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<b>FRANCE – EUROPE</b> .....	<b>2</b>
France's Far Right, Once Known for Anti-Semitism, Courts Jews (UNE) .....	2
Le Pen, Macron and Fillon Share Crowded Stage With French Also-Rans .....	4
Fillon Catches Up in French Poll as He Vows Revenge on Enemies.....	4

CBS : Car factory worker steals the spotlight at French election debate.....	5
Newsweek : The race to be French president narrows as Emmanuel Macron ties with Marine Le Pen .....	5
Newsweek : France has become a 'university for jihadists,' Marine Le Pen claims during second presidential debate.....	6
Is French presidential hopeful Macron the Clinton to Le Pen's Trump? Or is he actually an Obama? .....	6

Business Insider : 'When the time comes, I will go after them': François Fillon threatens those who smeared his campaign ..... 7  
 French candidate Fillon lashes out over corruption leaks ..... 7  
 The Most Feared Newspaper in France Is Full of Fiction, Scandal, and Puns ..... 8  
 French soldier killed in operation on extremists in Mali 8  
 Kansas City Star : French aerobatic pilots jet into Kansas City for World War I 'thank you' ..... 8  
 Air and Space Magazine : The French Are Coming!..... 9  
 The Professor and the Jihadi (online) ..... 9  
 How do you stop fake news? In Germany, with a law. 13  
 Kirchik : Germans need to recognize that the future of the free world depends on their election ..... 14  
 European Parliament Votes to Toughen Stance on Brexit ..... 15

**INTERNATIONAL..... 15**

Trump Pivots on Syria Policy After Suspected Chemical Attack (UNE)..... 15  
 Trump's View of Syria and Assad Altered After 'Unacceptable' Chemical Attack (UNE) ..... 16  
 Trump condemns Syria chemical attack and suggests he will act (UNE)..... 17  
 Death Toll in Suspected Syria Gas Attack Rises ..... 18  
 Images From Suspected Syrian Chemical Weapons Attack Prompt Calls for Action ..... 19  
 Nikki Haley Says U.S. May 'Take Our Own Action' on Syrian Chemical Attack ..... 20  
 Russia to Trump: Put Up or Shut Up on Syria and Bashar Assad..... 20  
 Editorial : Syria is not a black hole for international law..... 20  
 Wolfowitz : For Syria, Words Won't Be Enough..... 21  
 Tobin : Trump & Syria -- Bashar Assad's ISIS Fight May Be Reason Trump Is Cautious..... 21  
 Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Tested by Syria, North Korea Crises (UNE)..... 22  
 Trump and his 'America First' philosophy face first moral quandary in Syria (UNE)..... 23  
 U.S.-China Trade Tensions Loom Over Trump-Xi Summit..... 24

Trump lacks key players for meeting with Chinese leader ..... 24  
 Trump's Team Has No Idea What It's Doing On China 25  
 China Moves a Step Forward in Its Quest for Food Security ..... 27  
 Editorial : What Trump should tell America's most important rival..... 28  
 Editorial : President Trump's Most Important Meeting 28  
 Atkinson : How Trump can stop China from eating our lunch..... 29  
 Bolton : A Resolute Message for China..... 29  
 Editorial : Promote America's values ..... 30  
 Trump Gives Military New Freedom. But With That Comes Danger..... 31

**ETATS-UNIS..... 32**

Homeland Security Secretary Doesn't See Building a Wall Along U.S.-Mexico Border ..... 32  
 Foreign Policy : Can Trump Learn?..... 32  
 Steve Bannon Removed From National Security Council With Trump's Signoff ..... 33  
 Bannon removed from security council as McMaster asserts control (UNE)..... 34  
 Mega-donor urged Bannon not to resign..... 35  
 Trump Removes Stephen Bannon From National Security Council Post (UNE) ..... 36  
 Senate Is Running Out of Compromises to Avoid 'Nuclear Option' in Gorsuch Vote ..... 37  
 Editorial : Don't 'nuke' the Senate ..... 38  
 Koger : End the filibuster farce: Opposing view..... 39  
 E.J. Dionne Jr : The Gorsuch filibuster is about far more than payback ..... 39  
 Editorial : Late Hit on Neil Gorsuch ..... 39  
 White House Takes Lead Role on Tax Plan ..... 40  
 The Flawed Case Against Pricing Carbon ..... 41  
 Henninger : The Trump Tweets ..... 41  
 Rove : A Presidential Honeymoon From Hell ..... 42  
 Editorial : The Man Who Knows Too Much ..... 43  
 Wardman : Learning to Love the Nuclear Option..... 43  
 Kazin : Should America Have Entered World War I? .. 43  
 Max Boot : Was Russia election hack an act of war? ... 44

**FRANCE – EUROPE**



**France's Far Right, Once Known for Anti-Semitism, Courts Jews (UNE)**

Amanda Taub  
 PARIS — For years, France's far-right National Front was synonymous with anti-

Semitism. Its founder, Jean Marie Le Pen, was notorious for anti-Semitic outbursts — including a

comment that the Holocaust was just a detail of history.

But since Mr. Le Pen's daughter Marine took over the party's

leadership in 2011, the National Front has attempted a remarkable about-face: Today, the party

positions itself as a champion of French Jews.

Although Ms. Le Pen, one of the front-runners in the coming presidential election, still alludes to anti-Semitic stereotypes on the campaign trail, she now promises that her party will be the protector of French Jews.

It is a surprising twist that has resonated with some French Jews who feel abandoned by what they see as the government's tepid response to the anti-Semitic violence that has plagued the country for years.

But experts say the National Front's shift may be intended more as a message to non-Jewish voters looking for moral cover in supporting a party that vilifies their primary sources of fear and anger: Muslims and immigrants.

The National Front has long been widely viewed in France as toxic, but by declaring itself a shield for French Jews, it may have found an effective way to allow many voters to justify breaking a taboo. That reflects a concept known as "moral license." Framing the party as a champion of one minority enables voters to justify supporting its agenda in suppressing another.

The result is not a more racially tolerant National Front, but rather a party that has found nearly unprecedented success in persuading mainstream voters — many of whom may be quietly sympathetic to its anti-immigrant agenda — to embrace far-right ideas once considered off-limits.

"They are instrumentalizing us," said Jonathan Arfi, vice president of the Council of Jewish Institutions in France, which goes by the French acronym CRIF. "We are a small minority," he said, "but we have an important symbolic role to play."

### Becoming a 'Normal' Party

Mr. Arfi can point to the precise month when the new age of anti-Semitism began in France: September 2000, the beginning of the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising. That brought about attacks on Jews in France, particularly those who lived in poorer neighborhoods on the outskirts of large cities — areas that had gradually become dominated by Muslim immigrants from North Africa and their families. Since then, anti-Semitic violence has remained high.

But the French government and civil society were slow to respond to the attacks, Jewish leaders felt. For many years, Mr. Arfi said, politicians were in denial about the attacks, preferring to see them as an "imported conflict" rather than as

resurgent French anti-Semitism, although he was careful to note that the response had improved in recent years.

"It was uncomfortable for them to see that in France, the country of human rights, you had anti-Semitism coming up again," said Simone Rodan-Benzaquen, the director of the American Jewish Committee's advocacy in Europe.

That the attacks came from immigrant and Islamist communities, Ms. Rodan-Benzaquen said, deepened that discomfort: "It requires admitting that a population that suffers racism also harbors it."

The situation created an opportunity for the National Front. The anti-Semitic attacks tracked with its narrative about the dangers of Muslim immigration: Mainstream parties had allowed the Islamist threat to grow by refusing to admit it was happening, and only the National Front could undertake the harsh measures needed to solve the problem.

It was also a way for the National Front to delegitimize charges of racism against Muslims, Mr. Arfi said. "They are trying to say 'these people are committing anti-Semitic attacks, so they cannot be victims of anything.'"

Security outside a Jewish school in Paris in 2015. Anti-Semitic violence has been high in the city. Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

### Reading 'Between the Lines'

In 2014, Ms. Le Pen summarized her message to France's Jews in an interview with the French magazine *Valeurs Actuelles*. Her party, she argued, "is without a doubt the best shield to protect you against the one true enemy, Islamic fundamentalism."

In early 2016, the party began to publicize the support it had received from a new group, the Union of French Jewish Patriots. It is not legally affiliated with the National Front, but was founded by Michel Thooris, a National Front city councilor in Carros and a member of the party's central committee.

Mr. Thooris said that he had made his peace with the National Front's legacy of anti-Semitism. "There are anti-Semitic personalities in the party," he said, "but it happens in every political party."

He had decided to support the party, Mr. Thooris said, because he believed it would offer protection from anti-Semitic violence. "It's the only political party that actually offers to fight against insecurity, the rise of radical Islamism," he said.

Still, no mainstream Jewish organization in France has endorsed the National Front, whose support among Jewish voters remains relatively low. But the group's message may be about more than recruiting Jewish voters.

"By saying they will protect the Jews against anti-Semitism, people understand that they mean they will be tough with the Muslims," Mr. Arfi said. "Everything is between the lines."

This message enabled Ms. Le Pen to retain the loyalty of the party's base, which remains drawn to anti-Semitism, said Cécile Alduy, a Stanford University professor who studies the discourse of the French far right and has written a book about Ms. Le Pen's speeches and language.

When Ms. Le Pen attacks "international finance" or "globalized money," she is referring to common tropes of anti-Semitism, Ms. Alduy said. "She doesn't need to say anything against the Jewish community," she said. "Her rhetoric still nourishes and revitalizes these stereotypes."

"It's the best of both worlds in a way for the National Front," Ms. Alduy said. "They don't have to play dirty because their audience understands them between the lines."

### A 'Moral License'

A more important reason for the National Front's new stance on Jews may be its desire to attract mainstream voters who would otherwise consider it taboo to support the party.

To understand how this works, experts say, it helps to think about an unexpected analogue: the way people behave when they are trying to lose weight.

People on diets will say things like "Well, I was good yesterday, so I can cheat a little bit today," said Daniel A. Effron, a professor at London Business School who studies the psychology of moral behavior.

Social psychologists call that a licensing strategy, meaning that once people convince themselves they are "good," they can bend the rules in the future without losing that virtuous status.

It turns out that people employ the same kind of licensing strategy in political decisions.

In 2008, Mr. Effron, with his colleagues Jessica S. Cameron and Benoit Monin, recruited subjects who had voted for Barack Obama and asked them to consider a hypothetical: Imagine, they said, that you are a small-town police chief

who needs to hire a new officer for a department plagued by racial tensions. Should you hire the white candidate or the black one?

There was a twist. Half of the participants were first asked whom they supported in the presidential election, effectively getting a reminder — and an opportunity to tell the research team — that they had voted for Mr. Obama over Senator John McCain.

People in that group were more likely to say that the police chief should hire the white officer than people who hadn't been reminded of their electoral choice.

Remembering a vote for a black presidential candidate was the racial equivalent of a dieter remembering a day of salads. It made people feel as if they had "nonprejudiced credentials," Mr. Effron said, and could therefore indulge their unspoken desire to privilege the hypothetical white candidate.

### Giving Permission

Ms. Le Pen's emphasis on defending Jews — while retaining the party's core message of fear and anger — may have given potential supporters the same kind of "nonprejudiced credentials" that voting for Mr. Obama gave Mr. Effron's study subjects.

This may have helped to overcome one of the European far right's greatest problems: not that its message is unappealing — evidence suggests anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant attitudes are quite prevalent — but that voters feel uncomfortable openly embracing that message.

By recasting the National Front as a vote in defense of Jews rather than a vote to suppress Muslim immigrants, Ms. Le Pen is giving mainstream voters a way to embrace racial supremacist politics without feeling racist.

In order to convince the general public that times have changed and that the National Front is no longer taboo, Ms. Rodan-Benzaquen joked that the party needs "the kosher stamp."

In the last few years, the party has won more support than nearly any other far-right movement in Western Europe. Ms. Le Pen is tied for first in the presidential election polls, though she is projected to lose in a second-round runoff. And she is coming off remarkable success in the 2015 regional elections, in which National Front candidates won nearly a third of the votes nationwide.

Nicolas Bay, the party's general secretary, was up front about why

he visited Israel last January. One goal of the trip, he said, was to “erase every ambiguity about the accusations of anti-Semitism against our party” by emphasizing its

“special attentions for Jewish people.”

I asked Mr. Thooris, the National Front central committee member who founded the Union of French

Jewish Patriots, about the moral license theory.

Did he think that the party's moral credentialing on Jewish matters — including the public support of

groups like his — had helped dispel the broader public taboo against voting for the National Front?

“Yes,” he replied. “It is undeniable.”

**The  
New York  
Times**

## Le Pen, Macron and Fillon Share Crowded Stage With French Also-Rans

Alissa J. Rubin

PARIS — On Tuesday night, France got a good, long look at its choices in the coming presidential election. All 11 of them.

For nearly four hours, the leading contenders shared a debate stage with several obscure names on the April 23 ballot, most of whom are expected to get less than 1 percent of the vote. French election rules allow any candidate backed by 500 elected officials to run for president, which usually results in a crowded field (though in practice, only three or four are serious contenders). On Tuesday night, they all had equal time, although the debate moderators struggled to have them stick to it.

For Philippe Poutou, a far-left candidate who works in a Ford factory and wants to make it impossible to fire people, the debate was a rare opportunity to directly confront well-known figures like François Fillon and Marine Le Pen, who are expected to be among the top three vote-getters nationwide.

Mr. Poutou said of Mr. Fillon that “the more one digs, the more one senses the corruption,” referring to allegations that Mr. Fillon, a center-right candidate, had given his wife and two of his children dubious jobs as parliamentary aides. Mr. Fillon muttered at one point that he would take Mr. Poutou to court.

Mr. Poutou said Ms. Le Pen had also “pinched” from the public purse, referring to allegations that funds given to her far-right National Front for use at the European Parliament

were diverted for party expenses. Ms. Le Pen bristled at such questions from Mr. Poutou and other candidates, asking at one point whether she was being interrogated.

The debate was perhaps the only chance for voters to listen to the six minor candidates as well as the five leading contenders. Pool photo by Lionel Bonaventure

The candidates jabbed, shouted and talked over one another, competing for the attention of the roughly 35 percent of voters who polls indicate have yet to make up their minds. The fringe candidates included two leftists who talked of increasing wages and protecting jobs; two on the right who wanted France to withdraw from the European Union; and a centrist, Jean Lassalle, who once went on a hunger strike to persuade a business not to leave his region in southwestern France. (He lasted 39 days before he was hospitalized; the business stayed.)

But the leading candidates received the most scrutiny, especially Ms. Le Pen and the centrist Emmanuel Macron, who are currently expected to score highest in the first round of voting and face each other in the likely May 7 runoff. Ms. Le Pen was openly jostling with Mr. Macron, who recent polls indicate is likely to win a second round, as the front-runner.

Ms. Le Pen, who has campaigned against Islam, open borders and the European Union, used the presence of obscure far-right candidates at the debate to present herself as a moderate by comparison. She berated one opponent, François

Asselineau, for proposing what she called a “brutal” exit from the European Union, emphasizing that she would defer to the French people's decision in a referendum after negotiations with the E.U.

Ms. Le Pen also focused on what she called French traditions, saying the Constitution should be amended to give the people the right to defend their heritage. Asked to elaborate, she referred to the annual Christmas disputes in some towns over whether they could put up a Nativity scene in a town hall.

“But 60 percent of the French have no religion,” the leftist candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon shot back. “Give us a break about religion!”

Marine Le Pen, of the far-right National Front, used the debate to moderate the tone of some of her proposals. Pool photo by Lionel Bonaventure

Mr. Mélenchon is running almost even with Mr. Fillon, a former prime minister, for third place in the polls, and he clearly saw the debate as a chance to gain ground.

While the polls have been fairly consistent, the surprise results last year of Britain's vote to leave the European Union and the American presidential election have nevertheless cast uncertainty over the French race. Underlining it are questions about the number of voters who may abstain altogether. A low turnout would be expected to benefit Ms. Le Pen, whose supporters are seen as more highly motivated.

Another unusual factor is that neither of the two top candidates comes from a mainstream party. Ms. Le Pen's National Front has two representatives in the lower house of Parliament; Mr. Macron's party, created last year, has none. This has begun to be a major topic among French political analysts, who question whether either could muster the support in Parliament to enact their programs as president.

Mr. Macron, the most full-throated defender of the European Union on the dais on Tuesday, argued that Ms. Le Pen was preparing for “economic war” with France's neighbors. Ms. Le Pen in turn accused him of reverting to “old fossils” of 50 years ago by pushing the European Union as a guarantor of peace.

Mr. Macron replied with sharply critical words about her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the founder of the National Front, whose anti-Semitic image Ms. Le Pen has tried to shake with some success. “You are repeating the lies that we've heard for 40 years and that we heard from the mouth of your father,” Mr. Macron said.

Snap polls after the debate indicated that viewers found Mr. Macron and Mr. Mélenchon most convincing, followed by Ms. Le Pen and Mr. Fillon. That seemed to be bad news for Benoît Hamon, the Socialist candidate, who trails those four in the polls and was counting on a strong debate performance to jump-start his candidacy.

**Bloomberg**

## Fillon Catches Up in French Poll as He Vows Revenge on Enemies

6 avril 2017 à 06:18 UTC-4

- Republicans' candidate threatens legal action over revelations
- Rejects calls for military action over Assad chemical use

Francois Fillon.

Photographer: Christophe Morin/Bloomberg

French presidential candidate Francois Fillon made up some

ground in the first poll taken since Tuesday night's television debate as he promised to go after those he holds responsible for legal woes that have roiled his campaign.

Support for the Republican nominee rose one percentage point to 19 percent in Thursday's weekly Elabe poll of first-round voting intentions, while lower support for Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen brought him closer to a slot in the May 7 runoff than at any time since mid-February.

QuickTake Fillon Points to a Conspiracy

Fillon took aim at Le Pen and Macron on France Inter radio Thursday, though he saved his most searing attacks for those he says have conspired with prosecutors to have him charged with embezzlement in the middle of the election race.

“This affair was manufactured, and I will prove it: I have the dates, the days, the people who revealed the documents,” Fillon said. “When the moment comes, I will unmask them. It's true there have been days when I've slept badly. But I assure you that those who created this affair won't sleep well either.”

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Fillon had been the front-runner to become France's next president until he was put under investigation in January after a newspaper revealed that family members hired as his parliamentary aides may not have done any actual work. The affair sent him skidding in the polls ahead of the first round of voting on April 23. In half a century of direct presidential elections, his center-right movement has never been eliminated before the runoff.

## 'Regaining Traction'

Macron and Le Pen were both at 23.5 percent in the Elabe poll of 995 voters conducted April 5, 4.5 points ahead of Fillon. Far-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon jumped two points to 17 percent, and Socialist Benoit Hamon, another establishment candidate being shunned by voters, slipped one point to 9 percent.

The poll suggests that both Fillon and Macron would defeat Le Pen in the second round, though Macron would win by 24 percentage points and Fillon by 14.

Le Pen Faces 'Frexit' Fire in Presidential Debate

"Francois Fillon is regaining traction among center-right voters by

focusing his campaign on his ambitious reform program and dismissing Macron as a front for the outgoing administration," Charles Lichfield, a political analyst at Eurasia Group in London, said in a research note.

In Tuesday's debate, Fillon reacted angrily when other candidates mentioned his legal woes. In the radio interview, he repeated that he believes President Francois Hollande is behind the criminal probe. Government spokesman Stephane Le Foll responded on France Info that Fillon's comments were "defamatory" and that the justice system is independent.

## Russia Policy

Fillon also returned to calling for closer ties with Russia and warned

against getting militarily involved in Syria, even after this week's apparent use of chemical weapons by the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

"I refuse to go toward war," he said. "Confrontation with Russia makes no sense, I want us to negotiate. The solution is to talk with the Russians, the Iranians, and the Turks to get rid of Bashar al-Assad."

He also said he favors a Russian-European security conference that could even discuss changing some borders. Asked about Russia's annexation of the Russian-speaking Ukrainian region of Crimea, he said "I believe in the right of people to choose for themselves."

Fillon called for an end to European sanctions aimed at pressuring Russia to stop interfering in Ukraine.

"I will do everything to lift the sanctions against Russia, which have achieved nothing except to ruin French farmers," he told France Inter.

Policy toward Russia has been one of the most divisive issues in the French elections, with Fillon, Le Pen, and Melenchon calling for closer ties, and Macron and Hamon arguing for sticking with other European Union nations to keep pressure on Putin. Fillon plans to give a speech last Thursday on his stance toward the EU.

Before it's here, it's on the Bloomberg Terminal.

## CBS : Car factory worker steals the spotlight at French election debate

AP April 5, 2017, 5:33 PM

**PARIS** -- A messy-haired Ford car factory worker in a baggy sweater stole the limelight during France's heated election debate Tuesday night.

The man, Philippe Poutou, was not a member of the audience. He was a candidate from the far-left New Anticapitalist Party, on stage with 10 other candidates just three weeks ahead of the first poll.

Poutou, 50, who took just five weeks leave from his job in Ford's Blanquefort plant in the country's southwest to run for president, created sparks with his fighting rhetoric for the working classes and jabs at the front runners embroiled in corruption scandals.

With support of half a percent in an IFOP poll, he has virtually no chance of winning the presidency in

the two-round election April 23 and May 7.

From left to right, France's presidential candidates Nathalie Arthaud, Marine Le Pen, Benoit Hamon, Jacques Cheminade and Philippe Poutou attend a television debate at French private TV channels BFM TV and CNews, in La Plaine-Saint-Denis, outside Paris, France, April 4, 2017.

AP

Nonetheless, with an unpolished freshness and childlike grin, he accused Republican candidate Francois Fillon, 63, and National Front candidate Marine Le Pen, 48, of sullying the moral character of politics. Both are embroiled in corruption cases -- and both deny wrongdoing.

- Wife of French presidential candidate

faces charges over alleged no-show jobs

Social media went wild on Wednesday with Poutou's stinging attacks -- framing him as Joe Average speaking truth to power.

Le Pen, who claimed to be "persecuted politically," said she is protected by parliamentary immunity as a member of the European Parliament.

"There is no immunity for workers," Poutou fired back.

Fillon has been given preliminary charges for allegedly giving his wife and two children government-funded jobs which they never did. "I didn't make any mistakes... I'm still here and no one will intimidate me."

Poutou retorted: "Since January, it's just been a great campaign ... the more we dig, the more corruption there is, the more cheating there is."

The unionist, who frostily refused to pose in the collective photo of candidates ahead of the debate, has been basking in the unexpected glory in the hours since.

"I believe there is a real disconnection between the political world and the population," Poutou told The Associated Press on Wednesday at a political rally in the Parisian suburb of Montreuil.

"(Politicians) mix everything -- their personal funds and the public funds -- as if everything is allowed for them. Their arrogance is unbearable," he added.

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## Newsweek : The race to be French president narrows as Emmanuel Macron ties with Marine Le Pen

By Mirren Gidda On 4/6/17 at 5:50 AM

Wednesday night saw a marathon French presidential debate between all 11 contenders vying for power.

Throughout the four-hour discussion, candidates repeatedly attacked National Front leader Marine Le Pen for her nationalist agenda, while nationalist right-wing outsider François Asselineau accused her of not being tough enough on the question of EU membership.

The debate came 20 days before France heads to the polls to vote for its next president. Unless one candidate gets more than 50 percent of the vote, a second election will be held on May 7 between the two leading contenders.

Despite the hammering that Le Pen took during the debate, a poll taken by the data analysis company Elabe saw her tied with Macron for the first round of voting. Both candidates have the support of 23.5 percent of the 995 people Elabe surveyed. It is a blow for Macron who has dropped

two points in a week, though Elabe found that in the second round, he would take 62 percent of the vote, and Le Pen 38 percent.

Though Macron and Le Pen have maintained their position as presidential frontrunners, the former conservative prime minister François Fillon netted 19 percent of voters' support for the first round of elections. In mid-March, Fillon—once a favorite to win—saw his support drop to 17.5 percent after French officials announced they were investigating him over misuse of public funds. Fillon allegedly gave

his wife and children fake jobs, paid for with taxpayers money.

There was a victory too for the fiery leftist candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon. An Elabe poll of 1,024 people elected him the most convincing candidate in the debate with 25 percent of the vote. Following him was Macron with 20 percent of public support, Fillon with 15 percent and Le Pen with 11 percent. Despite this, Mélenchon is unlikely to make it to the final round of the presidential race.

# Newsweek : France has become a 'university for jihadists,' Marine Le Pen claims during second presidential debate

By Jason Le Miere On 4/5/17 at 12:19 PM

As insults flew during the second televised debate between the contenders in France's upcoming presidential election, far-right leader Marine Le Pen claimed the country had become a "university for jihadists."

Le Pen, who opinion polls suggest is likely to face a runoff against independent centrist Emmanuel Macron on May 7, has repeatedly railed against what she claims is the threat posed by Islam. The leader of the National Front has called for a dramatic reduction in immigration and on Sunday vowed to "uncompromisingly fight Islamist fundamentalism which seeks to impose its oppressive rules in our country."

France has been subjected to a series of terrorist attacks in the past two years from perpetrators claiming they were motivated by Islamic extremism. After the Paris attacks in November 2015 that led to the deaths of 137 people, Le Pen claimed that "France and the French are no longer safe." She struck a

similar tone following the Bastille Day truck attack in Nice last year that left 86 people dead. Le Pen said the atrocity was "the fault of the state" and urged the government to declare war on extremists to bring about the "total eradication of Islamic fundamentalism."

It was a tone she struck again as all 11 candidates for the French presidency squared off in front of the television cameras Tuesday.

"[France] must get its borders back because a large number of terrorists have slipped in via migrant flows, and some of these are responsible for the Bataclan massacre," she said. "Now, France is a university of jihadists." Marine Le Pen of French National Front (FN) attends a prime-time televised debate for the candidates at French 2017 presidential election in La Plaine Saint-Denis, near Paris, France, April 4, 2017. Lionel Bonaventure/Reuters

That rhetoric brought strong retorts, not least from Macron, whom polls suggest is in a dead heat with Le Pen going into the first round of the election April 23.

"Sorry to tell you this, Madame Le Pen, but you are peddling the same lies that we've heard from your father for 40 years," Macron said during one particularly fiery exchange.

Le Pen took over leadership of the National Front from her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, in 2011 and has sought to soften its tone to make it more appealing to mainstream French voters. Under her leadership, the party has witnessed a surge in popularity, with polls showing she is set to get 25 percent of the vote in the first round, although still likely to lose a runoff to Macron. Candidates pose prior to a prime-time televised debate for the French 2017 presidential election in La Plaine Saint-Denis, near Paris, France, April 4 2017. L to R: Jean-Luc Melenchon of the Parti de Gauche, Francois Fillon of the Republicans party, Jean Lassalle, Nathalie Arthaud of France's extreme-left Lutte Ouvriere party (LO), Marine Le Pen of French National Front (FN), Benoit Hamon of the French Socialist party, Jacques Cheminade, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan of Debout La France group, Emmanuel Macron of the

political movement En Marche ! (Onwards !), Francois Asselineau of UPR party. Lionel Bonaventure/Reuters

Le Pen also faced criticism from both sides on the debate stage for her stated intention of holding a referendum about abandoning the euro and the European Union within six months of becoming president. While extreme right candidates said her position had softened too much on the EU, Macron attacked from the center.

"Nationalism is war," he said. "I know it. I come from a region that is full of graveyards."

In response, Le Pen returned to her core anti-establishment theme, which she hopes will catapult her to victory next month in the footsteps of Britain's vote to leave the EU and the United States' election of Donald Trump.

"You shouldn't pretend to be something new when you are speaking like old fossils that are at least 50 years old," she said.



## Is French presidential hopeful Macron the Clinton to Le Pen's Trump? Or is he actually an Obama?

The Christian Science Monitor

April 5, 2017 Amiens, France—Frederic Chanterelle clearly feels like a loser of globalization.

On a drab day this week outside the Whirlpool offices here, the union leader is seething about the Michigan-based company's decision to close down the appliance factory and relocate to Poland. "Globalization means always more for the strong and less for the weak," he says, as employees who will lose their jobs by next year file out from their morning shift. "We always have to tighten our belts. They don't have a belt."

Welcome to the "rust belt" of France, where blue collar workers, like their American counterparts in Michigan, or Pennsylvania and Ohio, are ripe for the "economic patriotism" of Marine Le Pen, the anti-EU, anti-immigrant candidate out front in French presidential elections.

Even in France, Western elections are being viewed through the prism of the 2016 race in America between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. And if Ms. Le Pen, buoyed by the despair and frustration of

those left behind, is the Mr. Trump of the French election, the role of the globalist Mrs. Clinton falls to her chief rival, Emmanuel Macron, who hails from this former industrial city. Indeed, in the second presidential debate held last night, he stood out among his opponents by declaring outright that the European project is in his "heart."

Following that logic, Mr. Macron will easily lose the French rust belt, just as Hillary Clinton did in the US. But unlike Clinton, he is positioning himself as an agent of change: one who, his supporters say, takes the best of the right and the left to boost all of France. They say the better American comparison is to the "Yes We Can" message that resonated during President Barack Obama's 2008 campaign.

But can the young Macron, never elected to office before, win over a weary France with a message of hope?

### Macron's offering

Macron was born in Amiens, but moved to Paris and joined the elite education circuit. He reportedly made a small fortune working at

Rothschild Bank before Socialist President François Hollande poached him to become economy minister. But in office, Macron – who is often described as having an Anglo-Saxon spirit, putting emphasis on entrepreneurship – angered the left-wing branch of the party with a reformist agenda, including loosening bans on Sunday store hours and criticizing France's infamous 35-hour workweek.

As a candidate today, Macron is touting himself as post-ideological, with a platform that draws from the left and from the right. He wants more welfare for the worst-off, but he also wants to reduce public spending and keep France's budget deficit under 3 percent, as mandated by the European Union. He wants to make it easier to start a business and says he can push unemployment from 10 percent, where it has hovered throughout President Hollande's term, down to 7 percent.

But at this factory, whose closure is planned for June 2018, his message is hard to hear. Cecile Deliprou, a mechanical engineer and union representative for the white-collar workforce at Whirlpool, is angry

about injustice: dislocation is only about maximizing profits, she says. "It will be hard. The medium seniority in the factory is up to 25 years. That means we have spent in this factory more than half our working life. That means we have given to Whirlpool the best half of our working life."

Le Pen is polling her highest in former industrial areas like these. A Cevipof/Ipsos poll for France 3 last month showed 35 percent in this region, Hauts-de-France, will vote for Le Pen in the first round of the election on April 23, compared to 27 percent nationally. Macron pulls in 24 percent in the region, and just below 26 percent nationally.

Ms. Deliprou won't say who she is voting for. But she doesn't believe in a simplistic message, and says no candidate is offering a plausible way forward. "It's like Trump. It's only promises. If you want to believe it, OK, that's your choice to believe. But it's not realistic."

In the center of Amiens, "En Marche" volunteers are standing outside a department store handing out fliers. Olivier Williame, a teacher who volunteers for the campaign,

says Macron's message is more complicated than Le Pen's. But he is trying to communicate that blue collar workers would be worse off if Le Pen were successful in taking France out of the EU or the eurozone. In contrast, he says Macron's platform puts emphasis on retraining industrial workers.

"Macron thinks about globalization with a realistic view," Mr. Williams says. "He says we should try to accompany the employees losing the jobs, rather than trying to save absolutely these jobs when the plants are closing."

Macron's movement has faced much criticism for being out of touch with the rust belt, just like Clinton's was. Lex Paulson, a professor at SciencesPo who is a former organizer with the Obama campaign and now volunteers with Macron's "En Marche" movement, disagrees. He says he sees in Macron's movement more in common with that of Obama, including drawing huge numbers of volunteers who'd never before been politically engaged. "Hillary Clinton goes to Ohio, and there is absolutely no way she positions herself as a candidate of change," he says. "Emmanuel Macron is creating a change and a

major disruption in the political system, the way Hillary Clinton was the opposite of."

### 'Things are moving'

Amiens, famed for its Gothic cathedral, is a story of deindustrialization today. But it's also a story of transformation underway, says Laurence Rataux, who heads local development office for Amiens municipality. Only 13 percent of jobs in the city are industrial; the rest are public sector or service jobs. Amazon is opening a new distribution center here. While she says the Whirlpool closure was a shock, especially for the workers directly impacted, that is only one side. "Things are moving," she says.

The mayor of Amiens, Brigitte Fouré, worries that the Whirlpool workers will flock to Le Pen — or massively abstain. "I feel the workers are disappointed and beaten down because they say 'We worked hard and they are closing our factory and only for finances,'" she says. "They take refuge in the National Front."

And yet, she doubts that Macron is the man to make inroads, even though this is where he launched "En Marche" a year ago this week,

after leaving the Socialist government. "He launched his campaign here, but just as publicity to show that he is not just a banker from Paris, but from the French heartland," Mayor Fouré says.

Her comments point to one of Macron's standing challenges. While he is in a dead heat with Le Pen, and polling far ahead of her in a hypothetical runoff between the two on May 7, he has much "softer" support than she does, says David Webber, a professor at Insead business school outside Paris who researches comparative politics and integration.

The "Macron phenomenon" has gotten wind from the collapse of the two parties that form the mainstream political establishment — neither of which is polling to make the runoff. While Macron draws voters from the right and left, transcending party lines, that platform can also make him appear unconvincing and thin on substance, especially with no party apparatus behind him.

"If there is any kind of black swan event, some huge financial scandal, surrounding Macron, for example, things can look very differently on April 23," Mr. Webber says.

Mayor Fouré says she feels change underfoot amid an unpredictable election that could set France off in vastly different directions. "I feel like I'm at a crossroads of civilizations and political life," she says. "There are those who fear globalization and are fragile and those who say it is global here, we have to deal with it and go on."

And her role at the local level? "We have to maintain our openness of spirit without being naive. And I'm really convinced we have to talk to each other, meet each other. It's not by closing off and putting walls, with Mexico or France and other European countries. This is not life," she says. "If we can live together in a town the size of Amiens, this will translate at the polls."

Webber says the outcome of the US presidential election — along with Brexit and the rise of populism across Europe — might shape the mood in favor of Macron. "I think the Brexit result in the UK and election of Trump in the US are having more of an integrative effect on the remainder on the EU than a disintegrative one," he says.

## Business Insider : 'When the time comes, I will go after them': François Fillon threatens those who smeared his campaign

Barbara Tasch, Business Insider UK François Fillon, 2017 presidential election candidate of the French centre-right, visits the Mont Faron "Memorial du Débarquement et de la Libération en Provence" as part of a campaign visit in Toulon, France, March 31, 2017. REUTERS/Philippe Laurenson

François Fillon vowed to "go after" the people who smeared his campaign in an interview with French radio station France inter on Thursday morning.

Fillon was once the frontrunner in the presidential election race, but his campaign was disrupted following accusations — which he vehemently denies — that he paid his wife, son, and daughter huge sums of taxpayers money for minimal work.

In the interview, Fillon continued to claim he was innocent (both he and his wife are being investigated over the allegations) and that the scandal had been completely orchestrated by a "black cabinet" at the Elysée.

"It's been two and a half months since the entre political and media system hit me. But the truth will break out," Fillon said.

"I have the dates, the days, the people who disclosed the documents. When the time comes, I will go after them," he continued, "It has been difficult, it is true that I've slept badly in recent weeks. But those who are behind this case will not sleep well in the future"

Asked whether he still thought that Socialist French President François Hollande was at the origin of the scandal, Fillon answered "of course." According to him the documents, which allowed the newspaper *Canard enchaîné* to reveal the information about the payments made to his wife and children, came directly from the government, "they did not go looking for them, someone brought them [the documents]."

"We are faced with practices that are not democratic," said Fillon.

Hollande — who is not running for a second term — has rejected Fillon's accusations and denied any involvement in the matter.

Fillon also said again that the polls are wrong, just like they were wrong during his party's primaries when the polls predicted his rival Alain Juppé would be leading the conservatives. "I will be in the second round," he promises, "and I am convinced that polls are biased by the general political climate"

In the latest polls on voter intentions done after Tuesday's televised debate, the embattled conservative candidate came in third in the first round of voting with 18% of the votes, behind centrist Emmanuel Macron (25%) and far-right leader Marine Le Pen (24%). A combination picture shows the five main candidates for the French 2017 presidential election. REUTERS/Christian Hartmann

Macron was seen winning the presidency 62 percent to Le Pen's

38 percent, a margin that was down from 65 percent to 35 percent two weeks ago.

Le Pen has, like Fillon, been accused of misusing European funds to pay her personal aides a European Parliament assistant's salary and used her immunity as EU lawmaker to refuse to go to a police summons.

Although the polls for the second round of the elections show Macron as a clear winner (62% to Le Pen's 38%), his lead of the Front National candidate has been narrowing. This narrowing, coupled with voter uncertainty predict that the results of the elections are still far from certain.

The first round of the elections will take place on April 23 and the second round, which will determine who the new French president is, on May 7.



## French candidate Fillon lashes out over corruption leaks

Conservative presidential candidate François Fillon attends a television

debate at French private TV channels BFM TV and CNews, in La Plaine-Saint-Denis, outside Paris, France, Tuesday, April 4, 2017. The

11 candidates in France's presidential race are preparing to face off in a crucial debate Tuesday evening, less than three weeks

before the first round of the election. (Lionel Bonaventure/Pool Photo via AP) (The Associated Press)

PARIS — Conservative French presidential candidate Francois Fillon is threatening legal action over leaks that have deeply damaged his campaign — and that he believes came from President Francois Hollande.

Fillon said Thursday on France-Inter radio that he had detailed information about who was behind the leaks about parliamentary jobs he gave his wife and children. He said "when the time comes, I will pursue them" and "those who are at

the origin of the affair will not sleep well in the future."

Fillon has been given preliminary charges of embezzlement but denies wrongdoing. On Thursday he reiterated accusations that the Socialist president was linked to the

leaks — accusations Hollande has denied.

Fillon was once the front-runner in the race for the April 23-May 7 election, but polls now suggest he would come in third.

**Bloomberg**

## The Most Feared Newspaper in France Is Full of Fiction, Scandal, and Puns

A satirical weekly named after a duck has become the top newsbreaker in Paris.

Political discourse around the world tends to be driven by sober media stalwarts like the *Washington Post*, the *Times of London*, or Germany's *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. In France, the star of the show is an eight-page weekly that features excruciating puns for headlines, irreverent cartoons depicting political grandees as dwarves or devils, fake news such as imagined diaries—and real scoops that have laid low countless power brokers over the decades. On Tuesday nights, before *Le Canard Enchaîné* ("the Chained Duck") hits the streets, political and media elites across Paris flock to the paper's offices just a few steps from the Louvre to get an early bead on scandals taking flight.

Mixing facts, half-truths, and off-color jokes, *Le Canard* (as everyone calls it) presents details of behind-the-scenes machinations that readers perceive as more accurate and less filtered than what's published by its mainstream rivals. As campaigning has picked up for presidential elections this spring, the paper has broken dream-shattering stories week after week. In January it reported that conservative presidential candidate Francois Fillon had employed his wife in a no-show job for years—sending his campaign into a tailspin and his poll numbers into the dumpster. Playing no favorites, *Le Canard* has also published details of a taxpayer-funded trip to Las

Vegas by center-right candidate Emmanuel Macron during his tenure as economy minister, and targeted nationalist leader Marine Le Pen, most recently with an April 5 report on investigations of an associate for alleged misuse of public funds. "*Le Canard* is neither right nor left, but rather in the opposition," says editor-in-chief Louis-Marie Horeau. "We've never been the vassal of any party."

*Le Canard's* power is all the more surprising in an era when online upstarts such as *Politico*, the *Huffington Post*, and *BuzzFeed* have an increasingly powerful voice. While *Le Canard's* closely watched Twitter feed, with almost 400,000 followers, lights up every Tuesday with a handful of teasers on that week's stories, anyone wanting to read them must visit a newsstand. The century-old paper does have a website, but just barely: The landing page features its logo with the slogan "A palm in the cyber-sea ... but only one" and little more than links to images of front pages on which you can read headlines, but not articles. "Our job is to inform and distract readers with newsprint and ink," the website says.

The paper's reports—typically sprinkled with political gossip and details of private conversations such as Fillon's questioning by a judge about renovations at a chateau he owns—are increasingly credited with moving markets. As the Fillon story gained steam in February, the spread between interest rates of French 10-year sovereign bonds and Germany's benchmark bund hit

a four-year high amid growing concern about a potential victory for Le Pen, who's questioned France's membership in the European Union and threatened to revive the franc as the national currency. "Do we have to check *Le Canard* every Wednesday?" asks Pierre Martin, a trader at Saxo Bank A/S in London. "Yes. Undoubtedly."

Going into this election season, the biggest concern of the French political establishment was that fake news might overrun Facebook and help propel Le Pen to a populist triumph. Instead, *Le Canard* has garnered attention with investigative stories that have hobbled the candidacy of the erstwhile favorite Fillon. The publication followed its scoop on Fillon's wife, Penelope, with another alleging that his children had similar arrangements in the Senate. And in March, *Le Canard* revealed that a Lebanese tycoon had paid Fillon \$50,000 for an introduction to Vladimir Putin.

The newspaper has something of the sensibility of the *Onion* in the U.S., hammering away at the foibles and failings of the rich and powerful with tongue-in-cheek stories and illustrations. But *Le Canard* does more than spoof: Its 30 editors and reporters milk a network of tipsters reaching into the highest echelons of French society. The staff-owned weekly carries no advertising, and controversial stories are often unsigned—making it harder for the elite miscreants exposed each week to exact revenge. With a weekly circulation of about 400,000 copies

selling for €1.20 (\$1.30) each, *Le Canard* in 2015 reported €25 million in sales and profit topping €2 million.

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Founded in 1915, the paper has a long record of political and business scoops. In the 1920s it took aim at Banque Oustric—a shady collection of shaky investments assembled by a tycoon named Albert Oustric—helping push the bank into insolvency and taking down a finance minister implicated in the affair. In 1979 the paper reported that conservative President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing had accepted diamonds from the African dictator Jean-Bedel Bokassa, helping scuttle Giscard's candidacy two years later. In 1993 socialist Prime Minister Pierre Bérégovoy committed suicide after *Le Canard* reported that he'd gotten a 1 million-franc interest-free loan from an industrialist—a scandal that led to the party's defeat in parliamentary elections. "Fortunately, *Le Canard* is a weekly," President Francois Hollande said at a February cabinet meeting—according to the paper itself. "If it were a daily, imagine the situation we'd be in."

**The bottom line:** *Le Canard Enchaîné can lay low France's rich and mighty with satire, bad puns, and aggressive investigative reporting.*



## French soldier killed in operation on extremists in Mali

PARIS — A French soldier has been killed in a clash with extremists in Mali, as part of a French military operation aimed at fighting radicals across a swath of Africa.

French President Francois Hollande's office said in a statement Thursday the soldier was killed overnight "after a clash with terrorists" in southwestern Mali. Hollande's office and the French military did not provide further details.

Hollande reiterated France's support for Mali and the U.N. force keeping the peace there.

Three Malian soldiers were killed in an attack on a military post last week in an area of northern Mali frequented by drug traffickers and jihadist groups.

A French-led intervention drove out Islamic extremists from strongholds in northern Mali in 2013 but sporadic attacks continue.

## Kansas City Star : French aerobatic pilots jet into Kansas City for World War I 'thank you'

By Matt Campbell  
Campbellmccampbell@kcstar.com

The pride of the French air force arrived in Kansas City on Wednesday as part of a patriotic "thank you" to America on the

occasion of the 100th anniversary of the U.S. entry into World War I.

Ten jets of the Patrouille de France — including eight aerobatic pilots — touched down shortly after 1 p.m. at Wheeler Downtown Airport. They



arrived from Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, where they were scoping out the venue for an air show this weekend.

The team is scheduled to do a flyby over the Liberty Memorial here Thursday at the beginning of the national observance ceremony of the U.S. entry into World War I. They are scheduled to lead off the event at 11 a.m. at the National World War I Museum and Memorial. Tickets to the event have run out, but the flyby will be visible over much of downtown Kansas City.

"It's an honor for us to be here," Lt. Col. Gauthier Dewas said, adding that the centennial event is the highlight of the team's six-week tour across America. "It's very important

for us to be here, and being the French part of the ceremony is, for us, very emotional. I just want to thank you for the warm welcome."

The Patrouille de France is known for trailing red, white and blue smoke, which are the colors of the French flag as well as the American flag.

The Patrouille de France is similar to the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds. The group has not flown in the United States for 31 years and is visiting this year by invitation.

The Patrouille de France flies the Alpha Jet, a trainer and strike aircraft made jointly by France and Germany. The twin-engine jet has a 30-foot wingspan and can reach speeds of more than 600 miles per

hour. The tailfins of the jets were painted with a new design for this tour.

American pilots enlisted in the French air force beginning in 1915, long before the United States officially entered World War I. They formed the Lafayette Escadrille, named after the Frenchman who served with George Washington during the Revolutionary War.

More than 250 American pilots fought under the French flag before the U.S. entered World War I, and 68 of them were killed in combat, according to the Patrouille de France. The U.S. entry into World War I in 1917 on the side of the allies, United Kingdom and France, tipped the balance of power on the

ground on the Western Front, leading to Germany's capitulation in November 1918.

Capt. Benjamin Chanat will be piloting one of the rear wing jets Thursday, trailing blue smoke.

"We're here to highlight the brotherhood between our two countries," Chanat said shortly after landing in Kansas City. "France is the oldest ally of the United States. We always fight together, never against."

"It is a strong message for us to say to the U.S. people here in Kansas City and all over the U.S., 'We are here. We are still friends and partners for the future.'"

## Air and Space Magazine : The French Are Coming!

Paul GlenshawThe Patrouille de France team over Melbourne, Florida last weekend. (Patrouille de France)

airspace.com  
April 5, 2017 3:00PM

On March 25, the Statue of Liberty got a rare aerial visit from the Patrouille de France (the French equivalent of the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds). Eight Alpha jets streaked over Manhattan and out over the harbor, trailing blue, white and red smoke. "Our flag over the Statue of Liberty—that is the flight of a lifetime," says slot pilot Squadron Leader Nicolas Lieumont. Their cargo ship, an Airbus A400M, was right behind. The dramatic flyby was the kickoff for the team's first U.S. tour in more than 30 years. They've picked an auspicious anniversary to return.

Tomorrow (April 6) marks the

centennial of the United States entering World War I. The *Patrouille* will perform as part of the grand centennial commemoration at the National World War I Museum in Kansas City, the highlight of a tour that continues throughout April. Tour stops (consult our 2017 Airshow planner for details) include Melbourne and Lakeland, Florida and Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama. The French team will meet with their counterparts the Blue Angels and Thunderbirds at Pensacola Naval Air Station in Florida and Nellis AFB in Nevada, and will participate in NATO's Trilateral Exercise Initiative at Langley AFB in Virginia. They also will perform flyovers at Dallas, the Grand Canyon, the Golden Gate Bridge, and Colorado Springs, and will wrap up in Canada, with performances in Ottawa, Montréal, and Quebec City. Flying over New

York City last week. (Patrouille de France)

The tour is intended to serve as a reminder of France's role as the United States' oldest ally. Gérard Araud, the French Ambassador to the United States, remarked on the two nations' shared history of military aviation at a recent reception for the *Patrouille* pilots at the French Embassy in Washington D.C., saying, "When you walk along the corridor in the Pentagon that is dedicated to American aces, the first picture is of an American pilot wearing a French uniform and French pilot wings: Raoul Lufbery, from the Lafayette squadron! The Lafayette squadron, created in 1916, symbolizes the strong bond between our two air forces, their shared roots."

Like their American counterparts, members of the *Patrouille* are veteran fighter pilots. Squadron

Leader Christophe Dubois is the team's leader. His aircraft, like each of the team's Alpha jets, is decorated with the likeness of a French WWI ace—his is the great Charles Guynemer. For Squadron Leader Lieumont (once an exchange student at the U.S. Air Force Academy), the message of the tour is clear. "It's very important for the pilots to be here to thank the American people for what they did for us in the First World War and World War II," he says. "We fight together [now] because we believe in the same things and values—in freedom."

Although a flyover of Washington was scrubbed due to weather, the team was still able to visit the National Air and Space Museum, where they saw the SPAD XIII *Smith IV* in the World War I gallery. Said Lieumont, "I would like to have one to fly one day."

**The  
New York  
Times**

## The Professor and the Jihadi (online)

Robert F. Worth

Kepel scoffs at this argument, and sometimes derides its proponents as naifs or even Islamist fellow-travelers. He is more than an observer to this debate: Kepel was a member of the commission that helped create France's controversial 2004 law banning Islamic head scarves and other religious symbols and clothing in public schools, and remains proud of that role. He believes that eroding French state secularism, known as *laïcité*, would lead to a "Balkanization of Europe along religious and ethnic lines," with a Muslim voting bloc, Muslim schools and a hardening of quasi-separatist communities of various religions. With his career coming to an end — he is 61 — he is making these

arguments with ever-greater urgency. He has repeatedly dismissed claims of widespread Islamophobia in French society as fraudulent, saying the word has become little more than a rhetorical club used by Islamists to rally their base.

Kepel's term for this cultural malaise — and the title of his latest book — is *la fracture*. When I saw him recently in his spare office at the Paris Institute of Political Studies, commonly known as Sciences Po, a copy was on the table: The cover is a color portrait of his face against a black background, staring at the viewer with an expression of almost morbid gravitas. I had not seen it before and was taken aback, as much by the egotism of the gesture as by its tacit acknowledgment of

the death threat. He had set another copy of the book on a pile of boxes in an alcove, flanked above and below by two reproductions of one of the Fayum mummy portraits made for funeral sites nearly 2,000 years ago. It was his own kitschy little death shrine. Kepel told me he would have to be more careful if the book was as successful as he hoped. "This is why I put my face on the cover: If you want to kill me, kill me," he said, with a twinkle in his eye. "This is resistance."

**France's standoff** with its Muslim immigrants evokes such wrenching anxiety in part because it touches on what was once a source of great national pride. For much of the 20th century, France was the country of immigration par excellence. This was true despite France's

demanding approach to immigration, requiring newcomers to surrender their old identity completely and forget where they had come from. They could keep their religion, but it had to remain entirely private. In exchange, they could in principle become as French as anyone else, or even more so (Yves Montand, the great French actor and singer, was a poor migrant from Italy). Most of the immigrants were European Catholics, with fairly compatible heritage, but not all: More than 100,000 Indochinese refugees came in the decades after World War II, and they assimilated easily, too. French politicians boasted of their country's universal values as the beacon to these immigrant hordes. And French *laïcité* was seen as one of those values: People who had been in thrall to church dogma in

other places would breathe more freely in France, where Enlightenment principles prevailed.

By the time Kepel was born in 1955, that happy era of successful immigration was coming to an end. The years that followed saw a brutal war in Algeria and other struggles in France's former North African territories. At the same time, millions of Muslim immigrants began arriving in the concrete high-rises of the French *banlieues*, French cities, with a culture less amenable to the kind of assimilation France had always preached.

Kepel grew up in Paris, the son of an immigrant playwright and actor who translated Vaclav Havel's plays into French. As a young man, he hoped to become a classics scholar, but he was captivated by Syria during a summer excursion through the Arab world with a friend. When he got back to Paris, he started studying Arabic, and eventually entered a graduate program at Sciences Po (where he now teaches). Like most students of the Arab world, Kepel immersed himself in Arab culture, living in Damascus and then Cairo. But in 1982, his academic adviser told him he had seen something unusual back home in France: striking workers prostrating themselves in the direction of Mecca. Five years later, Kepel published "*Les Banlieues de l'Islam*," a sympathetic and detailed study of France's Muslim community that is still considered a landmark. At the time, anti-Arab racism was mostly seen as a social issue in France, not a religious one; Islam scarcely registered as a domestic phenomenon. Kepel spent much of the following two decades writing about the Middle East. His books on political Islam and the Arab world, authoritative but accessible, were valuable primers for many of the journalists (including me) who began writing about these issues in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

In 2010, Kepel returned to the *banlieues*, and he found them vastly changed. Years of worsening joblessness and unrest had helped to fuel the spread of a militant and often rejectionist Muslim identity, especially among the young. He was most concerned about the rising prevalence of Salafism, a puritanical Islamic current that is the typical gateway to jihadist violence (though most of its practitioners, it must be emphasized, are peaceful). Kepel published two volumes about the state of the *banlieues* in 2012, and the title of the second book, "Ninety-Three," is deliberately — some said excessively — ominous. It is the government designation for the Seine-St. Denis district, but it is also an allusion to Victor Hugo's

novel about the Terror of 1793, heyday of the guillotine.

The Paris terrorist attacks of January 2015 made Kepel's emphasis look not alarmist but prophetic. In their aftermath, he quickly completed "Terror in France," which outlines three generations of jihadism, starting in the 1980s and culminating in the newly decentralized attacks associated with ISIS across Europe. It was on the verge of publication when the second and far more deadly Paris attacks took place, on Nov. 13 of that year, helping to turn it into a best seller.

About a week later, Olivier Roy, who teaches at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, wrote an essay for *Le Monde* that challenged one of Kepel's core ideas. Roy argued that the issue was not the radicalization of Islam but "the Islamization of radicalism" — a phrase that quickly caught on. For Roy, the terrorists, mostly second-generation immigrants, were caught between the tradition-bound world of their parents and the secularism of their French contemporaries. Unable to find a place, they adopted a nihilistic rejection of society, expressing it not in the Marxist language of the 1960s and '70s but in its current equivalent: Islam. The same logic could explain why so many white Catholic French kids had become jihadis.

Kepel responded quickly and forcefully, accusing Roy, who does not speak Arabic, of cooking up a thesis that suited his own ignorance: If Islam is incidental, no need to listen to the Friday sermons or read the theological debates online. Roy's argument was also a salve to the liberal conscience, Kepel added, allowing people to believe that the state of contemporary Islam had little or nothing to do with the violence. Roy, clearly stung, responded, and the argument went on for months, fueled by frequent stories in the French press. Other intellectuals joined in, notably the academic François Burgat, who argued that both Roy and Kepel failed to adequately recognize the role of France's colonial history and current foreign policies in shaping the younger generation's anger. But it remained primarily a two-man fight.

When I met Roy in November, he told me over a lunch of Breton oysters and Muscadet that he had not wanted a feud. "He attacked me — I had to respond," Roy said, squeezing his lips out in a Gallic expression of disdain. "He's someone who needs enemies. He's like an academic version of Sarkozy." Roy made clear that he respects Kepel's erudition but

believes he is projecting his own obsession with jihadism onto the more nuanced political realities of a hybrid France. The two men form a striking contrast. Roy is a bit paunchy and disheveled, with an amiable, jowly face; he has the air of a college professor who likes taking students out for a drink. Kepel teaches class in elegantly tailored suits, and his manners are more formal. He has a volatile streak; he has feuded in public with several peers and former students. He is also more visibly interested in power. He makes no secret of his membership in the *Siècle* club, a quintessentially French institution that gathers much of the nation's political and social elite for a formal dinner on the last Wednesday of every month, in an 18th-century mansion near the presidential palace. In an article last year, Roy referred to Kepel cuttingly as a "professional Rastignac," an allusion to a socially ambitious character in the novels of Balzac.

Roy told me he believed that France's political culture had become too hostile to religion, and that *laïcité* — originally created as a way to keep the state neutral — had become "eradicatory" in its application. It would be healthier for France to give more space to *all* religious discourse. "You have a whole generation of politicians here who do not know how to talk to religious people," he said. When I asked Roy how France should handle the jihadist challenge, he said: "Isolate the radicals and saturate the religious space." In other words, the way to counter violent Islamists is to open our arms to Islam in other ways — including, presumably, to peaceful Islamists.

This may sound reasonable in the abstract. But it is uncomfortably close to the pressure tactics I often heard from Salafists and Muslim Brothers during my years as a correspondent in the Arab world. ("If society were more Islamic, Al Qaeda would have no foothold.") Roy is no Islamist, but I couldn't help wondering if his sympathy for Muslims, who are disproportionately poor and unemployed in France, had made him a little too sanguine. Terrorism aside, a distressingly large number of Muslims are in open revolt against French cultural and political norms. In September, a landmark survey commissioned by the Montaigne Institute found that 28 percent of French Muslims had adopted values "clearly opposed to the values of the republic," with a mix of "authoritarian" and "secessionist" views, including support for polygamy and the *niqab*, or full-face veil, and opposition to laws enforcing secularism. These attitudes reinforce anti-Muslim

sentiment, in a spiral of *crispations identitaires* ("identitarian fist-clenching") that is a boon to the anti-immigrant National Front.

**Kepel's fracture** is nowhere more evident than in the hometown of Larossi Abballa, the man who condemned him to death. Mantes-la-Jolie is an old industrial town in the far western suburbs of Paris. Its downtown resembles many others in northern France: a prim cluster of gray, Norman-style buildings that are home to shops, restaurants and bakeries. As you drive west, the landscape quickly changes to ugly block towers, vacant lots and mosques. The neighborhood known as Val-Fourré, wedged between a highway and a bend in the Seine river, is populated almost entirely by Arab and African immigrants, living in one of France's highest concentrations of subsidized housing. On Fridays, after the weekly prayer sermon in the local mosques, the crowded market stalls around the high-rise tower known as *la Centrale* look like a scene from an Arab city. The women are in long black *abayas* and veils; many of the men wear traditional Malian garb or North African-style *djellabas*. The white neighborhood that borders Val-Fourré has turned into a bastion of National Front supporters.

The first person I met in Val-Fourré was a burly man in Afghan-style dress, with the scraggly beard favored by Salafi Muslims. He preferred not to give his name. After chatting for a few minutes, I brought up Abballa and the killings in June. "That was just a matter of revenge," he said dismissively. "It had nothing to do with Islam." I asked what Abballa was taking revenge for, and he gave me an incredulous look. "Why? The cops had probably beat him up," he said. "They stop you, they harass you, they come to your house. It's the same for all of us." A few minutes later I asked him about the word "radicalization." He said: "What does 'radicalization' mean? What does 'fundamentalism' mean? It means what's fundamental, the basis of the religion. This is what they don't like. They keep pressuring us, but we will not give up our religion. And if it leads to a clash. ..."

He seemed uneasy talking to me and turned to say goodbye. He probably would not have spoken to me at all if I hadn't been introduced by a 31-year-old local blogger named Aboubakry N'diaye, who had offered to be my guide for the day. Hatred of the police is rampant in the French *banlieues*, and journalists are mostly assumed to be working with the cops.

One after another, the young men I met that afternoon said the same

thing, in almost exactly the same words: It had nothing to do with Islam, and revenge against the police is perfectly natural. None of them admitted to having known Abballa, though some insisted that he was an “ordinary guy.”

In a sense, Abballa’s very ordinariness, his invisibility, is the most sinister aspect of the younger generation of French jihadists. They leave no trace, and that is partly because the *banlieues* now provide both isolation and camouflage. Neighborhoods like Val-Fouré were once full of youth associations — many formed by the Communist Party — but those have slowly disintegrated over the years, along with the jobs once provided by local car factories. (Local youth unemployment is said to be at least 30 percent.) “That social tissue was necessary, but there are so many fewer associations now, and people are more isolated,” I was told by Yasser Amri, a political consultant who grew up in Mantes and worked as an adviser to a French lawmaker for the area. “They stay at home with a laptop, the internet takes over and they are vulnerable to ISIS.” Abballa may also have learned — or have been taught — to keep a low profile. In any case, his jihadist sympathies would have raised little suspicion in an environment where Salafism and hatred of the state have become norms.

The Friday market in Val-Fouré, one of the banlieues, or exurban immigrant ghettos, of France. Jérôme Sessini/Magnum, for The New York Times

Abballa’s life, at least early on, seems to bear out some of the arguments Olivier Roy makes about the second-generation immigrant’s sense of dislocation, and the hunger for an identity. His father was a laborer from southern Morocco who arrived in France five years before Larossi was born, the last child in a family of five. Abballa spent his early life in Les Mureaux, a town 12 miles away from Mantes with a very similar mix of poor immigrants and a reputation for riots. Abballa knew little about Islam — at least at first, according to the co-conspirators in his first terror plot, in 2011. At the same time, he told them he was “thirsty for blood,” court documents show. He was first arrested at 18 on theft charges, and seems to have fallen into jihad the same way he fell into petty delinquency.

Abballa’s first dip into jihad was almost comical. At 19, he joined a group of other young *banlieue* men in a park east of Paris, where they beheaded rabbits in preparation for murdering human captives. His plan to join the jihad in Pakistan were thwarted soon afterward, and police

officers found terrorist propaganda in Abballa’s home and those of other plotters, court documents show. They also had an academic volume co-written by Kepel, called “Al Qaeda in Its Own Words”: apparently they saw it as a handbook.

But it was the next phase that turned Abballa into a real jihadist, and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that his path conforms closely to the stages Kepel identifies with the third generation of European jihadism. Abballa spent almost three years behind bars, and was moved among jails several times because he was proselytizing for jihad. Later, he made direct contact with a member of ISIS in Syria who had helped direct terrorist attacks in France. By the time Abballa died, his religious devotion was unmistakable. The final video he made is a long sermon about Islam, and it includes a citation from a relatively obscure 11th century Islamic jurist. He was anything but a nihilist — the word Roy often uses to describe these young men.

After his release from prison, Abballa maintained a facade of normalcy, starting a one-man business delivering sandwiches and burgers. His Facebook feed is full of images of fast food and happy clients. Even the girlfriend he saw for years before his prison term claims she had no idea he had become radical. “After me, there was religion,” she said, in a short interview she gave on French radio just after the murders. “All he said was that he’d like it if one day I became like him, and wore a veil. But not once did he judge me or refuse to talk to me because I wasn’t veiled, or was wearing ripped jeans or leather. Not once.” Abballa’s family appears to have been the one group from whom he could not hide his new allegiances. On the night of Nov. 13, 2015, after the news of the Paris terrorist attacks spread, one of his sisters became terrified that he was among the attackers, according to an article in *Le Monde*. She called the house and asked another member of the family to pull up Abballa’s duvet and make sure he was safely in bed.

Exactly seven months later, on a balmy June evening, Abballa drove the 10 minutes to Magnanville, where Jean-Baptiste Salvaing lived. It is still not clear how he chose Salvaing, a midlevel career police officer who focused on local delinquency. What is clear, according to local news stories sourced to the police, is that Abballa had planned his attack carefully. He knew when Salvaing would be returning from work and hid behind a gate, where he sprang out and stabbed Salvaing repeatedly,

piercing his heart. He then went into the house and cut the throat of Salvaing’s companion, Jessica Schneider, and used his cellphone to conduct the broadcast on Facebook Live.

Watching the video is a profoundly unnerving experience. Abballa is seen from below, his long face distorted and lengthened by the angle. A patch of colored cloth can be seen hanging on the wall by his head, conveying an eerie hint of private domesticity; this room was clearly a place of comfort and happiness to the two people he had just murdered. Abballa does not look angry or upset. He sniffs frequently during his speech — a cold — and at one point says, “Pardon me.” Every now and then you can see and hear the shuffling of the paper from which he is reading. Abballa speaks for 12 minutes, mixing his French with bits of Quranic Arabic, pledging his allegiance to the leader of ISIS, calling for mass murder and predicting a new age of Islamic conquest. After the police SWAT team burst into the apartment and killed him, they found the couple’s 3-year-old child unharmed, in a state of shock.

The day before Salvaing was murdered, according to the *Le Monde* article, he attended a training session at his Police Headquarters, which abuts a mosque. The subject of the session was “radicalization.”

**One of the most** common critiques of Kepel is that his relentless focus on Islam casts a shadow of suspicion onto all French Muslims. As Roy put it to me, “If you say it’s a religious issue, then the extremists are seen as the *avant-garde* of the whole Muslim population.” Jean-Pierre Filiu, another prominent French scholar of the Islamic world, pointed out that several thousand Muslims marched for peace in Mantes-la-Jolie after the Abballa murders, many of them bearing pictures of the murdered couple and posters denouncing terrorism, and laid wreaths on the steps of the local Police Headquarters. There was no one there to greet them, and not much news coverage. “The jihadis want to blur the lines, but the lines should be clear,” Filiu told me. “It’s not the Salafis who are against us, and not the Muslims. It’s the jihadis.”

These are generous sentiments, and no doubt many French Muslims appreciate them. Kepel would say they seem less aimed at truth than tact, the idea that hurting Muslim feelings will poison the atmosphere further. At its extreme, this view risks its own form of condescension: Be nice to Muslims or they will turn into suicide bombers.

Kepel has argued in his recent books that the French Muslim community, once guided by the paternalist figures from the old country known as *darons*, is now increasingly under the sway of younger and far more confrontational Islamists. These ideologists, Kepel believes, have fostered a rupture with French values that nourishes the ISIS narrative. Yet some French intellectuals naïvely disregard or even embrace these figures in the hopes of “isolating the radicals.” In other words, Kepel turns the accusation of Filiu and Roy — that his own emphasis on Islam is unwittingly doing the work of ISIS — against them. Kepel likes to cite ISIS propaganda urging its followers in Europe to hide behind the language of victimhood, including one document shared among ISIS sympathizers titled “How to Survive in the West,” which includes the following lines: “A real war is heating up in the heart of Europe. ... The leaders of disbelief repeatedly lie in the media and say that we Muslims are all terrorists, while we denied it and wanted to be peaceful citizens. But they have cornered us and forced us into becoming radicalized.”

This kind of mutual accusation defines much of the past decade’s debate on Islamic symbols. Roy and other leftists tend to see the 2004 law banning the head scarf as an unnecessary provocation that has played into the hands of extremists. Kepel, who helped guide the law, says it was the rising prevalence of head scarves in schools that was sowing division and bias, and the ban has put an end to that. Each camp has Muslims supporting them. Surveys suggest that the French public overwhelmingly supports the ban, and my conversations with a dozen schoolteachers who work in the *banlieues* reinforced that conclusion.

‘They have taken on a religion that has nothing to do with their own origins. It’s a lost generation.’

The struggle over the head scarf is part of a broader effort by the French state, which harbors a quaint ambition to reach some sort of grand bargain with Islam as it did with the Catholic Church in 1905. That arrangement nowhere mentioned the word *laïcité*, but it reset the boundaries between church and state, reining in church influence in the public sphere and appropriating most ecclesiastical property. This is far more difficult to do with Muslims in France, who are extremely diverse, with no equivalent to the Catholic hierarchy. The fact that many mosques in France were built and supplied with imams by foreign organizations and

governments, notably Morocco and Turkey, is another obstacle. The French Council of the Muslim Faith, created by the government in 2003, has periodically issued calls for a reform of this system, with few results.

Although France's Muslim community is leaderless, one man has assumed an increasingly prominent and confrontational role, and has become Kepel's chief example of the Islamist fellow-traveler. Marwan Muhammad is executive director of the Collective Against Islamophobia in France, or C.C.I.F. Under his direction, the C.C.I.F. has raised its profile, filing frequent lawsuits and publicizing episodes of what it sees as anti-Muslim bias. Muhammad, a slight-figured man with a piercing gaze and a prayer bruise on his bald forehead, is 38, a former trader whose gifts as a speaker and promoter are indisputable. When I met him, in a cafe outside his offices in the Stade de France, just north of Paris, he said he saw his own work as comparable to the American civil rights movement. Speaking an impressively fast and American-accented English, he said that he had no trouble with French laws on *laïcité*, but that they had been "recoded" by racists who shielded themselves behind secularism. The 2004 law on the head scarf in schools, he said, had been "the mother of all tensions," and the antiterrorism campaign had become an excuse for attacking Muslims. The root of the problem, he said, was that France was still locked in a racist, colonialist mind-set and could not see Muslims as equals. When I raised the question of Islamist militancy in towns like Mantes-la-Jolie, he suggested it was an emotional reaction to racism, but also asserted the rights of Muslims to dress and behave as they liked.

Last summer, Muhammad gained new prominence by helping to shape public perceptions of the Burkini affair. It happened in August, when a number of French seaside towns enacted bans on the full-body swimsuit, designed to respect Muslim modesty codes for women. The French police then began forcing women in Burkinis to take them off, pay a fine or face arrest. The story became a global sensation, with the French government coming off in most accounts as petty, Islamophobic and hypocritical. The Burkini, the garment's supporters said, was an instrument not of repression but of liberation: a way for conservative women, who might otherwise be trapped inside, to enjoy themselves. All this took place just a month after the terrorist carnage in Nice, where a man plowed a truck through a

crowd of pedestrians on a seaside boulevard, killing 86 and wounding many more. For some observers, the Burkini affair may have suggested an unspoken corollary: Perhaps the French are helping to bring this terrorist hatred on themselves.

For Kepel, the lesson of the Burkini was entirely different. He did not deny that arresting the women was an appallingly clumsy (and self-defeating) thing to do. But he also saw yet another effort by Islamists — and their left-wing fellow-travelers — to turn France from the victim of terrorist atrocity into the aggressor. He pointed out that the international press coverage mostly ignored the rise of Salafist-style Islam as a context for the Burkini. In other words, many Frenchwomen in Burkinis might have been wearing bikinis a few years ago. The Burkini episode helped furnish what has become a dominant theme of his ongoing public dispute with the left. His new book, published in France in November, includes his most ferocious polemic yet against the "delusion" of Islamophobia. It also features an acidic portrayal of Marwan Muhammad, whom he portrays as an opportunist serving the interests of jihadis.

**Kepel's recent work** on the rise of jihadism in France's prisons and the *banlieues* — much of it carried out by a dedicated band of student researchers — is rooted in a set of alarming numbers. As of late March, there were 421 "Islamic terrorists" in France's jails and prisons and 1,224 people who had been identified as "radicalized," according to France's Justice Ministry. Many of these are in prison for minor or nonterrorist offenses and will soon be released. Each attack worsens the cycle of mistrust between *Français de souche* — the phrase means "French from the roots," and refers to white Christians — and their Muslim compatriots. To address this fear, a dubious new cottage industry has grown up over the past two years. Government grants for privately run "de-radicalization" programs have been easy money, with scores of new outfits and self-proclaimed gurus trumpeting their claims of success.

"Everyone is groping — no one knows what to do," I was told by Adeline Hazan, who leads a government watchdog agency for the nation's prisons. It does not help that about half of France's prisoners are Muslim (though Muslims make up less than 10 percent of the French population). In some overcrowded jails, the percentage is much higher. Hazan's group released a report last summer excoriating the government's new effort to segregate jihadi prisoners,

saying the plan threatened to make matters worse. The segregation scheme originated just after the Paris attacks in January 2015, when public attention was focused on the prison system's reputation as a factory for terrorists. But the proposed remedy may have been worse than the disease. The newly isolated jihadis were in a better position to reinforce one another's beliefs; and the government's plans for de-radicalization — which included "therapeutic fencing" classes — seemed little more than a joke. In September, an inmate in one of the segregated units stabbed a guard and almost killed him. A month later, France's justice minister, Jean-Jacques Urvoas, canceled the segregation scheme. When I met Urvoas at the ministry, I asked him what the word "radicalization" meant. He replied: "I don't know. And I am going to stop using it."

Whatever word you use, French prosecutors and judges now struggle daily with the mystery of how terrorists are made. A year ago, one of France's top prosecutors dealing with terrorism began convening a panel of academic experts once a month in her office at the Palais de Justice in Paris. It is the first effort of its kind. In December, I attended one of these meetings and listened for two hours as a dozen political scientists, sociologists and psychologists dissected the life and psyche of M., a young convict who'd grown up in a *banlieue* and joined ISIS. The participants argued about the same question that divides Kepel and Roy: Did everything come back to Islam, or was that just a pretext? "What's more important, the search or the response?" one person said.

The discussion ranged widely, but returned again and again to the question of "how one lives as a Muslim in France while integrating." One participant said, "I find him to be a psychopath," prompting a burst of laughter; another said he found M. "typical in many ways."

At 9 o'clock, the prosecutor brought the discussion to a close, and her assistants poured Champagne and pastries. I asked the prosecutor if she had found the session useful, despite the disagreements. She said it had shed light on the most difficult questions she must assess: the convict's "capacity for dissimulation" and his degree of dangerousness.

The number of people who require this kind of exhausting scrutiny is daunting: Some 700 French citizens are with ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and as the terrorist group loses ground, more of them will return home. I watched three of these returnees

standing in the defendant's dock during their trial in Paris in December. One of them had been transferred from jail, and appeared in a box to the side of the courtroom, flanked by guards. The others, who were at liberty, stood next to their lawyers, facing a panel of judges. The three men started out as friends in Roubaix, a town in northern France that has gained some notoriety as an Islamist stronghold. All of them ended up in Syria fighting for Islamist militias and eventually found their way back to France. The president of the judicial panel, a balding man with a scholarly mien, questioned them closely about their mind-set and beliefs and returned again and again to the question of Islam. "Today, would you say you're a republican Muslim?" he asked one of them. The accused, a white convert to Islam identified as Pierre T., mumbled "Ah, that's a tough one," and added that he preferred "normal Muslim." Later, the judge asked if he could practice his form of Islam and continue to work.

Another defendant, identified as Mehdi K., who had served in the French military before deserting and traveling to Syria, was pressed to describe his future plans. "I see myself living in France with my wife and children," he replied. "I am still Muslim, rigorous toward myself." The judge seemed unsatisfied with the response, and at one point he said something about the danger of Islam's being turned into a political ideology. As the session ended, the prosecutor demanded the maximum penalty for Mehdi K., saying that his radical convictions were deep-rooted and that he posed a "manifest danger." Mehdi K.'s lawyer protested, saying the prosecutor was asking the judge to determine the sentence "not for what he has done, but for the potential risk that he poses." It struck me as an odd objection to make. The judge had made very clear that he was far more worried about Mehdi K.'s future than his past.

Muslim men gather for prayer in Val-Fourré. Jérôme Sessini/Magnum, for The New York Times

With all this attention focused on them, many jihadis are now adapting, and have become far better at disguising their beliefs. Farhad Khosrokhavar, a sociologist who has spent many years researching Muslims in the French prison system, told me it has become almost impossible to get honest testimony out of the inmates. Many of them shave their beards, Khosrokhavar said, and adopt a mild demeanor, and sometimes they even stop praying and fasting during Ramadan, all so as to deceive the

authorities and, presumably, get out of prison faster.

On a brisk morning in December, Kepel arrived at the gate of Villepinte prison, northeast of Paris. It is a sprawling, high-walled compound, with huge square guard towers overlooking a grim landscape of highways, power lines and vacant fields. The prison is notorious for its overcrowded conditions; its administrator recently wrote an unusual letter of protest to a French magistrate saying that it was so far over capacity that it could not accept a single inmate more. It also hosts about 20 men accused of terrorist offenses, mostly hardened jihadists who have fought with ISIS in Syria.

Emerging from his car, Kepel was greeted by the prison administrator, a dark-haired woman in her 40s, and escorted inside, where two inmates were waiting in a spare room near the prison library. One was a thief, a svelte man with long hair and a beard; the other was a thickset North African who was in for nine years. The two inmates — who asked not to have their names disclosed — met Kepel on a previous visit and seemed delighted to see him again. Both were Muslim, and both were vehemently opposed to ISIS. By their account, Kepel's first visit to the prison, in which he delivered a lecture on Islam and jihadism, had humiliated the prison's tight-knit group of unrepentant ISIS members by knocking down their arguments with deft quotes from the Quran. "God is sovereign in his orders," he recited in Arabic at the close of a tense, angry debate, "but most people do not know it."

The visit, along with group discussions, they said, had pushed the jihadist contingent to be more communicative. They had kept to themselves before the debate, their lives and rap sheets a mystery. "Now we begin to understand a bit more," the North African told me. One of the jihadists "had a breakup, others had family problems." Some of them, he added, had begun to talk a bit differently about their prospects after swapping stories with other inmates doing longer sentences. "They had this idea that we're *fiche S*" — the designation used for monitoring potential terrorists — so "there's no future. Now they seem to understand there is a future. They talk about having jobs, marriage, kids. There's a

positive evolution."

But when the two inmates talked about life outside prison, their own optimism faded. France, they said, seemed to be building toward a confrontation with Islam. It was the same in all of Europe, they said, and even in the United States (they made clear that they spent much of their time watching TV news). For young men from the French *banlieues*, assimilation and radicalization appeared to be two sides of a coin that never fell in their favor. "All the profiling, the discrimination, it adds up," the North African said. He continued, referring to the numeric code for France's most notorious *banlieue*: "Ninety-three — if that's on your C.V., it's hard to get a job. There's frustration among the young. That becomes hate, and hate becomes radicalism."

Just before we left, I asked the North African whether he expected the recent wave of terrorist attacks in France to continue. This was just after the arrest of several terrorist cells, and two months before a machete-wielding jihadist attacked guards near the Louvre. He gave me a somber look. "This is just the beginning," he said.

Many French Muslims, even in the *banlieues*, seem to agree with Kepel that the core problem is the spread of more aggressive forms of Islam. In Mantes-la-Jolie, I met a 50-year-old shop owner who told me he believed that by the 1990s, the situation was improving, and "France was ready to assimilate its *Maghrebins*," or North Africans. What changed, he said, was not primarily the advances of the racist National Front, but the spread of Gulf-sponsored Salafism. The man described this phenomenon in terms almost identical to Kepel's. He told me he had been shaken by some of his encounters with young local men, many of them poorly educated and delinquent but full of religious rage. Sometimes, he said, men came into the shop and called him an infidel, in front of other customers. The shopkeeper asked me not to use his name, because he feared reprisals from the Salafis. "Now, people seem almost not to want assimilation," he said. "They have taken on a religion that has nothing to do with their own origins. It's a lost generation."

Naima M'Faddel, who is one of France's relatively few Muslim elected officials as a deputy mayor

in Dreux, told me she remembered the exact moment when she became aware of Salafism. As a girl in the 1980s, she once answered the door to find herself facing a bearded man in a *djellaba*, who quickly turned his gaze to the ground so as to avoid the sin of looking at an unveiled female. "Is the master of the house here?" he said. She replied that he was not. The man said, "Tell him he should go to the mosque." M'Faddel, who grew up in a mixed neighborhood of European and North African immigrants, said her family witnessed the Islamist influence becoming dominant as the demography shifted. "My impression is that the majority of Arab Muslims in the *banlieues* have been penetrated by Salafist thinking," she told me. M'Faddel said French racism and elitism were certainly problems, but she also placed a lot of blame on the political left for "infantilizing" Muslims and not trying hard enough to integrate them as citizens.

Another passionate enemy of the Islamist trend is France's most distinguished Islamic intellectual, the Moroccan-born thinker Tareq Oubrou. Oubrou leads a mosque in Bordeaux and promotes a discreet practice of religion that is fully consistent with *laïcité*. He says beards, head scarves and other public displays of religiosity are incidental to Islam. We spoke in the library of his home, with high shelves of Arabic and French scholarship above us. Oubrou told me cheerfully that political Islam had been a "total failure" and that Islam in general was in need of a fundamental rethinking, so that people could stop "trying to turn themselves into seventh-century Arabs." The Quran, he said, was a "point of departure and not a point of arrival." His mosque, a few blocks from the train station in downtown Bordeaux, is so discreet that I almost missed it. There are no minarets, no grand entrance. The only giveaway was the group of gun-toting French soldiers who stand guard at prayer times. Oubrou's opinions have earned him repeated death threats.

I recently spoke with a young, highly trained French Muslim doctor, who wears a head scarf and who was deeply frustrated that she could not do so at the public hospital where she worked in France. She told me she went to Oubrou to seek his

advice. He asked her about the nature of her work in the hospital, and she described it to him. He then gave her his counsel: Her work in the hospital appeared to be saving lives, which was far more important — and indeed, more Islamic — than anything she might want to wear on her head. I found this answer impressive, but the doctor was not convinced. She decided soon afterward to move to Britain, where she now works in a hospital that allows her to wear the head scarf wherever she likes.

The Muslim doctor's choice suggests a tacit critique of France, and it squares with something I heard from many young French people of North African background: France is simply out of step with a more globalized world. Some academics agree. "It is not France's traditions that caused this problem, and France's traditions may not be the answer," says David Bell, a historian at Princeton. "*Laïcité* may not be the best basis for integrating these very different populations. The debates there are dominated by intellectuals who are overly attached to their own history."

When I last saw Kepel in his office, I asked him about the accusation that he had become a kind of neo-Gaullist defender of French traditions. He scoffed a bit, saying it was the circumstances that had changed, not him. "The big issue is to think about what has happened to the country — 239 dead in 18 months," he said, using his own count. "It is unprecedented on French soil." He said he saw his role as offering facts about what led to those tragedies, not offering solutions. Some of those facts were uncomfortable, and some people — including officials in places like Mantes-la-Jolie and Trappes, with their hard-core Islamist enclaves — were unwilling to face them. It was up to other people, he said, to find ways to heal France's wounds. Kepel reminded me that his career was mostly behind him and that he had nothing to lose. "It may be that I'm influenced by my background as the grandson of an assimilated Frenchman," he added. "But basically, I'm just an Orientalist with cold blood and thick skin."

The  
Washington  
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## How do you stop fake news? In Germany, with a law.

<https://www.facebook.com/anthony.faiola>

BERLIN — Germany officially unveiled a landmark social-media bill Wednesday that could quickly turn this nation into a test case in the effort to combat the spread of

fake news and hate speech in the West.

The highly anticipated draft bill is also highly contentious, with critics

denouncing it as a curb on free speech. If passed, as now appears likely, the measure would compel large outlets such as Facebook and Twitter to rapidly remove fake news

that incites hate, as well as other “criminal” content, or face fines as high as 50 million euros (\$53 million).

Chancellor Angela Merkel’s cabinet agreed on the draft bill Wednesday, giving it a high chance of approval in the German Parliament before national elections in September. In effect, the move is Germany’s response to a barrage of fake news during last year’s elections in the United States, with officials seeking to prevent a similar onslaught here.

Already, a few fake news reports have emerged in Germany. One falsely alleged that a German girl of Russian descent was raped last year by asylum seekers. Repeated by high-level Russian officials, the reports seemed aimed at Merkel’s open-door policy for refugees.

*[Germany springs to action over hate speech against migrants]*

Merkel is now involved in a strenuous campaign for a fourth term in office.

“The providers of social networks are responsible when their platforms are misused to spread hate crime or illegal false news,” German Justice Minister Heiko Maas said in a statement.

The proposed law would apply only within German borders. But Maas

said Wednesday he would press for similar measures across the European Union.

A number of European countries have also sought to counter the fake-news scourge. The Czech Republic recently inaugurated a special unit charged with denouncing false reports. Should the German measure become law, however, experts say it would amount to the boldest step yet by a major Western nation to control social-media content. Depending on how obviously false or illegal a post is, companies would have as little as 24 hours to remove it.

In addition to fake news and hate speech, the draft bill would target posts seen as inciting terrorism or spreading child pornography. Officials have cited a surge of hate speech across the Internet as a major factor behind the rise of far-right violence in Germany, including arson attacks at refugee centers and assaults on police officers.

“Germany considers itself a pioneer,” said Markus Beckedahl, a prominent German Internet activist and blogger. “It’s a solo effort . . . but the European Commission will certainly watch closely what Germany is doing.”

Yet the broad nature of the bill prompted critics to call it an overreach that risks becoming de

facto censorship. Stephan Scherzer, chairman of the Association of German Magazine Publishers, said the measure could turn big social-media companies into “private opinion police.”

Green Party politician Renate Künast told public broadcaster ARD that the bill could lead to “a sharp limitation of freedom of speech, because there will only be deleting, deleting, deleting.”

*[In Germany, the language of Nazism is no longer buried in the past]*

One of the companies most affected by the bill is Facebook, which has sought to sidestep such laws by taking voluntary measures to curb the spread of fake news. The company echoed concerns that the bill would wrongly foist upon corporations a level of decision-making on the legality of content that should instead reside with German courts.

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“We work very hard to remove illegal content from our platform and are determined to work with others to solve this problem,” the company

said in a statement. “As experts have pointed out, this legislation would force private companies rather than the courts to become the judges of what is illegal in Germany.”

But German officials argue that social-media companies are simply not acting quickly enough to deal with damaging posts. Maas cited statistics showing that Facebook has rapidly deleted just 39 percent of the criminal content it was notified about, while Twitter acted quickly to delete only 1 percent of posts cited in user complaints.

Rather than setting a new standard, officials also say they are simply forcing social-media outlets to comply with existing laws governing hate speech and incitement in Germany. Incitement and defamation laws here are far broader than in the United States; for instance, laws on the books forbid defaming German leaders and make denial of the Holocaust a crime.

“There must be just as little room for illegal hate speech on social networks as there is on the street,” Maas said. “We owe it to the victims of hate crimes to enforce this better.”



## Kirchik : Germans need to recognize that the future of the free world depends on their election

James Kirchik

If this were any other year, the upcoming federal election in Germany would be like every other German election: humdrum and focused almost exclusively on domestic issues. Despite their country’s size and economic power, Germans resist seeing their nation — or their chancellor — as a potential world leader. More than seven decades after the Second World War, Germany is still uncomfortable with anything implying leadership, which makes some sense when you consider the German word for it: *Führung*. Over 80% of Germans want their country to participate in fewer military missions; 60% say Germany should be more reserved in international affairs more broadly.

But this is not any other year. By electing Donald Trump, America has abdicated its traditional role as leader of the free world. Trump’s “America First” foreign policy, blatant disregard for international law, attacks on the European Union and NATO, coziness toward Russia, and fundamental indifference for the liberal world order constructed and

sustained by the United States mean that Washington will no longer be able to steer the community of democratic nations.

The United Kingdom, which previously held the position of the world’s leading liberal power, should naturally be the next in line. But with its decision to leave the European Union, formalized in March, Great Britain has begun an inward-looking phase that may eventually end with its becoming Little England. France, meanwhile, has long reserved for itself an “independent” (read: unilateralist) role in foreign affairs, and its likely next president, Emmanuel Macron, is a 39-year-old political novice.

In these unpredictable and turbulent times, German Chancellor Angela Merkel has emerged as a steady and reliable hand: something less than leader of the free world (as some media outlets have simplistically lauded her, and a claim which Merkel herself calls “absurd”), but something greater than the leader of just another random country. Serving her third term as the top elected official in Europe’s biggest economy, Merkel is the only

person left on the international stage equipped to confront the greatest set of challenges facing the West since the Cold War.

As the campaign for the September election gets underway, then, Germans will have to accept that events beyond their control have created an unwelcome international dimension to their national rite—and that Merkel’s continued leadership is crucial not just to Germany, but to the West.

Merkel has a record of defending the ideals that define the free world, as she did in the terse congratulatory statement offered to Trump upon his victory in November. “Germany and America are connected by values of democracy, freedom and respect for the law and the dignity of man, independent of origin, skin color, religion, gender, sexual orientation or political views,” she said, adding: “I offer the next president of the United States close cooperation on the basis of these values.”

Unlike many Western politicians, Merkel — who grew up in communist East Germany — has no illusions

about the Russian regime of Vladimir Putin, a man she has dealt with for a dozen years and whose dangerous actions in Ukraine resemble, she memorably said, the “law of the jungle.” When it comes to any number of global issues, including the migration crisis and Russia’s attempt to upend the European security order, Merkel can be trusted to base her decisions on liberal precepts.

Merkel’s chief rival, an amiable Social Democrat named Martin Schultz, was previously leader of the European Parliament, a forum that hardly prepares one to enter the rough-and-tumble world of great power statecraft. He is campaigning on a platform centered around social justice and other domestic issues, precisely the sort of campaign Germans want to have—but not the campaign they need to have.

Merkel, for her part, must acknowledge that the German federal elections carry global import, without scaring off voters. Anything that stresses a more assertive role in foreign affairs will likely lead to charges that Merkel wants to throw Germany’s weight around, and we

all know what happened the last time Berlin did that.

Germans need to get over their aversion to global leadership; their country is not and cannot be a giant Switzerland. A recent BBC poll found that Germany is the most admired nation in the world. Neighbors that once feared German militarism, like those in Central and Eastern Europe, now clamor for a greater German

military presence on their soil to deter an aggressive Russia.

While Germans may not appreciate the crucial role their country and chancellor play in the maintenance of the liberal world order, the Kremlin certainly does, at least judging by the efforts it has expended over the last several years trying to discredit Merkel. Since fugitive National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden

landed in Moscow nearly four years ago, Russia has waged a relentless propaganda campaign against Merkel, portraying her alternately as a puppet and enabler of the American surveillance state as well as a reckless harridan determined to destroy Europe through ceaseless importation of Muslim refugees.

The German people have done an admirable job confronting the horrors of their past, but they cannot

let that past inhibit them from defending the hard-won achievements they helped postwar Europe to build. The fate of the free world could depend upon it.

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

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### European Parliament Votes to Toughen Stance on Brexit

Valentina Pop

Updated April 5, 2017 9:23 a.m. ET

The European Union's parliament toughened its stance Wednesday on upcoming talks about the U.K.'s divorce from the bloc, in an important vote on Brexit.

With support from 516 out of 699 members, the European Parliament added more demands to the main principles laid out by the bloc's negotiator, Michel Barnier, who is likely to take them into account during the talks.

While the European Parliament has no direct say in the negotiations, its vote will be needed to cement the final divorce deal, as well as to approve any transitional agreements and a deal underpinning the U.K.'s future relationship with the bloc.

"We will not give our consent if the conditions set in the resolution are not respected," said Italy's Gianni Pitella, who leads the socialist bloc in the European Parliament, during a debate preceding the vote.

The parliament backed the EU negotiation principles laid out last week, after U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May sent her country's official divorce notification. The parliament set a three-year limit on transitional agreements covering the time between the U.K. leaving the EU and the start of the new relationship.

Members of the European Parliament said the transitional arrangements should be governed by the EU's top court, a condition that may prove difficult for the U.K. government to accept, as Ms. May has said this court's jurisdiction will cease on the day her country leaves the bloc.

On the disputed divorce bill, which EU officials expect to reach €60 billion (\$64 billion), European politicians said it should cover not just all commitments made by the U.K. during its time as an EU member, but also so-called off-balance sheet items. These items would include, for example, the U.K.'s share of any losses made by the European Investment Bank

during the U.K.'s time as a shareholder.

Former U.K. Independence Party leader and long-time Brexit campaigner, Nigel Farage, who is a member of the EU parliament, said the bloc was acting like the Mafia, trying to hold Britain to ransom, with "a figure that has clearly been plucked out of the air." His comments caused consternation in the assembly; in response, Mr. Farage said he could substitute the phrase "a bunch of gangsters" for "Mafia".

Mr. Barnier said "we don't seek to punish the U.K., but simply ask to deliver on its commitments taken as a member." He criticized the U.K. government for pursuing a "very risky approach" by pushing for parallel negotiations on the divorce and on the future relationship. Mr. Barnier said the bloc would insist on settling the divorce before moving on to talks on the future relationship.

"The sooner we agree on the principles of an orderly withdrawal, the sooner we can prepare our

future relation in trade, a free and fair trade agreement, but also in security and defense," Mr. Barnier said.

The European Parliament also warned the U.K. not to pursue any bilateral deals with EU countries or nations outside the bloc for as long as Britain remained a member. Such efforts would result in U.K. representatives being kicked out of the bloc's negotiations, the politicians said. The parliament also said the U.K. shouldn't use cooperation in security and defense as a bargaining chip for trade relations.

If the U.K. wants to participate in future EU programs, it must contribute to the EU budget and let itself be governed by the EU top court, the politicians said. However, the British government has ruled out any large future contributions to the EU budget.

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## INTERNATIONAL

### THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Trump Pivots on Syria Policy After Suspected Chemical Attack (UNE)

Carol E. Lee, Dion Nissenbaum and Farnaz Fasshi

Updated April 5, 2017 7:24 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump said a suspected chemical attack by the Assad regime was "a terrible affront to humanity" that changed his mind about the Syrian strongman, signaling a more aggressive U.S. policy toward Syria.

Mr. Trump didn't elaborate on how his administration would respond to the latest attack, which killed at least 85 people, but said it made him re-evaluate his approach to

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his regime.

"My attitude toward Syria and Assad has changed very much," he told reporters. Deeper U.S. involvement or a military response could heighten tension with Russia, a regime ally, and complicate the fight against Islamic State that Mr. Trump has prioritized.

Hours after Mr. Trump spoke, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson urged Russia to abandon its support for Mr. Assad. Last week, he and other administration officials indicated the U.S. expected Mr. Assad would remain in power.

The attack left the Trump administration confronting the same dilemmas former President Barack Obama contended with. Before a Syrian chemical attack in 2013, Mr. Obama said the use of chemical weapons would be a "red line," but cut a deal to remove Syria's chemical weapons stockpile rather than launching a military strike.

On Wednesday, Mr. Trump said the attack crossed "many, many lines, beyond a red line."

"It is now my responsibility," said Mr. Trump, who has faulted his predecessor's handling of the war, including a decision not to launch airstrikes after the 2013 attack—

though in tweets at the time he argued against strikes.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, also pointed Wednesday to a sharp U.S. response, saying at an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council that if the international body fails to respond, the U.S. would be "compelled to take our own actions."

Vice President Mike Pence echoed her statement in an interview with Fox News, saying: "We are hopeful that there may well be action in the United Nations Security Council but let me be clear, all options are on the table."

A military response would bring its own complications, given the complex web of forces fighting in Syria and the involvement of both the Russian and Turkish militaries in the conflict, as well as the U.S.-led campaign to recapture Islamic State's de facto capital in Syria, Raqqa.

Pentagon officials said Wednesday that they have the ability to quickly strike the Assad regime if asked by the president. "We can strike the Syrian regime if we want to, but that's not the question," said one senior U.S. military official. "The question is what happens after we strike the Syrians?"

The U.S. military has hundreds of forces operating inside Syria, where they are setting up new bases and working with Syrian rebel forces fighting Islamic State. A U.S. strike against the Assad regime could trigger a military strike on American forces operating in northern Syria.

"You've got to war game out: We do something militarily and strike something of Assad's, what does he then do?" the military official said. "Maybe I'll lob a few missiles your way, kill a few Americans, then what happens? We obviously won't stand for that."

Russia is providing Mr. Assad with a sophisticated air defense system and Russian jets that would make it difficult for American pilots to enter

Syrian airspace to strike the regime. But the U.S. could fire cruise missiles from outside Syria that would eliminate the immediate risk to American pilots.

Mr. Tillerson plans to travel to Moscow next week to meet Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and he is expected to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Mr. Trump said on Wednesday he wouldn't reveal what his response to the chemical attack might be. "I'm not saying I'm going to be doing anything, one way or another, but I'm certainly not going to be telling you," he said.

Many diplomats at the U.N. have urged the U.S. to shape a policy toward the Syria conflict that goes beyond just fighting Islamic State.

"Frankly we need an America that is seriously committed to a solution in Syria and that puts all its weight behind it," said François Delattre, France's U.N. ambassador. "If not now, when?"

European diplomats said Wednesday that taking unilateral action would be preferable to taking no action, which would imply it is possible to get away with a chemical attack.

The Syrian army denied Tuesday using any chemical or toxic substances in the town, according

to state media, and blamed "terrorist groups and those behind them." The Syrian government routinely refers to most opponents of the regime as terrorists.

A draft resolution condemning the use of chemical weapons and calling for Syria's government to fully cooperate with the U.N.'s investigations, penned by the U.K. and endorsed by the U.S., was circulated among council members.

A draft reviewed by The Wall Street Journal calls for Syria's regime to provide a U.N. team investigating chemical attacks in Syria with information on flight plans, logs, names of commanders of helicopter squads and access to relevant air bases as well as generals or offices associated with the attacks.

Diplomats said the resolution was meant to be written in language that would be acceptable to all council members, including Russia and China. Russia and China have previously vetoed any council action that would hold Mr. Assad and the regime accountable for at least three incidents in which U.N. investigators reported the government used chemical weapons against civilians.

Russia said that a new U.N. resolution wouldn't be necessary and that a resolution shouldn't point a finger at the regime, but should ask for an objective and

comprehensive investigation on the ground. Russia offered a different resolution, which was unacceptable to the U.S. and its allies, diplomats said.

"Interest in these events is ideologically driven. It's closely interwoven with the anti-Damascus campaign," said Vladimir Safronkov, Russia's deputy ambassador to the U.N.

However, Russia didn't say it would veto the resolution and went into closed-door negotiations with the U.S., U.K., France, China and other council diplomats. A vote on the resolution could happen Thursday afternoon or Friday, diplomats said.

At the U.N., Ms. Haley, speaking to the council after Mr. Safronkov said Russia and Iran, together with Mr. Assad, have demonstrated no real interest in peace.

"How many more children have to die before Russia cares?" she said.

—Eli Stokols and Felicia Schwartz contributed to this article.

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## The New York Times Trump's View of Syria and Assad Altered After 'Unacceptable' Chemical Attack (UNE)

Mark Landler, David E. Sanger and Michael D. Shear

WASHINGTON — President Trump warned on Wednesday that he would not tolerate the "heinous" chemical weapons attack in Syria, opening the door to a greater American role in protecting the population in a vicious civil war that he has always said the United States should avoid.

The president declined to offer any details about potential action. But he said his horror at the images of "innocent children, innocent babies" choked by poison gas in a rebel-held area of Syria had caused him to reassess his approach. Only days after the White House declared it would be "silly" to persist in trying to oust President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, Mr. Trump said, "My attitude toward Syria and Assad has changed very much."

"It crossed a lot of lines for me," the president declared at a news conference in the Rose Garden, referring to the "red line" that his predecessor, President Barack

Obama, had drawn before a 2013 poison-gas attack by Mr. Assad's forces. Mr. Obama's failure to strike Syria after that, Mr. Trump claimed, sowed the conditions for this new assault. The estimated death toll was reported to have exceeded 100.

Syria was one of several places, along with North Korea and Iran, where Mr. Trump on Wednesday threatened a forceful American response. But in all these cases, he declined to disclose options, arguing that there was a need for surprise but stoking worries that his fledgling administration is not ready to deal with multiple threats across the Middle East and Asia.

At the United Nations, Mr. Trump's ambassador, Nikki R. Haley, warned that the United States might take unilateral action if the Security Council failed to respond to this latest atrocity in Syria. A shift in policy could include airstrikes, which were considered and ultimately rejected by Mr. Obama.

The president, standing alongside King Abdullah II of Jordan at the news conference, told reporters, "I'm not saying I'm doing anything one way or the other, but I'm certainly not going to be telling you."

Mr. Trump's stern words and lack of specifics attested to a leader, 75 days into his presidency, who is determined to show a more muscular style than Mr. Obama but is grappling with many of the same complexities that dogged his predecessor. And they raised anew a question that Mr. Trump until now has avoided: his criteria for using force, both in a humanitarian cause and in facing a direct, if distant, threat to the United States.

"It is usually better to threaten unspecified consequences until you are at a more advanced stage of planning," said Walter Russell Mead, a foreign policy expert at Bard College. "The danger is you become so distracted by these multiple crises that you can't focus on the most urgent one, or the one where the U.S. actually has a chance of succeeding."

**Syria Chemical Attack: Here's What Happened**

One of the worst chemical attacks in the Syrian civil war occurred on Tuesday in opposition-held Idlib Province. Dozens of people died, including children. Then the blaming began.

By YARA BISHARA, MEGAN SPECIA and NATALIE RENEAU on April 5, 2017. Photo by Alaa Alyousef, via Associated Press. Watch in Times Video »

Mr. Trump's challenge is complicated by the new upheaval in the ranks of his national security aides, with the abrupt removal of his chief strategist, Stephen K. Bannon, from the senior policy panel of the National Security Council. On Thursday, Mr. Trump is to meet President Xi Jinping of China in Florida, where the president plans to push for more Chinese support in the campaign to pressure North Korea.

Mr. Trump said he viewed North Korea, which tested an



intermediate-range missile on Tuesday, as a “big problem.” But he offered no remedies. Similarly, he vowed to send a message to Iran, which is backing pro-Assad militias in Syria and which he said had benefited from a “one sided” nuclear deal with the United States negotiated by the Obama administration. But he did not say what form it would take.

At times, the Trump administration has seemed at a loss for words in responding to fast-moving events. When North Korea launched its missile, Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson issued a statement so cryptic that it left much of Washington confused.

“North Korea launched yet another intermediate range ballistic missile,” the statement said. “The United States has spoken enough about North Korea. We have no further comment.”

Until this week, North Korea and Iran both figured higher on Mr. Trump’s list of pressing foreign problems than Syria’s civil war.

In September 2013, when Mr. Obama confronted a chemical weapons attack not unlike the one Mr. Trump faces today, Mr. Trump said on Twitter: “President Obama, do not attack Syria. There is no upside and tremendous downside. Save your ‘powder’ for another (and more important)

day!” As a candidate, Mr. Trump said repeatedly that forcing Mr. Assad out of power was not as urgent a priority for the United States as vanquishing the Islamic State.

Nothing, it seems, affects Mr. Trump’s judgments as much as what he sees on television. On Wednesday, he said the images of death inside Syria affected him, presumably in ways they did not under similar circumstances four years ago. “I will tell you that attack on children had a big, big impact on me,” he said. “That was a horrible, horrible thing.”

Mr. Trump has declined to define what kind of humanitarian crisis would prompt him to act. If he considers military action in Syria, he is likely to face the same reality Mr. Obama did: While it is possible to bomb Mr. Assad’s warplanes, runways and military installations — something some senior members of the Obama administration now wish they had done — any longer-term solution would require a major presence of troops and air power.

Despite his earlier advice to Mr. Obama not to act, Mr. Trump now says his predecessor missed an opportunity to solve the Syria conflict by failing to enforce his “red line in the sand.”

“When he didn’t cross that line after making the threat,” Mr. Trump said,

“I think that set us back a long ways, not only in Syria, but in many other parts of the world, because it was a blank threat.”

Mr. Trump was similarly withering about Mr. Obama’s nuclear deal with Iran. He hinted that because Congress had not ratified the accord, the new administration could somehow unravel it. The agreement, however, is not a treaty and thus does not require congressional ratification. Privately, White House officials have said the president is unlikely to rip it up.

But Mr. Trump said he did plan to deal with Hezbollah, which is backing the Assad government in Syria, and with other Iranian-backed militias that are fighting in Syria and Iraq. “You will see,” he told a reporter. “They will have a message. You will see what the message will be.”

On Thursday, Mr. Trump will face perhaps the most complex diplomatic challenge of his presidency in playing host to Mr. Xi at his private club in Palm Beach. He plans to make North Korea the centerpiece of the meeting, pressuring the Chinese to do more to compel the North Korean dictator, Kim Jong-un, to give up his nuclear weapons.

Mr. Trump has never publicly addressed the central conundrum: While he wants North Korea to give

up its nuclear weapons, he does not want to open negotiations. That means he will either have to commit to using force or publicly back down by entering into another set of talks — two options his administration has found unpalatable.

Apart from some messages on Twitter and Mr. Tillerson’s own statements during a trip to Seoul, South Korea’s capital, two weeks ago — when he said the United States would negotiate with North Korea only after it gave up its weapons and missiles — the Trump administration has said very little about North Korea, quite deliberately.

Mr. Tillerson has made clear he will be a diplomat of few words, preferring to do his deals behind closed doors and open himself to as little probing of the strategy as possible. But in the absence of much public comment, American allies seem confused about the Trump administration’s strategy of coercive diplomacy.

“The conundrum,” said Robert S. Litwak, the director of studies at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, “is that North Korea never acts except under pressure, but pressure never works.”



## Trump condemns Syria chemical attack and suggests he will act (UNE)

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

prolonged a civil war with numerous belligerents, separate from the campaign to defeat the Islamic State.

(The Washington Post)

Doctors and activists in rebel-held areas have blamed the Syrian government for a sharp increase in chemical attacks since the end of last year. Suspected chemical attack kills scores of men, women and children in Syria (The Washington Post)

Trump suggested that the attack Tuesday had changed his mind about his approach to Syria, which had seemed to focus exclusively on defeating the Islamic State, but he did not say what that might mean.

“I like to think of myself as a very flexible person,” Trump said in a Rose Garden news conference with Jordan’s King Abdullah II.

“And I will tell you that attack on children yesterday had a big impact on me, big impact. That was a horrible, horrible thing,” Trump said. “I’ve been watching it and seeing it, and it doesn’t get any worse than that.”

The president would not say whether military action against the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is more likely as a result of the attack, and he did not address whether his concern on behalf of the dead and injured civilians had changed his mind about the wisdom of accepting Syrian refugees into the United States.

But he did say his “attitude toward Syria and Assad has changed very much.”

U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley suggested the United States could intervene militarily, although she, too, was not specific about what that might entail.

“When the United Nations consistently fails in its duty to act collectively, there are times in the life of states that we are compelled to take our own action,” Haley said.

“For the sake of the victims, I hope the rest of the council is finally willing to do the same.”

If proven to have been carried out by Assad, the chemical attack Tuesday would represent a challenge to Trump to act where

Obama did not. The attack followed recent Trump administration statements backing away from Obama’s insistence that Assad must leave power as a part of any political settlement in Syria.

Trump did not call for Assad to go and said nothing about Russian culpability for backing the regime and defending it against charges that it targeted civilians. The Assad government and Russia blamed the chemical release on rebel forces.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitoring group, said that at least 72 people were killed, making it the deadliest chemical assault since 2013, when the Syrian government dropped sarin on the Damascus suburbs, killing hundreds of people as they slept, and bringing the United States and European allies to the verge of military intervention.

On Wednesday, Trump repeated campaign-trail criticism of the Obama administration for threatening military action over that 2013 attack and then backing off. For the balance of his presidency, Obama struggled with the limits of an arm’s-length approach that he

maintained was still preferable to direct military involvement.

"We have a big problem. We have somebody that is not doing the right thing. And that's going to be my responsibility," Trump said. "But I'll tell you, that responsibility could've made, been made, a lot easier if it was handled years ago."

Trump had supported Obama's decision not to bomb in 2013, but as a candidate, he used the episode as an example of what he called the Democrat's weakness and indecision. Trump promised certitude and strength, and there were echoes of that rhetoric in his first Rose Garden news conference Wednesday.

"We will destroy ISIS and we will protect civilization," Trump said, referring to the Islamic State group that operates in Syria and is one of many players in the fractured country. "We have no choice. We will protect civilization."

Abdullah, whose small country has been overwhelmed by Syrian refugees, largely dodged a question about whether Trump's proposed travel ban, which would block Syrians from coming to the United States as refugees, would add to Jordan's burden.

"The Europeans are being very forward-leaning" in providing

financial and other help, Abdullah said. "A tremendous burden on our country, but again, tremendous appreciation to the United States and the Western countries for being able to help us in dealing with that."

In the past, attacks on civilians such as the one Tuesday have increased the pressure on Syrians to flee.

Earlier Wednesday, Haley assailed Russia in blunt terms for protecting the Syrian government, saying that Moscow is callously ignoring civilian deaths.

"How many more children have to die before Russia cares?" she said in New York, with representatives of the Syrian government and its Russian backers looking on.

She held aloft gruesome images from the attack in Idlib province. One showed a child splayed and apparently lifeless.

"Russia has shielded Assad from U.N. sanctions. If Russia has the influence in Syria that it claims to have, we need to see them use it," Haley said. "We need to see them put an end to these horrific acts."

*[Deadly attack in Syria likely involved banned nerve agent, experts say]*

At the United Nations, Russia's representative lamented what he called "clearly an ideological thrust

to the discussion at the Security Council.

Accusations of the Assad regime's involvement are "closely interwoven with the anti-Damascus campaign, which hasn't yet reached the place it deserves on the landfill of history," Russian representative Sergey Kononuchenko said.

Russia is likely to block a proposed Security Council condemnation of the attack.

Syria's representative, Mounzer Mounzer, dismissed the accusation that his country is to blame, saying Damascus condemns the use of chemical weapons. "We don't have them. We never use them," he told the council.

Under Russian pressure, Syria agreed in 2013 to give up its chemical weapons and claimed it had eliminated its stockpiles.

Russia tried Wednesday to shift the blame to armed groups opposing Assad.

Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, a Russian military spokesman, said Syrian warplanes had been targeting rebel workshops and depots.

"The territory of this storage facility housed workshops to produce projectiles filled with toxic agents," he said in a recorded statement.

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The World Health Organization said Wednesday that victims' symptoms bore all the hallmarks of a chemical attack, possibly involving a banned nerve agent. Syrian forces also have used chlorine-based weapons.

The British and French ambassadors to the United Nations criticized Russia directly for protecting the Assad government at the expense of civilians.

"History will judge all of us in how we respond to these unforgettable and unforgivable images of the innocent," British Ambassador Matthew Rycroft said. "How long are we going to sit here and pretend that actions in these chambers have no consequences?"

He said Russia and China squandered an opportunity to call out Syria when they vetoed a February effort to condemn smaller reported instances of chemical weapons use.

John Wagner contributed to this report.



## Death Toll in Suspected Syria Gas Attack Rises

Raja Abdulrahim

Updated April 5, 2017 3:54 p.m. ET

BEIRUT—International medical organizations said Wednesday the symptoms exhibited by victims of a suspected chemical attack widely blamed on the Syrian regime were consistent with exposure to a nerve agent.

The death toll from Tuesday's airstrike on the opposition-held town of Khan Sheikhoun rose to at least 85 people, all of them civilians, according to doctors and rescue workers. The bombs containing a foul-smelling gas also sickened nearly 600 people who fainted, vomited and foamed at the mouth, they added.

The victims had no external injuries and died quickly of suffocation, indicating it is likely they were exposed to a chemical attack, according to the World Health Organization.

A Doctors Without Borders medical team operating in a hospital near the Turkish border examined eight people with constricted pupils, muscle spasms and involuntary

defecation, symptoms consistent with exposure to a nerve agent such as sarin gas, according to the medical group.

The medical team also visited other hospitals in northwest Syria treating victims of the attack and reported the smell of bleach, indicating a possible exposure to chlorine—a chemical used in numerous regime attacks in the past.

The U.S. and other countries condemned President Bashar al-Assad's regime for the attack.

The Syrian army denied Tuesday using any chemical or toxic substances in the town, according to state media, and blamed "terrorist groups and those behind them." The Syrian government routinely refers to most opponents of the regime as terrorists.

In Russia, a crucial ally of Mr. Assad, the military said Wednesday that Syrian aircraft had struck a "terrorist ammunition depot" holding chemical weapons near Khan Sheikhoun. It said "terrorists" were producing chemical munitions at the site.

Russia provides air support to Mr. Assad's forces, and Moscow has consistently denied reports that Russian or regime warplanes target civilians.

The Assad regime has been accused of using sarin in past attacks as well. Doctors and rescue workers in and near Khan Sheikhoun described symptoms similar to those suffered by the victims of a 2013 sarin attack in the Damascus suburb of Eastern Ghouta, in which 1,429 people died, according to a U.S. government assessment based on local medical reports.

Following the 2013 attack, the Assad government officially joined the Chemical Weapons Convention and agreed to relinquish its chemical arsenal as part of a deal to avert the threat of U.S. military action.

Since then, however, the government has repeatedly been accused of deploying chemical weapons, with a U.N.-led investigation blaming it for at least three chlorine gas attacks in 2014 and 2015.

The Intergovernmental Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons concluded in September 2014 that chlorine was deployed as a weapon "systematically and repeatedly" in rebel-held villages in northwest Syria.

"We have long expressed concerns that the regime may not have destroyed all their stockpiles," a Western diplomat in the region said Wednesday.

The 2013 deal on dismantling the Syrian regime's chemical arsenal didn't specifically ban chlorine—a common household chemical—but its use as a weapon is prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In the six years of the Syrian war, the Assad regime has deployed much of its military arsenal including Scud missiles, barrel bombs and chemical weapons as a means of meting out collective punishment in areas under opposition control. The regime, which controls the skies over Syria, relies primarily on airstrikes to inflict damage on rebel-held areas.

Though the use of chemical weapons has elicited an outpouring

of condemnation, the regime has faced little real consequence for their continued use. Though attacks by conventional weapons have killed far more Syrians in a war which has already claimed more than 400,000 lives, chemical weapons breed a heightened sense of terror among civilians.

"There is an eerie silence," said Raed al-Fares, an opposition activist in Idlib province, where the town of Khan Sheikhoun is located. "People are afraid, especially after rumors emerged yesterday following the attack that the regime is going to strike the whole province with chemical weapons."

Some residents of Khan Sheikhoun and other towns fled north toward

the Turkish border, hoping that would provide somewhat more security from regime warplanes, which continued to launch airstrikes on Idlib province Wednesday, antigovernment activists said. Hospitals across the rebel-held province had begun to establish medical centers to treat exposure to chemical weapons.

Among the dead in Tuesday's attack were entire families.

Abdul Hamid al-Youssef, 29, lost his 11-month-old twins, Ayah and Ahmed, his wife and two brothers. They were two of 23 children killed in the attack, doctors said. The twins stopped breathing and died as Mr. Youssef carried them out of

their house in Khan Sheikhoun after the attack, he said Wednesday.

In photos posted online hours after the attack, Mr. Youssef was cradling the tiny, shrouded bodies of his children and kissing their foreheads.

Other images of rows of dead children laid out side-by-side in underwear and pajamas were reminiscent of footage that emerged after the 2013 attack.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which was tasked in 2013 with removing and destroying the Syrian regime's chemical weapons stockpile, said it had launched an investigation into Tuesday's attack. Turkish officials said medical information from

dozens of victims brought to Turkey for treatment was being given to the World Health Organization for further investigation.

The U.N. and the European Union called for those responsible for the assault to be brought to justice, focusing rare attention on a conflict that has entered its seventh year and has become dominated by the fight against the extremist Islamic State.

—Nathan Hodge in Moscow, Margaret Coker in Istanbul and Maria Abi-Habib in Beirut contributed to this article.

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**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL**

## Images From Suspected Syrian Chemical Weapons Attack Prompt Calls for Action

Laurence Norman, Felicia Schwartz and Nathan Hodge

April 5, 2017 9:20 p.m. ET

America's ambassador to the United Nations brandished two grim photos—including a close-up of a shirtless dead child, arms outstretched—when she addressed an emergency session of the Security Council on Wednesday in the aftermath of a suspected chemical attack in Syria.

"We cannot close our eyes to the picture," said the ambassador, Nikki Haley. "We cannot close our minds to the responsibility to act."

The grisly images taken in the wake of Tuesday's deadly assault were splashed across front pages and television screens, and shared widely on social media. The images spurred sharp outrage that fed calls for a stronger international response to the six-year Syrian conflict.

The U.S. and others blamed the attack, which killed at least 85 people and left hundreds of others ill, on the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

President Donald Trump said the attack, and the images of "women, small children, and even beautiful little babies" had changed his view of the Syrian conflict and Mr. Assad. "That attack on children yesterday had a big impact on me," Mr. Trump said. "I've been watching it, and seeing it, and it doesn't get any worse than that."

In Washington, Sen. Marco Rubio (R., Fla.) and Sen. Ben Cardin (D., Md.) stood in front of poster-size photos of victims of the attack and

urged the Trump administration to take action. Statements from the administration are "not enough," Mr. Rubio said.

"There needs to be a level of outrage, this needs to become a priority," he said. "Otherwise we have lost our compass as a people and as a nation and more importantly for those who care deeply about our national security."

Diplomats gathered in Brussels for a conference this week aimed at raising funds for Syrian refugees expressed outrage. A leading French-language daily in the country, *Le Soir*, ran a picture of a boy in an oxygen mask on its front page. "The Endless Martyrdom of Syrians," the headline read.

European Union foreign-policy chief Federica Mogherini said the images from Syria "remind us all that here we have a responsibility to unite" to make peace. "What we've seen yesterday has horrified all of us," she said. "I can say this as a politician, but first of all as a mother."

But some diplomats said they were skeptical the latest violence—and the images of its toll—would be a turning point in a long-running conflict that has killed more than 400,000.

"Unfortunately, nobody has the guts to do anything against this regime," said Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri, speaking in Brussels. "The death toll is rising and nobody is doing anything."

The international divisions that have stymied a resolution to the conflict played out in how the apparent

chemical attack was covered by the media of different nations.

Russia's state-dominated broadcasters gave little airtime to the images of civilian victims of the chemical attack. Russian officials have put forward two narratives in response to the photos and videos of the bodies offered by rescue workers: either casting doubt on their credibility, or suggesting that the victims had been affected by a Syrian government strike against a rebel chemical-weapons facility.

Maria Zakharova, spokeswoman for the Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry, attacked the White Helmets, a civil-defense organization that operates in parts of rebel-controlled Syria.

"I would like to emphasize that all falsified reports on this issue come only from the notorious 'White Helmets' and the odious Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, based in London," she said in a briefing Wednesday. "Neither the White Helmets nor this observatory can be trusted."

Many news agencies in Iran, an Assad backer where state-owned or semiofficial outlets dominate, avoided reporting on the chemical attack. Stories by the hard-line outlet Fars News Agency focused on Syrian government denials and Russian portrayals of the incident as a strike on a warehouse where rebels stockpiled chemicals.

Still, graphic pictures of tragedies have sparked public outrage and helped drive policy change in the recent past. In September 2015, the picture of a lifeless boy facedown on a Turkish beach helped drive the

EU response to the migration crisis. Days later Germany's government signaled it was willing to give asylum to any Syrian refugees who wished to come.

The bipartisan display from Mr. Rubio and Mr. Cardin showed how some senators saw the attack as a moment to galvanize a forceful U.S. policy response. Mr. Cardin said the Trump administration should state clearly that Mr. Assad can't be the president of Syria, increase sanctions on the Syrian regime and begin a process to indict Mr. Assad for war crimes.

Sen. John McCain (R., Ariz.), who has advocated a stepped-up American role in Syria, said the Trump administration has the chance to "change course and take action"

"Seizing this opportunity will require answering some very difficult strategic questions," said Mr. McCain. "Until we do, the war, the terror, and the refugees will continue, and America's national security interests will be placed at greater risk."

—Asa Fitch and Farnaz Fassihi contributed to this article.

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# Nikki Haley Says U.S. May 'Take Our Own Action' on Syrian Chemical Attack

Somini Sengupta and Rick Gladstone

A hospital room in Khan Sheikhoun, Syria, after a toxic gas attack on Tuesday. Omar Haj Kadour/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

UNITED NATIONS — Holding photographs of dead Syrian children after a chemical bomb attack, the United States ambassador to the United Nations warned on Wednesday that her country might take unilateral action if the Security Council failed to respond to the latest atrocity in the Syria war.

Facing her first serious Syria showdown at the Security Council, the ambassador, Nikki R. Haley, also used her remarks at an emergency session to blame Russia for blocking a robust response to the attack on Tuesday on a northern Syrian town, which has incited widespread condemnation. The death toll was reported to exceed 100.

The United States, France and Britain have accused the Syrian government of responsibility and bitterly criticized Russia — Syria's main ally in the six-year-old war — for objecting to a resolution they drafted condemning the attack.

Nikki R. Haley, the American ambassador to the United Nations, held photographs of victims of the chemical attack in Syria during a Security Council meeting on Wednesday. Drew Angerer/Getty Images

Russia has said that insurgents may have been responsible, or that the attack may have been fabricated to

embarrass President Bashar al-Assad of Syria.

"Time and time again, Russia uses the same false narrative to deflect attention from their allies in Damascus," Ms. Haley said. "How many more children have to die before Russia cares?"

She closed her remarks with an ominous warning. "When the United Nations consistently fails in its duty to act collectively, there are times in the life of states that we are compelled to take our own action," she said.

## Syria Chemical Attack: Here's What Happened

One of the worst chemical attacks in the Syrian civil war occurred on Tuesday in opposition-held Idlib Province. Dozens of people died, including children. Then the blaming began.

She did not provide further details. But the hint of acting alone was striking, suggesting that she was willing to articulate a position even before her boss.

Shortly after her remarks, President Trump expressed his own tougher tone toward Mr. Assad. At a White House news conference on Wednesday, Mr. Trump said that the attack had "crossed a lot of lines for me" and that his attitude toward "Syria and Assad has changed very much."

The French ambassador to the United Nations, François Delattre, called on Russia to stand up to the use of chemical weapons and on the United States to show

leadership on Syria. Asked about his American counterpart's suggestion of unilateral action in the absence of a consensus, Mr. Delattre demurred. "Action by the Security Council would be by far the best option," he said. "I'm concerned by inaction at this stage, the risk of inaction."

Children receiving treatment after the gas attack. Mohamed Al-Bakour/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

The draft resolution "expresses its determination that those responsible must be held accountable" but provided no concrete measure to do so. It reminded the Syrian government that it was obliged to cooperate with international investigators looking into the use of chemical weapons, including by turning over all flight logs, flight plans and the names of commanders in charge of air operations on the day of the strike. It also asked the secretary general, António Guterres, to provide monthly reports on whether the Syrian government was cooperating.

The British envoy, Matthew Rycroft, pushed his fellow diplomats to act or lose all credibility in the eyes of the public. "They view us as a table of diplomats doing nothing, our hands tied behind our backs, beholden to Russian intransigence," he said.

Russia dismissed the comments, saying, "At this stage, we don't see a particular need." Its deputy ambassador, Vladimir Safronkov, went on to scold its drafters for

expressing "horror" at the attack: "Have you even checked what you wrote? This draft was prepared in a hasty way."

After the Council meeting ended, diplomats said that they were continuing to negotiate and that no vote had been scheduled.

In Brussels, at a meeting of donor countries for Syrian humanitarian relief convened by the European Union, Mr. Guterres declared that "war crimes are going on in Syria."

Asked whether Mr. Assad's government was responsible, Mr. Guterres called for "a very clear investigation to remove all doubts."

Condemnation also came from Pope Francis, who called the attack "an unacceptable massacre"; the NATO secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, who deplored "the use of these barbaric weapons"; and Donald Tusk, president of the European Council, who said that Syria's government bore primary responsibility.

The Brussels conference produced pledges of \$6 billion for 2017, Christos Stylianides, the European commissioner for humanitarian aid, announced Wednesday evening when the meeting concluded. That was less than half of the amount pledged a year ago.

The war in Syria has taken nearly 400,000 lives, monitoring groups have said, and it has displaced roughly half of all Syrians from their homes.



## Russia to Trump: Put Up or Shut Up on Syria and Bashar Assad

Zamira Rahim

The Russian government has questioned United States stance on Syrian President Bashar Assad, after President Donald Trump criticized a reported chemical weapons attack in Syria's Idlib province by government forces.

The attack has killed at least 86 people, including 26 children, CNN reports. Countries including the

U.S., the U.K. and Turkey have linked the attack to Assad's forces. Russia has repeatedly supported the Assad regime, and did so again in the aftermath of the latest deaths, suggesting the deaths had been caused by a Syrian strike hitting a rebel stockpile of chemical weapons.

Trump, whose administration had previously signaled that removing

Assad was not a priority, said Wednesday that the attack had caused him to change his mind about the Syrian President. He added that the use of chemical weapons was "heinous" and "crossed a lot of lines".

But Assad had previously been suspected of using chemical weapons, and Trump did not offer any clarity on what a revised U.S.

strategy in dealing with the Syria strongman would look like. So Russia posted the question on Thursday:

"Russia's approach to Assad is clear," Maria Zakharova, a Russian ministry spokeswoman, told CNN. "He is the legal president of an independent state. What is the U.S. approach?"



## Editorial : Syria is not a black hole for international law

The Christian Science Monitor

April 5, 2017 —With the Syrian conflict entering its seventh year, United Nations officials are asking if the country has become a war zone

empty of international norms. Chemical weapons are used in violation of international law. Aid is denied to millions of displaced civilians. Torture and other human-rights atrocities are commonplace. The death toll is now more than

400,000. And negotiations to end the war have so far been useless.

"How many times have we pleaded for the laws of war to be heeded or for a lasting political solution to end

the conflict?" says Stephen O'Brien, UN emergency relief coordinator.

Yet amid a conflict that appears free of moral conventions, humanitarian law does have a strong foothold. Nearly 5 million Syrian refugees

have spent years in nearby countries, welcomed with the type of hospitality toward strangers that is deeply rooted in the Abrahamic religions. Most of the refugees are in Turkey, but in tiny Lebanon they make up nearly a quarter of the population. And in an important measure of the world's commitment to international law, a conference in Brussels this week resulted in new pledges of aid for Lebanon.

Helping Middle East countries host the refugees — and fight off any “compassion fatigue” — is a critical investment for the future of Syria. The war will end some day, and the refugees will return. Their treatment as guests in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and other countries will instill values such as diversity and tolerance, which will be important in rebuilding their country. Given the history of war and enmity in the

Middle East, any lessons of hospitality must be supported.

A similar hospitality can be found in Tunisia toward Libyan refugees and in the neighboring countries of Nigeria toward refugees fleeing Boko Haram militants. Even though such conflicts largely ignore international rules of war, they are not “empty” of humanitarian law. The aid provided to Syrian refugees has helped them to retain their

dignity. When given shelter and work, they feel control over their lives and prepare themselves to return home.

This is law in action, or humanity's humanity at work. Rather than bemoan the absence of international law in Syria, it may be time to recognize where part of it already exists.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Wolfowitz : For Syria, Words Won't Be Enough

Paul Wolfowitz

April 5, 2017

7:20 p.m. ET

Among the many unintentionally profound comments attributed to Yankee great Yogi Berra, one of the best known is, “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.”

President Trump may have initially believed that he could avoid the fork in the road presented by the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons in Syria by simply blaming the crime on Barack Obama's failure to enforce his “red line” four years ago. Fortunately it seems he has reconsidered.

Mr. Trump initially responded on Tuesday by condemning the attacks as “heinous” and “reprehensible.” He added correctly that little children in Syria would not be dying such gruesome and painful deaths, gasping for breath, if Mr. Obama had followed through on his warnings against the use of chemical weapons in that civil war.

That made it briefly appear as though the president might use Mr. Obama's failure as an excuse to avoid action. In a joint press

conference Wednesday with Jordan's King Abdullah, however, Mr. Trump said the attacks on Syrian civilians, “innocent little babies” in particular, crosses “many, many lines for me.” He continued, “I now have responsibility,” and will “carry it very proudly.”

Mr. Obama's temporizing has admittedly taken some options away from Mr. Trump. What former Secretary of State John Kerry once described as an “unbelievably small, limited kind” of military strike probably was never sufficient to fulfill its stated purpose: to “hold Bashar Assad accountable.” Certainly something more substantial is needed now. And Russia's presence in Syria makes the situation much more problematic. Escaping this crisis through yet another agreement to eliminate Syria's horrific weapons peacefully is no longer feasible.

Let us hope Mr. Trump will reassess the impact of recent statements by members of his administration indicating that the U.S. is prepared to live with the Assad regime. The Syrians—and their Russian and Iranian backers—might well have interpreted this as a signal that they

could continue terrorizing the population. Ominously, doctors and activists in the Idlib area, where Tuesday's attacks took place, say there has been an upswing in the use of chemical weapons since the end of 2016.

The large numbers of Syrians who see Mr. Assad as no better than ISIS probably believe that the Trump administration has given him a green light. Their seeming acceptance of Mr. Assad must have come as a dash of cold water for our many allies and potential allies who thought the new American president was a strong, bold leader who would stand up to Iran in a way his predecessor did not.

Mr. Trump now needs to back up Wednesday's strong words with leadership. As president, his statements carry weight that they didn't previously. World leaders make life-or-death decisions based on what they believe the American president's words signify about U.S. intentions. If his actions don't match his rhetoric, critical allies will conclude that Mr. Trump is weak, like his predecessor, which will have a damaging ripple effect for U.S.

interests throughout the region and the world.

As with most such situations, the facts of the case are not yet completely clear. The Russians are claiming that Syrian warplanes targeted rebels who were producing toxic projectiles—an unconvincing story, but the facts do need to be investigated.

While the investigation is under way, the Trump administration should not spend the time hoping that the problem will go away. Instead, they should use it to prepare a bold course of action to end these barbaric attacks and restore peace to Syria. That is no small task.

Indeed, the Trump administration foreign policy is facing its first serious fork in the road. The president seems ready to take on the burden. All Americans should hope that he does not fail.

*Mr. Wolfowitz, an American Enterprise Institute scholar, has served as deputy defense secretary and ambassador to Indonesia.*

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## NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

### Tobin : Trump & Syria -- Bashar Assad's ISIS Fight May Be Reason Trump Is Cautious

As late as earlier this week, some in the White House were saying that for the U.S. to pursue the ouster of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad would be “silly.” But after President Donald Trump's strong statement on Wednesday about Assad's use of chemical weapons and U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley's denunciation of both the Syrian government and its Russian enabler, the notion of American action — both diplomatic and possibly even military — directed against Assad can't be considered so silly. Indeed, as the Trump foreign-policy team assesses its goals in the Middle East, reversing course on Syria may be the only way the president has of fulfilling his promise to defeat ISIS.

Those who cheered Trump's determination to avoid foreign entanglements — especially ones rooted in humanitarian concerns — may be hoping that the administration's most recent statements about Syria won't be translated into action. Given Trump's history of deprecating the Bush administration and his criticism of President Obama for even thinking about enforcing his “red line” threat to Assad that Trump now correctly sees as making his predecessor responsible for the mess he inherited, it is entirely possible that Trump will ultimately do nothing. But it's also possible that this administration, like so many of its predecessors, is working its way toward inescapable conclusions about policy that

contradict campaign rhetoric. Much as Trump would have liked to leave Assad in place, events may have made that impossible.

When Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Ambassador Haley, and White House spokesman Sean Spicer were dismissing the idea of seeking Assad's removal, they were merely acknowledging facts. Obama's timidity combined with massive military intervention by Iran, Tehran's Hezbollah auxiliaries, and, most importantly, Russia, meant the Damascus regime had largely won a civil war they were in danger of losing a few years ago. In 2013, when Obama stated that the use of chemical weapons by Assad meant crossing a “red line” the West would not ignore, the outcome of

the war was still in doubt. While some rebel forces remain in the field, the dictator's hold on power is no longer in question. The one truly potent threat is ISIS, which the Syrian government and its allies have largely left alone even as they have laid waste to any area where other dissidents have been located.

While Assad would like to reclaim all of his territory, ISIS, which still controls large stretches of both Syria and Iraq, has not been a priority. Assad and the Russians have been content to allow it to maintain its strength, since it has been a greater threat to the government of Iraq and its Western and Arab allies than to them. But his latest use of chemical weapons — which were supposed to have been

collected by Russia, according to the face-saving agreement Obama concluded with Putin in order to justify his refusal to enforce his “red line” threat — has done more than generate international outrage.

The problem for Trump isn't just that neither he nor the rest of his foreign-policy team are comfortable with maintaining silence about gas attacks on civilians or the fact that their Russian “friends” have no shame about providing diplomatic cover for Assad's atrocities at the United Nations. It's that they may be starting to realize that a tilt toward Russia may not be compatible with Trump's promises of a successful war against the Islamic State.

The West rightly regards ISIS as a barbarous terror group that has inflicted countless atrocities on minority groups and political opponents in Syria and Iraq. But to Sunni Muslims in Syria, the Islamic

State is the only force that is still effectively resisting the depredations of a Syrian government that many link to the Alawite minority. As much as both Obama and now Trump may have hoped that a war on ISIS could be prosecuted in cooperation with the Russian and Iranian forces helping Assad, the gas attack is a reminder that so long as Assad's butchers are terrorizing and slaughtering civilians with impunity, ISIS will have the support of many Syrians.

This week's reports of Assad's depredations may be forcing the president to confront the basic contradictions at the heart of his approach to the region. Just as he must choose between a desire to get tough with an Iranian government that seeks regional hegemony and his desire to avoid confrontations with their Russian ally in Syria, so, too, must Trump come to grips with the fact that the

military victory over ISIS he promised last year is incompatible with a policy of leaving Assad in place.

Rather than emulate Obama and sit back and let the Russians have their way in Syria, Trump must use all of the formidable resources at his disposal to get Moscow to rein in or abandon their client. As Senator Tom Cotton (R., Ark.) suggested on Wednesday, that might involve the use of covert action or military force against Assad. The motivation for Trump pressuring the Russians in this manner isn't so much a justified outrage at what has happened in Syria as a realization that acquiescence to the current state of affairs is antithetical to U.S. security goals about terror that Trump should regard as more important than his pro-Russian tilt.

It is ironic that a president whose political success was in no small

measure advanced by his stand against interventionism is now being forced to deal with the costs of a policy of appeasement of Russia that he advocated. But the world looks very different from the Oval Office. This wouldn't be the first administration that was transformed by events that weren't foreseen or properly understood before it took office. Should Trump hesitate to press the Russians or simply let this moment pass without U.S. action of some kind, that may be what some in his base want. But Bashar al-Assad's deplorable actions may have brought some much-needed clarity to Trump's otherwise muddled foreign-policy vision that will compel him to change his tune.

— Jonathan S. Tobin is opinion editor of JNS.org and a contributor to National Review Online. Follow him on Twitter at: @jonathans\_tobin.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

# Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Tested by Syria, North Korea Crises (UNE)

Carol E. Lee and Felicia Schwartz

April 5, 2017 8:01 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—A confluence of crises in Syria and North Korea is forcing President Donald Trump to re-evaluate his fledgling foreign policy, deciding which advisers he will listen to and which campaign pledges to jettison.

The apparent chemical-weapons attack in Syria and the latest ballistic missile test by North Korea raise the stakes for two upcoming events: Mr. Trump's summit this week with Chinese President Xi Jinping, a key ally of North Korea, and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's planned visit next week to Russia, a patron of the Syrian regime.

The president has signaled in recent days that he is willing to scramble the U.S. approach to North Korea, including by using military force, and he put his stance on Syria in play as well in a news conference on Wednesday.

Mr. Trump thus showed a readiness to shift from positions he held during his presidential campaign, when he entertained the prospect of talks with North Koreans and others. But the crises also will help indicate whether there has been a change in how—and by whom—the administration's foreign policy is developed.

On Wednesday Mr. Trump approved changes that removed adviser Steve Bannon from the operations of the White House

National Security Council and restored the roles of traditional U.S. security officials. The administration portrayed the move as long-planned, but others said it was the result of shifting White House dynamics.

“It looks like it's snapping back to the mean of more regular order in the foreign policy-making process,” said Richard Fontaine, president of the Center for a New American Security and a former foreign-policy adviser to Sen. John McCain (R., Ariz.). “The question is going to be how does all of this connect with the president and rest of the White House?”

In recent months, Mr. Trump roiled U.S. ties with many allies through Twitter messages and public comments, eclipsing the more sober and cautious statements by senior advisers such as Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Mr. Tillerson and others.

But the situations in North Korea and Syria require effective, reliable cooperation from key allies, such as Japan and South Korea, or European and Arab nations, said R. Nicholas Burns, a former career diplomat and undersecretary of state during the administration of President George W. Bush.

“This is a brutal experience; hopefully it will empower the pragmatic, expert part of the administration,” Mr. Burns said.

While Mr. Trump hasn't yet laid out specific policy shifts, the developments this week in Syria and North Korea, and the visit of Mr.

Xi to his Florida estate, have narrowed the window of time in which Mr. Trump has to act.

“People are going to be looking to see how the administration deals with these specific problems,” Mr. Fontaine said.

“The response to North Korea, to Xi, to Syria—they're going to be read as having broader significance into the kind of foreign policy that the administration wants to conduct going forward. It heightens the importance of these three events,” he said.

Mr. Trump has yet to develop a broad policy on Syria, which overlaps with his strategy against Islamic State, his goals for relations with Russia and his efforts to engage the Persian Gulf states, which have long wanted the U.S. to force out Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Mr. Trump has filled the top slots in his foreign-policy and national-security team, but many other positions remain empty. Mr. Trump's choice for ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, was recently sworn in, but his pick for ambassador to China hasn't been confirmed; he has yet to nominate his choice for ambassador to Russia.

The administration's most visible point person on Syria, and Russia, has been Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Ms. Haley said Wednesday the U.S. would act on its own if Russia

doesn't cooperate in a response to the chemical weapons attack.

On China, Mr. Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser in the White House, Jared Kushner, has played a leading role in formulating the administration's policy. The president's top diplomat, Mr. Tillerson, also tried to lay groundwork for this week's visit by Mr. Xi during a recent trip to Beijing.

Susan Thornton, the acting assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, said Wednesday the Trump administration wants China to close off its financial pipeline to North Korea, because “they are going to have an important part to play in the international effort to do something about North Korea's increasingly provocative moves.”

North Korea is “a big problem,” Mr. Trump said Wednesday. “We have somebody that is not doing the right thing, and that's going to be my responsibility.” Yet, Mr. Trump said in an interview with the Financial Times this week that “if China is not going to solve North Korea, we will.”

Mr. Trump on Wednesday spoke by phone with Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and said the U.S. would “continue to strengthen its ability to deter and defend itself and its allies with the full range of its military capabilities,” according to the White House.

Mr. Trump's rhetoric toward China on North Korea in advance of his meeting with Mr. Xi could better position him, said Jeffrey Bader,

who was President Barack Obama's top adviser on Asia.

"The Chinese understand that we are looking at new more strenuous, more draconian actions," Mr. Bader said. "In terms of preparation for the meeting with Xi, it is helpful for the Chinese to perceive that and should help motivate them to supportive of a tougher approach."

Mr. Trump has otherwise taken a rather traditional U.S. approach to China—recognizing, for instance, the "One China" policy he initially said was up for negotiation—despite fiery campaign rhetoric against Beijing over its trade and economic policies. Mr. Trump has a host of other issues to discuss with Mr. Xi, including

trade and maritime-security concerns in the South China Sea.

As a candidate, Mr. Trump promised to take strong action on trade and label Beijing a currency manipulator on his first day in office, but he has since backed off those positions.

Mr. Trump also took a more conciliatory tone toward Mr. Assad and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un. He said at one point Mr. Kim deserved credit for taking control of the country and that he would have no problem speaking with him. Mr. Trump said he didn't like Mr. Assad but that he was fighting Islamic State.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## Trump and his 'America First' philosophy face first moral quandary in Syria (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/greg.jaffe.5>

President Trump has vowed to follow a radically new approach to foreign policy that jettisons the costly mantle of moral leadership in favor of America's most immediate economic and security interests.

This week, crises in Syria and North Korea have put Trump's "America First" foreign policy to perhaps its biggest test.

On Wednesday, the president stood next to Jordan's King Abdullah II in the Rose Garden and delivered a statement on the brutal chemical weapons attack in Syria that sounded as though it could have been given by any one of his recent predecessors in office.

Trump condemned the attack as a "horrific" strike by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime against "innocent people, including women, small children and even beautiful little babies."

*[Turkish autopsies confirm chemical weapons used in Syria attack]*

(Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

Asked if it crossed a red line for him, Trump replied: "It crossed a lot of lines for me. ... Beyond a red line. Many, many lines."

Despite the tough talk, the Syrian chemical weapons attack poses a particular problem for Trump's foreign policy philosophy. The attack by Assad's forces offends America's values and it violates long-standing international norms of behavior, but it does not present an immediate threat to America's security or its economic interests. In an "America First" world, it is an

atrocious, but hardly a call to action for the United States and its allies.

The president's statement in the Rose Garden suggested that the horrors he had seen on television were causing him to rethink some of the core beliefs he had held about the U.S. role in the world when he was running for office.

The big question was how long Trump's sense of outrage would last and whether it would lead to substantive action.

"The president just made a statement on Assad that looks 180 degrees different from his actual policy," said Kori Schake, a research fellow at Stanford University and former official in the George W. Bush administration. "This may be a scattershot administration with a president that responds to near-term stimulus rather than long-term planning or strategy."

Less than a week before the chemical weapons strike, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley suggested that the Trump administration could live with an outcome that wiped out the Islamic State in Syria but did not remove Assad.

*[A chemical weapons attack in Syria exposes Trump's Assad problem]*

In the immediate aftermath of the attack, Trump seemed to be sticking to that instinct. His first impulse was to focus blame for the attack on President Barack Obama for threatening, but not executing, military strikes when Assad killed hundreds in a 2013 chemical attack.

Assad's "heinous actions," Trump said in a statement Tuesday after the attack, were a direct

consequence of Obama's "weakness and irresolution."

While Mr. Trump criticized Mr. Obama throughout the campaign for drawing a red line on Syria and not enforcing it, he was against military action in Syria at that time. And he drew his own red line on Syria on Wednesday.

Mr. Trump's swiftest policy turnaround has been on the future of Mr. Assad. Just days ago, his administration dropped the longtime U.S. demand that Mr. Assad must relinquish power as part of any political resolution to the Syrian conflict. On Wednesday Mr. Trump said the chemical attack had changed his view.

"It's extraordinary to me that they could pivot so quickly," said Aaron David Miller, an expert at the Wilson Center and former adviser to Republican and Democratic secretaries of State. "We've gone from risk aversion to risk readiness in 24 hours."

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By Wednesday afternoon, Trump seemed to be hinting — without directly saying it — that Assad's actions must be punished and that the Syrian strongman might have to go.

"I don't have one specific way," Trump said. "... I do change, and I'm flexible. ... And I will tell you that the attack on children yesterday had a big impact on me — big impact. That was a horrible, horrible thing."

The Trump administration is in the middle of a major review of its policies in Iraq and Syria that is being led by the Pentagon and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis.

A similar review is underway regarding its policy on North Korea, which on Wednesday launched another medium-range ballistic missile. The isolated and dangerous regime seems likely to develop a long-range missile capable of delivering a nuclear weapon to the United States before Trump leaves office.

Trump, during his Rose Garden appearance, was clearly feeling the weight of both of those foreign policy crises. When asked whether he felt responsibility to respond to the Syrian attack, he answered affirmatively and then naturally shifted to North Korea and his meeting later this week with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"We have a big problem," he said of North Korea. "We have somebody

Center and former adviser to Republican and Democratic secretaries of State. "We've gone from risk aversion to risk readiness in 24 hours."

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**Corrections & Amplifications** Susan Thornton is the acting assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs. An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated her title. (April 5, 2017)

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Whether that burden will push Trump away from his "America First" outlook and toward a more traditional foreign policy remains to be seen. In just a few months in office, Trump has consistently upended foreign policy norms and shown that he has little interest in leading or enforcing the rules-based international order as other presidents did over the past 70 years.

For the moment, the biggest changes from the Obama years are in style and rhetoric. Trump often has seemed more ambivalent than outraged over Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its annexation of Crimea. His interest in NATO, the cornerstone of security in Europe, is often largely confined to whether the allies are paying their fair share and the United States is getting a good deal.

He has shown a clear preference for stable dictators over the spread of democracy as indicated by the warm Oval Office welcome given to Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, who was shunned by the Obama White House for his brutal crackdown on dissidents.

The Syrian chemical weapons attack seemed to awaken Trump's sense of moral responsibility as leader of the world's sole remaining superpower. A president who has often seemed indifferent to suffering in faraway countries — including the plight of Syrian refugees — reacted with a natural revulsion.

*[Trump on Syria: 'I now have responsibility']*

Less clear was whether that revulsion would produce a significant shift in policy.

"I'm still trying to sort out what the reactions of the White House are and whether they have changed their position on Assad or whether it's just a rhetorical shift," said Danielle Pletka, a vice president at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative Washington think tank.

Other analysts echoed that confusion. "They have not yet

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL**

## U.S.-China Trade Tensions Loom Over Trump-Xi Summit

William Mauldin

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2017 5:08 p.m. ET

As President Donald Trump and China's President Xi Jinping meet this week for what White House officials are calling an introductory summit, there is one issue where the U.S. leader's position will need no introduction: trade.

Mr. Trump won the White House in part with an angry denunciation of other countries' economic "cheating," using China as Exhibit A. Last week, he predicted a "very difficult" meeting with Mr. Xi, citing "massive trade deficits and job losses."

Even with North Korea and other Asian security concerns front and center, disagreements over trade between the world's two largest economies may well be the topic that brings the most tension to the gathering at Mr. Trump's Mar-a-Lago club in Florida on Thursday and Friday. White House officials aren't raising expectations for any kind of grand deal.

"At the end of the meeting it's essentially going to be a stalemate—agree to disagree on a lot of things," said Scott Kennedy, a China scholar at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank.

The visit will set the tone for a complex relationship, one Mr. Trump aims to redefine by combating what he and his trade advisers see as the dumping of products in the U.S. at below fair value and Beijing's broad policies of subsidizing industries from metals production to aviation at the expense of American competitors.

Some business leaders said they would like Mr. Trump to convey his concerns about China's business climate—including limits on

figured out what they are trying to do," said Peter Feaver, a professor at Duke University and an adviser in the second Bush administration. "What looks like recalibration might be multiple voices."

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investment and fights over technology and intellectual property—so that the countries can work together over the long term on resolving the issues rather than merely blocking each other's exports.

"While we don't yet know the strategy of the Trump administration, we do agree with its desire for significant changes to Chinese policies that will result in a more-market-based and level playing field for American companies," said Jeremie Waterman, the China director at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the biggest U.S. business lobby.

A senior White House official told reporters on Tuesday that Mr. Trump intends to work in a constructive manner to reduce trade and investment barriers in China. The topics haven't been decided on in advance, so the two leaders are set to bring up whatever is on their minds, with the aim of starting a framework for addressing disagreements rather than setting policy on tariffs or other areas, the official said.

Progress with China has slowed recently, and the Trump administration wants to make the relationship more "fair, balanced and based on the principle of reciprocity," the official said.

Adding to the uncertainty is the fact that the meeting is happening quite early in Mr. Trump's term. His pick for U.S. trade representative, Robert Lighthizer, hasn't been confirmed by the Senate, and the Trump team hasn't brought key officials on board to develop a detailed strategy for challenging China's trade practices.

Moreover, members of his trade team hold disparate views on the issue. Some are closer to the traditional free-trade approach and others are pushing a harder line

in a White House marked by rival factions, it has become difficult to figure out who exactly is in charge of foreign policy. On Wednesday, Trump removed White House chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon from the National Security Council. The change suggested that national security adviser H.R. McMaster, who has a traditional view of U.S. power and global leadership obligations, was gaining influence over policymaking.

For his part, Trump left many guessing about his ultimate intentions in Syria and North Korea. "I don't like to say where I'm going and what I'm doing," he said.

His broader view of foreign policy, though, was clearer and unchanging.

"I just have to say that the world is a mess," he said. "I inherited a mess."

against Beijing to lower the trade deficit in goods with China, which stood at \$347 billion in 2016. China's ambassador has courted Trump adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner, part of the former group, in an effort to lower tensions.

Some diplomats and experts on Beijing said Mr. Xi may seek to further calm the waters by offering to limit certain Chinese exports, announcing deals for Beijing's state-run companies to buy big-ticket American exports, or arranging to make large Chinese investments in the U.S.

"I bet you dollars to doughnuts that Xi is coming bearing a specific gift like that that Trump will tweet," said Max Baucus, the U.S. ambassador to Beijing at the end of Barack Obama's presidency and a longtime Democratic senator overseeing trade issues.

But lawmakers and some business lobbyists in Washington are increasingly complaining that limited deals with Beijing aren't solving the economic and business disputes between the two countries.

Senate Democrats on Wednesday called on Mr. Trump to confront China on economic issues and 39 senators wrote to Mr. Trump asking him to address barriers that are keeping American beef out of China, despite Beijing's lifting of its beef ban.

Mr. Obama went to considerable effort to strike a major climate deal with Mr. Xi but Beijing was able to gain commercial advantage from that deal through massive state-driven investment in solar and wind technology, Mr. Baucus said.

Some top officials in the Trump administration said China hasn't abided by previous trade commitments, so they are planning to press ahead with plans to bring major unilateral trade-enforcement

cases that could hit Chinese industries with big tariffs.

"Eventually the Trump administration will use a series of carrots and—mostly—sticks to try to get China to modify its economic policies, and I think China will respond in kind," said CSIS's Mr. Kennedy.

Launching trade-enforcement cases under U.S. law could bring retaliation against American products directly from China or through the World Trade Organization, trade lawyers said. The Obama administration mostly avoided unilateral trade-enforcement actions under U.S. law, instead favoring a series of WTO cases against Beijing that often take years to produce a result for a given industry.

Given Mr. Trump's style and his recent meetings with world leaders, former officials and trade experts see a risk that the new president could make a public remark or Twitter post that strains the relationship. Starting off on the wrong foot could have repercussions both in trade and the security sphere.

On the other hand, Mr. Trump's experience in complicated business negotiations could be an asset, said Ed Mermelstein, a longtime Manhattan real estate lawyer who has worked with Mr. Trump.

"If you've ever done a major real estate transaction in New York, there's no other way of describing it than war," Mr. Mermelstein said, adding that "there's often a peace treaty signed at the end."

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## **POLITICO** Trump lacks key players for meeting with Chinese leader

By Josh Meyer



President Donald Trump may be brimming with confidence going into his Mar-a-Lago summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, but some China watchers say he could easily be outmatched by a superbly well-prepped Beijing diplomatic team aiming to exploit gaping holes in the White House's fledgling China policy group.

Trump will be relying heavily on son-in-law and real-estate magnate Jared Kushner with some assistance from old China hand Henry Kissinger and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, an oil executive who is mostly unfamiliar with the customs and political protocols of a Chinese delegation that places a premium on them. But Trump hasn't filled many key positions that could bolster him in the negotiations, including assistant secretaries of State and Defense for East Asia, according to former U.S. officials and other experts familiar with China policy.

Story Continued Below

"Those are very key players, and without people in those positions, it is hard to imagine that the administration in this short period of time has been able to come with a comprehensive China policy," said Dennis Wilder, who served from 2015 to 2016 as the CIA's deputy assistant director for East Asia and the Pacific.

A Trump administration spokesperson had no comment on whether the White House's China team is up to the task, or hindered by unfilled positions or lack of experience.

Other key positions remain unfilled, including a China-related slot at the U.S. Trade Representative's office. And one of the most important slots -- Trump's senior director for Asia on the National Security Council -- is occupied by Matthew Pottinger, a former Beijing-based journalist turned Marine who served in Iraq and Afghanistan

and was brought in by Trump's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn.

"While I'm sure he will learn quickly, he has no experience in negotiating with the Chinese at this stratospheric level," said Wilder, who was also special assistant to the president and senior director for East Asian Affairs at the National Security Council in the Bush and Obama administrations.

In contrast, Xi will come to the summit with a team of players with decades of experience in negotiating with at least three successive American presidents, and a huge playbook brimming with research and intelligence on U.S. positions on trade, security and other key issues, according to Wilder and others.

Xi will have his secret weapon, Wang Huning, a senior adviser to three Chinese presidents and a specialist on U.S. politics who has accompanied the Chinese president on dozens of overseas trips to meet with world leaders.

Security experts say that Trump to some degree should be able to wing it, by focusing on trade and North Korea, and committing to a series of follow-up meetings where the real policy experts meet to discuss the nitty gritty details. He will also have Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Reince Priebus and some other aides at his side at his Palm Beach resort, according to a background briefing provided by the White House in advance of the summit. But none of them are considered China experts, either. One who is an expert on China is a holdover from the Obama administration, NSC Director for China Leah Bray.

By all accounts, Trump and Xi aren't expected to reach any significant agreement on key issues like trade and North Korea's increasing belligerence and test firing of intercontinental missiles. The two-day summit is being pitched as a

first step in building -- some say repairing -- the relationship between the two leaders, and overcoming a sense of mutual distrust that Trump reinforced by sharply criticizing China throughout the campaign.

Xi, who pushed hard for the meeting, isn't traveling to Florida to make progress on those issues, or even to make friends with Trump, said Jonathan Adelman, a former China advisor to the State Department and Pentagon. That was also the case when Xi met with President Obama in 2013 at the Sunnylands resort in California, according to Adelman, who was also former honorary professor at People's University in Beijing.

Instead, Adelman said, Xi's goal is to show the billions of Chinese back home -- and other world leaders -- that he is recasting the U.S.-China relationship as one of two equal superpowers, with the Trump administration giving tacit approval of his much-touted "Chinese Dream" of national revival and prosperity.

And without an experienced team behind him, Trump could end up going along with Xi's plan without even realizing it -- and risk deeply offending key U.S. allies in the region like Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

"The basic problem is that Donald Trump doesn't have any experience with the Chinese and his State Department itself doesn't either," said Adelson, who said that in addition to the marquee players, "They are missing a whole lot of lesser people."

Some experts fear that Trump could easily fall into the same trap that Tillerson did on his recent visit to Beijing, in which the former Exxon-Mobil chief uttered some symbolically loaded phrases -- and nodded in agreement to others -- that are meaningless to anyone but the most veteran China observer. But on the global diplomatic stage,

even the slightest of utterances can be hugely significant, said Cleo Paskal, an associate fellow at London's Royal Institute of International Affairs.

"A lot of people noticed," according to Paskal, especially because China exploited it to signal that the new administration is ready to treat China as a true equal, at the possible expense of key U.S. allies in the region.

For many years, China had tried to get the Obama administration to embrace the phrases without much success, including the establishment of a "Great Power Relationship" between the two nations based on "win-win cooperation," and mutual respect without conflict or confrontation, said Paskal, author of the 2010 book, "Global Warring: How Environmental, Economic and Political Crises Will Redraw the World Map."

But Obama's seasoned China hands knew that if they did embrace the phrases, the administration would be giving Xi an opening to show that he had convinced Washington to not oppose Beijing's major initiatives, including expansion in the South China Sea.

If Trump were to validate the same language about a new "Great Power Relationship," even inadvertently and in passing, Paskal said, it could have potentially disastrous diplomatic consequences.

"It would say that basically there are only two powers that count in East Asia, and send a signal to Japan and South Korea and everybody else that they are now secondary powers and that the U.S. is now most concerned about what China thinks, and making deals that can be to their detriment," she said.

"Without experience," Paskal added, "they have no idea the kind of bear traps the Chinese are laying for them."



## Trump's Team Has No Idea What It's Doing On China

Paul McLeary | 1 hour ago

Donald Trump is, by his own admission, not terribly analytical or deliberative. In a recent *Time* magazine interview, he declared, "I'm a very instinctual person, but my instinct turns out to be right." Unfortunately, when it comes to foreign policy, his instincts often contradict one another in potentially dangerous ways. Even worse, the impulse to act on preconceived notions, rather than thinking through problems carefully, isn't limited to the president. It pervades his

administration -- especially when dealing with the most consequential bilateral ties in the world: U.S.-China relations.

Trump entered the White House with the most uncertain China policy of any administration in modern memory. More than two months into his presidency, and a summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping fast approaching, the administration has generated more questions than answers. It has not yet developed a coherent strategy for engaging China, nor does it have clear policies for the Asia-Pacific.

This could be forgiven -- if not for the fact that senior officials in the administration harbor two extreme sets of instincts, both of which are at odds with long-standing, bipartisan U.S. policy toward China. Members of Trump's team from a traditional big-business background -- including senior advisor Jared Kushner and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson -- hold instincts that are highly transactional and potentially accommodationist. According to this business-first approach, the United States should appease Beijing's desire for an expanded sphere of influence in Asia in exchange for

help on discrete issues such as North Korea or the bilateral trade deficit. The second set of instincts is held by the economic nationalists -- most notably chief strategist Steve Bannon and Peter Navarro, the head of the White House National Trade Council -- who are thoroughly hostile to China's economic and military rise.

The U.S.-China relationship has grown increasingly challenging to manage in recent years, and new ideas should, in theory, be welcome. Both of these approaches, however, bring with

them short-term and long-term dangers for U.S. interests and for the region.

The transactional approach to China accepts that it has significant sway on issues of great concern and seeks to elicit Beijing's assistance, even if it means signing away other U.S. interests in the process. It is not clear whether top administration officials hold these views immutably, but it is nonetheless evident that deal-making instincts have prevailed in a few notable interactions.

The clearest manifestation of this attitude came during Tillerson's recent trip to Asia, when his statements parroted Xi's own vision for the U.S.-China relationship. Tillerson repeatedly (and erroneously) stated, "Since the historic opening of relations between our two countries more than 40 years ago, the U.S.-China relationship has been guided by an understanding of non-conflict, non-confrontation, mutual respect, and win-win cooperation." That paragraph could have come straight from Chinese state media and was warmly applauded by the Beijing papers (although a few columnists warned of taking this too seriously). The verbiage may sound entirely innocuous but in fact has worrying implications.

This Chinese phraseology was first introduced by Xi at his 2013 summit with former President Barack Obama as the "new model of major-country relations." The original formulation includes respect for "core interests," an amorphous list of issues Beijing considers to be national security interests that it would use force to defend. It originally included Tibet, Taiwan, and Xinjiang but has evolved over the years.

While the South China Sea is not officially on this list, in private Chinese officials sometimes use a syllogism: "Sovereignty and territorial integrity are core interests, and China has inalienable sovereignty over the South China Sea, so..." Tillerson pointedly did not use the phrase "core interests," but to China, the object of "mutual respect" is self-evident. The "new model" implicitly acknowledges that the United States is in decline and essentially envisions a Chinese sphere of influence in Asia.

In 2013-2014, the Obama administration cautiously accepted the slogan at first, only to reconsider and wisely discard it, omitting any mention of the phrase from its statements. The Obama team's experience with this issue makes Tillerson's choice of words all the more mystifying, because career China experts at the State

Department and National Security Council are very familiar with this language and understood well what it implied.

After Tillerson returned from Beijing, the State Department spokesman had the opportunity to walk back his comments. Instead, he affirmed that Tillerson had chosen his words carefully. Media reporting suggests that Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who has set himself up as a potentially key interlocutor with Beijing outside traditional channels, had played a critical role in pushing the language. Kushner, who lacks any formal China experience and wears many other hats within the administration, may be negotiating further recognition of China's "core interests," as well as Xi's signature foreign-policy initiative, the "One Belt, One Road" global infrastructure investment plan.

Why would Tillerson — or Kushner, who has strong business ties with Beijing — revive these phrases and make them the bumper sticker of his first engagement with China? Why would the White House, as the *Washington Post* alleges, allow Chinese officials to draft the initial understandings between the Communist Party and the Trump administration?

One explanation may be instincts learned from Tillerson and Kushner's business experience in China. Foreign firms in China rapidly learn from their local partners to curry favor with the government by repeating its own preferred phrases; under Hu Jintao, there was a period when every foreign company seeking business in China spoke of how Beijing was working toward a "harmonious society"; since Xi took power, firms have fallen over themselves to promote the "China dream." Those instincts might work for the kind of bootlicking needed for firms to be allowed into the Chinese market, but they're actively counterproductive for national leaders.

But every indication is that this is a directed strategy of a kind and that the answer may lie in "win-win cooperation" — the pursuit of a better deal. The accommodationists' embrace of China's framework sets the stage for a bargain in which Beijing takes bolder action on North Korea or announces investments in the United States in exchange for U.S. deference on other Chinese interests. If some type of "deal" took place, however, its terms remain a secret, which unsettles allies in the region, as well as observers at home. Indeed, both the U.S. president and his son-in-law have significant business interests in China, raising the possibility that

Tillerson's rhetorical concessions in Beijing reaped no gains for American foreign policy whatsoever. Far more worrisome than Tillerson's words themselves, and any echo thereof at Mar-a-Lago later this week, is the fact that they may signal that some transaction took place, far from the public eye.

Yet also coursing through the administration is the fire of "economic nationalism," represented by Bannon and Navarro. These advisors view all of international politics — trade as well as security — in zero-sum terms. Under this lens, the rise of China can only be starkly inimical to American welfare and interests.

Indeed, Bannon showed a deep-seated hostility toward Beijing, as editor of the far-right media outlet *Breitbart* and host of its daily radio program.

Bannon views China as having stolen American jobs through unfair trade practices and corporate malfeasance, saying it has long conducted "economic warfare" against the United States.

Bannon views China as having stolen American jobs through unfair trade practices and corporate malfeasance, saying it has long conducted "economic warfare" against the United States. The U.S. trade deficit with China is "the beating heart of our problem," and China's holdings of U.S. sovereign debt put America "in hock to our enemies."

Bannon's sentiments on security issues are no more sanguine: He views conflict between the United States and China as inevitable. He speaks about U.S.-China relations in terms of the Peloponnesian War and has compared present-day Asia to the "matchbox" that set off World War I — although he is hardly alone in these comparisons. More striking are his statements about "the military confrontation [China is] obviously trying to drive us to in the South China Sea" and his confidence that "we're going to war in the South China Sea in five or 10 years."

Most disconcerting of all is Bannon's tendency to view relations with China as a harsh "clash of civilizations." In a 2014 speech to a right-wing Catholic forum, he said the United States faces an "expansionist China" that is "motivated, arrogant, and [thinks] the Judeo-Christian West is in retreat." Race and identity occasionally tinge his other public comments on China, including his disgust for the preponderance of East (and South) Asian immigrants in America's world-leading tech industry and a glancing suggestion

that China may use its emigrants as tools of expansion.

Navarro seems to share many of Bannon's troubling China views, as well as a lack of formal expertise on the country. The former economics professor has written books and produced films with such hyperbolic titles as *Crouching Tiger: What China's Militarism Means for the World*, *The Coming China Wars*, and *Death by China: Confronting the Dragon — A Global Call to Action*. He has also called for a 43 percent tariff on Chinese imports, which would likely lead to a global recession if implemented.

America has had China hawks in positions of power before, and a Hillary Clinton administration would likely have taken a harder line on Beijing than the Obama administration.

What's different about the nationalist group in the Trump administration is that they specifically and actively oppose the rise of China and see the relationship in zero-sum terms.

What's different about the nationalist group in the Trump administration is that they specifically and actively oppose the rise of China and see the relationship in zero-sum terms. Their stated policy aspirations are to unravel supposedly harmful U.S.-China economic interdependence to the greatest possible extent — and to contain China's military expansion wherever possible. This would mark a dramatic reversal of American foreign policy. While hyperbolic critics have long characterized U.S. Asia policy as a "containment" strategy aimed at China — and the two sides no doubt compete over many issues — no foreign country has done more to facilitate China's development than the United States. In reality, every presidential administration since Richard Nixon has welcomed "the rise of a China that is peaceful, stable, prosperous, and a responsible player in global affairs." And with good reason. When this aspiration is discarded and replaced with nationalist rhetoric and threats, it heightens anxieties on both sides of the Pacific and can make confident predictions of war like Bannon's into self-fulfilling prophecies.

These two starkly different sets of instincts are worsened by the policy cipher in the Oval Office. Trump has articulated few consistent views on the U.S.-China relationship. He has, however, made explicit the transactional approach that Tillerson only implied, such as when he said he would condition U.S. relations with Taiwan on whether "we make a deal with China having

to do with other things, including trade." Nonetheless, on the campaign trail, Trump used China (along with Mexico and the Islamic world) as a political prop: less of a real place than as a symbol of the foreign forces that had taken advantage of America and must be brought to heel on the latter's road back to greatness. The now-president said, in Bannon-esque terms, "We can't continue to allow China to rape our country." In the run-up to Xi's visit, Trump has been back on Twitter slamming China's protectionism, predicting that the summit meeting would be a "very difficult one in that we can no longer have massive trade deficits ... and job losses. American companies must be prepared to look at other alternatives." This followed the signing of an executive order to scrutinize U.S. trade deficits, particular those with China.

The inability to reconcile these conflicting paradigms may already be holding up straightforward policies designed to demonstrate U.S. commitment to upholding

freedom of the seas. Moreover, because the administration has not yet filled its senior Asia positions, there are few experts who can even attempt to steer the administration toward a more predictable course.

If either of these sets of views ascends and crystallizes into policy, this would gravely damage U.S. interests and welfare, as well as the security of the Asia-Pacific region. The United States and its allies can afford neither to unilaterally cede important interests for short-term gains and incredible commitments nor to provoke an economic or military conflict with the world's second-largest power.

An even worse outcome would be if both of these instincts guided U.S. policy simultaneously, leaving it dangerously indeterminate and inviting miscalculation and crisis. For instance, if officials do not clarify Tillerson's transactional comments in Beijing, then Xi might conclude that Washington has finally accepted the Chinese conception of "core interests" and assume that the door was open for

further expansion in the South China Sea. If China took a step in this direction, however, and began to build extensive military facilities on Scarborough Shoal, distressing the Philippines, a U.S. ally, the economic nationalists might urge reciprocal escalation. With the South China Sea now a key issue in China's own nationalist narratives, it would find it hard to back down, raising the risk of a major conflict between the world's two largest militaries.

With the Trump-Xi summit fast approaching, serious national security professionals, including Defense Secretary James Mattis and National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster, must insist that the administration start to craft a coherent strategy for engaging China. They will surely not accomplish this before the leaders meet this week, but they should nonetheless press the president to identify specific objectives and advocate for policies that avoid the Scylla of transactional

accommodation and the Charybdis of reckless escalation.

Washington should insist on China's cooperation on shared challenges like North Korea but make clear that it will not buy Beijing's help at the cost of vital U.S. or allied interests. It should make prudent investments in robust deterrence without assuming the inevitability of conflict. It can demand fairer terms on bilateral trade without unleashing an economic war that would ravage the globe.

When the leaders of the world's two largest powers meet, dangerous instincts cannot substitute for policy and strategy. Xi Jinping will easily recognize and take advantage of an impulsive and ill-prepared counterpart. And after April 6, if cooler, more careful heads do not prevail and these reckless proclivities pull and push at policy, the cost may be no less than America's standing in Asia and the peace and stability of the entire region.

## The New York Times

### China Moves a Step Forward in Its Quest for Food Security

Amie Tsang

LONDON — The Chinese government wants to make sure its food supply is reliable and safe as it works to feed a rapidly growing middle class. So it was a coup on Wednesday when a Chinese company won approval to take over one of the world's largest suppliers of seeds and pesticides.

By clearing the deal with European Union regulators, China National Chemical Corporation is close to the \$43 billion takeover of Syngenta, the Swiss farm chemical and seed company. It would be the largest Chinese takeover of a foreign company and is one of three proposed mergers in a stop-and-go international race seeking greater influence over the world's food supply.

"China has been trying to develop its own seed industry — and agricultural chemicals as well — for decades, and the progress has been slow," said Fred Gale, a senior economist at the United States Department of Agriculture. "This is an attempt to upgrade productivity."

The deal between China National Chemical Corporation, a state-owned company known as ChemChina, and Syngenta comes as trade relations between China and the West have become increasingly tense. The situation has been made worse by President Trump's sharp talk on the issue.

President Trump hosts the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida on Thursday, and trade is certain to be on the agenda.

Already, Mr. Trump has said that largely because of trade issues, the meeting would "be a very difficult one."

Syngenta's clearance from the European Union is part of an international competition that includes Dow Chemicals and DuPont, who are still working to close their merger. Though best known as chemical companies, Dow and DuPont, both based in the United States, also have huge agricultural businesses.

Bayer AG, the German industrial conglomerate, is also trying to complete its multibillion takeover of Monsanto. That deal would give Bayer control of the company most closely associated with the rise of genetically modified foods.

And ChemChina's takeover of Syngenta would give Beijing more influence over many of the seeds and chemicals it needs to feed its swelling population.

If all three deals are completed, they would reshape the global agricultural chemical business, reducing competition in the industry.

It is an important play for China, which has struggled to maintain and upgrade its food supply in recent years. China hopes to better feed its

increasingly affluent population, but several food scandals have made Chinese citizens suspicious of domestic supply chains.

Those scandals have fueled anxiety about genetically modified food, even as China wants to use the science to increase production. Although China has poured money into research, it still bans cultivation of genetically modified food for human consumption, and knowledge about genetically modified organisms is limited.

The ChemChina deal could bolster China's efforts to become a major player in genetically modified food. But Mr. Gale said Chinese consumers would probably remain wary.

"The general public has become very suspicious of seeds," he said. "That will be an obstacle to Syngenta becoming a pipeline for G.M.O. seeds in the China market."

ChemChina will have to sell prized assets to take control of Syngenta.

To appease European officials, it must sell substantial parts of its European businesses that make pesticides and substances that stimulate or slow plant growth.

"It is important for European farmers and ultimately consumers that there will be effective competition in pesticide markets, also after ChemChina's acquisition of Syngenta," Margrethe Vestager, the European Union commissioner in

charge of competition policy, said in a statement. "ChemChina has offered significant remedies, which fully address our competition concerns."

The European Union granted its approval a day after ChemChina received the go-ahead from the United States Federal Trade Commission. The F.T.C.'s approval hinged on ChemChina selling parts of a subsidiary's business in the United States to an agricultural chemical company based in California. The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, which focuses on national security issues and was also regarded as a significant potential obstacle, cleared the deal in August.

The ChemChina deal for Syngenta is part of a spate of consolidation in the agricultural chemical industry globally, as companies have tried to meet the challenge of falling crop prices.

Their efforts to win new customers are being made more difficult by consumer resistance. Widespread suspicion of genetically modified foods in Europe means that protests against Monsanto can draw thousands, and several European countries ban their cultivation.

The approval of antitrust agencies would be seen as promising for others seeking deals, said Dale Stafford, the head of mergers and acquisitions for the Americas at

Bain & Company, a business consultancy.

"This sends a strong signal that even though there needs to be concessions, with the right strategic deals, they can happen," Mr. Stafford said.

The ability to complete another agricultural chemicals deal, however, could be diminished by the huge deals that have been done.

"As markets get more concentrated, the impact on competition gets amplified," said Elai Katz, who leads the antitrust practice at the law firm Cahill Gordon & Reindel. This could make it harder to get deals past agencies or to find buyers for

divestitures.

In recent years, Chinese companies have been on an acquisition binge, buying major strategic assets like copper mines and oil deposits, and investing in flashier, if less economically or geopolitically important, deals for marquee names like the Waldorf Astoria hotel in Manhattan.

Lately, there have been signs that the shopping spree might be ending. China has tightened limits on how much money it is allowing past its borders, and that has threatened purchases that some Chinese officials have criticized as frivolous.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## Editorial : What Trump should tell America's most important rival

THERE IS concern that President Trump, who will begin a two-day summit Thursday with Chinese President Xi Jinping, is not prepared to inaugurate what will probably be the most important foreign relationship of his presidency. Mr. Xi will arrive with a polished list of Chinese demands; Mr. Trump, who has yet to staff most of the senior Asia positions in his administration or conduct a review of China policy, appears to be improvising. The danger is that he, like Secretary of State Rex Tillerson during his recent visit to Beijing, could be drawn into China's conception of a "new form of great power relations" before he has had the chance to formulate one of his own.

The confusion about administration policy is partly the result of a positive development: Mr. Trump has retreated from some of the counterproductive China-bashing he promoted during the presidential

campaign and immediately afterward. He did not designate the Xi regime as a currency manipulator on "day one" of his presidency; he told the Financial Times this week that he would postpone any talk of punitive tariffs on Chinese goods. He assured Mr. Xi during their first substantial phone call that he supported the one-China policy, reversing a hint that he might not.

These necessary adjustments have been accompanied by less explicable retreats. Since Mr. Trump took office, U.S. naval forces reportedly have not received administration permission to challenge Chinese claims in the South China Sea through "freedom of navigation" exercises. And Mr. Trump handed Beijing a major geopolitical coup by withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a step that left Mr. Xi with the opportunity to set the economic rules for the region.

Act Four newsletter

Far fewer overseas acquisitions by Chinese companies have been announced this year than by this time a year ago. The value of these deals has also fallen to about \$31 billion this year compared with \$87 billion at the same point last year, according to Dealogic, the financial data company.

American and European companies alike have criticized China's ambitious plan to build up its own technology industries, which the overseas businesses worry could create global competitors and potentially weaken their business in the big Chinese market.

And in the United States, takeover watchdogs have blocked several

deals that they say could affect national security, while some lawmakers are calling for even tighter reviews.

Yet Chinese companies have shown a willingness to be aggressive when it matters. And for China, food matters.

"On one hand they want to have the best technology, but at the same time they don't want their markets to be dominated by international companies like Monsanto, Dupont or Bayer," Mr. Gale said. "So that's the fastest way to do it, buy the technology. That seems to be China's strategy now."

The intersection of culture and politics.

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If the administration has focused on an issue for the summit, it would appear to be North Korea, which a White House briefer says is "a matter of urgent interest for the president." Mr. Trump appears to be betting that he can, unlike the three presidents before him, persuade the Chinese leadership to bring serious pressure to bear on the Pyongyang regime, which is racing to develop the capability to strike the United States with nuclear-armed intercontinental missiles.

The president is right to push Mr. Xi on the North Korean threat; he should make clear that the United States will proceed with the deployment of the THAAD antimissile system in South Korea in spite of China's objections. But it is not certain that Mr. Trump can deliver on his threat that "if China is not going to solve North Korea, we

will." Rather than tempt Mr. Xi to call his bluff, Mr. Trump should be offering assurances that change on the Korean Peninsula can be managed in a way that protects Beijing's legitimate interests. The stick Washington can credibly wield is not the threat of unilateral military action, but steps to punish Chinese banks and companies that fail to observe U.N. sanctions.

Administration officials suggest the summit discussions will span a variety of issues; one of these should be human rights. Mr. Xi has presided over the most aggressive crackdown on dissent in China in decades, and he is in the midst of stifling Hong Kong's relative freedom. By raising these issues, Mr. Trump can not only side with those in China who believe in democratic values, he can also make clear to Mr. Xi that their "great power relations" will not be exclusively on Beijing's terms.

**The  
New York  
Times**

## Editorial : President Trump's Most Important Meeting

The Editorial Board  
Illustration by Dandy/John J. Custer; Photo by Doug Mills/The New York Times

Donald Trump's meeting with his Chinese counterpart this week will be the most important diplomatic encounter of his presidency so far. His two days of talks at Mar-a-Lago with President Xi Jinping will test whether the two men — Mr. Trump an unpredictable novice, Mr. Xi a tightly scripted, experienced leader — can begin to effectively manage the world's most significant bilateral relationship.

By undoing American support for an international agreement on climate

change, repudiating an Asia-oriented trade deal and calling for funding cuts for the United Nations, Mr. Trump has already ceded leadership in key areas to Mr. Xi, who is eager to expand Beijing's role as an international power and has increasingly positioned his country as a competitor of the United States. It will be disastrous for America and the world if Mr. Trump continues on this disengagement path.

Mr. Trump does seem to appreciate the threat from North Korea's rapidly advancing nuclear and missile programs, putting that matter at the top of his agenda. He could hardly avoid it, given the fact that the North conducted another

missile test on Tuesday as Mr. Xi was en route to the United States.

Mr. Trump has repeatedly made clear that he expects China, the North's main supplier of food and fuel, to increase pressure beyond what it has been willing to do so far to force an end to the weapons programs. In an interview in The Financial Times on Monday, he was even more demanding, warning that the United States would take unilateral action to eliminate the nuclear threat if Beijing fails to act, presumably by curbing trade and assistance.

Analysts say China may be willing to increase pressure somewhat on North Korea, but well short of

causing the regime in Pyongyang to collapse. Most experts believe that the North will not abandon its nuclear program unless the leadership at the top changes. China opposes this because it fears a surge of refugees into its territory and wants to keep North Korea as a buffer against a potentially unified Korean Peninsula dominated by the American military.

The United States and China may have a long-shot chance at an achievable solution if they agree to increase sanctions on North Korea and pursue more modest goals — halting North Korean missile tests and curbing the production of additional nuclear weapons — but there has been no serious sign of

interest from the Trump administration.

Trade is another area where agreement is likely to be difficult, especially since these issues are still being fiercely debated inside the administration. During the campaign, Mr. Trump talked tough on China, promising to impose heavy tariffs on imports. But he has not followed through, and recently

told *The Financial Times* that he hoped to reach some kind of deal with Mr. Xi. Administration officials said they hoped the summit meeting might produce concrete results, though that may be a lot to ask of the first encounter.

The risk in this meeting is that Mr. Trump knows little about diplomacy with China and does not have a team of China experts in place. He

has already had to correct one major error; after calling into question America's longstanding one-China policy, he retreated and told Mr. Xi in February that he would respect Beijing as the sole government of China and not recognize Taiwan.

The meeting is also a test for Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump's son-in-law and close adviser, who, while also

lacking foreign policy and government experience, has played a dominant role as the primary interlocutor with the Chinese, thus eclipsing Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. Administration officials are confident that Mr. Trump can hold his own; Chinese officials say the same of Mr. Xi. Much is riding on whether they can do business.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

*Information Technology and Innovation Foundation.*

Of all the issues that will be on the table when President Trump hosts Chinese President Xi Jinping this week at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, none is more important for the U.S. and global economies than China's mercantilist campaign to dominate advanced industries by flouting the rules of the international trading system. China has been kidney-punching its competitors and has received in return only the occasional sheepish rebuke at ministerial dialogues. Trump is right when he says that China has been eating our lunch and that it is time to do something about it.

Doing something about it requires that Washington neither continue its flaccid appeasement nor retreat toward economic nationalism. Instead, the United States should adopt a strategy of constructive, alliance-backed confrontation. Only by leading an international coalition of market-based, rule-of-law economies will it be able to prevail on China's leaders to start competing fairly.

For such a strategy to work, however, Washington's pro-trade establishment first must come to grips with the reality that China is a conspicuous outlier — and that its unremitting mercantilist behavior represents a threat not only to the U.S. economy but also to the very soul of the global trading system.

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**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL.**

April 5, 2017 7:23 p.m. ET

This week's summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping is the most important meeting President Trump

## Atkinson : How Trump can stop China from eating our lunch

Robert D. Atkinson is president of the

Technology and Innovation Foundation. Xi has unabashedly trumpeted a goal of making China the master of its own technologies, by which he means Chinese firms should produce most of the technological goods and services that China consumes while also having free rein to dominate global markets. To achieve this, Xi has promulgated policies such as the "Made in China 2025" strategy, which calls for using at least 70 percent locally produced code, content and components in an array of advanced-manufacturing products, as well as a cybersecurity strategy aimed at mastering core technologies such as operating systems, integrated circuits, big data, cloud computing and the Internet of Things. Indeed, from computing to biotech to aerospace, almost no advanced U.S. industry is immune. Losing in these industries would mean fewer good U.S. jobs, a weaker dollar and severe vulnerabilities in the nation's defense-industrial base.

It would be one thing if China were just another middle-of-the-pack nation following international norms to reach ambitious industrial goals. But when the world's second-largest economy makes by-hook-or-crook mercantilism the animating force of its economic and trade policies, that is a whole different kettle of fish. In addition to stealing intellectual property, forcing competitors to hand over their technologies and thumbing the scales on behalf of its state-owned enterprises, China's unfair policies include a pattern of flatly denying some foreign firms access to its markets; weaponizing its antitrust laws to extort concessions; and underwriting acquisitions of foreign technology firms. These policies are especially damaging in the absence of a true rule of law or an independent judiciary to constrain Chinese officials.

The previous three U.S. administrations sought dialogue with Chinese leaders in the hope that they would have an epiphany and embrace the one true path of Western, market-based economics. But it should be clear by now that approach has failed miserably. Indeed, rather than reform, China has been doubling down.

Trump is right that China is flouting global trade rules to the detriment of the United States, but adopting a policy of economic nationalism — simply slapping tariffs on foreign goods, for example — will not solve the problem. In fact, it would simultaneously crimp U.S. prospects for growth, leave the global playing field wide open for China to dominate, and alienate allies who would have no choice but to cut flawed deals with the world's new economic hegemon. But neither is it a viable option to blithely accept Chinese domination of advanced industries.

So what should the Trump administration do? One step would be to resurrect a new and improved version of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. Much of the opposition to the TPP was based on a combination of ideology and misinformation, but it is true that the agreement could have been better. Trump should make it his own by adding new protections, such as strong curbs on currency manipulation, and then claim victory. Another step would be to more vigorously prosecute trade cases against China. But doing this would only chip away at the core problem. Neither approach represents a direct challenge to China's systematic pattern of abuse.

To fundamentally change Chinese government behavior, Trump needs to assemble an alliance of nations

that collectively raise the stakes. China won't willingly abandon its mercantilist policies unless it is compelled to do so by outside pressure that goes beyond the narrow, legalistic limits of the World Trade Organization. This fight will be won or lost not in the tribunals of Geneva, but in the court of global opinion where countries are held accountable for delivering tangible results. That means the Trump administration needs to enlist the international community to pressure China to show by its actions that it can be a responsible player in the global trading system.

The first step in enacting this new doctrine should be to build an ironclad prosecutor's case that catalogues all of the unfair, mercantilist practices China engages in and explains how they harm the entire world economy, rich and poor nations alike. Next, Trump should have top administration officials fan out around the world to line up allies, including in Europe, the British commonwealth nations, Japan and South Korea, to develop a coordinated response. This could even include orchestrating a Group of 19 meeting that excludes China — for the express purpose of formulating an agenda for how market-based, rule-of-law economies can respond both in unison and individually to Chinese mercantilism.

Isolation is not a formula for economic greatness; leading the defense of the global trading system is. Other countries lack the heft to push back against China's mercantilism on their own for the (very real) fear of retaliation. But the United States can and should lead this effort. "America First" should mean standing in the vanguard and pointing the way forward.

Obama's" U.S., which has been watching it happen.

Remembering Mr. Trump's campaign promises, the White House may be tempted to focus the summit on China's many violations

of its multilateral trade commitments, including pirating intellectual property; tilting domestic markets in favor of Chinese companies, especially state-controlled ones; and discriminating against foreign litigants in judicial

## Bolton : A Resolute Message for China

John Bolton

will have during his first 100 days in office. The 21st century could well be defined by the Washington-Beijing relationship. Things are not going well so far for the home team. China is on the march globally, and Mr. Trump inherited "no drama

proceedings. China's mercantilist policies have harmed America and the liberal international trading order generally. All merit extended discussion.

But it's even more important that Mr. Trump enter the meeting with a coherent strategic plan to address geopolitical and economic disputes. He should feel no pressure to bridge, let alone resolve, any of them now. He should instead focus on conveying clearly his administration's worldview, which is very different from his predecessor's.

Making America's foreign policy great again should mean that apologies, acquiescence, disinterest and passivity are terms that no longer describe or apply to Washington's leaders. No grandiose final communiqué is needed; a simple statement that the two leaders had a full and frank exchange of views will suffice.

Topping the agenda should be North Korea's nuclear-weapons program, the most imminent danger to the U.S. and its allies. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis have made clear how seriously they view the prospect of Pyongyang fitting an intercontinental ballistic missile with a nuclear warhead and threatening targets in the U.S. The president must follow up vigorously, or the Chinese may underestimate how

strongly the U.S. feels about the North Korean menace.

The only real way to end the North Korean threat is to reunify the peninsula by merging North Korea into the South. China will find that difficult to swallow. But if the Trump administration can demonstrate the many benefits to China flowing from the regional stability and global security that reunification would bring, Beijing should come around.

North Korea has achieved its current nuclear capabilities despite 25 years of American attempts to halt its progress. U.S. options for stopping Kim Jong Un from taking the final step are now severely limited. Moreover, the U.S. and China must bear in mind that whatever North Korea can do, Iran can do immediately thereafter—for the right price. As Pyongyang inches ever closer to producing deliverable nuclear weapons, the prospect of a pre-emptive U.S. strike against its nuclear infrastructure and launch sites cannot be ruled out.

Beijing has itself threatened to turn the international waters of the South China Sea into a Chinese lake by building bases on disputed rocks and reefs. In the East China Sea, Beijing seeks decisive ways to break through "the first island chain" and into the Pacific. Taiwan is a target; Mr. Xi will repeat the phrase "One China" monotonously in hopes

of hypnotizing the Trump team into believing it means what Beijing believes it means, rather than our longstanding interpretation.

The Obama administration's policy was to call for China, Vietnam, the Philippines and others to resolve their territorial disputes through negotiation. This might have worked had U.S. military forces been sufficiently deployed to support the other claimants and manifest America's will not to accept Chinese *faits accomplis*. Instead, Mr. Obama presided over the continuing worldwide decline of our naval capabilities. While Mr. Trump is committed to reversing that decline, it won't happen overnight. Accordingly, as when Ronald Reagan replaced Jimmy Carter, Mr. Trump must display political resolve, buying time until the necessary naval assets are once again at sea. Otherwise, China gets what it wants with cold blue steel, not diplomatic niceties.

China's threatening military buildup has implications well beyond its bordering seas. Its cyberwarfare program is large and growing. Its anti-ship missiles and other offensive naval weaponry are expressly intended to diminish the U.S.'s ability to project power into the Western Pacific. China's own naval buildup—its first in 600 years—endangers all its East and Southeast Asian neighbors; its nuclear and ballistic-missile efforts

threaten India in unprecedented ways and have major implications for America's ongoing nuclear-posture review; and its anti-satellite program is aimed squarely at U.S. intelligence-gathering capabilities in space.

For eight years, China's military budget has climbed while America's has fallen. Communist Party leaders drew the inescapable conclusion that they had a free hand to translate China's economic successes into military hardware and then to use, or threaten to use, those capabilities to achieve their international objectives. Who would stand in their way? China's neighbors, from Japan around to India, are incapable of resisting its power without American help. But while Washington has no appetite for conflict, neither should it simply accept Beijing's adventurism.

President Xi must leave Mar-a-Lago with the firm conclusion that he needs to re-calibrate China's geopolitical strategy. That alone would be a significant win for the home team. Spring training is finished. For Messrs. Xi and Trump, the real season starts Thursday.

*Mr. Bolton is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and author of "Surrender Is Not an Option: Defending America at the United Nations and Abroad" (Simon & Schuster, 2007)*



## Editorial : Promote America's values

The Editorial Board, USA

TODAY

President Trump and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on April 3, 2017. (Photo: Brendan Smailowski, AFP/Getty Images)

To the extent that the Trump administration's foreign policy has started to take shape—and it seems to be a work in progress—advocacy of human rights and democracy doesn't seem to be very high on the agenda.

If anything, Trump's "America First" foreign policy is looking more like a sort of realpolitik, where ethical and moral considerations are shed in favor of achieving transactional "wins" on jobs and security.

The president seems drawn to autocrats and cynical about promoting cherished American ideals. Asked in February about Russian President Vladimir Putin's reputation for ordering political killings, Trump didn't miss a beat: "Do you think our country is so innocent?"

Last month, the administration lifted human rights conditions on the sale of F-16 fighters to Bahrain, where political dissidents are locked up without due process. And the annual State Department report on global human rights was issued without fanfare or the usual news conference.

This week, Trump gushed about Egyptian strongman Abdel Fattah al-Sisi when the two met at the White House. Sisi overthrew his democratically elected predecessor in 2013 and has brutally cracked down on political dissent, a sure route to fomenting more violent extremism. "He's done a fantastic job in a very difficult situation," Trump said, vigorously shaking Sisi's hand, something he didn't do with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, a staunch ally, two weeks earlier.

It's true, as the foreign policy realists like to point out, that America can't right every wrong in the world. Trump needn't go as far as President George W. Bush, whose grandiose vision of bringing democracy to the Middle East, by military invasion if necessary, led to

the fiasco in Iraq. Or even as far as President Carter, who made human rights a cornerstone of his foreign policy.

But there's nothing wrong with private nudges, public rhetoric and material incentives to make clear America stands for basic freedoms. There's no reason to cede the moral high ground and every reason to try to hold it.

Silence on human rights discourages the pro-democracy activists who put their lives on the line for the rights Americans take for granted—and encourages the bad actors such as Putin and Syrian President Bashar Assad.

As Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., said Wednesday, it's probably no coincidence that a horrific chemical weapons attack occurred in Syria soon after U.S. officials suggested that Assad could stay in power. (Later in the day, Trump condemned the attack but didn't say what he'd do about it.)

Which brings us to the meetings between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping planned for

Thursday and Friday at Mar-a-Lago in Florida. The White House has said that human rights will be raised discreetly, if at all.

Xi's regime imprisons peaceful critics, detains people accused of violating Communist Party rules, holds hundreds of activists for years without trial, and engages in widespread Internet censorship. For all this, Xi avoids accountability to the Chinese people.

Shouldn't America at least advocate—for a moment during the discussion of trade imbalances, currency rates and North Korea—doctrines of freedom for the leader of the world's largest, repressive regime? Would it do any harm if Trump diplomatically pressed Xi to release Nobel Peace laureate Liu Xiaobo, whose "crime," for which he's serving an 11-year prison sentence, was to circulate a petition for placing human rights, democracy and the rule of law at the core of the Chinese political system?

As much as Trump might disdain moralizing, part of his job is

to send the message that America cares about its values.

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**The  
New York  
Times**

Helene Cooper

WASHINGTON — President Trump has let the military know that the buck stops with them, not him. The Pentagon, after eight years of chafing at what many generals viewed as micromanaging from the Obama White House, is so far embracing its new freedom.

Officials say that much of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis's plan to defeat the Islamic State, which Mr. Mattis delivered to the White House in February but has yet to make public, consists of proposals for speeding up decision-making to allow the military to move more quickly on raids, airstrikes, bombing missions and arming allies in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. Commanders argue that loosening restrictions — as Mr. Trump has already done for American operations in much of Somalia and parts of Yemen — could lead to a faster defeat of Islamic State militants in not only the Middle East but also the Horn of Africa.

Yet with the new freedoms come new dangers for the military, including the potential of increased civilian casualties, and the possibility that Mr. Trump will shunt blame for things that go wrong to the Pentagon. Mr. Trump already did that after the botched raid in Yemen in January, which led to the death of Chief Petty Officer William Owens, a member of the Navy SEALs known as Ryan, despite having signed off on that raid himself.

"They explained what they wanted to do, the generals, who are very respected," Mr. Trump told Fox News after the raid. "And they lost Ryan."

Beyond that, many foreign policy experts point out that giving the military freedom over short-term tactics like raids and strikes means little without a long-term strategy for the region, including what will happen after the Islamic State is routed, as the Pentagon expects, from Iraq and Syria.

"Moving decision-making on small tactical issues from the White House to commanders in the field is

*coupled with an opposing view — a unique USA TODAY feature.*

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positive, but commanders' autonomy doesn't help accomplish strategic goals," said Jon B. Alterman, director of the Middle East Program for the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

During the Obama administration, the military had to follow standards set by the president in 2013 to carry out airstrikes or ground raids in countries like Somalia, where the United States was not officially at war. Those rules required that a target had to pose a threat to Americans and that there be near certainty that no civilian bystanders would die. Under the Trump administration's new rules, some civilian deaths are now permitted in much of Somalia and parts of Yemen if regional American commanders deemed the military action necessary and proportionate.

The Obama administration process frustrated many in the military.

First there was the initial proposal from the Pentagon. From there it went to a policy coordinating committee, composed of lower-level officials from the Pentagon, State Department and White House, who reviewed the proposal's every aspect. Defense officials likened the process to a subcommittee review of a bill on Capitol Hill.

If the proposal cleared the policy committee, it then went to the National Security Council's deputies committee, composed of middle-level White House, State Department and Pentagon staff members, who in turn decided if they would kick it up to their cabinet-level bosses, among them President Barack Obama's national security adviser, Susan E. Rice, who often sent proposals back with multiple questions.

Finally, the full National Security Council — with the president in attendance — met on the proposal. At that point, Mr. Obama often had his own questions to ask.

"We had limiting principles that applied to everything," recalled Ben Rhodes, Mr. Obama's deputy national security adviser. "What were the risks to civilians on the ground? American service

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members? Overall national security interests?"

Sometimes the arguments over proposed military strikes went in circles. Derek Chollet, an assistant defense secretary during the Obama administration, recalled the debate about whether to provide lethal or nonlethal aid to the Ukrainian military after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014. Wary of signaling a deeper American commitment to the war effort in Ukraine, which would most likely be viewed as a hostile move by Russia, the administration, after extended debate, decided it would send only "nonlethal" aid — clothes, food, medicine — to the Ukrainian military.

Officials even made sure not to send the aid in American military planes, for fear that television coverage of the planes landing at the airport in Kiev would be "escalatory," Mr. Chollet recalled.

"There was endless deliberation," he said in an interview. "Then, lo and behold, at the Kiev airport, there were two gigantic U.S. Air Force C-17s" — an easily recognizable American military transport aircraft — on hand for a trip to plan an upcoming visit by Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., making a mockery of all the careful planning.

Fast forward to now. In the Trump administration, so far there have been few, if any, meetings of the policy coordinating committee, in large part because there are still vacancies across the government. Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, the national security adviser, is still building up his staff after Mr. Trump's first national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn, was fired in February. In the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, home to the National Security Council staff, it remains eerily quiet, and many nameplates next to office doors are empty.

Sheik Jamal al-Dhari, leader of the Iraqi Sunni tribe al-Zoba, said on Tuesday in Washington that he had been in the city for 10 days but had not been able to meet with anyone

in the Trump administration to talk about what will happen in Iraq after the fight against the Islamic State is over. So he has focused his trip on visiting House and Senate leaders on Capitol Hill. "Obviously it would be better to have meetings with the N.S.C.," he told reporters. "But maybe during my next visit."

In the meantime, General McMaster, a former military commander in both Iraq and Afghanistan, has indicated that he wants to push more decision-making authority to the Pentagon, although associates say he understands the limits and perils of military force.

Adm. James G. Stavridis, a former NATO commander who is now retired from the military, said it was unclear whether the new Trump rules would be effective.

"It is simply too early to make a judgment about whether they will go too far and end up conducting impulsive operations, or whether they will manage to find the sweet spot between excessive caution but also following the idea that fortune so often favors the bold in military operations," he said.

Other analysts say Mr. Trump's new command style is already coming into focus.

"Obama was cautious, he was analytical, he always wanted to see all the sides of the story before he took any action — possibly to a fault," said David Rothkopf, the chief executive and editor of the Foreign Policy Group and the author of "Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power."

"I think Trump is the opposite of all those things," Mr. Rothkopf said. "Also to a fault."

# ETATS-UNIS

THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL

## Homeland Security Secretary Doesn't See Building a Wall Along U.S.-Mexico Border

Dan Frosch and Laura Meckler

Updated April 5, 2017 3:48 p.m. ET

Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly told members of Congress Wednesday that he doesn't envision a wall stretching the entire length of the U.S. border with Mexico, and would instead focus on building additional fencing where it was most feasible.

Mr. Kelly's remarks, made Wednesday before the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security, run contrary to one of President Donald Trump's key campaign promises, to build a wall along the entire 2,000-mile border with Mexico.

The administration is pursuing funding and bids to build a border wall, but the project faces significant political, geographical, legal and financial challenges. Mr. Kelly's comments reflect longstanding views of many security experts and growing concerns among lawmakers that an end-to-end wall isn't practical or affordable.

Mr. Kelly said he was consulting with U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials about where additional fencing along the nearly 2,000-mile border was most needed, adding that he had been given "a lot of elbow room" on the issue.

"The president knows I'm looking at every variation on the theme," he said.

Mr. Kelly added, "I have no doubt when I go back to him and say...[A] wall makes sense here, high-tech fencing makes sense over here, technology makes sense over here...he will go tell me to do it."

The Homeland Security secretary faced tough questioning from Sen. Kamala Harris (D., Calif.), who pressed him on a policy being considered by Homeland Security that would separate parents and children caught trying to cross the border illegally.

Mr. Kelly said previously that he was weighing the approach to deter families seeking to come to the U.S. from becoming ensnared in dangerous human smuggling networks. But on Wednesday, he told the committee that the measure would generally only be undertaken if the child's life was in danger, "depending on what's going on, on the ground."

When pressed by Ms. Harris about whether his staff had been given a written directive on that issue, Mr. Kelly said he didn't need to because he had already given verbal commands to his staff.

"My staff knows already that they will not separate anyone unless I'm informed," he said.

He also faced sharp questioning from Sen. Claire McCaskill (D., Mo.), the top Democrat on the committee, about his agency's plans for tough new vetting procedures, who called ideas under consideration "very un-American."

The Wall Street Journal reported Tuesday that the Trump administration was considering new vetting rules that would ask visa applicants to provide cellphone contacts and social media passwords as well as answer probing questions about their ideology. A senior Homeland Security official said the changes could apply to close U.S. allies as well as visitors from other countries.

Sen. McCaskill said such procedures, which are still under consideration, would alienate allies and fail to screen out "bad guys."

"If they know we're going to look at their phones and we know we're going to ask them questions about their ideology, they're going to get rid of their phones and guess what they're going to do on ideology? They're going to lie," she said.

Much of the hearing, though, was focused on the border wall. And Mr. Kelly's comments come a day after a deadline for companies to submit their initial designs for the project to U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The agency recently put out requests for proposals for a solid concrete wall and a wall made of alternative material—both at least 18 feet high.

Several hundred companies expressed initial interest in bidding for the project, though it was unclear how many submitted actual plans before Tuesday's deadline. CBP said it hopes to winnow down the proposals in the coming months.

Responding to Mr. Kelly's testimony, Sen. McCaskill said at the hearing that Mr. Trump should stop talking about building a "wall from sea to shining sea" that would be paid for by Mexico.

"It's embarrassing. It's not going to happen. Everybody in Congress knows it's not going to happen," she said.

Some 650 miles of fencing already wind across portions of the southwest border. Mr. Kelly acknowledged Wednesday that in some places it would be difficult to erect more barriers because of a variety of factors like rugged terrain and environmental concerns.

Specifically, he cited a specific 75-mile swath of borderlands in Arizona, part of the Tohono O'odham Nation Indian reservation, as an example of where additional fencing would be unlikely.

"Not going to build a wall where it doesn't make sense," he told lawmakers.

At the hearing, Mr. Kelly also touted a sharp reduction in apprehensions of people trying to cross the southwestern border in March, but cautioned that the drop wouldn't last until more was done to secure the border.

Mr. Kelly said in a prepared statement submitted to the committee that less than 17,000 people were caught last month trying to cross the southwest border—down from 46,150 in March 2016, according to federal data. He stated that it was the fifth straight month where border apprehensions had declined.

Mr. Kelly said the decline showed the Trump administration's immigration enforcement policies were indeed swaying people from crossing into the U.S. illegally. Though many of those policies have yet to be implemented, Mr. Kelly said, "what we're doing on the border, what we intend to do on the border, has added to that deterrent effect."

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## Foreign Policy : Can Trump Learn?

Paul McLeary | 1 hour ago

And is the National Security Council shake-up the beginning of the end for Steve Bannon?

Based on the available evidence, Donald Trump is an odious person, self-absorbed, ethically challenged, and lacking the temperament to be president of the United States. His first two-and-a-half months in office have also demonstrated that he is an awful manager who has

surrounded himself with a very mixed bag of advisors that includes some who are corrupt, others who are profoundly misguided, and a couple who may actually be just downright evil. His immigration policies are un-American. His climate policies put the world at risk. His regulatory approach serves only corporate fat cats. His health care initiative was an abject failure. His foreign-policy blunders have been so many and so extreme that they

would be an embarrassment to a president who had served two full terms in office.

All this and he and his team are likely involved in the biggest political and spy scandal in American history.

This raises the question: Can it get any worse? Or, alternatively, can it get any better? Is he irredeemable? Or can he learn, and would that help?

This week, we have been offered answers that are marginally encouraging and that are deeply disturbing — which on balance, even Trump critics must admit, is better than usual.

On the positive side, Trump approved a shake-up in his National Security Council that is both welcome and smart.

His new national security advisor, H.R. McMaster, has managed to



right a significant number of wrongs in the national security structure

His new national security advisor, H.R. McMaster, has managed to right a significant number of wrongs in the national security structure, and Trump has approved the changes. The most buzzworthy of these is, of course, the fact that Trump's Rasputin in Steve Bannon, a man who had no business having anything to do with U.S. national security, has been removed from his seat on the NSC. Bannon was incompetent at the job and held (and presumably still holds) views that should have disqualified him from any office at all — from his Islamophobia to his reported anti-Semitism, from his attacks on a free press to his desire to gut much of what is good and essential about the government. He should never have been on the NSC, and, no doubt, Trump probably deserves as much credit for removing such an awful choice as a wife-beater would for no longer abusing his spouse.

That said, he did it. He acknowledged, at least implicitly, a mistake and corrected it. But the other corrections he also accepted — restoring the national security advisor to the position of truly leading the NSC process, restoring more permanent representation on the NSC to the leaders of the military and intelligence communities, and subordinating the homeland security functions within the NSC — were all clearly needed and should be welcome by anyone with U.S. national interests at heart. What they do is restore the national security structure to a more traditional shape and in so doing also show that not only does McMaster have his head screwed on right but that he is deft enough to set a course and implement it. What's more, he did it in a way that worked, for this administration and for Washington. He kept his head down. He avoided unnecessary publicity. He did not embarrass his boss. And he got it done. He was advertised as one of Trump's "grown-ups" and a man who could speak truth to power — and he is living up to his billing. The changes that have been put in place are sound. But more encouraging is that apparently someone in charge of this policy process is the kind of smart professional we need.

It should be noted that this view is supported by other moves he has made, from the easing out of Deputy National Security Advisor K.T. McFarland to a number of solid

hires he has made from the best and brightest of the mainstream Republican policy community.

In a White House that has thus far offered up a choice between dangerous chaos and a public relations clown show, this is refreshing.

In a White House that has thus far offered up a choice between dangerous chaos and a public relations clown show, this is refreshing. But given the stakes involved, it is also comforting.

Of course, the key to a functioning NSC process is a president who respects it. And nobody knows whether Trump will respect Wednesday's personnel changes. He is a mercurial man who makes impulsive decisions and then tries to correct them with other impulsive decisions. He cannot do that here. He must let the process work, develop policy options for him, brief him, and he must listen and take advice. There's very little evidence that he has ever done that well in his life. But the first step is acknowledging he has a problem, which he seems to have done Wednesday — so we can hope (even if we remain deeply skeptical).

That said, at the end of the day, process is only part of the equation. Personalities, as noted above, for better or for worse, are part of it. (Bannon has to be kept from establishing an "informal" back channel. Overdependence on presidential son-in-law and "Secretary of Everything" Jared Kushner also remains extremely worrisome; it is unlikely a team of George Marshall, Dean Acheson, and Henry Kissinger could handle the agenda he has been asked to handle with the kinds of day-to-day responsibilities and lack of staff, not to mention lack of knowledge, that constrain him.) But, of course, policies matter, too. And this week we have seen yet again that the Trump administration lacks a coherent foreign policy and that where there are hints of one, they are disturbing.

Most administrations struggle with foreign policy in their early days. Some, like the George W. Bush administration, are shocked into shaping one. Others, like the Barack Obama administration, start out with a "not what the last guy was doing" sort of policy. Mostly though, they try things, make a mess, see who emerges as leaders on their team, and take a while to

get their footing and establish the doctrines and parameters that then define them and upon which the world can depend. (Often I think, there is less coherence than policy pros or analysts will admit, even late in administrations. Governments are often about reaction and seldom have the time or the inclination to really fit all the pieces of the foreign-policy puzzle together. So they end up being defined by a few key traits — Obama's caution, Bush's unilateralism, etc. — that oversimplify and don't prove helpful for anyone except pundits lacking imagination.)

With Trump, there is certainly a "not what the last guy was doing" element to things associated with relaxing constraints on the military and intelligence community in the Middle East, giving them more autonomy (and producing the kind of collateral damage and civilian casualties that have gone along with that). There also have been things that were pure Trump: bluster and the failed immigration and "Muslim ban" initiatives, bungled relations with allies, tough talk on NATO and China that had to be walked back, and so on. Sending mixed signals has been another pattern. Trump tweets. James Mattis and Nikki Haley offer different views. Rex Tillerson runs the gamut of responses from a whisper to his typical "in space, no one can hear you scream" silence. (The North Koreans are no doubt still trying to figure out his "I'm done talking about this" reaction to their missile launch this week.) And always, eventually, Sean Spicer spins. Badly. With his nervous smile and sweaty upper lip. And all that is a sign not so much of a foreign policy as a lack of one.

There are some clear trends. Trump likes deals. He likes "winning." He seeks "victories" that he can crow about. And he really is not bogged down by scruples or ideals or values. The celebration this week for Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi underscored that we are very unlikely ever to hear this administration use the term "human rights." They just don't seem to care. (See Trump's willingness to embrace Vladimir Putin; his early tolerance, wavering this week for the cameras, of Bashar al-Assad; his past dealings with hoods and crooks and potentates.) This approach goes beyond the pragmatism of realpolitik.

It is a purely transactional foreign policy driven by a president asking,

"What's in it for me?" In honor of its author, let's call it: dealpolitik.

It is a purely transactional foreign policy driven by a president asking, "What's in it for me?" In honor of its author, let's call it: dealpolitik.

This approach will be welcomed by visitors like Chinese President Xi Jinping who will no doubt promise investment in the United States; give Trump the photo op he wants; toast his colleagues when human rights never come up; offer some vaguely worded reassurance that they'll work together on North Korea; marvel at the vulgarity of Mar-a-Lago; and then go home with a smile on his face, confident that his role as the most powerful person in the world is not at risk.

As foreign-policy stances go, it's crass and unlikely to get much for the United States. But it will make some allies (the more autocratic ones) and some rivals (from Russia to China) absolutely delighted. And that may actually strengthen some relationships and avoid conflicts with others. It may also lead to the United States getting played and plenty of situations worldwide deteriorating because of lack of American interest and engagement and moral fiber or standing. But Trump won't care much because they won't report that stuff on *Fox & Friends*.

This is what we have learned so far. But of course, given the volatility of the president, we don't know if this is progress toward something consistent or just a pattern we are pretending to see in the entrails of Team Trump's first 10 weeks of activity. We don't know if Bannon has really been contained by McMaster or whether this is all just sleight of hand and he'll remain the bwuhaha-ing power behind the throne. We don't know if McMaster can impose some discipline over the long haul on his thus far spectacularly undisciplined boss. We don't know if members of the Trump team — from Paul Manafort to Carter Page to Michael Flynn to Kushner to Trump himself — will end up in the big house. But you see, to the rest of the world, that is all at the margins. Life goes on. Heads of state visit and get embarrassed (if they are our allies) or pleased (if they are not). And, as Trump is discovering, when you are president, foreign policy happens whether you are ready for it or not.

Carol E. Lee and Eli Stokols

Updated April 5, 2017 7:22 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump's chief strategist, Steve Bannon, has been removed from the National Security Council's principals committee, and top U.S. intelligence officials have been restored as permanent members, according to a new presidential memorandum.

The decision was made by Mr. Trump's new national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, with the president's signoff, a senior administration official said.

The memorandum, reviewed by The Wall Street Journal, makes the director of the Central Intelligence Agency a permanent member of the principals committee and restores the chairman of the U.S. military's Joint Chiefs of Staff and the director of national intelligence as permanent members after they were initially downgraded from that status.

Also joining the principals committee are Secretary of Energy Rick Perry and United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley.

Mr. Bannon said in a statement: "Susan Rice operationalized the NSC during the last administration. I was put on to ensure that it was de-operationalized. General McMaster has returned the NSC to its proper function."

Ms. Rice was former President Barack Obama's national security adviser.

Wednesday's change means Mr. Bannon is no longer part of the National Security Council. He is still permitted to attend meetings but won't automatically be invited to each one.

Although Mr. Bannon and White House officials explained the move

as a natural evolution of the council under Gen. McMaster, others within the West Wing said it reflects the shifting power dynamics still coursing through the White House.

Two people with knowledge of internal jockeying said the bond Mr. Bannon once shared with Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, has frayed in recent weeks. Mr. Kushner has aligned himself with economic advisers Gary Cohn and Dina Powell—known as "the Goldman Sachs wing"—whose more moderate, globalist views have come into conflict with the economic nationalism espoused by Mr. Bannon, one person said.

A Bannon loyalist said there have been disagreements but played down the notion of a power struggle. "I think these arguments are going to probably increase as they get into economic policy, but it doesn't rise to the level of a rivalry or animosity," this person said. "I think it's just legitimate policy disagreements."

The administration's recent failure to advance an Obamacare repeal effort has left top West Wing staff, including Mr. Kushner, maneuvering to secure their positions, as Mr. Trump has been calling friends and confidants in the past two weeks asking for assessments of his senior staff, one person said.

Shortly after taking office in January, Mr. Trump took the unusual step of adding Mr. Bannon, a former media and financial executive who was an architect of the Republican president's campaign strategy, to the principals committee, the National Security Council's most senior decision-making body. The principals committee consists of the administration's top national-security policy makers.

Republicans and Democrats had questioned whether Mr. Bannon would have politicized the White House's national-security decisions. Mr. Bannon has attended one meeting of the principals committee, the senior administration official said.

White House officials had said if Gen. McMaster wanted to change Mr. Bannon's status, he had the authority to do so, though it wasn't initially planned. The senior administration official said Mr. Bannon had worked with Gen. McMaster to implement changes in the council, and now that they were well under way, he could step aside.

Another senior administration official said Mr. Trump "signed off on all the changes."

"Steve was put there as a check on [Mike] Flynn," the second official said, referring to Mr. Trump's former national security adviser who was forced to resign in February over undisclosed contacts with Russia. With Gen. McMaster now in charge, "there was no longer a need [for Bannon] because they share the same views," the official said.

"The idea initially was to make sure Flynn implemented the vision they had talked about," the official said.

That vision of "de-operationalizing" the council amounted to downsizing a body that had become bloated over the years. The council, which had been a panel of about 20 experts under President John F. Kennedy, doubled in size by 1991, and again with the first Gulf War under President George H.W. Bush. It has ballooned exponentially since then, growing to 100 people by the year 2000 and nearly 400 now.

The changes implemented on Wednesday reflect concerns raised by both Democratic and Republican foreign policy veterans about Mr.

Flynn's initial restructuring of the council.

"Today's reorganization of the NSC is a welcome, if belated, first step—but it's just a first step," said Ned Price, a council spokesman during the Obama administration. "The removal of Steve Bannon is as overdue as the addition of leading military and intelligence advisers, whose information and counsel have long been critical to the formulation of U.S. foreign policy."

Mr. Bannon arrived in Washington with few friends or allies in the Republican establishment, particularly after his website, Breitbart.com, often painted party leaders as hypocrites more interested in protecting special interests than working-class U.S. citizens.

His main task as chief strategist is helping Mr. Trump deliver on his campaign promises, which are enumerated on a dry erase board inside his West Wing office.

He has encouraged the president to criticize the mainstream media and is responsible for the White House strategy of trying to overwhelm opponents—Democrat or Republican—with a constant stream of tweets and other attacks to throw them off balance. Mr. Trump recently threatened to campaign against his GOP colleagues who didn't back a White House-backed health care law.

"The only thing Steve wants is to keep the flicker of the revolution alive," said one person who speaks with Mr. Trump.

—Michael C. Bender contributed to this article.

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## Bannon removed from security council as McMaster asserts control (UNE)

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

President Trump on Wednesday removed controversial White House chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon from the National Security Council, part of a sweeping staff reshuffling that elevated military, intelligence and Cabinet officials to greater roles on the council and left Bannon less directly involved in shaping the administration's day-to-day national security policy.

The restructuring reflects the growing influence of national security adviser H.R. McMaster, an

Army three-star general who took over the post after retired general Michael Flynn was ousted in February and who is increasingly asserting himself over the flow of national security information in the White House.

McMaster has become a blunt force within the administration who has made clear to several top officials and the president that he does not want the NSC to have any political elements.

Two senior White House officials said that Bannon's departure was in no way a demotion and that he had

rarely attended meetings since being placed on the council. They and others interviewed spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly on the issue.

*[Stephen K. Bannon, architect of anti-globalist policies, got rich as a global capitalist]*

In conversations Wednesday afternoon, several Trump associates described Bannon as overstretched, with multiple portfolios within the White House, and said the president's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner,

has been paying close attention to how to better use Bannon's skills as the administration works to recover from a rocky and dramatic first few months.

In a statement, Bannon framed his removal as the culmination of an effort to change the makeup of the NSC as it operated under President Barack Obama's national security adviser, Susan E. Rice, whose tenure was heavily criticized by Republicans.

"Susan E. Rice operationalized the NSC during the last administration," Bannon said. "I was put on to

ensure that it was de-operationalized. General McMaster has returned the NSC to its proper function."

Obama's NSC, like those of virtually all presidents since the council was established in the late 1940s, grew rapidly during his first term, and some Cabinet officials complained that it "micromanaged" their departments and decision-making. When Rice became national security adviser in 2013, she embarked on a somewhat successful effort to shrink its size. Her direct involvement in what some considered "operational" activities — including secret negotiations with Iran and Cuba — was relatively minimal compared with others'.

Bannon's view of the NSC under Obama is reflective of his broader efforts to "deconstruct" the federal government, including slimming down bureaucracies, as well as the ad hoc nature of foreign policymaking and blurred lines of authority in the Trump White House so far.

"Bannon says he was put on NSC to 'de-operationalize' it. Think the word he was looking for was 'dysfunctionalize,'" tweeted Rep. Adam B. Schiff, the ranking Democrat on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. "Mission accomplished."

Bannon's place on the NSC's principals committee generated intense controversy when the move was announced in January. National security experts, including Rice, characterized it as an elevation of a White House official with no national security experience, even while other national security officials in the administration were included on the NSC only when "issues pertaining to their responsibilities and expertise" were involved.

(Alice Li/The Washington Post)

The White House strongly disputed that characterization, saying Trump chose to change the structure of the principals committee from the one in place during the Obama administration to reduce the number of meetings in which senior intelligence officials were required to participate if the meetings did not pertain to their areas of expertise.

*[Trump strategist Stephen Bannon won't face voter fraud prosecution in Florida]*

Bannon's role early on, one of the officials said, was to guide and in essence keep watch over Flynn, who was tasked with reshaping the operation but whose management style could be combative. That official and a second official said Bannon did this from afar, attending one or two meetings of the group.

National security experts acknowledged that the Obama structure had been rife with complaints about too many meetings involving a glut of decision-makers, but they say those issues could also have been resolved at the discretion of the national security adviser.

"Whether it was too operational or too much micromanagement, that criticism did exist, but you don't need the chief strategist to be the one to try to rein that in," said John B. Bellinger III, who was the legal adviser to the National Security Council in the George W. Bush administration.

Unease about Bannon's strident nationalism and call to "deconstruct the administrative state" has led to clashes of temperament and policy even within the West Wing, officials said, with Bannon and particularly National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn disagreeing about aspects of Trump's agenda and forming their own informal power networks within the executive branch.

Cohn, who is a registered Democrat, has grown close to Kushner in recent months, and another one of his allies inside of the White House, Dina Powell, was named deputy national security adviser for strategy last month.

While Bannon has been removed from the council, the list of invitees to the council's principals and deputies meetings has expanded to include Powell, an Egyptian-born former national security official in the Bush administration and a Goldman Sachs official whose influence within the West Wing has expanded rapidly.

Kushner, Cohn and Powell, along with McMaster, have all become more powerful forces within the White House since the inauguration in liaising with foreign dignitaries and building relationships with key players on various policies.

Bannon remains a confidant of the president who is working closely

with other advisers on domestic and foreign policy.

Along with Bannon's removal, other changes outlined Wednesday in a memorandum further strengthen McMaster's position. He is now in charge of the National Security Council and the Homeland Security Council headed by Tom Bossert — a reversal from earlier in the year, when the NSC and HSC were put on equal footing.

*[Who is Julia Hahn? The unlikely rise of Steve Bannon's right-hand woman.]*

The new NSC structure also restores the position of the director of national intelligence and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the principals committee, which was their role in the Obama administration. The director of the CIA has also been added to the principals committee.

In addition, the secretary and deputy secretary of the Energy Department — which oversees the nation's nuclear arsenal — have been added as members of the principals and deputies committee meetings, respectively.

William Kristol, a Trump critic and longtime hawkish conservative voice, said the Republican foreign policy community was generally pleased to see the changes at the White House.

"McMaster is in charge and trying to chart policy in a reasonable way," Kristol said, noting that the news was sudden and unexpected since McMaster has been "pretty quiet since he's been there, being behind the scenes and avoiding interviews."

Several officials said McMaster is putting his own stamp on the NSC process and trying to formalize it, despite ongoing concerns that Trump's top White House aides — and some NSC staffers particularly close to them — continue to hold strategy meetings outside that process.

"McMaster is trying to put them under his control and either removing or downgrading people who had independent linkages to the White House so that advice will flow through him, which is normal," said Mark Cancian, a national security expert and former White House official who is at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

While McMaster has tried to inject new hires and remove some existing staff, many of Flynn's original hires and proteges remain in place. They include Ezra Cohen-Watnick, the senior director for intelligence, who several weeks ago enlisted Bannon and Kushner in a successful effort to reverse McMaster's effort to replace him.

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Trump's NSC became embroiled in the controversy over Russian interference in the 2016 election. The Washington Post reported last week that three officials from the NSC — including Cohen-Watnick — collected and distributed documents to House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes (R-Calif.), whose panel is investigating contacts between Trump campaign officials and Russian officials during the election. Nunes later held a news conference and briefed the president on those documents, which he said suggested that Trump associates were the subjects of incidental and legal surveillance by the Obama administration.

McMaster, who has become a conduit for foreign diplomatic leaders, has kept a low public profile since joining the administration, avoiding interviews and speeches. But inside the White House, he has gained significant influence and his plans for the council have largely been encouraged by the president's closest aides.

A key part of McMaster's résumé is his 1997 book, "Dereliction of Duty," which highlighted the failure of military leaders to give candid advice to the president in the lead-up to the Vietnam War and sets a high bar for advisers to the president.

"He was very critical of the Joint Chiefs and how they didn't speak up more forcefully against the war," Cancian said. "He put a mark on the wall here, and he has to live up to it."

"It's going to drive him to be very clear and pointed in his advice, particularly if he disagrees with the president or other elements of government," he added.

## POLITICO Mega-donor urged Bannon not to resign

By Eliana Johnson, Kenneth P. Vogel and Josh Dawsey

The man credited with honing Donald Trump's populist message and guiding him into the White

House has grown frustrated amid continued infighting in the West Wing, so much so that in recent

weeks a top donor had to convince him to stay in his position.

Five people, including a senior administration official and several sources close to the president, tell POLITICO that Bannon, one of Trump's closest advisers, has clashed with the president's son-in-law Jared Kushner, who's taken on an increasingly prominent portfolio in the West Wing. Bannon has complained that Kushner and his allies are trying to undermine his populist approach, the sources said.

Story Continued Below

Republican mega-donor Rebekah Mercer, a longtime Bannon confidante who became a prominent Trump supporter during the campaign, urged Bannon not to resign. "Rebekah Mercer prevailed upon him to stay," said one person familiar with the situation.

Another person familiar with the situation, a GOP operative who talks to Mercer, said: "Bekah tried to convince him that this is a long-term play."

Bannon has worked closely with Mercer not only at the right-wing website Breitbart News, where her family is a major investor and where he served as executive chairman until joining the Trump campaign in August, but also at Cambridge Analytica, the data-analytics firm owned largely by the Mercers. Bannon is a part owner of the firm, though he's trying to sell his stake, and until recently he served as vice president of the company's board.

The White House said that Bannon had not taken any steps to leave, and Bannon told POLITICO that any suggestion he threatened to resign was "total nonsense."

At Breitbart, Bannon, 63, was among the earliest Trump supporters and is credited with building the ideological foundation of the Trump movement. A former investment banker of considerable means, he is somebody the president views as an equal — and whose departure would scramble the pecking order of a White House that seems to have chaos in its DNA.

"It hasn't all been fun, and I know he's been frustrated," said a Republican who has spoken with Bannon in recent weeks. His position in the West Wing took a blow on Wednesday, when the White House issued a national security directive removing him from the National Security Council, where he had been installed as a member in the first weeks of the administration.

Bannon opposed the change, even saying he'd quit if the president signed off on it, according to one person familiar with the situation.

His allies inside the White House downplayed the significance of the reassignment, casting his initial elevation to the NSC as a temporary position that had come to a natural conclusion.

But Bannon's removal from the NSC is symbolic of a broader realignment in the West Wing that has Bannon increasingly marginalized and at odds both with the president and Kushner.

Bannon has generated a thrum of controversy since he joined the Trump campaign as chief executive in August, and the consistent drumbeat of negative press coverage surrounding him has strained his relationship with Trump, who monitors media reports closely, according to a source familiar with the situation.

Bannon has also butted heads with Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser, who considers him an ideologue whose advice to Trump is making it harder for the president to win popular support for his agenda, according to people familiar with the dynamic.

The tension between the two is indicative of a larger power struggle in the White House as Kushner's prominence and responsibility have ballooned. He has helped to expand the authority of two senior West Wing officials who, like him, are less ideological in nature: former Goldman Sachs executives Gary Cohn, who is now chairman of the National Economic Council, and Dina Powell, the deputy national security adviser for strategy. The national security directive removing Bannon from the NSC explicitly

authorized Powell to attend the National Security Council's Principals' and Deputies' Committee meetings.

The "big fight is between nationalists and the West Wing Democrats," said a person familiar with Bannon's thinking.

"You have these New York interlocutors who are just not political and who want to think that they're above the way Washington thinks, but if anybody is allied on delivering on things that Trump ran on, it's Bannon and Reince and the vice president," said the Republican who has spoken to Bannon recently.

Kushner has also told people that he thinks Mercer as well as her father, the hedge fund billionaire Robert Mercer — who poured \$13 million into a super PAC that supported Ted Cruz's campaign in the Republican primary, and came around to Trump after he won the nomination — have taken too much credit for their role in his victory, and has expressed misgivings about their go-it-alone approach to outside spending boosting Trump's agenda.

"If Bannon leaves the White House, Bekah's access and influence shrinks dramatically," said the GOP operative who talks to Mercer.

## The New York Times Trump Removes Stephen Bannon From National Security Council Post (UNE)

Peter Baker, Maggie Haberman and Glenn Thrush

WASHINGTON — For the first 10 weeks of President Trump's administration, no adviser loomed larger in the public imagination than Stephen K. Bannon, the raw and rumped former chairman of Breitbart News who considers himself a "virulently anti-establishment" revolutionary out to destroy the "administrative state."

But behind the scenes, White House officials said, the ideologist who enjoyed the president's confidence became increasingly embattled as other advisers, including Mr. Trump's daughter and son-in-law, complained about setbacks on health care and immigration. Lately, Mr. Bannon has been conspicuously absent from some meetings. And now he has lost his seat at the national security table.

In a move that was widely seen as a sign of changing fortunes, Mr. Trump removed Mr. Bannon, his chief strategist, from the National

Security Council's cabinet-level "principals committee" on Wednesday. The shift was orchestrated by Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, Mr. Trump's national security adviser, who insisted on purging a political adviser from the Situation Room where decisions about war and peace are made.

Mr. Bannon resisted the move, even threatening at one point to quit if it went forward, according to a White House official who, like others, insisted on anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. Mr. Bannon's camp denied that he had threatened to resign and spent the day spreading the word that the shift was a natural evolution, not a signal of any diminution of his outsize influence.

His allies said privately that Mr. Bannon had been put on the principals committee to keep an eye on Mr. Trump's first national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn, a retired three-star general who lasted just 24 days before being forced out for misleading Vice President Mike

Pence and other White House officials about what he had discussed with Russia's ambassador. With Mr. Flynn gone, these allies said, there was no need for Mr. Bannon to remain, but they noted that he had kept his security clearance.

"Susan Rice operationalized the N.S.C. during the last administration," Mr. Bannon said in a statement, referring to President Barack Obama's national security adviser. "I was put on the N.S.C. with General Flynn to ensure that it was de-operationalized. General McMaster has returned the N.S.C. to its proper function."

Mr. Bannon did not explain what he meant by "operationalized" or how his presence on the committee had ensured it would not be.

It was one more drama in a White House consumed by palace intrigue, where officials jockey for the ear of the president, angle for authority and seek to place blame for political defeats. Even as Mr. Bannon lost a national security

credential, Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser, seems to be acting as a shadow secretary of state, visiting Iraq and taking on China, Mexico and Middle East portfolios.

Mr. Bannon's many enemies, inside and outside the White House, celebrated what they saw as a defeat for his brand of fiery, nationalist politics.

"He didn't belong on the principals committee to begin with — doesn't really belong in the White House at all," said Representative Adam B. Schiff of California, the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee. "I hope that this is a sign that McMaster is taking control of the National Security Council."

Karl Rove — who, as senior adviser to President George W. Bush, was not allowed to join national security meetings — said it was a move back to a better process. "It was wrong for him to be added in the first place, and it was right to take him off," he said.

Even if Mr. Bannon really was removed only because there was no longer a need for someone to mind Mr. Flynn, Mr. Rove added, the end result was a victory for General McMaster. "It's either a sign of McMaster's strength, or the result is it strengthens McMaster," he said.

Still, Mr. Bannon, who has been under attack from outside the administration since the early days of the transition, is a crafty survivor, and insiders warned that it would be a mistake to underestimate him. When General McMaster wanted to fire a staff member, Ezra Cohen-Watnick, Mr. Bannon intervened to save his job.

Mr. Cohen-Watnick had alerted colleagues that Mr. Trump's associates had been caught up in surveillance of foreigners, information then shown by another White House official to Representative Devin Nunes, Republican of California and chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, which is investigating Russian meddling in last year's election.

James Jeffrey, a deputy national security adviser to Mr. Bush, said General McMaster appeared to have "scored one on the presumably more powerful Bannon," but cautioned against reading too much into what it meant for Mr. Bannon. "He seems to be very close to the president and, by most accounts, still wins many of

his battles," Mr. Jeffrey said.

From the start, General McMaster intended to revamp the National Security Council organization that he inherited from Mr. Flynn. The principals committee, which is led by the national security adviser and includes the vice president, secretary of state, defense secretary and others, is the primary policy-making body deciding questions that do not rise to the level of the president and framing those that do.

The initial structure approved by Mr. Trump not only gave Mr. Bannon formal membership on the committee, but also downgraded the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the director of national intelligence to occasional participants as issues demanded.

In addition to removing Mr. Bannon, the new order issued by Mr. Trump, dated Tuesday and made public on Wednesday, restored the Joint Chiefs chairman and intelligence director and added the energy secretary, C.I.A. director and United Nations ambassador. It also put the Homeland Security Council under General McMaster rather than making it a separate entity, as Mr. Trump's original order had done.

Mr. Trump was angry over the fallout from his first order, feeling that he had not been properly warned about its implications. He briefly considered reversing it the same weekend it was announced,

according to a person with direct knowledge, but decided against it for fear of creating more of a public storm.

For the first two months of Mr. Trump's presidency, Mr. Bannon occupied an unassailable perch at the president's side — ramming through key elements of his eclectic and hard-edge populist agenda, including two executive orders on freeing immigration from several predominantly Muslim countries. Mr. Trump viewed Mr. Bannon as a street-fighting kindred spirit who favored his own attack-when-attacked communications strategy.

But blunders by Mr. Bannon's team — especially the first immigration order, which was rejected by multiple courts — have undermined his position. His take-no-prisoners style was not a winning strategy on Capitol Hill, and Mr. Bannon declined to take a significant part. Experienced politicians, including Mr. Pence and Mr. Trump's budget director, Mick Mulvaney, stepped into more expansive roles as negotiations over the failed health care overhaul dragged on.

Mr. Trump initially supported Mr. Bannon's take-it-or-leave-it final message to holdouts in the House Freedom Caucus. But, needing a win, the president grew skeptical and authorized Mr. Pence to resume health care talks, with Mr. Bannon playing more of a

supporting role, according to three people close to Mr. Trump.

Mr. Bannon has also been at odds with Gary Cohn, the president's national economics adviser. Mr. Cohn is close with Mr. Kushner, who has said privately that he fears that Mr. Bannon plays to the president's worst impulses, according to people with direct knowledge of such discussions.

Moreover, Mr. Bannon's Svengali-style reputation has chafed on a president who sees himself as the West Wing's only leading man. Several associates said the president had quietly expressed annoyance over the credit Mr. Bannon had received for setting the agenda — and Mr. Trump was not pleased by the "President Bannon" puppet-master theme promoted by magazines, late-night talk shows and Twitter.

Yet there is a risk for Mr. Trump in appearing to minimize Mr. Bannon, a hero to the nationalist, anti-immigration base that helped drive Mr. Trump to an Electoral College victory. With his approval ratings at historic lows for so early in a presidency, he is counting on the same people who see Mr. Bannon as their champion — just as Mr. Bannon is counting on Mr. Trump to retain his place in the White House inner circle.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Kristina Peterson

Updated April 5, 2017 6:27 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—A bipartisan group of 14 U.S. senators in 2005 ended a bruising fight over federal judgeships with a compromise agreement that stopped GOP leaders from changing the chamber's rules for confirming Supreme Court nominees.

Twelve years later, no such group has materialized to pull the Senate back from the brink in the battle over Judge Neil Gorsuch, President Donald Trump's nominee to the Supreme Court.

The country's increasing political polarization in the intervening years has hardened the stances of both Senate Democrats, who said this week they had enough votes to mount a filibuster to block a vote on Judge Gorsuch under the current, decades-old rules, and Republicans, who are expected on Thursday to permanently change

# Senate Is Running Out of Compromises to Avoid 'Nuclear Option' in Gorsuch Vote

the chamber's rules to confirm the GOP president's pick.

"The whole environment has dramatically changed," said Sen. John McCain (R., Ariz.), a member of the so-called Gang of 14 that averted a rules change in 2005.

This week, Mr. McCain said he reluctantly would join most, if not all, Republicans in voting to alter the Senate's rules so Supreme Court nominees could be confirmed with a simple majority, rather than the 60 votes currently needed.

One party moving unilaterally to change the rules is so contentious, it is referred to as "the nuclear option." It would leave the minority party without any ability to block nominees and enable the president to cater to his or her party's ideological extremes if the Senate is controlled by the same party.

"There's a variety of reasons" for the shift, Mr. McCain said, "none of it good."

Sen. Brian Schatz (D., Hawaii) said: "There's no doubt we are moving into dangerous territory and we're putting ourselves in a position where if you're ever in the minority party, nobody has to talk to you."

Tuesday evening, Sen. Jeff Merkley (D., Ore.) took to the Senate floor and spoke in protest of Judge Gorsuch's nomination for more than 15 hours until Wednesday morning. During the night, Mr. Merkley railed against a rules change. The effort, though largely symbolic, is the closest approximation to a talking filibuster that can be found in the modern Senate.

Congressional experts said this week's expected Senate showdown reflects a widening gulf on Capitol Hill between the prevailing Republican and Democratic ideologies, as well as fewer centrist lawmakers on either side of the aisle.

Before the 2010 election, there were 54 Blue Dog Democrats, a group of fiscally conservative House

Democrats. This year, there are 18, including seven lawmakers who joined Congress this year.

Only three members of the Gang of 14 who took action in 2005 are still in Congress, after several lost re-election bids. In addition to Mr. McCain, they are: Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, both Republicans.

"The country is more divided, and it becomes very difficult to be someone who brokers a compromise," Ms. Collins said on Tuesday. "People on the far left and the far right are energized and putting a lot of pressure on members."

Republicans and Democrats are now further apart ideologically on most issues.

The parties used to have strong internal, regional divisions, particularly between Northern and Southern Democrats, said Keith Poole, a political-science professor

at the University of Georgia. The party's composition began to change after the passage of civil-rights legislation in the 1960s, as Southern voters abandoned conservative Democrats for Republicans.

Mr. Poole, whose research has studied every congressional roll-call vote since 1789, said lawmakers' votes now fall largely along only one spectrum ranging from liberal to conservative, rather than also dividing along regional lines, making bipartisan compromises harder to achieve.

"That's what's so distinctive and dangerous about the modern era," Mr. Poole said. "This is the first time when the two parties do not have any regional divisions within them."

The rise in partisanship has fed an escalating feud between the parties over how to use the Senate's procedural tools to keep the other side in check.

Democrats, who were in the Senate minority when then-President George W. Bush, a Republican, was in office, sought to block a set of Mr. Bush's judicial nominees before the Gang of 14 agreement defused the tension.

"The parliamentary arms race between the parties has just continued since 2005," said Sarah Binder, a senior fellow specializing in Congress at the Brookings Institution, a Washington-based think tank. "Minorities exploit the rules and majorities find new ways to restrict those new avenues."

Later, when Republicans were in the minority, their opposition to some of the judicial and executive nominees advanced by then-President Barack Obama, a Democrat, helped push Democrats, led by former Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada, to change the chamber's rules in 2013.

That change enabled the Senate to approve lower-court and executive nominees with a simple majority.

Then last year, Republicans, back in control of the Senate, declined to hold a hearing for Merrick Garland, Mr. Obama's nominee to the Supreme Court after Justice Antonin Scalia died. That stoked anger among liberal voters, who pressed Democratic senators this year to oppose Judge Gorsuch. The pressure from Democratic voters also was driven by resistance to Mr. Trump's early actions in office, most notably on immigration.

Mr. Schatz of Hawaii said, "This is like a troubled relationship where everybody has a grievance and everybody has a little bit of a reason to be angry, but the question becomes, what do we do next?"

Still, lawmakers from both parties say there is no appetite now for changing the 60-vote threshold for procedural hurdles on most legislation.

GOP lawmakers have said Mr. Reid's decision to change the rules in 2013 paved the road for the expected rules change later this week.

The consequences of the 2013 rules change became evident this year, when Mr. Trump's cabinet nominees, many of whom were contentious, cleared the Senate often along largely partisan lines.

None of Mr. Obama's cabinet nominees in his first term garnered more than 31 no votes.

By contrast, so far, six of Mr. Trump's nominees have drawn more than 40 no votes, with four drawing 47 and one drawing 50—prompting the first ever tiebreaking vote by a vice president on a cabinet nomination.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) has found ways to skirt the current rules requiring most bills to secure 60 votes to clear procedural hurdles.

Before the health-care bill collapsed in the House, Republicans had hoped to advance the legislation without needing any Democratic votes in the Senate, by taking advantage of a procedural shortcut tied to the budget. Meanwhile, both chambers have been passing measures under the Congressional Review Act permitting them to roll back with a simple majority some rules passed by Mr. Obama's administration.

—Natalie Andrews and Byron Tau contributed to this article.

**Corrections & Amplifications** Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) is the Senate majority leader. An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that he is the minority leader. (April 5, 2017)

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## Editorial : Don't 'nuke' the Senate

The Editorial Board, USA

TODAY

The 'nuclear option' explained

President Donald Trump made the comment before meeting with leaders of groups that support his Supreme Court nominee. Video provided by Newsy Newslook

Capitol Hill (Photo: Brendan Smialowski, AFP/Getty Images)

Democrats and Republicans are headed for a showdown Thursday that will blow away what little chances are left of bipartisanship cooperation in the Senate and ideological moderation on the Supreme Court.

Both sides will walk away pleased with their destructive handiwork, but only for a while. Their sense of satisfaction is destined to be fleeting.

Like children bent on immediate gratification, Senate Democrats, holding just 48 votes, planned to use the filibuster in a bid to stop the confirmation of President Trump's Supreme Court nominee, Neil Gorsuch. The move, if successful, would require Gorsuch to get 60 votes, instead of a simple majority, for confirmation.

As everyone knows, it won't be successful. Republicans will retaliate by changing Senate rules, using the "nuclear option," to eliminate the filibuster in Supreme Court confirmation battles. And Gorsuch will end up being seated.

All of this might sound like procedural minutiae, but it will greatly affect the future of the Senate, the Supreme Court and the nation.

Despite their loss, the Democrats will have shown their liberal base that they stood up to Trump, fought the good fight, and tried to retaliate for the shameless obstruction that Senate Republicans used last year to thwart President Obama's highly qualified nominee, Merrick Garland, for the vacancy left by the death of conservative icon Antonin Scalia.

Meanwhile, Republicans will glory in one simple fact: They won. They demonstrated that they'd do whatever was needed to seat a judge at least as conservative as Scalia.

In the long run, however, both sides will undoubtedly come to regret their impetuous and destructive actions.

Democrats weren't going to win this fight. Gorsuch has sterling credentials and a top rating from the American Bar Association.

Opponents barely laid a glove on him during four days of confirmation hearings. Nor is Gorsuch going to change the ideological balance on the high court.

But there will be a next time, and maybe not that far in the future. Leading liberal Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer are 84 and 78, respectively. Pivotal swing vote Justice Anthony Kennedy is 80. A Trump nominee to replace any of them could alter the ideological balance on the court for decades, affecting everything from voting rights to the right to choose abortion. Any leverage a filibuster might have given the Democrats will have been squandered in a no-win battle.

And the Republicans, who will one day be back in the minority, perhaps sooner than they think, will have lost a key tool for thwarting people they oppose.

As for who's at fault for reaching this moment, neither party is blameless. Senate Democrats abused the filibuster during George W. Bush's administration to thwart his judicial nominees. Then, in 2013, Republicans stood in the way of three superbly qualified Obama nominees to the federal appeals court in Washington, considered the second most important in the

nation. Frustrated Democrats foolishly used the "nuclear option" to eliminate the filibuster for lower-court nominees, and Republicans warned darkly how dangerous that was.

Now the parties have switched tactics and scripts, sounding equally hypocritical. If each side could somehow pull back from the brink, they and the nation would be better off.

Without a 60-vote standard, nominees to the federal courts will be even more extreme, further to the left or the right, depending which party is in power. Public confidence in the Senate will continue to erode, along with the trust that justices are fair and impartial arbiters of the law.

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## Koger : End the filibuster farce: Opposing view

Gregory Koger  
7:45 p.m. ET

April 5, 2017

Capitol Hill(Photo: Brendan Smialowski, AFP/Getty Images)

A "right" is meaningless if it can be abolished when someone actually tries to use it. If Republicans are willing to abolish the right to filibuster Supreme Court nominations so they can force President Trump's nominees through the Senate, Democrats lose nothing by making them follow through on their threat. Indeed, this "nuclear option" improves the debate over nominations by making them more transparent.

Filibustering against



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(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

Why are Democrats filibustering Judge Neil Gorsuch? Because they've had enough with the politics of power-grabbing and bullying.

At the root of this fight is a long-term conservative effort to dominate the Supreme Court and turn it to the political objectives of the right.

This is thus about far more than retaliation, however understandable, for the Senate Republicans' refusal to give even a hearing to Judge Merrick Garland, President Barack Obama's nominee for the seat Gorsuch would fill. Behind the current judicial struggle lies a series of highly politicized Supreme Court rulings.

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It started with *Bush v. Gore*, when five conservative justices abruptly halted the recount of Florida's ballots in the 2000 election and made George W. Bush president.

The unsigned majority opinion unmasked (to use the word of the moment) the unprincipled and unmistakably results-oriented nature of the

legislation in the Senate is common practice, but filibusters against Supreme Court nominees are extremely rare. Only one nominee — Abe Fortas in 1968 — was actually blocked by a filibuster, and only three nominations since then have faced a cloture vote to end a filibuster: William Rehnquist in 1971 and 1986 and Samuel Alito in 2006.

Since the 1960s, there has been an ideological struggle over the composition of the Supreme Court, but this war has mostly been waged in the shadows. Senators have acquiesced in every nomination that reached the Senate floor except Robert Bork's in 1987. This deference, combined with the Republicans' willingness to "go nuclear" to force Trump's nominees

through the chamber, means that the minority party is unlikely to have much influence on future nominations, with or without the "right" to filibuster. The Senate is better off without this farce.

The real constraint on nominations lies in the democratic process. Even when nominees say as little as possible about issues or cases, as Neil Gorsuch did, senators know the real question is whether to continue the direction of the Roberts court in striking down campaign-finance laws, granting religious exemptions from regulations to for-profit corporations, restricting abortion, and allowing states free rein to manipulate electoral rules to advantage the party in power.

For moderate or vulnerable senators, such as Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, Susan Collins, R-Maine, Dean Heller, R-Nev., or Rob Portman, R-Ohio, there might come a time when they fear the political repercussions of supporting nominees who will continue this aggressive and undemocratic legal agenda.

Gregory Koger is an associate professor of political science at the University of Miami.

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## E.J. Dionne Jr : The Gorsuch filibuster is about far more than payback

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decision with this lovely little sentence: "Our consideration is limited to the present circumstances, for the problem of equal protection in election processes generally presents many complexities."

Translation: Don't you dare use this case as precedent in any future decisions. We're just doing this to achieve the outcome we want in this election.

*Bush v. Gore* had consequences for the court itself, because Bush got to pick two Supreme Court justices. He chose John G. Roberts Jr. as chief justice. Roberts, it's worth noting, went to Florida as a volunteer lawyer advising then-Gov. Jeb Bush, who had a rather large interest in his brother's victory. Can we please acknowledge that few court nominees are pristinely above politics?

Later, Bush filled his second vacancy with Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr., and he and Roberts were key to two of the most activist decisions in court history on matters central to how our elections work.

In 2010, Roberts and Alito voted with the 5-to-4 majority in *Citizens United* that overturned decades of law and precedent to widen the gates to big money in campaigns. Then, in 2013, they were integral to another 5-to-4 decision, *Shelby County*, that gutted the Voting Rights Act. Many Republican-controlled states rushed in with new laws, including voter ID

requirements, that impeded access to the ballot by African Americans and other minorities.

You do not have to believe in conspiracies to see how *Shelby County* and *Citizens United* fit together. In tandem, they empowered the most privileged parts of our society and undercut the rights of those who had historically faced discrimination and exclusion. They also tilted the electoral playing field toward Republicans and the right.

So let's can all of these original-sin arguments about who started what and when in our struggles over the judiciary. From *Bush v. Gore* to *Citizens United* to *Shelby County*, it is the right wing that chose to thrust the court into the middle of electoral politics in an entirely unprecedented and hugely damaging way.

And the Republican-led Senate was ready to use any means necessary to hold on to this partisan advantage. When Obama chose Garland for the court, he picked the nominee Republicans themselves had said they could confirm. In 2010, for example, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) called Garland "a consensus nominee" about whom there was "no question" that he would win Senate confirmation. Hatch's view became inoperative when Garland threatened to break the conservatives' 5-to-4 advantage.

Obama took grief from many progressives who saw Garland as

too moderate. Gorsuch, by contrast, passes all of his side's litmus tests. During the campaign, Trump added Gorsuch to his roster of potential justices in response to lists from the Heritage Foundation and the Federalist Society. There is nothing moderate about Gorsuch except his demeanor. The demand for a 60-vote threshold is really a plea that Republican presidents put forward choices who can win broad support by reflecting Garland-style restraint.

In the coming days, we will hear moans about how terrible filibustering a Supreme Court choice is. Democrats will be dismissed as catering to "their base." Justified outrage over the blockade against Garland will be reduced to score-settling, as if those who started a fight should be allowed to recast themselves as pious, gentle peace-lovers when the other side dares to strike back.

It's said that with the odds against them in this fight, progressives would be wise to back off now and wait for the next battle. But graciousness and tactical caution have only emboldened the right. It's past time to have it out. From now on, conservatives must encounter tough resistance as they try to turn the highest court in the land into a cog in their political machine.

Read more from E.J. Dionne's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.



Updated April 5, 2017 7:27 p.m. ET 562 COMMENTS

## Editorial : Late Hit on Neil Gorsuch

Democrats haven't found a weakness in Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch, and not

even a filibuster seems likely to stop his confirmation. But opponents will try anything, and late Tuesday they

used some willing media outlets to claim that a handful of sentences in his book and dissertation were

similar enough to suggest plagiarism.

Politico reports—based on “documents provided to Politico,” you can guess by whom—that in his book, “The Future of Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia,” Judge Gorsuch used another author’s words to describe Down syndrome and a condition known as “esophageal atresia with tracheoesophageal fistula.” In a 1984 Indiana Law Journal article, Abigail Kuzma wrote that “esophageal atresia with tracheoesophageal fistula indicates that the esophageal passage from the mouth to the stomach ends in a pouch, with an abnormal connection between the trachea and the esophagus.”

Judge Gorsuch used the same

words in his explanation of the medical condition, a technical description of a specific ailment outside his area of expertise. Ms. Kuzma has issued a statement that she had “reviewed both passages and [does] not see an issue.” Because the passages “are factual, not analytical in nature,” she writes, and “both describe the basic facts of the case, it would have been awkward and difficult for Judge Gorsuch to have used different language.”

Politico also criticizes Judge Gorsuch for citing primary sources when attributing portions of his writing, rather than citing secondary sources. But primary sources are an approved method of citation in academic publications. Judge Gorsuch describes Derek Humphry, a founder of the Hemlock Society

and advocate for voluntary euthanasia, in similar terms as a book on the euthanasia movement written by Ian Dowbiggin, but he credits books by Rita Marker and Sue Woodman as the primary sources.

Politico rolled out some left-leaning academics to call this and a couple of other examples plagiarism, but this is thin soup. Someone clearly subjected every word in all of Judge Gorsuch’s more than 5,000 pages of writing to a Big Data plagiarism analysis, and this is all they found.

Oxford University Emeritus Professor John Finnis, who supervised Judge Gorsuch’s doctoral thesis, reviewed the allegations and says that “in all four cases, Neil Gorsuch’s writing and citing was easily and well within the

proper and accepted standards of scholarly research and writing in the field of study in which he was working.” Georgetown professor John Keown was an outside examiner on Judge Gorsuch’s dissertation and called the allegations “entirely without foundation.”

Late political hits are a progressive specialty—recall Clarence Thomas—and Democrats might try to use this one to postpone the confirmation debate and vote. Republicans should dismiss this desperation ploy and vote to put the distinguished jurist on the High Court.

Appeared in the Apr. 06, 2017, print edition.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Peter Nicholas, Nick Timiraos and Richard Rubin

April 5, 2017 5:41 p.m. ET

The Trump administration, stung by its failure to advance a health-care overhaul through Congress last month, is trying to lay a stronger foundation for a tax-code rewrite by taking a lead role in shaping the legislative push, according to interviews with several senior administration officials.

Despite the ramped-up effort, no consensus has emerged yet among senior White House advisers about either the shape of the tax plan or the strategy for building a coalition on Capitol Hill. Administration officials are courting Democrats, but the two parties face wide fissures that could be difficult to close.

Meantime, divisions have emerged within the Republican Party and inside the White House itself, where members of the GOP establishment and Wall Street moderates have been jockeying for primacy against economic nationalists in the new administration.

Much remains unsettled, and the timing is tight. One White House official said that the current August goal for a plan to pass could slip, and that it might be difficult to pass anything after December.

“If it slips to the next year, it becomes harder and harder,” the official said. “So we’re really going to push aggressively to get something done,” the official said.

Last week, President Donald Trump met with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, National Economic Director Gary Cohn and senior advisers Steve Bannon and Jared

## White House Takes Lead Role on Tax Plan

Kushner to review the state of play on the administration’s tax plan. Meanwhile, the president’s legislative advisers met this week with a group of House Democrats on Capitol Hill, sounding them out on ideas and various options under considerations.

If it succeeds, the tax legislation could become a model for the Trump White House. Its failure would mark another major policy setback for Mr. Trump, which would significantly diminish his ability to get any major initiatives through Congress.

The main blueprint for a bill now is a plan pushed by House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.), but the White House is wary of one of the bill’s key components: a border adjustment proposal that would subject imports to a 20% corporate tax rate while exempting exports from U.S. taxation. Any change on so sweeping a scale needs more widespread backing than has been evident to date, administration officials said.

Revenue-raising alternatives to border adjustment, such as a carbon or consumption tax, are getting nowhere in internal discussions.

Wooing Democrats now seems part of the playbook—a lesson learned from the health-care debacle. Administration officials have stepped up outreach in recent days. “Over 70% of Americans support action on tax reform this year,” said Tony Sayegh, a Treasury spokesman. “Clearly, this is going to be an effort that should attract significant bipartisan support.”

But some moves that might appeal to Democrats, such as higher taxes on the wealthy, risk losing key GOP

support. Many Democrats also want the tax overhaul to be tied to an ambitious infrastructure package, but for now, the Trump administration seems committed to keeping them separate, mindful of the difficulty involved in passing either one.

That posture could scare off Democrats. “It’s harder to come to the table and find a bipartisan solution if tax reform and infrastructure don’t move together,” said Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D., N.J.), who was part of a group of House Democrats who met this week with Trump legislative aides. “My worry is if you decouple them, you lose the opportunity to make sure they both get done.”

Democrats who cooperate with Mr. Trump also risk reprisals from voters back home.

Broadly, Mr. Trump wants a simpler tax code and lower business tax rates to stimulate investment and spur manufacturing. Coupling those moves with a middle-class tax cut, the White House appears to pitch the plan in populist terms—a vehicle for job creation and relief for struggling families.

A populist approach, and one that appeals to Democrats, might force Republicans to give up or scale back tax-rate cuts on high-income households, a priority for the GOP, who argue lower high-end rates are needed to encourage people to work, save and invest more. Messrs. Ryan and Trump have both said they want to drop the top rate for individuals from 39.6% to 33%.

Moreover, Republicans are reluctant to cut corporate tax rates without also lowering rates for partnerships and other businesses that pay income taxes through their

owners’ individual tax returns. Many small businesses are taxed this way. Without touching marginal tax rates for individuals, balancing those competing interests becomes harder.

To cut tax rates without having much of the benefit going to the top sliver of the income distribution, the Trump administration might have to consider a surtax or a plan like the Buffett Rule pushed by President Barack Obama and Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, which sets a 30% minimum tax on people with incomes exceeding \$2 million, measures unlikely to get Republican support.

Other questions remain unanswered in the administration. One Senate GOP aide said the White House still needs to set a revenue target. Will Mr. Trump look for a revenue-neutral plan that would reshuffle the existing tax burden or seek a tax cut? If he opts for the latter, how big should the cut be?

Sen. Orrin Hatch (R., Utah), chairman of the tax-writing Finance Committee, said White House officials haven’t yet gone over their tax-policy preferences in great detail.

“I would hope that they would come out with what they think ought to be done,” he said. “And if they don’t, I’ll be happy to come up with the plan they need.”

Asked when he would like to learn of the White House’s positions, Mr. Hatch said, “Tomorrow would be fine,” but then added that Mr. Trump has only been in office for a few months, and that a big tax bill will take time.



Mr. Ryan, at a speaking event Wednesday, acknowledged it would take time to reach an agreement. "The House has a plan, but the Senate doesn't quite have one yet, and they're working on one," he said. "The White House hasn't nailed it down. So even the three entities aren't on the same page yet on tax reform."

While administration officials aren't likely to publicly disavow the border adjustment plan favored by Mr. Ryan, they have stepped up efforts to find alternatives that might help simplify the tax code while raising more revenue.

It isn't clear those choices will be any more popular

**THE WALL  
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## The Flawed Case Against Pricing Carbon

Greg Ip

April 5, 2017 2:54 p.m. ET

This week Scott Pruitt, head of the Environmental Protection Agency acknowledged that humans do indeed contribute to a warming climate.

Mr. Pruitt's concession to scientific consensus came with a caveat: "The real issue is how much we contribute to it and measuring that with precision." Indeed, how regulators measure climate impact matters more than agreeing that such an impact exists. This makes President Donald Trump's order last week scrapping official estimates of the "social cost of carbon" especially significant. Without actually disputing the science behind climate change, it drastically raises the bar to acting on it.

Federal rules are supposed to cost the economy and society less than the harm they prevent. But regulators long lacked any benchmark for the costs of greenhouse gas emissions. Courts have ruled they can't assume the costs are zero, so in 2010 Barack Obama's administration, after lengthy study, began estimating the social cost of carbon. It put the future damage, such as from rising sea levels, crop damage and heat-related death, of emitting one metric ton of carbon dioxide in 2015 at \$42.

Critics argued the Obama administration chose assumptions that inflated that figure. Mr. Trump responded by instructing agencies to use broad regulatory guidance issued in 2003

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL**

## Henninger : The Trump Tweets

Daniel Henninger

April 5, 2017 7:14 p.m. ET

than the border adjustment plan, which raises \$1 trillion over a decade to pay for lowering the corporate tax rate. The border provision has been under sustained attack from senators, retailers and some conservative groups.

Two alternatives—a carbon tax and a value-added tax—enjoy even less support from Republicans than the border adjustment plan and are considered nonstarters within the administration, according to two administration officials.

Andy Laperriere, a policy analyst at the research firm Cornerstone Macro LP, who served as a top adviser to former House Majority Leader Dick Army in the 1990s,

that allows much less stringent assumptions. Yet most of the criticism of the initial estimates doesn't stand up. Indeed, equally plausible assumptions would justify a higher figure.

The most widespread criticism of Mr. Obama's social cost of carbon is that it was derived from complex models that link emissions to atmospheric concentrations to temperature and then to economic damage.

This, they say, yields results that are so uncertain they can't justify costly and irreversible mitigation measures. Critics also note that actual temperatures seem less responsive to CO2 than models predicted, which the United Nations-backed Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change acknowledged in 2014.

But the answer to imperfect models isn't to ignore them but to improve them. Michael Greenstone, a University of Chicago economist who led the Obama administration's effort, says about 150 reputable studies of climate damage have been released since 2009 and they would appear to justify an even higher social cost of carbon: "The evidence so far is that the damages are greater than we understood" for example due to heat-related deaths in India.

And uncertainty alone doesn't justify inaction. Military and terrorist attacks are also highly uncertain, yet the U.S. spends more than 3% of national income to prevent them on the theory that spending nothing makes an attack more likely. Moreover, their consequences are

said: "It would help move a tax bill if it is widely seen as Trump's plan and enjoys the unqualified support of the president. The administration is a long way from developing such a plan."

Mr. Laperriere said investors who are expecting quick action on taxes are likely to be disappointed, because the administration remains understaffed and hasn't yet staked out a position on key details.

At Treasury, Mr. Mnuchin has nearly 100 career staffers available to work on tax and economic policy, but few confirmed political appointees to guide that process, and only a handful of senior advisers to hold down the fort.

asymmetric: peace in the best case scenario, nuclear annihilation in the worst.

The consequences of global warming are similarly uncertain and asymmetric. One can posit zero or even positive effects, such as fewer deaths from cold in the best case. One can also posit massive and arbitrary destruction from rising sea levels, storms and biological die-off in the worst.

Robert Pindyck, an economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, argues climate policy should be geared to preventing extreme scenarios rather than the unreliable base-case projections of models. According to his survey of experts, to eliminate even a small risk of a 20% loss of future global income would require a social cost of carbon equal to \$80 to \$100 per ton.

Another controversy is over the rate at which the benefit of preventing future harm is discounted. As in all of finance, the lower the discount rate, the greater the value in today's dollars. Federal guidance in 2003 required regulators to discount benefits at both 3% (the real, or after-inflation return, on government bonds) and 7% (the return on private investments). The Obama administration used only 3%. Critics note 7% would have produced a far lower figure. Yet with time, the lower discount rate looks ever more sensible. In 2003 government bonds yielded 2% after inflation; today, just 0.5%.

The most valid criticism of the social cost of carbon is that the Obama administration calculated the harm

As the debate unfolds, it will become even more evident that Republicans don't agree on the basics of a tax bill, said Mr. Laperriere.

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U.S. emissions cause to the entire world, departing from the convention of considering only harm to U.S. residents, which would slash the \$42 cost per ton of CO2 to as little as \$3.

There was a logic to this. The harm that carbon dioxide causes to any country, unlike acid rain or mercury, is the same no matter where on earth it originates.

Yet holding the U.S. to a global benchmark could cause high carbon industries to move to countries that don't adopt the same standard, leaving emissions unchanged and Americans worse off.

That doesn't sit well with Mr. Trump's "America first" worldview. Mr. Greenstone responds that had the U.S. ignored the implications for the world in its own climate rules, it wouldn't have extracted emissions commitments from China in 2014 and the rest of the world in 2015.

If the global cost of carbon is mostly a tool for inducing other countries to cooperate, Mr. Trump could turn this to his advantage. Chinese President Xi Jinping will likely press him this week to abide by the 2015 emissions limits. Mr. Trump could respond that if China subjects all its decisions to the social cost of carbon, the U.S. will do the same.

First, though, Mr. Trump has to decide he cares.

**Write to** Greg Ip at greg.ip@wsj.com

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House and on balance the tweeting is worth it: "You know if you issue hundreds of tweets, and every once

in a while you have a clinker, that's not so bad."

Mr. Trump's deputy press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, complained on "Fox News Sunday" that the media's coverage doesn't reflect the reality of the new presidency: "The media constantly wants to talk about something that doesn't exist instead of something that does." She said, "We've spent the last couple of months doing major policy initiatives and rollouts in the forms of executive orders, rolling back regulations, creating an environment where businesses are confident in hiring again."

All of this is true, not least Mr. Trump's belief that Twitter helped him into the Oval Office. Back then, Mr. Trump's tweets drew free-media attention to himself and his shoestring campaign. The tweets destabilized his opponents, notably Hillary Clinton, who over-focused on him at the expense of her own message. The tweets rallied the Trump base and held it together when he had virtually no ground game. In the campaign, the tweets produced a positive outcome.

In his presidency, though, Mr. Trump's tweets are producing the opposite result. They have become presidential speed bumps.

This time, the tweets are drawing attention to himself as a president in permanent tension with two major American institutions: the U.S.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

7:15 p.m. ET

It may be hard to tell, but Donald Trump is still in the period of his presidency typically regarded as the honeymoon. This is when new administrations maximize early successes to harvest political capital. Yet aside from this week's likely confirmation of Judge Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court, Mr. Trump's first 100 days have been dominated by needless controversies and stalled initiatives. The White House needs a course correction.

No president gets everything right from the beginning. Remember the Bay of Pigs? But good presidents learn from early mistakes and step up their game.

Mr. Trump should start by understanding the poll numbers. Around 40% of Americans approve of his performance in office, while 53% disapprove, according to the Real Clear Politics average. No other president has had numbers this low this early.

press and the intelligence community. His furious, highly charged tweets about them produced a reaction. Both institutions are now in active opposition to his presidency, especially the media.

The ancient advice, "don't pick fights with people who buy ink by the barrel," is still true. The media—print, television, the web—buy time with the public by the petabyte. Every Trump tweet produces media pushback as negative coverage or snark at an overwhelmingly anti-Trump ratio.

Tweeting "Sleepy Eyes Chuck Todd" incentivizes every decision-maker at NBC to put anti-Trump reporting at the top of its hourly-news budget across the network. Where is the upside?

Mr. Trump has many sympathizers in his fight with the media. But for every president back to Lyndon Johnson, this is like waging battle with the tides. Repetitive negative publicity on this scale will suppress the Trump message and agenda.

Mr. Trump has a point about the media's microscopic coverage of the Russia collusion story and its disinterest in the Obama White House's abuses of U.S. intelligence. But the intensity of his tweets against the failing New York Times, the dishonest Washington Post, and CNN's fake news is mainly increasing audience size and

political market share for the media's version of these events.

The campaign tweeting destabilized Mr. Trump's Republican primary opponents. The presidential tweeting is destabilizing people who are on his side—in Congress, in the government and in the military.

The Trump "change" presidency, running hard on multiple fronts, was inevitably going to produce a big Beltway counteroffensive. The tweets disrupt the momentum of the people who are executing his plans and his legislative agenda.

The Trump White House doesn't put much stock in the Gallup poll's daily tracking of the president's approval rating, but its fall below 40% is almost entirely the result of public anxiety driven by negative static.

As former presidents know, falling steadily downward in public approval causes some House members and senators to distance themselves from the White House. With so many hard votes coming up, that small distance could determine whether he wins or loses.

After the election, the Democrats were confused and on defense. The political storms erupting after Mr. Trump's tweet storms have energized the defeated Democrats, whose candidates are raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for 2018 from small donors on the internet.

mishandling of intelligence by Obama officials.

Mr. Trump should move on, saying simply that he is happy lawmakers are investigating and looks forward to their report. A day of vindication is probably coming, but this story has become a distraction.

Mr. Trump should stop blaming his predecessor. It was tiresome when President Obama did it and made him look weak.

The president should stop raising expectations. Islamic State will not be defeated quickly. ObamaCare will not be repealed and replaced easily. Mr. Trump is not "the greatest jobs producer that God ever created." The strategy should be to underpromise and overdeliver.

Mr. Trump should stop attacking fellow Republicans, too. Punching down at the Freedom Caucus makes it more difficult for its members to support him on issues like the debt ceiling and tax reform. Better to express disappointment than anger—and to do it privately.

During the primaries, the Trump base emerged as a solid 30%. It will never abandon him. But as president, the arena of battle—on taxes, spending and infrastructure—has moved unavoidably to Washington, where the Trump base is a less potent factor.

Mr. Trump is right. Twitter helped him win the presidency. But the net-negative effects of the president's tweets are eroding his chances for success in Washington, where every victory is won at the margin.

The president should step back from tweeting and assemble a professional, Trumpian team to handle his public relations. If his presidency fails, historians of the Trump presidency will record that Twitter raised him up, and Twitter brought him down.

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Correction: Last week's column stated that Republican Rep. John Faso of New York signaled his intention to vote against the Trump health-care reform bill. The good news is that Mr. Faso, who defeated progressive Zephyr Teachout in 2016, stood his ground and publicly supported the bill.

*Write henninger@wsj.com*

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Constant leaks suggest that the White House staff is riven by division and disunity, with three feuding tribes: the Trump family and its allies, populist disrupters led by Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller, and everyone else. The president should try to diminish infighting by encouraging unity of purpose, while maintaining diversity of opinion.

Mr. Trump won't boost his staff's morale by blaming them for recent setbacks, as leaks from the West Wing indicate he has done. That causes aides to hunker down and leads to more finger-pointing, acrimony and distrust. At moments like this, a president must buck up the people around him by owning the missteps.

While reports from White House visitors suggest that the policy-making process has gotten less ragged than it was in the administration's opening weeks, much more structure is still needed. The president should regularly block off substantial time on his calendar for policy briefings, preceded by meetings during which the principals can frame the debate for

him. Potential decisions should be put on paper and circulated through senior staff for comment. There should be some forum to achieve consensus on what to focus on when, and for how long.

It's dangerous to have people whose only job is to advise the president, since this encourages aides to end-run or short-circuit any formal policy process. Better to make these

**THE WALL  
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## Editorial : The Man Who Knows Too Much

April 5, 2017  
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Politicians aren't always as dumb or cynical as they sound, but you wouldn't know that from Wednesday's confirmation hearing for Scott Gottlieb. Democrats criticized the nominee to run the Food and Drug Administration for the "conflict of interest" of knowing too much about the industries he'd regulate.

Washington Senator Patty Murray and other Democrats devoted most of the morning to agitating about Dr. Gottlieb's "unprecedented financial entanglements" because he has consulted for various companies and invested in health-care start-ups. Rhode Island's Sheldon Whitehouse flopped in with a strange remark

**The  
New York  
Times**

## Wardman : Learning to Love the Nuclear Option

Steven Waldman

It's also confusing that the Republicans are saying: Don't worry. Although we're ending the filibuster against Supreme Court nominees, we'll still allow the procedure to block legislation. If anything, there's more of a case for eliminating the filibuster for congressional bills than for the court. If a horrible justice gets on the court, he or she is there for life; if a destructive piece of legislation gets through, it can be repealed.

I remember vividly when I first became aware that the "Schoolhouse Rock" version of how a bill becomes a law had quietly disappeared. I was covering Congress for Newsweek during the Clinton administration. The Democrats were pushing legislation to create a national service program, which had broad support.

In the middle of the process, the White House was notified that they would need 60 votes, not 51. No Republicans staged a sit-in. No one wheeled in cots so that elderly lawmakers could nap during long hours of speechifying. The minority

people directly responsible for helping to execute decisions.

The White House should host fewer events so that it can go deeper into each issue it wants to draw attention to. The constant rush of appearances, tweets, rallies, interviews and photo-ops is good for cable television, but it could burn out the staff and stretch the president too thin.

about "dark money operations," which is an amusing way to describe financial disclosures available on the internet.

Bernie Sanders, never one to be hamstrung by knowledge, tweeted Wednesday that it was a "disgrace" to have an FDA commissioner who has taken money from drug companies. These are the same committee Democrats who pummeled Betsy DeVos for not having *enough* experience in public education.

Dr. Gottlieb disclosed his work in accordance with government rules and will liquidate his investments. He agreed to recuse himself for a year on decisions relevant to his past interests. He also promised Wednesday to follow directives from the Health and Human Services

leader, Bob Dole, just informed the majority leader that 40 Republicans opposed the bill, so they were going to switch to the supermajority system, thank you very much.

The consequences for regular Americans can be significant. Under the filibuster rules in place at the time of the New Deal, Republicans could have blocked the Security Exchange Act, the National Labor Relations Act and the Tennessee Valley Authority, according to the journalist Charles Peters's new book, "We Do Our Part."

And if the Senate had been operating under majority rule during the Obama and Bush administrations, the following bills would have gained Senate approval: the Toomey-Manchin background check bill for guns; the provision allowing people to have a "public option" for health care on the Obamacare exchanges; comprehensive immigration reform; an increase in the minimum wage; and the bipartisan campaign finance bill, called the Disclose Act.

If the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, eliminates the filibuster

Moreover, this all seems a jumble to most Americans. The avalanche of news generated by this White House could exhaust people, causing them to lose interest and confidence. When his approval rating is below 40%—with softening support among even Republicans—the last thing Mr. Trump should want is for Americans to turn off and tune out.

ethics office, and to be an "impartial and independent advocate for the public health."

The irony of the claim that Dr. Gottlieb can be bought by the industry is that pharmaceutical companies won't be thrilled by some of his priorities. One is increasing generic drug competition: On Wednesday he offered a tutorial in how companies exploit regulatory barriers to competition for their commercial advantage. Sounds like something ol' Bernie should like.

Another ugly charge is that Dr. Gottlieb won't address the opioid crisis because he has worked with companies that produce painkillers. Yup—he wants to take a pay cut and subject himself to bureaucratic hassles so he can peddle pills to addict more Americans. Who writes

*Mr. Rove helped organize the political-action committee American Crossroads and is the author of "The Triumph of William McKinley" (Simon & Schuster, 2015).*

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this stuff? In fact, Dr. Gottlieb called opioid abuse "a public emergency on the order of Ebola and Zika" and suggested an "all-of-the-above" strategy that would include inventing less addictive painkillers and better patient care.

Dr. Gottlieb has written lucidly about how FDA can unleash innovation without compromising public safety, which he rightly calls a "false dichotomy." Democrats once believed in expertise, and if they cared about delivering cures for patients as much as they fret that someone is making a profit, they'd confirm Dr. Gottlieb in a millisecond.

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on legislation, the Democrats' reaction may end up being less anger than regret (as in, "Why didn't we think to do that?"). President Barack Obama's legacy would have been different had majority rule been in effect.

This may be an area in which President Trump's disregard of tradition can work to his advantage, at least in the short run. Democrats are justified in worrying that Mr. Trump could get through more of his agenda in a majority-rules environment.

But in the long run, if Republicans remove the filibuster for legislation, they may regret it. They have been the bigger beneficiary of the practice. From 1999 to 2006, when the Republicans controlled the Senate, the Democratic minority used the filibuster 272 times. By contrast, from 2007 to 2014, when the Republicans were in the minority, they used it 644 times, more than twice as often. The average filibuster per congressional session under President Obama was 158; under President George W. Bush it was 85.

Much has been written about why use of the filibuster grew rapidly in recent decades. From World War I until 1970, Congress averaged less than 10 filibusters each congressional term. In 1975, the Senate eliminated the requirement that to maintain a filibuster, senators had to literally stay on the floor talking. It went from being arduous to easy. Some argue that the situation worsened as voters elected fewer conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans, who had made bipartisanship more common and filibusters less necessary.

Perhaps more modest reforms — like restoring the "talking filibuster" — should be tried first. That would reduce the abuse and instill more accountability. Elected officials could better fulfill their campaign promises, and voters could better judge whether they like the result.

But if the Republican leaders decide to go all the way, let's at least remember that the bigger threat to democracy is not the scary-sounding nuclear option but the thing it blew up.

**The  
New York  
Times**

## Kazin : Should America Have Entered World War I?

revue de presse américaine du 8 avril 2017

Michael Kazin

Army recruits filled a street in New York in April 1917 soon after President Woodrow Wilson declared war on Germany. Associated Press

One hundred years ago today, Congress voted to enter what was then the largest and bloodiest war in history. Four days earlier, President Woodrow Wilson had sought to unite a sharply divided populace with a stirring claim that the nation "is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured." The war lasted only another year and a half, but in that time, an astounding 117,000 American soldiers were killed and 202,000 wounded.

Still, most Americans know little about why the United States fought in World War I, or why it mattered. The "Great War" that tore apart Europe and the Middle East and took the lives of over 17 million people worldwide lacks the high drama and moral gravity of the Civil War and World War II, in which the very survival of the nation seemed at stake.

World War I is less easy to explain. America intervened nearly three years after it began, and the "doughboys," as our troops were called, engaged in serious combat for only a few months. More Americans in uniform died away from the battlefield — thousands from the Spanish flu — than with

weapons in hand. After victory was achieved, Wilson's audacious hope of making a peace that would advance democracy and national self-determination blew up in his face when the Senate refused to ratify the treaty he had signed at the Palace of Versailles.

But attention should be paid. America's decision to join the Allies was a turning point in world history. It altered the fortunes of the war and the course of the 20th century — and not necessarily for the better. Its entry most likely foreclosed the possibility of a negotiated peace among belligerent powers that were exhausted from years mired in trench warfare.

Although the American Expeditionary Force did not engage in combat for long, the looming threat of several million fresh troops led German generals to launch a last, desperate series of offensives. When that campaign collapsed, Germany's defeat was inevitable.

How would the war have ended if America had not intervened? The carnage might have continued for another year or two until citizens in the warring nations, who were already protesting the endless sacrifices required, forced their leaders to reach a settlement. If the Allies, led by France and Britain, had not won a total victory, there would have been no punitive peace treaty like that completed at Versailles, no stab-in-the-back allegations by resentful Germans, and thus no rise, much less triumph, of Hitler and the Nazis. The next

world war, with its 50 million deaths, would probably not have occurred.

The foes of militarism in the United States had tried to prevent such horrors. Since the war began, feminists and socialists had worked closely with progressive members of Congress from the agrarian South and the urban Midwest to keep America out. They mounted street demonstrations, attracted prominent leaders from the labor and suffrage movements, and ran antiwar candidates for local and federal office. They also gained the support of Henry Ford, who chartered a ship full of activists who crossed the Atlantic to plead with the heads of neutral nations to broker a peace settlement.

They may even have had a majority of Americans on their side. In the final weeks before Congress declared war, anti-militarists demanded a national referendum on the question, confident voters would recoil from fighting and paying the bills so that one group of European powers could vanquish another.

Once the United States did enter the fray, Wilson, with the aid of the courts, prosecuted opponents of the war who refused to fall in line. Under the Espionage and Sedition Acts, thousands were arrested for such "crimes" as giving speeches against the draft and calling the Army "a God damned legalized murder machine."

The intervention led to big changes in America, as well as the world. It

began the creation of a political order most citizens now take for granted, even as some protest against it: a state equipped to fight war after war abroad while keeping a close watch on allegedly subversive activities at home.

The identity of the nation's enemies has changed often over the past century. But at least until Donald Trump took office, the larger aim of American foreign policy under both liberal and conservative presidents had remained much the same: to make the world "safe for democracy," as our leaders define it. To achieve that purpose required another innovation of World War I: a military-industrial establishment funded, then partly and now completely, by income taxes.

For all that, the war is largely forgotten in the United States. Combatants in World War II and Vietnam are memorialized in popular sites on the National Mall, but the men who fought and died in the Great War have no such honor (though there is a small memorial specific to soldiers from Washington, and a small national monument is in the planning stages).

Alone among the former belligerent nations, the United States observes a holiday on the anniversary of the Armistice — Veterans Day — that makes no explicit reference to the conflict itself. The centennial of the declaration of war is a good time to remember how much the decision to enter it mattered.



## Max Boot : Was Russia election hack an act of war?

Max Boot, Zocalo Public Square  
3:18 a.m. ET April 6, 2017

Victoria Seewaldt at a Trump inauguration protest, Washington, Jan. 20, 2017. (Photo: Suchat Pederson, USA TODAY)

In an election decided by just 80,000 votes in three states, it is hard to dismiss the possibility that Russian intervention could, in fact, have tilted the outcome of the 2016 election. That would make this the most consequential computer hack in history, but was it an act of war?

Certainly not in the classic sense. The Kremlin did not, after all, transgress America's borders or the borders of an ally the United States is pledged to protect. It did not shoot down an American aircraft or sink an American ship. Those are the classic kinds of *casus belli* that have traditionally sparked hostilities. But such old-fashioned definitions of aggression do not seem fully adequate to deal with the cyber age, in which computers can be a

far more potent weapon of war than a machine gun or a mortar.

How should one treat incidents such as the one that occurred in 2007, when Russian hackers are suspected of having temporarily disabled Estonia's access to the Internet with denial-of-service attacks in retaliation for the removal of a statue in Tallinn honoring World War II Soviet soldiers? Or the 2010 Stuxnet virus used by Israeli and U.S. intelligence to disable a thousand Iranian centrifuges? Or the 2012 attack, blamed on Iran, which disabled 30,000 computers belonging to the Saudi state oil company? Or the 2014 North Korean attack on Sony Pictures in retaliation for the release of a movie parodying North Korea? As the Harvard strategist Joseph Nye notes in the journal *International Security*, these events, and others like them, do not fall neatly into "the classic duality between war and peace," occurring instead in a "gray zone" that defies an easy definition or response.

It is possible, to be sure, to imagine more severe cyberattacks that would more easily cross the threshold of open hostilities. "Talk of a 'cyber Pearl Harbor' first appeared in the 1990s," Nye writes. "Since then, there have been warnings that hackers could contaminate the water supply, disrupt the financial system, and send airplanes on collision courses. In 2012 Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta cautioned that attackers could 'shut down the power grid across large parts of the country.'" If such a massive attack were to occur — and if responsibility for it could be attributed with a high degree of certainty — one could imagine treating that as a provocation requiring a response not just with computer viruses but with actual firepower.

But attacks such as Russian President Vladimir Putin's hacking of the 2016 election fall below that threshold, which is part of what makes them so attractive to relatively weak states like Russia or North Korea: It lets them maximize

their ability to disrupt their enemies while minimizing the backlash. In fact, what consequence has Russia suffered for intervening in the U.S. election? Nothing beyond the expulsion of a few diplomats, which is hardly enough to make Putin rethink the efficacy of these tactics.

### POLICING THE USA: A look at race, justice, media

Indeed, even the impact of those last-minute Obama sanctions was probably undermined by the conversations that Michael Flynn, Trump's first national security adviser, secretly had with the Russian ambassador prior to the inauguration — talks in which he is suspected to have asked Putin to hold off on any retaliation in the expectation that once Trump became president he would ease tensions. Flynn subsequently had to resign after lying about those conversations. But even the growing Kremlingate scandal has not been enough to dissuade Putin

from meddling in similar fashion in the Dutch, French, and German elections to support pro-Russian and anti-EU candidates.

While no one is suggesting that the U.S. should have started World War III over the Russian interference in our election, a more serious response was in order. It's not hard to think of a range of appropriate responses: As I have suggested before, Obama could have asked the National Security Agency to disclose embarrassing communications between Putin and his aides or details about all of the billions they are suspected of looting. Or he could have simply asked the NSA to fry Kremlin computer networks. A range of non-

cyber responses could also have been entertained, such as providing arms to Ukraine to defend itself from Russian aggression or ratcheting up sanctions on Russia by kicking it out of the SWIFT system of inter-bank transfers. Of course now that Trump is president, there is scant hope of any response at all; the only issue is whether Trump will lift existing sanctions on Russia.

Obama hesitated to do more against Putin because every action carried the risk of unintended consequences and of sparking greater hostilities. But the greatest risk of all is relative inaction. By failing to respond more strongly to Russia's election intervention, the

U.S. risks legitimizing such "gray zone" attacks. Thus we can expect more of them in the future. They may not exactly be "acts of war," but they can cause more damage than many military attacks — and it can be much harder to know how to respond. Figuring out a doctrine of cyberwar that includes everything from such low-level strikes to "cyber Pearl Harbors" will be one of the signal challenges for military and intelligence strategists in the 21st century.

*Max Boot, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and a member of USA TODAY's Board of Contributors, is the author of Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient*

*Times to the Present. This essay is part of an Inquiry, produced by the Berggruen Institute and Zócalo Public Square, on what war looks like in the cyber age. On Twitter: @MaxBoot*

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