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Editorial : France's Stark Choice

April 23, 2017
6:47 p.m. ET 142

Sharply divided French voters on Sunday gave themselves Emmanuel Macron as a mainstream alternative to far-right Marine Le Pen in next month's second round of presidential voting. The French will now decide between two very different visions of French nationalism.

Incomplete tallies as we went to press suggested that the independent former Socialist Mr. Macron would finish first in a crowded field, with about 23% of the vote. Ms. Le Pen of the National Front was close behind. Free-market conservative François Fillon and far-left firebrand Jean-Luc Mélenchon each won a little under 20%. French voters remain deeply divided about how to jolt their country out of its malaise. But they seem willing, for now and only barely, to give the center another chance.

The most stunning result is the repudiation of the two mainstream parties that have ruled France for decades. Voters rejected the ruling Socialists but also Mr. Fillon of the center-right Republicans. Mr. Fillon might have fared better if not for his

personal scandals, but voters also remember the promise and failure of the last Republican President, Nicolas Sarkozy, six years ago.

Socialist President François Hollande started his term in 2012 promising a return to doctrinaire socialism before attempting a shift toward economic reform that never materialized. Unemployment has remained mostly stuck above 10%, with youth unemployment near 25%. Economic growth barely scrapes above 1% in a good year, and France's educated young flee to London, New York, Hong Kong and other global centers.

Benoît Hamon, representing the ruling Socialist Party, notched a distant fifth place with less than 7%. The other left-wing loser Sunday was Mr. Mélenchon. Though he is personally popular for his authenticity, voters rejected this French Bernie Sanders, rightly doubting that tripling down on statism is the way to revive France's fortunes.

The French will now have a choice between two very different political "outsiders." Mr. Macron's case in next month's runoff is that to regain its former vitality France must reform and compete better with the world.

The 39-year-old former banker would rebalance the scales between the state and private economy by

cutting thousands of government jobs and reducing corporate taxes to a 25% rate from 33.3%. He'd reform labor laws that protect incumbent workers at the expense of opportunities for the young and unemployed, but he'd keep France in the free-trade, free-immigration zone of the European Union.

Market enthusiasm for Mr. Macron—the euro is already rallying—reflects the boost this would give France's ability to attract job-creating global capital. His agenda isn't as ambitious as Mr. Fillon's, but Mr. Macron's moderation enhances his appeal to center-left voters in the runoff.

Ms. Le Pen's vision of France harkens back to an almost pre-World War II nationalism. Although she's often described as a right-winger, Ms. Le Pen's platform would find sympathy on the far left. She advocates abandoning the euro and the EU, which have acted as partial counterbalances to Paris's statist habits.

Instead, she supports trade protectionism and severe limits on immigration, as well as a greater role for the state in supporting French companies. On foreign policy and national security, she would turn away from France's traditional Atlantic orientation and toward Vladimir Putin's Russia.

The polls to date suggest Mr. Macron will easily defeat Ms. Le Pen, as Jacques Chirac defeated Ms. Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie, the first time a National Front candidate made the runoff in 2002. But no one should be so sure. France's economy has suffered another 15 years of mismanagement by mainstream parties.

And Ms. Le Pen's vigorous defense of French civilization against threats real (terrorism) and imagined (Muslim immigrants in general) resonates. Mr. Macron will need credible answers to the terrorist threat—witness Thursday's attack on the Champs-Élysées—and a growing disconnect between French society and the impoverished immigrant (often Muslim) communities in the *banlieues*.

The French choice is described in some quarters as pitting the "populist" Ms. Le Pen against the establishment Mr. Macron. But it's more accurate to say they represent different visions of French nationalism. Ms. Le Pen's blood-and-soil offer is well known. The challenge for Mr. Macron in the next two weeks is to offer a credible vision and program for an economically prosperous and confident France that is no longer the sick man of Europe.

Editorial : Emmanuel Macron Mounts a Patriot's Challenge to Marine Le Pen

The Editorial Board

3-4 minutes

Emmanuel Macron acknowledging supporters on Sunday night. Sylvain Lefevre/Getty Images

Defenders of liberal democracy in France and elsewhere sighed with relief after Sunday's first-round vote in France's presidential election. The centrist, pro-European Union political upstart, Emmanuel Macron, who founded his En Marche! party just last year, looks set to face off against the far-right populist National Front candidate, Marine Le Pen, in the final vote for the French presidency on May 7. Polls have predicted that Mr. Macron will beat Ms. Le Pen handily, though, with its traditional parties left in shambles by this election, France remains deeply divided and its politics unsteady.

Certainly, if Mr. Macron prevails on May 7, that will be good news for Europe: The embattled European Union would most likely not survive if France left the bloc. But the strong showing by Ms. Le Pen — who promises a referendum on France remaining in the union — is a further warning of the rising danger posed by populist right-wing leaders, in Europe and around the world. Her anti-immigrant National Front party will surely remain strong as long as French unemployment lingers in the double digits, and the many French who believe they have been abandoned by global elites see no better hope elsewhere. Ms. Le Pen called her performance in the polls on Sunday "an act of French pride."

Mr. Macron and Ms. Le Pen's strong showings have upended French politics, as voters spurned the mainstream center-left Socialist Party and center-right Les

Républicains party that have dominated the landscape for decades. The Socialist Party of the deeply unpopular president, François Hollande, lies shattered, with its candidate, Benoît Hamon, trailing in a distant fifth place. Mr. Hamon conceded defeat on Sunday, throwing his support behind Mr. Macron.

A fourth candidate, François Fillon of Les Républicains, also failed to win enough votes to put him on the May 7 ballot after being dogged by charges that he used public funds to pay his wife and children for work they may not have done. Mr. Fillon also conceded on Sunday night and said he would vote for Mr. Macron on May 7. He warned of Ms. Le Pen that "extremism can only bring about the misfortune and division of France." A far-left candidate, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who reaped a late surge of support, was trailing Mr.

Fillon, but said he would wait until the final, official count was announced before conceding.

France may be entering a new, fractured political era, but on Sunday its voters showed that they remained receptive to Mr. Macron's hopeful message, including his openness to immigrants and diversity, despite a recent spate of terrorist attacks and Ms. Le Pen's dark campaign. Mr. Macron said on Sunday that he wanted to be the "president of patriots, to face the threat of nationalists," holding himself out as France's true agent of change after decades of government failure. France will now face a stark choice on May 7, and hopes for Europe will ride not just on a win by Mr. Macron, but on his subsequent success in delivering on his commitment.

Applebaum : France's election reveals a new political divide (online)

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

5-6 minutes

Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen on April 23 advanced to a runoff in France's presidential election. The runoff will be held on May 7. (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen on April 23 advanced to a runoff in France's presidential election. The runoff will be held on May 7. Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen advance to a runoff in France's presidential election. (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

True to the spirit of 1789, the revolutionary French are a step ahead of everyone else. On Sunday, they became the first large Western country to ditch, in a major election, the center-right/center-left political-party structure that has dominated European politics since the Second World War. Neither Emmanuel Macron nor Marine Le Pen, the two candidates who emerged from the first round of voting for the French presidency, belongs to the old *gauche* or the old *droite*. Neither will have a major parliamentary party

behind his or her program. Neither, as president, would represent a continuation of the status quo.

If the most important political divide, in France as almost everywhere else, was once over the size of the state, the new political divide is not really about economics at all. It is about different visions of the identity of France itself. Le Pen, best described as a national socialist, would like to take France out of international institutions, including both the European Union and NATO; block borders; curtail trade; and impose quasi-Marxist state-dominated economics. Her voters are pessimistic about the present and nostalgic for a different France. Her most important foreign ally is Vladimir Putin, whose money funded her campaign, but in recent days President Trump has made positive noises about her, too. Her party, the National Front, has been part of French politics for decades, and has been historically noisy in its opposition to immigration.

On the other side is Macron, whose brand-new movement, *En Marche* — the name means "forward" — represents the brand-new radical center. Macron rejects political branding: "Honesty compels me to say that I am not a socialist," he has said, despite having served in a Socialist Party government. He embraces markets, but says he believes in "collective solidarity." His voters are more optimistic about the

future, they support the European Union, they embrace France's integration with the rest of the continent and the world: "You are the new face of French hope," Macron told them in his victory speech Sunday night. Though Macron favors strong external borders of the European Union, he expresses no special dislike of immigrants. The foreign politician he most resembles is the young Tony Blair, who also put together a centrist coalition, though it wasn't called that at the time.

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In this sense, the second round of France's election has a clear agenda: open vs. closed, integrationist vs. isolationist, future vs. past. Unlike her father, who won 18 percent in the second round of the presidential election in 2002, Marine Le Pen is expected to win more, maybe much more, in the May 7 runoff. Though she is far behind Macron right now, a fluke victory cannot be excluded. There is a part of the old left, including those who voted for the Trotskyist, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who sympathize with her objections to trade, bankers and international business; there is a part of the old right, including those who voted for François Fillon, who prefer her ostentatious endorsement of "traditional values."

There are many who, confused by the new political divide, will abstain. The smear campaign that will now be aimed at Macron — backed by Russian, alt-right and pro-Trump trolls — is going to be unparalleled in its viciousness. It may well put people off voting altogether.

Whatever the final result, Le Pen and her party will not go away. They stand for a set of feelings that are real, that exist in every Western country, and that are now best fought openly, point by point, argument by argument — for they pose a genuine and powerful threat to liberal democracy as we know it. Though the origins of the National Front are indeed fascist — its founders included Vichy sympathizers — it is no good dismissing her candidacy on those grounds. The task now, for Macron and those who will now imitate him, is to find solutions for the many people who reject his "open" politics and his centrist vision.

Security for the fearful; safety for those who feel threatened, whether by immigration or unemployment; dynamism for static economies. On Sunday night, Le Pen called on French "patriots" to support her in the second round. In response, Macron must now define new forms of patriotism, and new forms of solidarity, for those in France who want to remain French but embrace the world.

Bloomberg

Bershidsky : Continental Europe Wins the Sanity Contest

Leonid Bershidsky

7-8 minutes

I met Las Vegas lawyer Robert Barnes during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign. Long before everyone else I know, he was betting -- literally, through U.K. bookmakers -- on Brexit and Donald Trump's victory. He made hundreds of thousands of dollars for himself and the clients he advised from these bets. In Sunday's French election, however, he says he merely broke even.

Barnes told me he'd bet on progressive centrist Emmanuel Macron and far-left Jean-Luc Mélenchon to make the run-off round. At 20-1, he believed the risk-reward ratio was worth it. And lots of non-polling data were increasingly pointing toward Mélenchon, just like they had been toward Brexit and Trump: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube engagement,

mentions on the media, Google searches. Then, on Sunday morning, after watching Google search trends, Barnes added a separate bet on Macron to win the first round. That's how he narrowly avoided a loss.

Betting on "black swans" and protest votes can be profitable. But it appears that only the U.K. and the U.S., two countries where elites have long talked condescendingly of continental Europe, have produced unsettling political surprises in the current election cycle. I'm being polite; others would say they made stupid, perhaps disastrous, choices. Sickly old Europe, whose demise has been predicted over and over as the European Union endured years of recession, stagnation, high unemployment, mediocre leadership and pessimism, has consistently resisted the appeal of populist leaders -- both the nationalist kind represented in France by Marine Le Pen and Mélenchon's radical leftist kind. Before France, the populists lost in Austria and the Netherlands.

After France, they will almost certainly suffer a resounding defeat in Germany. The liberal European project doesn't just live to fight another day, as some pundits have grudgingly conceded; it continues to celebrate what outsiders deride as weakness.

It's pointless to add up Sunday's fringe votes. Le Pen plus Mélenchon isn't just a classic case of apples and oranges -- the people who voted for them probably couldn't spend 15 minutes in the same room without throttling each other. The pattern in recent and ongoing European elections is that in the run-up, voters show their disgruntlement by elevating noisy populists in polls, but then they cast ballots responsibly. The first round of a French election is a kind of glorified poll, a chance for people to make extravagant statements. In 2015, Le Pen's National Front did great in the first round of regional elections only to lose everything in the decisive round; the same is about to happen to Le Pen herself

this year. She stands to win just a third of the vote to Macron's two thirds, a landslide by any standard.

I say that with reasonable confidence because, unlike in the U.K. and the U.S., but like in the Netherlands, polls in France have turned out to be highly accurate. Going into the weekend, they put Macron two points ahead of Le Pen and Mélenchon and conservative candidate François Fillon neck-to-neck about two points behind her. That is exactly how the race played out.

Good Job, Pollsters!

The French polls predicted the first round result with a frightening precision

Sources: BFM.TV, Financial Times, official early results

There is, therefore, no reason to distrust poll predictions for the second round; barring an unexpected disaster, Macron is about to win comfortably. And a

disaster is highly unlikely: If anyone could compromise Macron, they would have done it before the first round, when he was weaker and there were other options for middle-of-the-road voters.

The accuracy of polls is just one way in which continental Europe has been more normal than the English-speaking countries. Both the Dutch and the French campaigns have been hard-fought and unusually dirty, but no one can claim foreign interference or hacking has affected the results. Macron claims there have been numerous attempts to hack his campaign, but if any have been successful, they turned up no damaging material. There was plenty of "fake news" to be found in France too, but it seemed to have played no role in determining the results.

That persistent normalcy reflects continental Europe's equally persistent divergence from the U.S. and the U.K. The continent has higher government expenditure and lower growth, but also less inequality, higher saving rates and lower household debt. People's lives are less precarious in the core EU than in the English-speaking countries. Voters in the major continental nations may get angry and disappointed -- say, with French President Francois Hollande's feckless leadership or with the recent inflow of refugees from the Middle East -- but they don't get desperate enough to vote in a Donald Trump or to inflict Brexit-style turmoil on their countries.

Core EU countries may lose on certain economic parameters, but they win the sanity competition. That

is a major, and underestimated, achievement of the EU: It has fostered a non-radical culture and a non-radical consensus that even powerful turbulence cannot destroy.

What, however, if the populist wave has merely slowed down, and, frustrated with more of the same, Europeans will give the populists a chance to govern in the next election? That's highly unlikely. Centrist leaders will work to consolidate their power and weaken their rivals' arguments. It's likely to mean tougher border policies and more pressure on newcomers to integrate, and certainly more targeted job policies to increase voter security. The EU unemployment rates are already on the way down, and, for better or for worse, there's less of a threat of tech-driven job destruction than in

the U.S. because the EU's embrace of the tech revolution has been more cautious. Leaders such as Macron, Mark Rutte in the Netherlands, and Angela Merkel and Martin Schulz in Germany are visibly learning from their interactions with the hard left and far right. If anything, they will be tougher to dislodge in four or five years.

Barnes is smart to be betting on Macron in the second round as well, just as he was smart not to bet on Hillary Clinton. It's time to stop making disparaging comments about the EU and shorting the euro because of political fears. The biggest risks today are in the English-speaking world -- at least until it fully internalizes its populist inoculation.



Andelman : What the French elections mean for Americans

By David A. Andelman

Story highlights

- Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron are the two leading French candidates heading into the May 7 runoff
- David A. Andelman: Macron would strengthen US relations, but Le Pen could threaten them by aligning France with Russia

David A. Andelman, editor emeritus of World Policy Journal and member of the board of contributors of USA Today, is the author of "A Shattered Peace: Versailles 1919 and the Price We Pay Today." He served previously as Paris correspondent for CBS News. Follow him on Twitter @DavidAndelman.

*Paris (CNN)*The second round of the French elections was set seconds after the polls closed Sunday evening, pitting two of the most unconventional candidates for the presidency of a nation that prides itself on professionalism and continuity of its leaders. Emmanuel Macron, who heads no political party but rather a movement he launched less than a year ago, will go head-to-head against Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Front, who has never held national office in France, but who represents her nation in the European Parliament, which she wants to dissolve.

The reality is that each also represents a dramatically different vision of France and its relations with America. In her acceptance speech, Le Pen spoke of an end to

globalism -- effectively a France First vision of her nation that should send shudders of fear through much of Europe but thrills of pleasure through President Trump and his entourage. Ironically, it also sets up President Trump, who effectively endorsed Le Pen last week, against President Obama, who called Macron to wish him godspeed.

While the world for the moment may breathe a sigh of relief that a far-left candidate, Jean-Luc Melenchon, was left in the dust, the final round will represent a French vote for or against France's remaining in Europe -- effectively a referendum on Brexit. A vote for Le Pen won't happen by accident. It will be a conscious choice of the French people, who know very well who they will be sending to the Elysees Palace.

And while the French people clearly want change, as of yet, they haven't decided what kind of change works for a country that has so firmly believed in the primacy of French culture and democracy.

Americans should care deeply about the outcome of the final showdown in two weeks. Geopolitically, a Le Pen victory would mean a strong ally of Vladimir Putin in the heart of a Europe from which she would have France withdraw. Macron's vision is for an ever stronger and more united Europe with France in a leadership role, and as a reliable partner to the United States for years to come.

Le Pen is committed to an easing of the sanctions against Russia for its seizure of Crimea and incursions into eastern Ukraine. It surprised few here when in the final days of her presidential campaign, she

suddenly popped up unannounced in the Kremlin for a warm grip-n-grin with a beaming Vladimir Putin. Indeed, the day after Trump launched 60 cruise missiles at a Syrian air base in retaliation for a Syrian chemical weapons attack on a civilian population, Le Pen blasted the American action as a return to the American practice of serving as "gendarme to the world." It was a rare break with President Trump, whom she has courted from the earliest days of her campaign, even showing up in Trump Tower, also unannounced, a week before his inauguration. And Le Pen is as skeptical of the value of NATO and France's role in the alliance as President Trump once was.

The arrival of Le Pen as French President would have a host of other impacts on American trade and financial issues. The euro, as a currency, would likely plummet, strengthening the dollar and making American products sold abroad much more expensive, potentially whacking the US trade balance and jobs in export-oriented companies. For the moment, however, the markets breathed a sigh of relief that far-left firebrand Melenchon did not advance to the second round -- the euro strengthening dramatically in electronic trading Sunday evening.

Macron, by contrast, is every bit a globalist, supporting a strong European Union, strong NATO and an active French role in both. He is also deeply skeptical of the aims of Vladimir Putin and anxious to continue or even strengthen sanctions. In short, he would likely prove to be a reliable ally of the United States as well as France's European neighbors.

Both, however, share a belief in the need to combat terrorism, though they differ dramatically on how to combat it -- Le Pen favoring a close-the-borders to foreigners approach similar to Trump's, Macron advocating for a more realistic approach that accepts the role of terrorism in the French landscape for years to come.

At this point, the outcome of the second round is up in the air. The narrow lead between Macron and Le Pen juggled as returns arrived throughout the evening hours. At the same time, this election is the first to be held under a national state of emergency, the tightest and least predictable in modern French history, so the second round may well be held hostage to a host of imponderable forces. Each candidate has acquired a security force and motorcade "like an American president's," as one French television commentator observed, and like nothing France has ever seen. And a terrorist attack could swing a tight contest.

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In the end, however, the choice of the next French president will be made for reasons that have little to do with external forces, or even America's needs or desires, though the outcome could have profound repercussions on both sides of the Atlantic. It will be made by French people with their own vision of France going forward in a new and particularly Gallic direction. And Americans had better let them make their own choice.



Obeidallah : Why Putin and Trump both like Le Pen

By Dean Obeidallah

Story highlights

- Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump have praised Marine Le Pen, the pro-Putin French presidential candidate
- Dean Obeidallah: Despite recent drama between Trump and Vladimir Putin, they and Le Pen are natural allies

Dean Obeidallah, a former attorney, is the host of SiriusXM's radio's daily program "The Dean Obeidallah Show" and a columnist for The Daily Beast. Follow him @deanofcomedy. The opinions expressed in this commentary are his.

(CNN)On one hand, Donald Trump's praise of France's far right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen, who appears to have received enough votes in Sunday's election to advance to the May 7 runoff, is not surprising. Le Pen, like Trump, ran a campaign that was anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and traded on white supremacist themes. (It's no coincidence that former Klan leader David Duke has publicly praised both Le Pen and Trump.)

On the other hand, you would think Trump would be hesitant to publicly praise a candidate like Le Pen, an avid supporter of Vladimir Putin, particularly given that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said just two weeks ago that US-Russian relations had reached an all time low.

And while the last few weeks have posed challenges to the Trump-Putin alliance, they are likely not reflective of the larger scale support the two leaders have for each other. Consider this: Throughout the campaign, Trump heaped praise on Putin, even defending Putin against allegations that he had journalists killed. And shortly after he was elected, Trump continued to publicly defend Putin, most notably during an interview with his friend Bill O'Reilly.

To some, myself included, the Trump-Putin feud is political theater to create the illusion of a rift after Russia's intelligence agencies helped Trump win the election, an allegation supported by the CIA.

Which is why Trump supporting a pro-Putin candidate in France may actually make complete sense

Now to be clear, Trump has not formally endorsed Le Pen. But just a few days before France's presidential election took place, Trump said Le Pen is "the strongest on what's been going on in France," then adding she is "the strongest on borders."

And, on April 21, after a terror attack in Paris left one police officer dead, Trump's tweeted: "Another terrorist attack in Paris. The people of France will not take much more of this. Will have a big effect on presidential election!" Given his recent praise of Le Pen, many consider this tweet a subtle endorsement of the far-right candidate, who has vowed to be tough on terrorism.

Le Pen is more than a little smitten with Trump. She has publicly praised Trump and met with some of his top surrogates, such as GOP far right Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa. Le Pen even declared she would've voted for Trump if given the chance.

And while she supports Trump, there is little doubt she also holds Putin -- and Russian banks -- in the highest regard.

Le Pen made international headlines when she met with Putin in Moscow just a few weeks ago, the only one of the 11 French presidential candidates to do so.

Le Pen has also advocated views that help Russia at Europe's expense. She has vowed to pull France out of NATO, the military alliance created to be a check to Russia's military might. Le Pen also called for an end to the sanctions imposed by the European Union on Russia for its annexation of Crimea, dubbing the sanctions "unfair and silly."

And Le Pen's ties to Russia go beyond rhetoric and photo ops. Le Pen's political party has been supported in part by Russian banks. Why didn't she seek funds from French banks first? Well, French banks refused to lend money, given her political party's "historic links to white supremacy and anti-Semitism." Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, had been convicted under French law for inciting hatred against Jews and for despicably denying the Holocaust. (This alone should have been reason enough

for Trump to refuse to praise Le Pen.)

In 2014, Le Pen's father secured about €2 million in campaign financing with the help of a Russian oligarch for the elections that year. And then Le Pen herself obtained a €9 million loan a few months later from the Russian Bank, First Czech Russian Bank, to fund her campaign.

And now it appears that Russian intelligence agencies are trying to influence the French election the same way they are alleged to have done in the US election. As Republican Sen. Richard Burr, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, recently stated, "I think it's safe by everybody's judgment that the Russians are actively involved in the French elections."

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Despite the obvious parallels between the US and French elections, it's unlikely Trump will criticize Le Pen anytime soon -- and especially now that she has emerged as one of the two potential future presidents of her country.

After all, as Le Pen herself said, "A new world has emerged in these past years. It's the world of Vladimir Putin, it's the world of Donald Trump in the United States ... and I think that probably I am the one who shares with these great nations a vision of cooperation and not a vision of submission."



Raphael : France Discards the Politics of Left and Right

Therese Raphael

6-7 minutes

For globalists rattled by Brexit and Donald Trump, the first round of the French presidential race was a relief. They should savor it. It probably won't last.

Turnout was nearly 70 percent. I live in one of France's most important political centers -- London -- and here voters queued for hours (in polite English fashion) to cast their ballots.

And this time, pollsters got it right: The hypernationalist Marine Le Pen will face a 39-year-old centrist reformer, Emmanuel Macron, from a political party that didn't exist one year ago, in the final round of the contest on May 7.

That's a big change for France, which left its long-dominant political parties of both left and right gasping by the side of the road. But there won't be an apocalyptic, turn-out-the-lights-as-you-leave-the-world second-round showdown between Le Pen and the anti-market statist Jean-Luc Melenchon. Both campaigned to substantially rewrite France's relationship with Europe and the rest of the world, something Macron does not propose to do.

Instead of this doomsday scenario, the largest share of the vote went to Macron, a blue-eyed reformer who's easy to like. He is, without a doubt, a political phenomenon. Once part of a Socialist government that has been thoroughly rejected by voters, he launched an independent party he called En Marche!, styled himself as non-establishment, and campaigned as a changemaker who

could bring in outsiders and parley with insiders. His success on Sunday is a salve to markets and a sign that the natural order of things hasn't been entirely disrupted.

"Foreign business chiefs swoon over this young, modern, dynamic minister. A French Justin Trudeau," wrote Gerard Davet and Fabrice Lhomme in their book about his mentor, President Francois Hollande, who tolerated Macron's political freelancing without suspecting that it would push his own party aside.

The Le Pen-Macron victories amount to the complete rejection of the rigid two-party system that has dominated French political life for over half a century. Grandees from the Socialist Party and the main party of the right (currently the Republicans) grew accustomed to

gobbling up talent from France's best universities, clashing swords, handing off the Elysee Palace to one another and essentially deciding the terms of debate and the course of policy in the world's sixth largest economy. In 1956, they together got 76 percent of the total vote; in 2012 it was 56 percent in the first round. On Sunday it was 26 percent.

The biggest hemorrhaging came from the Socialist Party, whose hapless candidate, Benoit Hamon, barely surpassed 6 percent. Hamon's candidacy was rejected even by the Socialist Party prime minister; his proposal to tax robots and his advocacy of a universal basic income and a range of hard-left policies struck voters as out of touch, as it was. Imagine if the U.S. Democrats had chosen Bernie Sanders to lead them and he had received 6 percent of the vote last

November (with a Democrat in the White House at the time). It's about that dramatic a result.

France's right fared better. Francois Fillon, a Thatcherite conservative to the right of his party, finished third with nearly 20 percent of the vote; at a time when voters had finally tired of the country's endemic political scandals, he was hurt by allegations that he misused party funds to employ family members. But his surprise selection in a first-ever Republican primary was only begrudgingly accepted by party leaders. His party may do better in the June parliamentary elections, but there is likely to be a vigorous debate over what exactly it stands

for.

France now has one presidential candidate, Le Pen, whose promises of expanding the already-robust welfare system coupled with xenophobia and contempt for the European Union justifies her claim to be both left and right. Macron, by contrast, claims to be neither. We can safely say that those labels no longer apply in France, just as they are becoming blurred elsewhere.

Instead, as in the U.S. and U.K., France is fractured by education and by geography. Over 40 percent of the voters picked candidates, Melenchon and Le Pen, who represent the most extreme views. Replacing the old left-right divide,

there are new battle lines drawn between those who want a more open, globalist France and those who see international ties as destructive of sovereignty. There are elements of the old left and the right in each of these camps.

On the economy, the division is between a vision of the state that focuses more on redistribution of wealth (Le Pen and much of the Socialist left) and one that, while embracing the centrality of the state in the French social contract, is focused on improving its efficiency (Macron and much of the center-right).

Even if Macron wins the May 7 runoff, he will need to find a way to

widen the center and draw from both left and right in the parliamentary elections in June. Without a governing majority, or a coalition in parliament, he can say what he likes but he can do little of it.

Alexis de Tocqueville once said, "The most dangerous moment for a bad government is usually when it starts to reform." Voters have decided that France has had bad government long enough and are demanding change. The person who gets to try to deliver it has a most difficult job. The relief may last into May, but it could be a hot summer.



Moody : French election: Can Le Pen finish the job?

John Moody
3-4 minutes

Did France just plug the dike on the crumbling European Union, or will it now crack wide open? It depends on who you think "won" Sunday's first round of presidential elections.

Emmanuel Macron, a former minister in the current Socialist government who calls himself an outsider, formed his own movement and took almost 24 percent of the vote on vague promises about a brighter future. Much of Macron's backing came not from rabid supporters but sworn enemies of the woman he will face in a run-off next month.

Declaring her 22 percent of the vote to be "historic" for France, Marine Le Pen of the right-wing National Front must now convince French citizens that her strident calls for tighter border security and less reliance on the E.U. are not a threat to their

pampered social welfare net and generous government benefits. That won't be easy.

But Le Pen can also claim – with justification – that she, and not Macron, represents the radical change that millions of Frenchmen say their country needs.

For the rest of Europe, the stakes could not be higher. A Macron victory on May 7 would be an immense relief to the European Union, which is in the process of getting divorced from Great Britain.

The E.U. has also become the punching bag of an insurgent party in Italy that is calling for increased national sovereignty instead of centralized decision-making in Brussels.

Like the Americans who voted to make Donald Trump president last November, a largely overlooked part of France wants to dethrone the traditional political system that has

remained entrenched in power for decades.

While most political commentators expect Macron to win the run-off, they may be overlooking the anger that native-born, working class French voters harbor against the "system."

The poor showing of Francois Fillon, a right-of-center veteran politician who droned on about traditional French values, while trying to defend himself against corruption charges, bared the growing dissatisfaction Frenchmen feel with their leaders.

Likewise, Socialist Benoit Hamon came up short, with his same-old, same-old pledge to keep France a vibrant member of the E.U., and keep the government subsidies flowing. Embarrassing the Socialists to boot.

Le Pen, far more than Macron, tapped into French fury with the status quo. Her tough stand against

continued mass immigration, especially Muslims who now make up 11 percent of the population, resonated with citizens who have been traumatized by repeated Islamist terrorist attacks over the past two years.

Le Pen's opponents will now circle the wagons and throw their support behind Macron. That might be enough to send him to the Élysée Palace. Then again, Le Pen supporters, like those of Trump, have demonstrated a loyalty and enthusiasm that none of the other candidates can claim.

If enough of them turn out a second time, she may pull off an even bigger surprise than the Tweeter in Chief. Yuge, in fact.

John Moody is Executive Vice President, Executive Editor for Fox News. A former Rome bureau chief for Time magazine, he is the author of four books including "Pope John Paul II : Biography."



Green : French Presidential Election: Elitist Center-Left Emmanuel Macron Won Most Votes

6-8 minutes

France is another country; they do things differently there. In Theresa May's Britain and Donald Trump's America, recent votes have been defined by populist hostility to technocratic "elites" — the modern aristocracy of bankers, civil servants, and politicians. Yet Emmanuel Macron, the winner in Sunday's first round of the French presidential elections, embodies all of these unpopular categories.

Macron is an *énarque*—a graduate of the *École nationale d'administration*, France's elite civil-service academy. After a brief stint

in the finance ministry, he moved to Rothschild's bank, then passed through the revolting door to politics, as an economic adviser to the current president, François Hollande a socialist of no fixed depth or clear competence. In 2016, Macron stepped aside as Hollande sank in the polls and floated himself as a one-man party. Its name, *En Marche!*, handily matches his initials: EM! On Sunday, Macron's promise of technocratic efficiency won a plurality, 23.8 percent of the votes.

Macron is heavily favored to win the second round on May 7. Or rather, Marine Le Pen and the Front National (FN) are heavily favored to

lose. Le Pen came a close second in Sunday's vote, with 21.6 percent of the vote. Both are beneficiaries of the collapse of the traditional parties of the center right and the center left. Both style themselves as insurgents but promise to preserve France's welfare state. Macron, the erstwhile minister of the Economy, Industry and Digital Affairs, promises to overhaul the French system through an efficiency drive. Le Pen calls for more radical measures, including the abandonment of the euro. In power, either would be an unknown and inexperienced quantity.

The policy differences between Sunday's two winners are doubled

by Sunday's two losers: François Fillon, of the conservative *Républicains* (20 percent); and Jean-Luc Mélenchon (19.5 percent), of the broadly left-wing *La France Insoumise*. Like Macron, Jean-Luc Mélenchon defected from the Socialists — in his case leftwards — and set up his own party in 2016. Its title, "La France Insoumise," translates like a Le Pen campaign slogan: France Unbowed, France Undefeated, France Rebellious. His hostility to the EU and his *dirigiste* promises to defend the welfare state and the jobs of French workers closely resemble Le Pen's positions. *Les extrêmes se touchent*, as the French say: The extremes meet.

Mélenchon had surged in the polls in the days before the vote. The media in France and abroad had characterized this as another insurgency, this time neo-Communist. Perhaps this explanation appealed because none of the candidates looked certain to overtake Marine Le Pen, the candidate, by ideological and familial extraction, of neo-fascism. Really, Mélenchon's rise reflected the collapse of the Socialists. The Socialists started in a bad position, as the sitting government. Worse, their candidate Benoît Hamon was tarred with the failures of François Hollande. Hamon lost votes to Mélenchon on his left, to Macron on his right, and to Le Pen across the board, and ended with a disastrous 6 percent.

François Fillon is a neo-Thatcherite. As the least statist of the major candidates, he was, in French terms at least, more of an insurgent than Macron or Mélenchon. Fillon's policies are a center-right mirror of

Macron's center-left policies; the prescriptions are those of Thatcher and Reagan rather than Clinton and Blair, but the promised cure is the same. Fillon, like Le Pen, ran an anti-elitist campaign that appealed to traditional and Catholic voters. He led Le Pen until a series of corruption scandals exposed him as an elitist in populist's clothing, which opened a path for Macron. Still, Sunday's result does not damage Les Républicains in the way that it does the Socialists.

For the first time since 1958, neither of the major parties of the Left and Right will be in the second round. The second vote will test how well the 'republican consensus' is surviving the collapse of the center.

In 2002, Marine Le Pen's father, Jean-Luc, who is not a neo-fascist but an old one, came second in the first round, with 16.86 percent of the vote. In the second round, strategic voting preserved France's

"republican consensus," giving Jacques Chirac 82 percent of the vote. At least Fillon's elimination deprives French voters of having to revive the 2002 slogan, "Vote for the crook, not the fascist." On Sunday, Marine Le Pen beat her father's first-round score in 2002. Her strategy of "dediabolisation" — "making undiabolical," or disassociating the Front National from its fascist and racist past — is working. The FN is now the first choice of first-time voters.

Sunday's first-round voting confirms that in politics as in cheese, the French are a law unto themselves. France's two-stage electoral process thins the rich and odiferous range of first-round options to a two-candidate runoff. On May 7, will the voters hold their noses in the second round, as they did in 2002?

For the first time since 1958, neither of the major parties of the Left and Right will be in the second round. The second vote will test how well

the "republican consensus" is surviving the collapse of the center — and how far the FN are becoming normalized as the voice of another kind of consensus, about national identity. The question seems to be less whether Macron will win, but by how much Le Pen will lose. In this sense, Le Pen is also a winner of Sunday's vote. The FN might still have an electoral ceiling, but it is rising.

Macron is no longer the insurgent, but the favorite. Like Fillon, he is an elitist campaigning as a populist. Le Pen will attack him as a "globalist" insider, as a turncoat Socialist, and as a fervent supporter of the EU and the euro. On paper, none of these should be vote-winning positions, yet on Sunday they were. But then, the French are different.

— *Dominic Green is a fellow of the Royal Historical Society and teaches politics at Boston College.*

**NATIONAL
REVIEW
ONLINE**

5-6 minutes

Fund : French Presidential Election: Macron & Le Pen Both Outside Establishment

Only a decade ago, France's two traditional major parties — the conservative Republicans and the Socialists — won 57 percent of the vote between them in the first round of the country's presidential elections. On Sunday, both parties together won less than half that — only 26 percent. Emmanuel Macron, the 39-year-old independent who placed first in this year's round, declared that the nation had "discarded" the two once-dominant parties.

Now France will have two weeks of ferocious fighting between the two finalists — Macron and the populist National Front leader Marine Le Pen. Supporters of Le Pen note that her 22 percent of the vote was a significant improvement over past National Front showings and predict that a rising tide of disgust against "arrogant elites" will carry her to victory in the May 7 runoff. Indeed, she did make clear that she offered "a fundamental choice" between French sovereignty and what she called the "forces of globalization and open borders." By contrast, Macron spoke in vague terms about how he stood for French "patriotism" rather than "anti-European nationalism."

No one doubts that Le Pen will add to her support in the second round. But those who believe that she can

duplicate the success of Donald Trump and win a surprise victory have to look at basic math. Trump trailed Hillary Clinton only narrowly in Election Day polls. The successful campaign to have Britain leave the European Union also trailed by only a small margin. But in a runoff with Macron, the populist Le Pen trails by an average of more than 20 percentage points. Campaigns can change minds, and polls can be off, but the surge of support Le Pen would need to win on May 7 would be unprecedented.

The reason that Le Pen probably has a ceiling is simple. François Fillon, the conservative who came in third in the first round, with 20 percent, put it simply when he advised his backers to vote for Macron on May 7. "The National Front's history is marked by violence and ignorance," he said. "Extremism can only bring unhappiness and division to France. There is no other choice than to vote against the far right."

Only two months ago, Fillon himself was seen as the front-runner for the presidency. An admirer of Margaret Thatcher, he campaigned on free-market themes and promised to reduce the size of the state while still keeping France in the European Union. Philip Turlé of Radio France Internationale noted that for the first time in decades, France was receptive to tough messages on security and economic reform.

Then it was revealed that Fillon had hired family members to be his aides in parliament and lied about the work they had done. Even though he found himself under formal investigation for corruption, he refused to leave the race.

If France doesn't engage in real reform of its economy and improve its assimilation policies for immigrants, populists of both the Left and the Right will continue to gain strength.

Many of his supporters drifted to Macron. Although he served as a minister in the government of outgoing Socialist president François Hollande, Macron has promised to remove some of the shackles holding back French innovation and economic growth. Nonetheless, many Fillon supporters are loath to back Macron in the runoff. The clear favorite of media and political elites, Macron has never been elected to office and so has no track record of keeping promises.

But for many Fillon supporters, Le Pen's call for an almost total ban on immigration is unrealistic, and her economic views echo left-wing calls for bigger public pensions, protection of the bloated civil service, and more government spending on a variety of programs. "Le Pen asks some of the right questions but still has many of the

wrong answers," Justine Le Blanc, a French lawyer who largely agrees with the National Front on immigration but thinks the party's views overly simplistic, told me.

Regardless of which outsider wins the French presidency, neither will find governing easy. Macron's En Marche (Forward) party didn't exist even a year ago, and it's unclear whether it will be able to elect many candidates in the parliamentary elections scheduled for June. Le Pen would in all likelihood face a parliament dominated by the traditional parties and leaning to the center-right, and it could stand in the way of her plans to hold a referendum on France's future in Europe.

If Macron wins, which seems likely, European Union leaders will breathe a sigh of relief. But the forces that have roiled Britain and the U.S. in the last year aren't going away. If France doesn't engage in real reform of its economy and improve its assimilation policies for immigrants, populists of both the Left and the Right will continue to gain strength and will force a new confrontation with the nation's establishment — sooner rather than later.

— *John Fund is NRO's national-affairs correspondent.*

American Conservatives Should Support Macron

5-7 minutes

Thus ends the first round of the two-step French presidential election. Beating the expectations of pollsters, centrist Emmanuel Macron eked out a win over Marine Le Pen. The two will now go head-to-head in a winner-take-all runoff on May 7.

With François Fillon (the GOP-equivalent candidate) now defeated, American conservatives might wonder who to support. After all, Macron is a former member of France's current socialist government, and Le Pen is avowedly pro-Trump.

The answer: Macron.

First off, Macron's economic policies are the more conservative. Like Trump, Le Pen supports protectionism and robust protections for the entitlement state, but she also wants expanded welfare benefits, a reduction in France's already unaffordable retirement age, and the retention of a 35-hour working week. Le Pen claims she will pay for all this with efficiency savings. Good luck. But that's just the start. Le Pen's National Front

party also wants import tariffs to protect lethargic French industries from competition.

This is socialism. It would mean higher living costs for families, ballooning deficit spending, and more barriers to first-time employment for younger workers. Conversely, Macron has promised reforms to encourage entrepreneurial risk taking and to unshackle private-sector businesses from France's constricting labor laws. Put simply, Macron is the candidate of economic opportunity; Le Pen is the candidate of special interests. Millennial conservatives have particular reason to support the former, in the sense that their futures depend on creative destruction born of fields such as those in the sharing industry.

Second, where Le Pen fetishizes national division, Macron speaks of patriotism joined to opportunity. Even as words alone, this is a political narrative that France desperately needs. As Andrew Hussey explains in his 2014 book, *The French Intifada*, many young French Muslims feel that their citizenry exists on paper only — that when it comes to education, opportunity, and respect, their country has no interest in them. American conservatives should be alarmed by that sentiment. The glory of American patriotism is its combination of shared opportunity and personal responsibility. Indeed, American Muslims' patriotism is proof that Le Pen is wrong. It shows that where expectations are matched to opportunity, nationalism can be inclusive.

There's a broader ideological issue in play here. As I wrote yesterday in the *Washington Examiner*, Le Pen's obsession with identity politics galvanizes her base but alienates everyone else. Some American conservatives think that Le Pen's beliefs are similar to Trump's, but they're not. Where Trumpism consists of chameleon political expediency, Le Pen-ism is grounded in the purity of sectarian anger. Trump flirts with sectarian rhetoric, but he corrals it to themes of crime, employment, and trade. Le Pen's identity politics run far deeper. Her speeches are webbed together by a thinly veiled disgust for French citizens of colonial ancestry. It's a telling differential between Trump and Le Pen. Where candidate Trump pledged to increase social mobility for American minorities, Le Pen uses minorities as a whipping horse to pleasure her base. Earlier this month, Le Pen promised to transfer government funds away from what she described as drug-addled, crime-ridden suburbs and toward rural areas. Regardless, her tone is always clear: The young Muslim men of Clichy-sous-Bois, where riots seized international headlines in 2005, are to be reproached. The empowered *pure* offer national salvation.

When it comes to U.S. security interests, Le Pen might as well be an American adversary. She wants to abandon NATO and cozy up to Putin.

This is not to say that France does not need to crack down on criminality and terrorism. It does — urgently. But confronting terrorists

and organized crime gangs won't do much good if the means of doing so drive future generations into those same endeavors.

Finally, when it comes to U.S. security interests, Le Pen might as well be an American adversary. Yes, she wants to leave the bureaucratic and illiberal European Union. But Le Pen also wants to abandon NATO and cozy up to President Putin. Hers is a pathetic mix of Gaullism and appeasement. Don't believe me? Read her policy platform and look at this photo.

Macron, however, pledges to improve France's security and intelligence apparatus. Expect, for example, increased French special-operations deployments alongside U.S. military forces. He has also shown admirable courage in condemning Putin's harassment. If American conservatives truly care about human freedom and the basic rule of law, their support for Macron must be a given.

This isn't a complex choice. Neither Le Pen nor Macron is a true conservative, but the latter is far closer to conservatism than the former is. Without Lafayette and France, the United States would probably have died in its infancy. Our close ally deserve better than Le Pen.

— Tom Rogan is a columnist for Opportunity Lives and National Review Online, a former panelist on The McLaughlin Group, and a senior fellow at the Steamboat Institute. E-mail him at Thomas.RoganE@gmail.com.

READ MORE:



Right-wing Le Pen claims victory alongside centrist Macron for French presidential runoff, with E.U. future at stake (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/michael.birnbaum1>

9-11 minutes

PARIS — French voters on Sunday rejected the two political parties that dominated France's post-World War II political life, pitting an anti-immigrant firebrand against an unconventional centrist in a presidential election that could determine the future of the European Union and France's place in the world.

By picking the pro-E.U. former economy minister Emmanuel Macron and National Front leader Marine Le Pen to advance to the decisive May 7 runoff, French citizens set up a stark choice. Now there will be a battle between a

contender who wants to seal France tight against the tides of globalization and another who seeks to strip away even more barriers with the rest of the world.

The victor could determine whether the international alliances that formed the backbone of the West after World War II will strengthen or be shattered by the force of nationalism. Le Pen has said she will seek to pull France out of the European Union, a move many leaders on the continent think would doom the 28-nation bloc; she also said she would rekindle relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin after years of strife between Russia and the West. Macron has called for a more muscular European Union in which Europe's richest nations would do more to prop up their poorer neighbors.

[WorldViews: What you need to know about the French election]

If Le Pen wins, she will continue a global string of ballot-box revolutions that began last year with the British decision to leave the European Union and continued with the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president. With her fierce anti-immigration agenda and her vow to keep France for the French, she could be a Gallic counterpart to President Trump. But if Macron triumphs — and polls suggest he will, by a 24 percentage point margin — it would be a further barrier to transatlantic disruptions, at least for now, after Dutch voters rejected a far-right leader in March elections.

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen on April 23 advanced to the runoff of France's presidential election. Here's what you need to know about her. French far-right leader Marine Le Pen on April 23 advanced to the runoff of France's presidential election. Here's what you need to know about her. (Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

At the jubilant Macron rally in Paris, the centrist candidate who was Socialist President François Hollande's economy minister told his supporters France would prosper in a revitalized European Union.

"I've heard the anger, the fears of the French people, their fear of change," the 39-year-old Macron said, winking at his cheering audience. "I want to be the president

of all patriots against the nationalist threat.”

[A youth revolt in France boosts the far right]

At Le Pen’s rally in Henin-Beaumont, a northern French town hit hard by factory closures, the modest assortment of soft drinks and snacks gave it more the feeling of a country fair than the celebration of an ascendant presidential campaign — exactly the everyman image Le Pen has sought to project.

“What is at stake in this election is a referendum for or against lawless globalization,” Le Pen told the cheering crowd. “Either you choose in favor of a total lack of rules, without borders, with unlawful competition, the free circulation of terrorists, or you make the choice of a France that protects.

“This is truly what is at stake. It is the survival of France,” she said.

The vote came after a turbulent campaign in which longtime pillars of France’s political establishment were either rejected by voters or discredited by scandal. Hollande, the most unpopular of all postwar French presidents, said he would not seek reelection. His most prominent Socialist successor lost to a primary challenger. So did the former center-right president, Nicolas Sarkozy. The early front-runner in the race, François Fillon, a right-wing challenger who sought a Margaret Thatcher-style overhaul of France’s economy, fell prey to a nepotism scandal.

With 97 percent of the vote counted, Macron led the field with 23.9 percent of the vote. Le Pen followed with 21.5 percent.

Many voters said they were opting for the least bad of an unpalatable slate of options.



Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen Advance in French Election (UNE)

Alissa J. Rubin
11-14 minutes

Marine Le Pen Speaks to Supporters

The far-right National Front candidate said she had the immense responsibility to defend the French nation after she appeared set to advance to a runoff vote in the presidential election.

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS.
Photo by Ian Langsdon/European Pressphoto Agency. Watch in Times Video »

“I want nobody, and it’s very complicated. I just don’t want to see the extremes,” said Emma Lacour, 42, who voted Sunday in the upscale Saint-Cloud suburb of Paris, where conservatives usually dominate. “I decided two minutes ago, and I’m not very happy,” said Lacour, who was too dispirited to say whom she picked as she walked out of the ornate 19th-century city hall that held the voting station.

Thursday’s attack on police officers patrolling Paris’s glittering Champs-Élysées boulevard was the final, bloody exclamation point in a campaign that often revolved around fears of terrorism and immigrants. One officer died and two were wounded by a gunman who pledged loyalty to the Islamic State.

[France’s terrorism problem divided the country. The election could make it worse.]

Filled with fresh worries about security, voters may have been drawn by Le Pen’s growling message about refugees and terror suspects. Macron, a newcomer who is far more conversant with boardrooms than he is with situation rooms, has sought to boost his security bona fides.

A former investment banker and a product of France’s elite educational institutions, he has described himself as a candidate of neither the left nor the right, and he has never held an elected office. His agenda marries social liberalism with proposals that would dilute France’s traditionally robust protections for workers. And — despite prevailing winds that make pro-E.U. sentiment an unlikely campaign strategy — he has embraced the union and said he wants to make it stronger.

“I’m hoping for the renewal of the French political scene,” said Catherine Grevelink, 56, who

oversees legal issues at a bank and voted for Macron in Saint-Cloud. “He’s very intelligent. Now we have to see how this comes out as he governs, if he is president.”

Either of the winning candidates would face questions about governing, since neither has a party structure in France’s Parliament. Macron’s movement is too new to have any lawmakers, and Le Pen would face steep challenges in capturing a majority of the National Assembly in elections scheduled for June 11.

That could potentially be a brake to her more ambitious plans, such as taking France out of the European Union. E.U. membership is enshrined in the constitution, and any change would require approval in both houses of Parliament.

Sunday’s result is a vindication of Le Pen’s years-long strategy to destigmatize her party after decades in which it lurked on France’s far-right fringe. Her father notoriously described the Nazi gas chambers as “a detail” of World War II. But Le Pen, 48, sought to make inroads among France’s large Jewish community and also depicted herself as the single true defender of French workers.

“The laws are there already, but no one applies them, as the attack in Paris showed,” said Martine Le Roy, 62, a retired insurance worker from Henin-Beaumont. She said she was supporting the anti-immigrant, hard-line Le Pen because she was worried about security.

Even as Macron and Le Pen advanced to the next round, the sheer uncertainty in the lead-up to Sunday’s vote was a measure of the unmooring of French political life.

“We’ve had two consecutive presidents, Nicolas Sarkozy and

François Hollande, very different orientations, very different policies, but still we have the same economic problems,” said Bruno Cautrès, who studies voting behavior at the Center for Political Research at Sciences Po in Paris. “It has been one of the best arguments of Marine Le Pen: ‘Why not me?’”

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Although most opinion polls suggest that Macron would win at least 60 percent of a head-to-head vote against Le Pen, an unforeseeable event — such as a large-scale terrorist attack — could shift votes in Le Pen’s direction. And the far-left candidate, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who electrified crowds of young voters with his soak-the-rich message, notably held back Sunday from asking his supporters to vote for Macron in the runoff, raising the prospect that some of his boosters — 19.6 percent of Sunday’s voters — could stay home or even vote for Le Pen. Backers of other candidates could also swing to Le Pen.

If Le Pen ultimately falls to Macron, she will still have taken the far-right further than any prior candidate in one of Europe’s pillar nations. If her rival is elected but fails to live up to expectations, she could seize the presidency in the next election in five years, analysts said.

“If she does well, she could be even stronger in 2022,” said Jean-Yves Camus, an expert on the French far right at the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs.

McAuley reported from Henin-Beaumont. Rick Noack and Virgile Demoustier contributed to this report.

PARIS — In France’s most consequential election in recent history, voters on Sunday chose Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen to go to a runoff to determine the next president, official returns showed. One is a political novice, the other a far-right firebrand — both outsiders, but with starkly different visions for the country.

The result was a full-throated rebuke of France’s traditional mainstream parties, setting the country on an uncertain path in an election that could also decide the future of the European Union.

It is the first time in the nearly 59-year history of France’s Fifth

Republic that both of the final candidates are from outside the traditional left-right party structure. Together, they drew less than half the total votes cast in a highly fractured election.

Even before the official tallies were announced, the political establishment was rallying behind Mr. Macron, warning of the dangers of a victory by Ms. Le Pen’s far-right National Front, though few analysts give her much of a chance of winning the May 7 runoff.

Mr. Macron, a former investment banker, abandoned traditional parties a year ago to form his own movement with an eclectic blend of

left and right policies. He campaigned on a pro-European Union platform, coupled with calls to overhaul the rules governing the French economy.

“The French people have decided to put me at the top in the first round of the vote,” Mr. Macron told jubilant supporters at a rally in Paris. “I’m aware of the honor and the responsibility that rest on my shoulders.”

Ms. Le Pen’s success was a victory for people who oppose the European Union and for those who want to see more “France first” policies to restrict immigration, protect French industry and limit

public signs of Muslim faith, including the wearing of head scarves.

"The great debate will finally take place," Ms. Le Pen said on Twitter. "French citizens need to seize this historic opportunity."

Political experts said the vote showed a new, profound cleavage in French politics around globalization, as well as France's relationship with the European Union.

"Fundamentally, this shows that France is going through deep political tensions: clashes over the global economy, the integration of France into the global economy and into Europe," said Bruno Cautrès, a political analyst and public opinion specialist at the Center for Political Research at Sciences Po, the institute of political studies in Paris.

It is not that the left-right divide no longer matters — after all, voters gave roughly 40 percent of the vote to various versions of the traditional left and right — but that it is now complicated by the crosscutting politics of globalization versus anti-globalization.

With 97 percent of the vote counted, Mr. Macron had 23.9 percent, Ms. Le Pen had 21.5 percent, the mainstream right candidate François Fillon had nearly 20 percent, and the far-left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon had 19.6 percent.

Emmanuel Macron Speaks to Supporters

Mr. Macron, the presidential candidate of France's En Marche! party, spoke to supporters after receiving the most votes in the first round of elections.

By REUTERS and THE ASSOCIATED PRESS. Photo by Sylvain Lefevre/Getty Images. Watch in Times Video »

When Ms. Le Pen spoke to supporters in the small town of Hénin-Beaumont in northern France, although the results were not yet definitive, she sounded victorious.

She not only made it to the second round for the first time, but also got a higher percentage of votes than she did in 2012, and a higher percentage than her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, did in 2002, when he made it to the second round as the National Front candidate and faced Jacques Chirac.

Ms. Le Pen said the outcome was "an act of French pride, that of a people who are raising up their

heads, that of a people sure of their values and confident of the future."

That future would be a perilous one under the National Front, others warned. Bernard Cazeneuve, the sitting Socialist prime minister, called Ms. Le Pen's project "dangerous and sectarian" and said it would "impoverish, isolate and divide" the country.

"It will inevitably lead to the end of Europe and of the euro, and, eventually, to France's relegation," he said. "The National Front cannot be the future of our country."

For now, voters narrowly embraced Mr. Macron's centrist calls for change over more strident appeals from the far left and the far right for France to fortify itself against immigration and globalization.

Le Pen and Macron Supporters Ecstatic

Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen, a centrist and a far-right candidate, were set to advance after the first round of elections in France. Though their supporters celebrated, some acknowledged that the election had not been won yet. The run-off will be on May 7.

By REUTERS. Photo by Eric Feferberg/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images. Watch in Times Video »

His success also suggests that despite multiple terrorist attacks in France recently, a message of outreach to immigrants and acceptance of Muslims, as well as of ethnic diversity, has some currency. Ms. Le Pen campaigned stridently against Muslims and immigration, linking both to security threats, and she may have benefited from a final surge of support after a terrorist attack in Paris on Thursday.

In contrast, Mr. Macron, in his address to supporters as the returns were still being tabulated Sunday night, emphasized that he wanted to be the president of all of France. He promised "to bring together the French people," clearly recognizing that if he wins the runoff, as is expected, he will have to lead a politically fractured country.

Four candidates with markedly different views came within a few points of one another in the vote on Sunday, suggesting that the fight about what vision of France will dominate the future is far from over.

Both Mr. Macron's supporters and those of Ms. Le Pen were cheering madly at their respective candidates' headquarters, with Ms. Le Pen's

loyalists dancing in the street outside the place where she was speaking in Hénin-Beaumont.

The two finalists could hardly be more different on the big questions facing France: globalization, immigration and French identity. Beyond that, they represent completely different faces of France.

Ms. Le Pen's voters want a government that protects them from the vicissitudes of the marketplace and closes its borders to outsiders, re-establishing the frontiers that have been largely erased by the European Union.

Voters at a polling station in Paris on Sunday during the first round of the French presidential elections. Jerome Delay/Associated Press

Although Ms. Le Pen has younger, more high-tech voters, she also represents the France that feels left behind: the workers whose jobs have moved to cheaper countries, such as those in Eastern Europe and Asia.

She represents young people who have to go to work early in life to help support their families, and who do not have the advanced degrees that afford them a good income. And she represents people who feel threatened by the immigrants thronging to Europe.

"Marine will fight for the young people — for their future, for their freedom, for their job, for their family," said Aurore Lahondes, a resident of the central-west city of Angers. She called Mr. Macron, a onetime investment banker at Rothschild & Company, "the candidate who is the most far away from the people."

"He is the candidate of the financial part of the world," Ms. Lahondes, 19, said in an interview at a bar that had been rented out by the local National Front federation. "He is the candidate of the European Union."

Mr. Macron represents a more educated and cosmopolitan France. His voters are not all privileged by any means, but they believe that looking beyond the country's borders will enrich them in every way, economically and culturally. Mr. Macron's challenge will be to convince more of the French that globalism has as many rewards as it does costs.

"Globalism has positive effects, but it also increases precariousness and inequalities," said Thomas Guénolet,

a political-science professor at Sciences Po.

French soldiers patrolling near the Eiffel Tower in Paris on Sunday. Ludovic Marin/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

The vote on Sunday came after a bruising campaign in which the public repeatedly rejected candidates who were expected to be winners. In the mainstream right primary, the mayor of Bordeaux, Alain Juppé, was expected to handily best Mr. Fillon. Instead, Mr. Fillon trounced him.

The left suffered similar upheaval, with the expected winner of the Socialist primary, former Prime Minister Manuel Valls, losing to Benoît Hamon. Mr. Hamon floundered during the campaign and received less than 7 percent of the vote, a cratering of support for his party.

On the right, Mr. Fillon initially looked like a potential winner, but a nepotism scandal — in which he was accused of embezzling public funds by paying his wife and children to work as his assistants, although they appear to have done little work — defeated his efforts to make it to the second round.

"The obstacles put on my path were too numerous, too cruel," he said, conceding defeat Sunday night.

In the meantime, Mr. Macron appears to have been in the right place at the right time, with mainstream candidates falling on either side and a far-right candidate whom many in France cannot imagine having represent the country.

That does not mean that people favor him, but rather that he was the "least worst" vote: an especially weak position for a candidate with no real party base behind him.

"I chose a 'useful vote' for the first round, and it really breaks my heart — it's the first time I'm doing this," said Monica Caignou, 40, who works in digital development in Paris.

Others saw in Mr. Macron the possibility for France to keep up with global changes. "We need someone young," said Karine Filhoulaud, a 45-year-old web editor, who was at Mr. Macron's victory party and danced alone long after the crowds had left. "He lives the transition: the environmental one, the digital one, the societal one."

French Parties Unify Against Le Pen: 'This Is Deadly Serious Now' (UNE)

Adam Nossiter

4 minutes

PARIS — Not since World War II has the anti-immigrant far right been closer to gaining power in France. With her second-place finish on Sunday in the first round of the presidential election, Marine Le Pen has dragged her National Front party from the dark fringes of its first 40 years.

But that remarkable accomplishment is so alarming to so many in France that as soon as the preliminary results were announced at 8:01 p.m., virtually all of her major opponents in the 11-person race called for her defeat in the second-round runoff on May 7. They implored their supporters to vote for the candidate projected to come out on top on Sunday, the centrist, pro-European Union former economy minister Emmanuel Macron, a political novice and outsider.

The first-round showing by Mr. Macron and Ms. Le Pen represented an earthquake, as they effectively broke the French political establishment. On the right and the left, the two parties that have governed France for more than 50 years suffered a severe defeat. They have been pushed aside in a wave of popular anger over the country's stagnant economy and shaky security.

The rapid-fire endorsements of Mr. Macron, coming from across the political spectrum, represented a dynamic that has always prevailed in France when the National Front approaches executive power — the cross-party, anti-far right alliance the French call the "Republican Front." The question now is whether that front can hold this time, as well.

Continue reading the main story

Ms. Le Pen has oriented her appeal around what analysts and politicians call the "un-demonization" of her party — the shedding of its racist, anti-Semitic, Nazi-nostalgic roots. That strategy has scored big results. Until the last week of the campaign, when she turned even more sharply

anti-immigrant, her speeches were shaped around what she depicted as regaining France's "sovereignty," breaking with the European Union and "restoring" France's frontiers.

But an undercurrent of prejudice still undergirds the National Front's fervent rallies. Anti-Muslim code still permeates her speeches. And a majority of French people, in polls, still say the party represents a threat to the country's democracy.

That sentiment was widely evident on Sunday in declarations from the political class, and from voters themselves. True, polls and prognosticators failed to predict Britain's vote to leave the European Union, or the American presidential victory of Donald J. Trump. It is because of these unexpected shocks to the political status quo that many analysts are wary of prematurely writing off Ms. Le Pen. But early polling for the second round in France shows that Mr. Macron's margin over her is as high as 25 percent.

One after another on Sunday night, and in quick succession, the grandees of the established parties urgently called for an anti-Le Pen vote, as if the real stakes of this year's election had suddenly been revealed.

"Extremism can only bring unhappiness and division," said the defeated candidate of the center-right *Républicains* party, François Fillon, who was the consensus favorite four months ago but was brought down by a corruption scandal. "There is no choice but to vote against the far right," said Mr. Fillon, who was set to finish in third place.

The candidate of the governing Socialist Party, Benoît Hamon, whose fifth-place finish symbolized voter rejection of the establishment, was equally unequivocal. He had run a campaign of unrelenting hostility toward Mr. Macron. That vanished Sunday. "There's a clear distinction to be made between a political adversary and an enemy of the republic," Mr. Hamon said, calling on Socialists to vote for Mr.

Macron. "This is deadly serious now."

Only the likely fourth-place finisher, the far-left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon, was holding back on Sunday night, hoping for an as-yet uncounted big-city vote that might push him past Ms. Le Pen. But his supporters were already acknowledging what appeared to be inevitable and calling for a Macron vote in the second round.

Fifteen years ago, when Ms. Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, shocked his compatriots by breaking through to the second round and again knocking out the Socialist Party, some Socialist voters went to the polls with clothespins on their noses, as they voted for the scandal-plagued candidate of the center-right, Jacques Chirac. Mr. Le Pen was dealt a crushing defeat.

Eighteen months ago, in widely watched regional elections, Ms. Le Pen's party seemed all but certain to gain control of the two regions in France where it is strongest, the north and the southeast. Most analysts predicted it. In the end, she gained neither: In the second round of those contests, the "Republican Front" united against her, the right and the left, and the National Front failed to gain a single region.

This time, even though she has pushed her party into a second round of voting, her prospects based on the first round do not necessarily look bright, either. She underperformed, gaining 21 percent of votes to Mr. Macron's nearly 24 percent. Analysts said the result could be seen as a disappointment for the Front, based on polls before the vote.

"She's clearly done better than in 2012," said Joël Gombin, a Front expert at the University of Picardy Jules Verne, calling it a half-victory. "But at the same time, the result is below what the Front was hoping for, and what the polls were saying."

Mr. Gombin said the results suggested the Front could also fare poorly in crucial legislative elections in June. In order to prevail against Mr. Macron, Ms. Le Pen must gain the votes of over half the Fillon

supporters, Mr. Gombin has said. But no poll shows her as achieving that result within a Fillon electorate that is conservative but hardly radical.

"The Front was unable to get voters on the right," Mr. Gombin said. "And it does seem as though the dynamic of the Republican Front will prevail," he added. "For the moment, I can't say there will be any cracks in it."

Mr. Gombin predicted a rejection inside the Front of the centrist-oriented turn pushed by technocrats like Ms. Le Pen's closest adviser, Florian Philippot, and a return to its hard-right roots.

Mr. Philippot was in television studios on Sunday night, ostensibly relishing the sharp ideological battle to come with Mr. Macron, who rejects Ms. Le Pen's economic protectionism and is strongly in favor of France's European partnerships.

"We've been able to impose this idea of patriotism at all levels," Mr. Philippot said. "It's really going to be about private interests" — the Front regularly derides Mr. Macron as the candidate of the "banks," as he is a former investment banker — "against the interests of the nation."

But at polling places on Sunday in Paris, voter after voter expressed fear of a Le Pen victory, even if there was no great enthusiasm for the youthful, untested Mr. Macron. Many said they had difficulty even stomaching the prospect of the National Front making it to the second round.

"That Marine Le Pen is not in the second round — that's what I want," Fabienne Zellner, who runs a youth-aid agency, said outside a polling station in Paris's heavily immigrant 18th Arrondissement. "That's what I want."

Myriam Bellehigue, a university professor in the more bourgeois Ninth Arrondissement, voted for Mr. Macron "without much" enthusiasm. "But, and I've been saying it for weeks," she said, "the extremes are just not possible."

Meichtry

6-8 minutes

French Presidential Runoff Heralds New Political Era (UNE)

William Horobin
and Stacy

Updated April 24, 2017 4:21 a.m. ET

PARIS—Centrist Emmanuel Macron and far-right politician Marine Le Pen led the first round of voting in France's presidential election as voters redrew the political map,

placing the European Union at the center of a new divide.

Mr. Macron won the first round with 23.8% of the vote, according to an official tally of 100% of votes, ahead of Ms. Le Pen with 21.5%.

The vote marks a stunning rebuke of France's mainstream political forces. For more than four decades, a duopoly of conservative and socialist presidents has alternated in the Élysée Palace, squeezing out fringe parties as well as mavericks

seeking to end the country's political and economic sclerosis.

On Sunday, the European Union and its demands of free trade and open borders became the defining fault line of a new political order. On one side stood Mr. Macron, a former investment banker who seeks deeper EU integration. On the other was Ms. Le Pen, an avowed opponent of the EU and its common currency.

"You have an alternative, the real one," said Ms. Le Pen on Sunday. "The major issue of this election is runaway globalization, which is putting our civilization in danger."

Mr. Macron said he wanted to become the standard-bearer of a governing majority that can relaunch the EU.

"I want to be the president of patriots against the threat of all the nationalists," he told his supporters.

Opinion polls published Sunday indicated Mr. Macron would handily defeat Ms. Le Pen in a head-to-head contest as supporters of defeated candidates coalesce around him. The second, decisive round of balloting is to be held on May 7.

The strength of Mr. Macron's score on Sunday could help restore calm in sovereign debt markets. Investors have been demanding a premium to lend to France in the run-up to the vote, amid fears the country's membership in the EU and the euro was in jeopardy.

Europe's common currency rose 1.8% to \$1.0926 on Sunday, its highest level against the dollar since November. Against the Japanese yen, the euro surged to ¥120.8, up 3.2%.

Still, the first-round outcome suggests the country is more divided than ever over the European question. Votes for the main euroskeptic candidates, including Ms. Le Pen and far-left firebrand Jean-Luc Mélenchon, accounted for nearly half of the tally.

The race is also unfolding in a highly volatile climate. The slaying of a police officer in an assault on the Champs Elysées Thursday revived fears of terror attacks that buffeted the country in recent years, killing more than 200 people.

François Fillon, the conservative Les Républicains candidate who placed third with 19.9%, said he would cast his vote for Mr. Macron, because "I have no other choice than vote against the extreme right."

The collapse of the ruling Socialist Party was amplified by the fourth-place performance of Mr. Mélenchon, who scored 19.5%.

"This failure is a deep wound," said Benoît Hamon, the candidate of the Socialist Party, who garnered 6.4% of the vote, placing fifth. Mr. Hamon also called on his supporters to unite behind Mr. Macron, calling Ms. Le Pen "an enemy of the republic."

Mr. Mélenchon refused to support one of the top two finishers Sunday evening. Taking the podium before a chanting crowd, he instead accused both Mr. Macron and Ms. Le Pen of failing to address a corrupt status quo and said that he would ask his supporters to vote on his website to determine whom his movement would support.

European leaders across the continent celebrated Mr. Macron's advance to the runoff. German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel

praised Mr. Macron as "the only truly pro-European candidate who didn't hide behind prejudices about Europe."

Mr. Macron and Ms. Le Pen will face an uphill challenge. Both need to field candidates for legislative elections scheduled for June 11 and 18 and command a majority in parliament to implement their platforms.

For Mr. Macron—whose political party En Marche, or "On the Move," is barely a year old—the difficulty lies in uniting barons from mainstream parties on the left and right who have recently defected to his ranks. At the same time, he needs to mobilize young supporters who have displayed savvy in campaigning on social media but lack experience in machine politics to turn out voters in local constituencies.

Ms. Le Pen's second-place finish is a step forward in her yearslong drive to refashion the National Front, a political party founded in the xenophobic and anti-Semitic spirit of her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen. Still, Ms. Le Pen's effort to push the party past World War II-era recriminations stumbled earlier this month when she claimed the French state wasn't responsible for the 1942 roundup of Jews, in which more than 13,000 people were arrested and kept in the Vel d'Hiv cycling stadium to be deported to Nazi concentration camps.

Supporters who joined Ms. Le Pen at a rally said her strategy failed to broaden the party's mainstream appeal.

"I think people fear Marine when they are in the voting booth," said Hervé Bertout, a delivery driver who

lives near Hénin-Beaumont in Northern France.

Such fears could make it hard for Ms. Le Pen to form a majority in parliament, through the National Front is likely to pick up more than its current two seats in the lower house.

Ms. Le Pen has tried to turn the page on the party's past by positioning herself as a check on globalism, vowing to wage a "patriotic revolution" by holding a referendum on France's membership in the EU and the euro. She has also promised to deport undocumented immigrants.

Mr. Macron's first-place finish continues a meteoric rise that began when President François Hollande picked the Rothschild banker as his deputy chief of staff in 2012.

Mr. Macron drew attention for criticizing the president's tax-the-rich policies as an attempt to make France "Cuba without the sun." Mr. Hollande not only tolerated the outspoken aide, he promoted Mr. Macron to economy minister, placing him in charge of the government's effort to slash red tape and loosen labor regulation.

—Joshua Robinson, Nick Kostov, Matthew Dalton, Noémie Bisserbe and Sam Schechner contributed to this article.

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Le Pen Posts Strong Showing, Pro-Europe Eyes Turn to Macron

By Emily Tamkin

In a surprise twist, the polls were basically right.

The French presidential election now boils down to a contest between Emmanuel Macron, a 39-year old former banker, pro-EU candidate who borrowed from left and right to create his own En Marche (Forward) party, and Marine Le Pen, the populist nationalist who defenestrated her father to take over the far-right National Front.

Sunday evening local time, with 87 percent of votes counted, the French Interior Ministry said Le Pen received 22.27 percent of the vote while Macron received 23.43 percent. That was broadly in line with early projections — but was also a sharp repudiation of establishment parties. Both the

center-right Republican candidate and Socialist candidate who finished out of the running threw their support behind Macron.

An Ipsos poll of the second round of the French elections has Macron winning 62 percent against Le Pen's 38 percent.

In a divide that mirrors what has happened in the United Kingdom and the United States, the opposing candidates represent not just different parties but clashing worldviews. Le Pen wants to leave the European Union and pushes protectionist policies, when not denying France's role in the Holocaust; Macron defends Europe, and wants France to be more engaged with the world, not less (much to the delight of Merkel's chief of staff, Peter Altmaier, who

tweeted that the outcome shows "France and Europe can win together!").

"We have here, one the one hand, the French who are confident in the future, who are optimistic, who want economic openness," said Alessia Lefebvre, a French politics expert at Columbia University. "On the other side ... it's the French who are scared about the future," and who are nostalgic for what they imagine was the security and certainty of a bygone era.

Le Pen, whose result Sunday was the best ever for the National Front in a presidential election, tried to polish some of her party's shabbier edges during the campaign, but has not shied from her core message, which is that "civilization" is under siege.

"Globalization puts our civilization at risk," Le Pen said in her Sunday victory speech.

Macron, in his speech, struck the opposite tone. "I will be the voice of hope and optimism, for our country's future and for Europe," Macron said.

For the second round of voting, scheduled for May 7, Macron seems well positioned to win, given his ability to pull support from both sides of the center. But some experts were leery of counting Le Pen out.

In Le Pen, Macron has "a very formidable and very dangerous opponent," Irene Finel-Honigman of Columbia University said "She's almost like a cornered animal, and she'll stop at nothing."

But while her nationalistic, far-right platform may be appealing to some,

her economic policy, Finel-Honigman explained, "is largely incoherent." That could create an opportunity for Macron — if he can articulate an argument that a retreat from the global economy would be even worse for workers who feel like they've been left behind. What's more, he'll have to do it without the machinery of a big national party: His movement was formed just a year ago.

Missing from the next round will be the mainstream traditional parties that have dominated decades of French politics. French voters are still politically engaged, with turnout in the afternoon at 69 percent, but they are tired of traditional politicians, eschewing both the center-right Republicans and center-left Socialists. (Current president

Francois Hollande, with single-digit approval ratings, didn't even compete.)

The traditional left and right dichotomy doesn't work anymore, Lefebure said. Citizens "don't recognize themselves in the parties."

The proof of that is the fate of those who ran for the traditional parties. Some projections had François Fillon, who, mere months ago, was assumed to be the next president of France, performing only slightly better than Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the far-left candidate who surged in the weeks leading up to the first round. (That Fillon spent his campaign under a cloud of fraud charges for misusing French funds to pay his family one million euros

didn't make the strongest appeal.) And the Socialist candidate, Benoît Hamon, managed to get only 6.5 percent of the vote, per projections.

Now eyes and ears will turn toward the other candidates, as French voters watch and listen for how they encourage their voters to go. On Sunday, Fillon and Hamon announced they would head to the polls on May 7 to vote for Macron. Both had strong words for the threat that the National Front poses to France. Fillon said the far right needed to be stopped. Hamon took things a step further, saying there's a difference between "a political adversary and an enemy of the Republic."

But, then, if Sunday's elections showed one thing, it is that the call

of mainstream parties isn't heard as loudly as it once was. Mélenchon, whom Finel-Honigman likened to a French Bernie Sanders, received 18.69 percent. He questioned the election projections and did not endorse Macron, saying instead that the French must vote their "consciences."

And so a larger question still looms: Will Mélenchon's voters, who, like Le Pen's, are upset and worried about France's future, turn out for Macron? Or will they send their extreme left votes over to the extreme right and vote for Le Pen, or just stay home?

France, Europe, and the world will wait two weeks for the answer.

TIME

French Election: Macron vs Le Pen a New Political Reality

Vivienne Walt / Paris

7-9 minutes

No matter whether centrist economist Emmanuel Macron or far-right National Front leader Marine Le Pen wins France's presidency in two weeks' time, Sunday's first-round election made history in France — ripping up the political system that has governed for generations over the world's sixth biggest economy and a powerhouse of the European Union.

Both the ruling Socialists and the conservative Republicans suffered crushing defeats, as millions of French voters expressed years of exasperation, fear and disillusion by voting for insurgent or extremist candidates. The runoff round between Macron and Le Pen — Sunday's two top vote getters — is on May 7.

As the polls closed at 8 p.m., the results appeared to be a collective *cri de coeur* against the establishment. "This is huge," says Pierre Haski, political columnist for the news magazine *L'Obs*, speaking to TIME after the vote. "The two parties that have dominated the political landscape for three or four decades have collapsed."

The next President of France now seems highly likely to be Macron, who captured the most votes among 11 candidates on Sunday. That itself is a stunning new reality. Macron, just 39, would be France's youngest-ever president by far if he is inaugurated in the ornate Élysée Palace on May 15.

What is more, he has never held elective office and has no traditional political party to call his own; he quit

President François Hollande's government as Economy Minister last September to create his own political movement, called *En Marche!* (On the Go!), and drafted thousands of young French to knock on doors across the country, polling 100,000 people about how they wanted their country to change.

It was a gamble that seems to have paid off — and now, it could catapult this newcomer into power. It is hard to overstate the extraordinary and surprising nature of that accomplishment. Emmanuel Macron speaks after winning the lead percentage of votes in the first round of the French presidential elections in Paris on April 23, 2017. He faces off against far-right candidate Marine Le Pen on May 7. Mustafa Yalcin—Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

"In one year we have changed the face of French politics," Macron told his ecstatic supporters at his victory party in Paris late Sunday night, saying that his win brought "new hope for our country, and for Europe." Amid the crowd of giddy supporters were many young French voting for the first time, who said in interviews they had been drawn to a candidate that appeared young and modern — a striking change from the fairly small group of grandees who have run the country for many years.

The preliminary results Sunday night put Macron at 23.9%, Le Pen at 21.7% and the Republicans' candidate François Fillon around 19%. The Socialist candidate Benoît Hamon polled a disastrous 6% — a potential death knell for the party that has ruled France for five years. Fillon and Hamon, in somber

concession speeches, admitted they were facing an entirely new political situation as outsiders. Both called on supporters to back Macron in the second round vote on May 7.

Standing in a hall in southern Paris, hundreds of Macron's young campaign volunteers broke into wild applause and cheers of "Macron Président!" as Fillon, projected on a large-screen monitor on stage, said, "I will be voting for Emmanuel Macron."

Indeed, Macron's lead over Le Pen on Sunday could potentially increase once all the votes are counted. That is because the early estimates do not include big cities like Paris, which are bastions of support for the former Rothschild investment banker, who is intent on modernizing the country and unweaving generations of state-heavy intervention.

When TIME profiled Macron last July, while he was still serving in Hollande's Cabinet, he said he believed the current system was "sclerotic" and could not survive. "I am a newcomer," he told us then. "I want to remain a newcomer. It is in my DNA."

Read more: *Emmanuel Macron Has Big Plans for France. Is It Ready for Them?*

Now, however, he will need to become the ultimate insider: Piecing together a coalition to smash Le Pen's National Front in the runoff round, and then to force through an agenda that could well spark violent protests. That includes loosening the way companies hire and fire employees, cutting back on steep wealth taxes for the richest French and luring hundreds of thousands of French expats back home; those include countless high-skilled professionals in Silicon Valley and

London's financial hub, who left France in recent years, frustrated by the lack of growth.

Macron's ability to push through his programs will depend heavily on the parliamentary elections in June. His political movement, which currently has no representation, has scrambled in recent weeks to find candidates for the June vote. "En Marche! has received 15,000 people who want to be deputies," Macron campaign spokeswoman Laurence Haim told TIME earlier this week. "We have commissions that are looking at each candidate, and we want parity and diversity, to completely transform the face of political life in France."

That is just one challenge, however: Le Pen.

The 48-year-old won the biggest-ever support for the National Front in Sunday's election. She has spent six years remaking the party from her father's far more rabidly racist and anti-Semitic movement into an electable force. In some ways, she succeeded in that on Sunday. Marine Le Pen, leader of the National Front, exits a polling booth after marking her ballot during the first round of the French presidential election in Hénin-Beaumont, France, on April 23, 2017. Marlene Awaad—Bloomberg/Getty Images

Tapping into deep unease over the migrant crisis and the terrorist threat, Le Pen stormed through the country arguing that France needed to close its borders and virtually halt all immigration, promising to hold a referendum to pull France out of the E.U. and drop the use of the Euro. Speaking to her supporters on Sunday night after the vote, Le Pen vowed she would take her support all the way to the Élysée. "Globalization puts our

country in danger," she thundered, to a packed hall in the northern France town of Hénin-Beaumont.

That message clearly hit home with millions of voters on Sunday. When TIME traveled the hard-hit Rust Belt of Northern France in February, many Le Pen supporters said they believed global free trade, which Macron supports, had failed French workers. "We don't think that finding workers that are cheaper and

cheaper, with worse working conditions, is a good thing for the people of the world," National Front activist Éric Richermoz, 24, told TIME then. "The National Front is the only party that gives people hope in these elections," he said in the northern town of Amiens.

Now, Macron will need to reckon with that fury—even if he succeeds in winning the presidency. And there is fury too on the other side of the

political spectrum: 19.2% voted for the far-left politician Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who fought to nationalize major industries and to reconsider France's E.U. membership.

"He has to take into account the anger of people who voted for Le Pen and Mélenchon," Haski says. In addition, he says, Le Pen has attempted to cast herself as France's Trump — the candidate of

change — vs. a Hillary Clinton-type opponent — the embodiment of an old establishment. She has said frequently, including to TIME in recent months, that she regarded Trump's victory as a sign that she too could prevail against all odds.

"She portrays this election as a replay of the U.S. election, Trump vs. Clinton," Haski says. "That is a trap that Macron does not want to fall into."

Breitbart : France's Fillon Leads Establishment Conservatives to Historic Defeat

5-6 minutes

The former prime minister was charged in March with misuse of public funds over the employment of his British-born wife Penelope as a parliamentary assistant for 15 years.

It was a severe blow to the 63-year-old, who clinched the nomination for the Republicans party in November by presenting himself as unscathed by the scandals that surrounded his rival and former boss, ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy.

But his failure to win a place in the May 7 presidential run-off also marks the first time since 1958 that France's main rightwing party has failed to make it to the second round.

In addition, it is the first time in modern French history that neither the mainstream left nor the right has been in the run-off, after outgoing President Francois Hollande's Socialists collapsed in disarray.

– 'Lamentable fiasco' –

"It was said to be a fight which the right could not lose, and which has ended in a lamentable fiasco," said Jean-Francois Cope, former head of the Union for a Popular Movement.

"The right has been swept away ... The right has just experienced its April 21," he said, referring to April 21, 2002, when Socialist candidate Lionel Jospin was knocked out in the first round by Jean-Marie Le Pen, whose daughter Marine will

take on centrist Emmanuel Macron in two weeks' time.

For Fillon, the devastating allegations that Penelope had earned 680,000 euros (\$725,000) for a fictional role were first reported by Le Canard Enchaîné newspaper in January.

His reaction was to strongly deny that either he or his wife had done anything wrong and to claim his left-wing rivals were operating a "secret cell" to blacken his name.

It was a response that drew scorn from Hollande and surprised even some of Fillon's allies.

After backtracking on an early promise to withdraw his candidacy if he was charged, Fillon found himself in the unlikely position of running as an anti-establishment rebel determined to defy the government, magistrates and the media he said were working against him.

Subsequent revelations that a wealthy French-Lebanese lawyer bought handmade suits for Fillon worth 13,000 euros each drew further ire from his opponents.

In the end, he trailed in the first round of the election behind Macron and Le Pen, a result his campaign coordinator admitted was a "huge disappointment".

A downcast Fillon himself admitted in his speech conceding defeat that the obstacles he had had to overcome were "too numerous, too cruel".

– 'Iron-fisted' approach –

Fillon's policy offer was based on deep cuts in public spending and slashing hundreds of thousands of jobs from France's bloated civil service.

He also proposed attacking one of the sacred cows of the French left, the 35-hour working week, raising it to 39 hours.

A leaner, meaner France could, he argued, rival Germany as the foremost economy in the eurozone within a decade.

In TV debates, Fillon stressed that of all the candidates, only he had experience of running the country.

In the wake of the killing of a policeman on Paris's Champs Elysees avenue on Thursday, he said that for years, "I have been warning that we are facing an Islamic totalitarianism" and promised an "iron-fisted" approach.

His outspokenness stood in contrast to his image as prime minister, of a quiet and urbane man whose steady temperament contrasted with the impulsive Sarkozy who once dismissed him as "Mr Nobody".

Once the youngest member of parliament at age 27, the devoutly Catholic Fillon voted against gay marriage when it was legalised in 2013.

The self-declared "Gaullist" — a form of nationalism that proposes an independent and strong France — also has a close bond with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The two men overlapped as prime ministers from 2008-2012 and their closeness led to questions about Fillon's foreign policy.

– Country manor –

Fillon and his Welsh wife met at university in France when they were in their early twenties.

They soon married and live in an imposing manor house near Le Mans in northern France where they brought up their five children.

Two of their children have also had paid work for their father in parliament, performing roles as "legal advisors" despite not being qualified lawyers at the time.

Penelope was until recently a low-key political wife, a keen horse-rider who once described herself as a country "peasant" who preferred the countryside to Paris.

In examining Fillon's insistence that his wife has "always" worked to help his career, French media homed in on previous comments she made.

"Until now, I have never got involved in my husband's political life," Penelope told regional newspaper Le Bien Public last year.

For Fillon's party, the immediate prospects are bleak. The defeated candidate called within minutes for his supporters to back Macron in the second round.

Bernard Accoyer, secretary general of The Republicans, called a meeting of its political committee for Monday morning to discuss the defeat.



Will Trump follow his heart or his head on French election?

Story highlights

- The White House insists it has no desire to put a finger on the scale of a foreign election
- But Le Pen's positions often found an echo in Trump's campaign

Washington (CNN) Sunday's French election result sets up a battle between the heart and the head of the Trump White House.

In the latest blow to establishment party politics in the Western world, two outsider candidates -- centrist Emmanuel Macron and far-right leader Marine Le Pen -- advanced from a crowded field to a run-off for the Elysee Palace on May 7.

Le Pen has risen on the same populist politics, rooted in anger over immigration policies, globalization and middle class economic disenfranchisement, that ignited Donald Trump's presidential campaign last year. She represents a threat to the strength and unity of the political institutions that have underpinned Western countries for the past half century, notably in her opposition to the EU and pledge to leave NATO.

So there's little doubt that the foreign policy establishment types who make up the more conventional, less-populist wing of Trump's national security team will be quietly rooting for the pro-EU Macron in two weeks.

But those sentiments certainly clash with the political DNA of Trumpism.

Le Pen's France-first positions as the head of the National Front mirror

the economic and political nationalism of Trump's political philosophy. Like the US president, she plumbed resentment towards elites from a power base in small towns and rural areas that abhor voters in more cosmopolitan, liberal cities.

Le Pen has also for years adopted positions on terrorism, porous national borders and Muslims that often found an echo in last year's US presidential election.

Who backs France's Emmanuel Macron? 03:14

And while the White House insists that it had no desire to put a finger on the scale of a foreign election, Trump has left little doubt about whom he wanted to win, even if his tweet on Sunday ahead of the results was cryptic: "Very interesting election currently taking place in France."

In an interview with the Associated Press on Friday, Trump noted that the attack that killed a French policeman in Paris last week would have a big impact on the election, and delivered a veiled endorsement of Le Pen.

"She's the strongest on borders and she's the strongest on what's been going on in France," Trump said. "Whoever is the toughest on radical Islamic terrorism, and whoever is the toughest at the borders, will do

well in the election.

Le Pen called for "Islamist mosques" to be closed after the attack. Macron was criticized in some quarters for a less hawkish response.

It was not the first time that Trump had sought a parallel with a foreign election. Last year, he frequently boasted that he had predicted that the United Kingdom would vote to leave the European Union.

His comments on France hint at the strong political identification between Trump and members of his inner circle with the goals of European populists.

Two sources told CNN earlier this year that Trump political advisor Steve Bannon told Peter Witting, the German ambassador to the US, that the Trump administration preferred to strengthen bilateral ties with individual European countries rather than deal with the European Union.

In what was described as a "combative" conversation, the sources said Bannon spelled out a nationalist world view and cited a wave of anti-EU populism as evidence of the bloc's flaws, a refrain he had previously articulated as the head of the Breitbart News website.

A victory in the second round of the election by Le Pen would raise the specter of another existential referendum on EU membership.



Trump has no favorite in the French election, Priebus insists, despite the president's tweet (online)

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

4-5 minutes

Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen advanced to a runoff in France's presidential election on April 23, according to initial exit polls. (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen on April 23 advanced to a runoff in France's presidential election. The runoff will be held on May 7. Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen advance to a runoff in France's presidential election. (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

In French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen, many have seen a sort of Donald Trump lite — an isolationist candidate with a populist

message and an anti-immigrant stance.

And many have prognosticated that Le Pen and Trump are part of a transatlantic mutual admiration society. Le Pen was photographed eating ice cream at Trump Tower. Trump told the Associated Press that Le Pen is "the strongest on what's been going on in France." Le Pen paid Trump the biggest compliment a politician can receive: If she were American, he'd have her vote.

So when Trump penned a tweet saying that last week's terrorist attack in Paris would have a "big effect" on the presidential election, many saw it as support for Le Pen.

Then Reince Priebus went on NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday.

[The French see echoes of the U.S. elections in their own]

The president's chief of staff was the first in the administration to address the tweet directly — and to try to

The union can survive the decision by the UK, one of its largest but most ambivalent members, to leave. But most analysts believe that the departure of France, along with Germany, one of the key levers of European integration, would spell the end for an institution that has helped consign the continent's blood-soaked past to history.

Given the upheaval in the Middle East and turmoil elsewhere in the world, it's a scenario that few foreign policy experts in Washington welcome.

In fact, some administration officials have gone out of their way during Trump's first 100 days in office to reassure Europeans that they are not rooting for the fracturing of the bloc, despite past rhetoric.

In Brussels in February, Vice President Mike Pence expressed the "strong commitment" of the United States to continue to work in "partnership" with the European Union.

Any weakening of NATO, meanwhile -- which Le Pen has vowed to leave if she becomes president -- would certainly threaten US global influence and ultimately raise questions about Western security.

Le Pen has gone so far as to chide Trump for what she sees as a reversal on NATO, a body that he criticized during his campaign but has now embraced.

"Undeniably he is in contradiction with the commitments he had made," Le Pen said in an interview with France Info radio last weekend.

Many foreign policy experts in Washington believe that a weakened NATO and European Union would directly aid the goals of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Le Pen visited Putin in Moscow in March and, like Trump, used her campaign to call for better relations with Russia.

Macron is a far less confrontational politician than Le Pen. Given his relative inexperience and euphoric rallies, he drew some comparisons to Barack Obama in 2008. (The former president called Macron last week to wish him luck).

While he has chosen to form his own party and not stand as part of the establishment, he is nothing if not a member of the French elite.

Although the former banker has never held elective office, he once served as a French finance minister and attended the top Paris schools that mold future establishment leaders.

If, as most analysts expect, he emerges as the winner of the second round of the election, he will face the task of forging relations with Trump, a politician who temperamentally and philosophically has more in common with Le Pen.

back off the foregone conclusion that Trump strongly supports Le Pen.

His answer: "No, not at all."

According to a transcript, Priebus told host Chuck Todd that Trump "is going to support whoever the winner is. We've got a long-term relationship that's historical with the French people and the French government. No matter who wins, that relationship is going to continue."

Le Pen and centrist Emmanuel Macron claimed victory in France's election on Sunday, and both are headed to a runoff on May 7.

[What you need to know about the French presidential election]

The Washington Post's Aaron Blake wrote that Trump was playing a political game in which "politicians say nice things about other politicians but insist they aren't endorsing them."

"While the media often handicaps foreign elections and candidates' strengths and weaknesses — it's part of our job — presidents and other world leaders avoid doing so for fear of looking like they are trying to tip the scales in another country," Blake wrote.

"Trump also just happened to underscore an issue that he feels is of the utmost importance — it was the subject of his first controversial executive action, the travel ban — and then pointed to Le Pen as clearly the best candidate on that issue. That's no coincidence."

5-Minute Fix newsletter

Keeping up with politics is easy now.

[Trump just admitted his presidency isn't going well — tacitly]

In a rally in France last week, Le Pen gave a speech on immigration that could have been a Trump campaign rally cry if a few proper nouns were changed.

"Just watch the interlopers from all over the world come and install themselves in our home," she said, according to the New York Times article on the event. "They want to

transform France into a giant squat. ... But it's up to the owner to decide who can come in. So, our first act will be to restore France's frontiers."

On Sunday, when pressed, Priebus conceded that Trump "may have some opinions, as far as who he thinks might win. But he certainly doesn't have a preference, other

than a right-of-center person who believes in the free market."

the Atlantic

Trump Was Wrong About France

Uri Friedman

4-5 minutes

Following Thursday's terrorist attack on the Champs-Élysées in Paris, which killed one police officer and wounded two others, Donald Trump made a prediction. "The people of France will not take much more of this," he wrote on Twitter. "Will have a big effect on presidential election!" It seemed like the American president was implicitly backing one of the leading candidates in that election, the National Front's Marine Le Pen, who has campaigned on rooting out Islamic extremism from the Republic and practices a Trump-like brand of populist-nativist politics.

Then Trump dispelled any doubt about his message. The attack, for which ISIS has claimed responsibility, will "probably help" Le Pen's chances, the American president told the *Associated Press*, "because she is the strongest on borders and she is the strongest on what's been going on in France."

(This despite the fact that the Champs-Élysées attacker was a French citizen ensconced well within French borders.) Trump didn't explicitly endorse Le Pen. But he effectively endorsed her sales pitch to voters. "I believe whoever is the toughest on radical Islamic terrorism and whoever is the toughest at the borders will do well at the election," Trump said.

It's not unprecedented for the president of the United States to weigh in on an upcoming vote in another country; ahead of the Brexit vote, for example, Barack Obama traveled to London to urge Britain to remain in the European Union. (Now-ex-President Obama made his sympathies known in the current French election as well, participating in a delightfully awkward public phone call with the centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron.) What was most remarkable about Trump's comments was, firstly, *who* he was praising: the far-right leader of a party with racist, anti-Semitic roots who enthusiastically supports Russian President Vladimir Putin

and fiercely opposes free trade and the European Union—in other words, the avatar of precisely the policies to which the U.S. government has long objected. And, secondly, it was what Trump was suggesting: that a lone terrorist with a gun had the power to sway the course of one of the world's most storied democracies and, perhaps, the future of Europe.

On the second point, Trump appears to have been proven wrong. On Sunday, in the first round of voting to elect the next French president, Macron eked out a victory against Le Pen and will now face her in a runoff election—results that mirror the way the polls looked just before the attack in Paris on Thursday. It's too early to determine the extent to which the issue of terrorism influenced the vote. But what's clearer is that the "big effect" Trump predicted never came.

It may have never come because, in the grim arithmetic of terrorism, the assault on police officers was minor relative to the massive attacks that

France suffered in Paris and Nice in recent years (these bigger attacks did temporarily boost support for right-wing politicians like Le Pen). Many French voters, accustomed to news of terrorists incidents, may have placed the violence on the Champs-Élysées in perspective relative to issues such as the sluggish economy and high youth unemployment. Trump made no mention of the scale of Thursday's attack.

But it also may never have come because the relationship between concern about terrorism and support for Le Pen isn't as straightforward as it may seem. In the aftermath of Thursday's attack, Macron urged the French not to give into fear and not to let terrorists destabilize the country, while Le Pen denounced Islamism as "a monstrous totalitarian ideology that has declared war on our nation." There is more than one way to defeat terrorism. Trump didn't mention that either.

The New York Times

France Delivers Euro's Latest Existential Question (online)

Peter S. Goodman

8-9 minutes

The results of the first round provided relief to investors, after the strong showing of her centrist opponent, Emmanuel Macron. European stocks soared on Monday, with bank shares leading the charge, while the euro strengthened more than 1 percent against the American dollar.

Few give credence to the prospect that Ms. Le Pen could actually deliver on her radical promises. She remains a long shot in the polls. Even if she wins, beating Mr. Macron in the runoff, her party will almost certainly fall well short of claiming a majority in the French Parliament when legislative elections are held in June. She would be relegated to figurehead status, with governing handled by a prime minister selected by the party in command.

But the concerns that have rippled through markets attest to fundamental defects that have long compromised the euro. It is a structurally flawed currency, one adopted by 19 nations operating

without a unified political organization. It suffers from a chronic shortage of faith in its ability to persevere along with an unrelenting surplus of threats to its existence.

Many argue that the euro was doomed from inception. It was conceived more as an idealistic reach for European cooperation than as a reasoned plan to manage a currency. The assumption was that shared money would spur the evolution of greater European political integration.

Instead, the euro has devolved into a major source of political acrimony across the continent.

In countries with their own money, bad economic times typically prompt governments to spend more to generate jobs and spur growth. Their currencies fall in value, making their goods cheaper on world markets and aiding exports.

But countries in the eurozone cannot fully avail themselves of these benefits. The currency comes with rules limiting the size of allowable budget deficits. Faced with hard times, governments using the euro have been forced to intensify the hurt on ordinary people

by cutting pensions and other public outlays.

The Nobel laureate economist Joseph E. Stiglitz has indicted the euro as a leading source of economic inequality that has divided European nations into two stark classes — creditor and debtor.

As Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain have slid into debt crises in recent years, they have accused Germany of self-serving inflexibility in demanding strict adherence to debt limits while refusing to transfer wealth to those in trouble. Germany and other northern countries have accused their southern brethren of failing to carry out reforms — such as making it easier to fire workers — that would make them more competitive.

The crises have time and again exposed the structural flaws of the eurozone and its tendency to generate more recrimination than action.

"You have a basic situation in the eurozone now where it's like a half-built house," said Jacob Kirkegaard, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington. "As long as that persists, a large number of investors

are going to have existential doubts about the euro."

Now, the latest wave of anxiety is being set off by France, one of the euro's charter members and a bedrock component of the European Union.

This is playing out against a backdrop of destabilizing events that once seemed impossible — the election of Donald Trump in the United States and the vote to abandon the European Union in Britain.

Though Ms. Le Pen has moderated her positions in recent weeks as her election has gained plausibility, her hostility for the European Union and the euro are well known.

"I want to destroy the E.U.," she told the German newsmagazine *Spiegel* in a 2014 interview. "The E.U. is deeply harmful, it is an anti-democratic monster. I want to prevent it from becoming fatter, from continuing to breathe, from grabbing everything with its paws."

In the same interview, she confirmed her desire to yank France free of the euro. "If we don't all leave the euro behind, it will explode," she said.

Ms. Le Pen has since muted talk of renouncing the euro in favor of adding a parallel currency, the franc. But the threatened act of redenominating French debt would almost certainly lead to a downgrade of France's credit rating, bringing severe market consequences, said Mujtaba Rahman, the London-based managing director for Europe at the Eurasia Group, a risk consultancy.

He traced a potentially calamitous string of events that would play out after a victory by Ms. Le Pen. Even before parliamentary elections, she could appoint a temporary government while serving notice that France intended to renegotiate the terms of its membership with the European Union. She could seek to fire the country's central bank governor and prepare to put in her own person to oversee the introduction of the franc.

"Her room for maneuver is greater than people believe," Mr. Rahman said. "She will have interpreted her election as a massive mandate. It flows from 'Brexit,' it flows from

Trump, and she'll try to get as much of her agenda done while she is unrestrained."

Even if she is stymied by political backlash, she could cause a volatile reaction in financial markets.

Around the globe, central banks, sovereign wealth funds and asset managers hold some 700 billion euros (about \$750 billion) in French government debt. A Le Pen presidency could spook them into unloading some of it, increasing borrowing costs for the French government and the business world.

French banks could see consumers pull euros out of their accounts to be squirreled away elsewhere. If that became a full-blown bank run, the consequences could become global, given that France's four largest banks are deeply intertwined in the international financial system.

Most analysts dismiss such talk as apocalyptic. The French parliament and constitution would severely constrain a President Le Pen. Investors would grasp this.

"The markets are not that stupid, and they will understand that there is a legislative election," said Nicolas Véron, a senior fellow at Bruegel, an independent research institution in Brussels. "There would be market volatility, but not a meltdown."

Those in control of money are implicitly saying that the odds of a meltdown remain low. Still, those odds are increasing, with fears of danger in France rippling out across the continent.

In the run-up to the first round, the costs of insuring against government default have grown in Italy as well as in France. With the market tenor shifting, bond yields dropped, reflecting improving sentiment about those countries.

But if Ms. Le Pen wins the presidency, the risks are likely to proliferate, increasing the costs of borrowing for businesses and households in Italy, Spain and Portugal, impeding job creation and economic activity, while perhaps forcing governments to cut services.

That could generate public anger, further stoking the fires of populism as Italy goes to the polls later this year or early next. That could enhance electoral prospects in Italy for the Five Star Movement, which favors dumping the euro.

A victory by Ms. Le Pen might change little directly, with her extreme inclinations contained by French political realities, while indirectly adding momentum to Europe's crisis of confidence: It would inject greater dysfunction into European institutions, rendering them even less capable of alleviating economic troubles. And more strife has in recent times translated into more support for the populist movements seeking to dismantle these institutions.

"It would be devastating for the eurozone and the E.U. if she won," Mr. Kirkegaard said. "It would certainly paralyze the eurozone in terms of almost anything for at least five years."



The leading French presidential candidates Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen, in their own words

<https://www.facebook.com/michael.birnbaum1>

5-6 minutes

Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen on April 23 advanced to a runoff in France's presidential election. The runoff will be held on May 7. Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen advance to a runoff in France's presidential election. (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen on April 23 advanced to a runoff in France's presidential election. The runoff will be held on May 7. (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

PARIS — The French presidential campaign has featured divisive rhetoric and a remarkable number of memorable quotes. Of the 11 candidates, only two will make it to the second round of the election.

Exit polls on Sunday evening showed centrist Emmanuel Macron with a lead of two percentage points over far-right candidate Marine Le Pen, who came in second.

Here are the two leading candidates in their own words.

MARINE LE PEN

On Islamism:

"Islamism is a monstrous totalitarian ideology that has declared war on our nation, on reason, on civilization ... Hate preachers must be expelled, the Islamist mosques closed."

Speech in Paris, April 21, 2017

On France's place in the world:

"What is at stake in this election is the continuity of France as a free nation, our existence as a people ... The French have been dispossessed of their patriotism. They are suffering in silence from not being allowed to love their country ... The divide is no longer between the left and the right, but between the patriots and the globalists."

Speech in Lyon, Feb. 5, 2017

On globalization:

"Financial globalization and Islamist globalization are helping each other out," she said. "Those two ideologies aim to bring France to its knees."

Speech in Lyon, Feb. 5, 2017

On economic policy:

"Putin's Russia is our role model for a patriotic economic policy."

March 2017 in Moscow

On the roundup and detention of about 13,000 Jews by French

police in an indoor Parisian stadium called Vel d'Hiv on July 16-17, 1942. Many of them were later deported to Auschwitz:

"I think France is not responsible for the Vel d'Hiv ... I think in a general way, more generally actually, those responsible were those in power then; this is not France."

April 2017, Interview on RTL Radio

EMMANUEL MACRON

On terrorism:

"The zero-risk option doesn't exist. Whoever pretends that with him or her — a few days ago I heard Marine Le Pen say that with her there wouldn't have been an attack — is both irresponsible and a liar. The zero-risk option doesn't exist. We're living with risk. The question is to see how to eradicate this risk."

In an April 21, 2017, interview with RTL

On Europe:

"We can achieve peace with a strong army, a strong diplomacy, deterrent weapons and a strong Europe."

Speech in Nantes, April 20, 2017

On France's colonial past:

"Colonization is a part of French history. It is a crime, a crime against mankind ... This is a past that we

must look in the eye, by apologizing to those we harmed."

During a visit to Algeria, Feb. 15, 2017

On his vision:

"Preventing the civilized world from falling apart and enabling the world of tomorrow to happen, such is our responsibility and our mission."

At a rally in Paris, April 17, 2017

On his place in the political spectrum:

"Just like de Gaulle, I choose the best of the right, the left and the center."

At a rally in Paris, April 17, 2017

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

On Russia:

"We'll have to talk to Russia ... A great country, with whom we have a shared history. But shouldn't we be outraged when human rights are violated? Should we accept the creation of camps for homosexuals in Chechnya?"

At a rally in Paris, April 17, 2017

Virgile Demoustier contributed to this report.

Macron, Le Pen Outcome in France Offers Encouragement for EU

Marcus Walker
5-6 minutes

Updated April 24, 2017 8:02 a.m. ET

The first-round results of France's presidential election on Sunday offered encouragement for the European Union but warnings for the established center-right and center-left parties that have dominated Europe's politics for decades.

The EU's favored candidate, Emmanuel Macron, won the first round with 23.9% of the vote, according to an official tally of 97% of votes, ahead of far-right candidate Marine Le Pen, with 21.4%. They will face off in the final round on May 7.

Opinion polls for the final, head-to-head contest have been far more decisive than for Sunday's fragmented, multicandidate vote. Surveys up until last week consistently showed Mr. Macron beating Ms. Le Pen by 20 percentage points or more in a one-on-one duel.

Still, the outcome triggers alarms for Europe's established parties on the center-right and center-left. France's long-dominant Socialists and conservatives failed to reach the runoff—an outcome that leaves both parties in crisis. Mr. Macron, a centrist with an eclectic policy platform, has no conventional party behind him.

Victory for Mr. Macron, 39 years old and a staunch EU supporter, would strengthen the conviction of Europe's mainstream politicians that they can beat back the challenge from anti-EU nationalists such as Ms. Le Pen.

"A Macron presidency would change the narrative for the European Union, feeding the perception that we are past peak populism," said Nicolas Veron, a French economist and fellow at Brussels-based think tank Bruegel. "Lower political uncertainty could also help economic growth in the eurozone."

After a year of political shocks, however, few incumbents in Europe's capitals will rest easy until the contest is over. And Ms. Le Pen still has a shot at power. Her pledges to disband the euro and dilute the EU would undo decades of efforts to unite Europe politically and economically. Her foreign-policy views, including her closeness to Russian President Vladimir Putin, would call into question France's commitment to its security alliance with Western powers such as the U.S. and Germany.

A Le Pen presidency would deliver the third blow within a year to the integrated, liberal-internationalist order of the Western world, following the U.K.'s referendum vote last summer to leave the EU and the election of Donald Trump in the fall as U.S. president on a nationalist, populist platform.

More recently, the tide in parts of Europe has turned in favor of

centrist politicians who support the EU and multilateral cooperation.

Nationalist parties fell short of their ambitions in recent Dutch and Austrian elections. In Germany, where parliamentary elections are due in September, traditional parties are dominating the race while a nationalist upstart group is mired in internal squabbles.

Many political scientists warn that the decline of established parties is a long-term phenomenon, however, and that antiestablishment populists such as Ms. Le Pen aren't going away.

In the runoff, most observers expect French voters from a broad swath of the political spectrum to rally behind Mr. Macron in order to block the radical challenge from the far right.

On Sunday, defeated candidates, including conservative François Fillon and Socialist Benoit Hamon, asked their voters to support Mr. Macron.

One factor is the euro. Surveys suggest a large majority of French voters want to keep the currency, rather than return to the French franc as Ms. Le Pen proposes.

Mr. Macron is an ardent supporter of the EU, but also argues that the bloc and the euro need growth-friendly overhauls.

To persuade a skeptical Germany, however, he may first have to deliver on his promise to reform France's sluggish economy.

The contest between the 39-year-old pro-EU centrist Mr. Macron and the 48-year-old Ms. Le Pen is "incredibly binary," says François Heisbourg, special adviser to the Foundation for Strategic Research, a Paris think tank. "On the one hand, you have a potential for a revitalization of the EU. On the other hand, complete and utter destruction of the EU. There is very little in between."

In neighboring Germany—France's main partner in driving European integration since the 1950s—ruling politicians made no secret on Sunday that they hope Mr. Macron wins. "All the best for the next two weeks," Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman said in a tweet directed at Mr. Macron.

"Macron is clearly the most pro-EU candidate and the most supportive of Franco-German cooperation," said Volker Perthes, director of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

If Mr. Macron wins, Germany will hope he can also form an alliance in parliament that allows him to enact economic overhauls, Mr. Perthes says.

The contest between centrists and populists over France's future will only conclude with June's elections for the national legislature.

Write to Marcus Walker at marcus.walker@wsj.com

Appeared in the Apr. 24, 2017, print edition as 'French Vote Tests Establishment Parties.'

Marine Le Pen goes from fringe right-winger to major contender

<https://www.facebook.com/michael.birnbaum1>

8-10 minutes

(Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen on April 23 advanced to a runoff in France's presidential election. The runoff will be held on May 7. Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen advance to a runoff in France's presidential election. (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

PARIS — The crusading French politician Marine Le Pen hates being called a far-right leader. She says if most French voters endorse her

harsh anti-immigration plans, that means she is a centrist.

After her breakthrough result Sunday in the first round of France's presidential elections, Le Pen will put that view to the test. The leader of a once-fringe party shadowed by its defense of World War II-era Nazi collaboration is just one round of ballots away from a backflip into the center of her nation's political life.

[France's National Front co-founder Jean-Marie Le Pen says the battle is already won]

If Le Pen captures the Elysée Palace on May 7, it will be a dramatic turnabout for a fiery leader whose bid for France's leadership was unimaginable a few years ago. But after a wave of bloody terrorist attacks, a surge of refugees and the aching sense that France's identity is slipping away, many voters appear ready to imagine the woman

with the cigarette-tanned voice as their president.

"We cannot afford to lose this war. But for the past 10 years, left-wing and right-wing governments have done everything they can for us to lose it," Le Pen said days before the election, after a French citizen killed a police officer and wounded two more on the landmark Champs-Élysées boulevard in an attack for which the Islamic State asserted responsibility. "We need a presidency that acts and protects us," she said.

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen on April 23 advanced to the runoff of France's presidential election. Here's what you need to know about her. French far-right leader Marine Le Pen on April 23 advanced to the runoff of France's presidential election. Here's what you need to know about her.

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

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The violence played perfectly into the warnings of a woman who has been sounding the alarm for years that France's identity was slipping away to Muslims — even before a recent spate of terrorist attacks sent France into an official state of emergency. Even Socialist President François Hollande briefly toyed with stripping dual citizens of their French nationality if they were convicted of terrorism charges, a signature Le Pen idea that critics said would relegate many French Muslims to second-class citizenship.

[Marion Maréchal-Le Pen: 'We've won the battle of ideas']

Born into a political family, the 48-year-old Le Pen was for decades

among her father's closest confidantes as Jean-Marie Le Pen led his National Front party as an eccentric gathering of extremist politicians who thought that the Holocaust was just "a detail" of World War II. Over the decades, he became the living emblem of Europe's far-right politicians: cranky, offensive, tinged with the odor of being a Nazi sympathizer, but always far from power.

The daughter's political awakening came when she was 8, she has said, after the family's modest apartment was bombed and officials appeared to do little to find the culprit. The front of the building was blown off. No one died, but a baby survived only because a tree slowed its fall.

"We were not treated the same as others," she wrote in her 2006 autobiography, blaming official indifference on her father's political views.

But if her father was willing to give up ballot-box success in the name of ideological purity, Le Pen has proven a far more adept politician. When Jean-Marie Le Pen slipped into the second round of the presidential election in 2002, there was little question that voters on both sides of the political spectrum would band together to defeat him. He captured less than 18 percent of the vote, a crushing disappointment

for a daughter who trained as a lawyer but spent the bulk of her career working inside the party.

[Marine Le Pen wants to be France's future. But can she escape the past?]

This time, there is little expectation that voters will reject Le Pen simply because of the party's past association with Nazism.

After the 2002 loss, the younger Le Pen vowed to transform the movement into a force that could actually win elections.

She took over the party in 2011 and quickly moved to distance it from its roots. She said she was the best ally of France's Jews — because she would protect them against Muslim immigrants. She made a bid for left-behind union members, the core of France's old left-wing alliance, by saying that she would protect their cherished social benefits by turning back the forces of globalization.

And in a father-daughter drama worthy of Shakespeare, she expelled her father from the party after his views about the Holocaust became a distraction on the campaign trail. They say they no longer talk — although the elder Le Pen is still financing his daughter's bid.

Now she is a sizzling sparkplug on the campaign trail, firing up crowds

who say none of the other contenders has anything fresh to say.

Before the first round, the mood at her rallies was in sharp contrast to her now-vanquished opponents, who sometimes seemed to struggle to indicate to crowds when they were supposed to cheer.

She has gathered supporters from across France's hard-hit north, where once-proud factories have been shuttered as jobs moved to Poland and China.

"My project is to give France its liberty back, to let it out of jail, to give you France back and to give France back to the world," Le Pen said to wild applause at her final Paris rally last week. "It is high time to set France free."

[Charles de Gaulle would roll over in his grave over what has become of French politics]

But if she wins, the France she would create could look radically different from the multicultural, plugged-into-Europe nation it is today.

Le Pen has vowed to erect border barriers and bar immigration both from inside and outside Europe. She says she would rebuild French manufacturing, which has struggled under competition from cheaper foreign goods, by seeking to bring

back the French franc. And she has listed a host of tactics she would use to make France less hospitable to its Muslim population, including the serving of pork in schools and the expulsion of any noncitizen who had been flagged for extra monitoring under France's anti-terror regime.

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Critics say her tactics would range from unconstitutional to inhumane, and they warn that the financial panic unleashed by any attempt to leave the European Union would knock down her already-struggling supporters.

She says that the tide of history is on her side, pointing to the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom and the election of President Trump as signs that voters around the world are rejecting globalization and immigration.

Trump's main failing so far, Le Pen said this month, is that he is turning into a conventional politician, and not upholding his more extreme campaign promises.

"He is in contradiction with the commitments he made," she told France Info radio. "I am coherent. I don't change my mind in a few days."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

French Election Will Signal Nation's Commitment to Economic Overhauls

Greg Ip

6-7 minutes

Updated April 23, 2017 8:03 p.m. ET

French voters are in a surly mood, and who can blame them?

France's economy is among the sickest of the advanced countries. Unemployment has been around 10% for four years and is well above the European Union average. Per capita incomes are no higher than in 2007.

Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Front who in unofficial results finished second in the first round of presidential voting on Sunday and was poised to proceed to the final round on May 7, blames the European Union and the euro, which she claims have made it impossible for French industry to compete with Germany's while robbing France of fiscal independence. Her solution: Leave.

Yet France's problems long predate the euro crisis and the austerity that

followed. From 1990 to 2007, France had the second-weakest per capita economic growth of advanced economies, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Only Italy's was worse.

The reasons are numerous but the most important is an overregulated and inflexible labor market that has discouraged hiring and investment, undermined productivity and left too many French workers undereducated or under-skilled. This is the story emphasized by Emmanuel Macron, leader of the center-left upstart party En Marche and a defender of the EU and the euro. He was looking like the first-place finisher on Sunday and thus lining up to face Ms. Le Pen in the second round.

A few statistics illustrate the challenge. While 8% of French workers are unionized, 90% are covered by collective agreements. The centralization of bargaining makes it almost impossible for companies to calibrate hiring to plant-level needs. It is time

consuming and costly to fire a worker. Income and payroll taxes are nearly 50% of the average wage. By driving a thick wedge between what employers pay and what workers receive, that discourages work. Unemployment benefits are generous and the minimum wage high.

These problems persist because French voters, despite their hunger for change, have punished any president who sought to fix the underlying problems. France has never had a Ronald Reagan or a Margaret Thatcher.

Conservative leaders have cut taxes, privatized firms and boosted competition, but changes that affect workers are routinely met with strikes and demonstrations.

The result is a bifurcated labor market where a large share of workers, especially the young, work on temporary contracts and receive little or no training. Innumeracy and illiteracy are both far higher than the OECD average.

Even as Germany in the early 2000s injected flexibility into its labor markets, France headed in the other direction. It created a 35-hour workweek on the flawed assumption the move would spread work around and bring down unemployment. The short workweek is now nearly sacred.

Spain, Portugal and Italy also suffered from rigid labor markets but have had to change under the pressure of the euro crisis, though Italy's efforts have stalled. France was largely spared those pressures, and indeed Nicolas Sarkozy, elected in 2007, lost his Thatcherite zeal for overhauls once the crisis hit.

Ironically, it is the socialist incumbent François Hollande who has been boldest in tackling the status quo. Led by Mr. Macron, then his economy minister, Mr. Hollande injected more competition into product markets, including legal services and bus transport, then tackled the labor market with plans to decentralize bargaining and rules for layoffs.

The moves met a backlash within the socialist party and on the streets. The measures were watered down, yet even so they cost Mr. Hollande so much support that he declined to run for a second term.

France's labor market has, at long last, begun to recover; job growth last year was relatively healthy. The overhauls have shown signs of success, such as a drop in dismissal-related job disputes.

Still, the recovery remains far behind Spain's, where labor-market overhauls were more radical (and the recession much deeper). This is partly because it's too soon—firms often respond to increased flexibility

by stepping up firing first and hiring later—and even more because they were too timid.

A key goal of Mr. Hollande's reforms was to free firms from national and sector-wide agreements on wages, hours and employment. But employees must still generally agree to opt out and thus few such agreements occur. Large firms must generally be experiencing hardship at the global level to lay off French employees.

These rigidities not only elevate unemployment, they hold back productivity growth because it is so difficult to reallocate labor to its most productive use. "Wages are not

sufficiently connected to productivity at the firm, sectoral or national level," says Philippe Martin, an economist at Sciences Po and an adviser to Mr. Macron. "France is a high-wage country, and therefore has to remain a high-productivity country."

While labor-market rules didn't attract the attention EU membership and terrorism did during the election, they define the candidates almost as much. The early results suggest the public remains deeply divided. Roughly as many voted for Mr. Macron and third-place finisher François Fillon of the conservative Republicans, both of whom would

have expanded the overhauls, as voted for Ms. Le Pen and the former communist Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who would scrap them.

Thus, on May 7, voters won't just decide if France remains integrated with Europe, but also whether it will make the changes necessary to thrive in it.

Write to Greg Ip at greg.ip@wsj.com

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Macron and Le Pen are now in a battle for the soul of France

Kim Willsher
8-10 minutes

former sheep farmer, two Trotskyists and a man who wants to colonize Mars.

France, for the patriots facing the threat of nationalism."

always come out consistently under 50%," Cross said.

France's far-right leader Marine Le Pen took her party to within reach of power on Sunday with a second-place finish in the country's presidential election that catapulted her into a runoff with centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron.

The result pits the "French-first" Le Pen, who is staunchly anti-immigrant and proposes a national, "Brexit"-style referendum on leaving the European Union, against the outward gazing Macron, who proposes greater EU integration.

The two-week runoff campaign promises to be a battle for the soul of France that will decide not only the country's future, but that of the EU.

Few political experts expect Le Pen to expand her support sufficiently past her base to win the May 7 election — but then, few predicted Britain's Brexit or the U.S. election of Donald Trump.

The first round of voting Sunday was notable not only for Le Pen's strong finish, but because neither of the country's traditional ruling parties — the Socialists on the left or the Republicans on the right — finished in the running.

"We have seen this tendency recently in democracies for the great parties of government to either disappear or become weak," said Dominique Reynie, founder of the think tank Fondapol. "We saw this in Greece and also in Italy. The absence of the big parties means the political universe in France has changed."

The words most used to describe the election were "historic" and "unprecedented." The unheard of field of 11 candidates included a

Macron, who ran as an independent, led the field with 23.8%, followed by Le Pen with 21.6%. The candidate of the ruling Socialist Party, Benoît Hamon, suffered an especially humiliating defeat, finishing fifth with just 6.1% of the vote.

The incomplete results showed a virtual tie for third place, with François Fillon of the opposition conservative Republicans and the far leftist Jean-Luc Mélenchon hovering just under 20%.

In a brief victory speech, Le Pen said she welcomed the result with "humility and gratitude" but did not waver an inch from her tough anti-immigration, anti-Europe, protectionist line.

She called her finish "historic," adding: "I now have the immense responsibility of defending the French nation. This result is an act of pride of a country raising its head."

Le Pen regards globalization as a "savage" enemy of the people and a "threat to civilization." She also speaks disparagingly about capitalism. Macron, a former Socialist economy minister and one-time Rothschild banker, seeks to harness the benefits of the world economy.

Macron, who has never held an elected position and, at 39, would be the youngest president in France's history, called for unity in his speech. He said he intended to govern for all France.

"The challenge is to open a new page in our political life and to take action so that everyone is able to find their place in France and in Europe," Macron said. "I want to be the president of all the people of

The result was consistent with what polls had measured for two months, but with up to one-third of French voters undecided or threatening to abstain right up to voting day, there was a sense that anything could happen.

That sense had been heightened on Thursday when a gunman killed a police officer on the Champs-Élysées in Paris — a crime for which Islamic State later claimed responsibility. There had been speculation that the attack could give Le Pen a bounce in the election, but that didn't happen — in fact, her share of the vote was lower than her numbers in the most recent pre-election polls.

In their concession speeches, both Hamon and Fillon urged their supporters to back Macron in the runoff election.

Hamon, running to succeed his party's deeply unpopular incumbent president, François Hollande, never really stood a chance. Fillon, the one-time favorite to win, saw his campaign implode under the pressure of a fraud investigation.

The prospect of a Macron-Le Pen matchup enraged some people. Hundreds protested in Paris, some singing, "No Marine and no Macron." Police detained three people as demonstrators burned cars and danced around bonfires, the Associated Press reported.

Mai'a Cross, an expert on European politics at Northeastern University in Boston, said she believes the vote for Le Pen will collapse and Macron will win the second round by a large majority.

"There has been a lot of hype about Le Pen, which has emerged mainly in the context of Trump's win and Brexit, but traditionally she has

"People may say they like Marine Le Pen, but I believe when it goes to the wire they have difficulty envisaging France with an extremist leader and they go for the safer candidate.

"We have to remember the French electorate is not the U.S. electorate," she added. "The French are not big fans of Trump and are unlikely, having seen the lesson of Trump, to vote in a similar way and elect someone as radical as Le Pen."

Cross warned that Le Pen could be a "real threat to the liberal world order" if she won.

But a Macron victory would carry its own challenges.

Reynie, who in addition to his position at Fondapol is a professor at Sciences Po university and a former Republican regional election candidate, said Macron's first task would be to win enough seats in legislative elections next month to form a majority in the National Assembly.

With no party mechanism behind him, Macron has promised to field "ordinary civilian" candidates in the two-round legislative vote.

"Can the center govern, that is the question. We have an institutional system in France that relies on the division between political camps, the famous right-left divide. The two-round vote system helps this divide," Reynie said.

"Can Macron obtain a major force in Parliament? I think even for him it will be difficult."

It is not the first time the National Front has been in the second round of a presidential election. In 2002, Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who founded the party in the 1970s, caused a political tsunami when he

received a surprising 16.8% of the vote to defeat the Socialist prime minister, Lionel Jospin.

If the country was shocked, Jean-Marie Le Pen, a pugilistic rebel who appeared barely interested in power, was astonished. Unprepared and without a credible program, he was badly defeated in the second round after France's mainstream right and

left parties formed a "Republican bloc" to keep him out.

In the 2012 presidential election, Marine Le Pen was knocked out in the first round, when she scored a party record of 18% against the incumbent President Nicolas Sarkozy and the eventual victor, Hollande.

Marc-Olivier Padiš, research director at the Paris-based Terra Nova think tank said whoever wins the second round, Macron or Le Pen, will have difficulty governing.

"They will not have a majority in the National Assembly and our political institutions are made for a majority to govern. If there isn't one, it will be hard for those institutions to function. If this happens, France will

lose its energy and its ranking in Europe and internationally as well as its role as a world power.

"Having said that, if Emmanuel Macron is elected there will be an enormous renewal of the political class and an upheaval of roles. But perhaps this is what French politics needs. If he doesn't win, the situation is very, very negative. That would be bad news."

the Atlantic A Rebuke of France's Political Establishment

Calamur

5-6 minutes

Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen have little in common on the face of it. Macron, who exit polls project as the winner of Sunday's first round presidential election in France, is a political neophyte. His centrist, globalist, pro-EU policies, are antithetical to the populist movements sweeping the West. Le Pen, who finished second in Sunday's election, is an embodiment of that movement: Her far-right National Front (FN) has festered on the fringes of French politics for decades. She is against immigration and the EU, and a strong advocate for nationalism and borders.

But what unites Macron and Le Pen, who will face off in a second round on May 7, is that they each represent a backlash against the political movements that have dominated modern France. For the first time in a recent presidential runoff in the country, neither of the two candidates will be from the traditional center-left and center-right movements.

Writing in *Project Syndicate*, Zaki Laïdi, a professor of international relations at Sciences Po, compares the political moment in France to

what existed in 1958 when Charles de Gaulle came to power and set up the Fifth Republic. He points out the conditions that exist today—distrust of elites, fear of globalization, rising economic inequality—combined with a renewed emphasis among voters on national identity, has fostered the rise of Le Pen's FN, which typically finishes third in the first round of voting. Traditional French parties have suffered: The ruling Socialists, the main center-left party, have been riven by factionalism. The Socialist candidate, Benoît Hamon, finished dead last among the major contenders—while the far-left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon, whose economic policies resemble Le Pen's, tied for third place. François Fillon, the candidate of the traditional center-right party, whose early high poll numbers suffered after a political scandal, also finished third.

Polls have shown Le Pen in the lead, or near it, for months. She has taken an unpalatable party founded by her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, in 1972 and turned it into an alternative for some of those in France who are tired of the old left-right divide that has governed the country for decades. Le Pen has channeled the anti-globalization sentiment, large-scale immigration from poorer countries, a massive refugee crisis, and terrorism to improve the FN's previous best performance, and to repeat her own father's performance

in 2002. (Jean-Marie made it to the second round of the presidential election that year only to lose; polls predict Marine will also lose in the second round.)

The projected first-round results correspond with what polls predicted ahead of the vote. But in another sense, Macron's victory in the first round should be a surprise. His triumph in the second round, which is widely expected, would be stunning. He represents exactly the same values that voters in the West—following the victories of Brexit and Trump—are supposedly fed up with. He is business-friendly, favors globalization, and believes in allowing in more immigrants. Yet these positions haven't hurt him as they have hurt politicians elsewhere in the West. "Macron's great insight, which few initially recognized, was that the right-left divide was blocking progress, and that the presidential election amounted to a golden opportunity to move beyond it, without the help of an organized political movement," Laïdi wrote in *Project Syndicate*. "At a time when the French people are increasingly rejecting the traditional party system, Macron's initial weakness quickly became his strength."

If Macron does, as polls predict, win the second round, it will undoubtedly be painted as a rejection of populism. But as my colleague Uri Friedman wrote in the aftermath of

the Dutch elections, where a far-right candidate performed worse than expected, "the most significant trend in Western democracies at the moment might not be the rise and fall of populist nationalism. Instead, it is arguably the disintegration of political parties. The story here is less about which specific type of politician people want to be represented by than about a crisis of democratic representation altogether—less about the empowerment of populists than about the broader diffusion of political power." Indeed, the exit polls in the French election show a similar dynamic at work. It's the type of political fragmentation to be expected in a country where trust in government is low.

"A disaffected and discouraged citizenry isn't just a boon for populists, who condemn the 'establishment' and ease worries about the future with nostalgic appeals to past greatness," Friedman wrote last week in an article on how populism took root in France. "It also has consequences for left-right politics. If you lack confidence in the government in general, you're unlikely to distinguish much between left, right, and center. If you doubt that your future is bright, you're unlikely to be satisfied with the same old ping-ponging policies of the center-right and center-left."



Far-right Le Pen, centrist Macron advance to French presidential runoff

Maya Vidon and Jabeen Bhatti,

Special for USA TODAY

5-6 minutes

PARIS — Far-right anti-immigration nationalist Marine Le Pen and centrist independent Emmanuel Macron will advance to a showdown for president of France that will determine whether the nation stays the course or upends European unity and its liberal immigration policies, estimates of first-round voting Sunday showed.

The election was a historic repudiation of major party

candidates, who quickly rallied around Macron ahead of the the May 7 runoff to prevent the election of Le Pen, who wants to ban Muslim immigration and pull France out of the European Union it helped found 60 years ago.

With 89.7% of the vote counted, Macron has 23.7% and Le Pen 21.9%. They are followed by conservative Francois Fillon, with 19.9% and far-left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon with 19.2%, the Associated Press reports.

Le Pen said Sunday her National Front party will represent "the great alternative" to the French people.

Fillon conceded defeat but Mélenchon refused to step aside until votes from France's cities, where he and Macron draw much of their support, had been counted.

"The time has come to free the French people," Le Pen said at her election day headquarters in the northern French town of Henin-Beaumont.

Macron and Le Pen have vastly different visions for how to govern France, and of French identity.

Le Pen wants to pull the nation out of the EU and close the country's borders to new immigrants. Macron

has broken with France's traditional left or right political leadership to run as an independent and promised to invest in public infrastructure and modernize France's workforce.

Macron said in a speech to his supporters that France was going through a unique moment in its history and said that if elected he would govern on behalf of all French patriots. Macron has never held elected office and his independent On the Move party did not even exist a year ago.

Protesters angry about Le Pen's results scuffled with police. Crowds gathered on the Place de la Bastille,

and police fired tear gas to disperse an increasingly rowdy gathering as riot officers surrounded the area.

French Prime Minister Bernard Cazeneuve urged voters to support Macron in next month's final round, as did defeated conservative candidate Fillon.

"Extremism can only bring unhappiness and division to France. As such, there is no other choice than to vote against the extreme right," he said.

Marion Abonnenc, 21, a student in Paris, said she was "satisfied" and "relieved" that her choice among the candidates is pulling ahead.

"I support Macron but also voted against the extremes which I really don't want to see in the second round," she said. "Marine Le Pen has a heinous message which really doesn't correspond to my values as

a youth as a citizen of the world. And it's not the image of France I want to convey."

At Le Pen's campaign base 120 miles north of Paris, Jerome Leroy, 34, an entrepreneur, was ecstatic over the results.

"I'm very happy with the results, it's well done, it's a good thing," he said. "We managed to get the others out of the picture already, only one candidate remains: Emmanuel Macron who in fact will bring nothing more than (president) François Hollande does today. So now the real debate can start and we are happy about it — it's awesome."

Unpopular Socialist President François Hollande did not run for re-election, unusual for an incumbent French leader.

Voters chose between 11 candidates in the most

unpredictable French election in decades and came amid heightened security in the wake of a terrorist attack in central Paris on Thursday in which a police officer was shot and killed.

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French citizens vote in first round of presidential race

France's stagnant economy, its 10% unemployment rate and national security concerns topped concerns for the 47 million eligible voters. France has been under a state of emergency since the

November 2015 terror attacks in Paris and there has been a steady drip of terrorism incidents in France over the last few years.

About 60,000 police and soldiers were deployed across the country to secure polling stations for Sunday's vote.

President Trump told the Associated Press on Friday that he was not officially endorsing Le Pen but he thought the attack on Thursday would "probably help" her because she is the candidate who is "strongest on borders, and she's the strongest on what's been going on in France."

On Sunday, Trump tweeted that there was a "very interesting election currently taking place in France."



What Would a Le Pen Victory in France Mean for Markets?

Riva Gold

6-7 minutes

Updated April 23, 2017 4:30 p.m. ET

As French voters hit the polls, investors are grappling with a remote yet not implausible possibility—victory for Marine Le Pen.

On Sunday, the anti-euro leader of the far-right National Front appeared to have made it through to the second round alongside centrist Emmanuel Macron, according to early projections.

Ms. Le Pen appears unlikely to triumph in May's second-round vote. The euro rose by more than 2% to above \$1.09 against the dollar as the polls projected a slight lead in the first poll for Mr. Macron and as it appeared that far left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon had failed to make it past the first stage.

If early projections hold, investors believe markets are likely to bet on a victory for Mr. Macron in the second round. Still, "I wouldn't price [Le Pen] out entirely," said Stephen Gallo, strategist at BMO Capital Markets.

Analysts say the fear of a Le Pen victory could still pose a risk to European equities and spur concerns over the future of the eurozone.

"It would be seismic, bigger than Trump or Brexit for markets, if Le Pen got into office and called into question the euro itself," said Paul Griffiths, chief investment officer of fixed income and multiasset at First State Investments.

In her campaign, Ms. Le Pen has vowed to take France out of the euro and bring back the franc, which could cause the country to default on its debt while questioning the viability of weaker eurozone economies such as Spain and Italy.

Ahead of the first round, options trading suggested investors were bracing for large swings in markets across Europe and were buying protection against a steep move in the Euro Stoxx 50 index of eurozone blue-chip stocks.

The yield premium demanded to hold 10-year French government bonds over their German counterparts climbed to 0.73 percentage point last week before narrowing in recent sessions, compared with just 0.22 in September.

Concern had also spread to the euro. The gap between the volatility that derivatives predict for the euro-dollar exchange rate and the current actual volatility of that pair climbed last week to its most extreme in a decade, according to Macro Risk Advisors.

In equity markets, attention will likely turn first to France's benchmark CAC 40 stock index, which has climbed roughly 4% this year. Its listed companies source 26% of their revenues from France and 61% from Europe as a whole, according to FactSet.

Companies with a larger share of overseas revenues, as well as more defensive shares such as consumer staples and pharmaceuticals, are seen as better positioned to weather any turmoil. French banks are seen as particularly vulnerable in the event of a political shock.

If Ms. Le Pen is elected, "you cannot imagine a German or Italian insurance company would keep their [money] in France," given the risk to the euro, said Philippe Waechter, chief economist at Natixis Asset Management.

Foreign-based investors own a large share of French debt, holding around 60% of government bonds. If they flee France, borrowing costs would likely climb, hitting French companies and the wider economy, Mr. Waechter said.

But the whole eurozone is likely to suffer, investors say, given questions over the entire project's future.

"It's the installation of huge structural risk and a lot of investors are just going to avoid it," said Michael Thompson, managing director at S&P Global Market Intelligence. Investors would instead likely move money back into U.S. stocks and bonds, he said.

Recent inflows into European equities from global investors could also make the region's shares more vulnerable to any surprises, some analysts say.

The eurozone is currently investors' favorite region for equities, with France the second most popular market in the region, according to Bank of America Merrill Lynch's April survey of fund managers. In the last month, the rotation out of U.S. stocks into eurozone equities was among the largest since 1999. That came even as political risk from the region was cited as the biggest tail risk for global markets.

"People are more optimistic about European equities than any time

since the crisis," said Pravit Chintawongvanich, chief derivatives strategist at Macro Risk Advisors. "If you get this unexpected outcome, it completely changes your calculus," he said.

While estimates vary, analysts predict a roughly 5%-10% fall in eurozone equities in the event of a Le Pen victory. Some believe that while U.S. equities could also initially sell off, the declines would be much smaller and stocks would likely quickly rebound, much as they did two days after the Brexit vote.

To be sure, investors point to several major hurdles between Ms. Le Pen's election and a so-called Frexit, even if she was to beat Mr. Macron. She would need support from the French prime minister to call a referendum on euro membership, which is unlikely unless she also wins a parliamentary majority. Around two-thirds of the French population still supports the euro.

Across Europe, markets have quickly bounced back from surprising political outcomes that had been presumed unfavorable for stocks. Italy's benchmark FTSE MIB Index has gained 16.2% since Italians rejected constitutional reform in December and handed populists a victory, compared with a 14.1% gain for the wider Euro Stoxx 50 over that time. London's FTSE 250 index has gained 11.7% since the U.K. voted to leave the European Union last June.

If Mr. Macron, the mainstream candidate, is elected, European stocks could be poised for big gains, given recent improvements in the

European economy and corporate earnings.

"There's pent-up demand for European

**The
Washington
Post**

After French vote, European leaders come out against Le Pen. But what if she wins? (online)

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7-9 minutes

Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen on April 23 advanced to a runoff in France's presidential election. The runoff will be held on May 7. Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen advance to a runoff in France's presidential election. (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

(Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

BERLIN — With the future of Europe in French hands, the continent's leaders have cast aside their tradition of staying out of each other's elections and weighed in with some unsolicited advice: Pick the candidate who wants to make the European Union stronger, not the one who wants to blow it up.

Hearty endorsements of independent centrist Emmanuel Macron — and the stinging dismissals of her far-right rival, Marine Le Pen — came from across European capitals in the hours after French voters whittled their presidential choices to two on Sunday.

If Macron wins, continental leaders are cautiously optimistic that he can steer the beleaguered country back into an historically central role in European affairs. If Le Pen wins, modern Europe — defined by integration and growing cooperation across national boundaries — could fall apart after already being jolted by Britain's planned E.U. exit.

"Congratulations @EmmanuelMacron," tweeted the center-right Danish prime minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen. "We should await the final election, but Europe needs an open-minded and reform-oriented France => Good luck!"

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's top adviser, Peter Altmaier, chimed in to say that Macron's first-place finish showed "France AND Europe

assets," said Mislav Matejka, equity strategist at J.P. Morgan. If the French elections don't result in a disruptive outcome, "this is the year for European equities," he said.

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can win together. The center is stronger than the populists think!"

[Choice for French voters: Hope in Europe or fear of globalization]

Although the preferences were no surprise, the decision by presidents, prime ministers and other senior officials to so vocally involve themselves in a democratic election outside their national boundaries marked a striking break with precedent.

Leaders normally maintain a studious silence when the vote isn't on their turf. That they didn't in this case reflects the gravity for Europe of the choice French voters face when they next go to the polls on May 7.

"The situation is now so tense that they're making an exception to the rules," said Claire Demesmay, who studies France for the German Council on Foreign Relations.

Yet by publicly wading into the French vote, Europe's powers-that-be are taking at least two major risks. One is that by backing Macron, they will only fan the flames of anti-establishment ire that have propelled Le Pen's rise.

"It may be counterproductive," said Josef Janning, head of the Berlin office of the European Council on Foreign Relations. "It could reinforce some of the discontent in France among those who will see this as the global elite denying them their right to vote."

The other potential pitfall is that it could make it even more difficult to work with Le Pen if she defies the polls and wins. For months before Americans voted last year, European leaders denounced Donald Trump — only to have to make amends this year with solicitous visits to the new U.S. president at the White House.

Trump said last week following a Paris terrorist attack that left a police officer dead that Le Pen would "do well" in the election, and called her the "strongest on borders, and she's the strongest on what's been going on in France." But Janning said that

by publicly speaking out against Le Pen, Europe's establishment appears to be discounting her chances.

"It would have been dumb to speak out in the way they did if they thought she could still win," he said. "They seem to view that possibility as close to zero."

As Europe digested the first-round results Monday morning, there was other evidence of a heavy bet on Macron's prospects.

The French stock market jumped four percent in morning trading, and the euro leapt to a five-month high.

In Berlin, the banner headline on the mass-market tabloid Bild, above a photo of a jubilant Macron, was: "Europe breathes a sigh of relief."

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel even waded into the realm of political prognostication, telling reporters that "I am sure [Macron] will become the new French president."

There were several reasons for optimism among pro-Europeans.

One was the fact that Europe had avoided what many regarded as a nightmare final round matchup between Le Pen and the far-left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon. Although the pair come from opposite ends of the political spectrum, they share a hostility toward the European Union and NATO.

Pro-Europeans were also buoyed by the fact that Macron had bested Le Pen in the first round, vindicating pre-election polls that had him ahead and offering no evidence of an unforeseen far-right surge.

And although the first-round result was tight — 24 percent to 22 percent — surveys show Macron enjoying a much-healthier advantage of 16 points or more in the final showdown two weeks from now.

Even as the European establishment rallied around Macron, far-right leaders and voters

across Europe were cheering Le Pen, who has vowed to hold a French referendum on E.U. membership and who denounces the 28-member bloc at every turn.

André Poggenburg, a state-level chairman with the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, tweeted his congratulations to the 48-year-old and described the runoff as a choice "between E(U)stablishment and patriotism!"

Nigel Farage, the British anti-E.U. politician who helped lead last year's Brexit campaign, wrote dismissively that Macron gave his victory speech Sunday night "with E.U. flag behind him. Says it all."

Indeed, at a time of rising nationalist sentiment in Europe, when the E.U.'s popularity is on the wane, Macron has stood apart for his unabashed pro-European views.

The union's blue flags with yellow stars have been a feature of the 39-year-old's rallies, alongside the French tricolor. And he has promised if elected to help lead "an ambitious Europe," restoring France to a preeminent place in the E.U. after years in which the French role has been diminished by its own domestic struggles with unemployment, terrorism and political dysfunction.

Macron's willingness to passionately defend Europe prompted liberal German lawmaker Alexander Lambdordorf to describe him Monday on Germany's ZDF television as "a French John F. Kennedy."

But analysts suggested that even if Macron wins, Europe's mainstream will need to keep its expectations in check for what he can achieve given overall public sentiment. Taken together, anti-E.U. politicians won nearly half the first round vote.

"It may be that Europe's leaders have an over-interpretation of the role Macron can play," said Demesmay. "The anti-European mood in France will still be there — and it could increase."

**The
Washington
Post**

French voters face choice between hope and fear in runoff for presidency (online)

<https://www.facebook.com/michael.birnbaum1>

7-8 minutes

(Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen on April 23 advanced to a runoff in France's presidential election. The runoff will be held on May 7. Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron and French far-right leader Marine Le Pen advanced to a runoff in France's presidential election. (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

PARIS — Campaigns offering starkly contrasting choices began their pitch to French voters Monday in a runoff battle for the presidency between a candidate who has preached hope for a more open nation and another who has darkly warned that globalization will destroy France.

The victories by Emmanuel Macron, 39, a fresh-faced centrist who has never held elected office, and Marine Le Pen, 48, a battle-hardened nationalist who wants to yank her nation out of the European Union, were a measure of how disgusted voters have become with traditional politicians. Never in the six-decade history of the modern French state have both major left-right political parties been barred from the presidency.

But as leaders from across the political spectrum began to unite behind the centrist candidate to deny the far-right Le Pen the presidency, the dominant emotion was not the sunny optimism of Macron's stump speech, but simple fear that a victory for his rival could doom France, the European Union and the West.

Still, there was a clear sign of relief among pro-European political groups and others that Macron came out on top and appeared in a strong position heading toward the

two-person runoff May 7.

France's main stock exchange, the CAC 40, surged and other European markets were higher in Monday trading. The euro was also stronger.

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen on April 23 advanced to the runoff of France's presidential election. Here's what you need to know about her. French far-right leader Marine Le Pen on April 23 advanced to the runoff of France's presidential election. Here's what you need to know about her. (Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

Macron's backers acknowledged Monday the risky dynamic, even as they embraced opinion polls that show him with a commanding lead over Le Pen.

[WorldViews: The key story lines in France's presidential runoff]

"It's necessary to be humble. The election isn't won. We must regroup," Richard Ferrand, the general secretary of Macron's political movement, said on France's BFMTV news channel.

He said he was "disappointed" that a far-left candidate, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who energized young voters with some of the same approaches as Bernie Sanders in the U.S. Democratic primary, declined to endorse Macron Sunday night. Mélenchon said his supporters — 19.6 percent of the electorate — needed to make their own decision about what to do next.

Le Pen warned Monday that the nation's political elites were coming together to conspire against her.

"The old rotten Republican front, that no one wants any more, and that the French have kicked out with

exceptional violence, is trying to unite around Mr. Macron," Le Pen said, referring to a successful 2002 effort by politicians across the political spectrum to deny her father the presidency when he made the runoff by uniting in support of his opponent.

Le Pen was relaxed and confident during a stroll through a market in the northern French town of Rouvroy, saying that French voters would not be deceived.

"This is a referendum for or against wild globalization," Le Pen said, as she passed out fliers that said "Eradicate Islamist terrorism" to vendors who were selling cheap plastic kitchen tools on tarps spread over card tables.

Many those who embraced Macron did so out of concern, not enthusiasm.

"Abstention is not in my DNA, especially when an extremist party comes close to seizing power," the vanquished center-right candidate, François Fillon, said in a concession speech Sunday night in which he appeared close to tears. "I have no other choice than to vote against the far-right. For this reason I'll vote for Emmanuel Macron."

[A youth revolt in France boosts the far right]

It was far from a ringing endorsement of Macron, whose sunny, better-days-are-before-us stump speech has felt at times disconnected from the grim mood in France. Unemployment has been marooned at 10 percent for years under Socialist President François Hollande, whose rock-bottom approval rating has set records. Terrorism and the refugee crisis have many French citizens feeling besieged. In the final results of Sunday's first-round election, 49.8 percent of French voters opted for

candidates who want to blow up the system.

Rather than blowing up the system, Macron says he wants to improve it. His centrist goals, "neither of the right, nor the left," in his words, would see strong E.U. nations do more to support weaker ones. He would embrace immigrants and refugees and would also enact business-friendly reforms to make it easier to hire and fire workers.

Now the question will be whether Macron can seize the moment and convert grudging support into enthusiastic backing. Even if he is victorious, he will still need to assemble a governing majority in the French parliament, a challenge given that his political movement is just a year old and as yet has no lawmakers.

If Macron ascends to the gilded Élysée Palace but falters once there, Le Pen could return stronger than ever in 2022. Already, she outperformed her 2012 presidential performance as well as that of her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, in his runoff in 2002.

Even as Macron embraced his front-runner status Monday, France's two traditional mainstream parties were confronting their failures. The Socialist candidate, Benoît Hamon, captured just 6.4 percent of the vote on Sunday, a remarkable meltdown of support given that Hollande is the incumbent.

"Undoubtedly, it's the end of a cycle, the end of a story," said former Socialist prime minister Manuel Valls, who broke with his party to endorse Macron ahead of the first round.



France urged to reject Le Pen in presidential vote run-off

Story highlights

- Macron and Le Pen through to the second-round presidential vote
- Result a comprehensive rejection of traditional politics in France

(CNN)France's defeated political establishment has begun to rally against the far-right leader Marine Le Pen as she goes head-to-head against political novice Emmanuel Macron in the final race for the French presidency.

As Le Pen celebrated the highest-ever voting tally for her Front National party, candidates knocked out in the first round began to

endorse Macron, who ended his insurgent campaign with a result that confounded expectations.

Macron, a pro-European centrist, took first place with 23.9%, while the anti-immigrant, anti-EU Le Pen came second on 21.4%, with 97% of polling stations declared on Monday. Both go through to a runoff on May 7 after emerging top of a fractured field of 11 candidates in the first round.

The result amounted to a comprehensive rejection of traditional politics in France. It is the first time since the establishment of the fifth French Republic in 1958 that no candidate from the two main political parties of the left and right

has made it into the second round of the presidential vote.

Macron goes through to the second round as the clear frontrunner, with most voters expected to switch to him from mainstream defeated candidates. Le Pen, meanwhile, faces an uphill struggle.

The French stock markets rose on Monday morning, and the euro jumped to its highest level since November against the dollar as investors bet against the chances of Le Pen winning.

There was relief in Europe, too: Michel Barnier, the European Union's chief Brexit negotiator, described Macron as a "patriot".

The chief of staff for German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that the result showed France and Europe could "win together" and added: "The centre is stronger than the populists think."

Francois Fillon, the mainstream Republican candidate whose campaign foundered amid corruption allegations, emerged swiftly from his defeat with words of support for Macron.

"I promise you, extremism can only bring unhappiness and division to France," he said, describing the National Front as a party of "violence" and "intolerance."

"We have to choose what is preferable for our country, and I am

not going to rejoice. Abstention is not in my genes, especially when an extremist party is close to power," he said. "There is no other choice but to vote against the far right."

He argued that Le Pen's economic and social programs would bankrupt the country, particularly if France dropped the euro as its currency, as the far-right leader has threatened.

The Socialist Party's candidate, Benoit Hamon, also warned against a Le Pen victory. "I appeal to you in the strongest terms to beat the National Front by voting for Emmanuel Macron, even though he is not part of the Left," Hamon wrote on Twitter.

Hamon secured just 6.4% of the vote, a disastrous showing for the Socialist Party, whose candidate Francois Hollande won the presidency in 2012 but whose popularity has sunk during his term.

French Prime Minister Bernard Cazeneuve tweeted his support for Macron, calling on voters to back him in the second round "to combat the National Front's disastrous project to take France backwards and to divide the French people."

But far-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon has refused to say who he would back, criticizing both candidates for having "no stance on the environment or the future of civilization, and who both challenge the welfare and social accord of the country."

France: Open or closed?

French voters made it clear Sunday that they were ready for change -- neither candidate hails from the establishment parties that have dominated the country for decades.

Who is Marine Le Pen? 01:47

In the next two weeks, Macron will build on his pro-European, centrist message while Le Pen made it clear she would intensify the nationalist, anti-Islamist rhetoric that propelled her into the second round.

Sunday's first round contest was held under tight security after a terror attack in Paris Thursday night disrupted the final day of campaigning Friday. And the Paris attacks in November 2015, on which 130 people were killed, saw French President Francois Hollande's popularity plunge into the doldrums.

Le Pen, 48, told supporters her first move as president would be to impose a temporary ban on legal immigration to France. She has also vowed to take France out of the EU.

"The French people must seize this opportunity, because the enormous challenge of this election is the wild globalization that puts our civilization at risk," Le Pen said at Henin-Beaumont, a National Front stronghold in northern France.

"Either we continue to disintegrate without any borders, without any controls, unfair international competition, mass immigration and the free circulation of terrorists, or you choose France with borders," she added.

Macron, 39, has warned against nationalism and has attracted support from the left and right for his more moderate stance, promising to boost the economy and improve security.

"I will be the president of the patriots against the threat of the nationalists. There is only one France, France of the patriots in a protective Europe. The fight to be trustworthy to run our country starts tonight and we will win it," he said Sunday night.

His party, "En Marche!" which was only created in September, now has more than 200,000 members and his meetings have attracted vast crowds.

Le Pen, Macron supporters rejoice

Le Pen's advancement to the second round is not without precedent -- her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, made it to a runoff against the then-incumbent Jacques Chirac in 2002, only to suffer a devastating loss when anti-extremist voters rallied against the National Front leader.

But it was not the comprehensive breakthrough for the far right that some had predicted.

Nonetheless, supporters at the National Front's headquarters responded to the results with songs and dance through the night, waving Le Pen flags.

"Marine Le Pen -- liberty!" shouted one woman, who gave her name as Valerie.

"Immigrants, terrorism, killing police officers -- I can't bear it. I don't want to see that kind of thing anymore. I want to live in a free country," she told CNN.

Who is Marine Le Pen?

A huge cheer erupted at Macron's headquarters after the results emerged, his supporters waving the French Tricolour flag, and those of the EU.

"I'm actually quite happy because I voted Emmanuel Macron yesterday," Roman Maison, a 27-year-old banker, told CNN in Paris on Monday.

"I think it's a big great message for Europe, this is a great message for

all around the world that populists are not winning."

The result mirrored others -- such as the British vote to leave the European Union and the US election of Donald Trump -- where voters have rejected traditional elites.

"It's a political earthquake in this country and in Europe," veteran French journalist Christine Ockrent told CNN.

Voters react to early results of the French presidential election first round.

Fillon was an early favorite for the presidency, but his campaign suffered from allegations that he paid his wife and children for work they never carried out. He denies any wrongdoing.

Far-left firebrand Melenchon, whose popularity surged in the final weeks of the race following impressive performances in the television debates, has so far refused to concede defeat, but said he would accept the final results when they came in.

"We do not recognize the score announced on the basis of opinion polls," he wrote on Facebook. "The results of the larger towns and cities are not yet known," he added, calling for "restraint" and urging commentators to "be cautious."

CNN's Hilary Clarke, James Masters, Saskya Vandoorne, Hilary McGann, Oceane Cornevin, Carol Jordan, Stephanie Halasz and Laura Smith-Spark contributed to this report.

CNBC : Macron vs. Le Pen — meet the next president of France

Silvia Amaro

4-5 minutes

Eric Feferberg, Joel Saget | AFP | Getty Images

Investors may have started pricing in a victory for centrist Emmanuel Macron in the runoff of the French presidency but the battle against the far-right leader Marine Le Pen is yet to be concluded.

CNBC takes a look at what separates Macron from Le Pen, and why a victory for the former might not be so straightforward.

Who are they?

The far-right candidate has taken on the leadership of the party founded

by her father -- Jean-Marie Le Pen. On Sunday, Marine Le Pen managed to get through to the second round of the French presidential election as voters have grown concerned with immigration, terrorism and security matters. This is only the second time in French history when the far-right has managed to reach the second round of the presidential vote. Jean-Marie Le Pen disputed the presidency against Jacques Chirac in 2002 but lost the runoff with a difference of about 65 percentage points. Marine Le Pen graduated from Panthéon-Assas University in Paris with a degree in law.

Meanwhile, Emmanuel Macron would be the youngest ever French president if elected. The 39-year-old politician began his career as an

investment banker and though he has served as an economy minister for two years, in the last Socialist government, he has never run for public office until now. At the start of the campaign, most analysts said Macron was running in the 2017 presidential race as preparation for the election in five years' time. But the centrist, independent candidate decided to take his chances even without the backing of the Socialist Party.

What do they want to achieve?

"Regarding Mrs Le Pen's program, the clear primary focus would be on European policy (open negotiation with other member states to bring sovereignty back in member states, including monetary policies), putting an end to the independence of the Bank of France and putting in place

economic protectionism," Barclays said in a note on Sunday night.

Le Pen's platform has been based on a closed-door policy to immigration and has called for a tax on companies hiring foreign workers.

On the other hand, the bank added that Macron's plan includes "a further labor law, (aimed at making it less rigid) to be implemented before the Summer... Measures to improve governance (ministers will be assessed, and will be renewed every year; insistence on no criminal record) an audit of public finances; proposals on the future of Europe (euro area budget)."

The former investment banker has promised a Nordic-style economic model for France -- making

government spending cuts of 60 billion euros (\$64.4 billion) while also implementing a stimulus package of 50 billion euros.

What are polls indicating?

A Harris survey taken on Sunday showed Macron winning the runoff on May 7 with 64 percent of the votes against 36 percent given to Le Pen. An Ipsos survey also showed

Macron winning the runoff with 62 percent of the vote against 38 percent for Le Pen.

However, it is important to take into account that voters from the far left won't necessarily support Macron, after the far-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon, who placed fourth in the first round, refused to support him.

"A number of left-wing figures have expressed scepticism towards Macron's policies on election night, providing only a lukewarm endorsement of the former economy minister," Antonio Barroso, deputy director of research at Teneo Intelligence, said in a note on Sunday night.

Furthermore, right-wing voters, who opted for the conservative candidate

Francois Fillon could choose Le Pen if their main concern is immigration and, another key factor, is the possibility of a third event, such as a terrorist attack or financial scandal, he added. Fillon started the election as the frontrunner but fell to third place after investigations into the misuse of public funds.

CNBC : French election looks like another setback for Europe's left

Jacob Pramuk

2-3 minutes

When Socialist French presidential candidate Benoit Hamon conceded Sunday after failing to qualify for a runoff, he called it a "historic blow" to his party.

It marks just the latest setback for the mainstream left across Europe — a retreat that has been largely missed by media reports as they focus on far-right leaders, whether they win or lose.

Hamon, part of the same party as incumbent President Francois Hollande, appears set to finish fifth in the vote based on early indications from pollsters. Centrist Emmanuel Macron and far-right candidate Marine Le Pen looked set to finish first and second, respectively, according to exit polls, setting up a runoff next month.

Nationalists vs. Globalists

Old guard liberals are fading across the continent, as politics become a battle between nationalist populists and more global centrists.

The British Labour Party — Britain's second-largest — lost 26 seats in the House of Commons in 2015 elections, while the center-left Liberal Democrats dropped 49 seats. The Conservative Party — already Britain's largest, and containing both global and populist elements — gained 24 seats.

In the Netherlands this year, centrist Prime Minister Mark Rutte kept his job ahead of far-right Geert Wilders and the Party for Freedom. Media coverage focused on Wilders' defeat, and it largely ignored what happened to Dutch liberals: The

country's mainstream left Labour Party dropped 29 seats in the parliamentary elections.

In a March, Chancellor Angela Merkel's center-right Christian Democrats won a regional election in Germany's Saarland state, while the center-left Social Democrats saw their vote share dip slightly from the area's last election in 2012. The result by the Social Democrats was by no means catastrophic, but some saw it as a possible bellwether for the national election later this year.

CNBC : Euro jumps, yen dives as French worries abate

CNBC

3 minutes

Arnd Wiegmann | Reuters

The euro surged and the yen sank on Monday after the first round of France's presidential election turned out bang in line with opinion polls, settling currency market worries of another systemic political shock from next month's second round.

Measures of expected volatility of the euro - driven to their highest in a year by nerves ahead of the vote - collapsed back to relatively normal levels around 8.5 percent, pointing to a fall in concern over anti-EU, anti-euro nationalist Marine Le Pen's chances next month.

The euro itself rose by as much as 2 percent after the initial indications from voting gave victory to centrist frontrunner Emmanuel Macron, as predicted by weeks of polling.

The same polls show Macron defeating Le Pen by around 30 percentage points in two weeks time and that will allow players who have hedged - or dumped - their holdings of euro zone assets to buy back in.

But with the single currency easing back to just a 1 percent gain in Asia and early European deals, there was uncertainty about whether it would rise further with the arrival of U.S. fund investors later in the day.

"If you are a Japanese former holder of French sovereign debt, you probably can't just buy it all back

straight away, it may be people will wait until the second round," said Richard Benson, co-head of portfolio investment with currency fund Millennium Global in London.

"I'd like to think the euro might go up another 1 percent or so. \$1.10 looks very important for euro. 112 (yen) for dollar yen. The question is are there hedges that have to get covered then the euro might still rise a bit more."

The euro last gained 1.13 percent Monday from Friday's close in New York to trade at \$1.0847.

As markets globally were comforted by the results of the vote, the flood of money out of the perceived security of the yen were more marked.

The Japanese currency fell 2 percent against the euro and by more than 1 percent against the dollar at a time when most other major non-euro currency pairs were trading flat.

It steadied at around 110.08 yen per dollar, 0.9 percent down on the day.

"Overall, the probability of a Le Pen presidency has decreased but is not yet null," Deutsche Bank economists said in a special note to clients.

"The risks of a possible new scandal, strong debate performance by the National Front leader or complacency from the electorate should still be monitored."



Head of Germany's Upstart Anti-Immigrant Party Pushed Aside

Anton Troianovski

3-4 minutes

April 23, 2017 11:21 a.m. ET

BERLIN—Germany's anti-immigrant party further sidelined its embattled leader this weekend and chose two lesser-known faces to lead the party in national elections later this year, another sign of the disarray that has swept the country's upstart populist movement.

At its national convention in Cologne, the Alternative for Germany party declined even to even consider a motion by Frauke Petry, the party's co-chairman and its best known member, that called on the four-year-old party to seek to govern in coalition with other parties and to chart a more moderate political course.

The rejection was another blow to Ms. Petry. Last week, she had said she wouldn't seek a spot on the AfD's election ticket, a concession to other party officials who have rebelled against her leadership.

Instead, the AfD on Sunday chose a 76-year-old lawyer and former newspaper editor, Alexander Gauland, and a 38-year-old business consultant, Alice Weidel, to lead the ticket for the Sept. 24 national election, in which Chancellor Angela Merkel will stand for a fourth term.

Ms. Weidel is seen as a pro-business figure. Mr. Gauland, representing the party's nationalist wing, is an ally of Björn Höcke, an AfD politician in the state of Thuringia whose rejection of Germany's tradition of Holocaust

remembrances stirred a nationwide backlash against the party in recent months.

Neither Ms. Weidel nor Mr. Gauland is as well known as the 41-year-old Ms. Petry, who has a doctorate in chemistry and is now pregnant with her fifth child. Analysts said that Ms. Petry's leadership battles could hurt her party, which is already sagging in the polls. In an Infratest Dimap poll conducted last week, it received 10% support, a drop from 15% last fall.

"A party like the AfD does need to appear somewhat united," said Thomas Poguntke, a political scientist at the Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf. "Permanent infighting is always bad."

The AfD's disunity is a contrast to France's Marine Le Pen, who has successfully galvanized her National

Front party around a message critical of immigration, Islam, and the European Union.

The AfD's electoral platform, approved by delegates on Sunday, echoes that message.

It urges Germany to close its borders to asylum applicants, end sanctions on Russia and to leave the EU if Berlin fails to retrieve

national sovereignty from Brussels, as well as to amend the country's constitution to allow people born to non-German parents to have their German citizenship revoked if they commit serious crimes.

More than 10,000 people protested against the AfD in Cologne over the weekend, a city police spokesman said. Three of the 4,000 police

officers mobilized to ensure security during the convention were injured, including one officer who intervened when an AfD delegate was attacked with a wooden plank, the spokesman said. Five people were detained.

Write to Anton Troianovski at anton.troianovski@wsj.com

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

6-7 minutes

How Theresa May's Election Gamble Could Backfire

Simon Nixon

April 23, 2017 4:20 p.m. ET

Theresa May's decision last week to call a snap election was a gamble, though not for the reasons that usually lead politicians to avoid unnecessary appointments with voters.

The risk that the U.K. prime minister might lose the June 8 election is as close to zero as is possible in a functioning democracy. Opinion polls point to her Conservative Party receiving between 40% and 50% of the vote, a lead of up to 25 percentage points over the opposition Labour Party, whose leftist leader Jeremy Corbyn was last year opposed by around 80% of his party's parliamentarians in a vote of confidence. Polls suggest that only 14% of voters see him as a credible prime minister.

Instead, the risk for Mrs. May is that she falls short of her primary objective, which is to strengthen her hand for the forthcoming Brexit negotiations with the European Union. To do that, she hopes to increase her majority of 17 seats in the 650-member House of Commons.

This is important not because a larger majority would somehow intimidate Brussels—the EU has already set out tough negotiating guidelines designed to protect its interests that won't change in response to British political developments—but because it will reduce her vulnerability to her own backbenchers on both sides of the

Brexit divide, giving her greater flexibility to push through whatever deal she reaches. It also means there won't need to be an election in 2020, just as the Brexit divorce is finalized and when the full costs may have only started to become clear.

Nonetheless, there are three ways that Mrs. May's gamble might yet backfire.

The first is that Mrs. May might find herself in the heat of the campaign forced to clarify her Brexit strategy in ways that might bind her hands or reduce her flexibility in the negotiations.

Her Brexit strategy so far has been to set out only a few red lines—an end to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice and new controls on the right of EU citizens to live and work in the U.K.—while insisting her ultimate goal is to secure a "deep and special partnership" with the EU that preserves as far as possible frictionless trade and current security cooperation.

But she has said very little about how she thinks she might reconcile these objectives, instead preferring to hide behind oft-repeated but largely meaningless slogans that don't commit her one way or another.

It is clear that she intends to pursue the same strategy in the election campaign, which has already been marked by her reluctance to face questions from journalists and a refusal to participate in head-to-head televised debates with opposition parties.

By saying as little as possible about her plans, she hopes to maximize her party's appeal. She needs the support of both hard-line Brexiters who would prefer a decisive break with Brussels rather than a deal that involves any compromises that might limit the U.K.'s post-Brexit capacity for independent action, as well as former pro-EU voters who want the closest possible ties with the EU.

In a normal election, a governing party would have no chance of evading scrutiny on an issue of such vital national importance. But against a Labour Party with no coherent position on Brexit and an unpopular leader, it might just work.

The second risk is that the election shifts the Conservative Party's center of gravity substantially to the right so that even if she wins an increased majority, she finds herself even more beholden to hard-line Brexiters, thereby reducing her scope for compromise with the EU.

Even before the referendum, the party's aging activists were notably more euroskeptic than its traditional electoral base, a trend that is only likely to have intensified since last June as the party has taken responsibility for delivering the referendum verdict.

At the same time, the Conservative Party's best opportunity to win seats from Labour and the Liberal Democrats is to win back votes that went to the pro-Brexit UK Independence Party in the 2015 election, creating an extra incentive for constituencies to select strongly pro-Brexit candidates.

The third risk is that opposition to the Conservatives somehow manages to galvanize itself over the next nearly seven weeks to deprive Mrs. May of her goal of a substantially increased majority.

The simplest way for this to happen would be if the Labour Party were to dump Mr. Corbyn as leader. But this isn't going to happen before the election. On the other hand, Mr. Corbyn is so weak that many Labour parliamentarians may be able to save their own seats by making clear they would not back him to be prime minister if he won, appealing to voters on the basis of their local reputations.

Their prospects might be helped by tactical voting by former Remain voters and those worried by the consequences of a Tory landslide for hot-button domestic issues such as tax, health and education. This could work particularly to the advantage of the Liberal Democrats, whose opposition to Brexit will help them win seats in pro-EU areas. Already, a number of efforts are underway to draw up cross-party lists of anti-Brexit candidates.

Mrs. May has clearly calculated that with such a commanding lead and against such weak opposition, these are risks worth taking. That may be right. But seven weeks is a long time in politics—and politics, like nature, abhors a vacuum.

Write to Simon Nixon at simon.nixon@wsj.com

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INTERNATIONAL

Across Mideast, Mattis Delivers Trump's Message of Reassurance

Gordon Lubold

7-9 minutes

April 23, 2017 4:58 p.m. ET

DOHA, Qatar—The Trump administration's still-emerging foreign policy has come into sharper focus as Defense Secretary Jim Mattis continues a whistle-stop tour through the Middle East, quietly placing building blocks for resetting ties that had become strained under the Obama White House.

Over the past week, Mr. Mattis visited leaders in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel bearing the message that the Trump administration wants to realign with those nations and stressing that Washington and capitals in the region have shared interests, such as fighting terrorism.

But an animating feature of Mr. Mattis's effort is to counter what he repeatedly has described as the malign influence of Iran.

"Everywhere you look, if there's trouble in the region, you find Iran," Mr. Mattis said on a stop in Riyadh, adding that nations in the region are working to "checkmate Iran and the amount of disruption, the amount of instability they cause."

For Mr. Mattis, assembling a coalition to serve as a bulwark against Iran represents a welcome opportunity. When he served as a combatant commander under the Obama administration as a four-star Marine general, Mr. Mattis was harshly critical of Iran, while the

White House focused on a nuclear deal with Tehran.

Those differences fueled a view that Mr. Mattis was pushed out as commander of U.S. Central Command, which oversees the region, when he left prematurely in 2013, short of a typical three-year appointment.

Now retired from the Marines and working in the Trump administration, Mr. Mattis has greater license to flag publicly his concerns about Iranian influence in the region. In the past week, he has cited Iran's support for Houthi fighters in Yemen, fueling the civil war there and noted Iranian support for Hezbollah in Lebanon, as well as its influence inside Syria.

His condemnations are echoed back home by equally harsh assessments from Mr. Trump, who last week declared that Iran hasn't lived up to the spirit of the 2015 nuclear deal.

Many leaders the Middle East are pleased to hear it, and in some cases, Mr. Mattis's presence in Riyadh, Cairo and Jerusalem in recent days is the only signal needed to convince those allies that relations are back on track, U.S. officials said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who maintained an icy relationship with President Barack Obama, praised what he characterized as a new era in ties on Friday.

"We sense a great change in the direction of American policy," Mr. Netanyahu told reporters Thursday

in Jerusalem, noting the "very clear and forthright words" Mr. Mattis used about Iran. "This has been appreciated around the world and in our region."

The Trump administration has yet to spell out core foreign-policy tenets such as how it plans to counter Islamic State, mediate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or approach the Iranian nuclear deal. Its decision to bomb a Syrian air base and use the largest nonnuclear bomb of the U.S. arsenal in Afghanistan prompted critics to question whether the administration has a cohesive global strategy.

But Egypt's move last week to release an imprisoned American aid worker and return her to the U.S. provided a symbol of the kind of reset of relations the Trump administration had in mind.

The aid worker, Aya Hijazi, 30 years old, was found innocent by an Egyptian court and returned home to the U.S. late last week. Weeks earlier, Mr. Trump had taken a personal interest in the case, officials said.

During his weeklong trip, which also took him to Djibouti and Qatar, Mr. Mattis didn't attempt to close formal military assistance deals with the countries, many of which seek showy military assistance from the U.S. in the form of tanks and jet fighters.

Instead, the U.S. is interested in providing assistance tailored to actual security needs of the nations, and to Washington's own needs. That could include missile defense

systems that ultimately could help defend U.S. allies in the region against security threats from Iran, officials said.

In Saudi Arabia, the Trump administration is poised to green light the transfer of precision guided munitions, a nearly \$400 million sale halted under the Obama administration over concerns about civilian casualties in Yemen.

Washington also already has begun to deepen its security relationship with the Emirati government, providing more intelligence support in the Emiratis' fight inside Yemen.

In Yemen, the U.S. remains primarily interested on eradicating al Qaeda militants. U.S. officials have repeatedly said that al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP, poses a direct threat to the American homeland greater than that from Islamic State.

But the U.S. has an interest in seeing an end to the civil war in Yemen, in part to help focus allies on fighting AQAP. Mr. Mattis said last week in Riyadh that he would like to see a U.N.-brokered peace process in Yemen.

That is unlikely soon, but Mr. Mattis said he believes that providing allies like Saudi Arabia with the kind of help it needs in Yemen will force the Houthi rebels to ultimately come to the peace table.

Write to Gordon Lubold at Gordon.Lubold@wsj.com

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Warring cousins, a grisly execution: A Tunisian family torn apart by ISIS (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100009511926129>

11-14 minutes

KASSERINE, Tunisia —One evening last fall, the Islamic State fighters came down from the mountains.

Sayed Ghozlani was visiting his family during a break from the army, and the fighters wanted to find him. They stormed his house during dinner and corralled the men. They beat them up, tied their hands behind their backs and forced them all to kneel.

Then one fighter pressed a gun against Sayed's head and demanded his name.

"Abdul Malik," he replied.

"That's not the truth," another militant said in a voice that was familiar, according to two witnesses.

His face bloodied, Sayed looked up to see a figure carrying an AK-47 rifle and smiling triumphantly.

It was his cousin, Muntasir.

In the mountains of western Tunisia, radical Islamists are spreading their ideology, cowing villagers with brute violence and dividing families. American-trained Tunisian soldiers are battling them, but the militants are formidable opponents.

The struggle lays bare the Islamic State's aspirations as it loses territory in Iraq and Syria, security officials and analysts say. The militants are searching for new havens and areas where they can impose control and sow chaos. They are also fortifying existing footholds to expand their reach and fallback options.

In Egypt, Islamic State militants are staging devastating attacks on minority Christians. In Algeria and the Sahel region, new Islamic State affiliates have emerged. And after losing its Libyan stronghold of Sirte in December, the Islamic State is trying to regroup in southern Libya, and potentially in Tunisia and other neighboring countries, U.S. military and intelligence officials say.

"The instability in Libya and North Africa may be the most significant near-term threat to U.S. and allies' interests on the continent," Gen. Thomas D. Waldhauser, head of the Pentagon's Africa Command, told the Senate Armed Services Committee last month.

The return of possibly thousands of fighters threatens to further destabilize this moderate Muslim North African nation, the only one to emerge as a functioning democracy after the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings.

Less than 15 miles from the Algerian border, the mountains have become a crossroads for militants from the region. Caves and bushes provide plenty of cover for

training camps and redoubts in an area that is partly ungoverned.

In villages and towns, the forces abetting radicalization are in full gear: Ignored by successive governments, the region is beset with high unemployment, poverty and weak social services. Resentment toward the government runs deep.

On that November evening, these colluding forces led one cousin to betray another.

"Ever since my brother joined the army, our cousin wanted to kill him," said Fadha Ghozlani, 35, who was in the house during the attack, along with their younger brother, Mohammed. "He brought the terrorists to our home."

Spreading radicalism

By U.N. estimates, at least 5,500 Tunisians have fought for the Islamic State and al-Qaeda in Syria, Iraq and Libya — more than from any other country. Many are from the Kasserine region.

But even as Tunisia became a militant pipeline to the wars in those countries, its secular history and drift toward the West made it a target. In 2015, Tunisian gunmen thought to have trained in Libya attacked the resort town of Sousse and the Bardo Museum in the capital, Tunis, killing scores, mostly foreign tourists.

Last year, Islamic State fighters based in Libya brazenly battled security forces in the southern border town of Ben Guerdane, widely seen as an effort to establish a new foothold in Tunisia.

That foothold seems to be taking shape in these mountains, where the Islamic State is also in a contest with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, or AQIM, for recruits and territory.

Many AQIM fighters have defected to form the Islamic State's Tunisian branch, Jund al-Khilafah, which in Arabic means the Soldiers of the Caliphate, security officials and analysts say.

There are no more than a couple hundred militants in the mountains, security officials say, including some from Algeria, Mauritania and West African countries. But most of the fighters are Tunisians from the area, disaffected men such as Muntasir.

By the time he joined the Islamic State last summer, it had become harder to travel to the wars abroad. The nation is under emergency law. Men younger than 35 need written permission from their parents to leave the country. A 125-mile earthen wall was built along the

border with Libya to prevent jihadists from leaving and entering.

"The security situation is improving," said Yasser Mesbah, an Interior Ministry spokesman. "But we can't say the threat is over."

Consider this: 3,576 Tunisians were tried last year on terrorism-related charges, including recruitment and training, according to Interior Ministry data.

"The bigger issue, not just for Tunisia, but for all of us, is this: What about the guys who have not left the state to fight?" said Patrice Bergamini, the European Union's ambassador to Tunisia.

"They are like ticking bombs."

Graffiti on the wall of a local school includes a reference to radical Islamists. (Lorenzo Tugnoli/For The Washington Post)

Men congregate at a cafe in Kasserine's city center. (Lorenzo Tugnoli/For The Washington Post)

Quiet conversion

Sayed and Muntasir grew up near each other in Thmad, a bucolic village in the mountains. Born the same year, they played together and often slept in the same room. They were both tall, lean and handsome.

Their families, like others in their once close-knit community, farmed and grazed sheep. They celebrated holidays and festivals together.

By the time the cousins turned 20, the Arab Spring uprisings were transforming Tunisia. In Kasserine, violent protests in January 2011 played a central role in the ousting of dictator Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. Like other interior areas, it had been ignored by the country's northern elite for decades.

Neither cousin took part in the revolution. Muntasir was growing crops and tending his family's sheep on the mountains. And by then, Sayed had joined the army to help support his parents and siblings.

But Sayed's job drove the two cousins apart. Muntasir soon viewed him as a member of Ben Ali's oppressive regime.

"When Muntasir learned that Sayed had enlisted in the army, he used to call him 'tyrant,'" recalled Mohammed Ghozlani, 25, Sayed's younger brother. "He used to throw this word in our faces whenever he saw us in a local cafe or other places. But at that time, he didn't try to harm us."

After the revolt, a new openness flourished. But that also paved the way for religious extremists to

attract youths frustrated with the lack of opportunities. In mosques and Islamic education camps, imams implored young people to give up their Western ways and urged them to defend Islam.

Mohamed Zorgui, a rapper and community youth leader, recalled that in 2013 "the black Islamic State flags were being displayed openly in the city center."

The flags are gone, but the sense of despair lingers.

The promises of economic growth that emerged after the revolution remain unfulfilled, and cafes are filled during the day with idle young men of working age.

"The youth have no idea what the future will bring," said Mahmoud Kahri, a lawmaker representing Kasserine. "And the government has found no efficient way to address their problems."

That has garnered more sympathy for the militants. In January, protests broke out in the town over the lack of jobs. Some youths burned tires. Others branded government officials "nonbelievers" and chanted "ISIS is coming," Zorgui recalled.

In Karma and Zuhour, two hardscrabble enclaves in the town of Kasserine, dozens of families have sons who left to fight abroad or were recruited by the militants in the mountains.

Scrawled on the wall of a school in Zuhour are the words: "ISIS is lasting and expanding."

By all accounts, Muntasir was not a devout Muslim. He rarely attended mosque or prayed five times a day. But last spring, his relatives noticed that he started praying and engaging in discussions about Islam.

"Muntasir used to drink alcohol, and then, one day, he suddenly started to speak about religion," Mohammed Ghozlani recalled.

Yet, Muntasir kept his Islamic State sympathies a secret, and many family members didn't realize he had joined the militant group until he had vanished into the mountains during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan last summer.

Mafoud Bin Daraie, a 40-year-old imam and community leader, said the militants have largely drawn rural young men who "have wrong impressions of Islam or are very poor."

He has tried to stop several Kasserine youth from heading overseas to fight or into the mountains.

But now the imam is a target.

'Fuel to the battle'

A few months ago, a Tunisian militant with a handgun entered Bin Daraie's mosque during Friday prayers. But security forces were tipped off, and before he could pull the trigger, they grabbed him.

"They tried to kill me because I spoke out against them," Bin Daraie said.

A few blocks from his mosque, a house is pocked with softball-size holes from heavy gunfire. In August, security forces fought a nine-hour battle with militants holed up there. Two of the gunmen, along with a passer-by, were killed.

One day last summer, the militants accused Najib Guasmi, 37, a shepherd, of being an informant for the security forces.

"They killed him with a bullet in his head," said his brother, Hadi.

The militants have also planted land mines, killing several civilians in recent months.

At least a dozen Tunisian fighters returning from Syria and Iraq have joined the militants, said Ridha Raddaoui, co-author of a recent report on terrorism by the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights.

As more fighters return, he added, "they will be fuel to the battle in the mountains against the Tunisian state."

At checkpoints in the towns, Tunisian security forces search vehicles for weapons and bombs. Soldiers patrol in Humvees and armored personnel carriers. Suspected militants have been arrested and sent to jail.

But a recent visit to the mountains, under armed escort, revealed the security challenges on this vast terrain dotted with cactus and pine trees along dry riverbeds.

"There are fighters everywhere," said a national guard commander, pointing at the mountains, a Belgian-made rifle slung over his shoulder. He spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to journalists. "But we don't have the necessary means and equipment to fight them."

The security forces, he said, were stretched thin and lacked equipment to track down the militants.

"God is the only one protecting us now," he said.

A tragic return

On that November evening, Muntasir was determined to confront his cousin. By then, he was routinely coming down from the mountains to pick up food and supplies. Nearly half the village was helping the militants. The other half lived in fear.

Sayed, too, was coming home — despite the omens. On one visit, a cousin told him that if he had a gun he would kill him on the spot.

"I told my brother, 'Don't come to the house. Muntasir is watching you,'" Fadhah Ghazlani recalled.

But Sayed was close to his mother, and she needed money.

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As Sayed glared at Muntasir in their house, his mother began to cry. She

begged Muntasir not to harm her son.

But the militants hauled Sayed into a guest room. Muntasir joined them.

Moments later, two bullets pierced the back of Sayed's head.

The New York Times

Afghan Base Massacre Adds New Uncertainty to Fight Against Taliban

Mujib Mashal

4-5 minutes

OUTSIDE CAMP SHAHEEN, Afghanistan — They joined the army because there is no work elsewhere. Many had never fired a weapon in combat.

The fresh-faced, impoverished Afghan recruits killed and maimed in the Taliban's sneak attack here on Friday, some of them just teenagers, are the latest targets of the insurgent group's campaign to subvert and demoralize the armed forces, already struggling with corruption, desertion and mistrust between soldiers and officers.

The psychological impact of the assault, one of the deadliest in the 16-year war, may now prove more devastating than the number of victims. While some survivors have vowed revenge, the assault has sown fear and rage not only among many recruits but also among their families, further threatening enlistment and making the government's fight against the Taliban that much harder.

"Those who join the army, it's because of poverty and lack of work," said Sher Mohamed, who buried his 22-year-old brother, Mohammed Yaqoub, a victim of the attack, in Takhar Province on Sunday. "Our leaders — their financial situation is good, their children are abroad, and it's the children of the poor who die protecting them."

Many grieving relatives were incensed that the government had

minimized the sacrifices of the victims, ordering officials to stay quiet or hide the extent of the fatalities, which have dribbled out over the past three days.

The government is highly sensitive to the casualty count in the military and has sought to suppress information about such figures.

But it is widely known that at least 6,700 of Afghanistan's roughly 320,000-member security forces were killed last year and more than 12,000 were wounded, a record.

At least 160 are believed to have been killed on Friday at the sprawling base, Camp Shaheen, northern Afghanistan's largest army installation. Most were not seasoned soldiers and were just going through basic training.

Unlike many other Taliban attacks against the military, where the targets have been commanders, police officers, bodyguards and sentries, the Camp Shaheen victims never even got the chance to fight.

As scores of coffins were distributed to families outside the base over the weekend for transport home by car, taxi, van and truck, traffic turned into a hodgepodge of makeshift hearses. Many other bodies were ferried by army helicopters to other provinces for relatives to retrieve.

Afghan activists paid tribute to the victims of a Taliban attack on an army base at a memorial on the Wazir Akbar Khan hilltop in Kabul on Sunday. Wakil Kohsar/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Officials who had visited the base's morgue said only a dozen or so bodies remained unclaimed.

Most were badly burned by the explosive vests some of the attackers had detonated inside the base.

On Saturday, hundreds of families gathered outside the base, many demanding to be let in, but were stopped at the same checkpoint that the 10 Taliban assailants masquerading in military uniforms had comfortably made their way through.

The assailants entered the base in two trucks, then opened fire on as many as 3,000 unarmed soldiers emerging from the base mosque as Friday prayers ended. Some of the attackers blew themselves up, and it took five hours for commandos to kill the rest.

New details have since emerged about the cunning of the plot.

One assailant had pretended to be a wounded soldier, replete with an intravenous drip bottle attached to his arm, officials said, as the trucks passed through seven checkpoints toward the base.

The base remained sealed off to outsiders on Sunday. But officials who had visited, speaking privately, said the bodies of seven Taliban attackers still remained scattered outside the mosque.

Two officials said the attackers had red cloth tied on their arms, which they apparently had used to distinguish one another from the hundreds of military men they had come to kill.

One assailant had even dropped his gun and pretended to be an officer ushering panicked recruits into the apparent safety of the dining facility, one of the officials said. Many were shot to death inside with nowhere to escape.

On Sunday, the closest checkpoint to the army base was quiet. Pedestrians went about their business, and children rode past it on their bicycles. Exhausted-looking soldiers checked vehicles and searched those allowed to proceed. Many said they had been told to strictly not speak to the news media, and when the Afghan president visited the army base on Saturday, he held his meetings in small groups to make sure details did not leak.

Haji Hazrat Qul, in his 60s, waited in the shade for the body of his cousin, 22-year-old Ansar ul Haq. The young man had graduated top of his class in Jowzjan Province, and after finding no other employment, had joined army training about six months ago.

Mr. Qul waited outside with a taxi while Mr. Haq's younger brother went in to identify and pick up the body. About three hours later, the younger brother called Mr. Qul to say the government would not allow the body to travel by road, because the road to their home district in Jowzjan was contested by the Taliban.

"They will bring the body by helicopter," Mr. Qul said, apologizing to the taxi driver he had kept waiting.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Saudi King Appoints Son Envoy to Washington

Nikhil Lohade and Dahlia

Kholiaif

4-5 minutes

Updated April 23, 2017 11:59 p.m. ET

DUBAI—Saudi Arabia's King Salman has appointed one of his sons as the kingdom's new ambassador to the U.S., as Riyadh seeks to cement improved ties with

Washington following its disputes with the Obama administration over Iran and other American policy in the region.

The appointment of Prince Khaled bin Salman as the new envoy to Washington was announced in a decree issued by the Saudi monarch late Saturday, according to the official Saudi Press Agency. The prince, who is in his 20s, replaces Prince Abdullah bin Faisal bin Turki bin Abdullah Al Saud.

Prince Khaled's appointment was among in a flurry of edicts by King Salman over the weekend that among other measures, reinstated allowances and bonuses for state employees that had been trimmed back last year.

The prince is seen as close to his brother, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is in his early 30s and oversees the Saudi defense forces and the kingdom's economic reform initiatives. Prince Khaled

accompanied his brother on an official visit to Washington last June, and both are said to belong to the king's inner circle of advisers.

Prince Khaled studied at Georgetown University and Harvard University, according to the website of the Saudi-owned Al Arabiya news channel. He also served as a pilot in the Saudi air force, during which he received training at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada and Columbus Air Force Base in Mississippi. He has carried out combat missions in

Yemen and against the extremist group Islamic State, according to Al Arabiya and local press reports.

Saudi Arabia, which is predominantly Sunni Muslim, strongly opposed the nuclear accord reached between mainly Shiite Iran and the U.S. and five other world powers in June 2015. Riyadh views the deal as a dangerous concession to Tehran, its rival for influence in the Middle East. The two sides support opposing sides in wars in Syria and Yemen.

While the Obama administration touted the agreement as one of its main foreign policy accomplishments, Donald Trump

criticized the accord during his presidential campaign, and since moving into the Oval Office has imposed new U.S. sanctions on entities linked to Iran.

His administration notified U.S. Congress last week that Iran was complying with the deal, but Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Mr. Trump was reviewing whether the U.S. would continue to roll back sanctions on Iran as required by the deal, given what he described as Tehran's support for groups Washington designates as terrorist organizations.

U.S. officials accompanying Defense Secretary Jim Mattis on a two-day visit to Riyadh last week said the U.S. was considering a

range of military support for the kingdom's fight against Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen in the hope of forcing the group into peace negotiations.

In public comments in the Saudi capital, the U.S. defense chief said it was important for the U.S. to help "reinforce Saudi Arabia's resistance to Iran's mischief."

Saudi Arabia has traditionally been a large purchaser of U.S. weapons and as ambassador to Washington, Prince Khaled will play a crucial role in striking fresh deals. In that respect, he has a familiar pedigree.

"He is being seen as a modern-day version of Bandar bin Sultan, who also trained as a fighter pilot before

dominating the U.S.-Saudi relationship for more than two decades as ambassador in Washington," Lori Plotkin Boghardt and Simon Henderson of Washington Institute for Near East Policy wrote in February.

—Summer Said in Dubai contributed to this article.

Write to Nikhil Lohade at Nikhil.Lohade@wsj.com

Appeared in the Apr. 24, 2017, print edition as 'King Appoints Son As New Envoy To Washington.'



3-4 minutes

April 23 at 5:05 PM

An Iranian presidential candidate said Sunday that the landmark 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers has failed to lift sanctions against his country or improve its economy.

Mostafa Mirsalim, a conservative, said at a news conference that President Hassan Rouhani's outreach to the West had failed, adding that "sanctions remained in place and were even intensified."

Under the nuclear deal, international sanctions were lifted in exchange for Iran



5-7 minutes

In two statements in August 2014, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah claimed that the Islamic State was a threat to the region. "The danger does not recognize Shiites, Sunnis, Christians, or Druze, Yazidis, Arabs, or Kurds," he said. "This monster is growing and getting bigger." He argued that ISIS threatened the Arab monarchies stretching from Jordan to the Gulf. Then he revealed the real goal of his Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement. "Going to fight in Syria was, in the first degree, to defend Lebanon, the resistance in Lebanon and all Lebanese."

Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, Iran, Hezbollah, and the various Shia militias in Iraq that make up the Hashd al-Shaabi are

Iranian candidate says nuclear deal failed to lift sanctions

TEHRAN —

curbing its uranium enrichment, but separate U.S. sanctions related to Iran's ballistic missile program have been tightened.

Mirsalim said that, if elected, he would abide by the nuclear deal. But he said President Trump's administration had already undermined the agreement, without elaborating.

Last week, the State Department certified that Iran was complying with the nuclear deal, but Trump, a longtime critic of the agreement, said that Tehran was violating the spirit of the accord and that the United States might withdraw from it.

The France-educated Mirsalim, switching to French at one point during the news conference, said he

wanted to transform Iran into a "safe international hub" for "regional and international dialogue and constructive engagement."

Today's Headlines newsletter

The day's most important stories.

Rouhani is the front-runner in next month's election, in which he will face off against five candidates.

Iran's hard-liners have criticized the nuclear deal, saying that Rouhani gave too much away and that the economy remains weak despite the lifting of sanctions.

Former hard-line president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and close ally Hamid Baghaei, both of whom were disqualified from running in the election, said in a joint statement that they will not support any of the

candidates. If their supporters remain on the sidelines, it could help Rouhani, who enjoys the support of moderates and reformists.

Meanwhile, Rouhani told supporters in the northern city of Qazvin that the election would be a selection between freedom and peace or their opposite, the semiofficial Iranian Students News Agency reported.

"The issue is if the society should be more open or closed," he was quoted as saying. "Whether we want confrontation with the world and to bring back the ill-omened shadow of war or we want to continue self-respecting engagement with the world."

Frantzman : Syrian Civil War -- ISIS Is No Counterweight to Iranian Influence

riding a wave of victories. Never before have Iran's proxies, extremist militias, had such legitimacy and power in some areas, while in others they play a polarizing role.

To fight Iranian influence, some have argued, ISIS and other jihadists should be encouraged to fight a war of attrition against Hezbollah and its allies. "In Syria, Trump should let ISIS be Assad's Iran's, Hezbollah's, and Russia's headache — the same way we encouraged the mujahedeen fighters to bleed Russia in Afghanistan," columnist Thomas Friedman wrote in the *New York Times* on April 12. Friedman was the *Times*'s Beirut bureau chief in 1982 and was posted to Jerusalem later in the 1980s. He was familiar with the initial rise of Hezbollah and with U.S. policy in Afghanistan,

where America spent hundreds of millions aiding fighters resisting the Soviets.

Efraim Inbar of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies argued in August 2016 that "the destruction of Islamic State is a strategic mistake." It would be best to "keep bad actors focused on one another rather than on Western targets and hamper Iran's quest for regional hegemony," he explained. In this theory, like the one Friedman later advanced, Hezbollah was being "seriously taxed by the fight against ISIS."

From a moral perspective, ISIS must be defeated in Iraq and Syria because of its crimes against humanity, particularly its massacre of Yazidis, a religious minority, in 2014, and its selling 5,000 women into slavery. Those who argue that nonetheless ISIS should be left to

"bleed" Iran and contend that this strategy is pragmatic, based on U.S. or Western "interests."

The problem is that there is no evidence that ISIS has "bled" Iran, the Syrian regime, Hezbollah, or Shia militias any more than it has advanced Tehran's interests. Before ISIS attacked Iraq in 2014, the Baghdad government still had to pretend to curry favor with Sunnis. After ISIS arrived, Shia Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani issued his famous fatwa calling on all Iraqis to defend their country. Tens of thousands flocked to the Hashd al-Shaabi, or Popular Mobilization Units. In December 2016, they became an official arm of the Iraqi security forces.

ISIS provides Assad legitimacy, as 'the lesser of two evils.'

As Iraq has battled ISIS, Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, has been a frequent visitor to the front lines: ISIS didn't weaken Iranian influence in Iraq, it put it on steroids. Before ISIS, Iran would never have been able to create a Shia militia coalition and make it an official part of the government. Its militias were seen as sectarian extremists. Now on the battlefields around Mosul, as I witnessed in a visit there in early April, the Shia flags fly everywhere, and they pose as liberators.

Similarly in Lebanon: On the arrival of pockets of ISIS on the border in 2014, Nasrallah, a turban-wearing blowhard who runs an extremist

religious militia, spoke of "barbarians" at the gate. Hezbollah leveraged the crises with Syria and the supposed threat from jihadists to hold the presidency of Lebanon hostage for more than two years until it maneuvered Michael Aoun into power in 2016. Lebanon's sectarian constitution requires that the country's leader be a Christian, but Nasrallah wanted a Hezbollah-allied Christian. Fighting ISIS and other jihadists in Syria allows him to pose as a "defender" of Christians and minority communities in Lebanon. He continues to claim that Hezbollah is "resisting" Israel by fighting in Syria. How is that? Nasrallah claims that Israel supports ISIS.

The extremism of ISIS has discredited the Syrian rebellion. Prior to the arrival of ISIS and the beheading of Steven Sotloff and James Foley, the world's attention was focused on the brutality of Bashar al-Assad. After August 2014, the U.S.-led coalition of 68 nations was busy bombing ISIS. The claim that letting ISIS off the hook would have somehow "bled" Assad is incorrect. In 2014, ISIS concentrated its war against Kurds in Syria and Iraq and rarely posed a threat to the Assad regime. That was threatened by the Syrian rebels. The regime identified the rebels as ISIS and al-Qaeda, monsters. ISIS didn't counterweight Assad. It

provided him legitimacy, as "the lesser of two evils."

Supporting religious extremists, as the U.S. did in Afghanistan in the 1990s, is not a counterweight to other extremists. The struggle against Iranian hegemony must be waged alongside other pro-Western or allied administrations such as Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq. Supporting jihadists leads to instability. It doesn't countervail Iran.

— Seth J. Frantzman is a researcher, a Jerusalem-based journalist, and an op-ed editor of the Jerusalem Post.

POLITICO Obama's hidden Iran deal giveaway

By Josh Meyer

44-55 minutes

When President Barack Obama announced the "one-time gesture" of releasing Iranian-born prisoners who "were not charged with terrorism or any violent offenses" last year, his administration presented the move as a modest trade-off for the greater good of the Iran nuclear agreement and Tehran's pledge to free five Americans.

"Iran had a significantly higher number of individuals, of course, at the beginning of this negotiation that they would have liked to have seen released," one senior Obama administration official told reporters in a background briefing arranged by the White House, adding that "we were able to winnow that down to these seven individuals, six of whom are Iranian-Americans."

Story Continued Below

But Obama, the senior official and other administration representatives weren't telling the whole story on Jan. 17, 2016, in their highly choreographed rollout of the prisoner swap and simultaneous implementation of the six-party nuclear deal, according to a POLITICO investigation.

In his Sunday morning address to the American people, Obama portrayed the seven men he freed as "civilians." The senior official described them as businessmen convicted of or awaiting trial for mere "sanctions-related offenses, violations of the trade embargo."

In reality, some of them were accused by Obama's own Justice Department of posing threats to national security. Three allegedly were part of an illegal procurement

network supplying Iran with U.S.-made microelectronics with applications in surface-to-air and cruise missiles like the kind Tehran test-fired recently, prompting a still-escalating exchange of threats with the Trump administration. Another was serving an eight-year sentence for conspiring to supply Iran with satellite technology and hardware. As part of the deal, U.S. officials even dropped their demand for \$10 million that a jury said the aerospace engineer illegally received from Tehran.

And in a series of unpublicized court filings, the Justice Department dropped charges and international arrest warrants against 14 other men, all of them fugitives. The administration didn't disclose their names or what they were accused of doing, noting only in an unattributed, 152-word statement about the swap that the U.S. "also removed any Interpol red notices and dismissed any charges against 14 Iranians for whom it was assessed that extradition requests were unlikely to be successful."

Three of the fugitives allegedly sought to lease Boeing aircraft for an Iranian airline that authorities say had supported Hezbollah, the U.S.-designated terrorist organization. A fourth, Behrouz Dolatzadeh, was charged with conspiring to buy thousands of U.S.-made assault rifles and illegally import them into Iran.

A fifth, Amin Ravan, was charged with smuggling U.S. military antennas to Hong Kong and Singapore for use in Iran. U.S. authorities also believe he was part of a procurement network providing Iran with high-tech components for an especially deadly type of IED used by Shiite militias to kill hundreds of American troops in Iraq.

The biggest fish, though, was Seyed Abolfazl Shahab Jamili, who had been charged with being part of a conspiracy that from 2005 to 2012 procured thousands of parts with nuclear applications for Iran via China. That included hundreds of U.S.-made sensors for the uranium enrichment centrifuges in Iran whose progress had prompted the nuclear deal talks in the first place.

When federal prosecutors and agents learned the true extent of the releases, many were shocked and angry. Some had spent years, if not decades, working to penetrate the global proliferation networks that allowed Iranian arms traders both to obtain crucial materials for Tehran's illicit nuclear and ballistic missile programs and, in some cases, to provide dangerous materials to other countries.

"They didn't just dismiss a bunch of innocent business guys," said one former federal law enforcement supervisor centrally involved in the hunt for Iranian arms traffickers and nuclear smugglers. "And then they didn't give a full story of it."

In its determination to win support for the nuclear deal and prisoner swap from Tehran — and from Congress and the American people — the Obama administration did a lot more than just downplay the threats posed by the men it let off the hook, according to POLITICO's findings.

Through action in some cases and inaction in others, the White House derailed its own much-touted National Counterproliferation Initiative at a time when it was making unprecedented headway in thwarting Iran's proliferation networks. In addition, the POLITICO investigation found that Justice and State Department officials denied or delayed requests from prosecutors and agents to lure some key Iranian

fugitives to friendly countries so they could be arrested. Similarly, Justice and State, at times in consultation with the White House, slowed down efforts to extradite some suspects already in custody overseas, according to current and former officials and others involved in the counterproliferation effort.

And as far back as the fall of 2014, Obama administration officials began slow-walking some significant investigations and prosecutions of Iranian procurement networks operating in the U.S. These previously undisclosed findings are based on interviews with key participants at all levels of government and an extensive review of court records and other documents.

"Clearly, there was an embargo on any Iranian cases," according to the former federal supervisor.

"Of course it pissed people off, but it's more significant that these guys were freed, and that people were killed because of the actions of one of them," the supervisor added, in reference to Ravan and the IED network.

The supervisor noted that in agreeing to lift crippling sanctions against Tehran, the Obama administration had insisted on retaining the right to go after Iran for its efforts to develop ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads and cruise missiles that could penetrate U.S. defenses, and to illegally procure components for its nuclear, military and weapons systems.

"Then why would you be dismissing the people that you know about who are involved in that?" the former official asked.

A SHREWD CALCULATION

The saga of how the Obama administration threw a monkey wrench into its own Justice Department-led counterproliferation effort continues to play out almost entirely out of public view, largely because of the highly secretive nature of the cases and the negotiations that affected them.

That may be about to change, as the Trump administration and both chambers of Congress have pledged to crack down on Tehran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Last Wednesday, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson announced a government-wide review of U.S. policy toward Iran in the face of "alarming and ongoing provocations that export terror and violence, destabilizing more than one country at a time."

On Thursday, President Donald Trump declared that even if Iran is meeting the terms of its deal with the Obama administration and other world powers, "they are not living up to the spirit of it, I can tell you that. And we're analyzing it very, very carefully, and we'll have something to say about that in the not-too-distant future."

At left, President Barack Obama delivers a statement Jan. 17, 2016, on the relations between the U.S. and Iran. At right, Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov meet July 7, 2015, in Vienna, Austria, during the nuclear talks between the E3+3 and Iran. | AP and Getty Photos

Such reviews are likely to train a spotlight on an aspect of the nuclear deal and prisoner swap that has infuriated the federal law enforcement community most — the hidden damage it has caused to investigations and prosecutions into a wide array of Iranian smuggling networks with U.S. connections.

Valerie Lincy, executive director of the nonpartisan Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, said Obama administration officials made a shrewd political calculation in focusing public attention on just those seven men it was freeing in the United States, and portraying them as mere sanctions violators.

That way, she said, "They just didn't think it was going to make too many waves. And I think they were right."

But Lincy, who closely tracks the U.S. counterproliferation effort against Iran, said that by letting so many men off the hook, and for such a wide range of offenses, Washington has effectively given its blessing to Iran's continuing defiance of international laws.

Former Obama administration officials deny that, saying the men could still be prosecuted if they

continue their illegal activity. But with their cases dropped, international arrest warrants dismissed and investigative assets redirected, the men — especially the 14 fugitives — can now continue activities the U.S. considers to be serious threats to its national security, Lincy said.

"This is a scandal," she said. "The cases bear all the hallmarks of exactly the kinds of national security threats we're still going after. It's stunning and hard to understand why we would do this."

Even some initial supporters of negotiating with Iran said the disclosures are troubling.

"There was always a broader conceptual problem with the administration not wanting to upset the balance of the deal or the perceived rapprochement with the Iranian regime," said former Bush administration deputy national security adviser Juan Zarate, who later turned against the accord. "The deal was sacrosanct, and the Iranians knew it from the start and took full advantage when we had — and continue to maintain — enormous leverage."

Most, if not all, of the Justice Department lawyers and prosecutors involved in the Counterproliferation Initiative were kept in the dark about how their cases were being used as bargaining chips, according to interviews with more than a dozen current and former officials.

So were the federal agents from the FBI and departments of Homeland Security and Commerce who for years had been operating internationally, often undercover, on the front lines of the hunt for Iranian arms and weapons smugglers.

It wasn't just that prosecutors and agents with years of detailed knowledge about the cases were left out of the consultations about the significance of the 21 men let go in the swap. The lack of input also meant that negotiators were making decisions without fully understanding how the releases would impact the broader and interconnected matrix of U.S. investigations.

At the time, those investigations were providing U.S. officials with a roadmap of how, exactly, Tehran was clandestinely building its nuclear and ballistic missile programs and maintaining its military with the unwitting assistance of so many U.S. weapons parts and technology companies. The cases were also providing key operational details of how the Iranian procurement

networks operate, and who in Tehran was calling the shots.

"So when they downplayed it, it really infuriated people," said Kenneth MacDonald, a former senior Homeland Security official who helped establish the multi-agency coordination center at the heart of the National Counterproliferation Initiative.

"They'd spent months or years on these cases and the decisions were made with no review of what the implications were," said MacDonald, who retired in 2013 but keeps in contact with agents as co-principal investigator at the DHS-affiliated Institute for Security Policy at Northeastern University. "There was absolutely no consultation."

A SYSTEM IN LIMBO

In a series of interviews, senior officials from the Obama White House and Justice and State Departments said the prisoner swap was a bargain for the U.S., given the release of Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian, former Marine Amir Hekmati and three others. Iran also promised cooperation on the case of former FBI agent Robert Levinson, who had disappeared in Iran nearly a decade earlier and was believed to be either imprisoned or dead.

Those senior officials acknowledged that all but a handful of people were kept in the dark, but said top representatives of the Justice Department and FBI helped vet the 21 Iranian proliferators and that then-Attorney General Loretta Lynch herself participated in blocking some other individuals demanded by Tehran from inclusion in potential prisoner trades.

"The condition was that they not be engaged in anything remotely attached to violence or proliferation activities," said one senior Obama administration official familiar with the swap negotiations. "And none of them were in any stage where they were providing assistance to the [Tehran] government."

That may be true for the seven men granted clemency in the United States, but it certainly wasn't the case for the 14 fugitives.

"These were people under active investigation, who we wanted very badly because they were operating at such a high level that they could help us begin to find out what was happening inside the black box of how Iran's procurement networks really operate," said Aaron Arnold, a former intelligence analyst at CPC2, the FBI's special Counterproliferation Center unit dedicated to thwarting Iranian nuclear and weapons smuggling. "Without that kind of strategic

insight, it leaves our analysts, but more importantly, our policy-makers just guessing at what Iran is up to and how to stop it."

Fifteen months later, the fallout from the nuclear deal and prisoner swap — and questions about the events leading up to them — continue to reverberate through the Justice Department and the specialized units at the FBI, Department of Homeland Security and Commerce Department created to neutralize the threat posed by Iran's nuclear and military ambitions.

The National Counterproliferation Initiative, created with much fanfare a decade ago, has suffered greatly, many participants said, even as they acknowledged that metrics are hard to come by. Much of the work is done in secret, and in long-range efforts that can't be publicly disclosed, much less measured in annual arrest or conviction statistics.

But key enforcement efforts are in limbo as the result of stalled or stymied investigations and prosecutions, and the trail of some high-value targets has gone cold, numerous participants said.

At least six times in the run-up to the nuclear deal, federal investigators scrambled to get Justice and State Department approval to lure top Iranian targets into traveling internationally in order to arrest them, according to one top Obama administration Justice Department official and other participants. But the requests weren't approved and the targets vanished, depriving the U.S. of some of its best opportunities to gain insight into the workings of Tehran's nuclear, missile and military programs, the sources said.

"We would say, 'We have this opportunity and if we don't do it now, we'll never have the opportunity ever again,'" the recently departed Justice Department official recalls. But, he added, "There were periods of time where State Department cooperation was necessary but not forthcoming."

Obama Secretary of State John Kerry declined to comment through a former senior State Department official, who said certain requests might have been delayed temporarily because they came at particularly sensitive times in the negotiations, but only with the concurrence of the White House and Justice Department.

But even now, many experienced agents and prosecutors say they are reluctant to pursue counterproliferation cases for fear that they won't go anywhere. They say they have also received no

helpful guidance on what they can — and cannot — investigate going forward given the complicated parameters of the Iran deal and lifting of nuclear sanctions. Some said they are biding their time to see how hard-liners in the new administration, including Trump himself, deal with Iran.

But others have grown so frustrated that they have moved on from the counterproliferation effort, taking with them decades of investigative experience and relationships cultivated with other government agencies and cooperating U.S. companies, a number of current and former officials said.

And critical momentum has been lost, many say, as the 10-year anniversary of the initiative in October approaches.

"This has erased literally years — many years — of hard work, and important cases that can be used to build toward other cases and even bigger players in Iran's nuclear and conventional weapons programs," said former Justice Department counterproliferation prosecutor David Locke Hall, adding that the swap demolished the deterrent effect that the arrests and convictions may have had. "Even though these men's crimes posed a direct threat to U.S. national security, the [Obama] administration has essentially told them their efforts have produced nothing more than political capital that can be traded away when politically expedient."

One senior Obama administration official who served at the White House and DHS disagreed, saying much of the intelligence about Iranian networks remains usable even though the 21 cases were vacated, and that counterproliferation agents are a resilient bunch who will continue to do their jobs.

When asked whether the counterproliferation effort has struggled, one current Justice Department spokesman said no and quipped, "We are still in the export violation prosecuting business."

That may be the case, said David Albright of the Institute for Science and International Security, a physicist and former weapons inspector whose decades of scientific research into Iran's secret nuclear weapons program brings him into regular close contact with federal authorities.

But like others involved in ongoing U.S. counterproliferation efforts, Albright said he witnessed many instances since late 2014 in which important investigations and prosecutions were hindered.

Albright, who serves as an expert witness in Justice Department Iran trafficking prosecutions, added that federal agents have told him of numerous cases of "lure memos" and other requests never approved by the State Department.

"You can't keep turning these down and expecting them to want to keep doing this," said Albright, who added that efforts to lure suspects to countries where they can be arrested are essential in getting beyond the lower rungs of middlemen for Iran. He said he could not disclose specific details, but said, "The amount of rejections has risen to the level where people were worried that it would kill the counterproliferation effort."

"They had wanted all of these things prosecuted, they were on a roll, they were freaking out the Iranians and then they were told, boom, stop," Albright said of the Obama administration's counterproliferation efforts. "And it's hard to get them back again. We are shooting ourselves in the foot, destroying the infrastructure that we created to enforce the laws against the Iranians."

The repercussions from the prisoner swap are especially strong in Boston, where authorities had worked for years to build the case against Jamili, the suspected Iranian nuclear procurement agent, and his China-based associate Sihai Cheng.

The two were secretly indicted in 2013 along with two Iranian companies, and Cheng pleaded guilty in mid-December 2015 to four criminal counts. He acknowledged conspiring with Jamili to knowingly provide more than 1,000 high-tech components known as pressure transducers to Iran, which authorities say advanced its nuclear weapons capabilities.

Less than a month later, though, as the prisoner swap unfolded, Boston prosecutors got orders from Washington to file court papers vacating the charges against Jamili and dropping the Interpol arrest warrant for him.

It wasn't until later that the case agents and prosecutors learned that the Iranian negotiators had specifically demanded that Jamili be included in the swap, said Arnold, the former analyst at the FBI's Counterproliferation Center Iran unit, where he headed a financial intelligence team tracking the money flows of the Iranian networks.

A GLOBAL CAT AND MOUSE GAME

By the time of the nuclear deal and prisoner swap, the U.S. government

had spent 35 years in pursuit of Iran's ever more sophisticated web of smugglers, traffickers, transport operatives and procurement agents.

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter declared that Iran constituted an unusual and extraordinary threat to U.S. security after Islamic revolutionaries overran the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and took hostage 52 Americans. Tehran began calling the United States "the Great Satan" and vowed its destruction, in part by using proxy forces like Hezbollah.

A raft of economic sanctions against Iran and Iranian entities were put in place, followed by other restrictions on U.S. parts and technology that Tehran needed for military or other restricted applications, including its squadrons of F-class fighter jets that Washington sold it during friendlier times. Its ambitious ballistic missile program became a grave concern over the years, especially when it became apparent that Tehran was using U.S. commodities to engineer intercontinental versions that could reach the United States, and to top them with nuclear, conventional or even chemical and biological weapons.

And as Iran's suspected nuclear weapons program ramped up, so did the U.S. effort to stop it.

Overseas, U.S. intelligence operatives shadowed Iranian procurement agents, cultivated informants and used cyberweapons to sabotage Iran's clandestine program. The U.S. military tried to interdict illicit shipments headed for Tehran. The Treasury Department issued endless rounds of targeted sanctions, but each time it restricted access to global markets for suspect individuals and companies, Tehran would simply create new ones. And successive administrations tried the diplomatic route to slow or stop Iranian proliferation, including Tehran's efforts to share weapons and research with other enemies of the United States, without success.

In response, federal law enforcement agents and prosecutors were deployed to shut down the Iranian procurement networks and dam the rivers of U.S. parts and technology illicitly flowing to Iran in violation of export control laws.

That proved virtually impossible, given the hundreds of trading, shipping and transport companies Iran employed, and the complex payment schemes and often unwitting procurement agents it used to get the products via other countries with lax export controls.

Meanwhile, since at least 1982, the Government Accountability Office began issuing stinging reports about how the lack of coordination and information-sharing among U.S. agencies severely hampered efforts to bring criminal cases against traffickers.

After the 9/11 attacks, those turf battles intensified. The cases often took years to investigate, and federal agents from two or even three agencies would sometimes discover they were conducting international undercover operations against the same target, a top former Homeland Security official recalls.

Securing convictions from American juries was also a huge challenge given the complex nature of the cases, especially when the procurement networks were buying so-called dual-use components that also could be used for less nefarious purposes.

Two post-9/11 cases exposed gaping holes in the global counterproliferation safety net. In the United States, Israeli-born trafficker Asher Karni was arrested for illegally shipping suspected U.S. nuclear components to Pakistan for its atomic bomb arsenal. And in Pakistan, metallurgist Abdul Qadeer Khan was caught selling his country's nuclear capability to Iran, Libya and North Korea.

At left, an Iranian security employee walks in a part of the uranium conversion facility just outside the city of Isfahan, Iran, in 2005. At right, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visits the Natanz uranium enrichment facilities on April 8, 2008. Ahmadinejad announced on Iranian state television during the visit that Iran had begun the installation of some 6,000 new centrifuges, adding to the 3,000 centrifuges already at the facility. | Getty

Both cases ratcheted up Washington's fears that the vast underground of WMD trafficking rings could sell their wares to Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

In 2007, the Bush administration responded by establishing the National Counterproliferation Initiative, charging the Justice Department with coordinating and expanding U.S. efforts to dismantle the procurement networks.

Task forces were established around the country, with special training for prosecutors and agents in how to collectively build cases that would not only put front-line traffickers in prison, but also map the illicit networks and target their leadership.

From the outset, Iran cases were front and center, especially in cities like San Diego, Houston and New York with large military, industrial or technology sectors. Boston, in particular, seemed a favorite of the Iranian networks.

Soon, the multi-agency teams were homing in on key players in Iran's nuclear and missile programs and another network procuring the IED components that Tehran's fearsome Revolutionary Guard used to assist Iraqi insurgents killing American troops in Iraq.

An early high-value target was Amin Ravan, who by 2008 was working with a Singapore firm on behalf of the Aerospace Industries Organization, described by a secret State Department cable that year as "the umbrella organization and key procurement center for all Iranian industries responsible for developing and manufacturing missiles."

Another was Behrouz Dolatzadeh, the suspected assault weapons buyer for Tehran. Authorities say he had been active as far back as 1995 in illegal arms smuggling and other illegal activities in connection with a sprawling business empire linked to Iran's hard-line leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

By 2011, the Justice-led task forces had developed so many promising leads that the FBI, Commerce and Homeland Security Department had created special units to better coordinate efforts. Together, they also improved liaisons with overseas law enforcement agencies instrumental in interdicting shipments headed for Iran.

And working with U.S. intelligence agencies and the State Department, the task forces successfully lured several key Iranian operatives out of Tehran and China for capture elsewhere, including two who would end up on Obama's prisoner swap list.

Dolatzadeh was indicted under seal in Arizona in February 2012, lured to the Czech Republic to inspect weapons en route to Iran, and arrested. And Ravan, already linked to the IED network, was secretly indicted in Washington in November 2012 and captured soon after in Malaysia.

And after a three-year undercover investigation, U.S. authorities lured a major Iranian proliferator named Parviz Khaki to the Philippines in May 2012 and arrested him on charges of conspiring to smuggle nuclear-related U.S. equipment to Iran.

"By dismantling this complex conspiracy ... we have disrupted a significant threat to national

security," John Morton, then-director of DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said at the time.

All three investigations provided U.S. officials with unprecedented insight into Iran's secret procurement efforts, current and former task force members said. But Dolatzadeh and Ravan were released by courts overseas, and Khaki died in custody, before the U.S. could extradite them.

The counterproliferation teams also enlisted the help of American companies, providing them with Iran's massive shopping list of needed items and hotlines to call when they got a nibble.

"It took a long time to mature, but by 2013 to 2014, it became very evident that we were getting a lot of great leads," recalls Randall Coleman, who as assistant FBI director oversaw the bureau's fledgling Counterproliferation Center and special coordinators in all 56 field offices.

"We were very aggressive, and as a result of that, our caseload went up about 500 percent," Coleman said. "It really exploded. We were rocking and rolling."

One of the most promising cases was in Boston, where federal agents were deep into their investigation of the illicit flow of parts to Iran from a Massachusetts firm, MKS Instruments, and its Shanghai subsidiary.

With help from MKS, which was not suspected of wrongdoing, agents initially focused on Cheng and gathered evidence that he had been indirectly supplying Iran with components with nuclear applications for years. The trail led to Eyvaz Technic Manufacturing, an Iranian company designated by European authorities as an entity involved in developing and procuring parts for Iran's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

"Time is important, not only for you, for me, for your end user, but also for your nation," Cheng wrote in a 2010 instant message to a suspected Iranian accomplice. "I personally believe the war will break out in 2 years and that will be the start of World War Three."

But the agents' curiosity was also piqued by another message from back in 2007, in which the Iranian accomplice, Seyed Jamili, asked Cheng for thousands of pressure transducers, for "a very big project and secret one."

The project, authorities determined, was Iran's clandestine uranium nuclear enrichment facilities at Natanz and Fordow, where the

transducers helped run thousands of gas centrifuge cascades to reach weapons-grade capability. There was even a photo of then-president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad touring Natanz, with the centrifuges — and MKS transducers clearly visible — in the background.

International U.S. arrest warrants were secretly issued for the two men, and authorities nabbed Cheng when he traveled to London to watch a soccer match in February 2014. After he was extradited and brought to Boston that December, authorities began to realize that Jamili was a far more important cog in Iran's proliferation network than they had suspected.

It was Jamili who had recruited Cheng with the promise of big and easy money, they determined, and who had been using his Iranian import-export firm as cover for personally recruiting other procurement agents on trips to China and possibly other countries.

Around that same time, negotiations over a comprehensive nuclear deal with Iran were heating up, and so were the top-secret prisoner swap talks on the sidelines of them.

AN OPERATIONAL SLOWDOWN

By the winter of 2014, federal agents and prosecutors began to detect waning support at the higher rungs of the Obama administration for their counterproliferation efforts against Iran, according to numerous officials involved. Also, they said, Justice Department management — and an interagency Iran working group — suddenly were scrutinizing Iran cases more closely, asking a lot more questions and holding up requests and approvals that in the past had been routine.

No specific guidance or order was given, some said, but the message was clear.

"They didn't want to have cases just popping up in the workup to the agreement or shortly after the agreement. The administration would not look good if there were [cases documenting] these acquisition attempts. And the Iranians kept doing it," MacDonald, the former senior Homeland Security official, said of Tehran's illegal procurement efforts.

"They were never told no, just to wait," MacDonald said of the agents. "It was a common theme among the people working these cases. The official response was that nothing had changed, that if you brought the case forward, it would be worked. But unofficially, that was just not the case."

Some of the cases involved significant investigations into

nuclear and missile proliferation that required State Department approval, including visas to lure suspects to the U.S. for arrest, said MacDonald, who had also served on the White House Task Force on Export Control Reform. "I've been told that the highest levels of the State Department weren't processing those, and the cases couldn't move forward."

A former senior State Department official said that in most cases, State Department and White House could only provide nonbinding guidance on how ongoing law enforcement operations might affect the sensitive negotiations. Ultimately, he said, the Justice Department was responsible for pushing back and protecting the integrity of its investigations and prosecutions.

And while it's possible that federal law enforcement officials missed opportunities as a result of State Department delays, "I am not aware of a single case where they lost out on some key arrest or information, or some proliferation activity was allowed to continue," the former senior State Department official said, adding that some lures and extraditions were approved "until the very end of our tenure."

Clockwise from upper left: A U.S. plane sits on the tarmac of Geneva's airport Jan. 17, 2016, awaiting the arrival of some of the Americans freed by Iran in a prisoner swap with the United States. The prisoners were former Marine Amir Hekmati, Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian, Idaho pastor Saeed Abedini, private investigator and retired FBI and DEA agent Robert Levinson, Massachusetts student Matthew Trevithick and Nosratollah Khosravi-Roodsari (not pictured). | AP and Getty Photos

Richard Nephew, a former top Iran sanctions official at the State Department and National Security Council, said any delays were "much more a case of managing the diplomatic initiative than letting the bad guys get away with stuff. If we found out in the NSC that something involved active law enforcement activity, then we were advised to stay the hell away from it."

A top Obama Justice Department official rejected the notion that the State Department didn't undermine important cases. He said prosecutors and investigators sometimes acceded to requests for delays they believed to be reasonable. But they became infuriated at times, he said, especially when opportunities to lure and arrest key Iranian

proliferators were lost due to delay or outright rejection by State.

"The impediment was not the leadership of DOJ but the other agencies that DOJ has to work with to bring these cases successfully," the Obama Justice official said. "They can kibosh it, they can pocket veto it, they can tell us no, they can punt it down a couple of steps."

Justice Department officials demanded "high-level conversations" with the State Department and White House, but "not a whole lot" changed, the Obama Justice official said. "Did it fix the issue? I don't think it did. I remember people up and down at DOJ being frustrated with the inability to move things."

A senior former federal law enforcement official involved in counterproliferation efforts agreed, saying the FBI was especially impacted. "Did some of these other agencies' actions ... undermine what we were trying to accomplish in terms of the Iran network in the U.S.? Yes. But you are treading into waters where people don't like what you are doing because it affects other things they are trying to do, diplomatically and politically."

Ultimately, the dysfunction created by the slowdown spread far beyond the enforcement agencies and damaged relationships with partners in private industry and foreign governments, former DHS official MacDonald and others said.

By early 2015, the Obama administration's oft-publicized desire for securing an Iran deal "was politicizing all of the ongoing investigations," Arnold said. He visited his former CPC Iran Unit colleagues that August while briefing Treasury and FBI officials on the Iran deal, reached a month earlier, as a counterproliferation expert at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

"There was a fear that as negotiations went on, the White House wouldn't want to get caught in a flap" created by a high-profile arrest or criminal case, Arnold said.

For agents and prosecutors, the headlines such an incident would create would antagonize not only their superiors but also a White House intent on proving to Tehran that it was committed to reaching an accord. On the flip side, it could also provide ammunition to the proposed deal's many critics in Congress and elsewhere, who were claiming that Iran was aggressively continuing its clandestine procurement efforts even as it pledged good behavior.

But agents and prosecutors had an even more powerful reason to throttle back on Iran proliferation

cases, according to Arnold and others.

Despite repeated requests, many were not given guidance or reassurances that the nuclear deal being negotiated in secret wouldn't render unprosecutable new and ongoing cases, especially high-priority ones against nuclear traffickers, Arnold said. So agents had no confidence that their work would bear fruit.

"It was absolutely insane," Arnold said. "People didn't know what to do."

"From the summer of 2015 on, there was a serious slowdown" as many counterproliferation officials shut down prosecutions and investigations voluntarily, Arnold said. "During that time, CPC wasn't as aggressive as it should have been."

The senior Obama administration official acknowledged that the twin sets of negotiations influenced the overall U.S. counterproliferation effort against Iran, especially the timing of individual investigations, prosecutions and international efforts to bring suspects to justice.

Such competing equities are unavoidable when high-level matters of diplomacy and geopolitics are under consideration, the official said. At those times, the White House must be guided by broader policy objectives, in this case de-escalating conflict with Iran, curbing its nuclear weapons program and freeing at least four American prisoners.

"The White House wouldn't be getting involved in saying yea or nay to particular arrests or cases or the like" that are the purview of the Justice Department, the administration official said. "It was not uncommon, though, that before we were going to undertake a law enforcement action that we thought would have foreign policy implications, we would alert folks at the White House so that there could be appropriate notice given to a foreign government. That happens."

The former official also acknowledged the complaints by agents and prosecutors about cases being derailed but said they were unavoidable, and for the greater good.

"It's entirely possible that during the pendency of the negotiations, that folks who were doing their jobs, doing the investigations and bringing cases, having no understanding of and insight into the other process, were frustrated because they don't feel like their stuff is moving forward," said the Obama official. "Or they were not getting answers, because there are

these entirely appropriate discussions happening on the policy side.

"That doesn't strike me as being, a, unusual or, b, wrong," the official added. "But I completely understand why it's frustrating."

The Justice Department refused repeated requests to make available for interviews anyone related to the counterproliferation effort since the Iran deal, or to provide information about its role in the negotiations.

But in a statement to POLITICO, the Justice Department said the negotiations "did not affect the Department's determination to investigate and charge worthy cases" and that it continued to "investigate, charge, and prosecute viable criminal cases ... throughout negotiations of the JCPOA," the formal term for the Iran deal. The Justice Department said it filed federal charges against 90 individuals and entities for violations of export controls and sanctions implicating Iran between 2014 and 2016, many under seal. It did not provide information about cases under seal for those or other years, making it impossible to place those numbers in the proper context.

Also, some of those cases involve the 21 Iranians let go in the swap. And because numerous individuals and entities often are charged in a single case, the statistics suggest a slowdown in counterproliferation efforts, according to current and former investigators and a POLITICO review of DOJ cases.

The timing of arrests, prosecutions and other investigative activities "may be informed by a variety of factors, including, especially in the national security context, collateral foreign policy consequences and impacts on American lives," the Justice Department said. "Once an individual is charged, the Department works to ensure that the defendant, whether located in the U.S. or abroad, is held accountable. In seeking to apprehend defendants located abroad, however, we need assistance from other departments, agencies, and countries, and sometimes we cannot accomplish an arrest without it."

Senior Obama administration officials also said the negotiations over the nuclear deal and, even more so the prisoner swap, required such extraordinary secrecy that only a tiny number of people were involved.

But as the nation's top law enforcement official — and as a participant in the negotiations — Lynch failed in her responsibility as

attorney general to protect the integrity of the Justice Department's investigations and prosecutions from any political interference, some current and former officials believe.

Lynch, through an aide, declined to comment.

Trump's attorney general, Jeff Sessions, raised the issue of Justice Department independence in 2015, when as a senator he asked incoming Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates about whether she knew that she had "the responsibility to say no to the president if he asks for something that's improper?"

Earlier this year, this issue arose again when Trump fired then-Acting Attorney General Yates for doing just that and refusing to defend his executive order on immigration. By doing so, Trump had "placed the independence of the Justice Department at stake," said Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.). "The attorney general is the people's attorney, not the president's attorney."

Obama spokesman Kevin Lewis also emphasized the importance of such a firewall recently when addressing Trump's claim that Obama had ordered wiretaps of him or his campaign. "A cardinal rule of the Obama administration was that no White House official ever interfered with any independent investigation led by the Department of Justice," Lewis said.

Many front-line current and former authorities disagree, and say the Iran deal and prisoner swap is a glaring example of that.

"A lot of people were furious; they had cases in the pipeline for months, in some cases years, and then, all of a sudden, they were gone — all because they were trying to sell the nuke deal," a former Department of Commerce counterproliferation agent said. "Things fell apart after that. There are some really good cases out there and they are not going forward. They just let them die on the vine."

A MASTERMIND EMERGES

Top Obama administration officials insist that the nuclear deal does not impede any of the broader U.S. efforts to go after Iran's vast nuclear, missile and conventional weapons procurement efforts. Even so, many participants said the way forward is still sufficiently unclear that they can't, or won't, proceed.

Over the past year, the system has kicked back into gear, with some new cases filed and movement in existing ones. Some, however, involve activity dating to 2008,

including the prosecution of some of Ravan's suspected associates in the Iraq IED case. Privately, some prosecutors and investigators are hopeful that the Trump administration's more hard-line approach to Tehran will mean more support for their efforts.

Like many others, though, Albright said he is concerned that the counterproliferation effort has suffered significant and lasting damage, even if much of it involves classified efforts that may never become public.

"How much damage was done to the law enforcement side of this from us pulling back from these prosecutions?" he asked. "We have to pick up the pieces."

Albright said that is especially the case in Boston, where he testified for the government against Cheng.

A few weeks after the prisoner swap, a judge sentenced Cheng to nine years in federal prison, even more than the prosecutors asked for, for his role in the conspiracy.

Cheng's lawyer, Stephen Weymouth, accused federal prosecutors of

unfair treatment, saying they threw the book at his client, a relatively small fish, while dropping all charges against the "mastermind," Jamili.

Since the swap, federal authorities have learned more about Jamili, including intelligence tying him directly to Mostafa Ahmadi-Roshan, a top Iranian nuclear official who supervised a key "commercial affairs" initiative at the Natanz uranium enrichment facility, according to officials familiar with the case. Authorities believe Jamili was on the phone with Ahmadi-Roshan on Jan. 11, 2012, when unknown assailants on a motorbike killed him by attaching a bomb to his car. Tehran accused Israel's Mossad in the attack.

But the federal agents' efforts to pursue such leads, even in the U.S., have been complicated by the general uncertainty hanging over the broader counterproliferation effort, according to Arnold, the former FBI analyst.

At left, young supporters of Lebanon's militant Shiite Hezbollah movement carry portraits March 18, 2017, of the founder of Iran's

Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as they march in the southern Lebanese town of Kfar Hatta during the funeral of a Hezbollah fighter. At right, an S-200 surface-to-air missile is driven past Iranian military commanders Sept. 22, 2015, during the annual military parade in Tehran marking the anniversary of the start of Iran's 1980-1988 war with Iraq. | Getty

"Part of the frustration is that there is strong evidence Iran is still conducting illegal procurement operations and the FBI can't really go forward with these cases," said Arnold, who has been closely following the Jamili-Cheng case as part of a Harvard research project into nuclear proliferation networks.

That frustration is especially acute when it comes to Jamili and the 13 other fugitives. When dropping the charges, the Justice Department said it was doing so in large part because it was unlikely that the U.S. would ever be successful in capturing or extraditing them anyway.

Some federal officials familiar with the cases scoffed at that, noting that they have lured many Iranians to places where they could be arrested, and that others were tripped up by sealed Interpol warrants while traveling. In Jamili's case, said one, "he has traveled so we know there's a chance we could get him."

Despite decades of intensive investigations, Arnold said, U.S. officials still have a "major air gap" when it comes to understanding the intermediaries like Jamili involved in the Iranian networks — who are between foot soldiers like Cheng and government officials running the nuclear and weapons programs.

"All of a sudden, we're no longer playing whack-a-mole, and we suddenly have this key player who is directly involved and has insider knowledge as to how this whole process works," he said. "So to see him being traded away is frustrating."

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Science Monitor

4-5 minutes

April 23, 2017 —At the heart of many Middle East conflicts lies a fierce rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The two compete for influence as countries, as oil giants, and, most of all, as self-proclaimed guardians of Islam. Yet over the past year, each has also entered a new kind of rivalry, one that is peaceful, perhaps even healthy in possibly setting a model. Both now have leaders eager to win over young people with fundamental reform.

For Saudis, that leader is Mohammed bin Salman, the deputy crown prince who is barely over 30. He wields much of the power in the ruling monarchy and last year set out a strategy called "Vision 2030." Among other reforms, the plan calls for a more open society and big investments in a non-oil economy that emphasizes innovation, mining, and tourism

Editorial : A Mideast rivalry worth watching

The Christian

(such as building a Six Flags theme park and perhaps a "museum of ice cream").

For Iranians, the leader is Prime Minister Hassan Rouhani, elected as a reformer in 2013 and now competing to be reelected in a May 19 election that is tightly controlled by the ruling Muslim clerics. He has slightly improved the economy and struck a nuclear deal with the West that weakens sanctions on Iran. In December, he issued a "Charter of Citizens' Rights" that emphasizes freedom of speech and assembly, a right to access information, and a clean environment. In a speech last month, Mr. Rouhani said, "Are not the people the owners of this country? Shouldn't the people be supervising the government...?"

In both Iran and Saudi Arabia, more than 60 percent of the population is under 30 years old. This youth bulge is restless from high unemployment and a widening exposure to foreign culture. Young people are eager to challenge traditional authority and even interpret religion in their own way.

As historian and journalist Christopher de Bellaigue writes in a new book, "The Islamic Enlightenment: The Modern Struggle Between Faith and Reason," ideas about the value of the individual, rule of law, and representative government "are now authentic features of Islamic thought and society."

Both Rouhani and Mohammed bin Salman are struggling against religious conservatives, who remain powerful either in government or in society. In Saudi Arabia, however, clerics who once monitored social behavior have been mostly subdued. Young people are being given access to live music concerts, some with female performers. In February, the country sponsored Comic-Con, a three-day festival about fictional heroes that saw a mixing of young men and women.

In his speech, Rouhani said the government has no "legitimate meaning" unless the people are "satisfied" with their leaders. "All people, regardless of their sex, religion, tribe, or political thought

must be equal before the courts and the law, and have the same rights," he said. Such words are a far cry from the current doctrine of an unelected Muslim ayatollah as supreme leader.

Since 2014, as world oil prices have fallen and Iran suffered from sanctions, each country has had to cut spending yet also appease a rising cohort of youth. Iran saw massive protests in 2009 over election fraud while Saudis saw some unrest during the 2011 Arab Spring. Reformist leaders are now more popular. And among each country's hardline factions, they are more tolerated in hopes of fending off unrest.

Most of all, young people are watching the reform efforts in each other's country. Whichever country begins to make the reform ideas real — and that is still uncertain — can claim a new kind of leadership of ideas among Muslims. Perhaps that will then lessen their rivalry with weapons in Middle East conflicts.



5-6 minutes

Editorial : Asking for Trouble on Iran

The Editorial Board

Doug Chayka

As with other foreign policy issues, the Trump administration's approach to Iran has been full of mixed messages. Yet amid the

confusion, there has been an ominous tendency to demonize Iran and misrepresent the threat it presents. This could lead to an unnecessary and risky confrontation.

The administration's various and conflicting responses to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal are a case in point. The deal, one of the Obama administration's major triumphs, requires Iran to curb its nuclear

activities in return for a lifting of economic sanctions. During the campaign, President Trump called it “one of the worst deals I’ve ever seen” and promised to tear it up or renegotiate it if he won the election. Last week, however, a letter from Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to the House speaker, Paul Ryan, signaled Mr. Trump’s intention to stick to the deal.

The letter certified that Iran was complying with the agreement, negotiated by five world powers in addition to the United States and Iran. The International Atomic Energy Agency, which monitors the agreement with on-site inspectors and advanced technology, reached the same conclusion in its most recent report.

However, in the letter, Mr. Tillerson also stressed that “Iran remains a leading state sponsor of terror” and said the administration was reviewing whether suspending sanctions continues to advance American interests. Further jumbling the administration’s views, Mr. Tillerson told reporters on Wednesday that the deal “fails to achieve the objective of a non-nuclear Iran” and “only delays their goal of becoming

a nuclear state.” On Thursday, Mr. Trump accused Iran of not fulfilling “the spirit” of the deal. Yet on Friday, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis insisted during a visit to Israel that the deal “still stands” and that Iran “appears to be living up to their part.” That same day, Mr. Trump told The Associated Press that “it’s possible that we won’t” stay in the nuclear deal, The A.P. reported on Sunday.

Such sequential confusions are nothing new for Mr. Trump’s headspinning positions on important national security issues. Among those heads spinning are those belonging to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and Republicans and Democrats who opposed the deal and thought they had a firm friend in Mr. Trump.

One possible reason Mr. Trump has muted his criticism is that the deal has clearly curtailed Iran’s nuclear program. It sharply limits the amount of uranium Iran is permitted to enrich and imposes checks that will allow the international community to know if there is cheating. Further, if America reneges on the deal, it will rightly bear the blame for its collapse and other world powers will be furious.

What may concern Mr. Trump when he says that Iran is not fulfilling the “spirit” of the deal is Tehran’s destabilizing role in the Mideast. The agreement was intended to resolve the most dangerous threat — preventing Iran from getting a bomb. But it did not and probably could not contain Iran’s meddling in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen, its support for extremists and its capacity to fan regional tensions.

These are legitimate concerns. But Iran is not the only nation roiling the region. And unlike his predecessor, Mr. Obama, who argued that Iran, a Shiite Muslim country, and the Sunni Arab states led by Saudi Arabia must find a way to co-exist, Mr. Trump seems to embrace the Saudi view that Iran should be portrayed in the harshest terms possible. For instance, the United States ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, pushed the Security Council on Thursday to focus on the “illegal and dangerous behavior” by the “chief culprit” of regional turmoil, Iran, and its ally Hezbollah.

For his part, Mr. Tillerson, in talking to reporters, compared Iran to North Korea, which unlike Iran has produced nuclear weapons, and

said that its “provocative actions threaten the United States, the region and the world” and that the administration “has no intention of passing the buck to a future administration.”

Where exactly is Mr. Trump going with this? His comments echo statements used by past presidents when they tried to build a case for military action, as, for instance, against Iraq. This is not the time for such action. Mr. Trump would better serve himself and global stability by developing a strategy that seeks to counter Iran’s destabilizing behavior, but also seeks cooperation where possible.

For that, the administration will have to regularly converse with the Iranian government, something that appears not to have happened, even to try to win the release of the businessman Siamak Namazi, and his father, Baquer Namazi, two Iranian-Americans who were sentenced to 10 years in prison by Iran on trumped-up spying charges. To get them out, reduce regional tensions and keep the nuclear deal on track, working with the Iranians is a much more logical choice than bullying them.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Ahmari : Erdogan’s American Enemies List

Sohrab Ahmari

Updated April 23, 2017 5:26 p.m. ET

In 2010, Bernard Lewis predicted that Iran and Turkey would trade places by the end of the decade. Iranians would abandon political Islam for secular nationalism, the great Princeton Orientalist said, even as the Turks relinquish their secular, Western-looking republic for some form of Islamist rule.

Today the Iranian transformation is at an embryonic stage. But the Turkish one is well under way, and liberal and secular-minded Turks are mostly powerless to stop it.

Turkish strongman Recep Tayyip Erdogan last week asked voters to ratify his authoritarian ambitions and his existing gains from a power grab going back to 2008. A majority agreed, though the margin was thin given what observers with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe delicately described as an “uneven playing field” that tilted in Mr. Erdogan’s favor.

Fifty-one percent is a lame prize indeed for a purged bureaucracy, a muzzled press and a jailed opposition. Add an election-day

switcheroo on the rules governing ballot verification, which the opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) says may have affected as many as 2.5 million votes, and the legitimacy of the plebiscite is in jeopardy. There would be a redo—if Mr. Erdogan weren’t the type of man who grows more shameless when shamed.

The CHP has vowed to mount a legal challenge, but the party faces long odds against once-independent institutions now packed with Erdogan loyalists. The likely outcome is that the result will stand, marking a major milestone on Turkey’s path to Iranization.

Yes, you can still legally drink alcohol in Turkey, the hijab isn’t mandatory for women and you can still access this newspaper’s website on the Turkish internet. Let’s hope Turkey’s secular forces can defend their liberties against encroachments by Mr. Erdogan and his Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP). But restrictions on personal freedom aren’t the only mark of ideological dictatorships like Iran’s, and Ankara’s behavior of late bears many of the other indicia.

An important one is the application of authoritarian methods far outside their borders, against their own subjects abroad as well as citizens

of free societies. The Ayatollah Khomeini’s 1989 fatwa against the British novelist Salman Rushdie was the classic case, and Mr. Erdogan is increasingly pursuing similar vendettas against his Western critics and enemies (real and perceived).

Over the referendum weekend, following a complaint by a group of Turkish lawyers, the Istanbul prosecutor’s office announced an investigation into 17 U.S.-based individuals the lawyers say are allies of Fetullah Gülen, the exiled Islamist imam and erstwhile AKP handmaiden. Ankara accuses Mr. Gülen of masterminding an attempted coup in July.

Among these alleged Gülen allies are Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, former CIA director John Brennan and Preet Bharara, the former top federal prosecutor in the Southern District of New York.

Then there is Michael Rubin, an analyst with the right-leaning American Enterprise Institute and a contributor to these pages. A tough critic of Mr. Erdogan, Mr. Rubin has argued—correctly—that the AKP’s authoritarian drive risks destabilizing the country. Mr. Rubin also predicted the July putsch. The notion that he’s a crypto-Gülenist would be laughable but for the fact

that it reveals the depth of paranoia within AKP circles.

“I’ve been a critic of Gülen when he worked hand in glove with Erdogan,” Mr. Rubin said in a phone interview Tuesday. Turkish propagandists, the Washington-based analyst says, accuse him of “Islamophobia” even as they also claim that he colludes with an Islamist cleric.

The aim of such legal and media harassment is to deter Mr. Rubin from visiting Turkey and to chill anti-Erdogan speech in the West. Ankara also probably hopes Turkish insiders and dissidents will stop feeding Mr. Rubin information.

The “investigation” is of a piece with Ankara’s attempt last year to have a German comedian prosecuted—in Germany—for delivering an obscene satirical poem about Mr. Erdogan on television. A spokesman for the Turkish presidency didn’t respond to a request for comment.

“Erdogan has eviscerated the press inside Turkey but it frustrates him that he can’t control people outside,” Mr. Rubin says. Mr. Erdogan imagines that democratic leaders such as President Trump and Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel wield as much power in the U.S. and Germany, respectively, as

he does in Turkey. He expects Mr. Trump and Mrs. Merkel to silence writers such as Mr. Rubin as a matter of diplomatic courtesy.

Western leaders should correct the Turk's misapprehension. The domestic opposition is cornered, but the referendum showed that half or more of Turkish society will never

accept Mr. Erdogan as an elected sultan. Turkey is still linked to NATO and the West in a way that Iran never was. That's all the more reason for Turkey's Western allies

to speak up for Mr. Erdogan's victims and help arrest, if not reverse, Turkey's transformation into another closed society like the one next door.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

11-13 minutes

U.S. Citizen Arrested in North Korea

Jonathan Cheng

Updated April 23, 2017 5:18 p.m. ET

SEOUL—North Korea has arrested a U.S. citizen in Pyongyang, people familiar with the matter said, adding another potential flashpoint with the U.S. at a time of increasingly heated rhetoric.

The arrested man, a Korean-American professor named Tony Kim, had been teaching at a university in Pyongyang set up by a Korean-American Christian businessman, two people familiar with the matter said.

Mr. Kim is the third known U.S. citizen to be detained by North Korea in recent months. Pyongyang last year sentenced Otto Warmbier, a University of Virginia undergraduate, and Kim Dong-chul, a Korean-American businessman, to terms of 15 years and 10 years of hard labor, respectively.

A U.S. State Department spokesman on Sunday declined to comment on the case, citing privacy concerns, but said the department typically works with the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang when U.S. citizens are detained there.

On Sunday, U.S. President Donald Trump held telephone calls with President Xi Jinping of China and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, although White House officials didn't say what the leaders discussed.

Mr. Kim's arrest of comes at a time of heightened tensions between Pyongyang and Washington. During a trip to Seoul last week, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence stopped at the demilitarized zone that divides the Korean Peninsula and warned North Korea not to push Mr. Trump, citing recent unilateral strikes on Syria and Afghanistan.

"North Korea would do well not to test his resolve, or the strength of the armed forces of the United States in this region," Mr. Pence said.

The U.S. has also sent an aircraft carrier, the USS Carl Vinson, toward the Korean Peninsula. The Vinson was conducting joint exercises with Japan's navy in the Philippine Sea on Sunday, the U.S. said, and is due to arrive early this week.

North Korean authorities detained Mr. Kim, who also goes by the Korean name Kim Sang-duk, at Pyongyang airport on Saturday, as he was about to leave the country, the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology, where he had been teaching, said on Sunday.

South Korea's quasiofficial Yonhap News Agency, which first reported the arrest, said Mr. Kim was detained, citing unnamed sources and identifying Mr. Kim only by his surname.

The Pyongyang University of Science and Technology, known as PUST, was founded in 2010 by James Kim, a Korean-American businessman and Christian. He had earlier founded the Yanbian

University of Science and Technology in northeastern China, where Yonhap reported that Mr. Kim had taught in the past.

Both universities have made a practice of hiring predominantly Christian faculty.

Yonhap reported that Mr. Kim, the professor, was in his late 50s and had been involved in aid work in North Korea. It said he was in the country to discuss relief activities. The reason for his arrest was unknown, Yonhap reported.

"This detention is related to an investigation into matters that are not connected in any way with the work of PUST," the university said, declining to comment on anything Mr. Kim may have been alleged to have done that is separate from his teaching work.

A number of humanitarian groups with ties to the U.S. do aid work in North Korea. Many of them are associated with Christian organizations.

North Korea has arrested and sentenced a handful of U.S. citizens in recent years, including Kenneth Bae, a Korean-American missionary the state held for more than two years on charges of trying to overthrow the North Korean government. Mr. Bae was freed in November 2014 after a trip to Pyongyang by James Clapper, the U.S. director of national intelligence.

In the past, high-profile U.S. envoys have been dispatched to North Korea to secure the release of U.S. citizens. In 2009, former U.S.

President Bill Clinton traveled to North Korea and met with then-leader Kim Jong Il to secure the release of Laura Ling and Euna Lee, two journalists who had been detained for illegally entering the country.

Mr. Warmbier was arrested after allegedly trying to steal a political poster from a hotel where he was staying in January 2016. Mr. Warmbier, who was 21 years old at the time of his sentencing, made a tearful apology at a government-run news conference in Pyongyang before his sentencing.

Mr. Warmbier's parents, Fred and Cindy, appeared on Fox News this month to call on Mr. Trump to help bring their son home.

Less is known about Kim Dong-chul, a Virginia resident who was 62 years old when he was convicted in April 2016 on charges of spying and stealing state secrets.

A Korean-Canadian pastor, Lim Hyeon-soo, has been detained in North Korea since February 2015. He was accused of committing "state subversive plots and activities" and sentenced to life in prison with hard labor.

—Chun Han Wong in Beijing contributed to this article.

Write to Jonathan Cheng at jonathan.cheng@wsj.com

Appeared in the Apr. 24, 2017, print edition as 'Pyongyang Arrests American Citizen.'

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

COMMENTS

3 minutes

Editorial : North Korea's Latest American Hostage

April 23, 2017 6:39 p.m. ET 44

was teaching a class in international finance and management at the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology. The mere thought of such a class is puzzling since North Korea's "international finance" is smuggling. But Mr. Kim had taught at a sister school in China near the border with North Korea, and perhaps he thought he could spread some goodwill. Bad mistake.

In addition to Kim Sang-duk, the North is known to hold two other Americans. Otto Warmbier, a University of Virginia student who was on a tour of North Korea, was detained last year for allegedly trying to steal a propaganda poster.

He was convicted of subversion and sentenced to 15 years of hard labor. He hasn't been seen since March 2016. American businessman Kim Dong-chul was charged with spying last year and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Hostage politics is a hardy Korean perennial, perhaps because it always seems to yield some political or diplomatic benefit. Pyongyang recently detained Malaysian citizens and traded them to Kuala Lumpur in return for the North Koreans suspected of conspiring to assassinate Kim Jong Un's brother. The North has also traded Americans over the years for visits

by high-ranking U.S. officials, even former Presidents, who offer the regime some legitimacy and sometimes more tangible benefits.

That's the best reason for the Trump Administration not to engage in hostage negotiations. The U.S. warns Americans not to travel to North Korea, yet some still tempt fate by doing so. The U.S. can ask China to intercede for the imprisoned Americans on humanitarian grounds, but the U.S. also needs China's help against North Korea's nuclear missiles.

North Korea is a terrorist government that obeys none of the norms of international behavior. The

As global events go, one of the safest predictions is that North Korea would take another American hostage amid growing tensions over its nuclear program. Sure enough, the Kim Jong Un regime on Saturday arrested an American teacher as he waited to board a flight out of the country.

South Korean media identified the new hostage as Kim Sang-duk, who

only solution is regime change. But in the meantime, the U.S. should make clear that Americans who

travel to North Korea do so at their own risk.



Blechman : Make clear to Putin that cheating doesn't pay

Barry M. Blechman 6:03

a.m. ET April 24, 2017

5-6 minutes

A U.S. carrier, missile destroyer and missile cruiser in Singapore on April 4, 2017. (Photo: MCS 2nd Class Z.A. Landers, AFP/Getty Images)

In its latest "in your face" assault on international law, Russia has developed and now deployed operationally an intermediate-range cruise missile — a weapon that the U.S. and USSR solemnly agreed to ban in the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The U.S. has long known that the new Russian missile, the SSC-8, was being developed and has sought to bring Russia back into compliance. After denying for years it had been developing such a weapon, within the past few months Russia cheated even more flagrantly by deploying an operational battalion. A second battalion remains at the development site and no doubt could be fielded quickly.

This blatant violation of the INF Treaty cannot go unanswered — and not just by diplomatic complaints. Once before, Russia (née Soviet Union) violated an arms control treaty in such a blatant way, by constructing and operating a radar at Krasnoyarsk which clearly violated the terms of the 1972 Anti-

Ballistic Missile Treaty. Both Republican and Democratic administrations tolerated the violation, responding only through specified channels and diplomatic entreaties. This tolerance, perhaps, was one reason the Russians were willing to violate the INF Treaty in a way they had to know would be recognized instantly by U.S. surveillance systems.

Tolerance of cheating can only encourage cheaters to continue their malevolent behavior. It also jeopardizes support for other treaty arrangements. The INF violation, if not countered, will reinforce those in the U.S., now including President Trump, who have expressed doubts about the benefits of the 2011 New START Treaty, which limits U.S. and Russian long-range missile launchers, bombers and the nuclear warheads which they carry. If the U.S. were to withdraw from New START, as some have urged, it would lead to a renewal of the dangerous and expensive U.S.-Russia competition to deploy additional long-range weapons, the nuclear arms race that characterized the Cold War, as well as deal a probably fatal blow to efforts to contain the acquisition of nuclear weapons by additional nations.

Some have suggested that the appropriate U.S. response to Russia's cheating on INF would be to deploy a similar weapon of our own in Europe. It would be easy

technically, as the U.S. is very good at building cruise missiles. But it would ignite a political firestorm in Europe, reopening the bitter divisions within the NATO alliance and within individual nations that were doused 30 years ago, in fact, by completion of the INF Treaty. It also would be useless militarily. The new Russian missile adds little to the nuclear threats that Russia already poses to Europe. NATO's existing nuclear forces and far-superior conventional military capabilities are more than sufficient to deter Russian aggression against the alliance.

POLICING THE USA: A look at race, justice, media

A far better response would be asymmetrical, building on the U.S. and NATO's advanced technical capabilities. In private conversations, U.S. and NATO officials should make clear to Russian leaders that unless they cease developing and fielding SSC-8 cruise missiles, and destroy the ones that already exist in a verifiable manner, the U.S. will deploy, in Europe, substantial numbers of the stealthy Long-range Stand-off (LRSO) cruise missile. Now being developed by the Air Force for use initially on older long-range bombers, the LRSO is designed to be able to penetrate any air defense system that Russia could possibly develop for years to come. The weapon will be relatively inexpensive and, once developed,

could be built quickly in large numbers. The LRSO will have the capability to be equipped with nuclear warheads, but if Russia did not come into compliance with the INF Treaty and the had to carry through with its threat to deploy LRSOs in Europe, they could be armed with conventional warheads. The accuracy planned for the LRSO would enable even conventionally-armed versions to destroy a vast array of targets.

Russian leaders know that their new cruise missile has no military value. One can only guess at their motives for developing the weapon, but they likely are political — to weaken NATO by reigniting the debates that nearly destroyed the alliance in the 1980s. Responding to the Russian violation with conventionally-armed LRSOs would counter Russia's cheating effectively, while avoiding the political fall-out that would accompany a nuclear response.

Barry M. Blechman is co-founder of the Stimson Center.

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Rogin : The Trump team has a historic opportunity with Japan — if it can pull together a strategy

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

5-7 minutes

TOKYO

The United States and Japan have a historic opportunity to forge a strengthened partnership to confront Asia's mounting security and economic challenges, senior officials here say. But the Trump administration risks missing this opportunity because of its failure to embrace the need for a broader strategy.

The administrations of President Trump and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe share basic interests, common values and political objectives in a way that sets the stage for the closest bilateral cooperation since

World War II. The two allies need to work together to deal with a rising China, confront a dangerous North Korea and manage explosive economic growth in Southeast Asia.

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But while the Japanese government envisions a strategic plan that would look over the horizon and account for the entire Asia-Pacific region, for now the Trump team is only talking about the North Korea crisis and specific bilateral issues. On both security and economics, the Japanese are asking the United States to think bigger and more broadly about what could be accomplished.

On security, both sides agree that Japan should take a more assertive

role and fulfill its decades-long drive to become a more normal, independent and self-reliant nation. Vice President Pence, visiting Tokyo last week, told me that the Trump administration wholeheartedly supports Abe's push for Japan to do more.

"The president would like to see Japan and our other allies in the world who have an ability to play a greater role in our common defense play that role and to bear that burden and I think that's consistent with that aspiration of the Japanese people," Pence said, adding he raised the issue of sharing the financial burden directly with Abe in their meeting.

For Japan, paying more money for hosting U.S. troops is only one part of the discussion. As Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso noted after

meeting Pence, Japan already pays a far greater percentage of the cost of hosting U.S. forces than any European ally does. In fact, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said in Tokyo in February that Japan is a model country in that respect.

What Abe wants is for Japan to build military capabilities needed to counter North Korea and also China, for example, by acquiring an offensive-strike capability and expanding Japan's missile defenses. That's politically difficult for him domestically and could require financial commitments the Japanese budget can't bear. But the project would benefit from more support from Washington.

Tokyo also wants to join with Washington to strengthen the rules-based international order in the face of Chinese aggression in the South

China Sea and the East China Sea, as well as Chinese military expansion throughout the Western Pacific. Maritime security is paramount for Japan.

The Trump administration is pursuing a warming of U.S.-China relations, and there's a concern that relationships with key allies, including Japan, could become subservient to that drive. There's also a risk that by placing too much emphasis on getting Beijing to fix the North Korea problem, the United States could lose sight of the regional dynamic and also acquiesce to a wide range of China's bad behaviors.

"Japan and the United States should jointly

address these issues," Kentaro Sonoura, Japan's vice foreign minister, told me. "What kind of actions will the United States be willing to take? Will the United States be willing to stand on our side or not? These are indeed very important points of interest and concern for us."

Several Japanese officials told me that they simply don't have interlocutors in the Trump administration yet. But their message to the United States is clear: While the short-term crisis is North Korea, the long-term challenge is China, and the alliance must not sacrifice the future for the present.

On economics, similarly, the United States is thinking more narrowly than Japan is. Pence and Aso kicked off a new bilateral dialogue and agreed on a basic framework. Following Trump's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, there's no clear message about what Washington wants the end result to be. Pence indicated there could be a bilateral trade agreement sometime in the future. The Japanese want to think bigger.

The broader region is experiencing massive growth, especially in Southeast Asia, and the United States and Japan share an interest in ensuring that trade and investment are based on a rules-based system, as was envisioned by the TPP. By preserving the core

of that agreement, free economies that value labor and other standards can compete, Sonoura said.

Trump and Abe have formed a good personal relationship, and there is trust that both sides can build on. But if the alliance doesn't know where it is going strategically, there can't be a clear path to get there. The Japanese have their ideas. Now the Trump team has to step up.

Read more from Josh Rogin's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.

The New York Times Security Council Diplomats to Have Lunch With Trump

Somini Sengupta
5-6 minutes

Members of the United Nations Security Council during a meeting about Syria on April 7. President Trump will host a lunch on Monday with 14 diplomats who are members of the Security Council. Drew Angerer/Getty Images

UNITED NATIONS — President Trump, who recently had Ted Nugent, Sarah Palin and Kid Rock over for a White House dinner, is planning to host 14 diplomats from around the world for lunch on Monday.

The diplomats are members of the powerful United Nations Security Council, an eclectic mix of America's friends and rivals, and plenty of skeptics. Their guide to the White House is Mr. Trump's outspoken envoy, Nikki R. Haley.

Halibut is on the menu, and a cheese soufflé, which one Council diplomat hoped would not be the most substantial part of the White House visit. As of Sunday, it was unclear who else the Council members would see, and whether Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson would meet them.

The White House meeting follows a series of slights by the Trump administration toward the United Nations — and

toward the idea of international cooperation in general. They include the administration's antipathy to the climate agreement and the nuclear deal with Iran, its funding cuts to the United Nations population agency, and the broader funding cuts it has proposed for the world body.

The lunch guests will include envoys from Russia and China, the countries arguably most critical to the Trump administration as it faces tests over Syria and North Korea. Both crises are sure to come up.

Several diplomats are likely to raise the subject of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well, even though Ms. Haley has tried to sideline it as a regular item on the Security Council's agenda, instead describing Iran as the bigger threat to the region.

For a president who has promised an "America first" approach to dealing with world affairs, this is the first opportunity, behind closed doors, for Council diplomats to gauge Mr. Trump's actual approach to the United Nations.

The United States is the organization's largest single funder and, as such, its most powerful member.

The visit is potentially an opportunity for Ms. Haley to show to fellow Council diplomats that she can deliver the White House, just as

it is a way for her to show how much the United States matters to the United Nations.

"There has been a lot of talk about China supplanting the U.S. as the top diplomatic dog at the U.N. since Trump's election," said Richard Gowan, a fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. "But at the end of the day, the Council's school outing to Washington makes it clear that it is still at Washington's beck and call."

The lunch, expected to last 90 minutes, is part of a daylong visit by the members of the Security Council to Washington. It is to include meetings with members of Congress, although several Council diplomats said they had not been told which lawmakers.

The lunch menu, shared with diplomats ahead of time, was capped with a pineapple brioche pudding for dessert.

"Particularly this week, with everything on his plate, that he would take time out and have a conversation with the Security Council is a sign that he's open to listening to them," said Nancy Soderberg, a former ambassador to the United Nations during the Clinton administration. "It's frankly surprising. It's a testament to Nikki Haley's increasing prominence within the administration."

The visit by Council members comes days after Mr. Trump met for the first time with the United Nations secretary general, António Guterres. Their talk lasted less than 20 minutes and came after a longer meeting between Mr. Guterres and Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, the national security adviser, said the United Nations spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric.

"It's an important relationship, and we are very pleased that the meeting happened," Mr. Dujarric said of the meeting with General McMaster.

They agreed to meet again "in the near future," Mr. Dujarric added.

The Security Council has visited the White House under previous administrations. Late last year, when the members of the Council were meeting with other senior White House officials, President Barack Obama joined them for what was supposed to be a quick meet and greet and ended up staying and talking for about 40 minutes on a range of issues on the Council's agenda, according to diplomats who attended.

The idea of a meeting with Mr. Trump came from Vitaly I. Churkin, the former Russian ambassador, who died in February. He brought it up this year during the Council's first meeting with Ms. Haley after she had been appointed the United States ambassador.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

7-8 minutes

April 23, 2017 5:44 p.m. ET

Zoellick : By Trashing Mexico, Trump Hurts the U.S.

Robert B. Zoellick

President Trump interrupted his prepared remarks in Wisconsin last Tuesday to excoriate, yet again, the North American Free Trade Agreement. "We're going to make some very big changes," the president pledged, "or we are going to get rid of Nafta once and for all."

Mr. Trump is playing with fire. Over the past 30 years, presidents of both parties have recognized that the U.S. benefits from working with Mexico and Canada. The more robust North America is, the better it can compete and project power globally. In contrast, Mr. Trump's

approach seems almost designed to help elect an anti-American, pro-Castro populist, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, to the Mexican presidency in 2018.

Mr. Trump's policy of confrontation pits his hostile nationalism against

an American tradition of practical internationalism. Because of historical legacies and national pride, North American integration and cooperation have been built on respect for the sovereignty and independence of Canada, Mexico and the U.S. That differs sharply from the European model of integration, which has sought shared sovereignty.

Consider how Mr. Trump's own priorities would fare under his Mexican policy, starting with illegal immigration. Today's illegal immigrants are coming primarily from Central America. Washington should cooperate with Mexico to create a multistage defense. Working with Mexico to strengthen law enforcement, the rule of law, and intelligence would leave both countries better positioned to stop drug traffickers, criminals, human smugglers and terrorists.

Insulting Mexico, on the other hand, will make it impossible for politicians there to work with Yankee gringos. A hostile Mexico can ignore the flow of people northward, while American policies that weaken investment and growth in Mexico simply create more incentives for Mexicans to migrate to the U.S.

Mr. Trump's great wall would be a waste of money, as conservative Republicans from border states now acknowledge. A combination of fencing, additional border police, electronic surveillance and other intelligence tools would stop illegal immigration more effectively and at a lower cost. Fiscal conservatives should just say no to Mr. Trump's \$20 billion boondoggle.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson knows that the amendments Mexico's President Enrique Peña Nieto made to his country's constitution in 2013 open the door to investment that will expand North American energy security and Mexico's income. Mr. Tillerson may not be aware, however, that because Nafta's energy terms refer to Mexico's constitution, American investors are now protected against a populist reversal of Mexican policy—but only as long as the U.S. remains in Nafta. The integration of North American energy markets helps the U.S. sell gas and electricity to Mexico while lowering costs of production in North America.

Mr. Trump's policies will actually increase costs and weaken the global competitiveness of the U.S. auto sector, his favorite subject for industrial policy. Efficient manufacturing relies on integrated supply chains that crisscross borders. U.S. producers seeking to compete with Asian and European manufacturers now transfer components across North American borders up to 14 times in the process of completing final goods. More than 30% of Mexico's exports to the U.S. contribute to the integrated auto sector.

Mr. Trump's protectionist economists have questioned the data on U.S. exports. Yet when the Manufacturers Alliance for Productivity and Innovation recalculated trade statistics to count only the value added by each country, the U.S. had a surplus in manufactured goods with Mexico and Canada.

If Mr. Trump blocks Mexico's exports, Mexico will strike back, hurting other parts of the U.S. economy. American farmers, already struggling with low prices, could forfeit sales of soybeans, corn and fruit. Poorer Mexicans will consume less, so U.S. sales will drop. American exporters of services, a source of competitive advantage and surplus, could suffer. Six million U.S. jobs depend on exports to Mexico, with workers in Texas, Michigan, Arizona and Louisiana particularly vulnerable to self-defeating economic nationalism.

Mr. Trump will also discover that the U.S. needs friends. When I first started working with Mexico in the 1980s, I could usually guess Mexico's foreign policy by putting a minus sign in front of any U.S. position. The old one-party state of the PRI, which ruled for more than 60 years, placated leftist intellectuals by posting them to the Ministry of External Affairs, where they were free to indulge in anti-American policies.

But when I became the U.S. trade representative in 2001, my closest partners in opening markets were Mexican and Canadian counterparts. Mexico's central bankers and economic officials became natural allies as macroeconomic policies converged. Until recently, Europeans, Asians and even other Latin Americans assumed that the three North American countries would be aligned on most foreign policies. The Mexican public's attitude toward the U.S. had shifted from sullen resentment to admiration and friendship.

Looking to the future, the alliance of the three North American democracies—being energy self-sufficient with integrated infrastructure and efficient and secure borders—could offer the U.S. a resilient and powerful base from which to face global challenges. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly should brief the president on the high number of Mexican-Americans in the U.S. Marine Corps.

When White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus was chairman of the Republican National Committee, he concluded that the GOP needed to reach out to Mexican-Americans and other Hispanics. Insults and attacks on citizens' home countries are not a winning formula for the future.

William Seward, Lincoln's secretary of state and the man with the vision to purchase Alaska, wrote in 1853 that someday Mexico, Canada and the U.S. would create a North American union, but only after a long process and solely through free choice. Seward fought for America's national union while also promoting an internationalist vision. Vice President Mike Pence and members of the cabinet have tried to reassure allies in Europe and Asia that a nationalist America can be internationalist, too. Mr. Trump should apply this correction at home and stop abusing America's amicable and vital neighbors.

Mr. Zoellick is a former World Bank president, U.S. trade representative and deputy secretary of state.

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Donald Trump's Push for Border-Wall Funding Muddies Budget Talks (UNE)

Kristina Peterson

9-11 minutes

April 23, 2017 7:28 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Less than a week before the federal government could run out of money, White House officials said President Donald Trump wants any spending deal to include some funding for a border wall, despite little appetite among congressional Republicans for risking a partial shutdown over the issue.

The administration's last-minute push, voiced on Sunday talk shows and by the president himself on Twitter, injected a note of volatility into the coming week, when lawmakers return after a recess and with little time for reaching an agreement to keep the government operating after its current funding expires at 12:01 a.m. Saturday—also the 100th day of Mr. Trump's presidency.

That deadline has left congressional Republicans juggling the demands of the White House and its shifting messages with those of Democrats, whose votes will be needed to pass

a spending bill to avoid a government shutdown.

Complicating the intricate negotiations over the funding bill, top White House officials also are urging House Republicans to move swiftly to revive a partisan health-care bill that stalled last month, and Mr. Trump has said he would release a proposal for overhauling the tax code on Wednesday.

Given the complications and tight timeline, few, if any, of Mr. Trump's legislative ambitions are likely to be realized by Saturday. That means GOP lawmakers would face the

uncomfortable choice of denying or deferring some of Mr. Trump's wishes, such as funding the wall, before the symbolic 100th day, or triggering a showdown with Democrats.

House Republicans held a weekend conference call where GOP leaders said they would focus first on striking a deal to keep the government funded.

"The top priority is keeping the government open," Rep. Tom Reed (R., N.Y.) said in an interview after the Saturday afternoon call. "I support the [border] wall, but I don't like us getting bogged down in

symbolic, ideological fights” on must-pass legislation.

House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) told Republicans that the House Appropriations Committee had been working closely with the White House on the spending agreement, according to a Republican on the call.

“And so, wherever we land will be a product the president can and will support,” Mr. Ryan said, according to that person. If lawmakers can’t reach a bipartisan deal by Friday, they may pass a one-week stopgap measure, buying more time for negotiations, lawmakers and aides predicted. A larger bill would fund the government until October and could include a newly written defense-spending bill.

The spending bill under discussion already was expected to include some of the president’s wishes, including an increase in funding for the military and border security.

But White House officials began pushing for more late last week, potentially destabilizing the precarious balance required to avert a shutdown.

Administration officials said Mr. Trump wants the spending bill to include funding to begin building the wall along the southern border. However, they haven’t threatened

that he would veto a bill that excluded it.

“The president has been pretty straightforward about his desire and the need for a border wall,” Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly said in an interview that aired Sunday on CNN. “I will suspect he will be insistent on the funding.”

In March, the administration asked Congress for \$1.4 billion in spending for the current fiscal year for the project, with an additional \$2.6 billion for the next fiscal year, beginning Oct. 1. Administration officials said the fiscal 2017 money would pay for 48 miles of new border and levee wall systems, and 14 miles of replacement fencing, as well as some technology improvements and road construction.

“It’s not like we’re inserting something that the president didn’t talk about on the campaign,” White House budget director Mick Mulvaney said in an interview Friday. “It should come as a surprise to no one that President Trump wants money for a southern border wall.”

Mr. Trump himself repeated his request over Twitter on Sunday. “The Democrats don’t want money from budget going to border wall despite the fact that it will stop drugs and very bad MS 13 gang members,” he said.

But White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus said Sunday the administration could be flexible on whether the spending bill included money specifically for the wall, suggesting funds for border security could be considered sufficient for now.

On Capitol Hill, Democrats in both chambers have warned that they aren’t willing to fund the wall in the coming spending bill.

“The Democrats do not support the wall,” House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.) said Sunday on NBC. “The wall is, in my view, immoral, expensive, unwise, and when the president says ‘Well, I promised a wall during my campaign,’ I don’t think he said he was going to pass billions of dollars of cost of the wall on to the taxpayer.”

While some Republicans said they would be willing to set aside funds for the border, many are reluctant to imperil a bill that would need at least eight Democratic votes to pass the Senate. GOP leaders are also likely to need Democratic votes in the House, where some conservatives are expected to oppose the bill, giving Democrats unusual leverage at a time of full GOP government control.

Democrats are pushing to include payments, known as “cost-sharing reductions,” that help support

Affordable Care Act plans by helping insurers lower costs for low-income consumers. An abrupt withdrawal of the payments would pose an immediate threat to health-insurance markets, potentially triggering the collapse of health plans midyear.

With Republicans in control of both the White House and Congress for the first time since early 2007, GOP lawmakers and aides have stressed the need to demonstrate their party can govern, particularly after House leaders were forced to pull their health-care bill from the floor last month when it became clear it lacked enough Republican support to pass. Mr. Priebus said on NBC Sunday that he “would like to have a vote this week” on a modified health bill, “but again, it’s not something that has to happen in order to define our success.”

Even if the bill were to clear the House this week, it isn’t clear it could pass the Senate and certainly couldn’t do so before Saturday.

—Brody Mullins, Peter Nicholas and Michelle Hackman contributed to this article.

Write to Kristina Peterson at kristina.peterson@wsj.com

Appeared in the Apr. 24, 2017, print edition as ‘Late Spending Demands Roil Effort to Avert Shutdown.’



Showdown looms as Trump demands funding for wall on U.S.-Mexico border (UNE)

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

9-11 minutes

President Trump and White House officials pressed congressional Republicans on Sunday to use the looming threat of a government shutdown to win funding for a wall along the border between the United States and Mexico, a top priority for the administration as it nears the symbolic 100-day mark.

Trump wants funding to be included in a spending measure that would keep the government open past April 28, a determined effort that has prompted a possible standoff with lawmakers in both parties, who hope to avert a federal closure next weekend.

Trump’s push for fast action on his pledge to build the border wall is part of a mounting and, at times, tense scramble inside the administration to kick-start the president’s agenda, even if it risks dire political consequences. It

follows weeks of frustration within the White House over inaction and stalemates on Capitol Hill over big-ticket items such as health care and tax cuts.

White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus said in an interview Sunday with The Washington Post that the president and his advisers remain “strong” in their commitment to securing funding for border security and a wall.

“This is what the president ran on,” Priebus said. “We want to get to a place this week where border-security money is being directed to the Department of Homeland Security so that we can begin surveillance and preliminary work, and then we will keep working on getting DHS what it needs for the structure.”

The timing promises a week of high drama on the Hill. The Senate returns Monday night, and the House returns Tuesday from a two-week recess, leaving just three days when both chambers will be in session to wrangle out a funding

agreement. Negotiators worked throughout the break, but thus far a deal has not been struck.

The wall, which experts say would cost \$21.6 billion and take 3½ years to construct, has emerged as a crucial sticking point for the White House, with the president insisting privately and publicly that progress toward its funding and eventual construction must be showcased this week.

“Congress is right to be nervous, but that’s Trump’s style to be aggressive, ambitious, right out of ‘The Art of the Deal,’” said William J. Bennett, a conservative commentator and close friend of House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.). “Everyone seems to be getting used to that and how Trump doesn’t want the half loaf but the whole loaf.”

In a tweet Sunday, Trump elbowed Democrats who have resisted his call to include wall funding. He chastised them for not wanting “money from the budget going to the border wall despite the fact that

it will stop drugs” and gang activity, in his view.

Trump added that he would continue to ask Mexico to pay for the project, another bold proclamation he made during the campaign. Meanwhile, he said, he will press Congress for funding “so we can get started early” on the “badly needed border wall.”

It remained unclear Sunday whether moderates within the GOP could persuade the White House to avoid a shutdown. Democrats have insisted that they will not vote for any spending bill that gives the White House money or flexibility to begin construction of a border barrier. They believe that the GOP will have to either abandon Trump’s demand or assume political responsibility if a shutdown occurs.

“The burden to keep it open is on the Republicans,” House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said Sunday on NBC’s “Meet the Press.” “Building a wall is not an answer. Not here or any place.”

(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

With less than a week to pass a new spending bill, negotiations between the White House, Republicans and Democrats are ramping up to avoid a government shutdown on April 29. With less than a week to pass a new spending bill, negotiations between the White House, Republicans and Democrats are ramping up to avoid a government shutdown (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

Inside the White House on Sunday, West Wing aides made calls to congressional allies, while the president tweeted and reached out to several advisers, according to three officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly.

Trump's tweets included a shot at Democrats in which he drew parallels between border-wall funding and continued federal payments for subsidies under the Affordable Care Act. Some Trump associates said that they believe Democrats may be willing to deal on border funding if those payments are put on the table this week during cross-party talks.

"ObamaCare is in serious trouble. The Dems need big money to keep it going — otherwise it dies far sooner than anyone would have thought," Trump tweeted. He later followed: "The Democrats don't want money from budget going to border wall despite the fact that it will stop drugs and very bad MS 13 gang members."

The tweets did little to assuage concerns created earlier in the day when White House budget director

Mick Mulvaney suggested that Trump might not sign a spending bill that does not meet his demands.

"Will he sign a government funding bill that does not include funding for the border wall?" Chris Wallace, host of "Fox News Sunday," asked Mulvaney during a televised interview.

"We don't know yet," Mulvaney responded.

Mulvaney said that the White House expects Democrats to cave on the border wall in exchange for guaranteed payments under the ACA.

But Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) have already rejected a White House offer to build into the spending bill a dollar-for-dollar match in wall funding and federal health-care payments. Negotiators want the stopgap measure to keep government open by keeping spending flat, including money to keep the ACA going. Trump is hoping to open that up for negotiation in exchange for wall money.

Democrats believe that voters will blame Trump for a shutdown, particularly if congressional leaders omit wall funding from a spending deal. Democrats and GOP leaders appeared to be nearing a spending agreement last week before Trump ramped up his demands.

Aides hailed the budget talks as one of the only active discussions in which Democrats and Republicans maintained common ground. One clear area of agreement was not to include border funding in the stopgap budget. Democrats agreed to include other border-security measures, including money for new

drones to patrol the border, but it was agreed that the wall itself should be debated separately, after the government is kept open.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) is among a group of prominent Senate Republicans who have said publicly that they hope to avoid a border wall fight this week.

"I think that's a fight worth having and a conversation and a debate worth having for 2018," Rubio said Sunday on CBS's "Face the Nation." "If we can do some of that now, that would be great. But we cannot shut down the government right now."

Mulvaney's hard-line stance is also odds with a White House faction convinced that a government shutdown would be cataclysmic for an administration already struggling to prove its ability to govern, according to GOP aides in the White House and Congress who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing talks.

Republican leaders have signaled that they will concentrate this week on keeping the government open, even if that means ignoring White House calls for action on other major priorities, such as rewriting the tax code and overhauling the ACA.

Trump has pushed his staff in recent days to prod House Republicans for final revisions in a health-care proposal that can win support from both the hard-line conservative Freedom Caucus and the moderate Tuesday Group. And that task led advisers over the weekend to rely especially on three key players — Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-N.J.), co-chairman of the Tuesday Group; Rep. Mark

Meadows (R-N.C.), chairman of the Freedom Caucus; and Rep. Patrick T. McHenry (R-N.C.), the House GOP chief deputy whip — to finalize legislation.

But the White House's efforts to work directly with House coalitions and piece together a compromise health-care package has led to private unease on Capitol Hill, where some GOP members close to the leadership have grumbled that Trump aides are setting up the party for defeat or a stumble if support for the tweaked health bill is not as strong as the White House has suggested.

The Daily 202 newsletter

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Trump's advisers, aware of those concerns, still plowed forward Sunday on crafting the bill's language, citing the president's desire for action. There were ongoing conversations about the timing for a health vote, with Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or even sometime in early May, if necessary, discussed as options.

Ryan addressed that pressure in a conference call Saturday afternoon, in which he told GOP members that while he hoped that they would continue health-care talks, his top priority will be the stopgap spending bill.

"Wherever we land will be a product the president can and will support," Ryan said, according to a senior GOP aide on the call.

Abby Phillip and Sean Sullivan contributed to this report.

POLITICO Trump and Congress eye shutdown showdown over border wall

Rachael Bade

8-10 minutes

President Donald Trump and Congress are on a collision course over government funding this week, as the White House demands money for a border wall with Mexico and Democrats vow it will never see a penny.

But just five days out from a government shutdown, Trump appears headed for disappointment. Democrats are signaling they're unlikely to cave, and Hill Republicans are already pressing the administration to fight another day.

Story Continued Below

That means the White House is largely on its own in a high-stakes game of political chicken, weakening its negotiating position. Even Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.), the former Homeland Security Committee chairman who wrote the 2006 law authorizing the wall's construction, said the White House should push for it later in the year.

"There's going to be compromises going on," King said on Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures." "Once the government is up and running, and stays open and running, then we have to fight this out over the next year."

The face-off comes as lawmakers return to Washington following a two-week Easter recess. Government funding expires Friday, leaving Congress little time to strike

a deal. A White House push for progress on repealing Obamacare will also consume energy on Capitol Hill, even as a vote on legislation this week appears unlikely.

White House officials and several senior House Republican sources say a short, one-week stopgap may be needed to buy more time to negotiate on a larger bill to fund the government through September.

In the meantime, both sides are puffing up their chests, refusing to budge from their hard-line positions on one of Trump's most famous campaign pledges. Trump's budget director Mick Mulvaney and Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly both reiterated during Sunday interviews that Trump would need a down payment on his

wall as part of a government funding package.

"It goes without saying that the president has been pretty straightforward about his desire and the need for the border wall," Kelly said on CNN. "He'll do the right thing for sure, but I would expect he'll be insistent on the funding."

On cue, Democrats scoffed.

"The Democrats do not support the wall," House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said on NBC's "Meet the Press." "The burden to keep it open is on the Republicans. The wall is, in my view, immoral, expensive, unwise."

Meanwhile, sensing the judgments of pundits and politicians surrounding Trump's 100-day mark this Saturday, the White House is

also cranking up the heat on Speaker Paul Ryan to pass an Obamacare repeal-and-replacement this week, another heavy lift for the House.

Mulvaney suggested Sunday the chamber could pass both a health care and government funding bill in the coming days, and he said he's even "heard rumors" that House lawmakers may work through next weekend to get the repeal passed. That's a notion most popular among increasingly impatient White House officials; House Republicans have no plans at this time to hold lawmakers in town through the weekend.

Ryan also downplayed the possibility of a health care vote this week during a conference call with Republican lawmakers Saturday. While GOP leaders are more optimistic about reaching a deal to win over their fractious conference, a vote won't be held until party whips are confident they have the votes for passage.

Plus, the focus on Capitol Hill is the still-unsettled negotiation to avoid a shutdown.

The White House's hard-line insistence on wall money in the final stages of talks has perplexed some lawmakers, particularly after Trump's vows that Mexico would pay for the wall, not taxpayers. Numerous senior Hill Republicans don't think the White House request — a \$1.4 billion down payment on a construction project that might ultimately cost more than \$20 billion — is worth such extensive political capital at this time.

Most GOP lawmakers say they're confident there will be no shutdown, echoing comments Ryan expressed to House members Saturday. But they will need significant Democratic votes in both chambers, especially with the Senate's 60-vote threshold.

"We have to find eight votes in the Senate to avoid the Senate filibuster," Rep. David Schweikert (R-Ariz.) said on "Sunday Morning Futures." "We're going to have to find the way we bring Senate Democrats along."

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) said it would be dangerous for the United States to flirt with a shutdown during a time of instability in Europe, the rising threat from North Korea and an ongoing conflict in Syria.

"We cannot shut down the government right now," Rubio said on CBS' "Face the Nation," later adding that the border fight is "worth having for 2018" funding rather than for the current fiscal year. "The last thing we can afford is to send a message to the world is that the United States government, by the way, is partially functioning."

Privately, numerous Hill Republicans believe the White House will eventually cave on the wall — though Trump is expected to win some extra money for the Pentagon and border security that don't relate to wall construction.

Some administration officials, however, are adamant that they could pin fault for a government shutdown on Democrats. Mulvaney said Sunday that Republicans would blame the left for "holding hostage national security." White

House legislative liaison Marc Short said "the American people have been clear that they want the border secured."

"I think the president's been clear, and the American people elected him on wanting border security," Short said in an interview Friday. "We don't see how that's a controversial element in our minds. ... The American people elected us based on that."

Still, a shutdown showdown is a risky gamble for Republicans, as they control all the levers of power in Washington and would likely shoulder blame, too.

White House chief of staff Reince Priebus took a slightly less aggressive approach than other Trump officials, saying on "Meet the Press" that he believes the government will stay open and that he's "pretty confident we're going to get something satisfactory" for border security.

He also would not say that Trump will veto a bill that does not explicitly include wall funding. But Republicans on Capitol Hill say they aren't sure whether Mulvaney, Kelly or Priebus represent Trump's true position. That complicates the job for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Ryan as they try to move a funding bill that can pass the House and Senate and be signed by Trump.

"Hard to know whom is speaking for Trump," said a Republican familiar with negotiations. "No one wants to be the bearer of bad news."

The wall money isn't the only spending sticking point for

Congress and the White House. Democrats have demanded the administration commit to funding Obamacare cost-sharing subsidies either in law through the appropriations package, or via executive branch actions by the Health and Human Services Department.

The White House had threatened to cut off funding the subsidies, a stance Trump doubled down on through a Sunday tweet: "ObamaCare is in serious trouble. The Dems need big money to keep it going - otherwise it dies far sooner than anyone would have thought."

Trump is using the threat as a negotiation tactic to bring Democrats to the table. Mulvaney and senior White House officials have offered Democrats a dollar of Obamacare subsidy funding for a dollar of wall funding.

But so far, Democrats haven't budged.

"I hope the president will back off," said Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the No. 2 Democrat in the chamber. He called Trump's hard-line tactics on the wall a "political stunt" and said a shutdown "would be the height of irresponsibility. He would not want that to define his first 100 days."

Tara Palmeri contributed to this report.

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POLITICO Republicans sound alarm on Trump's troubles ahead of 2018

By Alex Isenstadt

9-11 minutes

Republicans say President Donald Trump needs to turn things around fast — or the GOP could pay dearly in 2018.

With the party preparing to defend its congressional majorities in next year's midterms, senior Republicans are expressing early concern about Trump's lack of legislative accomplishments, his record-low approval ratings, and the overall dysfunction that's gripped his administration.

Story Continued Below

The stumbles have drawn the attention of everyone from GOP mega-donor Sheldon Adelson, who funneled tens of millions of dollars into Trump's election and is relied

upon to bankroll the party's House and Senate campaigns, to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. Adelson hasn't contributed to pro-Trump outside groups since the inauguration, a move that's drawn notice within the party, and McConnell is warning associates that Trump's unpopularity could weigh down the GOP in the election.

Potential GOP candidates whom party leaders want to recruit are afraid of walking into a buzz saw, uncertain about what kind of political environment they'll be facing by the time the midterms come around — and what Trump's record will look like.

As tumultuous as Trump's first 100 days have been, there's still plenty of time for him to correct course. The president is projecting confidence that the GOP can resuscitate its stalled repeal of

Obamacare, pass tax reform, and work with Democrats on a major public works package. Success on those fronts would no doubt calm the GOP's current jitters.

But interviews with more than a dozen top Republican operatives, donors and officials reveal a growing trepidation about how the initial days of the new political season are unfolding. And they underscore a deep anxiety about how the party will position itself in 2018 as it grapples with the leadership of an unpredictable president still acclimating to Washington.

"It's not the way you'd want to start a new cycle," said Randy Evans, a Republican National Committee member from Georgia. "At some point, they've got to find some kind of rhythm, and there is no rhythm yet."

"They've got to put some drives together," he added.

Appearing Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press," White House chief of staff Reince Priebus pushed back on the suggestion Trump has accomplished little. Among other things, Priebus pointed to the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch and reports that border crossings have plummeted since the start of the new year.

"He is fulfilling his promises and doing it at breakneck speed," Priebus said.

Behind the scenes, the administration is keeping a watchful eye on the 2018 election. Priebus remains in touch with his political allies from his time as party chairman. There's talk Priebus may attend an RNC meeting in San Diego next month and a Mitt

Romney-hosted donor summit in Park City, Utah, slated for June. The midterms are likely to be front and center at both events.

Priebus and chief strategist Steve Bannon are carefully tracking the special election for a Republican-leaning Georgia House seat, a contest the administration sees as a key early test of the president's political standing. White House officials were heartened that Democrat Jon Ossoff — whom Trump attacked on Twitter and robocalls — fell short of an outright victory in the first round of voting, triggering a June runoff against Republican Karen Handel.

Yet as Republican strategists examine that special election, and one for a conservative Kansas seat a week earlier, they're seeing evidence of a worrisome enthusiasm gap. In the run-up to the Georgia election, low-propensity Democratic voters — people who in years past did not consistently turn out to the polls — cast ballots at a rate nearly 7 percentage points higher than low-propensity Republicans, according to private polling by one Republican group.

In Kansas, the chasm was wider. Infrequent Democratic voters cast ballots at a rate of 9 percentage points higher than low-propensity Republicans did. The GOP nonetheless held the seat.

Former Rep. David Jolly, a Florida Republican who won a 2014 special election that was a precursor to a broader GOP sweep in that year's midterms, said the Georgia race was rife with warnings for his party.

"It's a verdict on Trump's first 100 days," Jolly said. "Ossoff simply has to speak to the president's failure, while Republicans have to wrestle with whether and how to defend Trump's historically low approval ratings and how closely to align with a president who at any moment could undermine Handel's entire messaging

strategy with an indefensible tweet or an outright lie."

Jolly, who lost reelection in 2016 and is considering running again, said he and other would-be GOP midterm contenders are struggling to take measure of what they'd be getting themselves into. The election is bound to be a referendum on Trump's first two years. Two Republicans, Wisconsin Rep. Sean Duffy and Indiana Rep. Susan Brooks, recently announced they will be forgoing Senate runs.

"If you're a prospective candidate, boy, it's tough," Jolly said.

Republicans are far more concerned about the House than the Senate. The GOP has a four-seat edge in the Senate and a map tilted heavily in its favor. House Republicans, by contrast, have a 24-seat margin but must defend dozens of swing districts. It's a scenario not entirely unlike the first midterm election of Barack Obama's presidential tenure, when Democrats lost control of the House.

Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.), a member of GOP leadership, said the lack of legislative progress so far has imperiled his party's hold on the House. But Cole doesn't point the finger at Trump: Instead, he said, fellow Republicans unwilling to compromise on key agenda items like health care are to blame.

"The majority is not safe," he said. "We need to be more constructive legislatively, and there are going to be political implications if we don't."

"I'm confident President Trump and the Congress will deliver meaningful results for the American people," said Henry Barbour, an influential RNC member from Mississippi and the nephew of former Gov. Haley Barbour. "We don't have another option, particularly as it relates to the House in 2018."

Not every Republican is confident about the Senate, either. McConnell

has privately expressed concern about Trump's approval ratings and lack of legislative wins, according to two people familiar with this thinking. A student of political history, the Senate leader has warned that the 2018 map shouldn't give Republicans solace, reminding people that the party in power during a president's first term often suffers electorally.

"We do have to do something with our full control of the government," said Scott Jennings, who served in George W. Bush's White House and oversaw a pro-McConnell super PAC during his 2014 reelection. "Doing nothing is not an option. There's time — the midterm elections aren't until November 2018 — but at some point we have to finish the things we ran on."

Republican fundraising, bolstered by the party's full control of the federal government, has been robust. The RNC reported raising \$41.5 million during the first quarter of the year, a record.

Yet Trump's rocky start is causing restlessness in some corners of the donor world. Adelson, the Las Vegas casino mogul, has privately complained about Trump's failure to fulfill his campaign promise to move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, three people close to the billionaire said. Adelson is also rankled that some people he recommended for administration posts haven't yet been tapped.

More fundamentally, Adelson is dismayed by what he sees as a state of chaos in the new administration, these people said. In what some Republicans are interpreting as a sign of his frustration, Adelson has yet to give money to any of the pro-Trump outside groups set up to boost the president's agenda.

An Adelson spokesman, Andy Abboud, said the billionaire is "overall not angry or unhappy" with the president and is pleased with

his decisiveness on certain issues. Adelson, he said, is waiting patiently for action on the embassy.

Others are less forgiving. Texas businessman Doug Deason and his billionaire father, Darwin, have become so annoyed with the lack of progress that they have told Republican members of Congress they will not donate to them until the president's agenda is approved. The younger Deason, a member of the Koch brothers' political network, said he blamed House and Senate Republicans for the impasse, not Trump.

"I think generally people are happy, but we're in a rare position where we have the presidency and both houses of Congress, and we want to get things done," he said.

In recent weeks, party leaders have taken steps to assure nervous donors that the political environment remains stable for Republicans and that the president's agenda is on track. During a recent donor summit in Palm Beach, Florida, hosted by House Speaker Paul Ryan, organizers stressed that health care and tax reform could still get done.

Indeed, some Republicans say it's premature to start fretting about an election 18 months away, regardless of Trump's early blunders.

"This is part of the growing pains of the new administration. It's like fumbling a football in the first three minutes of the game," said Ken Abramowitz, a New York businessman and major GOP donor. "It's not great. But if you're going to fumble the football, it's good to do it in the first three minutes."

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Trump 100 Days: Path to Shutdown Is Set

Philip Elliott

6-8 minutes

Desperate for a triumph ahead of President Trump's 100th day in office, the White House is furiously pushing for another attempt at scrapping the nation's health care law this week, hinting that deep tax cuts are on deck and adding border wall blueprints and a boost to Pentagon spending to the hopper to boot.

Welcome to Trump's week of magical thinking. On their own, any of these projects can take months of work in Washington. Now the President wants to jam all this into a single week, let alone one in which lawmakers face a Friday deadline to approve a federal spending measure. Failure to find agreement would shut down the government.

The vote will be one of the first consequential moves since Republicans gained control of the House, Senate and White House—and it could indicate to voters that the GOP isn't capable of governing

despite unified control of Washington. Without coordinated action, federal agencies will shut their doors, workers won't report for duty and vast parts of the government will stop in their tracks. It's a serious situation—and certainly a more urgent problem than Trump's goal of ditching President Barack Obama's health care legacy, slashing tax rates or finding cash for a border wall that, at best, won't be finished during Trump's first term in office.

President Trump Talks Health Care at Joint Presser with Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni

"The plan gets better, and better and better, and it has gotten really really good"

Administration officials spent the weekend ramping up pressure on lawmakers, even as they sent mixed signals about what the President would settle for and what he would insist Congress include in a spending plan. White House chief of staff Reince Priebus told NBC's *Meet the Press* that perhaps increased spending for border

security could appease Trump's demand for brick-and-mortar wall funding. "I think we'll be OK with that," Priebus said, without much conviction.

Meanwhile, the White House budget chief tried to project calm. "I don't think anyone foresees or expects or would want a shutdown," budget director Mick Mulvaney told *Fox News Sunday*. Yet asked how intractable Trump is on the border funding question, he cautioned: "We don't know yet."

And that's the most unpredictable aspect of this momentous week. Trump prides himself on his deal-making skills. But government isn't real estate, and there are prescribed ways to fund it. Over the weekend, Trump tried to outline a spending bill in 140-character bursts. For instance: "Eventually, but at a later date so we can get started early, Mexico will be paying, in some form, for the badly needed border wall." Perhaps the President was trying to tell Congress not to worry about the cost of the wall. But an IOU signed by only one country isn't going to help lawmakers foot the bill.

Then there's the pesky question of who is picking up the tab for all of

this new spending Trump wants. Republicans for years have insisted any new spending be matched, dollar-for-dollar, with cuts elsewhere. Mulvaney, a former Tea Party lawmaker from South Carolina who once insisted on such spending offsets, said he wasn't sure the party orthodoxy still held: "I don't think we've decided that part yet."

In a conference call with fellow Republican House members on Saturday, House Speaker Paul Ryan said that keeping the government open was his top priority. He also seemed to suggest that he was sympathetic—but not beholden—to the White House's goals. "Wherever we land will be a product the President can and will support," Ryan told colleagues, according to one top Republican staffer who listened to the call.

At the Capitol, senior aides to Republican lawmakers have been rolling their eyes at the President's gumption—and his cluelessness about how Washington works. Some traded dismayed text messages after Trump's off-handed comment that it might not matter if Congress gets its act together on health care. "We'll see what happens," Trump told reporters. "No

particular rush, but we'll see what happens."

Democrats were in no hurry either to help the President out of a mess made by his own ambition. "The wall is, in my view, immoral, expensive, unwise," House Leader Nancy Pelosi told *Meet the Press*. It's unlikely that a single House Democrat will vote for a funding bill that includes cash for fencing. That could squeeze Ryan if his conservative flank revolts over other deferred priorities, such as cutting Planned Parenthood funding or killing subsidies for poor Americans' health care.

Trump's first bulldozer-in-a-bureaucracy attempt to trash the health care law came up embarrassing for all Republicans involved. The President insisted Ryan schedule a vote on health care repeal, then was forced twice to postpone the vote before scrapping it altogether. Trump said he was willing to move on, but that's no longer the case. He's been telling White House aides he wants it gone, pronto. And, while Congress is at it, to cut taxes and build the wall that was so popular at his campaign rallies. "My base really wants it," the President told *The Associated Press* last week.

The White House is trying to accommodate Trump's demands. But there are limits to what the administration can do. Congress—specifically, the House—is the starting point for all spending plans. The Senate would need to approve the lower chamber's work. To do so will require at least eight Democrats to vote with the Republican majority. If he wants to keep the government open, Trump may be forced to sign a spending bill missing items on his wish list.

Trump seems to be bracing for the moment. Last week, he tweeted the 100-day marker was a "ridiculous standard," arguing that regardless of his accomplishments, the "media will kill!" But inside the White House, Trump wants his first hundred days to be feted. His lieutenants have struggled to figure out how best to commemorate the milestone. One element will be a Saturday evening rally in Pennsylvania, which helped deliver his Electoral College victory. But if the President keeps adding demands to the agenda, his celebration could come with the government shuttered and voters looking for someone to blame.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Priebus Says Trump, Nearing 100 Days, Is on Track

Michelle Hackman

6-7 minutes

April 23, 2017 2:09 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus defended President Donald Trump's performance in his first 100 days in office, pointing Sunday to recent history to argue that Mr. Trump is on track.

Mr. Priebus, appearing on NBC, said that most recent presidents signed no major legislative achievements into law until after the 100-day mark had passed.

Barack Obama stewarded an economic stimulus package into law one month into his presidency, Mr. Priebus acknowledged, but he said he benefited from a deal that lawmakers had begun negotiating the previous October.

Mr. Trump has drawn criticism for early missteps on his efforts to heighten restrictions on travel and immigration, his party's inability to repeal or replace the Affordable

Care Act, his backpedaling on foreign-policy promises and failure to fill many administration posts.

Mr. Priebus said that Mr. Trump honored many of his major campaign promises through executive order, including directives tightening the immigration regulations as well as withdrawing from the unratified Trans-Pacific Partnership, a 12-nation trade pact that Mr. Trump frequently lambasted on the campaign trail.

He pointed to the confirmation of Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court as a major legislative achievement and added that the administration is "hopeful" a health-care bill would pass the House this week.

"He is fulfilling his promises and doing it at breakneck speed," Mr. Priebus said.

The administration focused much of its early energy on dismantling and replacing major portions of the Affordable Care Act, a Republican campaign promise since the law was first passed in 2010. But the Republican effort foundered late last month, when GOP leaders pulled their bill from the House floor after

failing to win enough votes to pass the measure.

New Jersey Rep. Tom MacArthur, a co-chair of the Republican centrist organization known as the Tuesday Group, has been negotiating a deal on the bill with members of the right-wing Freedom Caucus. However, the changes they are proposing aren't certain to win enough "yes" votes to make passage possible, and congressional leaders signaled a vote was unlikely.

Now, Mr. Trump plans to introduce a blueprint for a tax-code overhaul on Wednesday to show movement on another major legislative priority. White House budget director Mick Mulvaney said on *Fox News Sunday* morning that the president's announcement wouldn't involve a specific legislative proposal, and that the White House is undecided on a crucial sticking point: whether to try to raise as much revenue after any overhaul as the tax code currently pulls in.

Mr. Priebus acknowledged the administration is behind on its executive-branch appointments, but

he blamed Democrats for holding up Mr. Trump's cabinet nominees, which he said has slowed the process. Political differences, he said, also have slowed the process of filling other appointments throughout the government. "We have hundreds of people in the queue," he said.

Karl Rove, former President George W. Bush's political strategist, said the 100-day report card is a "completely phony" measure—but added that Mr. Trump has seen mixed results.

"We're at 100 days and we're going to have to measure," Mr. Rove said on *Fox News*. "And he's got a number of successes: Cabinet, Supreme Court nomination.

"But look, some big setbacks. The travel ban executive order—a mess. Now fixed, but a mess," he added. "Obamacare repeal and replace—failed to get it done. And that's difficult to do, but pressed it early."

Write to Michelle Hackman at Michelle.Hackman@wsj.com



Jennings : In first 100 days, Donald Trump has made all the right enemies

Scott Jennings, Louisville Courier-Journal

6-8 minutes

At this point, President Trump has the lowest presidential approval rating since 1945, per ABC News. But nearly all those who voted for Trump stand by their decision. Maria Mercedes Galuppo (@mariamgaluppo) has more. Buzz60

In West Palm Beach, Fla., on April 8, 2017. (Photo: Alex Brandon, AP)

With President Trump's 100th day in office coming at the end of April, media have already begun the timeless — and meaningless — process of dissecting how he is doing.

One hundred is an arbitrary deadline, born of our society's enduring fascination with round numbers. Nonetheless, we persist in asking presidential candidates what their first 100 days would be like and then judging the winner at the same mark.

Our system of government gives the president enormous power to make things happen in his first 100 days (or in any 100-day period, for that matter). However, the chief executive's ability to move swiftly runs smack into the big white glacier at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, where Congress is better judged in yearly increments.

Signing bills into law requires two branches of government; therefore, it isn't exactly fair to blame the Trump Administration for a Republican-controlled Congress divided against itself. Though Trump lacks a signature legislative accomplishment

in his first 100 days — ala Bush 43's tax cut and Obama's stimulus — it is not for lack of trying (see: Obamacare repeal).

While not as sexy as repealing Obamacare, Trump has signed several meaningful pieces of legislation that thrilled different parts of his political base — a pro-life bill allowing states to strip money from Planned Parenthood; a bill repealing Obama-era anti-coal regulations; and a bill scrapping anti-gun rules signed by Obama.

These were core promises kept by Trump to conservative Republicans. And along the way, he nominated and saw confirmed Justice Neil Gorsuch to the U.S. Supreme Court. You could do worse in a 100-day period. Heck, Trump has signed more than double the number of bills Obama did in his first 100 days.

But Trump has truly made his mark on foreign policy. He has forcefully reasserted American leadership on the world stage after an eight-year vacuum. He fulfilled a campaign pledge to "bomb the hell out of ISIS," killing at least 94 of them using the "mother of all bombs." He put Syria's genocidal dictator, Bashar al-Assad, on notice by Tomahawking his air base after Assad viciously gassed his own people, including women and children. And Trump has dealt firmly with the lunatic despot Kim Jong Un by quite possibly "cyber-terminating" a North Korean missile test, according to plugged-in Washington D.C. news source Axios.

In the face of success on the international stage and some policy wins at home, the mainstream media is desperate to undermine a successful 100-day narrative for Trump. The press has settled on

two storylines — flip-flops and White House staff infighting.

It is true that some of Trump's decisions stand in contrast to statements he made during the campaign. But those who deride his "flip-flops" should remember that governing and campaigning are two different things and that Trump gets more policy latitude from voters because he has never held office before.

While campaigns focus on the promises of candidates, presidencies are more about reacting to circumstances than enacting plans in a static policy environment. Things change all the time, and a chief executive must be prepared to deal. Would we really want a president incapable of reacting to a rapidly changing world?

But in an attempt to split Trump from his political base, the press will continue to create stories about how his flip flops are costing him his most fervent supporters. And while you can always find a crank or two to quote in any article, the truth is that Trump's base is as solid today as it was on Election Day.

Why? Because Donald Trump continues to have all the right enemies, and no flip-flops or stories of White House infighting are going to change that.

POLICING THE USA: A look at race, justice, media

Trump's base supporters are too busy living their lives to obsess over the outrage of the minute in Washington, D.C. They don't follow 50 Beltway reporters on Twitter, hanging on their every snarky comment. They aren't particularly concerned with which Trump

advisors are up or down in the morning political tip sheets.

But they do follow politics closely enough to know that the press still hates Trump, as do the liberal political elites. As far as the average Trump supporter in Middle America is concerned, Trump must be doing just fine.

And to make matters better for Trump, his political opposition, the hapless Democrat Party, has taken their participation ribbon view of society to laughable lengths, celebrating their loss in a recent Kansas special election like they'd won the lottery. They continuously relitigate the sideshow issue of Trump's tax returns (newsflash: this was settled by the Electoral College). And today's battle whine? Mitch McConnell was mean to Elizabeth Warren in the hallway!

The policy news flying out of Washington is head spinning, but Trump's political enemies are the same old collection of media properties and out-of-touch liberals. That tells Trump's core supporters all they need to know — that the antiestablishment president they sent to Washington is doing exactly what they asked him to do. In the first 100 days, Trump has turned Washington upside down, pissing off all the right people along the way.

Scott Jennings has advised President George W. Bush and U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. He is a partner at RunSwitch Public Relations and a columnist at The (Louisville) Courier-Journal, where this piece was first published. Follow him on Twitter @ScottJenningsKY.



Disapproval of President Donald Trump Grows in Latest WSJ/NBC News Poll

Rebecca Ballhaus

7-9 minutes

Updated April 23, 2017 4:07 p.m. ET

Americans are dissatisfied with President Donald Trump as he nears his 100th day in office, with views of his effectiveness and ability to shake up Washington slipping, a new Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll finds.

More than half of Americans—some 54%—disapprove of the job Mr. Trump is doing as president, compared with 40% who approve, a 14-point gap. That is a weaker showing than in the Journal/NBC News poll in late February, when disapproval outweighed approval by 4 points.

While Mr. Trump still draws overwhelming support from his own party, he risks losing the nation's political middle ground. Among independents, disapproval rose markedly, to 54%, while 30%

approved of his job performance. That 24-point gap compares with a 9-point margin of disapproval in February.

The survey of 900 adults found some bright spots for the president, including strong support for the missile strikes he ordered on Syria in response to a chemical attack there in early April. More than six people in 10 approved of the military action, and half approved of his handling of Syria overall.

Not a single member of Congress who represents the territory on the southwest border has expressed support for President Trump's request for \$1.4 billion to begin construction of his promised wall, according to a Wall Street Journal survey.

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Separately, nearly as many people in the survey approved as disapproved of Mr. Trump's handling of the economy.

Still, Mr. Trump enters his fourth month in office with a lower job-approval rating than posted by the prior 11 presidents dating to Dwight Eisenhower, an analysis of WSJ/NBC and Gallup polling shows. The only other president with job approval under 50% at this point was Gerald Ford, who notched 48% support after assuming the presidency following Richard Nixon's resignation in 1974.

The largely negative view of Mr. Trump comes as he nears the 100-day benchmark after a turbulent start in office. While his administration successfully guided his Supreme Court nominee, Neil Gorsuch, to confirmation, efforts to replace the Affordable Care Act, a central campaign promise, have failed so far. The administration hasn't made substantial progress on its ambition to overhaul the tax code. Some goals, such as removing the U.S. from a 12-nation trade pact, have been accomplished through his executive powers.

Notably, the new survey found a historically high share of Americans—some 57%—believe the government should do more to solve problems and help people, compared with 39% who said the government is

doing too many things better left to business and individuals. Democrats have long said government should do more to help people, but the new survey found other groups agreeing in larger numbers. Some 59% of independents said government should do more, up from 38% in late 2010, when the tea-party movement was growing. The percentage of Republicans calling for more government action grew to 28%, up 11 points.

Mr. Trump has laid out a nuanced stance on government services. He has broken with many in his party to defend the social safety net, pledging not to cut Medicare or Social Security. At the same time, he has proposed a budget that would scale back domestic spending, and nonpartisan government analysts say the health bill he backed would add to the ranks of the uninsured.

"Voters very clearly wanted change in 2016," said Jeff Horwitz, a Democratic pollster whose firm conducted the Journal/NBC News survey with the firm of Republican pollster Bill McInturff. "The question is, is the direction that he's taking things the change that the voters wanted and were hoping for?"

Americans are roughly split on the president's handling of the economy, with 44% saying they approve and 46% saying they disapprove. Mr. Trump, who has invited dozens of business executives to meet with him at the White House, as well as labor leaders, often touts his efforts to create jobs, and the president has signed a series of measures intended to roll back regulations on businesses.

In other assessments of Mr. Trump's presidency, 35% of poll respondents said he was off to a good or great start in office, compared with 54% who said the same of Mr. Obama eight years ago. Nearly two-thirds of Americans, some 64%, said Mr. Trump was off to a poor or fair start.

About one-third of Americans said Mr. Trump has been more effective than past presidents, a larger share than said so of George W. Bush or Bill Clinton near the start of their terms. Some 44% said Mr. Trump has been less effective than prior new presidents.

The assessments of Mr. Trump's job performance are colored by views of his personal qualities. The share who said Mr. Trump was honest and trustworthy, effective in

getting things done and able to change business in Washington all declined from February.

The poll found a sharp divide in views of the president between two types of Trump voters: those who said they had backed him because they liked him or his policies, and those who voted for him because of opposition to his Democratic rival, Hillary Clinton.

More than 70% of pro-Trump voters, for instance, said the president had the right temperament for office, compared with about one-quarter of the anti-Clinton voters.

The Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll was based on nationwide telephone interviews with 900 adults from April 17-20. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.27 percentage points, with larger margins of error for subgroups.

Write to Rebecca Ballhaus at Rebecca.Ballhaus@wsj.com

Appeared in the Apr. 24, 2017, print edition as 'New Poll Shows Negative View of Trump.'



Editorial : Ivanka Trump's foreign entanglements put America's reputation on the line

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Page).

April 23 at 7:01 PM

IS THE president's softened tone on China a strategic choice, or does it reflect his daughter Ivanka's extensive business ties to the country? Was the early camaraderie between President Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe influenced by a business deal between Ms. Trump's company and a state-associated Japanese firm, after the president's daughter sat in on a meeting with Mr. Abe? Probably not; yet such questions inevitably arise given the combination of Ms. Trump's business entanglements and her White House role.

The entanglements would have been concerning if she had never entered the White House. Playing

both roles puts America's reputation on the line. Foreigners must wonder: Is the United States a country where government actions are intertwined with the private interests of the president's family? What does the United States surrender in ethical standing when the president's daughter is both a close adviser and a businesswoman with operations that depend on the goodwill of foreign governments?

The Associated Press reported last week that "global sales of Ivanka Trump merchandise have surged and the company has applied for at least nine new trademarks in the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Canada and the U.S." Ms. Trump's company secured valuable trademarks in China on the same day she helped welcome Chinese President Xi Jinping to Mar-a-Lago on an official visit.

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Ms. Trump and her advisers say that she has relinquished most control over the business to a trust run by her family members. Why not just sell her business? Because, they may say, its value is based on her personal branding, so the Trump name and reputation would still be for sale. Why not establish a blind trust? Because retaining some control allows her to reject potentially shady deals. Won't she run afoul of White House ethics rules if she offers advice on, say, trade with China? Executive-branch rules have permitted certain conflicts of interest in the past, and she can recuse herself on a case-by-case basis, with advice from lawyers and government ethics experts.

But the fact remains that foreign governments will see approving trademark applications, financing and business deals as a way to curry favor with the U.S. government. As long as Mr. Trump is president, would a country such

as China ever reject an Ivanka trademark application?

For decades, the United States has advocated the principle that official corruption is a scourge to be stamped out, above all by isolating government from the private interests of those in power — and of their families. This principle is enshrined in the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which prohibits Americans from participating in the bribery that undermines so many foreign economies. The risk now is that the Trump administration will taint that advocacy, allowing foreign leaders to argue that the United States is no better than any Central Asian dynasty. Rather than defending a narrow legal case, the Trumps should be bending over backward to avoid any suggestion of hypocrisy. Ms. Trump can be an adviser on foreign affairs; her business should not simultaneously be expanding or seeking rights and benefits overseas.



E. J. Dionne Jr. : Sessions's aloha-baiting could bring attention to the real problem

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

6-7 minutes

Imagine if I began a column about Attorney General Jeff Sessions this way: "I really am amazed that an attorney general who hails from a former Confederate state in the Deep South can issue a series of orders wrecking efforts to reform police practices, cutting back on voting rights and restarting the war on drugs."

The specifics of what Sessions is up to are accurate, but that knock on the land of cotton would leave my inbox bulging with rebukes to bigotry against Dixie, and I'd probably get many YouTube links to Lynyrd Skynyrd singing "Sweet Home Alabama." (Don't go to the trouble. I already have the song on my iPhone.)

Yet the man whose job is to be the top lawyer for all of us said something very similar about a federal judge in Hawaii who blocked President Trump's travel ban. For the record, here is Sessions's islophobic sentence:

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"I really am amazed that a judge sitting on an island in the Pacific can issue an order that stops the president of the United States from what appears to be clearly his statutory and constitutional power."

The obvious problem in Sessions's comments, made to conservative talk-show host Mark Levin (and unearthed by CNN's Andrew Kaczynski), is that Hawaii is a state like every other

and has been in the union for 58 years, as Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) helpfully pointed out. Are newer states inferior to older ones?

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

The Post's Matt Zapotosky explains why a federal judge in Hawaii on March 15 ruled to freeze President Trump's second travel ban hours before it went into effect. The Post's Matt Zapotosky explains why a federal judge in Hawaii ruled to freeze President Trump's second travel ban hours before it went into effect. (Video: Bastien Inzaurrealde/Photo: Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

There is also the Trump administration habit of trying to discredit any judge who rules against it, the stuff of autocratic regimes. Members of the executive branch have every right to criticize and appeal lower-court decisions, but what Sessions suggested is that Derrick Watson, the federal judge in question, somehow lost his right to rule because of where his court is located.

Hawaii has been a special place in conservative demonology because many on the right, once they had to concede that former president Barack Obama was actually born there and not in Kenya, wanted to hold on to the idea that he came into the world in a location that was, well, different.

And Sessions may have picked up his anti-Hawaii cues from right-wing media, which reported that Obama had "unexpectedly" flown alone to

Hawaii on March 13, two days before Watson issued his ruling, and that Watson just happened to go to Harvard Law School with the former president.

A conservativetreehouse.com blog post asked: "Coincidences? Or did President Obama travel to Hawaii to initiate, facilitate, or participate in the decision by Judge Watson?" On March 16, Rush Limbaugh got the story out there and then insisted that he wouldn't traffic in speculation. "I want to mention also Barack Obama has been in Hawaii the past few days," he said, but added, "I don't know if Obama met with the judge." Nicely played, Rush.

Here's one good thing that could come from Sessions's aloha-baiting: It might start focusing attention on the rest of that opening sentence and on the damage the attorney general is inflicting. Doing so would belie the idea that Trump is somehow becoming more "moderate."

Sessions has started switching the Justice Department's stance on voting rights cases, away from minority plaintiffs and in favor of states that passed discriminatory measures such as voter ID laws restricting access to the ballot. The new Justice Department stance did not stop U.S. District Judge Nelva Gonzales Ramos from declaring earlier this month that Texas's strict voter ID law "was passed, at least in part, with a discriminatory purpose." Thank goodness Ramos can't be criticized as one of those island judges.

Sessions also ordered department officials to review reform agreements between its civil rights division and troubled police forces nationwide, an Obama-era initiative aimed at restoring community confidence in the police after a series of shootings of unarmed black men.

Jonathan Smith, executive director of the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, called the move "terrifying," but in a USA Today op-ed last week, Sessions invoked classic law-and-order rhetoric, saying he would "not sign consent decrees for political expediency that will cost more lives by handcuffing the police instead of the criminals."

And as Sari Horwitz reported in The Washington Post, Sessions is bringing back the old war on drugs, thus stopping in its tracks a once-promising criminal justice reform movement of conservatives, liberals and libertarians concerned with over-incarceration, particularly in African American communities.

You don't have to live on an island to worry about what Sessions is doing in the name of justice.

Read more from E.J. Dionne's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.



Hackman

3 minutes

April 23, 2017 5:47 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Former President Barack Obama is set to emerge from a self-imposed public absence on Monday with an event on "civic engagement" at the University of Chicago, an appearance that will kick off a series of public events and private speeches.

Mr. Obama, who had vowed to avoid meddling in President Donald Trump's handling of the office, has largely declined to make public statements as his successor works to dismantle portions of his

Obama to Appear at Chicago Event

Michelle

legacy, including on immigration, health care and the environment.

Instead, the former president has taken a succession of vacations, with photographs most recently showing him on a trip to French Polynesia, where he was seen with rock star Bruce Springsteen, actor Tom Hanks and media mogul Oprah Winfrey.

Mr. Obama has set up a postpresidential office and staff in Washington while his younger daughter Sasha finishes high school. So far, though, details on his postpresidential plans have been scant.

That is set to change on Monday, when students from across the Chicago area will gather to discuss the mechanics of civic engagement,

according to a statement from Mr. Obama's office.

That appearance will be followed in May by one in Boston, where Mr. Obama will attend an awards ceremony, and another in Germany, where he will join German Chancellor Angela Merkel for an event at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. He is also expected to deliver several private, paid speeches across the U.S. and Europe, according to media reports.

Mr. Trump has been facing growing resistance from Democratic Party activists, who are working to stymie his policy agenda ahead of the 2018 midterm elections.

Many of those activists have expressed a desire to hear from Mr. Obama on specific issues, but he

has largely steered clear since Mr. Trump's inauguration.

One public statement released by Mr. Obama's office since the inauguration, following the rocky implementation of Mr. Trump's travel ban, took a muted tone—praising the resulting protests as a form of civic engagement.

"Citizens exercising their Constitutional right to assemble, organize and have their voices heard by their elected officials is exactly what we expect to see when American values are at stake," the January statement read.

Write to Michelle Hackman at Michelle.Hackman@wsj.com



Demonstrators Take to the Streets in Support of Science

Daniela

Hernandez in New York and Betsy McKay in Atlanta

7-9 minutes

April 22, 2017 5:05 p.m. ET

As Diana and Brendan Sun waited for a subway Saturday in New York, they carried signs urging people to “thank a scientist” if they had ever used a cellphone, computer, or television or taken medicine for diabetes, a cold, or high blood pressure.

The mother and son were on their way to the first March for Science, one of a number of rallies intended to counter perceived global attacks on science. The demonstrations—led by scientists and originally proposed online—are part of a movement among researchers toward increased public activism. The Suns were among the tens of thousands who attended the more than 500 rallies world-wide.

Among the movement’s goals: to push for evidence-based legislation and to communicate to the public the social and economic impacts of scientific research. Dr. Sun, a dermatologist, and her son also hoped to change the public’s perception of scientists, who have long been portrayed as villains in movies and books like “Frankenstein,” they said.

Anna Parker, a masters student in zoology attending the march in Laramie, Wyo., said she hoped the march would spark conversations among people of different political leanings about the role science has in local communities, including its part in job creation. She said she fears the proposed cuts to research funding will limit her ability to work as a scientist.

“I’m not going to be marching against Trump. I’m going to be marching for science,” Ms. Parker said. “I hope that comes through.”

Representatives for companies participating in the march had a similar view. “We see it as a great opportunity to get out and showcase science...and its contributions to humanity,” said Gene Kinney, the president and chief executive of

Prothena Corp., a biotech company focused on disorders like Parkinson’s disease. The therapies the company is developing, he said, are based on years of basic research. About half of its 100 employees expressed interest in marching in Dublin and San Francisco, where Prothena has offices, according to Dr. Kinney.

In advance of Saturday’s events, the organizers of the March for Science stressed that the rallies weren’t an indictment of the Trump administration or any one political party. Representatives from scientific organizations like the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science, said during a press conference Wednesday that decades of federal funding cuts for research, scientific misinformation, and world-wide attacks on the free exchange of ideas were drivers for the movement.

The march is “international...therefore it can’t just be about Trump,” said Rush Holt, the president of AAAS, a March for Science partner, in an interview. Reducing the marches to that “diminishes the significance,” the physicist and former Democratic congressman added.

Participants and speakers at several of the rallies also said the gatherings weren’t partisan, but they sharply criticized a Trump administration proposal to slash the budgets of federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as its stance on climate change.

At the Chicago rally, Iliana Genkova, a Bulgarian immigrant who studies wind-data simulations to improve weather forecasting at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said she attended “to secure my job and save the planet along the way.” She

carried a sign simply saying “Science Matters.”

The marches were held on Earth Day, which was started in 1970 to increase awareness of environmental protection.

Top officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a federal government agency based in Atlanta, didn’t participate officially in the march in that city, which attracted about 12,000 participants, according to its organizers. “The agency has no involvement and does not determine what employees do on their personal time,” said Kathy Harben, an agency spokeswoman.

Some CDC employees did attend the Atlanta rally. One epidemiologist said he had come to support science as a nonpartisan issue. “It’s important for everyone regardless of your political philosophy to take science seriously,” he said.

At the events in New York and Washington, D.C., some attendees carried signs with pro-environment, pro-science and anti-Trump messages. Some demonstrators said they were concerned about the Trump administration’s immigration policies and how they could affect research and the country’s ability to continue to be a leader in science in technology.

When the New York march passed by Trump International Hotel & Tower in Midtown Manhattan, protesters booed and chanted “Lock him up.”

Along the march route in New York, where some vendors sold anti-Trump merchandise, James MacDonald, an actuary, carried a sign in support of President Donald Trump. Mr. MacDonald said the protesters were pretending the march was about science, when it really was in opposition to the president and his policies.

Some scientists who chose to sit out the march said they worried marching would further politicize

science and undermine efforts to work with legislators in both parties to craft science-informed policies related to health care and the environment.

“I am concerned that there is a line between actively communicating what the facts are, what the risks are, what the impacts are—versus, as a science community, being outwardly partisan,” said David Titley, the director for Pennsylvania State University’s Center for Solutions to Weather and Climate Risk. “It will be a distinction that is lost. I hope the damage isn’t too bad,” he said.

The test for the marches’ organizers and attendees going forward will be how well they can translate the momentum beyond the march.

That will require a “grass roots” movement that mobilizes scientists and their supporters to engage with their communities, schools, and local legislators more regularly, according to Lucky Tran, who holds a Ph.D. in molecular biology and is one of the marches’ organizers.

Some organizations, like Ciencia Puerto Rico, a nonprofit that advocates for science-based policies and investments in science and tech education, have already been doing that work and plan to continue it after the rallies, said Mónica Feliú-Mójer, the organization’s vice director. While the march can bring “visibility” to such issues, it is unlikely to solve them, she added.

“It’s not a sprint,” Dr. Feliú-Mójer said. “It’s a marathon.”

—Ellie Kincaid, Joe Barrett and Dave Cole contributed to this article.

Write to Daniela Hernandez at daniela.hernandez@wsj.com and Betsy McKay at betsy.mckay@wsj.com

Appeared in the Apr. 24, 2017, print edition as ‘Demonstrators Take to the Streets to Support Science.’



Bill Nye: Science made America great

Bill Nye

4-5 minutes

Story highlights

- The US has long respected and promoted science, Nye writes
- Nye: Science is being undermined by ideological forces motivated to maintain the status quo

Bill Nye, known as Bill Nye the Science Guy, is an American science educator, television presenter, and mechanical engineer. He is the CEO of The Planetary Society, the world’s largest non-profit space interest group. The opinions expressed are his own.

(CNN)I was proud to join thousands of concerned citizens, scientists and engineers in Saturday’s March for Science. With more than 600 marches taking place around the world, we conveyed that science is

political, not partisan, and science should shape our policies.

Although it is the means by which humankind discovers objective truths in nature, science is and has always been political. Article I, Section 8 of the US Constitution

refers to

promoting “the progress of science and useful arts” to motivate innovators, stimulate the economy and establish just laws.

The US has become the most powerful nation on Earth and among the greatest in history, because it has long respected and promoted science. Countless policies, from military deployments to regulations that control the formula of a shampoo, are based on science.

Scientific research depends on government investment

(approximately \$65 billion in the US last year), which itself relies on a social compact: that basic research

across all fields is beneficial to a nation.

Currently, science is being actively undermined by ideological forces motivated to maintain the status quo rather than advance the nation's long-term interest. This is especially true of the extractive fossil fuel industries. When facing tides of deliberate misinformation, scientists, engineers and researchers have taken it upon themselves to organize and raise awareness about their professions and the vital importance of the scientific enterprise.

By marching, scientists had no choice but to engage more in the political sphere. They face staggering proposed

budget cuts

in energy, medical and environmental research. The denial of the accepted facts of science, along with the rejection of well-established theories -- such as evolution and especially climate change -- have cultivated anti-science policies that harm people, economies and our global environment.

Science is a process that enables continual innovation, extraordinary public works, reliable transportation, and food for the world's billions. Consider what the US has achieved in space science; the national pride and cosmic perspective of our planetary home are priceless. Science is universal. Countries around the world have followed suit and established space programs to garner similar benefits.

Without science, the US, any country in fact, cannot compete on the world stage. Yet today, we have a great many lawmakers, not just here but around the world, deliberately ignoring and actively suppressing science. It's another formula -- a formula for disaster. Imagine your world without printed words of any kind -- paper, electronic or otherwise.

How would your life be without electricity, let alone information technology? Consider a city with no sewers. Be thankful for antibiotics and polio vaccines. These technologies derive from our science.

To suppress scientific discoveries such as evolution, the benefit of vaccines, or global warming apparently based on nothing but

intuition will soon prove costly and fruitless -- and in some heretofore-productive agricultural regions, very costly and literally fruitless. These examples and countless others are connected to policy issues, which can only be addressed competently by understanding the natural laws in play.

As a society, we want informed citizens, who can make good judgments in the voting booth. We ignore natural laws at our peril.

At the 600-plus Marches for Science around the world this Earth Day, we reminded everyone, our lawmakers especially, that science serves our society, and science must shape our public policies. The science marches can prove effective by prompting action. May the facts be with us.

**The
Washington
Post**

eports

13-16 minutes

'Everyone tunes in': Inside Trump's obsession with cable TV (UNE)

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

advisers said, also uses details gleaned from cable news as a starting point for policy discussions or a request for more information, and appears on TV himself when he wants to appeal directly to the public.

Some White House officials — who early on would appear on TV to emphasize points to their boss, who was likely to be watching just steps away in his residence — have started tuning into Fox News' "Fox & Friends" because they know the president habitually clicks it on after waking near dawn.

But Trump's habits have consequences far beyond being the quirky, unchanging ways of a 70-year-old man who keeps an eye on cable as he goes about his day, as his confidants describe his behavior. Foreign diplomats have urged their governments' leaders to appear on television when they're stateside as a means of making their case to Trump, and U.S. lawmakers regard a TV appearance as nearly on par with an Oval Office meeting in terms of showcasing their standing or viewpoints to the president.

Former House speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) said Trump's intense monitoring cuts both ways. "At times, it'll lead to mistakes," he said. "Other times, it lets him move with astounding speed."

"It's all part of him being this work in progress who is constantly listening and evolving," Gingrich added.

Explaining his decision to launch 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at a Syrian air base, Trump even cited, publicly and privately, the gruesome images of dead and dying Syrian

children poisoned with the nerve agent sarin, images that dominated television for several days.

"President Trump is someone who comes to the White House with a sophisticated understanding of how to communicate, the power of television, the power of imagery, the power of message, and how message, messenger and delivery all work together," said Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the president.

The president's fascination with television is born of personal experience. Trump, long a fixture in the New York tabloids, did not become a household presence until 2004, when he began hosting NBC's hit reality TV show "The Apprentice." He relished the attention, boasting about and fretting over his ratings, much as he now handles political polls.

He is also a natural showman. During the campaign, he riveted viewers with his raucous rallies, where he often spoke for more than an hour without any notes or teleprompters. And in TV interviews, he sometimes offers tips on matters including lighting and chair placement, with an intuitive sense of what makes for good TV.

"He is very attuned to the fact that cable networks have 24 hours a day that they need to fill — and if you're interesting, you are gold," Gingrich said.

Always tuned in

Trump's quotidian viewing is unremarkable, based on his profile. Fox News's average prime-time viewer last year, for instance, was 68 years old and mostly white, and the average American watches

more than four hours per day, according to Nielsen data.

On his campaign plane, Trump watched television on full volume — usually Fox News, sometimes CNN — almost constantly, said someone who flew with him, shushing his aides whenever he himself came on the screen and listening with rapt attention. When Hillary Clinton appeared, he'd similarly quiet his team, often before pointing a finger at the TV and scolding: "She's lying! She's lying!"

To relax, however, he would occasionally watch the Golf Channel, while on his plane or in the clubhouses of some of his private courses.

Now that he's in the White House, friends and aides describe a president who still consumes a steady diet of cable news. During an intimate lunch recently with a key outside ally in a small West Wing dining room, for instance, Trump repeatedly paused the conversation to make the group watch a particularly combative Spicer briefing.

Trump turns on the television almost as soon as he wakes, then checks in periodically throughout the day in the small dining room off the Oval Office, and continues late into the evening when he's back in his private residence. "Once he goes upstairs, there's no managing him," said one adviser.

Sometimes, at night, he hate-watches cable shows critical of him, while chatting on the phone with friends, said someone familiar with the president's routine — a quirk a senior official jokingly called "multi-teching."

In the morning, the president typically flips between "Fox & Friends," Maria Bartiromo's show on Fox Business and CNBC's "Squawk Box." West Wing aides assert that the president stopped watching MSNBC's "Morning Joe" after the show's hosts grew increasingly critical of his presidency, but some confidants think he still tunes in, especially for the top of the program.

His feelings toward CNN and its president, Jeff Zucker, who greenlighted "The Apprentice" when he was running NBC Entertainment, are similarly fraught. Trump is furious with Zucker for what he thinks is the network's unfair coverage but admires Zucker's business bona fides and ratings growth, said a friend.

Most of the televisions in the West Wing display four channels at all times — CNN, Fox, Fox Business and MSNBC.

The president also likes One America News, a conservative-leaning channel whose correspondent often gets questions in Spicer's daily news briefing, and before the campaign told an aide that he occasionally enjoyed watching Al Jazeera.

He is still in touch with Roger Ailes, the former Fox News chairman who was ousted amid charges of sexual harassment and who unofficially advised Trump near the end of the presidential campaign. But, Trump has told friends, he thinks Fox News is "nicer" to him in the post-Ailes era. Fox News host Sean Hannity, meanwhile, is especially close to Trump's two older sons, as well as to the president.

"For all the talk about how the media is so tough on Trump, which they are, the most interesting thing about Trump and the media is that in the end, Trump totally manipulated the media," said Stephen Moore, an economist for the Heritage Foundation who served as a senior adviser to the Trump campaign. "The media is why he won — because he completely dominated the media. That's the irony of the whole thing."

Appearances matter

West Wing staffers have begun including local news clippings in his morning briefing, said one, noting that an issue such as rolling back

environmental regulations may earn the president poor press nationally but a more positive headline — "Trump saves coal jobs," for example — in a local paper.

But Trump — who has boasted to several advisers and friends about having "the world's best TiVo" — remains most focused on what he sees on his flat screens, going so far as to compliment print reporters on their television appearances.

He can also be critical. When Spicer did his first briefing-room appearance in an ill-fitting gray pinstripe suit, the president made his displeasure known, and Spicer returned the next week more crisply attired. Trump often asks his West Wing staff whether they happened to catch their colleagues' TV hits, praising dramatically confrontational or cool and smooth appearances.

"He prefers facts and figures; he likes when people are defending but also explaining. He likes toughness but also appreciates polish, poise and positivity," Conway said. "He appreciates when you don't look like people are bothering you or getting the best of you. He loves when you call out media bias, or what the anchors have said or not said."

Trump was especially incensed, said a senior adviser, by what he saw as cable news' blanket coverage of his campaign and what was portrayed as his administration's overly cozy ties to Russia.

Another time, Trump took particular issue with the aesthetics of a male commentator who appeared sometimes as a guest on "Morning Joe," and began pestering the hosts, imploring them to dump the analyst who so offended his visual sensibilities, said someone with knowledge of the episode.

But Trump's interest in TV has proved a welcome — and at times surprising — point of entry to the White House for lawmakers and even pundits.

Rep. Elijah E. Cummings (D-Md.) once appealed to Trump directly on "Morning Joe," addressing the camera to implore the president to call him so the two could chat about prescription drugs. A day or so later, Cummings said, the president himself responded.

"I was a little surprised that he called — I thought his secretary would call, but he actually called," Cummings said. "But it's the way he operates. And he does watch television and he's very critical of television, and I thought we had a good conversation."

Gingrich added that sometimes after an appearance on "Fox & Friends," he'll have just left the studio and not even reached his car when his cellphone will ring: the president calling to tell him, "That was good."

Indeed, it is now a running joke in television green rooms that if a trade association or special-interest group wants to reach the president, the smartest use of their money is to buy morning television ad time or book a representative on air.

House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.), a friend of the president's, said he has been impressed with how Trump will call attention to individual lawmakers in meetings, recalling who said what about him or his policies on TV.

"I've watched him in rooms where he goes through person by person. He clearly keeps track," McCarthy said. "He's not just watching big shows, either. He has called us up after watching our news conferences here at the Capitol."

Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill.), a nattily dressed 39-year-old former Air Force pilot who now serves in the Air National Guard, was taken aback when Trump singled him out during an Oval Office meeting with several House Republicans during health-care discussions, telling the group to pay attention to how sharply attired and articulate Kinzinger is on TV.

"We all come into the Oval, and right when he sees me, he goes, 'You're really good on TV,'" Kinzinger said, confirming the anecdote with a chuckle. "Then, during our meeting, he eventually gets to me, and that's when he tells the whole group. It was fun to hear."

Not everyone appreciates Trump's television obsession. Some of his tweets, often prompted by TV segments, have left his aides scrambling to reverse-engineer information to support his dubious assertions. Others worry about a president who can seem to be

swayed by the last thing he sees on TV, a medium geared more for entertainment than actual policymaking.

Rick Wilson, a veteran Republican consultant and vocal Trump critic, said a number of Republicans in Congress and in establishment party circles find the president's habits bizarre to the point of alarming, although they rarely say so publicly because they do not want to draw his wrath.

"There are many conversations where it ends: 'But of course, God knows, he could watch Fox News tomorrow and change his whole position,'" Wilson said. "They don't get him, because he's a creature of television and they're creatures of politics. They care about the details, he cares about what's on TV."

The president, Wilson added, "is a TV character to them, and they have to navigate around it."

Either way, Trump's viewing habits have seeped into the ether of both the White House and the nation's capital. During the Republicans' failed health-care push last month, Trump invited a small group of conservative activists to meet with him in the Oval Office.

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When the meeting was over, said someone with knowledge of the gathering, the president made a plea to the participants: "I know you have already said it's a bad deal, but Kellyanne is going to walk you out to the microphones and I'd love it if you could say it's great," Trump said.

The group never did embrace the health-care proposal. But speaking briefly to reporters that evening, the attendees were polite and took pains not to criticize Trump himself.

And later, as they began doing television appearances to gin up opposition to the bill, they were always careful to mention that they appreciated the open dialogue with the president and his inviting them into the West Wing to chat.

After all, they knew he'd be watching.

Dan Balz contributed to this report.