drown themselves in the sea."

Uttar Pradesh, home to more than 200 million people, badly needs development, not ideological showmanship. The state has the highest infant mortality rate in the country. Nearly half of its children are stunted. Educational outcomes are dismal. Youth unemployment is high.

Mr. Adityanath has sounded the right notes, saying, "My government will be for everyone, not specifically for any caste or community," and promising to make Uttar Pradesh "the dreamland" of Mr. Modi's development model.

But the appointment shows that Mr. Modi sees no contradiction between economic development and a muscular Hindu nationalism that feeds on stoking anti-Muslim passions. Mr. Modi's economic policies have delivered growth, but not jobs. India needs to generate a million new jobs every month to meet employment demand. Should Mr. Adityanath fail to deliver, there is every fear that he — and Mr. Modi's party — will resort to deadly Muslim-baiting to stay in power, turning Mr. Modi's dreamland into a nightmare for India's minorities, and threatening the progress that Mr. Modi has promised to all of its citizens.

The New York Times

China Bets on Sensitive U.S. Start-Ups, Worrying the Pentagon

Paul Mozur and Jane Perlez

The white paper, which was distributed to the senior levels of the Trump administration this week, concludes that United States government controls that are supposed to protect potentially critical technologies are falling short, according to three people knowledgeable about its contents, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

"What drives a lot of the concern is that China is a military competitor," said James Lewis, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, who is familiar with the report. "How do you deal with a military competitor playing in your most innovative market?"

The Chinese deals can pose a number of issues. Investors could push start-ups to strike partnerships or make licensing or hiring decisions that could expose intellectual property. They can also get an inside glimpse of how technology is being developed and could have access to a start-up's offices or computers.

Trump administration officials and lawmakers are raising broad questions about China's economic relationship with the United States. While the report was commissioned before President Trump took office, some Republicans have called for tighter regulation of foreign takeovers by giving a broader mandate to the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States. Known as Cfius, the committee reviews foreign takeovers of American companies, but critics say that its scope does not include smaller deals and that it has other weak spots.

Ashton B. Carter, former secretary of defense under President Barack Obama, had tapped Mike A. Brown, the former chief executive of Symantec, the cybersecurity firm, to lead the inquiry into the Chinese investments, according to two of the people aware of the white paper's contents.

A spokesman for the Department of Defense said it "will not discuss the details or components of draft internal working documents."

The size and breadth of the deals are not clear because start-ups and their backers are not obligated to disclose them. Over all, China has been increasingly active in the American start-up world, investing $9.9 billion in 2015, according to data from the research firm CB Insights, more than four times the level the year before.

Neither the high-tech start-ups nor their Chinese investors have been accused of wrongdoing, and experts said much of the activity could be innocent. Chinese investors have money and are looking for returns, while the Chinese government has pushed investment in ways to clean up China's skies, upgrade its industrial capacity and unclog its snarled highways. Proponents of the deals said American limits on technology exports would still apply to American start-ups with Chinese backers.

But the fund flows fit China's pattern of using state-guided investment to help its industrial policy and enhance its technology holdings, as it has recently done with semiconductors. China has also carried out efforts to steal military-related technology.

Still, some start-ups — especially those making hardware rather than

money-drawing mobile apps like Snapchat — said Chinese money was sometimes the only available funding. But even a company struggling for money can ultimately come up with a big breakthrough.

Chinese investors have a bigger appetite for risk and a willingness to do deals fast, said Neurala's chief executive, Max Versace.

To demonstrate his software's capabilities to the Air Force, Mr. Versace said, Neurala used its software on a ground drone from Best Buy to make it recognize and follow around the service's secretary, then Deborah Lee James, during a meeting.

"We were told by the secretary of the Air Force, 'Your tech is awesome, we should put it everywhere,'" he said. "No one followed up."

Neurala finally took a minority investment from a Chinese fund called Haiyin Capital as part of a $1.2 million round, Mr. Versace said. He did not disclose the size of Haiyin Capital's commitment. Haiyin Capital is backed by a state-run Chinese company, Everbright Group, according to a statement from one of its subsidiaries.

American military officials have "figured out a very good way to give $10 billion to Raytheon," he said. "But to give a start-up $1 million to develop a proof of concept? That's still very, very hard."

Late last year, a research firm called Defense Group Inc. argued in a report prepared for Congress that the Neurala investment could give China access to the company's underlying technologies. It also said the deal could create enough uncertainty that American officials would steer clear of Neurala's technology, effectively wasting any American money that had gone into the firm.

Mr. Versace of Neurala said the company took pains to ensure that the Chinese investor had no access to its source code or other important technological information.

To address concerns that it was not tapping innovations from start-ups, the Pentagon in 2015 set up a group called Defense Innovation Unit Experimental to enable investments into promising new companies. While at first it struggled, in 2016 it helped carry off a barrage of deals. The unit also prepared the white paper.

In May 2015, Haiyin Capital also invested an amount it did not disclose in XCOR Aerospace, a Mojave, Calif., commercial space-travel company that makes spacecraft and engines and has worked with NASA. XCOR did not respond to requests for comment.

In an interview in Chinese media, Haiyin Capital's founder, Yuquan Wang, said that part of its goal is to build Chinese industrial capabilities and that it can be hard to get space technology into China because of American export controls.

About the fund's investments, Mr. Wang said, "We strive to get a portion of research and development moved back to China so that we can avoid China being only a low-end manufacturer." Haiyin Capital did not respond to a request for comment.

Quanergy, a company that works on the light-detecting sensors used in driverless cars, raised financing last summer that included funds from the partly state-backed Chinese venture fund GP Capital. A few days later, Quanergy purchased people-tracking software from Raytheon for an undisclosed amount. Alongside a wide array of commercial technology, it makes sensors for military driverless vehicles and a security system billed as "the most complete and intelligent 3-D perimeter fencing and intrusion-detection system."

Quanergy did not respond to requests for comment. Its investors also include foreign automakers and South Korea's Samsung.

Chinese investors have also made a push in another industry, flexible electronics. The technology, which the National Research Council has said is a priority for the American military, can help make electronics lighter and easier to attach to anything from a uniform to an airplane.

In 2016, a Silicon Valley start-up called Kateeva that makes machines that print flexible screens raised $88 million from a group of Chinese investors. Three took board seats, including Redview Capital, a spinoff of a firm run by the former Chinese premier Wen Jiabao's son, Wen Yunsong.

Kateeva's chief executive, Alain Harrus, said that while investors in Silicon Valley had begun looking more at hardware companies, raising big rounds for capital-intensive technology can be tough. Kateeva ultimately raised money where its customers were, in China and South Korea. Mr. Harrus said he believed more should be done in America to figure out the best way to nurture and fund core next-generation technologies.

Ken Wilcox, chairman emeritus of Silicon Valley Bank, said in the past six months he had been approached by three different Chinese state-owned enterprises about being their agent in Northern California to buy technology, though he declined.

"In all three cases they said they had a mandate from Beijing, and they had no idea what they wanted to buy," he said. "It was just any and all tech."

The Washington Post

North Korean missile explodes seconds after launch

A North Korean missile appeared to explode within seconds of launch early March 22, the U.S. Pacific command says. The U.S. military says it's detected a failed North Korean missile launch attempt, with a rocket exploding within seconds of its launch. (Reuters)

TOKYO — A North Korean missile fired Wednesday morning exploded within seconds of launch, the South Korean and U.S. militaries said, a reassuring sign for those worried about the speed at which North Korea's weapons program has been progressing.

The launch attempt comes at a time of heightened tensions in the region, with the United States and South Korea conducting joint military exercises aimed at countering the North Korean threat and the Trump administration clearly signaling it is prepared to use force to stop Kim Jong Un's regime.

The missile was launched from North Korea's east coast about 7 a.m. local time Wednesday.

"North Korea fired one missile from an area near the Wonsan Air Base this morning but it's presumed to have failed," South Korea's Defense Ministry said in a statement.

Hawaii-based U.S. Pacific Command said the missile failed "within seconds of launch."

It was not clear what kind of missile North Korea had fired. Both the South Korean and U.S. militaries were analyzing the data.

Kim has made clear that he wants the capability to strike the U.S. mainland. In his New Year's address, he said North Korea had "entered the final stage of preparation for the test launch of intercontinental ballistic missile."

In February, North Korea launched its first missile since Donald Trump was elected U.S. president, firing a medium-range missile that appeared to show significant technological advances.

This month, North Korea launched four missiles, three of which landed within Japan's exclusive economic zone. Although the missiles weren't new, the tactic was, analysts said. The simultaneous firings appeared to be designed to outsmart the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense antimissile battery that the United States is deploying in South Korea, which would have difficulty shooting down four targets at once.

Over the weekend, Kim supervised a rocket engine test of "historic significance," according to state media. The North Korean leader declared "that the whole world will soon witness what eventful significance the great victory won today carries," the report said, declaring Saturday as the "March 18 revolution" because of the "great leaping forward" in the country's rocket industry.

The test coincided with U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's visit to neighboring China, where he met with President Xi Jinping and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Tillerson said in Seoul the previous day that "all options," including military ones, were on the table to stop North Korea from developing the ability to attack the United States.

Wang urged him to remain "coolheaded" about North Korea and not to abandon dialogue.

But from Washington, Trump made clear that he expected China to use its leverage over North Korea. "North Korea is behaving very badly. They have been 'playing' the United States for years," he said on Twitter. "China has done little to help!"

Los Angeles Times

If we're going to rule out negotiations with North Korea, we have to be ready for war

Robert L. Gallucci

During a visit to Seoul last week, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson drew some reddish lines around North Korea.

"Twenty years of talking has brought us to the point we are today," Tillerson said at a news conference. "Talk is not going to change the situation." If North Korea threatens South Korean or American forces or elevates the level of its weapons program, Tillerson warned, preemptive military action is "on the table."

Tillerson's comments did not come entirely out of left field. For months, Washington has been abuzz over the possibility that North Korea may successfully test an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of delivering a nuclear weapon to an American city. In a New Year's address, North Korean ruler Kim Jong Un indicated such a test could come sooner than we think.

But Tillerson's warning did signal that the Trump administration is taking U.S. policy toward North Korea in a new direction — that we may be serious about abandoning engagement and willing to pursue containment through military action.

If North Korea is newly capable of striking an American city with a nuclear-armed missile, however, it would not be the first time that the U.S. was defenseless against an adversary's weapons. Americans lived for years with Soviet and Chinese missiles pointing in our direction. We had no way to defend against Soviet missiles in the 1950s, nor Chinese missiles in the 1960s. We were worried in 1960 when Nikita Khrushchev, then the Soviet leader, pounded his shoe against a table during a session of the United Nations General Assembly. For many reasons, Mao worried us even more.

Analysts can read Tillerson's comments in different ways. If he meant to indicate that the U.S. would undertake a military strike on North Korea to prevent the testing and development of an ICBM — a "left of launch" program, as the Pentagon would call it — such an act could not properly be called preemption, because it would not be responding to an imminent attack. Rather, we would be taking preventive action and risking a preventive war with the goal of cutting off the emergence of a future threat. The invasion of Iraq in 2003, for instance, was a preventive war, not an act of preemption. Ethics, law and prudence are on the side of preemption but not on preventive strikes.

If, on the other hand, the U.S. intelligence community were to conclude that North Korea was about to launch a missile at Los Angeles, Seoul or Tokyo, we should fully expect Trump to order a preemptive strike to take out the missile before it is launched. If this is the only line Tillerson meant to draw, he should have saved the ink and not made news with the threat.

In either scenario, we can expect that attacking North Korea, even with an intended "surgical strike," will bring retaliation, most likely against South Korean and American forces and civilians on the Korean peninsula — there are a lot of both within range of North Korean missiles and artillery — and possibly a second Korean War. The U.S. and its allies should be ready for this. At the moment, neither we nor our allies are prepared for war.

With so much at stake, Tillerson should disclose what exactly is new about the North Korean threat that makes deterrence suddenly unreliable. Certainly it is not the quality or quantity of North Korea's nuclear weapons. At the height of the Cold War, the number of Soviet weapons — counting tactical and strategic weapons deployed in silos, on submarines and aboard bombers —reached 30,000 or so. The North Koreans have less than 20. It is possible that U.S. officials lack confidence in the rationality of Kim Jong Un. If this is the case, the American people should be informed that this is why we are risking another Korean War.

Some argue that an alternative to military action is the adoption of tougher sanctions together with more pressure on China to allow them to work. While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with such an approach, there is little reason to think it will be effective in stopping North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs. So the real alternative to war is a negotiated settlement that addresses the threat. There is a lot of work yet to be done in order to set the table for productive negotiations. More than 20 years ago, we struck a deal with the North that froze plutonium production for almost a decade before the deal collapsed: They cheated and we caught them. That was still a deal worth making, and the next one will have to be better. For starters, we should require that North Korea improve the human rights of its citizens as a condition of normalizing relations with the U.S.

The United States has no real capability to shoot down ICBMs, but we never have. We have been defenseless against this threat for six decades. For all those years, we have relied on deterrence and the promise of devastating retaliation. The logic is that the capability of our conventional and nuclear weapons deters our enemies and provides for the nation's security. If the U.S. is going to abandon this logic now, it should be done with great care, and with the full understanding that we are risking war.

The Washington Post

Opinion | 'Strategic patience' with North Korea is over. Here's what should replace it.

The Editorial Board

SECRETARY OF State Rex Tillerson is being faulted for undiplomatic speaking during his tour of Asia over the weekend. Among other things, he parroted official Chinese rhetoric about "mutual respect" and "win-win solutions," which Beijing hailed as deferral to its uncompromising positions on matters such as Taiwan. Perhaps Mr. Tillerson was suffering from a lack of seasoned staff. Or perhaps he was offering "face" to Chinese President Xi Jinping to compensate for vigorous private arm-twisting on the principal subject of the tour, North Korea.

We are cautiously willing to bet on the latter. Though many of its early foreign policy actions have been inept or incoherent, the Trump administration appears to have properly focused on what may be the biggest single threat it inherited: the manic pursuit by the regime of Kim Jong Un of nuclear warheads and the capacity to launch them at the continental United States. Since President Trump took office, Pyongyang has conducted two tests of missiles and another of a rocket engine that might be used on an intercontinental ballistic missile. It is rapidly stockpiling nuclear warheads. And the 30-something Mr. Kim has demonstrated his capacity for reckless aggression by, among other things, reportedly orchestrating the murder of his half brother at an international airport in Malaysia.

The Obama administration's strategy toward North Korea — "strategic patience" — amounted to ignoring the gathering threat. But the outgoing president appears to have warned his successor about the problem in their first post-election meeting — and Mr. Trump seems to have listened. During his trip to Japan, South Korea and China, Mr. Tillerson bluntly declared that "the policy of strategic patience has ended" and that "we are exploring a new range of diplomatic, security and economic measures" — including possible military action.

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No doubt the administration is discovering what deterred President Barack Obama: U.S. options range from the very bad to the truly terrible. A military strike on North Korea's nuclear or missile facilities might not succeed while triggering a potentially catastrophic war — though, as Mr. Tillerson hinted, further steps by North Korea toward deploying nuclear-armed ICBMs might compel such action. Tougher sanctions might impose terrible hardship on North Korea's people without altering the course of a regime that has allowed millions to starve to death. Renewing negotiations with Pyongyang risks repeating the futile exercises of the past two decades, when North Korea pocketed U.S. aid and political concessions while violating its promises to freeze nuclear work.

Judging from Mr. Tillerson's public comments, the new administration is starting with the most sensible opening steps — a strong effort to enlist China, as well as other nations, in a new campaign of pressure. He said, "I don't believe we have ever fully achieved the maximum level of action that can be taken" under existing U.N. Security Council resolutions — and he's right. Chinese banks continue to help North Korea trade in U.S. dollars, as do the regime's own shell companies. Chinese companies continue to supply North Korea with not only food and energy, but also materials Pyongyang can use to build bombs.

What has not been tried on North Korea is the full-court economic press that was applied to Iran. In this case, it may not succeed in inducing the regime to check its nuclear ambitions. But it is the right place to start.

ETATS-UNIS

Trump's White House is starting to look a lot like Putin's Kremlin

By :ark Galeott

Critical media voices denounced as "enemies of the people."

Power not in the hands of elected officials, but the President's close friends and family.

Statecraft taking second place to the interests of the inner circle.

While there's no real evidence that Donald Trump is Vladimir Putin's puppet, his White House is certainly starting to resemble the Kremlin in the way it works.

First, there's its belief that it can define truth to its own convenience and shout down different perspectives as "fake news" and label those who question the official line as "enemies of the people."

Of course the Kremlin, with its stranglehold on Russian TV, can be even more inventive. Propagandist-in-chief Dmitry Kiselev, for example, regularly conjures tales of bizarre conspiracies, and damns Putin's enemies as traitors and fascists.

The White House is making a spirited challenge for Kiselev's crown: from tales that Trump drew "the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration" right through to the recent claims of Trump Tower wiretapping.

That a free press exercising its freedom in ways inconvenient to the administration is seen as a sign of dishonesty and disloyalty is truly chilling.

But the "fourth estate" is just one of the institutions under threat in Trump's America.

Over his 17 years dominating Russia (including one term as prime ministerial puppet-master), Putin has essentially hollowed out Russia's institutions.

Unless they have some personal relationship with the boss, ministers are just junior managers, and policy is not decided -- or even discussed -- in Cabinet, let alone Parliament. Instead, it emerges from shadowy circles of Putin's closest allies and cronies, often without records, warning or explanation.

The United States is not quite in the same situation -- yet -- but it is clear that the most important policy decisions are likewise being made out of sight.

After all, both in Moscow and Washington, the key to true power has more to do with your relationship to the president, not your job title.

In Russia, the prime minister -- constitutionally the second most powerful figure in the government -- has long been eclipsed by the head of Putin's Presidential Administration.

Trump has a similarly personalized and informal approach. His daughter Ivanka is now to have an office in the White House and access to classified intelligence. His son-in-law Jared Kushner is playing a pivotal role in foreign policy. Although he was forced to roll back partially, Trump's first instinct was to take the director of national intelligence and chairman of the joint chiefs off the permanent membership of the National Security Council and install Bannon in their stead.

What matters is how many degrees of separation you have from the boss, not what you know or what your job title may be.

Many of Trump's inner circle are businesspeople, so maybe it is unsurprising that they might see their roles in terms of how they further their economic interests.

Putin treats the whole Russian state as his piggy bank, but also is comfortable helping his closest allies do very well out of official policy. People like his old judo buddies the Rotenbergs get awarded lucrative government contracts, are bailed out for their failures, and even compensated for sanctions losses.

Meanwhile, apart from Trump's sidestepping demands that he divest himself of his own portfolio, his friends look set to benefit. Indeed, already he has said that he wants to cut back controls on Wall Street because of "friends of mine, who have nice businesses who can't borrow money."

There is, it seems, no longer anything unique about the Kremlin's personalized, post-truth style of rule.

President Trump's Reckless Shame Game

The Editorial Board

President Trump's Homeland Security Department turned its immigration purge — and assault on the Constitution — up a notch this week. It posted the first of what it says will be weekly online reports identifying state and local law enforcement agencies that decline its requests to keep immigrants in jail to give federal agents time to pick them up.

The idea is to name and shame these agencies, accusing them of recklessly loosing dangerous aliens onto the streets. The report, on the Immigration and Customs Enforcement website, trumpets itself as a "Public Safety Advisory." It includes a grim warning from the acting ICE director, Thomas Homan, about the agency's requests, called detainers: "When law enforcement agencies fail to honor immigration detainers and release serious criminal offenders, it undermines ICE's ability to protect the public safety and carry out its mission."

The accusation is dishonest. The report is a sham. And the claim of protecting public safety is ridiculous — dangerously so.

When local authorities decline to honor ICE detainers, they can have any number of good reasons for doing so. A likely one is the Fourth Amendment, which forbids imprisoning anyone without justification. If a police department is about to release someone who posts bail, it can't prolong the

detention — in essence, arrest that person again — just because ICE asks it to. Federal courts have repeatedly ruled that the local police cannot be forced to honor a detainer in violation of the Constitution. That is, without an arrest warrant from a judge. Which an ICE detainer is not.

Beyond the constitutional problems lies an argument about public safety, which also finds the Trump administration on the wrong side of the facts, in service of a campaign of fear. Mr. Trump has been trying to make Americans fear unauthorized immigrants. He has succeeded in making these immigrants terrified of him, having declared open season on the undocumented, in effect making every one of 11 million people a priority for deportation. Nobody — not parents of citizen children, not students, not those with clean records and deep American roots — is above suspicion or safe from arrest.

That fear has had palpable effects. Chief Charlie Beck of the Los Angeles Police Department announced on Tuesday that Latino immigrants had suddenly and sharply become less willing to report crimes. He said reports made by immigrant Latinos of sexual assault had dropped 25 percent in 2017 through March 18, compared with the same period last year. Reports of domestic violence fell by 10 percent early this year.

Chief Beck said Mr. Trump's deportation crackdown had made immigrants afraid of going to the police or cooperating with courts. "Imagine a young woman, imagine your daughter, your sister, your mother," he said, "not reporting a sexual assault, because they are afraid that their family will be torn apart."

And now, with his ICE detainer bulletins, Mr. Trump wants local law enforcers to be afraid of him, too. He wants them to fear being publicly blamed for crime by immigrants, to have second thoughts about releasing anyone who might give the administration an excuse to brand them as complicit.

By attacking them in this way, the administration puts local law enforcement agencies in a terrible position. Honoring a detainer puts them at risk of a federal lawsuit. Not honoring one puts them in the cross hairs of the xenophobic Mr. Trump. His indiscriminate search for immigrants to deport keeps ICE from focusing on real public safety threats. It antagonizes local agencies that want to do policing the right way. It emboldens corrupt local jurisdictions that engage in racial profiling and other abuses. And it makes immigrants fear and shun the protection of law enforcement.

The result: Everybody is afraid. And everybody is less safe.

the Atlantic Devin Nunes's Curiously Selective Memory

Conor Friedersdorf

Representative Devin Nunes, a Republican, is chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. He is therefore leading a key probe into whether or not Donald Trump's presidential campaign had ties to Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Can an inquiry he leads be trusted?

The skeptics include Evan McMullin, the former CIA operative who launched an independent bid for the presidency last year, billing himself as a conservative alternative to the Republican nominee. He says the House GOP "can't be trusted to investigate Russia & Trump's Kremlin ties," adding, "a special select committee is needed." And that mistrust seemed vindicated Tuesday when Nunes responded to a journalist's question about the Russia investigation with a highly dubious answer.

The journalist was David Corn, a progressive who works at *Mother Jones*. He asked Nunes about Carter Page and Roger Stone, two figures whose ties to both Trump's presidential campaign and Russia have piqued widespread interest and media coverage. Nunes insisted that he wasn't familiar with either man.

"You haven't heard of Carter Page and all these other people?" Corn asked.

"No," Nunes said.

"I mean," Corn replied, "there were about five names mentioned by the Democrats."

"I don't know these people," Nunes said.

Said an incredulous Corn, "You've not heard of Carter Page or Roger Stone?"

"No," Nunes insisted, "I've heard of Manafort," Trump's former campaign chairman, who was paid handsomely to do work for a pro-Russia faction in Ukraine, and was later replaced by Trump, apparently due to public controversy over those ties.

Was Nunes being honest?

Well, look closer at these people who are supposedly unfamiliar to a man leading an investigation into ties between the Russian government and the Trump campaign. Carter Page was a foreign-policy adviser to Trump when he was a candidate. My colleague Julia Ioffe probed the weird nature of his position in the campaign.

The New York Times reported that he traveled to Moscow to speak at a Russian university prior to the election. And he met with the Russian ambassador during the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, despite previously claiming on TV that he had no such meetings. Neither act is a smoking gun proving that the Trump campaign colluded with Russia. But anyone investigating the possibility would be incompetent or dishonest if they insisted that they'd never even heard of the man.

(The Senate intelligence committee has heard of him.)

It seems even less likely that Nunes has never heard of Roger Stone, given his long career in Republican politics and frequent media appearances over the years.

Stone is germane to this story because he worked on the Trump campaign and communicated on Twitter with a hacker alleged to have facilitated the leaks of DNC emails.

"One of the president's close friends and advisers is now acknowledging some contact with a Twitter handle U.S. officials considered a front for Russian intelligence," CBS reported. "On at least 16 different occasions during the 2016 campaign, Guccifer disclosed Democratic Party data targeting Hillary Clinton and Democratic candidates." Again, that does not prove coordination with the Trump campaign, or that Guccifer is actually a front for Russian intelligence. For his part, Stone insists that the contact with Guccifer was "innocuous." But it is absurd for the chair of the House intelligence committee to be unaware of Stone––so absurd that one cannot help but suspect that Nunes is lying. Hence my deeper probing.

On February 14, the *New York Times* published the article "Trump Campaign Aids Had Repeated Contacts with Russian Intelligence." It included this paragraph:

The F.B.I. has closely examined at least three other people close to Mr. Trump, although it is unclear if their calls were intercepted. They are Carter Page, a businessman and former foreign policy adviser to the campaign; Roger Stone, a longtime Republican operative; and Mr. Flynn.

Note those three names.

The White House then asked key intelligence officials and lawmakers to debunk the article, according to the *Washington Post*. Nunes was one of them: "Nunes spoke on the record and was subsequently quoted in the *Wall Street Journal,*" the newspaper reported.

Later, on March 3, during a television interview with a local news affiliate in his district, Nunes was asked about the Russia investigation and a *Fresno Bee* editorial that called him a "paper tiger" who was not equipped to lead the effort.

In the course of a long, meandering series of answers, Nunes said, "I think where people are getting confused at is, there was a *New York Times* story where three Americans were named in that story. And I was asked whether or not I was going to bring those people before the committee and ask them questions. And I said, 'Absolutely not.' I said we cannot go on witch hunts against the American people just because their name ends up in a newspaper story, because look, we know this, all newspapers are biased … I have to be very careful not to start hunting down Americans and bringing them before the legislative branch of government just because they appeared in a newspaper story as being a friend of some foreign government."

In other words, far from being unfamiliar with Carter Page and Roger Stone, Nunes apparently concluded weeks ago that it would be improper for his committee to call them to testify, ostensibly because he doesn't trust the objectivity of the *New York Times*—this despite the fact that, as best I can tell, the local news interview happened after Page went on live television and admitted to meeting with the Russian ambassador at the RNC, reversing his prior, inaccurate public position.

In any event, Nunes needn't have ever trusted the *New York Times* to figure out that both Page and Stone have ties to Russia. What he told his constituents is just not credible.

Now, weeks later, Nunes tells David Corn—and by extension, the American public—that he is flat-out unfamiliar with Page and Stone, both having been subject to massive media attention; attention including mentions in a prominent news article Nunes helped Trump rebut; mentions Nunes alluded to earlier this month.

Given all that, do you trust Nunes to run this investigation honestly?

The New York Times

Monitoring May Have 'Incidentally' Picked Up Trump Aides, House Member Says

Matthew Rosenberg, Adam Goldman and Emmarie Huetteman

Mr. Nunes acknowledged that the incidental intelligence gathering on Trump associates — during the presidential transition late last year, when Mr. Obama was in office — was not necessarily unlawful. American intelligence agencies typically monitor foreign officials of allied and hostile countries, and they routinely sweep up communications linked to Americans who may be taking part in the conversation or are being spoken about.

The real issue, Mr. Nunes told reporters, was that he could figure out the identities of Trump associates from reading reports about intercepted communications that were shared among Obama administration officials with top security clearances. He said some Trump associates were also identified by name in the reports. Normally, intelligence agencies mask the identities of American citizens who are incidentally present in intercepted communications.

But nothing about the investigations into Russian election interference is routine. In making his claims, first in a news conference on Capitol Hill and then in the West Wing driveway after meeting with Mr. Trump at the White House, Mr. Nunes, who served on the president's transition team, appeared to be trying to steer the public debate away from the investigations into whether Trump associates colluded with Russia during the election.

"I don't want to get too much into the details, but these were intelligence reports, and it brings up a lot of concern about whether things were properly minimized or not," said Mr. Nunes, who said the surveillance was not related to Russia. "What I have read bothers me, and I think it should bother the president himself and his team, because I think some of it seems to be inappropriate."

Mr. Nunes, who has spent months assailing leaks of classified information about Mr. Trump from anonymous officials, refused on Wednesday to identify who had allowed him to read the intelligence reports on the surveillance. He would only say that the people had proper security clearances and needed to be protected.

Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, who has also complained about leaks of classified information, had no such quibble with what Mr. Nunes disclosed on Wednesday. "I think it's startling information," he told reporters.

Despite the plaudits from the White House, Democrats said Mr. Nunes had badly damaged his credibility in his apparent attempt to shore up Mr. Trump's. His decision to dash off to the White House and brief Mr. Trump in the middle of his committee's investigation into Russian interference — which includes the president — raised questions about the independence and viability of the House inquiry he is leading.

Representative Adam B. Schiff of California, the ranking Democrat on the committee, said Mr. Nunes needed to decide whether he was going to oversee the intelligence committee or be a White House surrogate.

"He can't do both," Mr. Schiff said in a hastily arranged news conference in response to Mr. Nunes. "This is deeply troubling."

Mr. Schiff said that "there is more than circumstantial evidence now" of collusion between Trump associates and Russian officials.

The House Intelligence Committee is running one of three investigations into Russian interference in the election (the Senate and the F.B.I. are the other two). Before Wednesday, Democrats had already expressed skepticism that the House investigation could rise above partisan politics, and Mr. Nunes's statements only deepened their concerns.

Mr. Schiff, who said he had not seen the information Mr. Nunes cited, said the mere fact that Trump associates could be identified in intelligence reports, all of which remain classified, "does not indicate that there was any flaw in the procedures followed by the intelligence agencies."

Current and former intelligence officials backed up Mr. Schiff's assessment.

"If the F.B.I. has asked for information about Trump or any of his cronies relative to N.S.A. collection overseas, it wasn't for grins," said Frank Montoya Jr., a former F.B.I. agent who served as the government's senior counterintelligence official.

They "asked because there was a legitimate concern about suspicious behavior that might warrant an investigation, or because an investigation was already underway. The fact that this news isn't about Russia only makes me more concerned about the actions of our president."

Apart from names of Trump associates, it was unclear what exactly was in the intercepts. Mr. Nunes said there were multiple Trump associates named in them, but Mr. Schiff said it appeared that only one person was identified by name. Mr. Schiff said he came to that conclusion after speaking directly with Mr. Nunes.

Mr. Nunes's concern, Mr. Schiff said, "was he could still figure out the identities of some of the parties even though the names were masked."

Democrats and intelligence officials questioned whether Mr. Nunes had violated the law in discussing classified reports. Mr. Nunes said he had not broken the law even as he acknowledged that the reports were classified.

Several people are known to be under scrutiny in the Russia investigation, including Paul Manafort, who stepped down as chairman of the Trump campaign in August amid reports his name was in a secret ledger in Ukraine listing off-the-books payments for consulting work he did for a Russian-backed government there.

On Wednesday, The Associated Press reported new details of Mr. Manafort's activities in Ukraine, including a proposal he is said to have drafted in 2005 to do similar work for pro-Russian interests in other former Soviet republics. The plan was presented to a Russian oligarch with whom Mr. Manafort had a business relationship, Oleg Deripaska, a close ally of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia who agreed to pay Mr. Manafort $10 million for the work.

It is unclear how far the plan got or whether money changed hands. Mr. Manafort issued a statement denying he did any work for the Russian government.

Mr. Deripaska, via a spokeswoman, said the only payments he made to Mr. Manafort were tied to private business ventures.

The Washington Post

House Intelligence chair says Trump campaign officials were ensnared in surveillance operations

Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said on March 22 that President Trump's communications may have been inadvertently picked up by intelligence agencies during the transition of power. House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) says President Trump's communications may have been inadvertently collected. (Video: Bastien Inzaurralde/Photo: Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

The chairman of the House Intelligence Committee on Wednesday accused U.S. spy agencies of abusing their surveillance powers by gathering and sharing information about President Trump and his transition team, an unproven charge that was quickly embraced by the White House but threatened to derail the committee's investigation of possible Trump campaign ties to Russia.

Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.), one of Trump's closest allies on Capitol Hill, said he was alarmed after seeing intelligence reports disseminated after the Nov. 8 election that made references to U.S. citizens affiliated with Trump, and possibly the president-elect himself. He appeared to be referring to relatively routine cases of surveillance on foreign individuals in which they communicated with or mentioned Americans.

"What I've read seems to me to be some level of surveillance activity — perhaps legal, but I don't know that it's right," Nunes said to reporters outside the White House. "I don't know that the American people would be comfortable with what I've read."

But Nunes's refusal to disclose how he had obtained the documents and his unusual handling of the material — which he withheld from other committee members even while rushing to present it to the White House — were interpreted by some as a sign that his discovery was engineered to help the White House.

Trump said he regarded Nunes's disclosures as validation of his widely discredited claim that he was the illegal target of a wiretapping operation last fall ordered by President Barack Obama. Asked whether he felt vindicated, Trump said during a brief public appearance at the White House: "I somewhat do. I must tell you I somewhat do. I very much appreciated the fact that they found what they found."

Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif) said on Wednesday he had "grave concerns" about the intelligence committee's ability to conduct a credible investigation after its Republican chairman Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) suggested President Trump's communications may have been collected during surveillance. Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif) said on Wednesday he had "grave concerns" about the intelligence committee's ability to conduct a credible investigation (Reuters)

The timing of Nunes's disclosures was politically advantageous for Trump, coming just days after FBI Director James B. Comey testified that the president's wiretapping claims were groundless and falling on a day when Republicans struggled to muster enough votes to pass a health-care overhaul bill.

Nunes's White House visit was denounced by Democrats as a partisan move that severely damaged the prospects of the committee carrying out an impartial probe.

Rep. Adam B. Schiff (D-Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said that Nunes's action "casts quite a profound cloud over our ability to do the work," and he called for the formation of an independent commission. "If the chairman is going to continue to go to the White House rather than his own committee, there's no way we can conduct this investigation."

Other Democrats suggested that Nunes may have crossed a legal line by publicly talking about secret intelligence work.

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) said the congressman's statements "appear to reveal classified information, which is a serious concern. With regard to the substance of his claims, I have no idea what he is talking about.''

Nunes, who served as a member of Trump's transition team, would not say whether his information came from a source affiliated with the White House — or whether the reports he had seen simply cited cables between foreign entities or direct communications between Trump or his team and a foreign agent.

"I'm not going to get into any of this," he said, stressing only that it was "very clear to me" who the Trump team officials referenced in the report were.

President Trump on March 22 said he feels "somewhat" vindicated after Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said that intelligence agencies "incidentally collected information" on Trump associates during the presidential transition. President Trump says he feels "somewhat" vindicated by Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. (The Washington Post)

The White House has previously enlisted Nunes, as well as a senior U.S. intelligence official, to knock down politically damaging reports about Trump and Russia. White House officials dismissed suggestions that Trump aides had coordinated with Nunes.

"We watched his press conference on the Hill at the same time everybody else did," White House deputy press secretary Sarah Sanders said. "We didn't have any information before that."

The developments added to the intrigue and animosity that have so far characterized Trump's relationship with U.S. intelligence agencies, as well as the administration's efforts to fend off reports of Russian ties that forced the resignation of Trump's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, and a recusal on Russia-related matters by Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

Nunes's claims raise the possibility that U.S. spy agencies violated long-standing rules that are designed to protect U.S. citizens from surveillance and require Americans' names to be stricken from intelligence reports except in rare circumstances. But the lack of detail provided by Nunes, and the ambiguous wording he used in his public appearances to describe the materials, made it hard to determine whether there was any violation.

Nunes's statements appear to center on surveillance approved by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, a secretive panel that authorizes the interception of communications of known or suspected agents of foreign powers — such as ambassadors — or terrorism suspects.

Though it is generally not acknowledged, the U.S. government has for years used FISA warrants to eavesdrop on ambassadors, embassies and others believed to be acting in America on behalf of foreign governments.

While such surveillance aims to gather intelligence about foreign actors, it can often pick up conversations with their American counterparts — such as State Department officials, lawmakers or other Americans who speak to foreign officials. Agencies refer to such monitoring as "incidental'' collection and take steps to minimize the sharing of those people's names or identifying information within the government, often by masking their names in internal reports about the intercepted communications.

Nunes described the surveillance as apparently legal but nevertheless troubling because it involved the activities of Trump and his aides after he was elected but before he became president.

"It looks to me like it was all legally collected. It was a lot of information on the president-elect and the transition team and what they were doing,'' he said.

Nunes's statements were remarkable on numerous levels. He publicly discussed FISA-approved surveillance, something that Comey had refused to do before Nunes's committee days earlier. Nunes attributed his information to an anonymous source, after he and other members of his party have bemoaned media reports relying on unnamed people.

Perhaps most significantly, Nunes went to the White House to brief the president on the details of material potentially gathered as part of his panel's investigation into associates of the president and Russia's interference in the campaign.

Nunes said that none of what he reviewed involved Trump team contacts with Russian officials. He initially said the collection included

details of Trump's conversations but then backed away from that claim, saying only that it was "possible."

"I have seen intelligence reports that clearly show that the president-elect and his team were at least monitored and disseminated out in intelligence,'' he said, adding that he hoped to ascertain who in the government had sought details about the Trump team and had asked for their identities to be revealed, or "unmasked," in the intelligence reports.

Nunes also said that he hoped to have more information by Friday and had asked the FBI, the CIA and the National Security Agency to "provide a full account of these surveillance activities."

The directors of the FBI and NSA spent more than five hours Monday being grilled by lawmakers on Nunes's committee about the counterintelligence probe looking for any evidence of coordination between the Trump campaign and Russian officials during the election. Comey was also asked about Trump's claims on Twitter that he had been the victim of an Obama-ordered wiretap. "I have no information that supports those tweets,'' Comey said.

Schiff said that after speaking with Nunes on Wednesday afternoon, the Republican said that most of the names of American citizens were not "unmasked" in the intelligence reports but that it was still possible to ascertain their identities.

"Because the committee has still not been provided the intercepts in the possession of the chairman, it is impossible to evaluate the chairman's claims. It certainly does not suggest — in any way — that the president was wiretapped by his predecessor," Schiff said.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) called Nunes's actions Wednesday "remarkable" and "bizarre," and said the partisan jockeying from Nunes and Schiff — with "no substantiation," McCain added — were turning the House Intelligence Committee's investigation into a political sideshow.

He called for either a select committee or an independent commission to look into the matter.

"No longer does the Congress have credibility to handle this alone, and I don't say that lightly," McCain said on MSNBC.

He stressed, however, that he believes the Senate Intelligence Committee is doing "a good job" with its investigation.

USA TODAY

Vote 'no' on Ryancare: Our view

During the presidential campaign, Donald Trump repeatedly promised to repeal Obamacare and replace it with "something terrific." There are many words for the House Republicans' latest health care plan, embraced by Trump and scheduled for a vote on Thursday. "Terrific" is not among them.

You might have thought that GOP leaders would have reconsidered their approach after the Congressional Budget Office found that their initial plan would leave 24 million fewer people with insurance coverage over the next decade.

But no. The fact that a population nearly as big as Texas' would join the ranks of the uninsured did not seem to faze them. In the days since the CBO delivered its sobering analysis, House Republicans have responded not by going back to the drawing board, but with some modest changes designed to shore up support among wavering lawmakers.

The changes include increased tax subsidies for some older Americans, a work requirement for Medicaid and a number of sweeteners directed at individual members. But their new plan is just as terrible as the old one.

The measure would still fund a massive tax break for upper-income households at the expense of millions of everyday Americans. It would still result in uninsured Americans showing up in droves at emergency rooms and shifting the costs onto everyone else. It is opposed by AARP, the American Medical Association and the American Hospital Association.

The Republican plan would further destabilize insurance markets by

repealing the mandate that individuals obtain health care coverage — even though the individual mandate, which puts a premium on personal responsibility, used to be a solidly Republican concept.

It was devised in the early 1990s by the conservative Heritage Foundation and embraced by 18 Republican senators, including Minority Leader Bob Dole, in their alternative to Hillarycare, the plan championed by then-first lady Hillary Clinton during her husband's administration

Two of those supporters, Orrin Hatch of Utah and Charles Grassley of Iowa, still serve in the Senate. Grassley even helped negotiate what would become Obamacare (though eventually he and two other Republicans negotiators would abandon their handiwork when they saw how sharply the party was turning against anything bipartisan).

Now the GOP is stuck. For years, it has promised to "repeal and replace" Obamacare, but its replacement plan is little more than less-generous tax credits, Medicaid cuts and a lot of mumbo-jumbo about free markets.

Party leaders are gamely pushing forward on repeal, saying that failure to do so would make them look weak. One of their prime arguments is that Obamacare is collapsing on its own. That is not true. The CBO analysis found that the non-group market is relatively stable. Yes, problems are showing up in some counties and states, but none that can't be repaired.

Trump, meanwhile, has endorsed the House GOP measure, though he ran in 2016 as an outsider, promising insurance for all and vowing to stand up for the little guy.

Now he is in full embrace of the Republican establishment as he pitches a health plan that would devastate many of the people he claimed to be speaking for. On Tuesday, he even suggested he'd rally voters against Republicans who defied him.

It's time to put an end to this sorry spectacle. Republicans should drop the repeal effort, work with Democrats to fix Obamacare's flaws, and move on to tax reform, infrastructure and other initiatives that would help Americans instead of hurting them.

The New York Times

House Republicans, Deeply Divided, Face Painful Choice on Health Vote

Jennifer Steinhauer

At least for now, though, too many have not.

"The bill maintains Obamacare's overall structure and approach, an approach that cements the federal government's role in health insurance," said Representative Rick Crawford, Republican of Arkansas, an opponent of the bill who represents the concerns of the conservatives.

Other more moderate members expressed opposite objections. "Under the current proposal, many South Jersey residents would be left with financial hardship or without the coverage they now receive," said Representative Frank A. LoBiondo, Republican of New Jersey. "Our seniors on Medicare already struggle to make each dollar stretch."

Some Republican leaders and those charged with drumming up votes suspect that some of the more conservative members are simply trying to force Mr. Ryan to cancel a vote on the bill so they do not have to go on record against Mr. Trump. But moderates may feel the pressure of voters: Large protests against the bill are planned for Thursday.

Further hampering them, House Republicans failed to do the grueling work of building a coalition outside Washington as Democrats did with the Affordable Care Act in 2009. While anti-abortion groups have warmly embraced the bill, which could restrict coverage of the procedure, it lacks other advocates. Doctors, nurses and hospitals have come out strongly against the measure, and insurance companies have been largely skeptical.

Even if Mr. Ryan manages to secure the bare minimum of votes

required, the bill that would pass the House would not become law. The Senate expects to make significant changes in the legislation, dragging out the process deep into the spring, if it can pass any version at all.

Senate Republicans, largely those from states that chose to expand their Medicaid programs under the Affordable Care Act, so far have not seemed susceptible to pressure from leaders and Mr. Trump, listening instead to governors and constituents concerned about significant reductions in benefits.

Part of the bill's problem is time itself. Much has changed in the years since the Affordable Care Act passed, with millions of Americans, many in red states, now getting health insurance as a result of the law, as well as treatment for the prescription drug addictions that have plagued scores of communities.

"My goal for this whole process was to help the people the law harmed and not harm the people it helps," said Representative Dan Donovan, Republican of New York. At the same time, a fair number of conservatives would like to see those benefits greatly reduced, the central tension of the Republican debate.

As a result, it remains difficult to imagine a bill that could find its way out of the Capitol to Mr. Trump's desk, given the broad disparities in what Republicans now seek.

Even if they can come together, House Republicans risk making the same mistakes Democrats made in the beginning of Mr. Obama's term, when they pushed through what came to be known as Obamacare. That achievement, monumental at the time, ended up dragging down a once formidable Democratic majority and reducing the ability of Democrats to pass more legislation during his presidency.

Yet if the bill fails, Republicans in the House could end up like House Democrats under President Bill Clinton, who passed a controversial energy tax that was reduced to rubble in the Senate, but remained an albatross for Democrats in the 1994 elections.

The Democratic majority repeated that error in the early years of the Obama administration when the House passed a highly unpopular bill to cap the carbon emissions that cause climate change, only to see it go nowhere in the Senate, bringing down some House Democrats in the process.

Republican leaders are privately telling members that they do not want to be tarred as Republicans who voted with Democrats to maintain the Affordable Care Act. It's a message they expect to resonate once the bill reaches the Senate.

"We remain committed to the repeal and replacement of Obamacare with policies that actually work," Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican leader, said on the Senate floor Wednesday as he urged members to get on board. "Americans are ready for a better way forward after the failure of Obamacare."

But the flaw in that theory is that plenty of groups that usually support Republicans have already expressed distaste for the repeal-and-replace measure and are urging members to reject it.

"In 2018, members are going to have to campaign for re-election and say, 'Look we repealed Obamacare,' and voters are going to look at their premiums and say, 'Oh no you didn't,' " said Dan Holler, a spokesman for Heritage Action for America, a conservative group. "In the long term, it is not in the best interest of the Republican Party to pass this bill."

House Republicans could console themselves in thinking that the vote on Thursday could be more like the excruciating vote in 2003 for President George W. Bush's Medicare prescription drug benefit.

Then, House Republican leaders had to keep the vote open for hours as they twisted arms, finally securing passage, 216-215, over the opposition of the party's most conservative members, including the current vice president, Mike Pence, an Indiana congressman at the time.

But that measure, which did become law, has proved popular and durable, and the vote — which led to ethics charges against some of the arm-twisters — has largely receded into the history books.

POLITICO

Inside Trump's last-ditch bid to avoid a health care disaster

By Rachael Bade, John Bresnahan and Kyle Cheney

Archconservative Rep. Steve King was a "no" on the House GOP Obamacare replacement when President Donald Trump summoned him to the White House on Wednesday morning.

At an Oval Office meeting with 18 House Republicans — mostly opponents of the bill — Trump invited King to sit next to him in a chair normally reserved for Vice President Mike Pence, one of the Iowa Republican's closest friends in politics.

Story Continued Below

Trump asked King why he couldn't vote for the bill. King responded he didn't think it would lower insurance premiums enough. But King then floated a potential deal to Trump: If the president would publicly back amending the bill to deregulate the health care industry, King would change his vote.

Trump agreed, and Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) picked up a desperately needed vote.

With one day to go until the biggest vote of his brief presidency, Trump is using all the trappings of his office to try to clinch the needed 215 votes. It's unclear whether it will be enough to save the legislation. But late Wednesday, the White House floated a major change to the bill in a bid to win over roughly three dozen House conservatives. It was over the same issue King had raised in the White House meeting earlier in the day.

Trump is trying to overawe opponents of the bill with the prestige of White House, calling them into his gold-painted Oval Office for private conversations. He is leaning on Ryan to promise them votes on their pet measures. And Trump is showing he's quite open to horse-trading, if that's what it takes.

Over the next 24 hours, Trump plans to meet one-on-one with more opponents. Insiders say he'll likely focus on members whose districts he carried by a wide margin, which includes a large slice of the hard-line conservative House Freedom Caucus.

The question is: Can the man House GOP leaders dubbed the "ultimate closer" get it done?

Trump will also huddle with the Freedom Caucus on Thursday morning, just hours before the bill hits the floor.

The White House made a major concession to the Freedom Caucus on Wednesday night. It agreed to add a provision to the health care bill to eliminate an Obamacare mandate that forces insurance plans to provide a minimum menu of benefits. Ryan and other top Republicans had balked at making such a move, fearing it would derail the bill under the Senate's arcane procedural rules.

But with a possible defeat looming on Thursday, the White House went along. The concession showed how far Trump is willing to go to prevail, though problems remain with some moderate Republicans.

It was hardly the only ask of Trump.

During the same White House meeting with conservatives earlier Wednesday, Rep. David McKinley (R-W.Va.), who currently intends to vote no, raised the issue of health insurance and pension benefits for retired mine workers. Thousands of former mine employees will lose their health and pension benefits soon if the federal government doesn't intervene.

McKinley asked Trump to support a permanent extension of the benefits. Trump said he would see what he could do. McKinley planned to meet with Ryan about the issue.

"I want to find a way that I can find comfort with this" bill, McKinley said.

When asked whether his vote hinges on what happens with the coal miner provisions, McKinley admitted it may.

"This is my best position I have right now for leverage to deal with issues that people try to avoid around here," McKinley said.

Trump's wheeling and dealing kicked off in earnest Tuesday night after one of his must gung-ho supporters on Capitol Hill, Rep. Lou Barletta, announced he would oppose the bill. The Pennsylvania Republican said he had concerns that undocumented immigrants would receive health care tax credits.

Just before Trump took the stage at a National Republican Congressional Committee fundraiser, the president huddled

with Barletta and Ryan in a private room off the main auditorium where thousands were seated. Barletta told Trump he wanted to pass a bill that would create a verification process to ensure only American citizens receive the credit, an idea he said Ryan would not put in the replacement bill.

Trump agreed. Barletta then pushed for a timeline, and got Ryan to commit to getting to the bill by late April, right after the Easter recess.

It was enough to bring Barletta on board.

“I think he’s doing a hell of a job!” Barletta said of Trump’s negotiations. “It didn’t take much. He got me in 15 minutes and agreed to meet my concern and I think he’s doing a good job at getting this as close as it is, because it wouldn’t be without him.”

Trump’s sell is not heavy handed. There's no yelling or table-pounding. But it is pointed and direct, participants said.

The president met Wednesday with about a dozen Republicans, most who were firmly against the Republican legislation. The group, which included King and Freedom Caucus members Jody Hice and Ted Yoho, were shown into the Cabinet Room for the meeting. The Oval Office, they were told by staff, couldn’t hold that many members.

But when Trump arrived and found out most of them had never seen the most famous office in the world, he ushered them into the Oval Office and insisted they meet there. This seems to be one of Trump's favorite moves, White House officials said.

After insisting King sit in the chair reserved for Pence, they went around the room and introduced themselves, said how they would vote on the bill and why. The first few were all answers Trump wanted to hear. Rep. Richard Hudson (R-N.C.), a Ryan loyalist, told Trump he was a firm yes because he believes the bill will lower the cost of health care.

Then, Trump got to some harder answers. Hice and Yoho each told Trump they were opposed because the bill wouldn’t lower premiums enough.

Trump didn’t like that response. He pushed back on Hice, twice in a row: “So you just want to keep Obamacare for the next four years?”

Rep. Jim Renacci (R-Ohio), another attendee who came in as a no, said he was impressed with Trump and hinted he’s now open to changing his mint.

“What would you do different?” Renacci said Trump asked. “And that’s a great question. If you don’t like this, what would you do different? And if you’re asking for something that can’t be done unless you get 60 votes in the Senate, that can’t be guaranteed. So now tell me what you want done.”

Los Angeles Times

A healthcare test we're hoping Republicans will flunk

The Times Editorial Board

On Thursday, House Republicans and President Trump face their first big test since the election that put the GOP in complete control of the federal government. The House will be voting on a bill to repeal much of the healthcare reform law Democrats pushed through Congress in 2010, replacing it with a skinflint alternative that’s projected to leave 24 million more people uninsured in a decade. It’s a horrible proposal, and the main hope for the country is that dissident Republicans will kill it because it’s not awful enough for them.

The GOP leadership’s “American Health Care Act” abandons one of the core goals of the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (better known as Obamacare) — extending insurance coverage to more people — while doing little or nothing to hold down medical costs or improve care. Instead, it would give a sizable tax break to high-income households and the healthcare industry by cancelling Obamacare’s tax increases; slash federal spending on Medicaid, the healthcare program for the poor and the disabled; and offer new subsidies and insurance rules that are projected to trim premiums for better-off Americans and younger, healthier people not covered by large employer plans.

Republicans are fond of arguing that Obamacare is “collapsing,” a reference to the dwindling number of insurers serving the non-group markets in several states, and the large premium increases in many of those markets last year. Never mind that the vast majority of people served by Obamacare’s insurance exchanges received federal subsidies that shielded them from the brunt of those price hikes. Sadly, many of those families’ subsidies would melt away under the GOP plan, which would provide smaller tax credits tied to age, not income or location. As a result, they would face unaffordable premiums and impossibly high out-of-pocket costs.

To the far-right Republicans in the House Freedom Caucus, that’s simply not bad enough. They apparently don’t want the federal government providing any subsidies whatsoever for these consumers, even though it spends $235 billion annually subsidizing the insurance policies that employers provide their workers. They also want every shred of Obamacare wiped from the books, which Republicans can’t do under the procedures they’re using to avoid a Democratic filibuster in the Senate.

Top Republicans tried to mollify the Freedomites by proposing an even tougher crackdown on Medicaid, making it harder for states to enroll more of their poor residents and easier for them to cover fewer. Because heaven knows the healthcare system in this country works that much better when more Americans go uninsured and have to wait for treatment until their ailments become severe enough for an emergency-room visit.

Yet the Freedomites remain on the fence, as do a number of Republicans who don’t think this bill’s big idea — letting insurers sell cheaper plans that stick their customers with a bigger share of their medical bills — is a good thing for their constituents. They’re absolutely right about that. If the holdouts prevail, it will be a huge loss for Trump and the House GOP leadership. But it will be a welcome win for most of the rest of us.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

GOP Lawmakers Struggle to Unite on Health Bill

Kristina Peterson, Siobhan Hughes and Natalie Andrews

The GOP plan to replace the Affordable Care Act, backed by President Donald Trump and House Speaker Paul Ryan, remained in jeopardy Wednesday after a day of intense negotiations among Republicans showed signs of rallying conservatives behind the bill while driving away more centrist lawmakers.

Ahead of a planned vote by the House on Thursday, Mr. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence, as well as other senior administration officials, huddled with lawmakers through the day on proposed changes to the bill.

A deal that was emerging on Wednesday night had the potential to win support for the bill from wavering conservatives, many of whom have said the bill doesn’t go far enough in wiping away the 2010 health law championed by Democrats.

GOP leaders weighed repealing the ACA’s requirement that insurance policies cover 10 specific benefit categories, known as essential health benefits. Those include maternity care, certain pediatric and mental-health services and preventive health services. Some Republicans believe the requirement has driven up premiums, while Democrats say it ensures that plans truly cover needed services.

Rep. Devin Nunes, the Republican chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, ignited a new battle over President Donald Trump’s claims that he was spied on by the Obama administration, saying that U.S. intelligence agencies intercepted information about people involved in the Trump transition team.

The Supreme Court rejected an appeals-court ruling involving disabled students that was based on Judge Gorsuch's views, a surprise development that some Democrats said was evidence of the nominee's insensitivity.

The White House sought to distance itself from President Donald Trump's 2016 campaign manager following a new account Wednesday that alleged he worked to promote Russian interests in his previous work as a political consultant.

The Trump administration asks the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Va., to compress its timeline to two weeks, from more than two months.

In fits and starts, the Trump administration is trying to show it values traditional allies and alliances, despite the president's rhetoric suggesting the contrary. Good thing, because America's allies and alliances are under exceptional stress, Gerald F. Seib writes.

"We're encouraged tonight at the real willingness of not only the White House but our leadership to make this bill better," said Rep. Mark Meadows (R., N.C.), who leads a group of 30 to 40 conservatives called the House Freedom Caucus, many of whom have withheld support, even though they believe in the party's goal of repealing the ACA.

It was the most optimistic assessment from Mr. Meadows in recent days. But he cautioned: "We're not there yet.''

Other conservatives who discussed the proposal at a Wednesday night caucus meeting also left optimistic. "Most good things happen toward the end of the discussion," said Rep. Trent Franks (R., Ariz.).

House leaders hadn't decided whether to make the change to the bill, and the proposal was still under negotiation. Its reception was tepid among more centrist Republicans, some of whom want the bill to offer more generous help to older and low-income people to help them afford insurance.

Centrist House lawmakers were briefed on the proposal Wednesday night by Mr. Ryan and other House leaders in the speaker's Capitol office, and some conveyed little enthusiasm afterward.

"After careful deliberation, I cannot support the bill and will oppose it," Rep. Charlie Dent (R., Pa.) said after the meeting.

Rep. Ryan Costello (R., Pa.) told reporters that "the Freedom Caucus has presented what it would take for them to make some yeses, and I think that there are a lot of members that will now have to evaluate things a little bit further."

Until Wednesday, House GOP leaders had warned conservatives that eliminating the coverage requirements in the House bill would risk stripping it of its special procedural status when it goes to the Senate.

Republicans are using a procedural shortcut that would enable them to pass the bill in the Senate with only GOP votes, requiring a simple majority, rather than the 60 votes that most legislation needs in the Senate. Republicans hold 52 seats in the chamber.

"What we just don't want to do is put in a 'fatal provision,' " Mr. Ryan had said Wednesday morning on a Wisconsin radio show.

But by the evening, House GOP leaders said they received new advice from Senate Republicans: While the change might not survive in the Senate, it wouldn't enable Democrats to block the whole bill, a GOP leadership aide said.

About 30 House Republicans had remained opposed to the bill earlier in the day, a survey of House GOP members by The Wall Street Journal found. GOP leaders can lose no more than 22 Republican votes, since no Democrats are expected to support the bill.

The bill would dismantle much of the ACA's taxes and subsidies and replace them with tax credits largely tied to age, aimed at helping people afford insurance if they don't get it through employers.

If insurers were no longer required to offer the set of mandated benefits in their plans, costs likely would rise for sicker and older people, who are more likely to want generous policies with comprehensive coverage. Younger, healthier consumers would be more likely to purchase the new, less-comprehensive health plans.

Senate Democrats said Wednesday night that Republicans wouldn't be able to retain the provision eliminating those benefits if the bill made it to the Senate.

"It will require 60 votes to repeal these protections, and the votes just aren't there in the Senate," said Matt House, spokesman for Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.). "It speaks volumes about the Republican Party that they need to try to make this bill worse for the American people in order to buy off the Freedom Caucus."

House Republicans voted nearly 90 times to repeal parts of President Barack Obama's 2010 health-care law while he was in office. But with a Republican in the White House and the prospect of a repeal becoming law, the party has struggled to bridge longstanding differences over the government's role in health care.

Failure to pass the health plan would be "a big blow to the president, who is 100% behind this bill," said Rep. Tom Cole (R., Okla.). "It would obviously be a terrific setback for our leadership, and it's a big blow to Republican confidence." Defeat for the bill would also damage the prestige of Mr. Ryan, one of its main promoters.

GOP aides said there was no strategy in place for what would happen if the bill fails on the House floor Thursday.

"There is no Plan B," White House press secretary Sean Spicer said Wednesday. "There's a Plan A and a Plan A. We're going to get this done."

However, some conservative interest groups remained strongly opposed to GOP bill. Organizations backed by billionaire industrialists Charles and David Koch said late Wednesday that they would spend millions of dollars to defeat the health-care bill, the Associated Press reported.

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

Republicans Repeat Democrats' Health Care Mistakes

By Ian Tuttle

It feels like 2009 all over again.

Eight years ago, a new president was in the White House, flanked by friendly congressional majorities and eyeing an overhaul of the American health-care system. That president and Congress intended to provide universal health-insurance coverage, by hook or by crook. Closed-door negotiations, procedural machinations, and veritable bribes (such as the infamous "Cornhusker Kickback," "the Louisiana Purchase," and the "Omaha Stakes") ultimately put the Affordable Care Act on Barack Obama's desk. He signed it on March 23, 2010, and ushered in seven years of mayhem: soaring premiums, the withdrawal of major insurers, the de facto collapse of the individual insurance market, and more.

Now, Republicans are rushing to repeat Democrats' mistakes.

The *Freaky Friday* remake that Washington, D.C., is currently performing is not difficult to spot. Start with the sudden declarations of urgency. Speaker Paul Ryan insists that Republicans have no choice but to embrace the House GOP's Obamacare-reform bill, the American Health Care Act. "This is the closest we will ever get to repealing and replacing Obamacare," Ryan said earlier this month. "The time is here. The time is now. This is the moment."

In his 2009 address to a joint session of Congress, a newly inaugurated President Obama was similarly definitive: "Let there be no doubt: Health-care reform cannot wait, it must not wait, and it will not wait another year."

Obama's urgency was misplaced, and Ryan's is, too. There was time for the GOP to craft a strong alternative, to roll it out methodically, and to build support. But a mad rush is now on to push the American Health Care Act through Congress. Republicans unveiled the bill just over two weeks ago, and aim to vote it out of the House on Thursday. Senate leadership, despite firm opposition from several Republican senators, aims to force the legislation through its chamber next week, according to a recent report from *Politico*. The GOP hopes that the whole process will be wrapped up by Easter.

Democrats famously pushed Obamacare legislation to the president's desk, thanks to maneuvering by then-Senate majority leader Harry Reid and to the budget-reconciliation process. Reid gave his chamber six days to debate the final version of the Senate bill, and most senators admitted that they didn't even attempt to read all 2,700 pages. (Max Baucus suggested that doing

so would be a "waste of time," because the details were too complex for anyone but experts.)

But, as the *Washington Examiner*'s Philip Klein quipped on Twitter: "Obamacare was passed at the pace of *Zootopia* DMV sloths compared to this AHCA attempt."

There is something to be said for political momentum — except that it's not clear how much momentum Republicans have any more. For several years, there has been party-wide agreement that Obamacare needs to be gutted, but this ill-conceived effort has sapped much of that energy. A *Politico*/Morning Consult poll released on Wednesday morning showed that 41 percent of respondents approve of the AHCA, compared with 38 percent who disapprove. Approval has dropped slightly, and disapproval has risen since last week. These findings should not be over-interpreted — one in five respondents had no opinion of the bill — but even Republican support is tepid. Only 62 percent of Republicans are behind the bill. The AHCA probably does not threaten to galvanize a left-wing "Tea Party," but Republicans seem oblivious to the dangers that can accrue to a party that pushes through large-scale legislation with only lackluster political support.

Republicans seem oblivious to the dangers that can accrue to a party that pushes through large-scale legislation with only lackluster political support.

Finally, Republicans, despite promises of a "three-phase" legislative strategy, seem to be under the impression that they are about to wrap up our interminable health-care tussle. "There is no Plan B," White House spokesman Sean Spicer said on Wednesday, asked about reports that the AHCA lacks the requisite votes in the House and Senate. "There is Plan A, and there's Plan A. We're going to get this done." Perhaps. But even if the AHCA is signed, health-care reform — according to the White House's own plan — will not be "done." Yet increasingly Republicans seem to think they are about to put a bow on the entire health-care debate.

And in that, too, they are sounding like Democrats: Just before the Obamacare exchanges opened for enrollment, in the fall of 2013, President Obama told a Maryland crowd: "We're now only five days away from finishing the job." Of course, Obamacare didn't "finish the job" of reforming the nation's health-care system (or even of providing universal coverage), and neither will Republicans' plan. Nor will it free them from the political tangles of health-care policy. The remedy of at least one Republican senator, speaking anonymously to *Politico* this week, is to abandon the issue altogether: "Maybe the best outcome is for this to fail in the House so we can move on to tax reform. Which is what we should have done anyway."

Memories are short, especially in politics. For seven years, Republicans have been railing — rightly — against Democrats' health-care boondoggle. But now, finally in a position to clean up some of that mess, they are repeating many of Democrats' mistakes.

When the means are so dispiriting, can the ends be much better?

The Washington Post

Opinion | The GOP's health-care plan goes in the exact wrong direction

By Charles Lane

There's a lot not to like about America's fragmented, inefficient health-insurance system. If you had to identify its fundamental flaw, however, it would probably be this: People need medical care whether they have a job or not, yet the U.S. system is built on a linkage between health insurance and employment.

Fifty-six percent of the nonelderly U.S. population obtained insurance via employer-paid plans in 2014, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. The federal government picked up more than a quarter-trillion dollars of the cost, indirectly, through a tax break.

Even directly government-funded programs, such as Medicare for the retired elderly, or veteran's care, embody the premise that coverage is "earned." Exceptions — coverage for the disabled or poor children — go only to those not expected to work.

President Barack Obama's health-care law addressed, but did not solve, this problem. So you might expect a plan to reform that reform, such as the House Republicans' proposal to "repeal and replace" Obamacare, to fix it for good.

The GOP's proposals make matters worse. Obamacare imposed a percentage tax on high-cost employer-paid plans, to go into effect next year; the GOP bill postpones it further into the future, until 2025. Obamacare created a subsidized and regulated individual market for the self-employed and others left out of the employer-paid system. Republicans would salvage it, sort of, by shrinking it.

Obamacare offered Medicaid to millions of poor and near-poor adults. The Republicans would phase much of this out and — in the latest version of their bill, rewritten to appease GOP ultra-conservatives — encourage states to link remaining Medicaid benefits to work. Specifically, states could deny coverage under Medicaid for able-bodied, childless adults who do not work, study, train or seek work, and those states that did so would get extra federal financing.

"The work requirements are important. They're something that is restorative to people's self-worth . . . sense of themselves, about working when they're able to," President Trump's health and human services secretary, Tom Price, said Sunday on ABC's 'This Week.'"

To be sure, this sentiment has its place. When awarding cash, such as welfare or unemployment benefits, government must avoid creating disincentives to work, for the sake both of the recipients and of the taxpayers who support them.

However, to repeat: One's susceptibility to illness does not vary with work effort. There is precious little to be gained, either financially or politically, and certainly not morally, by linking Medicaid and work.

The vast majority of Medicaid beneficiaries — 77 percent in 2015, according to Kaiser — are in households with a worker already. As for the rest, no less a conservative than Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation has pointed out that the likeliest result of denying Medicaid would be that individuals wind up at a hospital emergency room, seeking expensive treatment for conditions that might have been dealt with at less cost earlier — with insurance. Rector's scenario assumes they do make it to the hospital, of course. Those who don't — well, Republicans can explain that at the next election.

The GOP needs to knock off the ideological games and face facts: Health insurance works best with a broad risk pool, and "everyone" is the broadest possible risk pool.

This country's failure to organize itself accordingly — a failure that persists in spite of the changes Obamacare made, not because of them — is at the root of our health-care woes.

Trump and Price are not among history's greatest free-market intellectuals. Friedrich von Hayek was, though, and he acknowledged that health insurance presented a special economic case.

"Where, as in the case of sickness," Hayek wrote in his 1944 magnum opus, "The Road to Serfdom," "neither the desire to avoid such calamities nor the efforts to overcome their consequences are as a rule weakened by the provision of assistance — where, in short, we deal with genuinely insurable risks — the case for the state's helping to organize a comprehensive system of social insurance is very strong."

As Hayek was quick to note, this in no way implies a Bernie Sanders-style single-payer system. Rather, "it is possible under the name of social insurance to introduce measures which tend to make competition more or less ineffective."

Smart reformers, conservative and liberal, have devised plans that rely more on market forces than does the hodgepodge we live under at present, or than single-payer would. What the best such concepts all have in common is that they weaken, or end, the link between employment and insurance.

"There is no incompatibility in principle between the state's providing greater security . . . and the preservation of individual freedom," Hayek wrote. And he was right — even if the contemporary GOP leadership seems intent on proving otherwise.

Gorsuch hearings: Should agencies – or courts – decide the law?

The Christian Science Monitor

There are several elephants in the room where senators are grilling Judge Neil Gorsuch this week. One of those proverbial pachyderms was present courtesy of the aspiring Supreme Court justice.

“There’s an elephant in the room with us today,” Judge Gorsuch wrote in a 2016 concurrence that featured prominently in 11 hours of questioning Tuesday from members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The “elephant” Gorsuch was trying to draw wider attention to is a legal doctrine known as Chevron deference. Basically, a Supreme Court decision from 1984 states that, as long as a federal agency’s interpretation of a law passed by Congress is reasonable, courts should allow it – which tips the balance toward the executive branch of government.

With executive power now being challenged in the courts like never in living memory, many in the legal community think the “behemoth” of Chevron deference, as Gorsuch described it, should be revisited and revised as well. And that’s in no small part because of Gorsuch’s own comments while serving on the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals.

“Gorsuch is one of the most prominent, if not THE most prominent, lower court judges calling for a rethinking of Chevron,” wrote Ilya Somin, a professor at George Mason University’s Antonin Scalia School of Law, in an email to the Monitor. “His position is still a minority view. But the minority is growing.”

While scaling back Chevron would certainly affect agencies, it could also have significant repercussions for President Donald Trump, who not only nominated executive power skeptic Gorsuch, but who has also continued to push the envelope of executive power himself.

“Executive power issues are the most important that the [Supreme] Court will face in the next decade,” wrote Ernest Young, a professor at Duke University Law School, in an email to the Monitor. “The Executive must abide by statutory limits set by Congress, but if the Executive gets to define those limits (and courts have to defer to its definitions) then those limits are a lot less meaningful.”

Put more bluntly by Professor Somin: “Eliminating Chevron would help curb the dangerous expansion of executive power. It’s particularly desirable if you believe Trump and/or some other likely administration poses an unusually serious threat to the rule of law.”

In the three decades since the Chevron ruling, courts have grown even more willing to defer to agency expertise and the notion that executive agencies are more politically accountable than the judiciary. Simultaneously, the overall power of the executive branch has been steadily expanding.

“When an agency can overrule a judge on the law, that’s a separation of powers issue I think, maybe even an equal protection issue,” Gorsuch said Tuesday during his hearings. “I defer to experts when it comes to facts, but when it comes to questions of law, [the Administrative Procedures Act] entrusts courts to say what is the law.”

When should it apply?

Defenders of Chevron argue that deference to agencies is necessary because of their institutional expertise. They also argue that, for the government to run efficiently and effectively, agencies can’t be required to get court approval for every interpretation or reinterpretation of a law.

Chevron’s scope has become vast and complex, however, and criticisms of it are equally complex.

To which agency actions should Chevron deference apply, for example? The 1984 Supreme Court case – involving Gorsuch’s mother, Anne, who was the head of the Environmental Protection Agency under President Reagan – concerned how the US Environmental Protection Agency should interpret a “source of pollution” to be regulated by the Clean Air Act. The justices ruled that courts should defer to the EPA interpretation instead of crafting one itself.

But should a court show equal deference to the actions of a low-level IRS employee responding to a minor concern? And does the agency interpretation deserve deference immediately? Or only after it has been in effect after a certain amount of time?

Even the more liberal members of the Supreme Court have these kinds of nuanced concerns, says Professor Young.

“Justice [Stephen] Breyer is generally a strong supporter of agencies but – as a lifelong [Administrative] Law professor (he taught it to me back in 1992) – his views are very complex and there are situations where he would limit agencies significantly,” he adds. “Likewise, Justice Kagan is also an Ad Law professor in her former life and has complicated views. I don’t think this will turn out to be a left-right issue on the Court.”

Partisan lens

However, how people outside the court tend to view it does tend to be influenced by where they sit on the political spectrum.

“People on the right have become skeptical of bureaucrats’ claims to expertise because they perceive bureaucratic power as being exercised in overtly political ways,” wrote Young. “People on the left accuse the right of rejecting ‘science’ outright.”

The Gorsuch hearings have given the Chevron debate the exposure Gorsuch himself may have only once dreamed of, but it has done so through a distinctly partisan lens that belies the complexity of the issue.

“Reexamining Chevron is not about being anti- or pro-regulation. It's about restoring constitutional separation of powers. It's about ensuring that bureaucracy abides by the law no matter what its policy goals,” said Senator Orrin Hatch (R) of Utah. “This deference allows unaccountable bureaucrats to rewrite the law.”

Democrats on the committee have voiced the concern that abandoning Chevron due to fear of the latter could result in the courts disregarding agency expertise.

“Judicial action is often after the fact and backwards-looking, and regulation needs to keep up with the times,” says Sen. Chris Coons (D) of Delaware in an interview with the Monitor. As for the legislature, “unless Congress is going to start passing 5,000-page bills, we’re not going to have the time or competency to do [the technical work of agencies] in statute.”

During Tuesday’s hearing, Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D) of Minnesota quoted Gorsuch’s “behemoth” concurrence before asking if he would vote to overturn Chevron as a Supreme Court justice.

“My job as circuit judge is when I see a problem I tell my bosses about it,” Gorsuch responded. “If I was a justice I would try to approach it with as open a mind as possible.”

Gorsuch’s views may be more specialized than some fear. The 10th Circuit rarely deals with Chevron cases, and the cases it does deal with are arguably far-removed from the big agency rulemakings that the deference was originally meant to apply to.

While it is clear that Gorsuch would be more skeptical of Chevron than many of his colleagues on the high court, “What is far less clear,” wrote Eric Citron for SCOTUSblog, “is whether and how far Gorsuch’s outspoken skepticism extends to the far-more-central cases of agency rulemaking in which *Chevron* developed and in which it continues to play a core role in making federal regulation effective.”

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

Neal Gorsuch Nomination: The Left Distorts Originalism to Smear SCOTUS Nominee

By David French

Why can't United States senators, law-school deans, and journalists bother to understand or fairly characterize the legal doctrines they so vigorously oppose? This morning, Senator Dianne Feinstein — fresh from lecturing Neil Gorsuch on the novel constitutional concept of "super precedent" — purported to attack Judge Gorsuch's legal philosophy by reading a question from a law-school dean:

You are a self-professed originalist in your approach to constitutional interpretation. For example, you wrote, and I quote, "Judges should instead strive, if humanly and so imperfectly to imply the law as it is, focusing backward, not forward, and looking to text, structure, and history to decide what a reasonable reader at the time of the events in question would have understood the law to be." Now, do you agree with Justice Scalia's statements that originalism means that there is no protection for women or gays and lesbians under the equal-protection law because this was not the intent or the understanding of those who drafted the 14th Amendment in 1868?

Note what happened here. Feinstein's dean went straight from a quote to a straw man, fundamentally mischaracterizing Scalia and originalist jurisprudence in one consequential sentence. First, Scalia's consistent position wasn't that the equal-protection clause offered "no protection" to women or gays, but rather that it did not offer special or extraordinary protection. For example, here he was dissenting in *Romer v. Evans*, a decision that struck down a Colorado constitutional amendment prohibiting local governments from outlawing discrimination based on sexual orientation:

The only denial of equal treatment it contends homosexuals have suffered is this: They may not obtain *preferential* treatment without amending the state constitution. That is to say, the principle underlying the Court's opinion is that one who is accorded equal treatment under the laws, but cannot as readily as others obtain *preferential* treatment under the laws, has been denied equal protection of the laws.

And second, when discussing "originalism," for the vast majority of originalists, the key isn't "original intent" but rather a concept called "original public meaning." Once again, here's Scalia dissenting from an overreaching majority — this time in *U.S. v. Virginia*, a case requiring a public all-male military academy to open its doors to female cadets:

The Citadel has existed as a state funded school of South Carolina since 1842. And all the federal military colleges — West Point, the Naval Academy at Annapolis, and even the Air Force Academy, which was not established until 1954 — admitted only males for most of their history. Their admission of women in 1976 (upon which the Court today relies), came not by court decree, but because the people, through their elected representatives, decreed a change. . . . In other words, the tradition of having government funded military schools for men is as well rooted in the traditions of this country as the tradition of sending only men into military combat. The people may decide to change the one tradition, like the other, through democratic processes; but the assertion that either tradition has been unconstitutional through the centuries is not law, but politics smuggled into law.

In other words, when the equal-protection clause was enacted, what were the words understood to *mean*? Were they understood to sweep away, say, restrictions on women in combat? Were they understood to mean that legislatures couldn't enact laws that prohibit certain sexual practices? Drafters create a text, and that text has an original, understood meaning. That, in a nutshell is what "originalism" means. Or, if you prefer a master class from a far more esteemed source, here is Judge Gorsuch's response to Senator Feinstein:

If you don't have two minutes to watch, the core of his explanation is this:

It would be a mistake to suggest that originalism turns on the secret intentions of the drafters of the language of the law. [The] point of originalism, textualism, whatever label you want to put on it — what a good judge always strives to do and what we all do — is [to] understand what the words on the page mean, not import words that come from us. . . . It matters not that some of the drafters of the 14th Amendment were racists, because they were, or sexists, because they were. The law they drafted promises equal protection of the laws. That's what they wrote. And those — the original meaning of those words, John Marshall Harlan captured in his dissent in [*Plessy v. Ferguson*], that equal protection of the laws does not mean separate in advancing one particular race or gender. It means equal.

The essence of originalism is answering this core question: What do the words on the page mean? It is not about making them mean what the judge wants them to mean. It is not about twisting, expanding, or redefining them to adjust their meaning. And to determine what the words mean, especially if the meaning is controversial, we must inquire into the original understanding of that meaning.

Here's a dirty little secret of the federal bench: This is how the vast majority of cases are decided, regardless of the judge's ideology. Indeed, in court opinion after court opinion you'll find even the most liberal jurists referring back to the passage of the legislation at issue to understand its meaning.

This standard practice breaks down, however, at the cutting edge of left-wing ideology — especially as it pertains to the sexual revolution. Feinstein's very next response to Gorsuch gave the game away. Rather than address what the words of the 14th Amendment are supposed to mean, she stampeded straight to her favored legal outcome, abortion rights, and talked about how she heard that women in college used to "pass the plate" to raise money to send friends to Mexico for abortions. This, of course, has *nothing* to do with the meaning of the words in the Constitution.

The lesson from the legal Left — a lesson I was very clearly taught by multiple professors in law school — is that when a case is of sufficiently critical social importance, standard rules of legal interpretation give way to the greater demands of social justice. Here's how one judge put it to me in his chambers: "You should always know the law, and you should always know what's right. Do what's right." This would be an appealing notion if judges possessed godlike powers of judgment, but they don't; they're flawed like every other human. So it's an appalling abuse of power.

To smear Neil Gorsuch, the Left has created and attacked a straw man. Judge Gorsuch does not believe for example, that the equal-protection clause provides "no protection" to any class or category of American. Like Justice Scalia, one of his mentors, knew, he knows that all citizens are entitled to the considerable and invaluable protections outlined in the words of the 14th Amendment itself. If the Left wants to enhance or diminish those protections — or to create new rights and privileges entirely — it should win elections and pass laws, rather than looking to the court to pervert the Constitution.

The Washington Post

Opinion | Democrats should make a deal on Gorsuch

The Editorial Board

SENATE MAJORITY Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) chastised Democrats on Tuesday for threatening to block Judge Neil Gorsuch's nomination to the Supreme Court. "If Judge Gorsuch can't achieve 60 votes in the Senate, could any judge appointed by a Republican president be approved with 60 or more votes in the Senate?"

Well, that is rich. Democrats said the same sorts of things about Merrick Garland, the judge President Barack Obama nominated more than a year ago, whom Mr. McConnell blocked in a cynical power play. In fact, Democrats had more reason to complain: More than Mr. Gorsuch, whom conservative activist groups handpicked, the moderate Mr. Garland was a consensus nominee. Of all the people to take Democrats to task, Mr. McConnell has the least standing.

Nevertheless, the national interest requires that Democrats judge Mr. Gorsuch "on the merits," as Sen. Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.) said at this week's confirmation hearings. Those merits include top-flight academic credentials, a decade on the federal appeals bench, a "well-qualified" rating from the American Bar Association and the support of some key Obama administration legal officials. In his hearings, Mr. Gorsuch defended judicial independence, went as far as he could in criticizing President Trump's bullying of federal judges, and expressed reverence for legal precedent.

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Mr. Gorsuch answers were far from perfect. He was overcautious in discussing his legal thinking during his hearings. He said less than previous nominees on long-established precedents, raising questions about why. Though he defended the "originalist" approach, holding that the law should be read as it was understood when written, he said too little about what happens when the original meaning was in dispute at the time or is debatable now. Despite its adherents' pretensions, originalism often provides inadequate guidance, and some originalists have used the approach as pretext to embrace conclusions at least as arbitrary and ideological as those they criticize. Moreover, though he would deny he sent any such message, Mr. Gorsuch's past writing signaled skepticism of some important existing precedent.

We are likely to disagree with Mr. Gorsuch on a variety of major legal questions. That is different from saying he is unfit to serve. He deserves the deference due any presidential nominee. Senate Democrats are nevertheless poised to demand that Mr. Gorsuch garner 60 votes for confirmation, rather than a simple majority, a stand they could seek to enforce by filibustering a motion to confirm the nominee.

The resulting standoff could end in three ways. First, a cloture vote could attract sufficient Democratic votes to reach the 60-vote threshold to stop a filibuster, which is unlikely. Second, Mr. McConnell could move to eliminate the filibuster on Supreme Court nominees, which would be deeply unwise and injure both parties in the long term. Third, the parties could strike a deal that would preserve the filibuster for the minority party in the case of future nominees while providing for an up-or-down vote on Mr. Gorsuch's confirmation. That, not deepening the politicization of the judiciary, is the best path forward.

The Washington Post

Opinion | Gorsuch's big fat lie

With a shrewdly calculated innocence, Judge Neil Gorsuch told a big fat lie at his confirmation hearing on Tuesday. Because it was a lie everyone expected, nobody called it that.

"There's no such thing as a Republican judge or a Democratic judge," Gorsuch said.

Gorsuch, the amiable veteran of many Republican campaigns, is well-placed to know how serious a fib that was. As Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) noted, President Trump's nominee for Merrick Garland's Supreme Court seat actually received a citation for helping win confirmation for Republican-appointed judges.

We now have an ideological judiciary. To pretend otherwise is naive and also recklessly irresponsible because it tries to wish away the real stakes in confirmation battles.

The best scholarship shows an increasingly tight fit between the party of the appointing president and how a judge rules. It's a point made in "The Behavior of Federal Judges ," by Lee Epstein, William Landes and Judge Richard Posner, and also in research by Neal Devins and Lawrence Baum.

Judge Neil Gorsuch continued with his third day of Supreme Court nomination hearings on March 22, answering broad questions but rankling Democrats with his refusal to state specifics. Here are the highlights from the day. Judge Neil Gorsuch continued with his third day of Supreme Court nomination hearings on March 22, answering broad questions but refusing to state specifics. (Video: Jenny Starrs/Photo: Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post)

As Devins and Baum write, party polarization now affects the behavior of judges, "reducing the likelihood that they will stray from the ideological positions that brought them to the Court in the first place."

Face it: If partisanship and ideology were not central to Supreme Court nominations, Gorsuch would be looking at more years in his beloved Colorado. Notice that I referred to the Supreme Court seat as belonging to Garland, the chief judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, nominated by President Barack Obama to replace the late Antonin Scalia. In an appalling act of extreme partisanship, the Republican-led Senate would not even give Garland a hearing.

It's frustrating that so many minimize opposition to Gorsuch as merely the payback for Garland the Democratic base yearns for. This content-free way of casting the debate misses what's really going on: Thanks to aggressive conservative jurisprudence, we have a Supreme Court that, on so many issues, continues to push the country to the right, no matter which party controls Congress or the White House.

The reason Republicans wouldn't even let the moderately liberal Garland make his case is that conservatives who regularly denounce "liberal judicial activism" now count on control of the Supreme Court to get results they could never achieve through the democratically elected branches of government.

They could not gut the Voting Rights Act in Congress. So Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr.'s court did it for them. They could never have undone a century's worth of legislation limiting big money's influence on politics. So the *Citizens United* decision did it for them.

And it's true, as Franken and other Democratic senators noted, that Gorsuch has done what economic conservatives count on the judges they push onto the courts to do: He regularly sides with corporations over workers and consumers. We can't know exactly where the millions of dollars of dark money fueling pro-Gorsuch ad campaigns come from, but we have a right to guess.

You don't have to believe the liberals on Gorsuch's record. Last month, a report by the Orrick law firm concluded: "After reviewing Judge Gorsuch's background and record of judicial opinions, it appears that the prior relatively pro-business conservative trajectory of the Supreme Court will now be restored."

This is the whole point, and GOP senators couldn't allow Garland to get in the way of *that*. Better to have Gorsuch settle the court's current 4-4 tie.

Senate Democratic leader Charles E. Schumer (N.Y.) tried to slow the Gorsuch train by noting that if a Democratic president were under investigation by the FBI, as Trump's campaign is, Republicans would be "howling at the moon about filling a Supreme Court seat in such circumstances."

Republicans, of course, just shrugged off Schumer's accurate rendition of their hypocrisy. The nominee himself flicked away White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus's declaration to the Conservative Political Action Conference that Gorsuch "represents the type of judge that has the vision of Donald Trump and it fulfills the promise that he made to all of you."

Bless Priebus for telling the truth and making clear that uncompromising resistance to Gorsuch is not primarily about payback or thrilling the base. The point is to make clear that conservatives, including Trump, want the court to sweep aside decades of jurisprudence that gave Congress broad authority to legislate civil rights and social reform, along with environmental, worker and consumer protections. Gorsuch good-naturedly evaded nearly every substantive question he was asked because he could not acknowledge that this is why he was there.

Bloomberg

What Trump's SEC Pick Needs to Explain

The Editors

When Donald Trump announced that he would nominate Wall Street lawyer Jay Clayton to lead the Securities and Exchange Commission, he cited the need to "undo many regulations which have stifled investment in American business." At Clayton's confirmation hearing this week, senators should ask exactly what that means.

Scrutiny of Clayton has so far focused on his close ties to the industry he would oversee. He has represented large financial institutions facing U.S. investigations, and he worked on big investment deals for Goldman Sachs and Barclays Capital. His wife is a wealth manager at Goldman Sachs. Possible conflicts of interest matter -- but Clayton's thinking on regulation and oversight of capital markets needs to be examined, too.

The SEC's rulemaking -- much of it mandated by the 2010 Dodd-Frank Act -- has drawn criticism for doing too much and for doing too little. Some say its "risk retention" rule (which requires firms that repackage and sell loans to keep some of their own product) obstructs the flow of credit. Others complain that burdensome disclosure requirements prevent companies from offering their shares to the public. Traders say that the SEC's failure to complete rules on credit derivatives is killing part of the market.

The agency's leader will have the power to harden or soften the rules, and will decide how strictly to enforce them. So which of these regulations does Clayton see as the biggest obstacles to investment?

The SEC is also at the center of efforts to shed more light on markets, which would enable regulators to know what's going on next time there's a flash crash or some other crisis. It's been working for more than six years to get market participants to build a system for recording all activity in stocks and options. Meanwhile it's trying, along with other agencies, to put together the real-time derivatives data needed to spot dangerous concentrations of risk.

Without the SEC's active support, such initiatives may founder. So does Clayton see the transparency they promise as important for investor confidence in U.S. markets?

Finally, the SEC is supposed to identify and punish misbehavior, to ensure that investors are treated as fairly as possible. Under former chair Mary Jo White, it cracked down in some new areas -- exposing, for example, the various ways in which private investment-fund managers divert money to themselves. It also came under fire, both for failing to hold individuals accountable and for steering too many cases to its in-house administrative proceedings, where defendants have fewer protections than they would in a real court.

Is Clayton satisfied with the aggressiveness and aim of the SEC's enforcement actions? If not, what would he change?

Clayton's insider status needn't be disqualifying. As others, such as Goldman Sachs alumnus Gary Gensler, have demonstrated, it can be an advantage. Yet Clayton's views on how best to maintain U.S. markets' reputation for dynamism and reliability remain unknown. It's a mystery that the Senate must address.