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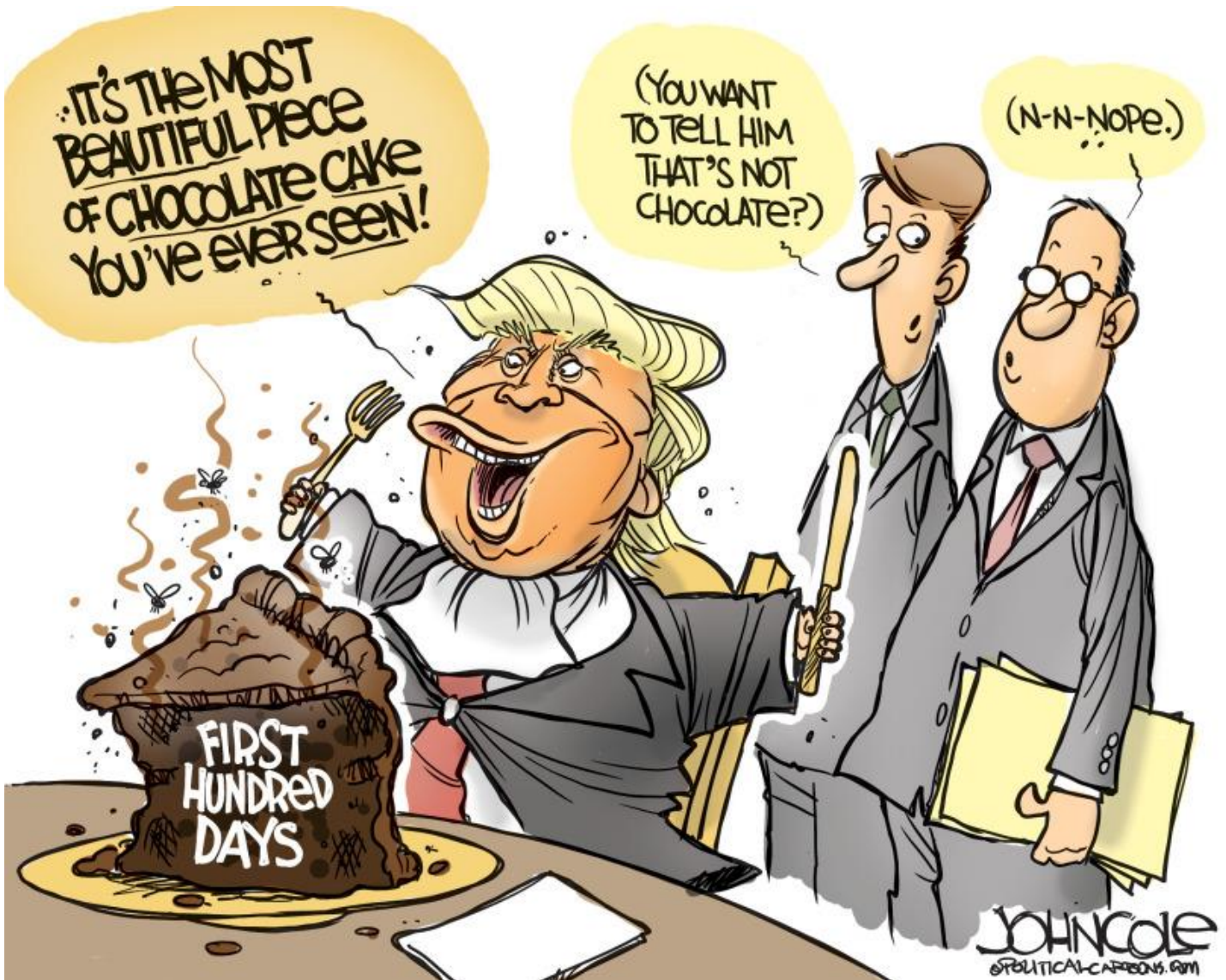
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FRANCE – EUROPE

**THE WALL
 STREET
 JOURNAL.**
 Marcus Walker

7-9 minutes

April 24, 2017 7:54 p.m. ET

The ascension of centrist Emmanuel Macron as the heavy favorite in France’s presidential race spurred investors to set aside the political worries that have long plagued European markets and to make new bets on economic growth.

Mr. Macron is now seen as the leader in May 7’s runoff against second-place finisher Marine Le Pen, whose pledge to dismantle the euro had damped prices of euro assets and the common currency itself.

The former investment banker’s good showing sent stocks and the euro sharply higher while triggering a sharp selloff in German government bonds, which investors had bought as a haven from populist politicians such as Ms. Le Pen. Mr. Macron won the first round with 24% of the vote, according to an official tally, ahead of Ms. Le Pen with 21.3%.

From Europe’s trading floors to its chancelleries, hopes are rising that the continent can emerge from nearly a decade of crises.

The euro currency zone has struggled more than any other world region to recover from the global financial crisis. It was still emerging from its long slump when a major migration wave further boosted antiestablishment politicians such as Ms. Le Pen who want to reverse Europe’s deepening integration.

Sunday’s French vote showcased the nationalist challenge to the status quo, but also the strength of a gathering backlash from broadly centrist voters who want to defend the European Union and the euro.

A long-awaited strengthening of Europe’s economic recovery is adding to the sense that the continent may be over the worst of

French Vote Fuels Hopes for Growth Across Europe (UNE)

Mike Bird, Jon Sindreu and

its troubles. Investors are now clearly betting against a political earthquake that brings down the euro or the EU.

The euro strengthened more than 1% against the dollar Monday to above \$1.08. France’s stock market rose 4.1%, led by its big banks. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1.1%.

One clear sign of the market’s growing optimism was the rise in yields of German bonds, indicating that investors believe that the strengthening eurozone economy will allow the European Central Bank to reduce its monetary stimulus measures, including bond purchases.

But Europe’s political uncertainty hasn’t suddenly disappeared. Ms. Le Pen can still win the presidency. Antiestablishment, euroskeptic parties have a shot at winning Italian elections due in early 2018.

Even if Ms. Le Pen doesn’t win the presidency, the popular discontent with governing elites that she tapped is likely to linger—and could return with a vengeance if Mr. Macron fails to overcome France’s sense of national malaise.

And the May 7 election might yet prove tighter than many expect. Ms. Le Pen now has two weeks to frame her duel with Mr. Macron as a plebiscite on globalization and the status quo—neither of which are popular in France.

What’s more, many Europe-watchers have long viewed Italy as the place where the eurozone could crack. The country’s deep-seated economic stagnation has fragmented its political landscape and weakened public support for the euro.

“It is probably too early for markets to see a big relief rally just yet,” said Anna Stupnytska, global economist at Fidelity International.

Still, Mr. Macron is the clear favorite to become French president, with opinion polls putting him ahead by 20 percentage points or more.

Some investors say Europe’s stabilizing politics could even turn the region’s economic recovery into a boom.

“This allows investors to get back to the basics, to think about economic fundamentals and how it affects monetary policy,” said Paul Meggyesi, a foreign-exchange strategist at J.P. Morgan. “Given how mispriced European assets are, there’s scope for significant moves,” he said.

German and other northern European bonds considered havens sold off sharply Monday. Gold, another haven that has benefited from concern over political risk, fell 1.52% in the wake of the French vote.

French government bonds, meanwhile, rallied alongside those of Italy, Spain and Portugal, the three European markets that typically sell off when investors are concerned about a eurozone breakup.

Investors’ nerves had already been soothed somewhat by a mid-March election in the Netherlands that saw the defeat of anti-euro populist candidate Geert Wilders. And in Germany, support for the euroskeptic Alternative for Germany party ahead of the Sept. 24 election is now below 10%.

“The perception that the center, the establishment, is reasserting itself is good for investors,” said Kevin O’Nolan, portfolio manager at Fidelity International.

Eurozone business surveys published by Markit on Friday indicated activity is at its strongest level in six years. The region’s unemployment rate, at 9.5%, is the lowest since May 2009 and consumer prices rose 1.5% in March from a year earlier, not far from the central bank’s target of close to but below 2%.

Investors had always seen Mr. Macron as one of the more market-friendly candidates in the French election—and as the foremost supporter of deeper eurozone

integration. During the campaign, he backed a dedicated budget and parliament for the currency bloc. After the vote, spokesmen for German Chancellor Angela Merkel and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker threw their support behind him.

As the country’s economy minister, from 2014 to 2016, Mr. Macron made it easier for employers to lay off workers. His policies include corporate tax cuts and an additional €50 billion (\$54 billion) program of public investment.

Market-oriented overhauls of French labor laws, taxation and other areas could boost the country’s long-term growth potential, many economists say. The country’s problem since 2011, however, is that it has been growing well below its potential. France’s sluggish recovery since the height of the eurozone crisis has deepened the longstanding sense of national unease.

Victory for Mr. Macron could, by removing political uncertainty, unleash some of the “animal spirits” that have been lacking from France’s recovery in recent years, says Nicolas Véron, an economist at Brussels think tank Bruegel.

Inflows into Europe’s equity markets have already been picking up, according to data provider EPFR Global. Investors have moved about \$5 billion into European equities since the beginning of the year, with a rise in inflows in the past four weeks.

As the eurozone’s economy gathers steam, the ECB may start acting.

ECB policy makers have been wary of signaling an end to their monetary stimulus amid the risk posed by the rise of euroskepticism. Mr. Macron’s first-place finish puts a reduction of stimulus back on the agenda, investors say.

“The focus will now shift to the improving eurozone economy and the prospect of the European Central Bank beginning to withdraw monetary policy stimulus,” said Anthony Doyle, fixed-interest

investment director at M&G Investments.

Still, while the central bank has already moved to curb its stimulus in recent months, by slowing its bond purchases and phasing out a series

of free loans, ECB chief Mario Draghi warned in Washington Friday that underlying inflation in the eurozone was too weak and the bloc's economy still needed "very substantial" support from the central bank.

—Tom Fairless contributed to this article.

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Macron's strong finish in the French election shows populist wave may be ebbing (UNE)

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

8-11 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 — In this era of fiery populism and muscular anti-globalist forces, politicians across Europe are suddenly discovering an electoral surprise.

It might actually pay to embrace the European Union.

The top finisher in the first round of the French presidential election on Sunday is Emmanuel Macron, a 39-year-old centrist who jets to Berlin to give speeches in English. The blue-and-yellow banner of the E.U. flutters off his campaign headquarters. He is strongly favored to beat his anti-Europe rival, Marine Le Pen, in a May 7 runoff.

After years in which the E.U. was the favorite foil for ascendant politicians on the continent, the 28-nation club may be making a comeback despite Brexit and President Trump's euroskepticism. The Netherlands' staunchly pro-European Green Left party quadrupled its support in elections last month. Former European Parliament president Martin Schulz is surging in polls ahead of September elections in Germany.

And Macron 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 domestic struggles with unemployment, terrorism and political dysfunction. He has pledged to push for reforms that would force stronger nations to protect weaker ones.

Sunday's balloting showed French attitudes toward Europe split down the middle, with euroskeptic politicians winning nearly half the vote. In addition to Le Pen, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, a far-left candidate, drew millions of votes. Opinion polls examining E.U. attitudes revealed conflicted feelings, with a majority of French respondents describing themselves as pro-E.U. but saying the institution needed deep reforms.

Given such division, European leaders nervously watched the first-round voting to see which way France might tilt. On Monday, many political figures were unusually public about their support for Macron.

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

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's chief of staff, Peter Altmaier, tweeted that Macron's first-place finish showed that "France AND Europe can win together. The center is stronger than the populists think!"

The centrist German lawmaker Alexander Lamsdorff heaped on more praise. Macron is "a French John F. Kennedy," he told Germany's ZDF television Monday.

In a rare display of cross-continental comity, Macron also was congratulated by Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, a combative leftist who has sparred with the German government ever since he was forced to accept a humiliating bailout in 2015.

Pro-E.U. politicians were not the only ones to focus on Macron's attitudes toward Europe.

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

Leaders in Europe 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 final round of the French vote.

If Macron is elected — and opinion polls suggest he has a comfortable lead over Le Pen despite his first-round squeaker — continental

leaders are cautiously optimistic that he can steer the beleaguered country back to its 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 decision to exit the E.U.

Analysts believe that if Macron can put more of a Gallic stamp on the E.U. machinery in Brussels, he may have a chance to shift France's complicated attitude toward the bloc back toward more positive ground, particularly if he can also jump-start his country's stalled economy.

"The French liked Europe when it was a greater France, but they feel today that it's no longer the case. It's a greater Germany," said Eddy Fougier, an expert on anti-globalization movements at the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs.

[French election: How the pollsters got the last laugh]

For all their concerns about the E.U., voters may be becoming more wary of disruptive European politicians as they watch Trump churn up political turmoil in the United States and Britain solidify its E.U. divorce plans.

Dutch euroskeptic leader Geert Wilders crashed out of front-runner status ahead of March elections in the Netherlands. Germany's euroskeptic Alternative for Germany party spiked after Trump's election but has more recently split and sputtered. Now the ascendant political force in Germany is Schulz, a center-left leader who spent more than two decades as a member of the European Parliament and has staked his career on a robust defense of Brussels.

And though Italy's anti-establishment Five Star party is doing well before elections that must be called before the spring of 2018, few observers see it as the existential threat to Europe that a Le Pen presidency would be.

The support for the centrist politicians reflects "a reasonable approach to a reality that everybody must recognize, and that is the European Union," said Daniel Cohn-

Bendit, a Franco-German former European lawmaker who supports Macron.

"Today more and more people are concerned about how we can protect Europe and the European project," Cohn-Bendit said. "This has a link with Trump's election, with Brexit."

At a time when the E.U.'s popularity is on the wane, Macron has stood apart for his unabashed support for Europe and globalization. On a January trip to Berlin's Humboldt University, he switched to flawless English to exhort students to build a stronger Europe. The move drew praise in Germany — and darts from his far-right rivals, who said he was disrespecting the French language.

As the European powers-that-be closed ranks around Macron on Monday, they took two major risks. One is that by backing the French centrist, they will fan the flames of anti-establishment ire that have propelled Le Pen's rise.

"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," said Josef Janning, head of the Berlin office of the European Council on Foreign Relations.

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

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

Analysts suggested that, even if Macron wins, Europe's centrists will need to keep their expectations in check for what he can achieve. "It may be that Europe's leaders have an over-interpretation of the role Macron can play," said Claire Demesmay, who studies France for

the German Council on Foreign Relations. "The anti-European mood in France will still be there — and it

could increase."

Birnbaum reported from Paris. Virgile Demoustier in Paris, Stephanie Kirchner in Berlin and

Karla Adam in London contributed to this report.

**The
New York
Times**

After French Vote, Mainstream Europe Breathes a Sigh of Relief (UNE)

Steven Erlanger
and Alison Smale

11-14 minutes

The French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron at a campaign rally in Paris last week. Sylvain Lefevre/Getty Images

LONDON — There was palpable relief in mainstream Europe on Monday at the success of the independent centrist Emmanuel Macron in the first round of the French presidential elections, and a wide assumption that he will defeat the far-right Marine Le Pen in a runoff two weeks from now.

After other recent electoral setbacks for far-right populists, and the far right's flagging momentum in Germany's election campaign, some even suggested that the French election could represent the high-water mark of the populist surge that has voted Britain out of the European Union and Donald J. Trump into power in the United States.

If this is a high-water mark, though, the water remains quite high.

For the moment, the parties and personalities that have energized far-right populism have not fully crystallized electorally. But the issues that have animated the movements — slow economies, a lack of jobs, immigration — are not going anywhere, and the far right has already moved the political terrain in its direction.

The politics of Europe remain, at best, precarious, even if the center — the French-German core of the European Union — appears to be holding, at least for now.

"There is a sigh of relief," said Jan Techau, the director of the Holbrooke Forum at the American Academy in Berlin. "It's good that in addition to all the other issues on the agenda, we don't also have an extremist French problem."

The Slovenian riot police escorting migrants to a registration camp in 2015. Immigration is one of the issues that have driven far-right populism. Sergey Ponomarev for The New York Times

After a year of unpredictable elections in Europe and the United States, it would be unwise to discount Ms. Le Pen entirely, even if her odds are long. Still, the French result was particularly welcomed by

Brussels and Berlin, which have been praying for a French partner willing to challenge both the statist structure of France and the complacency of the European Union. And after weeks of market jitters, investors on Monday cheered the results, with global stocks surging and the euro reaching fresh highs.

Mr. Macron believes in economic liberalism, a reformed France and a more flexible European Union, while Ms. Le Pen threatens to take France out of the bloc, which would in effect mean breaking it over her knee.

Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, broke protocol to congratulate Mr. Macron and wish him continued success, as did the German foreign minister, Sigmar Gabriel, who said, "He will be a great president."

By winning more votes than Ms. Le Pen, Mr. Macron, who at 39 is on course to be France's youngest head of state since Napoleon, seemed to many to be a new generation's centrist answer to sclerotic and corrupt establishment politics and the challenge of populism and the far right.

Even so, candidates of the far right and far left did very well in the voting, reflecting strong and skeptical views among the French public.

"Of course many people in Brussels and so on are relieved that we don't have two extremists in the last round, but only one," said Guntram B. Wolff, a German who directs Bruegel, a Brussels-based research organization.

Marine Le Pen, the leader of the far-right National Front party, received nearly 7.7 million votes in the first round of France's presidential elections on Sunday. Ian Langsdon/European Pressphoto Agency

"But the fact of the matter is that we still have a little bit more than 40 percent of the electorate having voted for an extremist," Mr. Wolff said. "So that shows that a large part of the French population doesn't seem to be very happy with his or her own position and pretty dissatisfied with the political system."

The question for many is whether a centrist reformer like Mr. Macron, a former investment banker, is prepared to seriously take on board

the dissatisfaction of ordinary working people.

"That the flow of support towards the far-right populists has stagnated is a hopeful sign for European democracy," Ska Keller and Philippe Lamberts, the co-leaders of the Greens in the European Parliament, said cautiously in a joint statement.

"But the threat from the far right is not over," they were quick to add. "If Macron is to take it on and defeat it, he needs to get real on social justice and do more for those who feel marginalized."

Still, for a majority in Europe, the far right has not provided answers either, as it has fallen short of predicted triumphs.

In December, the far right was defeated narrowly in Austria's presidential election. In a parliamentary vote in the Netherlands in March, the nationalist Geert Wilders failed to come first as predicted, though he did finish second. In Britain, the U.K. Independence Party, or UKIP, which pushed for the country to exit the European Union, has lost its only member in the national Parliament and is floundering before the June 8 elections.

Supporters of the far-right Alternative for Germany party at a campaign event in Essen this month. The party could win seats in the federal Parliament for the first time this September. Lukas Schulze/Getty Images

Perhaps most significant, with crucial German elections this September, the populist Alternative for Germany, which rode a wave of anti-Islam, anti-migrant sentiment to seats in 11 of the country's 16 state legislatures, seems to be running out of steam, mired in internal disputes.

Yet on traditional measures, Ms. Le Pen did very well in the first-round vote on Sunday. She received nearly 7.7 million votes, compared with her 6.4 million in the first round in 2012 and the 4.8 million that her father, Jean-Marie, received when he advanced to the second round in 2002.

While Ms. Le Pen is expected to lose in the runoff, Mr. Macron — as a youthful banker with an elite education — is an easy target for her. French unhappiness with establishment parties is sure to be reflected in the June votes for the French legislature, in which Mr.

Macron and his year-old movement, En Marche!, will have to work hard to cobble together a working majority.

Robin Niblett, the director of Chatham House, a research institute in London, cautioned that populist views have been growing for many years, not just in southern Europe but in "more settled northern Europe," like Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands.

"In a time of economic turbulence, there's been a search for national identity and individual identity, a feeling that national identities are being stripped away at a pace people can't control," he said. "The E.U. is seen as an expression of that loss, and even a vehicle for it."

As important, the far right's nationalism and opposition to multilateralism have split mainstream parties and pushed the national conversation to the right.

The far-right politician Geert Wilders came second in a parliamentary vote in the Netherlands in March. Robin Utrecht/European Pressphoto Agency

"At the moment, conservatives are doing a better job at coalescing support and co-opting aspects of the populist message," Mr. Niblett said. Each country has its own specific political context, he said, "but I don't see the validity of the populist message declining."

Giles Merritt and Shada Islam of Friends of Europe, a research institution in Brussels, hailed Mr. Macron, saying that if elected, he "would not only breathe new life into the Franco-German 'locomotive' but offer a more hopeful and upbeat message for the future."

Germany especially is looking forward to a more like-minded French partner, as together they make up about 47 percent of the eurozone's gross domestic product, said Daniela Schwarzer, the director of the German Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin.

"Macron understands Europe and the need to change things, and that means changing France, too," she said, noting a speech by Mr. Macron in Berlin that directly linked "reform and modernization in France with reform in the E.U."

That is the perfect line for Germany, she said, "which fears pressure for more burden-sharing with countries who haven't done their economic homework."

Mr. Macron has said he wants a common eurozone budget under a eurozone "finance minister" and has proposed "democratic conventions" to identify reform priorities for the European Union.

Workers at Canary Wharf, a London business district. Mr. Macron, if elected president of France, is expected to push a harder negotiating line on Britain's exit from the European Union, especially regarding financial services. Andrew Testa for The New York Times

The Germans fear that if the eurozone integrates further with a budget and banking union, but without prior economic changes

from its members, Germany will end up bailing out everyone else forever. So Mr. Macron, vowing economic reform in France, is singing a song much more attuned to German ears.

But Mr. Macron, if elected, is also expected to push a harder negotiating line with Britain over its exit from the European Union — especially on the issue of financial services, about which he knows a great deal.

"With his background, we assume Macron sees much more clearly where the actual issues lie and will work to prevent Europe from facing a competitive disadvantage," Ms. Schwarzer said.

But there is much to play for, not just in Britain's election in June but especially in Germany's in September. Chancellor Angela Merkel faces a strong challenge from the center-left Social Democrats, and the far-right Alternative for Germany is likely to win seats in the federal Parliament for the first time.

At the far right's party conference this past weekend in Cologne, there were strong themes of nationalism and distaste for immigration despite the party's internal disputes, in which Frauke Petry, one of its leaders, lost her effort to pull the party away from the hard right.

Her rivals brought delegates to their feet with speeches that pandered to identity loss. Whether or not the party succeeds, the issue seems likely to continue to resonate broadly.

Jörg Meuthen, a professor who leads the party with Ms. Petry, said that few Germans could be seen as one walked around a typical German town.

"This is our country," he told cheering delegates. "The country of our grandparents and parents. We must take it back."



Macron gains backing of French political establishment fearful of Le Pen

4-5 minutes

Emmanuel Macron spent Sunday evening dining at a Left Bank restaurant once frequented by the likes of Pablo Picasso and Ernest Hemingway.

While the French centrist presidential candidate enjoyed a meal after claiming victory in the European nation's first-round presidential election, he was also reveling in the new wave of support he received from an unlikely source: his former presidential rivals from France's traditional political parties.

Following Macron's win on Sunday — and the second place finish by far-right National Front candidate Marine Le Pen — many of the defeated presidential contenders threw their voice behind the centrist front-runner ahead of the May 7 runoff.

The conservative former French Prime Minister François Fillon — once the favored candidate to win the presidency — conceded on Sunday night after pulling in just less than 20 percent of the vote. In a speech to his supporters, Fillon

announced that he was supporting Macron's bid for president because there is "no other option but to vote against the far right."

Certainly not a ringing endorsement of Macron or his policies, but a definite sting to Le Pen as she and Fillon share a similar anti-European Union ideology and conservative credos.

Socialist leader Benoît Hamon — the candidate from the other side of France's political establishment — echoed Fillon's words in a speech he gave, saying that while the independent Macron "is not a man of the left" the socialist's supporters should still vote for him.

"There is a distinction between a political adversary and the enemy of the Republic," Hamon said.

The support for Macron from France's political establishment is eerily reminiscent of the presidential race in 2002, where Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, was running against then-incumbent President Jacques Chirac.

When Le Pen and the conservative Chirac finished in the top two in the first round of elections, Socialist

Prime Minister Lionel Jospin — who was also running for president — dropped out of the race and threw his support behind Jospin. Soon after, numerous leftist politicians began backing Jospin, who eventually won 82 percent of the vote in a landslide victory.

The younger Le Pen has tried to distance herself from her father's anti-Semitic and xenophobic persona and soften the image of the National Front — and in doing so finding broad appeal among the country's younger voters attracted to her anti-establishment and pro-French-worker stances. Still, she has been vilified for her anti-immigrant and anti-globalist proposals.

Both the center-right and center-left on Sunday fell in behind Macron, whose optimistic vision of a tolerant France and a united Europe with open borders is a stark contrast to Le Pen's darker, inward-looking "French-first" platform that calls for closed borders, tougher security, less immigration and dropping the shared euro currency to return to the French franc.

Macron came in first in Sunday's vote, with 24 percent; Le Pen had

21.3 percent; Fillon had 20 percent and Melenchon had 19.6 percent. Fillon bested the former Trotskyist by 152,912 votes.

Whoever wins in the May 7 second-round election, one thing is clear: the French public is tired of the political establishment.

French voters rejected the two mainstream parties that have alternated power for decades in favor of Le Pen and the untested Macron, who has never held elected office and who founded his own political movement just last year.

Socialist candidate Manuel Valls, whose party holds a majority in the legislature and whose President Francois Hollande is the most unpopular in modern French record-keeping, got just 6 percent.

"We are in a phase of decomposition, demolition, deconstruction," said Valls. "We didn't do the work — intellectual, ideological and political — on what the left is, and we paid the price."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Newsweek : Who Will Win the French Election? How Marine Le Pen Could Become the Next Trump

By Jason Le Miere On 4/24/17 at 4:30 PM

6-8 minutes

Emmanuel Macron hadn't won anything beyond a shot at a runoff vote against Marine Le Pen, but his remarks to supporters and a subsequent private party Sunday night felt every bit like a victory lap. And the polls strongly suggest those

celebrations, while perhaps a tad premature, will continue after France returns to the ballot box in two weeks to decide the country's next president.

Related: French Elections: Marine Le Pen Aide Calls Emmanuel Macron 'Arrogant'

But as the world has witnessed in shock over the past year, polls and statistical models do not always

come to fruition. If they did, Hillary Clinton would now be president of the United States and David Cameron would still be prime minister of a Brexit-less Britain. And in France, a country that has already soundly rejected the political elite, it could be argued that it would be foolhardy to make any predictions with any great degree of certainty.

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Le Pen's far-right National Front party, the leadership of which she took over from her father, has surged in the polls in recent years thanks to her hard anti-immigration and anti-Islam stances, her pledge to pull the country out of the Euro and her chastising of establishment politics.

Macron, too, emerged from the outskirts of French politics, although he is a centrist who is set to be

painted by Le Pen as just another political insider aloof from the people. The 39-year-old is a former investment banker whose political experience is limited to two years as economy minister under outgoing Socialist President François Hollande. His En Marche! (On the Move!) party was founded only a year ago.

Both candidates came out on top in France's presidential election Sunday, with Macron claiming 23.9 percent of the vote to Le Pen's 21.4 percent with 97 percent of the vote counted. It is the first time in nearly 60 years that neither mainstream left or right party advanced a candidate to the second round.

The challenge now for both is to greatly expand their support beyond what were historically low totals for first-round victors.

For Macron, that promises to be a more straightforward task. In the immediate aftermath of Sunday's vote, Republican candidate François Fillon, who came third in the voting with 19.9 percent, endorsed Macron and incumbent Hollande followed suit on Monday, urging the country to back Macron against the "risk" of a Le Pen presidency.

None of the major defeated candidates came out in support of Le Pen, although two failed to endorse either Le Pen or Macron,

including far-left insurgent Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who grabbed 19.6 percent of the first-round vote. While Le Pen will hope to garner votes from Fillon and Nicholas Dupont-Aignan on the right and Mélenchon on the left, the expectation is that opposition to Le Pen will now coalesce around Macron.

Such was the case in 2002, when Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie Le Pen made it into a runoff against Jacques Chirac. When the second round came around, the founder of the National Front increased his vote by less than one percent to be decisively swatted aside by Chirac, who took more than 82 percent.

His daughter has made significant strides in detoxifying the party, particularly against charges of antisemitism, and a defeat on that scale looks unlikely. Indeed, she made a further move to try to appeal to mainstream French voters Monday by announcing that she was temporarily stepping aside from the presidency of the National Front. Instead, she said she was simply "the candidate" of the National Front who "wishes to bring together all French people." Marine Le Pen (R), French National Front (FN) political party leader and candidate for French 2017 presidential election, poses for a selfie as she leaves the hairdresser in front of her campaign headquarters in Paris, France, April 24, 2017 the day after the first round

of presidential elections where Le Pen ended in second place. Charles Platiau/Reuters

However, polls give her a far greater deficit to bridge than either Trump or Brexit, the two populist triumphs with which her rise is regularly compared. Mirroring the outcome of similar surveys carried out beforehand, no opinion poll taken since Sunday's vote has put Le Pen's support above 40 percent. The largest poll thus far, from Harris, saw Macron getting 64 percent of the vote to Le Pen's 36 percent.

By way of comparison, the gulf was never even close to being so large for Trump against Clinton, not even when he was seen as a total outsider upon first announcing his nomination in the summer of 2015. Two weeks ahead of the election, Trump was between five and 10 points behind Hillary Clinton. In swing states, the margin was only a couple of percentage points.

And, of course, as it turned out, Trump did end up losing the popular vote but winning the White House. With no Electoral College in France, Le Pen will not be able to do the same and claim the presidency. Emmanuel Macron, head of the political movement En Marche !, or Onwards !, and candidate for the 2017 French presidential election, celebrates after partial results in the first round of 2017 French presidential election,

at the Parc des Expositions hall in Paris, France April 23, 2017. Benoit Tessier/Reuters

Bookmakers similarly give her a slimmer chance than Trump of pulling off an upset. An average of her odds currently put her chances at 17 percent, down from the 22 percent chance given to Trump at a similar stage in the U.S. presidential race.

Some statistical models are even more certain of the outcome. The Economist's model gives Le Pen just a one percent chance of triumphing, down even from the 10 percent chance given to Trump by the likes of FiveThirtyEight and *The New York Times'* The Upshot two weeks out.

But not all experts are nearly so negative on Le Pen's chances. The political risk consultancy the Eurasia Group has given Le Pen a 40 percent chance of emerging victorious. Indeed, writing on The Economist's website, the group's president Ian Bremmer and associate Charles Lichfield describe the race as "almost a coin flip."

Given the evidence of the past year, it would be unwise to discount such a tension-filled prediction. It is also true, however, that a Le Pen triumph would be the biggest political shock yet.



France's Final Round: Change, But How Much?

Luis Ramirez

5-6 minutes

LONDON —

France's two contenders for the presidency launched their campaigns Monday in a frantic bid to garner an absolute majority by convincing voters they each have the measure of change that French voters want.

The choice before French voters in the final round of elections on May 7 will be between staying the course in the European Union or following the lead of Britain and leaving the bloc.

In picking former banker and economy minister Emmanuel Macron and nationalist crusader Marine Le Pen, voters rejected mainstream parties in what analysts said amounted to a revolution in French politics. For the first time since the founding of Charles de Gaulle's Fifth Republic, the left-leaning Socialists and the right-leaning Republicans were shut out of the race.

French far-right leader and candidate for the 2017 presidential election Marine Le Pen poses for a selfie after getting a haircut in Paris, April 24, 2017.

"In two weeks, I want to become your president, the president of all the people of France. The president of patriots against the threat of nationalists," Macron told supporters at a rally after his victory in the first round, taking a jab at Le Pen and drawing on the sensibilities of French voters who want change, but not at the cost of overturning France's relationship with Europe.

Le Pen's victory message to supporters was one of determination to march ahead with an agenda to strengthen France's borders, curtail immigration, chase out the establishment politicians, and throw off the influence of Brussels.

"It is time to free the French people from the arrogant elite who want to dictate people's behavior, because, yes, I am the candidate of the people," she told cheering supporters.

EU partisanship

EU officials, in an unusual move, congratulated centrist Macron, a gesture analysts say shows the alarm that Le Pen's advance to the second round is causing among EU leaders.

"Le Pen's program will cost hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of jobs in France and in Europe," German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said Monday during a visit to Jordan. "It will be done at the expense of the ordinary workers, and that is why we support Emmanuel Macron."

France, Gabriel said, "is a large European nation without which we cannot shape Europe. That is why his program for France is tantamount to a new beginning in Europe. We have the chance together to manage to reform Europe with Emmanuel Macron."

French centrist presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron, center, next to Mourad Franck Papazian, left, co-president of France's Armenian Organizations Coordination Council (CCAF), right, arrives for a ceremony marking 102nd anniversary of the slaying of

Armenians by Ottoman Turks in a brief ceremony in Paris, April 24, 2017.

European markets soared as did the euro on Monday, something analysts attribute to relief the race will be between a moderate and a candidate of the extreme.

In the days before the poll, speculation had grown that far-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon might have a chance after his popularity surged in the final moments, which would have meant a race between the far right and the far left.

How far from center?

In the first round, the polls were mostly correct in predicting a shift to non-traditional parties, but analysts caution the second round could be more unpredictable, since it will be a measure of how far voters want to go in their push for change.

Polls and many observers are betting on a Macron victory, saying Le Pen will find it difficult to reach beyond her established support base, which is largely in the

economically depressed, de-industrialized northeast of France.

FILE - Campaign posters of French National Front (FN) political party leader Marine Le Pen, center, and head of the political movement En Marche! (Onwards!) Emmanuel Macron, right, are seen in Antibes, France, April 14, 2017.

Macron will have to convince voters that he does not

the Atlantic

The Fall of the French Left

Samuel Earle

8-9 minutes

In the first round of a French presidential election, there will, naturally, always be more losers than winners. But until Sunday, the Socialist Party had lost in the initial round only once before: In 2002, when incumbent Prime Minister Lionel Jospin unexpectedly finished a close third, behind a surprise surge from the National Front's leader (FN), Jean-Marie Le Pen.

This year, independent-centrist Emmanuel Macron and Jean-Marie's daughter, Marine, now leader of the FN herself, will move on to the final round on May 7. The Socialist candidate, Benoît Hamon, finished an unprecedented fifth. His loss feels very different from Jospin's of 15 years ago, and not only because his paltry share of the vote was so much lower—just over 6 percent compared to Jospin's 16.

What is even more striking than the result itself is that, unlike in 2002, this crushing loss comes as no surprise at all. Like Le Pen's victory, it was in the making for months, if not years. And yet it is still so remarkable: The most open presidential race France has seen since the formation of the Fifth Republic, with four candidates in close contention, saw no place for the Socialist Party, a stalwart of the French political scene for the past half century. The election was full of surprises, scandals, twists, and turns. But for numerous reasons the Socialists were never really in the mix. The media covered Hamon, it seemed, almost out of sympathy, a melancholic nod to the party's former status.

Hamon won the Socialist Party's leadership election in January, and was widely recognized as the party's most-radical nominee ever. His left-wing credentials were clear: After being appointed education minister in April 2014, he quit the government in August that year in protest against its pro-market policies. But his promises to bring about a *future désirable*, with a

represent an extension of the policies of unpopular outgoing Socialist President Francois Hollande, despite the past close ties between the two men.

Some analysts believe the task may not be so difficult, considering many voters on the center and left may see themselves as voting against Le Pen, rather than for Macron.

universal basic income, a tax on robots, and legalized cannabis, would never be enough to lift the sorry state of his party. The rot ran too deep.

Indeed, if this election revealed the rifts and ruptures within French society, it also revealed the rifts and ruptures within the Socialist Party itself, and across the French left more generally. President Francois Hollande endured the lowest popularity ratings on record and his difference-splitting agenda—anti-austerity rhetoric with austerity-driven policy and occasional appeasements to the FN's xenophobia—satisfied no one. He leaves behind the strange air of having let down everyone, all but burying the Socialist Party in the process. His attempts to maintain unity have, instead, ripped the party apart.

While Hamon's leadership victory was initially met by suggestions of support from the party's elites, these swiftly gave way to betrayal. Manuel Valls, France's prime minister, was one of the most notable departures, along with Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian. Hamon, Valls explained, "does not arouse my enthusiasm." It's hard to blame them. The Socialists' pro-business wing already had its dream candidate, only he wasn't running for their party. Macron, a former investment banker at Rothschild who left the party last year to launch his own movement, *En Marche!*, attracted a large share of the Socialist Party vote—supporters and staff alike—with his pro-Europe, pro-business agenda; his vote was highest in areas that voted for Hollande in 2012, predominantly in the western regions. On the left, meanwhile, Hamon was outflanked by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, another former member of the Party backed by his own movement, *La France Insoumise*. His captivating campaign did the most damage to Hamon, almost single-handedly halving his vote-share within the space of a month.

It's tempting to ask what might have happened had Mélenchon and Hamon merged their candidacies—

French voters, they say, may have attained the change they wanted at this stage by excluding the traditional parties from the race.

Jean-Yves Camus, a political analyst in Paris, sees the appetite for change as similar to that of the United States last November, but believes the French may not be ready to go all the way.

could one of them have bested Macron or Le Pen, commentators on the left wonder? But such a plan could have just as easily backfired and come to nothing; such is the Socialist Party's blemished brand that it could have hurt Mélenchon by trying to help him. He was, after all, advocating *dégagisme*, or "kick them out," where "them" refers to the traditional politicians and elites. This rebellious message, which resonated so well with French frustrations over politics-as-usual, may have fallen flat had he bound himself to a "them" party like the Socialists. As Mélenchon put it himself, he had "no intention of going and hitching myself to a hearse."

In the wake of Mélenchon's surprising (if also unsuccessful) surge and Macron's hold on the center, the Socialists are left to awkwardly ask whether they have a purpose. This question has no easy answers. With no territory to call their own, they are not even in "no-man's land"—theirs is a nowhere land. It's not clear what the way forward is, or if one even exists. While for now the Socialists retain a majority of seats in Parliament, with elections for the legislative assemblies in June, *The Economist* has already reported that, according to the *En Marche!* team, many Socialists are ready to defect. The two factions that have hitherto lain uneasily within the party—centrism and socialism—have now deserted it for Mélenchon and Macron. Meanwhile, whatever remains of the working class has largely shifted its support to Le Pen, who preys on its insecurity by invoking foreign threats. Living in areas with low economic activity and with low levels of education were the two strongest demographic indicators for voting Le Pen.

What is clear is that the Socialist Party cannot continue as if nothing has changed. It is no longer the workers' party, and has not been for some time—François Mitterrand's embrace of the Single European Act in the mid-1980s marked the end of the left's opposition to the market, but no vision ever replaced it. The left's mainstream parties across the

"There's the same feeling I heard in the United States at time of its election," Camus told VOA. "We also have this feeling here. But the National Front is not the only party that wants to change the system. The left also wants to change the system."

"There is anger at the politicians, but I think not to the point where this will become a revolution," he said.

Western world have failed to confront this same identity crisis. They now draw their core support from an urban, affluent middle class. Hamon's campaign promises, radical though they were, reflected this narrowness: clever, cool ideas, but too intellectual to resonate with the millions of men and women struggling to make a living right now.

Tellingly, Macron, Le Pen, and Mélenchon found success by adopting new vocabularies—they each desperately wanted to distance themselves from the status quo, and, in the process, ditched the tired dichotomy of the left and the right. In western democracies, the center has made this move before, with Tony Blair's "Third Way" and Bill Clinton's "triangulation," but Mélenchon's decision to do something similar, while not yielding on his left-wing agenda, was striking and effective. For decades, he has been a staunch maverick of the French left. When he decided to leave the Socialist Party in 2008 after 30 years of service, it was, he said, to set up a "new party for the left." Now, he and those around him almost refuse to use the word. "We do not appeal to the identitarian patriotism of those who think that we have to 'save the left' or 'be left-wing,'" a spokesperson for Mélenchon's *La France insoumise* explained in an interview. "It is far too minoritarian. We want to win."

And they came closer than many thought possible. Hamon, by contrast, languished in fifth with dated language. "The left," he gushed, "it's everything I am. It is my life." No one else, he said, could represent the country's political left. But it turns out no one wanted to, because no one needed to. It's not where the votes are found.

Throughout his campaign, Mélenchon always insisted that the French are furious, not fascist. In the final round, Macron against Le Pen, France will see how far that is true. But we can say with certainty that nor are the French loyally "left-wing" either. If the Socialist Party is to survive, it will need a new beat.

Now on the threshold of the French presidency, who is Marine Le Pen?

The Christian Science Monitor

18-23 minutes

April 24, 2017 Paris—When Marine Le Pen was a child growing up in Paris, her friends never slept over — their parents wouldn't allow it. And no matter how hard the blond, blue-eyed girl studied at school, her teachers often mocked her, hardly concealing their disdain. Her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, was so reviled in French mainstream society that someone set off a bomb in the stairwell outside their apartment four years after he founded the fringe far-right National Front (FN) political party in 1972.

Ms. Le Pen describes in her autobiography, "A Contre Flots," or "Against the Current," a childhood that was full of insults, suffering, and injustice — all simply because of her family name.

She cannot say the same of her adulthood.

The girl who grew up in the harsh shadow of her provocative, nationalist father has risen to become one of the most popular politicians in France — and one of the most important opposition leaders in the world. Now, as the campaign for the French presidency reaches its denouement — with Le Pen having a distant but not inconceivable chance of winning — she has pushed the FN closer to the Élysée Palace than her father ever did and is expanding her influence over French and European politics.

A young member of the National Front puts up a poster of Marine Le Pen in Lyon, France, that reads, 'Put France in order.' Ms. Le Pen is popular among youth.

ROBERT PRATTA/REUTERS/FILE

Caption

The party leader, who is both anti-immigrant and anti-European Union, inspires an almost cultlike following. She now garners support among large swaths of the population, including a growing number of mainstream voters who once rejected her. Many of them carry photos of her in their wallets.

At rallies, supporters chant her name in trancelike reverence. "Marine! Marine! Marine!" came the cry at a recent campaign stop in Metz in France's Grand Est, a former mining region that's reeling economically.

Le Pen, tall and confident, walked onto the stage cutting a striking figure. She was dressed modestly, as is her style, in a dark blue blouse cut out at the shoulders that was at once feminine and authoritative. The arena was filled with those who want out of the EU, who want immigrants out of France, who want the ruling elite out of office. And if they are separated by disparate, and sometimes irreconcilable desires — some eschew her left-wing protectionist trade policies but love her right-wing crusade to stop foreigners from coming in — they seem united in a longing for the grandeur of a France they can barely grasp anymore.

In voices thick with nostalgia, these voters — and the candidate they would elevate — may well decide the future of Europe. The EU, the postwar bloc that France helped to found, probably couldn't survive if the country withdraws from the organization, which is what Le Pen wants to have happen.

The following that she has amassed both reflects and reinforces the nationalist revival sweeping across Europe and around much of the world. The populist rebellions in so many countries that shun globalism, open borders, and multiculturalism may be the most dominant political trend of the 21st century — and perhaps no one embodies the mood of the movements better than Le Pen.

She is not just Donald Trump with a more natural hairdo and a French accent. Her political roots date back to her teenage years, her rise has been methodical, and she is peaking in popularity at the most important moment for Europe in a half-century — one that may decide whether the EU survives or splits apart.

"This is the cleavage of 21st-century democracies," says Pascal Perrineau, an expert on populist movements at Sciences Po in Paris. "It's not a cleavage between the right and left anymore, or between conservatives and progressives. It's a new kind of split between open societies and closed societies."

Ms. Le Pen visits a chocolate-maker in Chalezeule in eastern France.

SEBASTIEN BOZON/REUTERS

Caption

In the second round of elections May 7. In a field of 11 candidates, she and Emmanuel Macron, a 39-year-old former investment banker who broke from the ruling Socialists to start his own upstart party, En

Marche, were the top winners in round one Sunday.

That means it will come down to the pro-EU, pro-free trade Macron against the antiglobalization, anti-immigrant Le Pen — illustrating the dichotomies running through Western societies. Polls for now give a significant edge to Macron in the second round, and the two mainstream parties put their support behind Macron, but in an era when Mr. Trump and "Brexit" triumphed, no one is predicting an unequivocal defeat for Le Pen.

"Macron speaks to the France that is doing well," says Mr. Perrineau. "Marine Le Pen speaks to the France that is not doing well."

The region of undulating hills around Metz is sometimes called the "Country of Three Borders" because it is where France, Germany, and Luxembourg meet. If anyplace can call itself the heart of Europe, it is here. As FN supporters entered the arena for Le Pen's rally on a rainy Saturday, the mayor of Metz, Dominique Gros, was hosting a mini ceremony just a few blocks away celebrating Franco-German friendship week.

Mr. Gros's father fought in the French Resistance against the Germans. His grandfather died in the epic Battle of Verdun in World War I. His great-great-grandfather fought in the Franco-Prussian War. Gros himself was born in 1943, in the middle of World War II. "I learned when I was little that Germany was our enemy," he says. "But we have succeeded in overcoming our ancestral hate ... and we must fight against this disastrous trend that risks pitting one against the other like in older times."

Gros is, in other words, a strong advocate of an integrated Europe.

But if this region is a story of overcoming animosity through shared interests, it's also one of globalization and deindustrialization. It is the disappearance of jobs, and the loss of dignity as a result, that have turned many Metz voters toward Le Pen.

At the candidate's rally, Camille Ajac says she supports a "Europe of nations" but not the EU, which she calls "a Europe of interdependence." "We absolutely want to get our sovereignty back," she says.

Jean Schweitzer, a baby boomer, says he simply wants to give a new party a chance "since neither the right nor left has gotten us anywhere, and meanwhile France

just gets worse." Antoine Dupont talks angrily about his grandmother's financial woes. At age 82, she's been reduced to knitting stuffed animals to supplement her pension. He complains, too, that younger people are being forced to leave the country to find higher-paying jobs.

They all believe France's future depends on the politician whom they describe as frank, simple, and honest — someone who could be a charismatic next-door neighbor.

Members of the European Parliament in Brussels vote on whether to lift the EU parliamentary immunity of French far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen, a sharp critic of the European Union, after she came under investigation for tweeting pictures of Islamic State violence.

YVES HERMAN/REUTERS

Caption

Le Pen promises to hold a referendum on EU membership — what is called a "Frexit" vote — if she becomes president. At a rally in Lille, France, in March marking the 60th anniversary of the EU, she said flatly that "the European Union will die," adding, "the time has come to defeat globalists." She has called for the reintroduction of a new French currency, though she's softened her tone in response to polls showing the vast majority of French want to keep the euro.

Advocates of European unity believe France's departure from the EU would be catastrophic. "The EU can survive without the [United Kingdom]. It wasn't there in the first place. It's always been sort of half in and half out," says Douglas Webber, professor of political science at INSEAD, a business school outside Paris. "But if France is no longer there, then basically you are missing not just a foot, you are missing an arm, and a leg, and a good part of the torso. This would be a political ... revolution of the highest magnitude on the Richter scale."

Le Pen's stance on national identity — preventing more foreigners from coming in and diluting what it means to be French — resonates as much as any issue with her followers. It's also what makes her sound the most like her father. She wants to reimpose immigration controls at the border. She promises to prevent companies from relocating abroad for cheaper labor.

While detractors criticize her for stirring up hate, pointing often to a

statement she made in 2010 comparing Muslims praying in the streets with the Nazi occupation of France, she has tapped into a deep anxiety about radical Islam in France. It has been fed by major terrorist attacks in Paris and Nice that together killed more than 230 people. At the same time, 1.3 million refugees and asylum-seekers, mostly Muslim, have entered Europe in the throes of upheaval in the Middle East, which the far-right easily conflates with terrorism.

"Let's give France back to France," says Le Pen at the Metz rally.

As her followers chant "On est chez nous," or "We are in our house," she adds: "What I want is not to close the borders. It is simply to have them – and control them."

Marine Le Pen (2nd from r.) and other members of right-wing European parties speak to the media during a conference in Koblenz, Germany.

THOMAS LOHNES/GETTY IMAGES

Caption

For all her hard-line stances on immigration and the EU, it would be incorrect to classify Le Pen as simply far-right. She has, for instance, adopted a protectionist trade agenda that is increasingly attracting some former socialist and even communist voters.

On two other litmus-test issues, gay marriage and abortion, she has toned down her message or remained largely silent. The social conservative branch of the FN seems to be appeased by the voice of Le Pen's niece, rising star Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, who is a devout Roman Catholic and opposed to both. Yet the views of Le Pen herself, born in the pivotal year of 1968 amid student protests to what one family biographer calls a "bourgeois bohemian" mother, remain ambiguous. Her top adviser, Florian Philippot, is gay.

"Certainly in the '70s the FN was from the extreme right, but today all the parties that shake European political life, that are creating the surprises ... they are more complex than just a single party from the extreme right," says Perrineau.

In recent years, Le Pen has also tried to scrub the FN of its darker associations. She has kicked out members who publicly spew the kind of vitriol that was characteristic of her father and attempted to change the party's image of being a party of racist old men.

The real inflection point came in 2015. Her father repeated a comment that over the years has

refused to fade from memory. Jean-Marie stood by his assertion, first made in 1987, that the gas chambers of the Holocaust were a mere "detail" in history. Marine banished him from the party and publicly severed their relationship. Many observers have wondered whether the rupture was genuine, or just a brilliant moment of rebranding. Those close to her say it was painful and has been permanent and shows how politics always comes first with the Le Pens.

"You don't break with your father in public on TV and have it not be difficult. It's incomprehensible," says Bertrand Dutheil de la Rochère, one of her advisers. "But her father was impossible, just going from provocation to provocation. The FN and Marine don't need provocation."

Her campaign posters now bear just her first name, not her last, with the words: "In the name of the people." The logo, now a blue rose, used to be a flame.

French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen (c.) and his daughter Marine Le Pen arrive at a ceremony in Paris in 2010. She broke off ties with her polemical father in 2015.

JACQUES BRINON/AP

Caption

The steeliness that has helped Le Pen rise to the pinnacle of French politics may be rooted in that cold night in November 1976 when a 44-pound bomb went off in the family's Paris apartment building. The explosion damaged 12 dwellings and sent a baby flying out a fifth-floor window. Amazingly, no one was hurt in the incident – including the child, who landed in a tree along with his mattress. To this day, no one knows who planted the bomb. But Le Pen, who was 8 at the time, has written that she emerged from the incident "no longer a little girl like everyone else."

The youngest of three sisters, Le Pen and her family moved to the wealthy, western suburb of Saint-Cloud to a mansion called Montretout. Today it is tucked within a gated community and carries an air of serenity.

But Olivier Beaumont, a French journalist who wrote the book "In the Hell of Montretout," compares it to the house in Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho," a place that bore witness to unconventional tragedy, forming Le Pen's tough character and ability to rise in politics as an unloved outsider. "Her whole story is one of rupture, departures, doors slamming," he says.

The constant antipathy directed at her father hung over the family. Ultimately her mother, Pierrette, left

– moving out one day when Le Pen was 16. The distraught teen waited for her mother at the entrance of her high school every day for several weeks, certain she would come home. Instead her mother moved to the United States with a lover, leaking explosive commentary about her ex-husband. At one point, she posed for Playboy magazine. The humiliation was too much for young Marine: She didn't talk to her mother again for 15 years.

Le Pen's entree into politics came at age 15, when her father let her miss school for a week and join him on the campaign trail. Jean-Lin Lacapelle, one of her old friends and an FN official today, says no one at the time saw in her a French president. She didn't want the life of a politician.

Instead it was Marine's older sister Marie-Caroline who was expected to take up that mantle, before she and her father had a falling-out and broke ties. Marine, in the meantime, became a lawyer and handled the party's legal affairs.

In 2002, Jean-Marie made it to the second round of the presidential elections to face Jacques Chirac, stunning the nation. Marine went on air to talk about it. She was in her early 30s, all smiles and optimism.

"The day after, at the headquarters of the Front National in Saint-Cloud, all of the press arrived asking, 'Where is Marine Le Pen? Where is Marine Le Pen?'" says Mr. Lacapelle. "It was incredible."

He says that's when he knew she would take the party to the top.

Though older and more polished now, Le Pen still has a blunt, charismatic style that appeals to French youth. The FN is one of the most popular parties in France among people ages 18 to 24, though the last minute surge of communist-backed Jean-Luc Mélenchon ate into its score Sunday night, bumping it down to the no. 2 party among the demographic.

Part of her allure is rooted in the plight of young people in the world's sixth-largest economy, nearly a quarter of whom are unemployed. On the eve of Le Pen's rally in Metz, 20-something supporters from across the country came together in the city's party headquarters to discuss their plans for the following day. It had more the feel of an awkward school dance than a strategy session – they had put out bowls of potato chips and bottles of soda.

Emilien Noé, a former Socialist who coordinates the youth movement in the region, says young people are drawn to the FN's promise to restore French glory, something they've

never known. "A lot of young people are living abroad instead of in France, and this is sad for a country like ours," he says.

While many Millennials are attracted to Le Pen because they see her as a rebel – one poster in the FN's national headquarters trumpets "The rebel wave" – the candidate herself doesn't act like the icon of a rebellion. In campaign imagery she is more likely to be photographed feeding cows and cuddling kittens.

When she reveals pieces of her personal life, it's often in the context of a mother of three children in their late teens. Friends say the twice-divorced politician is a workaholic. But when she does relax, one of her outlets is karaoke. Her choices reveal her era: With her raspy voice, she likes to belt out the songs of Dalida, the Egyptian-born Italian diva who was a global phenomenon from the 1960s into the '80s.

Le Pen has made inroads with other voters, too, including women. She doesn't carry the feminist mantle. That she would be the first female president of her country is hardly a factor the way it was with Hillary Clinton.

But she has positioned herself as a defender of women against the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. She wants the Islamic veil banned, as well as the burkini, saying neither belong in modern French society.

"We believe that a woman in a veil seems not to be free," says Marie-Hélène de Lacoste Lareymondie, a regional counselor for the FN in the Grand Est.

She says women recognize themselves in Le Pen, a divorced single mother. "She is a feminist, of course," says Ms. Lacoste Lareymondie. "But she represents all kinds of women – mothers, lawyers, working women, political women. It's complete."

Not everyone buys it. Critics say her feminism is barely disguised discrimination against Muslims. At some public rallies, protesters denounce her as a "fake feminist."

Le Pen's mother had two nicknames for Marine growing up: "Miss bonne humeur," or "Miss good mood," because of her resolutely joyful and optimistic nature, she writes in "Against the Current." The other was "Miss Trompe la morte," or "Miss Daredevil," because of a fearlessness she showed as a child, whether on a bicycle or skis.

It's the intrepidity that seems to rally her base.

In the FN's newest campaign video, Le Pen is facing the sea as an emotionally charged soundtrack

pounds in the background. It feels like the trailer for a film. In a voice-over, she proclaims her love of France, the “age-old nation that does not submit.” She promises to stand up against the “sufferings of” and “insults to” the country. The video ends with her behind the wheel of a boat, a clear metaphor for one of her main campaign slogans, to steer the country toward

what will “put France in order.”

The unsubtle subtext is that Paris needs the kind of strong leadership that has been missing under President François Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy before him. The French have always sought a “strongman” in their presidents, a monarchical instinct that turns them toward authority, especially in times of crisis.

“This is the country that produced Napoleon, the country that produced Charles de Gaulle,” says Perrineau.

But he sees protest as the stronger current pushing Le Pen toward the doors of the Élysée. He references French intellectual Pierre Rosanvallon, who said it’s no longer a time of elections in Western society. It is the time of “dis-elections.”

In the end, many French voters, says Perrineau, “just want to vote in the bogeyman.”

• *An earlier version of this story ran before the first round of the French presidential elections*

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Will Emmanuel Macron Be Able to Run France If He Wins the Presidency?

David Gauthier-Villars and William Horobin

6-7 minutes

April 24, 2017 3:57 p.m. ET

PARIS—Political novice Emmanuel Macron is widely expected to win the French presidency on May 7, but he will need a big victory in yet another crucial round of elections to become more than a mere figurehead.

For Mr. Macron to be able to implement his policies if he defeats far-right leader Marine Le Pen in the runoff, his upstart movement will have to secure a parliamentary majority in June.

Turning En Marche, or “On the Move,” the party that Mr. Macron founded barely a year ago, into a political machine will be a tall order for the 39-year-old former investment banker, who on Sunday won the first round of the presidential contest with 24% of the vote.

So far, Mr. Macron, who is running for office for the first time, hasn’t named anyone who would join his administration, and has announced only a handful of the candidates who will run under his colors for the 577 seats in the two-round legislative vote scheduled June 11 and 18.

Without a majority, French presidents have historically been smacked by a constitutional punishment known here as “cohabitation”—a form of power-sharing under which a prime minister from the opposition runs the government, effectively squeezing the head of state into a ceremonial role.

The presidential and legislative elections have different dynamics, warned Famke Krumbmüller, analyst at political risk consultancy OpenCitiz. She said having Mr. Macron’s stamp of approval may not be enough for En Marche candidates to unseat rivals in constituencies where voters enjoy cultivating a direct bond with their elected officials.

“The question is whether they will be able to win against rivals with local bases, even if those rivals’ parties got smashed in the presidential vote,” Ms. Krumbmüller said.

Mr. Macron is expected to win the May 7 runoff against Ms. Le Pen with 61% of the vote, according to a survey conducted by the OpinionWay polling agency during and after Sunday’s first round.

If she prevailed in the runoff, Ms. Le Pen would face a different set of obstacles. Unlike Mr. Macron, she can rely on a nationwide and disciplined apparatus, as well as on the National Front’s deep-rooted local bases. But her performance in the first round of the presidential election—she garnered 21.3% of the vote, up from 17.9% in 2012—suggests she has yet to broaden the party’s mainstream appeal.

That is necessary to succeed in the two-round voting system introduced by Charles de Gaulle upon fathering the Fifth Republic, a new constitution designed to squeeze political majorities out of France’s fractured postwar landscape.

In recent years, left and right mainstream parties have often coalesced in second-round votes to block the National Front, saying its history of xenophobia made it unfit to govern. The party currently holds

only two seats out of 577 in the National Assembly, France’s lower house of parliament.

The outcome of the legislative election will provide a measure of French voters’ repulsion toward the socialist and conservative parties that have alternated to govern France in the past four decades.

On Sunday, both Benoît Hamon of the ruling Socialist Party, and François Fillon of the conservative Les Républicains, were ejected from the presidential race, garnering 6.4% and 20%, respectively.

Despite the humiliating blow, leaders of Les Républicains vowed to quickly regroup, conquer a majority in parliament, and impose a “cohabitation” on Mr. Macron.

“It’s wasn’t our ideas that were defeated on Sunday, it was our candidate,” Daniel Fasquelle, a lawmaker for Les Républicains and mayor of Le Touquet, a resort town, told French television. “Our ideas are shared by a majority across the country and we will demonstrate that in the legislative vote.”

Socialist Party officials sought to display similar fighting spirit, saying they would line up candidates in all the constituencies against Mr. Macron’s recruits. Michel Rombaut, a volunteer in Mr. Hamon’s campaign and a Socialist for nearly 40 years, said Mr. Macron’s candidates should expect fierce resistance.

“There are elected officials who have been in place for years and who have done a fantastic job,” he said. “Many are big local personalities and it will be very difficult to dethrone them.”

Even if she lost to Mr. Macron, supporters of Ms. Le Pen expressed hope she would have a strong shot at becoming the leading face of the opposition by feeding off the leadership disarray besetting the Socialists and Les Républicains.

“It’s incredible, but the two parties that have dominated the Fifth Republic are out,” said Philippe Murer, an adviser to Ms. Le Pen.

On Monday, Mr. Fillon stepped back from the coming legislative battle, telling troops at Les Républicains that he no longer had the “legitimacy” to fight with them.

During the campaign, Mr. Macron has said he was confident in his capacity to build a parliamentary majority. He has been looking to recruit candidates from outside the political arena and pledged to enforce strict gender parity when naming them.

Speaking to supporters on Sunday evening, he set to work, spreading his arm wide open and saying: “Every woman and man is welcome. I won’t ask those who join me where they come from.”

—Nick Kostov contributed to this article.

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Argument



The Radical Centrism of Emmanuel Macron

France’s presidential front-runner is drawing on a tradition with little precedent in his country’s politics.

Of all the potential outcomes that could have emerged from the first round of Sunday’s French presidential election, the one that observers seemed to fear most was a second round duel between

Marine Le Pen, the candidate of the hard right Front National, and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of the hard left La France Insoumise (Defiant France). That face-off between representatives from the far ends of

France’s political spectrum has been averted.

Remarkably, however, two extremes will nevertheless confront one another in the run-off on May 7. Le Pen, who placed second with 21.4

percent of the vote, will continue on to the second round of the election. She will be up against Emmanuel Macron, who came in first with nearly 24 percent. The 39-year-old former investment banker is commonly referred to as a centrist. Such a moniker, however, tells us very little. Instead, we should think of Macron as the embodiment of a particularly French kind of center — the extreme center.

The “extreme center” is a notion coined by the historian Pierre Serna, in his seminal work on the French Revolution and, more particularly, the Restoration, the 15-year period that followed Napoleon’s fall and saw the return of the Bourbon monarchy. The Restoration was caught between those committed to maintaining the ideals of the French Revolution and those committed to their extirpation. In his paradoxical phrase, Serna sought to emphasize the efforts made by the court of Louis XVIII, during a few brief years, to tack between the revolutionary left and counterrevolutionary right. Squeezed between these two utterly antithetical worldviews, Louis and his ministers staked out a position uncommonly dedicated to compromise and moderation, as well as a kind of proto-technocracy. Most importantly, they insisted upon their devotion to what was called the “general interest.” This experiment in moderate extremism, however, did not last long. It ended in 1820 with an act of terrorism: a follower of Napoleon assassinated a member of the royal family, pushing the monarchy into the arms of the extreme right.

Of course, the differences between Macron and Louis XVIII are greater than the similarities. But Macron, facing a political landscape potted with craters where the country’s two establishment parties once stood, has cast himself as the ultimate

centrist: “neither left nor right,” as he likes to put it. On the one hand, he vows to impose an austere diet on the bloated public sector, eliminating 120,000 positions over five years; on the other hand, he promises major investments in the environmental, health and agricultural sectors. A friend of the financial and industrial worlds, Macron also portrays himself as the defender of France’s revolutionary and universal values of liberty and equality. And short of an different kind of act of terrorism between now and May 7, Macron is the odds-on favorite to win.

Le Pen’s electoral options from this point on are limited. No doubt she will look to center-right candidate François Fillon’s more conservative supporters: Tellingly, Christophe Billan, the leader of the archconservative Catholic organization Sens Commun, which had rallied to the scandal-plagued Fillon, refused last night to choose between Le Pen and Macron, leaving his members to “follow their conscience” come the second round. More strikingly, Le Pen will also appeal to working class voters who had cast their ballots for Mélenchon. Interviewed by the magazine *L’Obs*, one such voter declared: “For me, it’s out of the question to vote for Macron. And so, it’s going to be either Le Pen or abstention. We’ve got to resist international finance.”

But, by and large, Le Pen has few potential allies: her party and her person remain radioactive for the vast majority of the French political class. Not surprisingly, once the official results were announced last night, a great chorus of voices across the political spectrum declared their support for Macron. On the right, senior figures like former prime ministers Alain Juppé and Jean-Pierre Raffarin rallied to

Macron, as did a depressed Fillon. On the left, there was a similar mobilization; the Socialist candidate Benoît Hamon, though reeling from a disastrous showing — he secured scarcely 6 percent of the vote — nevertheless called on the party’s faithful to vote for Macron. The one notable exception was Mélenchon, who has refused to endorse Macron until he learns, through the social media his campaign used so skillfully, where his supporters stand on the issue. (That they were chanting “Résistance, résistance” during Mélenchon’s concession speech does not bode well for a Macron endorsement.)

All of this — along with polls the show him crushing Le Pen by more than 20 points in the second round of voting — suggests that Macron’s great challenge will not be gaining the Elysée, but instead fashioning a functional extreme center, one that doesn’t end, as it did in repeatedly in 19th century, with sharp lurches to either the extreme right or left. Though outstanding French theorists from Benjamin Constant through Raymond Aron have defended the virtues of centrism and moderation, French history, in thrall to ideological politics, has proved mostly allergic to its actual practice. (The failure of Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, the one notable exception to this rule, to win a second term as president in 1981 reflects the difficulty balancing act of centrist politicians in France.)

Assuming he becomes president, Macron’s hopes for success will depend on the legislative elections in June. Historically, the French have tended to give the presidents they vote into office the parliamentary majorities they need to carry out their campaign promises. All of these presidents also led broad-based, long-established and well-oiled political

parties. Macron, by contrast, founded his movement, *En Marche!*, less than a year ago, when he was still serving as the economy minister in President Francois Hollande’s administration.

Nevertheless, his movement claims to have reviewed more than 14,000 applications for those seeking to run as representatives, and promises to reveal a full list of candidates for the 577 parliamentary slots after the run-off election. By way of a teaser, fourteen *En Marche!* candidates were presented to the press earlier this month. Gender balanced and multi-racial, they ranged from farmers, teachers and journalists to the former head of RAID (France’s SWAT unit), civil servants and intellectuals. Their professional, ethnic and class diversity may well represent a new approach to extreme centrism in France, one that seeks to bridge at least some of the schisms that bedevil French political life.

But, of course, both the extreme left and extreme right are not going away anytime soon. As the specialist of the Front National, Nicolas Lebourg, argues, if Le Pen succeeds in winning at least 40 percent of the vote, she will lay the groundwork for a new assault on the Elysée in five years. Similarly, Mélenchon will use his powerful showing in the first round to push to ever farther to the left a thoroughly deflated and diminished Socialist Party. No less important, the social and economic forces that have lifted Le Pen and Mélenchon will continue to swell once this electoral season ends and it remains to be seen if the extreme middle will hold against the extremes of both the left and right.

Image credit: RANCOIS NASCIMBENI/AFP/Getty Images



Meet the man who could become France's youngest president

Chris O'Brien
8-10 minutes

After a year of electoral shocks around the globe, France delivered its own surprise when political neophyte and centrist Emmanuel Macron topped 10 other candidates in the first round of presidential voting.

Suddenly, an obscure former investment banker who has never been elected to political office is the heavy favorite to win a second round of voting against extreme-right candidate Marine Le Pen on May 7.

In its most important election in decades, one watched closely around the world amid a rise of nationalist and populist movements, France chose an enthusiastic supporter of the European Union, open borders and digital disruption

That Macron finds himself on the threshold of power caps a remarkable rise that has defied almost every bit of French political conventional wisdom.

He is a youthful 39 in a country where age and experience are favored; he is married to his high-school teacher, 24 years his senior; as the Socialist government’s economic minister, he pushed for workplace reforms and a renewal of

entrepreneurial spirit that made him a detested figure among the country’s unions.

And breaking the ultimate French political taboo: He is not afraid to speak English in a public setting.

The result is a candidate who has confounded much of the French political establishment by building a new political movement from scratch as if he were launching a startup. His belief that there was a radical center tired of the traditional left-right choices seemed audacious a year ago, but now may be on the verge of transforming France’s politics.

“In one year we have entirely changed the political situation in France,” Macron said Sunday night to a throng of cheering supporters in Paris. “I know exactly what task lies ahead for me. This election has opened the door to optimism, to a new path for hope for Europe, and the world.”

Yet Macron, who would be France’s youngest president, continues to face skeptics who believe he is a lightweight who is merely recycling old ideas, and who may not be up to the daunting challenge ahead of pressing a reform agenda in a country that stubbornly resists change of any kind.

His opponent, Le Pen, came out swinging Sunday night, echoing many of the criticisms of Macron leveled from both the left and right: that he is banker who is a lapdog for corporations; and that he wants to put global interests ahead of France's needs.

"At stake in this election is the savage globalization that has put our civilization in danger," Le Pen said. "This reign, it is that of the king of money."

While the second round of voting is two weeks away, an election night poll from Ipsos had Macron favored by 62% of the electorate over Le Pen.

France's largest union, the CFDT, as well as the Communist Party, and the candidates from both of France's two largest parties, the Socialist and Republican, strongly endorsed Macron and called on supporters to vote to block Le Pen.

It's Macron's unabashedly pro-E.U. stand that would make his victory next month resonate beyond France's borders to those around the world looking for a globalist champion. Following his first-place finish Sunday night, Macron received congratulations from German Chancellor Angela Merkel, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, and E.U. foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini following a victory speech he made from a podium standing next to a French and EU flag.

"To see the flags of France and the EU salute Emmanuel Macron's result shows hope and the future of our generation," Mogherini wrote in a tweet.

Macron was born in Amiens, a small town in northeast France. In high

school, he met Brigitte Trogneux, his French teacher, when was 15 years old and began to woo her relentlessly. His parents, both doctors, eventually sent him to an elite private high school in Paris, but he continued to pursue Trogneux, who was married and 24 years his senior.

"At the age of 17, Emmanuel said to me, 'Whatever you do, I will marry you!'" she told Paris Match magazine in an interview.

They married in 2007.

During the campaign, Brigitte Macron stayed close to his side, becoming one of his closest campaign advisors, and a popular figure with his supporters. In a country which has a fascination with first ladies, her age, fashion sense, and influence on Macron have made her a figure of intrigue. In an appearance in early March, he declared that she would continue to play a role as advisor if he was elected.

"She will have this role, this place, this requirement, not concealed, not behind a tweet or a hiding place, she will have it at my side," the candidate declared, according to the LCI news service.

On Sunday, she strolled on stage with Macron, hand-in-hand, kissing briefly to cheers from the adoring crowd.

Macron, who has an undergraduate degree in philosophy and a masters in public policy, briefly worked as a bureaucrat in the Finance Ministry before quitting to join the prestigious Rothschild investment bank. It made for an unusual resume for a Socialist Party member.

was also packed. On Easter Monday *Nice-Matin*, the city's newspaper of record, reported that those in the tourism industry were, like the churchgoers, singing "resurrection songs of praise." Tourists were back. But what about France itself? All the presidential candidates who took part in Sunday's first round-election were promising a resurrection too, but, in Nice at least, many voters were suffering a crisis of faith.

The presidency of the Socialist Francois Hollande has long been considered a failure, and opinion polls had long indicated just how disillusioned the electorate had become with the political establishment. To a great extent this was confirmed by Sunday's result. The candidate of the Socialists and the traditional party of the left, got a

In 2014, President Francois Hollande picked him to be economics minister.

From the start, Macron made it clear that he was an independent voice. He embraced reforms of France's strict work rules while speaking glowingly of the country's nascent startup scene. His vocal support for "La French Tech," and his belief in the need to embrace disruption, made him sound like a Silicon Valley acolyte and won him a passionate following among entrepreneurs and the tech industry.

It also made him highly suspect among the unions that formed the traditional base of Hollande's Socialist Party. In 2015, the government passed a series of work reforms that became known as the "Macron Law," which triggered widespread strikes and protests.

During a now-infamous face-to-face confrontation during one protest, a striking worker said he could only dream of making enough money to afford a suit like the one Macron was wearing at the time. Macron's response: "The best way to pay for a suit is to work."

Behind the scenes, Macron had quietly begun working with a Paris-based political technology firm, Liegey Muller Pons, started by a handful of French entrepreneurs who had volunteered for Barack Obama's campaign in 2008.

A year ago, Macron announced a new movement called, "En Marche!" or "Onward!" Working with the firm, he began recruiting volunteers who were willing to fan out across the country to conduct face-to-face interviews with voters. Over a three-month period, that effort, called the "Grande Marche," saw 5,000 volunteers knock on 300,000 doors,

which took 23.9 percent on Sunday. In the face of a far-right finalist, almost the entire French establishment has gotten behind Macron and his centrist movement, and the polls have suggested that Macron could win by as much as 62 percent to 38 percent for Le Pen. But the establishment itself is much out of favor, and however he tries to distance himself from it, Macron is very much its creature. Wide though the gap may be today, abstentionism, another major terrorist attack, or something else as yet unforeseen could swing the vote.

"If you look at Macron, he likes the American way of campaigning," said Guillaume Liegey, a co-founder of Liegey Muller Pons. "He's very interested in this American way of telling stories with concrete examples. Rather than the French style of just coming from the brain, he wants to talk about values and speak from the heart."

But Macron is not afraid to use his head and heart. The data gathered by volunteers were then analyzed to understand what the electorate wanted, and how it might be addressed. Macron resigned from the government, and went on a speaking tour last summer to discuss the findings.

By late fall, those "diagnostics" and the speaking tour evolved into an official presidential campaign.

The wave swept up people like Axelle Tessandier, 36, who had left France to work at a startup in San Francisco. She returned to Paris in 2016, founding her own innovation consulting firm. She soon found herself at the center of the Macron campaign as an advisor.

Tessandier said it was Macron's positive vision and expressions of hope, along with his political and economic openness, that convinced her he could reinvent French politics.

"I want us to be the passion vote," she said. "I want us to be the conviction vote. I want to talk about what kind of society we want to create."

O'Brien is a special correspondent.

Judah : New York Review of Books : France Against Itself

Tim Judah

21-27 minutes

Eric Gaillard/Reuters French newspapers with results from the presidential election on the Promenade Des Anglais in Nice, France, April 24, 2017

It was Easter Sunday in Nice, France's fifth-largest city, exactly one week before the first round of the country's presidential election. In the old town, there were armed police guarding the Cathedral of Sainte-Réparate—part of the country's continuing state of emergency. Inside, the church was full. A few minutes' walk away, the Promenade des Anglais, the Mediterranean city's famous seaside walkway that was the site of last July's devastating terrorist attack,

dismal 6.3 percent of the vote and for the first time since the founding of the Fifth Republic in 1958, there will be no candidate in the second round from any of the mainstream parties. The other establishment party, the conservative Republicans, led by former prime minister François Fillon, failed to advance, getting just 19.9 percent. By contrast the parties of the extreme right and left did remarkably well. Jean-Luc Melenchon, on the far left, got 19.6 percent and Marine Le Pen, of the far right National Front (FN), took 21.4 percent—enough to qualify for second place and a spot in the runoff election on May 7.

In the second round Le Pen will run against Emmanuel Macron, the thirty-nine-year-old former economics minister and founder of a party barely a year old, En Marche!,

A visit to the Côte d'Azur gives some sense of how this situation came about. First was the abysmal performance of the current administration. By last year Hollande's ratings had dropped so low that he decided not to run for a

second term. His promises of reform and economic rejuvenation were largely unfulfilled. France has first-rate infrastructure and health care, but taxes are high. The country's growth has been lingering in the doldrums since the financial crash of 2008. Its unemployment rate is almost 10 percent, or about six million people. Its youth unemployment rate is close to 25 percent. (Britain's unemployment rate is 4.7 percent and Germany's is 3.9 percent.) Writing in *Le Figaro* on April 19, a group of economists noted that in 1980 France's per capita GDP was 20 percent higher than that of Britain but that by 2015 Britain had overtaken it.

These issues have affected more prosperous areas as well. A few days before the first-round vote, I visited Eze, an attractive and wealthy town in the hills above Nice, where I met Vanessa Vada, an activist for Macron's centrist party. Macron has not proved particularly strong in this part of the country, and Vada told me that one of her (and his) motivations was to avoid the populist nationalism that had recently triumphed in the United States and Britain. However, while she was hopeful that Macron would win, she was frightened that the strong emotions many feel about problems today could produce an unpleasant surprise in the final round. "I am getting worried that people will go and vote for just one reason... *they are pissed off!*"

All parties also need to fight the upcoming June parliamentary elections. Macron's party, whose initials "EM" are the same as his own, has no seats in the outgoing parliament because it is new, and France's electoral system means that the FN had only two out of 577 seats in the last parliament. To govern effectively, the new president will need a majority of deputies to support him or her in the assembly. So, even though things look good for Macron now, he has won a battle but certainly not won the war. Add together the votes of Le Pen, Melenchon, and the marginal candidates and you find that up to 49 percent voted for anti-EU, anti-establishment, and mostly Russian-friendly platforms. That gives you an idea of just how fed up many French are. The day after the election Macron was already being criticized for complacency. When the first results came out he gave a victory speech as if he had already become president and then celebrated at a smart Paris restaurant, which drew unfavorable comparisons with Nicholas Sarkozy, Hollande's bling-loving predecessor.

"All upturned," said the banner headline of *Nice-Matin* on the morning after the election. It is as

true for Nice as it is for France as a whole. Except for soldiers patrolling the streets, however, a visitor might be hard-pressed to notice anything untoward or tense here. The city basks by the sea. Oligarchs' yachts, or rather small ships, sit at anchor waiting for a brief visit from their masters. Cheap airlines bring millions of visitors to the South of France. Nearby, Cannes is preparing for its seventieth annual film festival in mid-May, and the world's tennis stars have been battling it out in the Monte-Carlo Rolex Masters. Next month the Monaco Grand Prix will bring yet more people to stay in Nice, and after that the summer season begins.

On July 14 last year, just after the Bastille Day fireworks, Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, a Tunisian Muslim who had been exposed to jihadist ideas, drove a truck down the Promenade, killing eighty-six people and injuring 434. Eight months earlier Islamist terrorists had killed 130 and wounded 368 in attacks in Paris. The country is still under a state of emergency. The Nice and Paris attacks were only the biggest and most spectacular examples of extremist violence of the last few years. The last one was on April 20, when a convicted criminal and presumed Islamist murdered a policeman on Paris's Champs Élysées.

The Côte d'Azur has long been a stronghold of the right. On Sunday the conservative Fillon beat Le Pen in Nice, 26.1 percent to her 25.28 percent, and Macron came third with 20.52 percent. However, in the wider Alpes-Maritime region Le Pen outperformed Fillon 27.75 percent to 27.39 percent, and Macron scored just 19.04 percent. The FN has always done well here, though the electoral system means that the traditional right has kept a firm grip on power. Compared to the presidential election in 2012, when Le Pen also ran but did not get into the second round, she moved from second place in the region to first.

The FN's first big supporters were pieds-noirs, French who had left Algeria after independence in 1962 and settled in the south. In 2015 Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, the niece of Marine Le Pen, received 45.22 percent of the vote in the second round of the regional elections. In recent years, the traditional right has had to move rightward to stop its voters from going over to Le Pen. But Vada is correct. Watching Le Pen and Fillon on television, watching Fillon address a rally of five thousand people in Nice in the final days before the first-round election, and talking to ordinary people who said they were likely to vote for either of these two

candidates, I often felt like I was listening to a French version of the Brexit and Trump campaigns, with many of the same fears about foreigners and globalization eroding the livelihoods of citizens.

On Easter Monday I chatted with Sabine, a woman in her fifties, who was chopping lemons in front of stalls of ice packed with fresh lobsters, prawns, and oysters for sale outside the Café Turin on the beautiful Place Garibaldi. "You English," she said, explaining why she was going to vote for Le Pen, "have been very brave to leave Europe," and that is what she wanted France to do and what, in effect, Le Pen is promising. Taxes were too high, Sabine said. If your business was very small, you got help, and if you were rich you hid your money abroad. But if you were anywhere in-between "you just have to pay, pay, pay." Her motivations for voting for Le Pen seemed similar to her British and American counterparts who voted for Trump and Brexit. Too many foreigners were flooding into France and they often got all sorts of state aid, "and my parents have a tiny pension and they have to pay for that!"

If Le Pen comes to power on May 7, she says her first task would be to take back control of the country's borders, which are supposedly open because France is in Europe's Schengen zone. Even if she does not there is little doubt that Macron would need to use his time in power to tackle the question of migration. It has long been the issue at the heart of the FN's policies, even if Marine Le Pen has, since taking over the party from her father in 2011, purged it, at least in public, of its worst racist elements.

In fact, amid the state of emergency, some enhanced immigration controls have already been put in place. Police watch the cars coming over the border from Italy, and pull some over for questioning. I came to Nice on a local train from Ventimiglia, the first town on the other side of the border. Many migrants and refugees destined for France, and especially Africans who have crossed the Sahara and paid smugglers to take them on the dangerous crossing from Libya, pass through here. I went to the train twenty-five minutes before it left and saw a dozen or so Africans waiting on the platform or in the carriages, which were otherwise empty. I came back five minutes before the train left and the Africans had vanished, but the train had now filled up with other passengers. I asked the French train conductor whether the Italian police had shooed them away. "Oh no," she said, "they are hiding in the cupboards or under the seats." Tim

JudahPolice removing African migrants from a train at the Menton-Garavan train station, Menton, France, April 15, 2017

Ten minutes after the train departed, we arrived at the first French station. The police got on and walked down the train opening all the cupboards, which contain the electrics and plumbing. "It is a game of cat and mouse," said the conductor. One of the policemen told me that at the moment they were catching about two hundred people a day on the trains and sending them back to Italy. Later I heard that the more determined or richer migrants and refugees pay smugglers from the Roya valley, a mountainous area of the border, to help them trek to France.

I was at the Café Turin because I had an appointment there with Patrick Allemand. He is a veteran Niçois Socialist who supported Macron, judging, like many others—and correctly, as the polls proved—that Benoît Hamon, the Socialist candidate, had no chance of winning. "We have never had an election like this," Allemand said. "There is not much engagement. Not much fervor. People are in disarray and many don't know whom to vote for." Usually, people knew whom they were going to vote for well in advance, but this year, a lot of people didn't.

According to Allemand, the problem was not just that the last five years had been a huge disappointment, but that "there is a feeling that no one can do any better." Even many ordinary Le Pen supporters seem underwhelmed. One pensioner I spoke to, named Jean-Jacques, said that migration needed to be stopped or controlled and Le Pen was the woman to do it, but that, in the end, "she would not pass" the second round.

Allemand was glum. If Le Pen was elected then the consequences would be cataclysmic, but they would be too if Melenchon somehow got through. He did not, but what he has done is change the face of the French left. Hamon's dismal showing—and Melenchon's respectable one—means that between now and the parliamentary elections, there is a lot still to sort out on the left. Melenchon ran a slick campaign and, like Obama in 2008, made innovative use of modern technology. He addressed rallies in seven cities at once by appearing in all but one of them as a hologram. He talked about ecology, kicking out the bankers, and his 100 percent tax rate on earnings above €400,000. His opponents painted him as a Chavez-loving Communist, which he denied, but next to him Bernie Sanders would look like a

conservative. He was close to Le Pen in his anti-European and pro-Russian views. And like Le Pen, he wants France out of NATO.

"For the left Europe is central and its future will be determined by who wins, so it is not just social and economic questions," said Allemand. "We have a central position. If France goes it will all collapse." Unless Le Pen can turn the tables and win on May 7, that is a fate that France and Europe seem to have avoided for now, but Macron and whoever wins the German election in September are on notice that they have only a few years to make profound changes to save Europe's established order.

Back in Eze last week, I found the mayor, Stéphane Cherk, talking to people in the streets. The village has 3,000 permanent residents, he said, which grows to 12,000 in summer, along with, over the course of the year, some 1.2 million tourists. He was an independent but supported Fillon. The old town, with its spectacular views, is full of souvenir shops, selling anything you can possibly imagine made of lavender, paintings, fridge magnets, and so on. With so many tourists and so much money pouring in, it is not really surprising that the mayor tells me: "To be quite honest, we don't really have any problems." Even so, he was worried about Le Pen. If she is elected, he said, "it would be a catastrophe. No more tourists will come." Referring to Trump's victory, he added: "I heard there are many fewer visitors in New York."

Though they are less apparent on the Côte d'Azur, France is well known for its suburban areas scarred by deep problems of unemployment, drugs, and crime. When I asked Cherk to suggest a place nearby that is struggling he sent me to La Trinité, another small town abutting Nice. No tourists come to this mostly white, middle-class area. Young families come here because it is much cheaper than Nice, said Jean-Paul Dalmasso, the mayor, and then commute into the city. France's failure to pull out of the economic crisis meant that his subsidies from Paris had been cut by 50 percent, which was forcing him to make budget cuts. At the same time, he needed to spend more on things like security cameras to keep people safe. At Christmas people had grumbled because he had announced that to save money, there would be no Christmas lights in town. In other words, his problems were relative. Dalmasso also told me he was throwing his

weight behind Fillon. He was one of the few in La Trinité who did, though. Le Pen scored a whopping 40.76 percent here, followed by Melenchon at 20.9 percent.

A few minutes' walk from La Trinité is the river Paillon, which separates it from Ariane, a working-class but well-maintained suburb within the boundaries of Nice. Lots of people, mostly of African and Arab North African descent, were walking over the bridge coming from or going to Auchan, a big supermarket in La Trinité. On the market square in Ariane an old church has been taken over by a Catholic association called Mir, which helps some three hundred needy families. They can come here and, for a symbolic amount, buy food. Jean-Claude Watry, a volunteer, said that about 80 percent of Ariane's 30,000 people were either immigrants or children of immigrants. There are two mosques and three Muslim prayer rooms. This is one of the poorest areas of Nice, but, he conceded, there are plenty of areas in other parts of France that are far worse off. There are people from fourteen ethnic groups here and, while a majority are Muslim, many immigrants are not. They include Spanish Roma, for example, who are evangelical Christians. Tim Judah's posters showing French presidential election candidates Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, Marine Le Pen, and Emmanuel Macron in La Trinité, France, April 18, 2017

In the market everyone was closing up for the day. Two men, both sons of North African immigrants, were cleaning up their mobile rotisserie, Le Roi du Poulet. They did not want to give their names but said they would vote for Melenchon. "He is the one that makes me least scared," said one. It is estimated that up to 80 percent of French Muslims voted for Hollande in the last election. This time despondency reigns. Religious Muslims, like religious Catholics, opposed the legalization of gay marriage. After the big Paris terrorist attack they also did not like Hollande's suggestion that French jihadis could have their citizenship stripped. They worried that fear and paranoia concerning Muslim immigrants might one day cause the authorities to take away their citizenship too.

In a local shop there was an election poster but it was to remind Algerian citizens of that country's upcoming elections. In a café I chatted with a group of young men whose parents had been immigrants from North Africa. Out of ten, only five of them had jobs. It had always been hard to get work, they said, but now, with

their names, it was even harder. They were the double victims of the terrorists. Muslims were killed like everyone else but then Muslims were blamed for the attacks. "We are hit both ways," said Othman, aged twenty-five, who worked as a waiter and told me about his neighbors, who were related to the first victim of the Nice truck attack. It is hard to be completely sure how many Muslims died in the attack, but about 20 percent of the names suggest a Muslim background.

One place where I did not detect many Muslims was a Fillon rally on the other side of Nice. Most of those who had come were white, middle-class, and middle-aged or older. Fillon thundered on about General de Gaulle, just like Brexiteers always go on about Winston Churchill. There was "no citizenship without culture and roots," he said. Lax policing had led to "lawless zones." France was the "cradle of our Christian roots."

Fillon became the candidate for his party in November 2016 because they wanted someone clean and moral in reaction to the scandal-ridden Sarkozy, the last president from the right. Since then Fillon has come under investigation by the police for allegedly paying his wife more than €700,000 of public money for parliamentary work she never did. There have also been other allegations against him. He had said he would drop out if he was investigated, but in the end he did not—a strategic miscalculation for him and his party. From leading the pack his support bled to Le Pen and to Macron and cost him his place in the second round. For now, the second-round polls show more Fillon voters opting for Macron than Le Pen, but they also show a significant number abstaining. So when Marine Le Pen said she was taking temporary leave from the leadership of the FN on the day after the elections, it was clear that this was a maneuver designed above all to attract support from Fillon voters who could not stomach the FN but might be tempted to vote for her alone. "#Fillon and his lieutenants told us that #Macron was baby Hollande," she tweeted sarcastically, "and now they are calling us to vote for him?"

In her Nice flat Valerie Arboireau, an artist and art director, showed me one of her works. It was a vintage embroidered sheet covered in lipstick kisses arranged in such a way that, if you stand back, you can see they take the shape of breasts. Like others she complained of crushing taxes and said that while France was good at incubating

creative start-ups, she knew many who had taken their businesses to Britain or Belgium once they began to succeed. She and many of her friends did not like the right and thought Macron was "an empty shell into which everything goes," referring to his campaign to seek support from left and right. She said she would like to cast a *vote blanc*, or blank ballot, in protest. In the end, she said, especially in the second round she knew she would have "to vote against" someone, who now we know is Le Pen.

Philippe Metaut, an antique dealer who used to be a finance director, echoed her. A sort of inertia hung over the poll. He would vote, above all, to stop the "catastrophe" of the extremes of Melenchon and Le Pen, and hence "would vote for the least bad candidate." He and Victoria summed up the mood of many I met, especially educated, middle-class people. They resented their position as "useful voters," meaning people mobilized to vote against someone they detested, rather than for someone they believed in.

Amid this gloom there is one bright spot in Nice right now: the Medrano circus. The acts are traditional. The elephants sit on their hind legs, the tigers jump through hoops, the performing poodles strut their stuff, the acrobats do amazing things, and a Ukrainian woman pulls a van with her teeth. The manager is Radu Nepotu, a twenty-six-year-old Moldovan who decided to do this rather than practice as a lawyer back home. There were ninety people working in the circus, he said, and only ten of them were French. "We have got Chinese, Peruvians, Mongolians, Ukrainians, Russians, Moldovans, Romanians and Germans."

Nepotu did not seem worried that the election might end with closed borders, making it hard for his team to work here. As far as he was concerned the show would go on. When the candidates talk of French culture they are always making reference to long-dead artists or authors. But, said Nepotu, the circus was French culture too, "and if they stopped people from coming they would be forbidding us to create French culture." The problem, he said, was that you could not find enough good acts in France. "You have to look everywhere." Reflecting a bit he said: "Yes, we pay too much in taxes, but it is still a great country." At least someone in Nice didn't think voters need to make France great again.

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

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

8-9 minutes

PARIS — After picking two relative outsiders to advance into the final round of a hotly contested presidential election, French voters are facing a new political divide: a debate over national identity instead of politics or economics.

In a flat-out rejection of the center-left and center-right parties that have run the country for decades, voters opted for Emmanuel Macron, 39, a fresh-faced independent who argues for France's place in Europe and a globalized economy, and Marine Le Pen, 48, an ardent right-winger who wants to return to a nation-state model, leave the European Union and curb immigration.

With two weeks left before the May 7 runoff, Macron is seeking to hold on to centrist voters, while Le Pen has doubled down on her anti-immigrant rhetoric.

To broaden her appeal to voters, Le Pen announced Monday that she is temporarily stepping down as head of her far-right party. "Tonight, I am no longer the president of the National Front," she said on French television. "I am the presidential candidate." The move appeared aimed at reaching out to leftists who share some of her positions, notably her aversion to membership in the E.U. and NATO.

Never in the six-decade-long history of the modern French state have the traditional parties been barred from the presidency. And never before has the National Front — once considered an extremist fringe with no chance of gaining power — received more than 20 percent of the vote in a presidential election.

(The Washington Post)

Emmanuel Macron, a 39-year-old centrist, will face Marine Le Pen, the far-right nationalist in the presidential runoff May 7, leaving French voters with a stark choice. Macron takes on Le Pen for French presidency. Now What? (The Washington Post)

The choice between Macron and Le Pen is ultimately a choice between two radically different visions of the euro zone's second-largest economy and only nuclear power.

"You really have two new parties," said Dominique Moïsi, a French political scientist and author of "The Geopolitics of Emotion," a study of how subjective undercurrents can alter political life. "On the one hand, you have global openness, based on hope. On the other, you have a party of nationalistic closure, based on fear."

After terrorist attacks that have rocked France in the past two years, Le Pen on Monday promised, for the first time, that she would expel all "foreign Islamists" — no longer just those suspected of crimes. Meanwhile, leaders across the political spectrum were quick to fan the flames of fear, too, warning that Le Pen might win.

"This is deadly serious now," Socialist candidate Benoît Hamon said in his concession speech Sunday night as he urged his supporters to back Macron in the runoff. François Fillon, the mainstream conservative contender, said much the same.

Financial markets and pro-European political groups showed clear signs of relief that Macron had emerged on top in Sunday's vote and appeared to hold a strong position ahead of the two-person runoff. But Macron's backers acknowledged 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, general secretary of Macron's political movement, said on France's BFM television news channel.

But the observation came only after Macron was criticized for delivering a victory speech Sunday night — followed by a celebratory banquet in a posh Paris restaurant — that suggested to many that he considered the battle over.

"The French people have expressed themselves," Macron declared in his remarks, before a roaring crowd. "The power of the momentum behind me will be the key to my ability to lead and to govern."

In any case, not all of those defeated in the first round responded to the call of the "Republican Front," a bipartisan coalition devoted to thwarting a National Front victory at all costs.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon, a far-leftist who energized young voters with some of the same approaches as Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) in the U.S. Democratic presidential primaries last year, declined to formally endorse Macron; some in the Fillon camp defected to Le Pen.

[After French vote, European leaders come out against Le Pen. But what if she wins?]

Le Pen complained Monday that political elites were conspiring against her, just as they had united against her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, in the final round of the 2002 presidential vote. In that contest, when the elder Le Pen, a convicted Holocaust denier, defied all odds and qualified for the runoff, leftists turned out to vote for Jacques Chirac, the incumbent conservative president.

"The old rotten Republican Front, that no one wants anymore and that the French have kicked out with exceptional violence, is trying to unite around Mr. Macron," Marine Le Pen said during a stroll through a market in the northern town of Rouvroy, reiterating that French voters would not be deceived.

"This is a referendum for or against wild globalization," she said, passing out fliers that said "Eradicate Islamist terrorism."

Many of those who embraced Macron did so out of concern, not enthusiasm. As Fillon put it: "Abstention is not in my DNA, especially when an extremist party comes close to seizing power."

[A youth revolt in France boosts the far right]

In the ongoing war over national identity, Macron faces considerable obstacles. Whether on the far left or the far right, populist voters who

want to overhaul the "system" accounted for 49.8 percent of the ballots cast Sunday. And his better-days-are-before-us stump speech has at times been perceived as disconnected from the grim mood in France, which is struggling with a stagnant double-digit unemployment rate, the threat of terrorism and Europe's refugee crisis.

But Macron defends the "system" and vows to improve it. His centrist vision — "neither of the right, nor the left," in his words — calls for strong E.U. nations to do more to support weaker ones. He would embrace immigrants and refugees and would 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 Parliament, a challenge given that his political movement is just a year old and has no lawmakers.

[The geographical divides behind Le Pen's and Macron's success in the polls]

World News Alerts

Breaking news from around the world.

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

Meanwhile, France's two traditional mainstream parties were left confronting their failures. Hamon captured just 6.4 percent of the vote on Sunday, a remarkable meltdown of support, given that Socialist François Hollande is the incumbent president.

"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.

Virgile Demoustier in Paris and Brian Murphy and William Branigin in Washington contributed to this report.

PARIS — A day after mainstream parties were dealt a heavy defeat in the French presidential election, the far-right leader Marine Le Pen, one of the two candidates to advance to a runoff, condemned the parties' calls to unite against her and support her rival, the independent centrist Emmanuel Macron.

Ms. Le Pen's statement on Monday denouncing "the old and completely rotten Republican Front" — the coalition of mainstream parties allied against her — sums up her challenge in the May 7 runoff. So far, not a single rival party has called for its voters to support Ms. Le Pen. And she has no plausible major reservoir of votes to add to the 21.3 percent she received in the first round of voting, though she is expected to gain some voters from the defeated center-right candidate François Fillon.

Perhaps in an effort to broaden her appeal to voters from outside the far-right National Front's traditional constituencies, Ms. Le Pen announced on Twitter on Monday that she was temporarily stepping down as the party's leader so she could run as a candidate for "all the French."

"Tonight, I am not the president of the National Front, I am the presidential candidate, the one who wants to gather all the French around a project of hope, of prosperity, of security," she said in an interview on French television.

Most of Ms. Le Pen's rivals have gathered around the effort to defeat her. Only one major candidate has resisted calls to unite against her: Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the firebrand hard-left candidate who came in fourth and who has pointedly refused to support Mr. Macron,

saying instead that he would seek the opinion of his supporters through his website. Similarly, traditionalist Roman Catholic organizations that backed Mr. Fillon refused to endorse Mr. Macron on Monday.

Some of Ms. Le Pen's advisers said, in interviews with French news media on Monday, that they were hoping to lure some of the supporters of the defeated Mr. Mélenchon, whose populist program bore similarities to that of Ms. Le Pen: hostility to the European Union, NATO and the forces of globalization, and a forgiving attitude toward Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin.

Many of Mr. Mélenchon's supporters may have little fondness for Ms. Le Pen, but in interviews they expressed equal disdain for the pro-free market Mr. Macron. "For me, Le Pen, Macron, it's the same," said Olivia Scemama, a musician from the 18th Arrondissement of Paris who said she voted for Mr. Mélenchon. "With Macron, it's the extremism of banks, of finance."

The election results published Monday suggested another hurdle for Ms. Le Pen to overcome: a sharp urban-rural divide in the vote, with voters in France's major cities heavily favoring her rivals. The geography and sociology of her support was similar to Donald J. Trump's support in the 2016 United States presidential race. She won more départements — between a county and a state in French political geography — than Mr. Macron, and she won the working-class vote. But she did poorly in what French sociologists call "Winner's France" — urban, employed, well-educated and pro-European. She received less than 5 percent of the vote in Paris, less than 8 percent in Bordeaux and less than 9 percent in Lyon.

Stock markets opened higher on Monday across Europe, a sign that investors were relieved by Mr.

Macron's strong showing. Ms. Le Pen wants France to leave the euro currency zone, a prospect that created unease on international markets in the prelude to the first round of voting.

Polls released Monday showed that about 60 percent of voters supported Mr. Macron, compared with less than 40 percent for Ms. Le Pen. A live televised debate between the candidates is set for May 3.

In Hénin-Beaumont, the northern French city where Ms. Le Pen won 46 percent of the vote and whose National Front mayor is one of her top advisers, even supporters were pessimistic about her chances in the runoff. "It's a bummer," said Jean-Louis Devienne, 72. "If people could come here and see how good the National Front has been for our town, they would understand how good it can be for our country."

On Monday, Ms. Le Pen continued to emphasize the anti-immigrant and anti-globalization views that propelled her into the second round, and she denounced the efforts of the mainstream parties to keep her out of the presidency.

"The old and completely rotten Republican Front, which no one wants, and which the French have pushed away with exceptional violence, is trying to coalesce around Mr. Macron," Ms. Le Pen said in Rouvroy, a town in the deindustrialized north of France where her message tends to resonate with voters.

The independent centrist Emmanuel Macron on Monday in Paris. Benoit Tessier/Reuters

Ms. Le Pen also called Mr. Macron "weak" on terrorism, an issue that drew renewed attention days before the first round of voting, when a gunman on the Champs-Élysées, in central Paris, killed a police officer.

President François Hollande is scheduled to pay tribute to the fallen officer at a ceremony on Tuesday. His office said that Mr. Macron and Ms. Le Pen are expected to attend.

Mr. Macron, who has never held elective office, came in first among 11 candidates, with 24 percent of the vote. Ms. Le Pen was second, with 21.3 percent, according to final results tallied Monday by the Interior Ministry.

Mr. Fillon, the center-right candidate who was once seen as the front-runner, before a scandal involving public funds paid to his family, finished third at 20 percent. He was followed by Mr. Mélenchon at 19.6 percent, and the Socialist candidate, Benoît Hamon, at 6.4 percent.

The mainstream parties were left struggling to pick up the pieces after their poor showing. On the right, many were quick to blame their candidate, Mr. Fillon, who refused to drop out of the race after the embezzlement scandal.

The Socialists and the Republicans will now be looking to elections in June, when French voters will elect the members of the National Assembly, France's lower and more powerful house of Parliament. Those legislative elections could present a bigger challenge for Mr. Macron than winning the second round of the presidential election. He has vowed to field candidates in all 577 districts. But his political movement is barely a year old, and he is up against the established parties, which are weakened but still have extensive networks.

Although Mr. Macron is seen as an overwhelming favorite in the second round of the presidential election, he was warned not to take victory for granted and — after he spent Monday night with supporters at a chic restaurant in the wealthy Sixth Arrondissement of Paris — not to celebrate too much, too soon.



From economic woes to terrorism, a daunting to-do list for France's next president

By Elizabeth Roberts, CNN

Updated 6:16 AM ET, Tue April 25, 2017

What to know about Emmanuel Macron 01:26

Story highlights

- The economy is in the doldrums, joblessness rife and terror attacks frequent
- Le Pen has rode a wave of nationalist fervor to

second round; Macron has warned against it

(CNN)Winning the election is just the start of it. The list of troublesome issues facing the next president of France is lengthy, and it will not be easy to solve any of them.

Not only is the security situation worrying — the country has been in a state of emergency since the 2015 Paris attacks — but the economy is in trouble and the rate of unemployment high.

Although France is the third biggest economy in Europe, it has not recovered as strongly from the global financial crisis as its neighbors, Germany and the UK.

A demonstration against unemployment in Bordeaux.

And while GDP figures are finally improving, they remain at very low levels.

These issues were key in the campaigns of centrist Emmanuel Macron and far-right nationalist

Marine Le Pen leading up to the first round vote.

The two candidates have radically different approaches — but whoever wins on May 7, experts told CNN there is no doubt that it will be the economy, above all other issues, upon which the next president will be judged.

Unemployment top concern

France still struggles with youth unemployment 03:13

"Unemployment is the number one issue," said Emmanuelle Schön-Quinlivan, lecturer in European politics at University College, Cork.

"The economy is doing slightly better and we've had a slow decline in unemployment in the past few months, but we've had mass unemployment for 30 years.

"French people are now at a point where they all have someone in their inner circle affected by unemployment. This is the key issue that people want to see solved."

France is struggling to bring down its unemployment rate, which stands at roughly 10% -- higher than the eurozone average and more than double the level of joblessness in Germany and Britain.

The problem is worse for young people: 24% of those between the ages of 15 and 24 don't have a job.

Slow recovery

The International Monetary Fund predicts growth of just 1.4% for the French economy in 2017, one of the weakest rates in the EU.

Ariane Bogain, a lecturer in French and politics at Northumbria University, said: "I think to be deemed a success the key priority is the economy. That's the main reason [current French President Francois] Hollande threw in the towel."

Unemployment has been high for many years in France, which explains the success of the Le Pen's

far right National Front party, according to Bogain..

"When I graduated in 1994, unemployment was 11 per cent. Today it's 10 per cent. For 30 years we've had this constantly high unemployment," Bogain told CNN.

Gilles Latraye, a 57 year-old job-seeker, resorted to begging for a job by the side of a highway last year.

"The situation has improved recently. Unemployment is down and GDP up a bit. We may be starting to turn a corner but it's going to take ages, whether it's Macron or Le Pen. It won't be fixed in a year. It will take all of the five-year term."

Dominic Thomas, Professor of French and Francophone Studies at UCLA said: "People have been left behind and that goes for these communities which are not automatically immigrant-based communities or poor immigrant communities.

"They are people living in the industrial north and rust belt, whose communities have been completely decimated by industrial change. That is no different to the northeast of England or the famous rust belt in the US."

Terror threat

France has borne the brunt of terror attacks in Europe in recent years. An attack on a police bus in Paris left one officer dead just two days before the first round vote.

Terrorism in France

Nov. 2015: Coordinated attacks in Paris kill 130 people

Jan. 2016: Knife-wielding man shot dead on anniversary of Charlie Hebdo attacks

Jul. 2016: Bastille Day truck attack in Nice leaves 84 dead

Jul. 2016: Catholic priest killed after ISIS sympathizers storm church

Sep. 2016: Plot to attack Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris foiled

Feb. 2017: Police thwart 'imminent attack on French soil'

However, Dr Schön-Quinlivan said that in her view, the French electorate realizes that terrorism -- particularly in the form of 'lone wolf attacks' -- is "extremely difficult to fight."

Bogain added: "It's not just happening in France. It's Germany. It's Westminster. We know even if we put police everywhere it can still happen. They (the French electorate) are forgiving in that regard."

Nationalism

Immigration was another hot button topic during the run up to the first round of the election. Many voters -- and politicians -- blame France's current immigration policies for exacerbating unemployment and contributing to the terror attacks. Meanwhile there have been clashes with police in immigrant communities in Paris amid racial tensions.

Le Pen's nationalist, anti-Islamist rhetoric propelled her into the second round. She has pledged to slash net immigration to just 10,000 people per year.

A protest in Paris over allegations of police brutality in February.

Macron, however, has warned against nationalism and attracted support from the left and right for his more moderate stance. He has praised German Chancellor Angela Merkel's role in the migrant crisis and believes France should do more. The issue will continue to be divisive.

"This tension is absolutely linked to the economy. It is very much a national issue," said Dr David Lees, a teaching fellow in French studies at the University of Warwick.

"In the south this is also due to historical divisions between those who are white and those who are from north Africa. In other parts of France it could be fixed by securing jobs for those born and bred in France."

Dr Schön-Quinlivan said: "Macron's point of view on immigration is that we should still be welcoming. But I don't think the majority of the French people agree with that. Most people want to look after our own. That's very strong."

CNN's James Masters also contributed to this report.

New York Post : Emmanuel Macron picks up endorsement from Hollande

By Bruce Golding

2 minutes

The remaining candidates for president of France looked to expand their bases Monday, as centrist Emmanuel Macron picked up an endorsement from the country's outgoing leader and Marine Le Pen resigned as head of her right-wing

National Front party.

The French political and business establishments rallied behind Macron following his first-round victory, with President Francois Hollande joining two vanquished candidates to urge support for the first-time candidate.

In a televised speech from the Elysee Palace, Hollande warned that Le Pen's anti-immigrant

nationalism would "deeply divide France," which has been under a state of emergency since the 2015 ISIS terror attacks.

The French CAC 40 stock index also surged more than 4 percent — to its highest level in nearly a decade — following polling that showed Macron likely to win by a landslide in his May 7 runoff against Le Pen.

Meanwhile, Le Pen announced she "was no longer president of the National Front" shortly after a party official predicted she could pick up disaffected supporters of failed left-wing candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon.

"The voters who voted for Mr. Melenchon are angry voters. They can be in agreement with us," National Front Vice President Steeve Brioss said.



France's far-left failed to get its 'Bernie Sanders' elected. The far-right could be the winner. (online)

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

6-7 minutes

WorldViews

Analysis

Analysis is interpretation of the news based on evidence, including data, as well as anticipating how

events might unfold based on past events

By Rick Noack

WorldViews

Analysis

Analysis is interpretation of the news based on evidence, including data, as well as anticipating how events might unfold based on past events

April 24 at 2:18 PM

PARIS — When far-leftist candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon failed to advance into the second round of the French election Sunday night, his supporters did not only bemoan the defeat of their *Bernie Sanders*. They also had to accept that their project to radically change French democracy seemed to have failed.

At least for now.

Four hours after exit polls first indicated that Mélenchon would not make it, shattered groups of supporters were still sipping their beers in a bar near the Gare du Nord train station where the politician had planned to celebrate his victory.

"Resistance," some of them shouted and the prevailing sentiment there was one of defiance — against far-right candidate Marine Le Pen but

also, and perhaps more surprisingly, against centrist Emmanuel Macron. Sunday night, Mélenchon was the only leading candidate who refrained from urging his supporters to vote for Macron in the second round.

It is a message which appears to have resonated well among his supporters. Many of them said they would either stay at home during the second round or submit a blank vote. "Our goal is to change the way our democracy works," said 19-year-old Parisian Zoea Brahams.

[French election: How the pollsters got the last laugh]

"Of course, I would feel bad if our abstentions led to a Le Pen presidency, but we simply cannot continue to vote for a candidate we do not like only to prevent the rise of the far-right, as we have done for years now," she said. Other bystanders weighed in to agree with her.

"Politicians like Macron are responsible for the rise of the far-right," said 26-year-old Jeanne Chevalier. "Their neoliberal policies have led to the unemployment which

explains the current dissatisfaction."

Especially among younger voters, Mélenchon was by far the most popular candidate. About 30 percent of all 18- to 24-year-old voters chose him, followed by Le Pen, who was supported by 21 percent.

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)

Polls show that Macron is expected to have a clear lead over Le Pen in the second round in which only the two candidates will compete. Abstentions or blank votes, however, could significantly shrink

the buffer between the centrist European Union advocate and the far-right politician.

"A significant minority will not vote," said Gérard Grunberg, a political analyst who emphasized that he believes a majority of Mélenchon's supporters would now back Macron.

The former candidate's most enthusiastic fans are not so sure about that.

"There is a general feeling here that most Mélenchon supporters will not vote for Macron," campaign member Luc Weinstein, 27, said Monday. "Macron used to be President Hollande's economics minister. Voting for Macron is like voting for Hollande," Weinstein said. President François Hollande is deeply unpopular in France, and many younger people who voted for him in 2012 argue that he has failed to deliver on one of his central promises, to support French youths.

[This chart shows how the French election is a break from the past]

The question of whether to issue an official voting recommendation to Mélenchon's supporters will now be

posed in the kind of online poll that the movement used to write its manifesto. The chances that the far-leftist movement will end up issuing such a recommendation are low because most members active on the platform are deeply committed to Mélenchon.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

It is also unclear whether the former candidate's support for Macron would really make a difference.

Even a strong encouragement would be unlikely to prevent the approximately 10 percent of his voters who previously supported Le Pen from returning to the camp of the far-right. The leftist candidate's anti-globalization message had resonated remarkably well in some areas with high unemployment that are usually predominantly pro-Le Pen.

Paradoxically, the defeat of a far-left candidate could motivate some voters to shift to the far-right.



Macron Campaign Wards Off Hacking Attempts Linked to Russia

Sam Schechner
5-6 minutes

April 24, 2017 1:17 p.m. ET

PARIS—Hackers matching the profile of a pro-Kremlin group have tried in recent weeks to access campaign email accounts of French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron, a cybersecurity firm said Monday, raising fears of election interference in the final two weeks of the France's presidential campaign.

In a report set to be published Tuesday, security-research firm Trend Micro identified a pro-Kremlin hacking group it calls Pawn Storm as the likely source of a multipronged phishing attack that started in mid-March against Mr. Macron's campaign.

As part of the attack, hackers set up multiple internet addresses that mimicked those of the campaign's own servers in an attempt to lure Mr. Macron's staffers into turning over their network passwords, said Feike Hacquebord, a senior threat researcher for Tokyo-based Trend Micro and the author of the report, a copy of which was reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.

Mounir Mahjoubi, digital director of Mr. Macron's campaign, confirmed the attempted hacking, saying that several staffers had received emails

leading to the fake websites. The phishing emails were quickly identified and blocked, and it was unlikely others went undetected, Mr. Mahjoubi said.

"We can't be 100% sure," he said, "but as soon as we saw the intrusion attempts, we took measures to block access."

The hacking group Pawn Storm, which is known to other cybersecurity firms as Fancy Bear or APT28, was identified by U.S. officials and cybersecurity experts last year as a Russian state-backed organization. They said the group had carried out hacks to obtain and subsequently leak emails from the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman during last year's U.S. presidential election, allegations that Russia denied.

On Monday, referring to the allegations in the Trend Micro report, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov denied accusations that Moscow was involved.

"I repeat once again: Russia has never interfered, isn't interfering and will never interfere in the electoral processes of other countries," he told Russian news agencies.

Cybersecurity experts say hacks by pro-Kremlin groups are part of a broader pattern of propaganda aimed at delegitimizing Western

institutions. In recent years, groups have targeted elections, at times favoring candidates who are seen as more favorable to Russia's interests, experts say.

Analysts say Mr. Macron's opponent, National Front leader Marine Le Pen, could be favored by Moscow because she has vowed to pull France out of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union, organizations that Russian President Vladimir Putin views as threats to Russian interests.

Ms. Le Pen, who met Mr. Putin last month in Moscow, has also said she would lift the sanctions imposed on Russia following its annexation of Crimea in 2014.

A spokesman for Ms. Le Pen didn't respond Monday to request for comment on the latest hacking allegations.

In February, Mr. Macron accused Russia of sponsoring cyberattacks against his campaign and of spreading smears about his character, accusations the Kremlin rejected.

Trend Micro said that the hacker group attacked the computer systems of Germany's Christian Democratic Union, the political party of Chancellor Angela Merkel, as well as two German political think tanks in recent weeks. The German

government last year blamed Russia for directing hacker groups to attack Germany's lower house of parliament.

Trend Micro said it discovered the phishing attempt against Mr. Macron's political party En Marche, or "On the Move," by monitoring new internet-address registrations that mimicked the names of possible targets.

On March 15, someone used the name Johny Pinch and a fake Paris street address to register the name onedrive-en-marche.fr, according to public internet records. On April 12, someone using the same information registered mail-en-marche.fr, the records show.

Those addresses were both hosted on internet protocol address blocks associated with Pawn Storm, Trend Micro's Mr. Hacquebord said.

Mr. Hacquebord added that other clues, such as related addresses and the creation of security certificates to make the fake sites look authentic mirror techniques used by the group in several dozen other cases identified in the report, including the hacks of the Christian Democratic Union and the Democratic National Committee.

"I cannot say for sure, but the fingerprints match," Mr. Hacquebord said.

—Thomas Grove in Moscow contributed to this article.

Write to Sam Schechner at sam.schechner@wsj.com

Appeared in the Apr. 25, 2017, print edition as 'Hackers Targeted Election Front-Runner.'



French presidential candidate blacklists RT: report

Mark Hensch 2

minutes

French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron's campaign has refused press accreditation to Russia's international television outlet, according to a Monday report, calling RT pro-Moscow "propaganda."

"It is not just an outlet like the others," one source inside the Macron campaign told The Daily

Beast. "It is a propaganda organ. Therefore we have decided not to give it accreditation."

RT, formerly known as Russia Today, told the Beast that it hopes the center-left candidate changes course and allows it access.

"RT has not received an official reason for its exclusion from the Macron presidential campaign HQ," it said in a statement.

"We hope that his team will see fit to afford the courtesy of accreditation to RT shortly, and not attempt to curtail journalism, and manipulate

the media, by selecting who can and can't report on his campaign."

Macron and Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Front advanced this weekend from a field of 11 presidential candidates to a May 7 runoff.

France's presidential election is widely regarded as a test of the populist wave that has swept through Western governments since last year.

Macron, who served as the economy minister to current French President Francois Hollande,

supports remaining in the European Union.

Le Pen, who has frequently been compared to President Trump, could instigate a referendum on leaving the EU should she win next month.

Both candidates have called for increased security measures in the face of France's continued struggles against terrorism. But Le Pen has also pledged to crack down on immigration and called for mosque closures as the nation has remained under a state of emergency since the Paris attacks in 2015.



French presidential candidate Macron targeted by hackers, cyber firm says

By Dugald McConnell and Brian Todd, CNN

Updated 7:25 AM ET, Tue April 25, 2017

Report: French candidate targeted by hackers 02:43

Story highlights

- Macron's digital campaign manager says attempted hacks were unsuccessful
- Russian President Vladimir Putin has denied any interest in interfering with the elections in France

(CNN)French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron's campaign was targeted in recent weeks by hackers, using methods similar to the hacks in the United States targeting the Democratic National Committee last year, according to a new report by cybersecurity researchers.

Tokyo-based cybersecurity firm Trend Micro says it discovered four phony Web domain names that were very similar to the domain names of the Macron campaign -- presumably to try to trick careless campaign workers into accidentally compromising their email accounts. For example, a fake domain called mail-en-marche.fr was set up on April 12. Macron's party is En Marche!

What to know about Emmanuel Macron 01:26

The firm was unable to tell whether any campaign staffers actually fell

into any traps, or whether any campaign materials were compromised.

Macron's digital campaign manager, Mounir Mahjoubi, confirmed there had been attempted hacks, but said they weren't successful.

"These are usual cyberattack tactics. We have set up a security team and every member of the staff is trained to report these attempts," he told CNN, assuring no party supporters' information had been compromised.

"No sensitive data ever leaked from our apparatus."

A French official told CNN that French intelligence services are warning campaigns to take steps to prevent being targeted by hackers.

Macron, a centrist candidate, won the first round of the French Presidential election Sunday, taking home 24.01% of the vote.

He will face off on May 7 against anti-immigrant, anti-EU candidate Marine Le Pen, who came second with 21.3%, beating establishment candidates from France's two largest political parties.

MORE: Can Le Pen actually win?

US intelligence: Putin ordered hacking of DNC 02:22

Hard to determine hacker's identity

Feike Hacquabord with Trend Micro told CNN he could not say whether the hackers were Russian. But he

said the M.O. was the similar to that of the DNC hackers -- who US intelligence officials say are linked to Russian intelligence.

Hacking culprits can be difficult to track back and identify with certainty. But cybersecurity experts say French institutions have previously been targeted by hackers with ties to Russia. For example, when the broadcaster TV5 Monde was hacked in 2015, researchers at cybersecurity firm FireEye said it was carried out by Russian-backed hackers from the Russian-backed unit APT28.

Putin meets with Marine Le Pen at the Kremlin 02:20

"Russian intelligence have certainly been hacking inside France, and will continue to do so," said Columbia University's Jason Healey. "The attacks that Russia used against the US -- of getting hold of embarrassing information and releasing it -- I'd say the French are very open to such things."

Russian President Vladimir Putin has denied any interest in interfering with the elections in France.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Monday also brushed off the allegations, which have been circulating for weeks.

"All this is a reminder of the accusations that were heard from Washington just recently and that have remained unconfirmed to this day, which does no credit to those who made them," Peskov told state-run media TASS.

He also denied suggestions that Moscow would be unhappy with a Macron win, saying the allegations were "utterly erroneous" and "primitive."

But analysts say Putin would have good reason to favor conservative nationalist Marine Le Pen over centrist Macron in the upcoming runoff election.

"Le Pen has been very open about her desire to have better relations with Russia, she's an outspoken opponent of sanctions [against Russia], and she's interested in taking France outside of NATO," said Will Pomeranz at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington. "She has a very populist right-wing message that plays to Putin's narratives -- it undermines Western institutions."

Le Pen visited Moscow a month ago to meet with Putin, at a time when other Western candidates would not want to be seen shaking hands with him.

Former Asst. Sec. of State David J. Kramer, now with the McCain Institute in Washington, says the two also have a number of things in common: a focus on national sovereignty, a distrust for international institutions, a keen focus on fighting Islamic terrorism, an embrace of traditional values and a vigorous style.

"They share this desire for strong leadership not encumbered by checks and balances. They want to get things done, go after common enemies," he said.

Russian Hackers Who Targeted Clinton Appear to Attack France's Macron (online)

Nicole Perlroth

4-5 minutes

Those websites were registered to a block of web addresses that Trend Micro's researchers say belong to the Russian intelligence unit they refer to as Pawn Storm, but is alternatively known as Fancy Bear, APT 28 or the Sofacy Group. American and European intelligence agencies and American private security researchers determined that the group was responsible for hacking the Democratic National Committee last year.

On Tuesday, Trend Micro's researchers plan to release their report detailing cyberattacks in recent weeks against Mr. Macron's campaign — as well as members of Germany's Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung, a political foundation linked to Chancellor Angela Merkel's political party — in what appears to be the latest Russian effort to influence political outcomes in the West.

The Kremlin scoffed at the report. Dmitri S. Peskov, the spokesman for President Vladimir V. Putin, said Monday in Moscow that "this all recalls the accusations that came

from Washington and which are still suspended in thin air." In remarks to Russian news media, he added that Russia had "never interfered" in foreign elections.

But the report's findings gave some credence to the "strong suspicions" voiced weeks before Sunday's voting by Mr. Macron's digital director, Mounir Mahjoubi, that Moscow was the source of what he said had been a barrage of "highly sophisticated" efforts to gain access to the campaign's email accounts.

Mr. Mahjoubi said in an interview Monday and earlier in April that he had no proof of a Russian role, but that the nature and timing of so-called phishing attacks and web assaults on the Macron campaign had stirred worries that Russia was repeating in France what American intelligence agencies say was a concerted effort to undermine Hillary Clinton's campaign.

"The phishing pages we are talking about are very personalized web pages to look like the real address," Mr. Mahjoubi added. Anyone could easily think he was logging into his own email. "They were pixel perfect," he said Monday night. "It's exactly the same page. That means there was talent behind it and time

went into it: talent, money, experience, time and will."

The goal was to obtain the email passwords of campaign staff members so a cyberattacker could lurk unseen inside an email account reading confidential correspondence. "If you are speed reading as you sign on, and everybody speed reads online, it's something you might not notice," Mr. Mahjoubi said. "For instance, it uses a hyphen instead of a dot, and if you are speed reading you don't look at the URL."

Unlike the attacks aimed at Mrs. Clinton's staff, those directed at the Macron camp, Mr. Mahjoubi said, failed to gain access to any email accounts used by the candidate or his lieutenants.

This winter, the campaign's website also came under attack. The attacks coincided with highly slanted articles about Mr. Macron on the French language services of Sputnik and RT, formerly Russia Today. Both are state-funded Russian news media outlets.

The coincidence of the hacking of the Macron campaign website, the phishing attacks and the slanted articles caused Mr. Mahjoubi to

consider that there might be Russian involvement. "That was only a supposition," he said, based on the timing.

Mr. Mahjoubi described the phishing attacks as the "invisible side" of an apparent Russian campaign to hurt Mr. Macron, while the "visible side" took the form of fake news or slanted stories in the French-language Russian media.

Russia, or at least its state-controlled media, clearly favored Ms. Le Pen, who criticized European Union sanctions imposed on Russia after it annexed Crimea in 2014 and voiced support for Moscow's intervention in Syria to prop up President Bashar al-Assad.

The success of its cyberattacks in the United States has only bolstered the Russian hacking group's ambitions, security researchers say.

"This is the new normal," said Tom Kellermann, a cyberintelligence expert and the chief executive at Strategic Cyber Ventures. "Geopolitical events will now serve as harbingers for these types of attacks."

New York Post : The French vote was a win for the West — and a loss for Putin

Ralph Peters

5-6 minutes

Even in today's embittered, conflict-ridden world, the news is sometimes plain good. That was the case after Sunday's first-round vote for president in France. Of the top four contenders, only one, Emmanuel Macron, has been pro-NATO, pro-European Union, pro-US and anti-Putin. He also had the audacity to tell the French they actually have to work, if they want a stronger economy.

And he won.

After the second-round vote is held May 7, Macron will become the next president of France's Fifth Republic, which a number of his opponents hoped to destroy. For five more years, the West will maintain a united front against barbarism.

Macron's 23.7 percent of the first-round vote won't sound impressive to Americans, especially given that pro-Putin, anti-American, anti-Semitic, anti-NATO, anti-EU bigot Marine Le Pen of the National Front

placed second, with 21.7 percent of the vote. But there were 11 candidates running, with four front-runners and a dark horse in fifth place.

The overall stunner was that the traditional parties both were shut out of the final round for the first time in generations. Their party machines guaranteed a die-hard, first-round vote for their candidates but were left to throw their remaining weight behind Macron.

The upstart challenger will defeat Le Pen in a landslide May 7. A banker who'd never before led a campaign and who briefly served in the current French cabinet, Macron's the real outsider — a man still without a party, only a movement. Le Pen, whose outsider act is aging badly, leads the second generation of her family to run on fear and hatred. She's the new old guard.

Some American conservatives have been duped into believing that Madame Le Pen is their kind of gal, because of her tough stances on immigrants and Islam. Yet she's not only the favored candidate of Vladimir Putin but preferred by

terrorists, as well: She shares the Islamist conviction that Muslims must not integrate into Western societies.

As for the Putin connection, Le Pen chooses Moscow over Manhattan. A loan of over €9 million to her party from a Moscow-based bank is a matter of record, while Russian disinformation — insidious "fake news" — pulled out all the stops to back her campaign. In turn, she publicly praises Putin's stumbling, bumbling, oligarch-addled economy as a "role model" for France.

That spooks French voters. Contrary to American misperceptions, immigration and security are secondary issues in this election. The French vote on the economy — always — and the French economy is stagnant. Even the extreme-left candidate, hoary old Commie Jean-Luc Mélenchon, didn't suggest that Putin has the answer to French unemployment. (Mélenchon takes his Trotsky straight, no chaser.)

And while Le Pen's railing against the EU played well with her supporters, even those who like

hate speech don't want to lose their subsidies from Brussels.

Le Pen did manage to grab second place, but that's misleading. Politically homeless voters will turn overwhelmingly to Macron, not to her National Front. And she goes into the next race with a limp (that happens when you shoot yourself in the foot): After years of smoothing over her dad's Holocaust denials, she recently dismissed the collaboration of France's Vichy government in the arrest of French Jews and their deportation to Nazi death camps as not really France's fault.

It wasn't a gaffe. It was a sales pitch.

And it didn't work.

The real loser in this election has been Vladimir Putin, though. France was going to be his grand prize, his lever to break NATO and the European Union. In Germany, he might hope for a more sympathetic government, but he wouldn't get one that was openly pro-Moscow and anti-US. France looked like Europe's weak link. The world-champion

poker player bet big — and lost his stake.

Is this election a turning point? Putin's had a terrible spring, suffering one reversal after another. His rebuffs began in late winter with the defeat of a pro-Putin party in Bulgaria and fury in Montenegro over a Russian coup plot, but that didn't echo on

this side of the Atlantic.

The real body blows began with President Trump's order to punish Syrian butcher Bashar al-Assad for using poison gas on his own people. Putin, the master bluffer, had no means to stop or reply to our cruise missiles. Then the leading EU powers refused to lift sanctions imposed over Putin's invasions of

Ukraine. And — to its great credit — the Trump administration last week refused to grant a sanctions waiver to ExxonMobil to rescue the Russian economy.

So where are we as we wait for the May 7 run-off? The one reassuring candidate looks set to occupy the Elysée Palace. Europe will emerge stronger and markets will rise. The

trans-Atlantic relationship will endure. And Putin just hit the limits of his campaign to subvert our democracies.

Viva la France!

Ralph Peters is Fox News' strategic analyst.



French election: How the pollsters got the last laugh (online)

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

9-11 minutes

WorldViews

Analysis

Analysis is interpretation of the news based on evidence, including data, as well as anticipating how events might unfold based on past events

By Adam Taylor

WorldViews

Analysis

Analysis is interpretation of the news based on evidence, including data, as well as anticipating how events might unfold based on past events

April 24 at 12:34 PM

The results of the first round of the French election came late Sunday: Of the 11 candidates, independent centrist Emmanuel Macron came out on top, followed closely by far-right leader Marine Le Pen. Both progress to a second round of voting, set for May 7.

It's a landmark election that saw France's main political groupings pushed out by outsiders, but it wasn't a surprise: The polls had been predicting a Macron-Le Pen runoff for some time. The final results were remarkably close to the average predictions of pollsters, as the chart below shows:

In an age of anti-poll sentiment, what can we learn from France? On Monday, WorldViews spoke with Claire Durand, president of the World Association for Public Opinion Research and a professor at the University of Montreal, to ask what the French polls got right — and what lessons there might be for pollsters who are accused of missing Trump and Brexit.

WorldViews: Overall, how well do you think the French polling companies did?

Claire Durand: They did very, very well. They are within the margin of

error everywhere. Their prediction for Macron is on the spot. Le Pen? It is within the margin of error, but she has been a bit overestimated. [Leftist Jean-Luc] Mélenchon has been underestimated, which is a surprise, though it's not necessarily an underestimation, I think. What happened most probably is that many people who thought they were going to vote for [Socialist Benoît] Hamon went to Mélenchon at the last minute.

Their [political platforms] were very close, and as people thought that perhaps Mélenchon could make it to the second round, they may have left Hamon and gone to Mélenchon.

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)

When we look at the methodology of these polls, are there certain things that went right or went wrong?

It is always difficult with French polls because they use reports of previous elections to help estimate. They are not the only ones who do that. It's a bit like in the United States when people use partisanship. It tends to reduce variance . . . and people get accused of plots like "herding," as in the last British general election. [Herding is when pollsters make decisions that cause published estimates to vary less than expected.] That didn't happen this time, though.

What is extremely interesting in France is that there is a law where all the pollsters have to file all the information about their polls with the French polling commission. I'm on

the AAPOR [American Association for Public Opinion Research] committee for the U.S. election and if we had that, we'd be very, very happy!

[French polls] ask people how they voted in previous elections, like the 2012 elections and the regional elections in 2015. I looked at two pollsters — IFOP and OpinionWay — because they give all the information . . . and really it was almost perfect. This means that when they use "report of previous election" to adjust their estimates, it doesn't change anything. In fact, what you have is almost exactly what they got anyway, since they used quotas for certain demographics. What you see is that whether they weight or adjust or do anything else, it does not change the overall numbers. It's rather interesting. It was not like that in 2002, I can tell you.

[The key storylines in France's presidential runoff]

That was the last time the National Front got through to the second round. Was that a big surprise?

2002 was for France what 1948 was in the United States or 1992 in Britain: It was a very big miss [for political pollsters].

At that time, there were three leading candidates. Lionel Jospin [of the center-left Socialists], Jacques Chirac [of the center-right Rally for the Republic] and Jean-Marie Le Pen, father of Marine. Everybody was absolutely sure that the two candidates that would make it to the second round were Jospin and Chirac. And what happened? Le Pen made it to the second round.

Afterward we were informed by some people that at least two pollsters had Le Pen ahead of Jospin, but they changed the numbers! It was a bomb. People had no confidence in the polls, so there were some changes and the polling commission started to check more. They looked at one pollster's numbers and said the estimation does not correspond to the data file. And the pollster said, "Yes, I thought my numbers were not good and, you

know, this would not be good for the credibility of polls."

In 2016 there was a new change in the law and now everything is on the web so everyone can consult it. Interestingly, now there is no more underestimation for the extreme right.

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

That's something that people talk about a lot. I think the average person now thinks that the extreme right is always underestimated in polls. That wasn't the case here?

No. In fact, I went back and looked at the 2012 elections and things were already better by then. In France, people now say, "Voting for the extreme right is not shameful anymore."

From what we know, did Le Pen get a bump in support after the attacks last week?

We don't have that data, because it happened so late. We don't think it was the case.

Overall, it seemed that the only thing the polls missed was turnout, which they thought might be lower than 2012. Why was that?

Estimating those who will or will not vote is an old problem for survey methods. Even if you ask people whether they voted [after the election], the estimate is actually quite a lot *higher* than reality. My estimate was that the turnout would be high as there was other research in political science that shows that the more candidates you have and the closer the election, the more people go vote. They think their vote can change something.

There have been other elections around the world — for example, in the U.S. or Britain — where there has been a big backlash to polls, rightly or wrongly. Is there anything that these polling companies could learn from the French pollsters?

Yes. Explain what the margin of error means! For me, it's the lesson of the U.S. and it's the lesson of

Brexit. What I've seen in France is that all along, everybody spoke about the margin of error [and that it] means it could be either/or.

They did not use that much of the probability thing that you see in the United States. I'm absolutely against that: I think that one reason Clinton lost in the U.S. election was that aggregators published figures

showing she had high probability of winning based on published polls. When you tell people it is a high probability it will rain, they think it is sure that it will rain. We didn't see that so much in France. What we can learn is: Explain clearly what the margin of error means. In referendums like Brexit or a close election in the U.S., it is extremely important.

We're now heading up to the second round. Most of the polls I've seen suggest Macron has a comfortable lead. Is there any reason to doubt the second-round polls?

No. I've seen how they do it, it's almost mathematical. They ask people how they voted in the first round. They adjust for that and only

for that and then they run their estimation process. This usually gives an exact — absolutely exact! — estimate. They've never missed the second-round vote. In fact, they usually have it perfectly.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington



France Could Elect A President With Seriously Troubling Ideas About Religion

8-10 minutes

Marine Le Pen, the leader of France's far-right, anti-immigrant National Front party, came in second place Sunday in the country's first round of voting in the presidential election.

The presidency now depends on a May 7 runoff election between Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron, an independent, centrist candidate who is being supported by French and European politicians across the political spectrum.

Le Pen is the daughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen, who helped found the National Front. Marine Le Pen took control of the party in 2011 and has tried to distance herself politically from her father's racist and openly anti-Semitic views, going so far as to help push him out of the party in 2015. In just a few years, she's helped to transform the National Front from a fringe party to a serious contender for political power in France.

But Le Pen's rise to power doesn't necessarily bode well for France's religious minorities. Le Pen claims she's not "waging a religious war," but she has championed French secularism at the expense of religious minorities' ability to express their faith in public.

Below, The Huffington Post has gathered just seven of the troubling ideas Le Pen has espoused about religious minorities. From her bashing of Muslim women who wear the headscarf, to her calculated attempts to pit French Jews against French Muslims, Le Pen's past comments make it clear if she wins it would become even harder for France's religious minorities to practice their faith.

She compared Muslims praying in the streets to the Nazi occupation.

During a National Front rally in 2010, Le Pen responded to reports of Muslims praying in public in French cities with a disturbing comparison. The Muslims had

reportedly turned to public spaces because of a lack of space in local mosques.

"I'm sorry, but for those who really like to talk about the Second World War, if we're talking about occupation, we can also talk about this while we're at it, because this is an occupation of territory," Le Pen reportedly said during the rally.

"It's an occupation of swaths of territory, of areas in which religious laws apply ... for sure, there are no tanks, no soldiers, but it's an occupation all the same and it weighs on people."

She was charged with inciting hatred after those comments, and later acquitted.

Pascal Rossignol / Reuters

A woman walks past official posters of candidates for the 2017 French presidential election at a local market in Bethune, France.

She can't seem to distinguish between terrorism and religion.

During and after the American presidential elections, U.S. President Donald Trump promised that he would name and eradicate what he called "radical Islamic terrorism." His use of the phrase was a departure from the strategies of former presidents Barack Obama and George Bush — both of whom avoided using a term that linked violence propagated by terrorists to the religious beliefs of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims.

Le Pen has her own version of the phrase — she calls it "Islamic fundamentalism." In an op-ed for The New York Times in January 2015, written days after the Charlie Hebdo attacks, Le Pen criticized French officials for refusing to link the terrorist attacks to Islam.

"Let us call things by their rightful names, since the French government seems reluctant to do so. France, land of human rights and freedoms, was attacked on its own soil by a totalitarian ideology: Islamic fundamentalism," she wrote.

She has applauded Trump's Muslim ban.

After Trump signed an executive order restricting refugee admissions from seven Muslim-majority countries in January, a member of Le Pen's campaign said that the National Front would be open to issuing a similar ban in France.

"And why not?" Steeve Briois, National Front's vice president, told Agence France-Presse. "We are no longer in the world of the Care Bears. We are in a horrible world, so sometimes you have to take measures of authority, even if it shocks."

Le Pen herself has applauded the travel ban.

"I think Donald Trump and his intelligence services wanted to set up criteria and conditions to avoid having potential terrorists enter the United States, where they might commit attacks, the same way that France was the victim of attacks," she told CNN.

Charles Platiau / Reuters

Marine Le Pen (L), a candidate for France's presidential election, casts her ballot in the first round of the election at a polling station in Henin-Beaumont, northern France, on Sunday.

She doesn't think Muslim women who wear the headscarf can be truly French.

Although Le Pen has tried to paint herself as being opposed to "Islamic fundamentalism," it's clear from her language about Muslim women that she sees Islam itself as a problem.

In an interview with Anderson Cooper last month, Le Pen reiterated her stance against the headscarf some Muslim women wear as part of their religious practice.

"I'm opposed to wearing headscarves in public places. That's not France," she said in the interview. "There's something I just don't understand: The people who come to France, why would they

want to change France, to live in France the same way they lived back home?"

The headscarf has long been a subject of debate in France. Hijabs and other religious articles of clothing were banned from public schools in 2004. In 2011, France banned women from wearing full-face veils in public places — even though only about 2,000 of France's 5 million Muslims are believed to wear full veils.

During her campaign, Le Pen has consistently presented Islam as a religion that is inherently unfriendly toward women.

During a rally last week, she said, "In France, we respect women, we don't beat them, we don't ask them to hide themselves behind a veil as if they were impure."

She doesn't think France should be held responsible for its participation in the Holocaust.

In 1942, French police rounded up more than 13,000 Jewish men, women and children at a sporting arena in Paris, many of whom were then sent to their deaths at Auschwitz.

Earlier this month, Le Pen stated that she doesn't think France is responsible for that raid, which was ordered by Nazi officers.

"I think that generally speaking if there are people responsible, it's those who were in power at the time. It's not France," she said.

Former French presidents have assumed the opposite position, apologizing formally for the roundup.

Le Pen's opponent in the French election, Emmanuel Macron, said her comments reflect the fact that she is still her father's daughter.

Jean-Marie Le Pen has been convicted numerous times of contesting crimes against humanity for claiming that the gas chambers used to kill Jewish people during the Holocaust were a mere "detail" of history.

Charles Platiau / Reuters

Marine Le Pen (C), French National Front (FN) political party leader and candidate for French 2017 presidential election poses in front of her campaign headquarters in Paris, France, April 24, 2017.

She believes Jews shouldn't wear kippas in public.

Le Pen has attempted to disentangle herself from her father's blatant anti-Semitism — sometimes by pitting French Jews against Muslims.

In an interview with Israel's Channel 2 News, she said she believes

French Jews should be willing to sacrifice their ability to wear kippas in order to join in a "struggle against radical Islam." Le Pen, who believes no one should wear outwardly religious clothing in public, portrayed Jews giving up their religious symbols as a necessary and patriotic "sacrifice."

"I mainly think the struggle against radical Islam should be a joint struggle and everyone should say, 'There, we are sacrificing something,'" Le Pen said in 2015. "Maybe they will do with just wearing a hat, but it would be a step

in the effort to stamp out radical Islam in France."

She's actually glad when religious minorities don't speak up.

When Anderson Cooper asked Le Pen if Sikhs should be allowed to wear turbans, she responded, "No, not in public."

Her response was reflective of how little she cared about the protection of religious minorities' ability to practice their faith.

"We don't have a lot of Sikhs in France. We've got some. But we

don't really hear much from them or about them. Which is good news."

The remarks have left Sikhs in France worried about the future — and wondering if they should leave France if Le Pen wins the presidency.

"For me France will not be a welcoming country for Sikhs and any people who want to live his or her religion freely," Talwinder Kaur, a Sikh mother living in France, told NDTV.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Norman

4-5 minutes

April 24, 2017 1:25 p.m. ET

BRUSSELS—The European Union's executive body is breaking with longstanding tradition by taking sides in the French presidential election, a potentially risky strategy aimed at helping centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron.

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker on Sunday night called Mr. Macron to congratulate him and wish him luck for the second round, a conversation that was tweeted about by his staff.

Mr. Juncker's intervention represents a stepped-up effort by EU authorities to actively defend Brussels from the growing political opposition it faces across the bloc. Some of Mr. Juncker's commission team also publicly welcomed Mr. Macron's first-round win, as did leaders of Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg.

As a rule of thumb, the EU's executive, unlike national leaders, typically stays above domestic party politics. Mr. Juncker's move comes as EU governments have

EU's Juncker Sides With Macron in French Vote

Valentina Pop and Laurence Norman

increasingly bristled at Brussels' intervention.

Moreover, explicit commission backing of Mr. Macron could play into the hands of his May 7 runoff opponent, Marine Le Pen, who has derided Mr. Macron as a cheerleader for European and global elites.

On Monday, Mr. Juncker's spokesman, Margaritis Schinas, doubled down on the commission's support for Mr. Macron. Welcoming the prospect of a "strong, clear debate" on France's role in Europe ahead of the runoff, he said the choice on Sunday was "between defending what Europe represents and another option which aims to destroy Europe."

In the past, the EU has worked hard not to be seen as interfering in elections. EU offices in member states have sometimes been on hand to explain the EU's role to reporters or the public or, in the case of Britain's Brexit referendum last year, to push back against what they saw as unfair attacks.

But as political threats to the EU have multiplied and some observers—including Donald Trump, shortly before his inauguration—predicted that other countries would follow Britain to the exit, Brussels has become less cautious.

Last May, between the first and second rounds of the Austrian presidential race, which pitted a center-left candidate against a politician from Austria's far-right Freedom Party, or FPO. Mr. Juncker told a German broadcaster: "I don't want to see the FPO candidate become president of the Austrian republic."

In March, when Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte's party ended comfortably ahead of the anti-EU, anti-immigration party of Geert Wilders in Dutch parliamentary elections, Mr. Juncker's spokesman called the result "a vote for Europe, a vote against extremists."

Ahead of Sunday's elections, EU officials had been cautious. Mr. Juncker told a German newspaper that a victory for Ms. Le Pen in France wouldn't mean the end of the European project. The EU's other top official, European Council President Donald Tusk, steered clear of any direct comments on the French vote.

Senior EU officials said Mr. Juncker made the choice to go public with his support for Mr. Macron not as a calculated intervention but as a reflex to show the EU has certain values it will defend against what Brussels views as extremists. Some people in Brussels noted that Mr.

Macron chose to speak Sunday night in front of both French and EU flags.

However there is also a view in Brussels that for too long, the EU allowed itself to play the sitting duck, absorbing attacks without responding to the critics. A presidential election in one of the EU's founding countries was a moment to push back.

"The stakes were high," Mr. Schinas said Monday.

What isn't clear is whether the endorsement will help.

Leonie Eland, from the Brussels-based European Policy Center, said Ms. Le Pen, who paints Mr. Macron as a proponent of "savagely globalization," would use Brussels' blessing against him.

The endorsement "will confirm the beliefs of those who back him, but...it will also strengthen the opinions of supporters of Marine Le Pen who think the EU is meddling in national affairs."

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CNBC : Not everyone is so sure the French election polls spell good news for stocks

Berkeley Lovelace Jr.

2-3 minutes

The poll estimates for the French presidential election allow the markets to get some renewed confidence, Chase Chief Economist Anthony Chan said Monday.

U.S. stocks opened sharply higher Monday after centrist Emmanuel

Macron won a plurality of votes in Sunday's preliminary French presidential election. And Macron is expected to beat far-right opponent Marine Le Pen in the second round with 62 percent of the vote, according to a poll from Ipsos/Sopra Steria.

Macron and Le Pen will face off again on May 7.

The Dow Jones industrial average opened up more than 200 points, while the S&P 500 and Nasdaq composite opened up 1 percent.

"They had lost some of their faith," Chan said on "Squawk on the Street." "When you look at the estimates of the election polls for the second round, they're singing a tune that the markets like, and that's why the markets are celebrating."

Nicholas Colas, Convergex chief market strategist, told CNBC on Monday he wouldn't expect too much from the market's recent move up.

"I think you're just seeing a snapback rally after some concern about the outcome from the election," he said on "Squawk on the Street." "But I think the underlying fundamentals are exactly the same as they have been."

"We have a very narrow leadership market, mostly in tech. Fairly high valuations and, until today, a 20-year bond that had done better than small- and mid-cap stocks. So, there

was a lot of questions about this rally to this day," he said.

Colas added he believes corporate earnings can offset some of the

sentiment swings around politics in the U.S. and abroad.

"Earnings this quarter will be about 9.2 percent growth year-over-year, the highest since the fourth quarter

of 2011," he said. "So, we've finally broken out of the very slow earnings growth cycle into something a little bit better."

**The
New York
Times**

French Markets Surge as Euro Withstands Attack From the Right

Peter S.
Goodman

8-10 minutes

LONDON — The euro has avoided another existential crisis that might have wreaked havoc on Europe and the global economy. That was the conclusion investors divined from the first round of voting in the French presidential election, prompting exuberant buying on markets around the world on Monday.

Those in control of money looked beyond the fact that Marine Le Pen, a far-right candidate bearing intense hostility to the euro, claimed a spot in the second round of balloting on May 7. Instead, they focused on polls showing that she was likely to be defeated, and by a lopsided margin, at the hands of her sole remaining opponent — Emmanuel Macron, a pro-European figure trusted by business leaders.

For markets anxious about the prospect of a Le Pen presidency, it was as if a fire-breathing dragon hovering over the kingdom had been slain.

Stocks on French exchanges surged to a nine-year high as a wave of relief washed over the commercial realm. The value of the euro climbed nearly 2 percent against the dollar before yielding some of those gains. The gap between interest paid on French sovereign debt and rock-solid German government bonds narrowed, an indication that investors were seeing diminishing risks. The optimism spread to the United States, with American stocks up more than 1 percent and investors selling off safe havens like Treasury bonds.

The manic swings of the markets — first spooked by the possibility of a Le Pen presidency, then ecstatic over the apparent unlikelihood of that possibility — attest to the gnawing fear that the euro could still succumb to whatever blow history delivers next. The euro confronts a chronic shortage of faith in its ability to persevere, along with a surplus of threats to its existence.

In recent years, the euro has survived enough Greek tragedy to fill an Aeschylus trilogy and has had sufficient brushes with Italian banks for an opera. It has endured a global financial shock, years of regional

economic stagnation and no end of cross-border political accusations.

As Ms. Le Pen appeared to see her electoral fortunes expand in recent months, the markets construed yet another direct threat to the euro's sustainability.

Ms. Le Pen, the leader of the National Front party, has long disdained the euro as a threat to prosperity. She has pledged to convert French debt into a new national currency, an undertaking that could begin the euro's downfall. And she has vowed to renegotiate France's relationship with the European Union, threatening to upend the project of European integration that has prevailed on the Continent as an antidote to the brutalities of World War II.

Her strength in polls in recent weeks prompted investors to demand greater returns on French government debt, a sign that the odds of default — however minute — were multiplying. Investors had been aggressively purchasing options that offered protection against a precipitous plunge in the value of the euro.

Few gave credence to the prospect that Ms. Le Pen could actually deliver on her radical promises. Even if she were to shock pollsters and win, her party would almost certainly fall well short of claiming a majority in the French Parliament after legislative elections in June. She would be relegated to figurehead status, with governing handled by a prime minister selected by the party in command.

Still, concern in the markets underscored the fundamental defects that have long compromised the euro. It is a structurally flawed currency, one adopted by 19 nations — known collectively as the eurozone — that operate without a unified political organization.

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 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 those benefits. The currency comes with rules limiting the size of 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 changes — like 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 F. 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."

The latest alarm was being set off by France, one of the euro's charter members, and a pillar of the European Union. This was playing out against a backdrop of destabilizing events that once seemed impossible — the election of Donald J. Trump in the United States and the vote in Britain to abandon the European Union, also known as Brexit.

Ms. Le Pen has moderated her positions recently as her election has gained plausibility, but 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 antidemocratic 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, managing director for Europe at the Eurasia Group, a risk consultancy based in London.

Mr. Rahman traced a potentially calamitous string of events that could 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.

"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 \$760 billion) in French government debt. A Le Pen presidency could scare 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 saved elsewhere. If that became a 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 that. Still, in the run-up to the first round, the costs of protecting assets against government default grew in Italy, as well as in France.

The fear was that if Ms. Le Pen were to win the presidency, the risks would proliferate. That would

increase the costs of

**NATIONAL
REVIEW
ONLINE**

Editorial : French Election Tragedy: Reforms Deferred Again

4-6 minutes

Once again, the French will avoid reform.

As had been predicted in the polls, the second round of this year's presidential election will pit the self-professed "centrist," Emmanuel Macron, against the nationalist "populist," Marine Le Pen. The newly minted Republican party, which had at one point seemed a shoe-in but whose candidate succumbed to scandal, will be nowhere to be seen. Neither will the once-vivacious *parti socialiste*, the now-terminal *parti communiste*, or even the Greens. Instead, French voters will be asked to choose between Macron, a partyless cipher whose main political achievement hitherto has been to serve under the most unpopular president in modern French history, and Le Pen, the savvy daughter of the fascist gadfly, Jean-Marie. Neither choice is a suitable one.

Seduced perhaps by the frivolous comparisons to Donald Trump — and impressed by her willingness to talk about crime, immigration, and the European Union — some

American conservatives

**NATIONAL
REVIEW
ONLINE**

Stuttaford : French Presidential Election: Emmanuel Macron Faces Populist Challenges

8-10 minutes

The news that Emmanuel Macron, the nice centrist candidate, was going to win the first round of France's presidential election was greeted with undisguised delight by the European Union's ruling elite. Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, is not meant to weigh in on elections that are still underway in EU member states, but rules are for little people. He was quick to pass on his congratulations and wish Macron well in the run-off against the

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, stoking the fires of populism as Italy goes to the polls early next year. Enhanced electoral prospects in Italy for the Five Star Movement, which favors scuttling the euro, could result.

In short, a victory by Ms. Le Pen would add momentum to Europe's

have assumed that Le Pen must be a fellow spirit. This is incorrect. *Au contraire*: Le Pen is a statist of the most destructive kind. Economically, she sounds exactly as you would expect a politician to sound if her party had recently absorbed a few hundred thousand former-communist voters: She is against entitlement reform in a nation that is creaking under the weight of its unfulfillable promises; she hopes to expand, not limit, welfare payments; she favors reducing the retirement age, despite an obvious aging crisis; she opposes the privatization of failing public industries; and she wishes to leave untouched the country's destructive 35-hour work week. Whatever anger she is channeling, France's sclerotic growth would be worse, not better, under her agenda. In comparison, Donald Trump looks like F. A. Hayek.

Le Pen is no friend to religious liberty, having adopted wholesale the French concept of *laïcité* that drives the faithful from the public square, and her current view on abortion is that it should not only be "unquestioned" but should be "fully reimbursed" by the state. On the matter of foreign affairs, there is no more elegant way to describe her than as an "anti-American." Le Pen

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 those 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

is hostile toward NATO and accommodating toward Vladimir Putin, with whom, the French press reports, she has arranged a diabolical quid pro quo that traded her silence after the Russian annexation of Crimea for a series of Kremlin-backed loans to her party. Predictably, she has cast free trade as a neo-liberal plot to undermine French manufacturers that, in reality, have not been competitive for decades. Sadly, even her admirable willingness to engage with French unease on immigration is tainted by extremism. There is a sensible road to be trodden between distaste for all restrictionism and flat-out xenophobia. With her promise to end all immigration into France, Marine Le Pen has not found that road.

A Macron presidency threatens to exacerbate the resentments and the cultural unease that have pushed so many in France into Le Pen's arms.

Alas, neither has Emmanuel Macron, who, while clearly preferable to Le Pen, represents a missed opportunity in his own right. Economically, Macron has made a few cursory nods toward retrenchment — he hopes to cut the bureaucracy and lower corporate

terms of almost anything for at least five years."

But on Monday, as stock markets exulted and the euro climbed, that possibility had seemingly been rendered hypothetical.

The euro — perpetually afflicted by doubt — had dodged the latest immediate threat to its permanence.

taxes, and has pledged to reduce France's deficit — but he remains a socialist at heart. Under a Macron presidency, the welfare state will be expanded rather than limited; the 35-hour work week will at best be tinkered with; and, give or take a few details, the status quo he helped President Hollande put in place will be left well alone.

Worse still, a Macron presidency threatens to exacerbate the resentments and the cultural unease that have pushed so many in France into Le Pen's arms. Macron seems to have no understanding of why immigration is a source of tension, and, given his tendency to make claims such as that "there is no such thing as French culture," he will be the perfect foil for the malcontents if the economy continues to stutter and the Islamist attacks continue to mount.

Like much of the rest of the world, Europe at present is deep in the throes of an anti-globalist moment. That France seems destined to meet that moment with a devout Europhile who was once a Rothschild banker is less than ideal. That, despite it all, he is the best option on offer, is nothing short of a tragedy

meant by "European" was that France must remain in the EU, something that Le Pen might well put in jeopardy. *That's* what really mattered.

Unemployment in France is approximately 10 percent, more than twice German levels. About a quarter of those between the ages of 16 and 25 are unemployed. French GDP growth has been sluggish for years, and government spending accounts for around 57 percent of GDP, compared with 44 percent in Germany.

Then there is terror: the *Charlie Hebdo* murders that began 2015, the massacre in Paris that ended it, the truck plowing into crowds celebrating Bastille Day in Nice last year, and, most recently, the shooting in the Champs-Élysées that left one policeman dead and two other people seriously wounded just days before Sunday's vote. These attacks are part of a wider Islamist assault on the West, but they are also symptomatic of failings in the effort to integrate France's large Muslim minority, failings with consequences that have done more than their bit to contribute to the

growth of the hard right. In 2016, Patrick Calvar, the head of France's General Directorate for Internal Security, told a parliamentary enquiry that he feared a "confrontation between the far right and the Muslim world."

And Federica Mogherini is cheered up by some flags.

Observing the behavior of the Bourbons and their aristocratic entourage on their return to France after the fall of Napoleon, the French statesman Talleyrand is said to have remarked that the king and his entourage had "learned nothing and forgotten nothing." For some reason that quip came to mind as I read those tweets and other celebratory commentary from, it seemed, every corner of Davosworld,

Looking at Emmanuel Macron, it's not difficult to understand why. He is one of them — likable, clever, the son of a professor and a doctor, with degrees from the right places, impressive stints in both investment banking and government to his credit, and a fondness for the EU, free trade, and the politics of the Third Way or whatever the old Blairite snake oil is known as these days. As a Socialist minister of the economy, he put together the *Loi Macron* package of reforms in 2014 and 2015 as a modest — very modest, and it says something about French politics that they had to be forced through by decree — step in toward deregulation. At about the same time, he left the Socialist party, before quitting the government the following year amid speculation about the independent presidential run that duly came to

be.

Current polling suggests that Macron will beat Le Pen by a 60–40 margin on May 7, a margin comfortable enough to reinforce the establishment narrative that the French elections, like the Dutch and Austrian elections that preceded them, are evidence that Europe's populist wave has crested. But 40 percent would still be a very high number for a candidate with the baggage of Marine Le Pen, who managed to conjure up the ghost of Vichy just a couple of weeks ago. The only other occasion on which the National Front reached the second round of a French presidential election was in 2002. Then, its candidate, Marine's father Jean-Marie, took just 17.8 percent of the total.

Current polling suggests that Macron will beat Le Pen by a 60–40 margin on May 7.

There's another problem for the tale of populist retreat: Between Le Pen's share of the first-round vote (roughly 21.5 percent) and that of Jean-Luc Mélenchon, left-wing maniac and standard-bearer of France Unbowed (about 19.5 percent), four out of ten first-round ballots were cast for champions of the hard right and left. At 23.9 percent, Macron came out ahead of both of them, but not *that far* ahead. As establishment triumphs go, this looks a touch thin, even more so after you remember that neither of the two main parties managed to get their man into the final round. Former prime minister François Fillon, of the center-right

Republicans, had looked at one point to be a strong challenger, but his campaign was dragged down by scandal. He is under criminal investigation, as is his wife, so the fact that he still managed to reach nearly 20 percent of the vote gives a hint of what might have been. As for the official candidate of the Socialist Party, poor Benoît Hamon, he was eclipsed by Macron and left with barely more than 6 percent of the vote.

So what now? Le Pen will press on, as candidates described as far right so often do, with a mix of policies from both ends of the political spectrum, a mix that has not harmed her blue-collar appeal. Her tough line on immigration and Islamic extremism is accompanied by a somewhat protectionist economic platform designed to appeal to those who have found themselves struggling to keep up. This blend runs through into Le Pen's Euroskepticism, driven from the right by nationalism and from the left by her suspicion of the EU's attachment to what is, by French standards, an over-fondness for the free market. Oh yes, she'd also pull France out of NATO.

When Macron (who has been endorsed by Fillon and Hamon, but not, interestingly, by Mélenchon, who has said he won't be endorsing anybody) wins in the second round — and he will — the next hurdle he'll face is the parliamentary elections in June. No one knows how his fledgling party, En Marche! (echoes of Jeb!) will fare, but assuming that coattails and a honeymoon work their magic, enough of his team may make it into the National Assembly to form the nucleus of some sort of

centrist coalition. But putting that together is still likely to involve horse trading of a type that won't make it easy to build even on the meager reformist achievements of the *Loi Macron*, let alone address the mess in which France — statist, sclerotic, and stuck with the Euro — now finds itself.

Away from the economy, Macron appears to believe that there is not that much that can be done about mass immigration (climate change is, he explains — of course he does — one of its causes). This is not something that appears to worry him much, and it's not only National Front voters who will find his lack of concern off-putting. As for doing a better job of integrating France's Muslim minority, it's far from clear that Macron has anything new to offer. The same may hold true of terrorism. "This imponderable, this threat," Macron explained after the Champs-Élysées shootings, "will be a fact of daily life in the coming years."

France's next presidential election isn't until 2022, but Marine Le Pen — or someone like her — will be waiting, and that wait may not be in vain.

— Andrew Stuttaford is a contributing editor of National Review.

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NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

11-14 minutes

'Huge Earthquake in France. Not Much Damaged.' That would make a perfectly accurate headline for reports on the first round of France's presidential election yesterday. On paper it was a dramatic overthrow of the status quo. Candidates of the traditional conservative and socialist parties that have dominated French politics since the Second World War (and, arguably, under different names for far longer) were eliminated from the race — along with a charismatic old-Left warhorse supported by the Communists. Two "outsiders" were sent into the final round on May the 7th. "Centrist" Emmanuel Macron led "far Right" candidate Marine Le Pen by a margin of 24 percent over 22 percent. On the morning after,

O'Sullivan : French Election: Emmanuel Macron vs. Marine Le Pen & New Political Spectrum

Macron is universally seen as France's next president. He represents youth, hope, the future, change. Things will never be the same again, etc., etc.

Except that Macron was a leading minister in the government of France's unpopular current president, the socialist party's François Hollande, who seemingly withheld his support from the centrist turncoat only because he was advised it would damage him. Both defeated candidates of the old parties, now supposedly reeling from defeat, have joined together to urge their supporters to back Macron in the next round, as have European Union leaders, heads of government, and almost all other establishment worthies. And it is highly misleading to describe the two surviving candidates as either centrist or far-right. These

descriptions belong to a dying political spectrum, born in the French revolution, going from the right (representing church, business, tradition, the bourgeoisie) to the left (representing secularism, labor unions, radical bohemianism, and "workers and intellectuals"). That opposition of beliefs and interests has less and less relevance to the real divisions and ruptures in modern French (and European) life. And the seeming break-up of the traditional party system is in reality a surprisingly smooth transition to a new system in which most of the former leading figures emerge from behind smoke and mirrors wearing different colors and spouting new rhetoric or "values."

Think of this new system as a jigsaw puzzle that has yet to be fully assembled. Here are just some of

the individual pieces lying on the carpet. How do they fit together?

1. France's socialist party — currently holding the presidency and a significant slice of the National Assembly — won less than 7 percent of the national vote. That's almost a European trend; orthodox Left parties get a sharply declining share of the national vote in Spain, Britain, Central Europe, Holland, Poland, Hungary, etc., etc. as insurgent parties of left and right emerge to better represent popular discontents. In almost all cases this decline is caused by a split between "workers and intellectuals" in which middle-class intellectuals, generally in the public sector, take over the party, and blue-collar workers leave it for new parties that offer various blends of nationalism and welfare together with opposition to economic

globalization (or in establishment-speak, “populism”).

2. Center-right parties such as the Republicans in France (the heirs of the Gaullists keep changing their name) are also threatened by the rise of “populism.” But the threat is less immediate, and the character of the “populist” challenge to conservatism is different. It comes from those social conservatives who feel that their morality, religious traditions, and family structures are under siege from the moral and sexual radicalism of courts and state bureaucracies that promote such causes as removing a right of conscientious objection to performing abortions, restricting parental rights in education and welfare, prohibiting expressions of religious faith, and much else. The largest public protests ever seen in France took place in opposition to Hollande’s legalization of same-sex marriage.

3. Both sorts of “populism” make common cause on such matters as defending borders and national identities, opposing mass migration, resistance to loss of national sovereignty, skepticism about the transfer of powers from national governments to international bodies, and sometimes Euro-skepticism, which in France means support for leaving both the euro and the EU.

4. When center-left and center-right parties have been threatened in recent years by the rise of populism, they have responded to it not by making concessions to win back their voters but by forgetting their differences on taxes and spending and joining together to form a stronger resistance to it. So-called “Grand Coalitions” of left and right now govern not only Germany (where they were an invention of the 1960s) but also Sweden, Holland, and the European Parliament itself. France’s election shows an oddly similar pattern: Macron represents a “centrism of all the parties” against the challenge of Le Pen’s populism. It sets the entire French establishment and all the traditional parties against the National Front. Other things being equal, that would suggest that Le Pen represents the kind of tiny fringe that extremist parties obtain in the U.S. and the

U.K. But she won a fifth of the vote in a crowded field, and she will almost certainly win more than a third in two weeks’ time. She’s the champion of large sections of the French people. But what separates her from the other side? What do the two sides stand for? And who votes for them?

5. Now is the time to turn to two recent and important articles by Charlie Cooke in *National Review* and by Chris Caldwell in *City Journal*. Brutally over-simplifying and then combining these two theses, what’s just happened is that the party system has caught up with the changing demography of France and its electoral system. Think of the electorate as divided — as Caesar divided Gaul in fact — into three parts: the France that has prospered from globalization; the France that has arrived through globalization; and the France that has been left behind by globalization. Republican and socialist parties have both had support from prosperous France — broadly speaking, the public sector voting for the socialists, the private for the Republicans — with both celebrating the advance of modern globalist, multicultural, and Europeanist ideas. The Left has had the lion’s share of support from the France that has arrived in recent years — Hollande’s last victory five years ago was celebrated by crowds waving Palestinian flags. And the France that has been left behind has increasingly thrown its weight behind the National Front. In strictly numerical terms that meant the National Front was becoming a serious challenger for power against two weakening entities. But since the France being left behind was more or less excluded from public debate, the terms of that debate were heavily slanted against Le Pen. As Caldwell notes mordantly, politicians in the major parties suddenly began talking not about free and unfree societies but about “open” versus “closed” ones and issuing warnings about “xenophobia” and “nationalism” to voters who rarely strayed from their own districts. A centrist agenda of global governance, “more Europe,” open borders, multiculturalism, free trade, and the pre-eminence of international law became the

common ground of *soi-disant* modernizers across the spectrum. And what had been the standard beliefs of ordinary Frenchmen only yesterday — the superiority of French culture, *laïcité*, and France’s specific republican ideal of citizenship — gradually became shameful prejudices not to be admitted in polite society even if politicians occasionally exploited them for votes. Charlie Cooke describes how the ordinary French people he encountered were nervously suspicious of talking politics candidly and easily to him. There were too many trap-doors in a political conversation, especially if you were an FN voter.

What had been the standard beliefs of ordinary Frenchmen only yesterday gradually became shameful prejudices not to be admitted in polite society.

6. What prevented the establishment parties from riding these new verities to an easy electoral victory was that these parties and the results they delivered were unpopular. Unions halted any liberalizing measures; the over-valued euro exchange rate meant that the costs of the resulting inefficiency were much higher. Together with the growing crisis over terrorism, this ensured that Hollande and his government were increasingly despised. In most previous elections the center-right party would have come into power and pursued a slightly modified version of the same progressive agenda à la Sarkozy. But the relentless rise of the National Front meant that there was now a serious alternative to this revolving-door metooism. And François Fillon, the center-right’s unexpected candidate, could see that he needed something much more radical both to revive France economically and to win back the social conservatives his party had abandoned. His combination of Thatcherite economics and social conservatism, however, was only slightly less distasteful to the broader French establishment — which is still both statist and progressive — than Le Pen’s populism.

Two things then happened: First, Fillon was destroyed by judicial leaks and attacks unprecedented against a presidential candidate; second, the Left progressives abandoned the socialist candidate — a decent fellow doomed by Hollande’s record — and adopted their former colleague, Macron, as a new centrist contender. He is now a certainty for the presidency despite being the heir of Hollande and the champion of the unpopular establishment. As Charlie Cooke predicted, the French, moving right, will elect a left-wing president. Or as the French immortally say: The more things change, the more they stay the same.

The game is not over. Macron can’t be defeated in this round, but he will probably suffer some loss of reputation at the hands of Marine Le Pen in debate. His major problem is that despite the media chatter about reforms, he is the candidate of the status quo. That commits him to the Europeanist and progressive policies that have made Hollande unpopular. Worse, Macron is a more candid champion of such policies than any of their original architects. He has gone so far as to charge that French colonialism was a crime against humanity, to deny that there is any such thing as French culture, and to call for open borders. Unless he changes both politically and rhetorically, he will encourage the drift of native-born Frenchmen to the National Front. And he will do so in the face of two dangerous trends: the continuing turmoil produced by Islamist terrorism in France, and the silent destruction of jobs, ever higher up the occupational ladder, by domestic automation aggravated by globalist competition. France is in a serious crisis about itself that will get far worse in the next presidential term. If Macron faced any opponent other than Ms. Le Pen who, somewhat unfairly, cannot shake off her family’s past, he would be defeated. Before long a less tarnished political entrepreneur on the right will realize the fact, steal some of Le Pen’s policies, and add his own to fashion a winning costume.

— John O’Sullivan is an editor-at-large of *National Review*.

**The
New York
Times**

Kauffman : France’s Voters Keep Hope for Europe Alive

Sylvie Kauffmann
5-7 minutes

To New Yorkers and Londoners, this strong territorial divide may look familiar. There are undeniable echoes of the Brexit-Trump 2016 electoral insurrection in this first

round. France is not immune to the powerful populist wave that has engulfed Western democracies over the past few years, starting with Hungary and Poland.

Here, anger over inequality and unemployment, resentment over globalization and immigration, and discontent with a political system

that has run its course contributed to a notable statistic: Of the 11 candidates who competed on Sunday, eight were either critical of the European Union or squarely against it. Together they attracted 49.6 percent of the vote — almost half the electorate.

Yet the French vote has confirmed a trend apparent in recent elections in two other European Union member states, Austria and the Netherlands: Across the Channel from Britain, the dikes are holding. In all three countries, anti-populist forces managed to put forward a candidate or a platform offering an alternative innovative enough to counter the

anger. In Austria, it was an ecologist presidential candidate. In the Dutch parliamentary election, it was two small, firmly pro-European parties. In France, it was a young man who portrayed his lack of political experience as an asset and promised to transform the discredited system.

Let's face it: Old Europe is looking more resilient than the Anglo-Saxon world.

In the end, in France, neither Donald Trump nor Vladimir Putin — who ostentatiously welcomed Ms. Le Pen at the Kremlin a month before the election — had a decisive influence on the election. Nor did the Islamic State. What mattered was Europe. This remains the major issue, superseding all others because so much depends on it now.

For Marine Le Pen's supporters, the European Union is an abomination that violates national sovereignty and opens borders to mass immigration, while the eurozone prevents the French government from controlling its economic and monetary policy. To Mr. Macron, the European Union is the institution that can help France be a player and defend itself in a globalized world, while its

open borders and common currency increase economic opportunities for its citizens. Basically, Europeans are stronger together.

This is the clear choice French voters will face in the second round on May 7. A choice between two starkly different visions of Europe, between two opposite outlooks on the world: an open world versus a world of borders and barriers, modernity versus conservatism. The political consensus, based on the European project and liberal values, that allowed two major mainstream parties to govern France alternately on the right and the left for the past three decades has been shattered.

The candidate of the governing Socialist Party, Benoît Hamon, earned a devastating 6.4 percent of the vote, mirroring a trend in some other European countries. As for Les Républicains, the center-right party, it is also in deep trouble. Their candidate, former Prime Minister François Fillon, came in third on Sunday with 20 percent. Never before had the major party of the right been eliminated from the second round.

Would the party have fared better with a candidate who hadn't employed his wife in lucrative but

elusive tasks and who paid for his own suits? Even this is not sure, such is the thirst for renewal and the furor of "dégagisme" ("scram-ism"), as the far-left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who claimed 19.6 percent, called the anti-politician trend — only to fall victim of it, too.

This is the new landscape, shaped by the steady rise of the National Front and euroskepticism over the past decade. Rather than hiding behind it, Emmanuel Macron chose early in his campaign to fly the European flag. He astonished his rivals by winning support for the European Union, against all odds, at his rallies. And it worked.

He also managed to reverse the fear factor: By the end of the campaign, polls showed that more than two-thirds of French voters, still convinced of the benefits of a common currency, did not want to leave the eurozone, throwing Marine Le Pen's anti-euro agenda off balance. Mr. Macron embraced the French-German relationship, so vital to a unified Europe, and went to Berlin to meet Chancellor Angela Merkel, for whose immigration policy Marine Le Pen has only scorn.

Here is Mr. Macron's toughest challenge in the next two weeks:

how to reconcile an electorate that has grown more conservative and fearful of the effects of globalization with the idea that a stronger Europe is congruent with France's interests and will not harm the country's national identity. His frequent use of the words "protection," his rousing calls to "patriots," the French flags waving alongside the blue European banner with its gold stars at his rallies while supporters join him in singing "La Marseillaise," show that he is aware of the danger of leaving the monopoly of patriotism to the National Front.

But even if he succeeds on May 7, he will still be left with other difficulties. Winning the June parliamentary elections — without a proper party — and achieving a majority to govern is one. Transforming the political system, as he has promised, to adjust it to the 21st century and give a voice to those voters who have felt excluded for so long is another. For a political novice, however talented and lucky, this is quite a tall order. But it is the condition for the dikes to continue holding up.



Leonhardt : The Urgency of Ethnic Nationalism

David Leonhardt
4-5 minutes

These choices often end up being more complicated than they first seem, and I don't want to suggest otherwise. But a disturbing pattern is still emerging.

Too many people — well-meaning people on both the left and right — have grown complacent about nationalist bigotry. They are erring on the side of putting other priorities first, and ethnic nationalism is benefiting.

Let's start on the political left. And, no, I'm not about to lapse into false equivalence. Ethnic nationalism is largely a force of the right. But the left needs to decide how to respond, and it hasn't been effective enough so far. It has underestimated the threat and put smaller matters ahead of larger ones.

After France's first round of voting, the leftist candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon refused to endorse the last person who can prevent Le Pen from becoming president, Emmanuel Macron. A Le Pen

presidency, to be clear, would likely tear Europe asunder, marginalize French citizens who hail from Africa and the Middle East and lead to a big expansion of security forces. It would be the biggest victory for Europe's far right since World War II, by far.

Yet Mélenchon still won't back Macron — a centrist former banker who was until recently a member of the Socialist Party. It's a classic case of political purism that may feel good, but can do grave damage.

Just look at the United States. Updated presidential vote totals show that Trump's margins in Michigan, in Pennsylvania and in Wisconsin — which together would have swung the result — were smaller than the tally of Jill Stein, the Green Party candidate. It's impossible to know whether Stein's campaign cost Hillary Clinton the election, yet it clearly hurt. In a very close race, parts of the American left aided Trump.

I understand that this point enrages backers of Stein and Mélenchon. They have real differences of opinion with center-left candidates, and they want to win those debates.

But the final round of an election that includes a viable white nationalist isn't a time to hash out the future of progressive politics. It's a time to defeat racism.

A version of this dilemma also applies to the political center. Apolitical institutions have to decide whether they will treat ethnocentrists like Trump and Le Pen differently from other politicians. These institutions are right to resist becoming part of "the opposition," because society needs nonpartisan institutions. But they also have to avoid compromising their mission.

The Holocaust Museum has put itself in a tricky spot. It invited Trump to give a major speech this morning, much as previous presidents have done. Of course, previous presidents didn't retweet neo-Nazi sympathizers, vilify Muslims or try to airbrush Jews out of the Holocaust.

Maybe the museum's leaders are confident Trump will use the speech as a turning point, which would be wonderful. But by conferring the museum's prestige on Trump, those leaders have a new responsibility to call out future dog whistles from the administration. The Holocaust

Museum has effectively invested in Trump.

Finally, there is the political right. Most Republicans despise the notion that their ideology makes room for bigotry. Theirs is the party of Lincoln and of individual freedom, they say.

Fair enough. But that history brings responsibilities. Today's Republican Party has plainly made room for white nationalism, via Steve King, Steve Bannon, Jeff Sessions and Fox News, not to mention the president.

If the Holocaust Museum is now invested in Trump, Republicans are really invested in him and his fellow nationalists. You don't get to call yourself the party of Lincoln and stay silent when voting rights are abridged, hate crimes are met with silence and dark-skinned citizens are cast as un-American.

I never expected to live through a time when bigotry would again be as ascendant. But we are living in that time, and it brings a new set of choices.



Le Pen Steps Down as Head of National Front Before Final French Vote

@HeleneFouquet Helene Fouquet
More stories by

1 minute

Marine Le Pen said she stepped down as head of the National Front party to campaign for president as a "free" candidate who could represent "all the French people."

Speaking in an interview with France 2



France honors police officer killed in Champs-Elysees attack

ABC News
5-7 minutes

As President Donald Trump and the Republicans in Congress gear up for another attempt at repealing and replacing Obamacare, an ABC News/Washington Post poll finds broad public preference for keeping and improving it -- including high levels of support for some of its key components.

See PDF with full results here.

Just 37 percent of Americans in the national survey say Obamacare should be repealed and replaced; 61 percent say it should be kept and fixed instead. Even more broadly, the public by 79-13 percent says Trump should seek to make the current law work as well as possible, not to make it fail as soon as possible, a strategy he's suggested.

These lopsidedly pro-Obamacare views are far different from the results of an ABC/Post poll in mid-January asking if Americans supported or opposed repealing Obamacare, 46-47 percent. That question did not offer "keeping and improving" it as an alternative -- and it was asked before the contours of the first failed effort to repeal the law were known.

Obamacare's rising fortunes are reflected in support for two key provisions of the law that Republicans have proposed changing in recent months. Americans by 70-26 percent say coverage for pre-existing conditions should be mandatory nationwide rather than left up to the states. Similarly, 62 percent prefer

television, the candidate says she wants to rally French voters around her candidacy. Le Pen says she needs "only 10 little points" to win the election on May 7, citing polls that show independent rival Emmanuel Macron would beat her

nationwide minimum insurance coverage standards (for e.g., for preventive services, maternity and pediatric care, hospitalization and prescription drugs); just 33 percent would leave such standards up to the states.

Even among Republicans and conservatives, majorities support a nationwide standard for coverage of pre-existing conditions (54 and 55 percent, respectively). A narrow majority of conservatives (53 percent) and a substantial share of Republicans (46 percent) also support a national standard for minimum coverage in this poll, produced for ABC by Langer Research Associates.

Further, just 20 percent of conservatives, a quarter of Republicans, and 28 percent of Trump's own voters say he should try to encourage failure of the existing law.

In an additional expression of support for the law, Americans by 43-26 percent say they'd rather see Trump work with Democrats than with conservative Republicans in Congress to change it. Twenty-four percent prefer him to work with both.

Groups

These results reflect near-universal sentiment among Democrats in favor of the law, majority preference among independents and moderates to keep and improve it, and, as noted, divisions within the GOP and related groups.

For example, 93 percent of Clinton voters and 88 percent of Democrats support keeping Obamacare and trying to improve it, as do two-thirds

by a margin of 60 percent to 40 percent.

Macron, who created his political movement one year ago, has received endorsements from former Republican rival Francois Fillon and President Francois Hollande, a

of independents and even 21 percent of Republicans and 18 percent of Trump voters. Eighty percent of Trump voters and 76 percent of Republicans prefer repeal and replace, as do 71 percent of strong conservatives -- but just 46 percent of "somewhat" conservatives.

There are similar partisan and ideological patterns in support for the key Obamacare provisions tested, nationwide coverage for pre-existing conditions and minimum coverage standards. Large majorities of Democrats, independents, liberals and moderates support these, while Republicans, conservatives and Trump voters are more closely divided.

Similarly, it's notable that even among Republicans and Trump supporters, only about half favor Trump working with conservative congressional Republicans rather than with the Democrats in Congress on health care. The rest in these groups say he should work with both (30 to 35 percent) or with the Democrats (14 to 11 percent).

Other groups

Among other groups, support for a nationwide standard for covering pre-existing conditions peaks at 78 percent among 50- to 64-year-olds, the age group most likely to need care but generally lacking access to Medicare. Support for this standard is lowest, but still at 62 percent, among under-40s.

In terms of nationwide minimum coverage requirements, support is lowest, 49 percent, among

Socialist, as the establishment parties unite against Le Pen.

Le Pen became the head of the National Front in 2011, succeeding her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Medicare-covered seniors, vs. 66 percent among all others.

In another age gap, repeal and replace is least popular among under-40s (30 percent) vs. 40 percent among those 40 and older. Support for repeal also rises with income, from 31 percent among those in less than \$50,000 households to 41 percent in those with higher incomes.

Men are 7 points more likely than women to favor repeal, and 9 points less likely to support nationwide minimum coverage requirements. Finally, in one of the sharpest splits (beyond partisanship and ideology), nearly half of whites support repealing and replacing the law, while only 16 percent of nonwhites, including 11 percent of blacks and 15 percent of Hispanics, agree.

Methodology

This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone April 17-20, 2017, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,004 adults. Results have a margin of sampling error of 3.5 points, including the design effect. Partisan divisions are 31-24-36 percent, Democrats-Republicans-independents.

The survey was produced for ABC News by Langer Research Associates of New York, New York, with sampling, data collection and tabulation by Abt Associates of Cambridge, Massachusetts. See details on the survey's methodology here.



Denmark Says 'Key Elements' of Russian Government Hacked Defense Ministry

Neil MacFarquhar
4 minutes

Denmark's defense minister, Claus Hjort Frederiksen, last week. He blamed Moscow for cyberattacks against the Danish Defense and Foreign Ministries. Ints Kalnins/Reuters

MOSCOW — The Kremlin on Monday denied accusations that "key elements" of the Russian government had hacked into email accounts at Denmark's Defense Ministry over the last two years in a sustained cyberattack.

A new report by the Danish government's Center for Cybersecurity said that hackers had breached email accounts and servers at both the Defense Ministry

and the Foreign Ministry in 2015 and 2016. The hackers gained access to login information but did not obtain any classified information from the compromised Defense Ministry accounts, the report said.

Denmark faces a "very high" threat of cyberespionage against both the government and private companies, according to the report from the center, an arm of the Danish Defense Intelligence Service. It

emphasized that the attacks were all connected and part of a constant threat.

Although the report, made public on Sunday, did not name Russia, Defense Minister Claus Hjort Frederiksen blamed Moscow in his remarks to the Danish news media.

"This is part of a continuing war from the Russian side in this field, where we are seeing a very aggressive Russia," Mr. Hjort Frederiksen told

the Danish news agency Ritzau. "The hacked emails don't contain military secrets, but it is of course serious."

The attack was well organized, he was quoted as saying by the Berlingske daily newspaper. "It's connected to the intelligence agencies or key elements of the Russian government, and it's an eternal struggle to keep them away," he said.

Dmitri S. Peskov, the spokesman for the Kremlin, dismissed the accusations, as Russia does regularly with any hacking allegations.

"Russia does not do hacking attacks," Mr. Peskov told reporters at his daily briefing. "We would like to understand what he is talking about and what became the basis for these statements."

The Danish report named the hacking agent as APT 28 and cited various other aliases, including Fancy Bear, Sofacy and Pawn Storm.

Investigators in the United States have identified Fancy Bear — believed to be directed by the G.R.U., Russia's military intelligence agency — as responsible for hacking into the email system at the

Democratic National Committee last year, an accusation the Kremlin denied.

The Danish report said that the attempt to hack the Foreign Ministry had failed, but that some email accounts at the Defense Ministry had been copied. Those workers could be subject to blackmail or recruitment, the report said.

Neither the report nor the defense minister provided details of who or what departments had been targeted.

Some policy analysts in Denmark dismissed the accusations as part of

the lobbying over a new Defense Ministry budget, while other politicians and officials criticized the defense minister for suggesting that there would be no consequences for Russia.

Denmark has been the target of Russian ire before, in the tensions between Europe and the Kremlin that arose in 2014 over the Ukraine crisis. At that time, Russia threatened to aim nuclear missiles at Danish warships if the country joined NATO's missile defense system.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Varadarajan : Gibraltar Braces for Life After Brexit

Tunku Varadarajan

5-6 minutes

April 24, 2017 7:09 p.m. ET

Being Gibraltar is a mighty tough act: Barely 2½ times the area of New York's Central Park, the Rock has, for much of the past three centuries, faced hostility on its land border with Spain, which ceded it to Britain in 1713. The cession was made in perpetuity—but that has never stopped Spain from treating Gibraltar as a "disputed territory" and trying to wrench it back. The border reopened fully only in 1985, a decade after the death of Gen. Francisco Franco; but even democratic Spain has imposed border closures from time to time as a way to teach Gibraltar who's boss.

The people of Gibraltar have sided with Britain and against Spain in the sovereignty debate. In a referendum in 1967 on whether sovereignty in the British territory should pass to Spain, 99.64% of citizens voted "no"; and in a 2002 referendum on whether sovereignty in Gibraltar should be shared by the U.K. and Spain, "no" scored 98.97%. Even the most diehard Spanish nationalist wouldn't spin the smaller second number as progress for Madrid's cause.

Gibraltar's latest problems, however, have been of British—not Spanish—making. The European Union was a boon to Gibraltar, as Madrid was required to treat its border as one between two EU member states, as well as to accord to Gibraltar the full range of EU rights. But the Brexit referendum has wrecked this happy situation. In spite of voting to remain in the EU by a very Gibraltarian 96%, the Rock is now bound by the U.K.'s vote to leave. Bowing ominously to Spanish pressure, the EU has stated—in its guidelines for Brexit negotiations—that no new deal with the U.K. would apply to Gibraltar without Spain's assent.

This veto gives Spain great power to throttle Gibraltar's economy, and accompanies its latest offer to the U.K. of joint sovereignty over Gibraltar, under which Gibraltarians would keep their political and legal institutions, while having to acknowledge that their territory was as much Spain's as Britain's. (Madrid acts as if the Gibraltarians don't exist. It talks only to London, denying the Rock's people a voice. The U.K., for its part, has affirmed that it will not accept a change in Gibraltar's sovereign status without the explicit agreement of Gibraltar's people.)

To find out how Gibraltar is bracing for life after Brexit, I spoke to Fabian Picardo, its chief minister. (Disclosure: He was my student at Oxford, where I taught him law in

1992.) Mr. Picardo is forthright in his rejection of Spain's co-sovereignty offer: "People born a particular way can't be changed because they're offered a deal. Brits don't become Germans if they're offered a good deal, and Gibraltarians don't become Spaniards because the deal on the table is commercially attractive."

Mr. Picardo, whose grandmother was Spanish, says that "the terms put to us in respect of joint sovereignty actually represent the full hypocrisy of the Spanish position." He explains that many of Spain's attacks against Gibraltar are aimed at its financial-services sector. Even though Gibraltar is highly regulated and a financial services center ranked alongside London and Frankfurt, Spain claims the territory allows money laundering. "And what's the first line of their offer of joint sovereignty? That we can keep the financial-services sector that's so anathema to them when it's not in a joint-sovereign Gibraltar!" says Mr. Picardo.

Diplomats say that Spain was emboldened to take a hard line on a post-Brexit Gibraltar because Prime Minister Theresa May didn't mention the territory in her letter of withdrawal from the EU (under Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon). I ask Mr. Picardo whether he'll push for an addendum to the letter, one that makes clear Gibraltar must be

part of any post-Brexit deal. "We're not calling for an amended Article 50 notification from the U.K.," he says. He is certain that the U.K. will stand by Gibraltar: "David Davis—the U.K.'s Brexit secretary—'said to me three weeks ago, 'We will not do a deal with Europe if it excludes Gibraltar.' I have no reason to doubt him."

Mr. Picardo talks, also, of the snap general election in the U.K. to be held in June, announced by Mrs. May last week: "What I can tell you is that we'll be approaching all political parties in the U.K. for clear commitments to Gibraltar to feature in their manifestos, both in terms of our ability to continue to trade on single-market terms with the U.K. after Brexit, and the inclusion of Gibraltar in the U.K.'s new international trade deals going forward—including the ones with the EU."

The Brexit negotiations promise to be even more knotty than many imagine. The plucky Gibraltarians will make sure of that—their way of life is at stake.

Mr. Varadarajan, a former lecturer in law at Oxford University, is a Research Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution.

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INTERNATIONAL

David E. Sanger and William J. Broad

10-12 minutes

WASHINGTON — Behind the Trump administration's sudden urgency in dealing with the North Korean nuclear crisis lies a stark calculus: a growing body of expert studies and classified intelligence reports that conclude the country is capable of producing a nuclear bomb every six or seven weeks.

That acceleration in pace — impossible to verify until experts get beyond the limited access to North Korean facilities that ended years ago — explains why President Trump and his aides fear they are running out of time. For years, American presidents decided that each incremental improvement in the North's program — another nuclear test, a new variant of a missile — was worrisome, but not worth a confrontation that could spill into open conflict.

Now those step-by-step advances have resulted in North Korean warheads that in a few years could reach Seattle. "They've learned a lot," said Siegfried S. Hecker, a Stanford professor who directed the Los Alamos weapons laboratory in New Mexico, the birthplace of the atomic bomb, from 1986 to 1997, and whom the North Koreans have let into their facilities seven times.

North Korea is now threatening another nuclear test, which would be its sixth in 11 years. The last three tests — the most recent was in September — generated Hiroshima-size explosions. It is unclear how Mr. Trump would react to a test, but he told representatives of the United Nations Security Council at the White House on Monday that they should be prepared to pass far more restrictive sanctions, which American officials say should include cutting off energy supplies.

The American physicist Norris Bradbury next to "Gadget," the first atomic bomb, which was detonated in the desert near Alamogordo, N.M., in 1945. Credit United States Department of Energy

"People have put blindfolds on for decades, and now it's time to solve the problem," Mr. Trump said.

He made his remarks after a Sunday night phone call on North Korea with Xi Jinping, China's president, who urged Mr. Trump to show "restraint" with North Korea,

according to a Chinese television report. White House officials said little about the call, and aides are trying to use Mr. Trump's unpredictability to the greatest advantage, hoping it will keep the Chinese off balance and deter the North Koreans.

A Growing Arsenal

Inside the C.I.A., they call it "the disco ball."

It is a round, metallic sphere, covered by small circles, that the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, is shown caressing in official photographs as if it were his crown jewel. And it may be: The sphere is supposedly a nuclear weapon, shrunken to fit inside the nose cone of one of the country's growing arsenal of missiles.

American intelligence officials still debate whether it is a real bomb or a mock-up that is part of the country's vast propaganda effort. But it is intended to show where the country is headed.

The potential range of North Korea's current weapons, particularly the KN-14 and KN-08 missiles, would put most of the world in reach of its nuclear warheads.

Unless something changes, North Korea's arsenal may well hit 50 weapons by the end of Mr. Trump's term, about half the size of Pakistan's. American officials say the North already knows how to shrink those weapons so they can fit atop one of its short- to medium-range missiles — putting South Korea and Japan, and the thousands of American troops deployed in those two nations, within range. The best estimates are that North Korea has roughly 1,000 ballistic missiles in eight or so varieties.

But fulfilling Mr. Kim's dream — putting a nuclear weapon atop an intercontinental ballistic missile that can reach Seattle or Los Angeles, or one day New York — remains a more complex problem.

As Dr. Hecker, a man who has built his share of nuclear weapons, noted last week, any weapon that could travel that far would have to be "smaller, lighter and surmount the additional difficulties of the stresses and temperatures" of a fiery re-entry into the atmosphere.

By most estimates, that is four or five years away. Then again, many senior officials said the same four or five years ago.

At a train station in Seoul in 2006, South Koreans watched a broadcast of North Korea's first nuclear weapons test. Jung Yeon-je/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

But the North has come farther than most experts expected since the infancy of its program in the 1950s, when the Soviet Union began training North Korean scientists in nuclear basics.

It took three decades for the North to assemble the technology it needed to make its own bomb fuel. Finally, from a reactor at Yongbyon, it succeeded in making plutonium: enough for about one atomic bomb a year.

The first North Korean nuclear crisis, in 1994, ended in an agreement with the Clinton administration to freeze the North's production facilities in return for oil and peaceful reactors. It fell apart early in the George W. Bush administration. In 2006, the first test explosion, while unimpressive, entered North Korea into the club of nuclear powers. Analysts say the first blast was a plutonium bomb, as was a second detonation just months into the Obama administration in 2009.

Dr. Hecker visited Yongbyon in 2010, and the North Koreans showed him a complete uranium enrichment facility, which American intelligence agencies had missed. The message was clear: The North now had two pathways to a bomb, uranium and plutonium. Today, it has an arsenal made up of both, intelligence officials say.

And it is aiming for something much bigger: a hydrogen bomb, with a destructive force up to 1,000 times greater than ordinary nuclear weapons. That is exactly the path the United States took in the 1950s.

Recently, United Nations investigators found evidence that the North's factories had succeeded in producing lithium 6, a rare ingredient needed to make thermonuclear fuel. Gregory S. Jones, a scientist at the RAND Corporation, said the North might have already used bits of thermonuclear fuel in its 2016 detonations.

A potential clue, analysts say, is that the North's five blasts over the past decade have grown steadily more destructive.

Shrinking the Bomb

A bomb is useless to North Korea — as an offensive weapon or as a deterrent — unless the country can make a convincing case that it has a reliable delivery system. So when the North flaunts missiles at military parades, as it did on April 15, the stars of the show tend to be the big missiles that are designed to reach Washington and New York. While several intercontinental ballistic missiles rolled down the streets of Pyongyang, conducting a flight test that proves one could fly that far, and land with accuracy, is so far only an aspiration.

Missing from the parade were the short- and medium-range missiles that have been successfully flight tested. American intelligence agencies believe some of those can carry operational nuclear arms. The critical one is the Nodong, which has a range of about 800 miles.

But the North Koreans are discovering — as the United States, the Soviet Union and China did before them — that it is far more complicated to design an intercontinental missile. With that weapons system, a warhead would move at four miles a second and re-enter the atmosphere in fiery heat — so, if badly engineered, it would burn up long before hitting a target. To reach their goal, North Korean weapons designers are looking to miniaturize their warheads, making them far lighter and more powerful.

The big effort these days is to merge two technologies: Get a missile that can cross the Pacific, and marry it to a warhead that can survive the ride. And this is why the United States is so desperate to stop the cycle of testing.

The cyber- and electronic warfare attacks that President Barack Obama ordered against the country's missile fleet were intended to slow North Korea's learning curve. The Musudan, which can travel 2,200 miles, has racked up an embarrassing failure rate of 88 percent — although how much of that is due to incompetence or outside meddling is not known. Until the North Koreans figure out what is going wrong, and how to fix it, they appear hesitant to test the KN-14 and the KN-08, both of which are designed to hit the continental United States.

Examining North Korea's Missiles

At a recent military parade, North Korea displayed several missiles at a time of heightened tensions with the United States. Here's a closer

look at what some of them are designed to do.

By MARK SCHEFFLER and DAPHNE RUSTOW on April 16, 2017. Photo by Wong Maye-E/Associated Press. Watch in Times Video »

The diplomatic pressure from China to stop a sixth nuclear test at the Punggye-ri test site is intended to keep the North Koreans from making advances in warhead miniaturization and the design of a hydrogen bomb. As Mr. Obama noted before he left office, even failures are important learning tools for the North

Koreans, aiding the trial-and-error process of making new warheads.

How long will it take for the North Koreans to solve those problems? The best guesswork is around 2020 — while Mr. Trump is still in his first term.

A Freeze, to What End?

The strategy emerging from Mr. Trump's national security team comes down to this: Apply overwhelming pressure on the North, both military and economic, to freeze its testing and reduce its stockpile. Then use that opening to negotiate, with the ultimate goal of

getting the North Koreans to give up all their weapons.

Many experts, however, believe that is a fantasy, because Mr. Kim regards even a small arsenal as critical to his survival. The upside of the strategy, if it works, is that the "nuclear freeze" would delay for years the day the North can fit a small, reliable, well-tested weapon atop a large, reliable, well-tested missile. The downside is that it would leave the North Koreans with a small, potent arsenal — one the United States would be essentially acknowledging, if not accepting.

That is why it will be hard for Mr. Trump to fulfill his vow to "solve this problem." And every day, there is the chance of miscalculation, or an accident.

At any moment, Dr. Hecker said on a call to reporters organized by the Union of Concerned Scientists, a live weapon could turn into an accidental nuclear detonation or some other catastrophe.

"I happen to believe," he said, "the crisis is here now."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Trump Urges U.N. to 'Solve the Problem' of North Korea's Weapons Program

Ben Kesling in Washington and Te-Ping Chen in Beijing

5-6 minutes

April 24, 2017 7:11 p.m. ET

President Donald Trump said the United Nations Security Council must adopt new and stronger sanctions on North Korea, telling visiting U.N. diplomats that "it's time to solve the problem" posed by the country's nuclear-weapons program.

Mr. Trump's admonition on Monday came as the White House scheduled high-level meetings on North Korea amid concerns about a sixth nuclear test and as tensions escalated over the weekend with the arrest of an American citizen.

American officials briefed the visiting Security Council diplomats at the White House, and the administration said senators will attend a classified briefing there on Wednesday.

On Friday, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will chair a special U.N. Security Council session on North Korea.

The heightened activity takes place as a U.S. aircraft carrier, the USS Carl Vinson, heads toward the Korean Peninsula and as experts said North Korea is preparing for additional missile launches and a

possible nuclear test. Mr. Trump outlined security concerns to the visiting diplomats, singling out Syria and North Korea.

"The status quo in North Korea is...unacceptable, and the Council must be prepared to impose additional and stronger sanctions on North Korean nuclear- and ballistic-missile programs," Mr. Trump said. "This is a real threat to the world, whether we want to talk about it or not. North Korea is a big world problem, and it's a problem we have to finally solve."

As part of the elevated U.S. concern, Mr. Trump spoke late Sunday from Washington with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to discuss the threat.

"The two leaders reaffirmed the urgency of the threat posed by North Korea's missile and nuclear programs, and committed to strengthen coordination in achieving the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," the White House said on Monday.

Mr. Xi urged the U.S. president to exercise restraint and said he opposed any action that would violate Security Council resolutions, Chinese state media reported.

Mr. Abe said Mr. Trump "indicated by his words and actions that all possible options are on the table." Mr. Xi said all parties should avoid

further ratcheting up tensions on the peninsula, state media reported, adding that the two pledged to stay in regular touch.

White House press secretary Sean Spicer said the Chinese government has been responsive to U.S. requests for help on North Korea.

"China has been very, very helpful in this process and continues to be," he said. "And I think we hope to see a change" in North Korea's behavior.

Mr. Spicer repeated White House concerns about reports that an American citizen had been detained over the weekend in North Korea. The Wall Street Journal reported that Korean-American professor Tony Kim, who had been teaching at a university in Pyongyang set up by a Korean-American Christian businessman, was detained in Pyongyang.

He is the third American citizen confirmed to be held in North Korea.

The Pentagon said on Monday that the Carl Vinson recently arrived in the Philippine Sea and has held naval exercises with the Japanese Navy. Pentagon spokesman Capt. Jeff Davis declined to say whether the exercises were preplanned or were added to the Vinson strike group's schedule.

The Vinson's progress toward the Korean Peninsula has been closely

watched following a mix-up over the movement of the aircraft carrier and the accompanying ships in its strike group.

Top defense officials and the White House appeared to say this month that the group was proceeding directly to the waters off North Korea, while the group actually first traveled to Australia for a previously planned exercise.

The Vinson's deployment was recently extended by a month to provide a presence in the Western Pacific, the Navy said last week.

Wednesday's classified briefing for senators at the White House will involve Mr. Tillerson, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford and Director of National Intelligence Dan Coates, the Pentagon said on Monday.

—Carol E. Lee and Rebecca Ballhaus in Washington, Chieko Tsuneoka in Tokyo and Jonathan Cheng in Seoul contributed to this article.

Write to Ben Kesling at benjamin.kesling@wsj.com and Te-Ping Chen at te-ping.chen@wsj.com

Appeared in the Apr. 25, 2017, print edition as 'Trump Presses U.N. on North Korea.'

The Washington Post

Trump gets on the phone to Asia as another North Korea flash point looms

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

9-11 minutes

The White House announced Monday that it would host an unusual private briefing on North Korea for the entire Senate on Wednesday, and President Trump spoke with his counterparts in China and Japan.

This flurry of activity comes ahead of a key anniversary Tuesday and as Washington steps up pressure on the North.

Just days after the nation marked the birthday of founder Kim Il Sung with a massive military parade and

missile test, there are concerns that North Korea could stage a provocative missile or nuclear test Tuesday, the anniversary of its military's founding.

Trump discussed the situation with Chinese President Xi Jinping, who

urged Washington and Pyongyang to meet each other halfway, and with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who demanded that North Korea stop repeating "dangerously provocative actions."

(Jason Aldag, Anna Fifield/The Washington Post)

The Washington Post's Anna Fifield has been to North Korea seven times. Here, she reports from Pyongyang on what's changed in the city and what hasn't, like the government's control over the population and visiting media. The Washington Post's Anna Fifield has been to North Korea seven times. Here's how media access has changed over the years. (Jason Aldag, Anna Fifield/The Washington Post)

The return of a U.S. aircraft carrier strike group to the region could also reignite tensions, especially if it is accompanied by another round of punchy rhetoric from either Pyongyang or Washington.

Speaking to the U.N. ambassadors from the Security Council member countries on Monday, Trump said "the status quo in North Korea is also unacceptable," and that the U.N. council must be prepared to impose additional and stronger sanctions on the country.

White House press secretary Sean Spicer told reporters that all senators would be briefed on North Korea on Wednesday by several senior administration officials, including Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis.

Spicer said the briefing would be held at the White House. Such briefings usually take place in a secure location on Capitol Hill, where there is more room to handle such a large group.

Past administrations have often held briefings for smaller groups of about two dozen or fewer lawmakers in the White House Situation Room. But they have traditionally sent high-level aides to Capitol Hill to hold discussions with larger groups in secure underground locations.

A senior Trump administration official said the meeting with senators will take place in the auditorium at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, the building next to the White House that houses most of the National Security Council. The auditorium will be temporarily turned into a "sensitive compartmented

information facility," or SCIF, which is the term for a room where sensitive national security information can be shared, the official said.

Meanwhile, in Beijing, the possibility of another missile test by North Korea is leading to mounting frustration with Pyongyang and an increasingly obvious deterioration in relations with its neighbor.

(White House)

President Trump spoke highly of Chinese President Xi during a press conference at the White House on April 12, but avoided commenting directly on the decision not to label China a currency manipulator. "We're going to see," he said when asked if a deal was struck. Trump spoke highly of China's president on April 12, but avoided commenting directly on his decision not to label China a currency manipulator. (White House)

On Monday, the Global Times newspaper said that if North Korea stages a sixth nuclear test, Beijing would "undoubtedly support" the United Nations in adopting tougher sanctions against the regime, including an embargo on oil exports.

China says it has already suspended all coal imports from North Korea, and although several North Korean ships, thought to be laden with coal, have been seen at Chinese ports recently, there are no indications that they have been allowed to unload their cargoes.

The prospect of stiffer sanctions has already had an impact on daily life in Pyongyang: The NK News website reported Saturday that gasoline prices in the capital had nearly doubled in recent days, with residents lining up at gas stations; some stations were closed and others were selling fuel only to foreign organizations and diplomats.

The regime's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) criticized China — without naming it — for "dancing to the tune" of the United States on Friday. The Global Times, whose views do not necessarily reflect official policy, responded in an editorial that such a broadside "will not have any effect apart from further isolating Pyongyang itself."

Such public sniping is rare between the two allies, who fought side by side during the Korean War and have since emphasized their close bond and unbreakable friendship.

In his phone call with Trump, China's Xi called for restraint from

both Washington and Pyongyang, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement, but he also stressed that China "resolutely opposes activities that violate U.N. Security Council resolutions" and is willing to work with the United States and other countries to keep the peace.

Japan's Abe had a 30-minute call with Trump to discuss North Korea, whose actions he called an "extremely serious threat" to international society and to his country.

"I told him we highly value President Trump's attitude to show all options are on the table with his words and actions," Abe told reporters in Tokyo. "We completely agreed to strongly demand that North Korea, which continues to carry out dangerous provocative actions, exercise self-restraint."

A White House statement Monday said that Trump and Xi "reaffirmed the urgency of the threat posed by North Korea's missile and nuclear programs" and pledged to "strengthen coordination in achieving the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula."

The White House was less clear in describing Trump's call with Abe, saying the leaders "addressed a range of regional and global issues of mutual concern."

Naval destroyers from Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force started drills with the carrier strike group led by the USS Carl Vinson in the Philippine Sea on Sunday, and the South Korean navy is expected to do the same as the group approaches the Korean Peninsula.

An American guided-missile submarine, the USS Michigan, arrived at the South Korean port of Busan Tuesday, in what the U.S. Navy described as a "routine visit." Rear Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Korea, described the visit as "yet another example of the steadfast [South Korean] and U.S. naval partnership."

In Asia last week, Vice President Pence said that "all options are on the table" for dealing with North Korea and its provocations, although experts say a military strike remains unlikely.

North Korea responded by saying that the Trump administration was "spouting a load of rubbish" with its calls for "browbeating" Pyongyang and its deployment of the carrier group. "Such intimidation and blackmail can never frighten" North

Korea, the Foreign Ministry said, according to a report carried by KCNA.

Another state media outlet was even more defiant, threatening to sink the Carl Vinson, which it compared to a "gross animal," according to Reuters.

"Our revolutionary forces are combat-ready to sink a U.S. nuclear-powered aircraft carrier with a single strike," the Rodong Sinmun, the newspaper of the ruling Workers' Party, said in a commentary.

There are continued signs of activity at North Korea's main nuclear test site, at Punggye-ri in the northeast of the country. The latest satellite images show trailers and mining carts at the site, according to the 38 North website, although activity does not always mean that the North Koreans are planning a test.

China's Defense Ministry denied media reports last week that it had put its troops on "high alert" near the North Korean border, saying it was merely conducting "normal training."

But Beijing is not only frustrated with Pyongyang.

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Breaking news from around the world.

It also blames the United States for forcing the regime into a corner, with the George W. Bush administration backing out of negotiations and naming North Korea as part of an "axis of evil" in 2002. The toppling of Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Libya's Moammar Gaddafi also helped convince Pyongyang's rulers that abandoning their nuclear program would lead to their overthrow, experts say.

The Global Times said Trump had initially labeled President Barack Obama's policies as mistaken but then followed the same line.

"Washington should also reflect on its wrongdoing," it wrote. "Trump won't reach the right destination if he only changes a pair of shoes while continuing along the same old path."

Denyer reported from Beijing and Fifield reported from Tokyo. Philip Rucker and Ed O'Keefe in Washington contributed to this report.

U.S. Imposes Sanctions on Syrian Government Workers After Sarin Attack

Julie Hirschfeld Davis

6-7 minutes

Steven Mnuchin, left, the secretary of the Treasury, announced sanctions on Monday in response to a chemical weapons attack in Syria. "The United States is sending a strong message with this action that we will not tolerate the use of chemical weapons by any actor," he said. Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Monday imposed sanctions on 271 employees of the Syrian government agency it said was responsible for producing chemical weapons and ballistic missiles, an effort to impose a sweeping punishment after a sarin attack on civilians this month.

The sanctions on members of President Bashar al-Assad's Scientific Studies and Research Center more than doubles the number of Syrian individuals and entities whose property has been blocked by the United States and who are barred from financial transactions with American people or companies.

Steven Mnuchin, the secretary of the Treasury, described it as one of the largest actions his department's Office of Foreign Assets Control had ever undertaken. It seeks to punish those behind this month's chemical weapons attack in Khan Sheikhoun and previous ones carried out by Mr. Assad's government, and to deter others contemplating similar actions.

"The United States is sending a strong message with this action that we will not tolerate the use of chemical weapons by any actor, and we intend to hold the Assad regime accountable for its unacceptable behavior," Mr. Mnuchin told reporters at the White House. "The Treasury Department, together with the Department of State and our international partners, will continue to relentlessly pursue and shut down the financial networks of any individuals involved with Syria's production or use of chemical weapons."

It is not clear what impact the restrictions will have, given that they only apply to business, financial holdings or transactions involving United States people or companies. Administration officials said they had focused on highly educated Syrian officials with deep expertise in chemistry who were thought to have the ability to travel extensively and possibly to use the American financial system.

"We wouldn't be doing this if we didn't think it was impactful," Mr. Mnuchin said. "It's quite impactful."

It was the second time the United States government has imposed sanctions on Syrians for the government's use of chemical weapons. In January, the Treasury Department blacklisted 18 Syrians, including six connected to the scientific studies center, after an investigation by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the international body that polices chemical weapons, determined that the government had been responsible for three chlorine gas attacks.

The Syrian government has portrayed the Scientific Studies and Research Center as a medical and agricultural study agency, but the United States government has long considered it a training ground and secret laboratory network for engineers developing chemical and biological weapons.

Britain applauded the American action, calling it a strong message that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable.

"The abhorrent attack on Khan Sheikhoun is a stark reminder that the international community must work together to deter the future use of chemical weapons in any circumstances," Boris Johnson, the British foreign secretary, said in a statement. "Sanctions send a clear signal that actions have consequences and seek to deter others from a similar acts of barbarism."

Syria agreed in a 2013 deal brokered by Russia to destroy its chemical weapons arsenal and get rid of material that could be used to resume the manufacture of such weapons.

But American officials have said this month's attack indicated that the Assad government still had the capacity to make and use chemical weapons.

On Monday, one official said that assault and at least one other this month suggested that Syria had an ongoing chemical weapons program and called into question declarations the government had made to the contrary.

Republicans who had long criticized the Obama administration for doing too little to prevent the Assad regime's atrocities also praised the sanctions.

"They represent another stark departure from the Obama administration's dithering on Syria, which only worsened the bloodshed and created a vacuum for ISIS," said Representative Ed Royce, Republican of California and the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, referring to the Islamic State. He said he would push forward with Democrats on legislation that would "give the White House additional leverage to hold Assad — as well as his Russian and Iranian backers — accountable."

A report issued by the National Security Council this month that included a declassified account of the Khan Sheikhoun attack said American intelligence had indicated that "personnel historically associated with Syria's chemical weapons program" were at Shayrat airfield in March and on the day of the assault.

That airfield is believed to have been used by Syrian government warplanes to carry out the attack. President Trump ordered missile strikes on the airfield days later.

An administration official declined to say whether any of those figures were part of the group targeted with sanctions on Monday, citing the need to protect intelligence sources and methods, but asserted that those being blacklisted were believed to be responsible for attacks.

U.N. Documents Syrian War Crimes, but Prosecution Moves Slowly

Rick Gladstone

5-7 minutes

A rebel-held neighborhood in Daraa, Syria, after air strikes on Sunday. Members of a United Nations commission investigating war crimes in Syria have not been allowed to visit the country. Mohamad Abazeed/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

The chairman of a United Nations commission investigating possible war crimes in Syria has met that country's ambassador only once, he said. It happened during a chance encounter in a hallway after he had

given a briefing to the General Assembly in New York.

"Then for 15 minutes, he gave me a lecture," the commission chairman, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, said of his exchange with the Syrian envoy, Bashar al-Jaafari. "We don't have any hope that the Syrians will cooperate with us."

Members of the commission, created by the United Nations Human Rights Council in August 2011, have never been permitted to visit Syria by the government of President Bashar al-Assad, which appears to view them as accomplices of Mr. Assad's enemies.

The commission, with a support staff of about 25 people, has collected an enormous volume of material, which could be used in courts, about the atrocities committed in the six-year-old civil war by both Mr. Assad's side and the groups arrayed against him.

The Syrian Mission to the United Nations did not respond to emails requesting comment.

The material collected from outside the country includes testimony from more than 1,400 witnesses and victims. The commission also reviews and corroborates photographs, video, satellite imagery, and forensic and medical reports from governments and

nongovernmental sources to determine if there are "reasonable grounds to believe" an atrocity has been committed, according to its website.

"The fact that we don't have access to Syria doesn't mean that we don't have access to information inside Syria," Mr. Pinheiro said last week in an interview that included some of his colleagues.

And, he said, the commission's work carries more credibility than evidence of war crimes in Syria compiled by other groups because its work is not financed by one side or the other.

"A lot of organizations are documenting the war crimes, they

are serious and committed people, but of course they are funded by states that have a vested interest," Mr. Pinheiro said. "At least we are being funded by the regular budget of the United Nations."

Besides Mr. Pinheiro, a Brazilian political scientist, his fellow commissioners are Karen AbuZayd of the United States, a longtime United Nations diplomat, and Carla Del Ponte of Switzerland, a former war-crimes prosecutor. They are also responsible for compiling a list of suspected perpetrators of war crimes in Syria, which is kept in a sealed envelope in the custody of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein. Even Mr. Hussein has not seen the list, Mr. Pinheiro said.

Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, chairman of the United Nations commission investigating possible war crimes in Syria. Martial Trezzini/European Pressphoto Agency

Ravi Kumar Reddy, the legal adviser for the Syria commission, said the list was updated annually and would remain secret.

Mr. Reddy would not disclose how many people were on the list, saying "it would be unwise." But Mrs. AbuZayd said, "Not as many as you'd like to think."

Mr. Pinheiro, Mrs. AbuZayd and some of their aides were in New York last week to meet with the United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, and to speak about some of their findings at an informal Security Council session.

Mr. Pinheiro and his aides told them that increasing numbers of civilians were now concentrated in northern Syria, where much of the fighting was among militants whose alliances kept shifting.

"New conflicts are emerging in which civilians are caught up between all these actors," said Anis Anani, the commission's political

adviser. While the Islamic State militants are losing territory in northern Syria, he said, "it's also giving way to unstable dynamics on the ground."

Whether the commission's evidence will lead to an independent prosecution of suspected war crimes is unclear, even if the documentation is overwhelming. There is no clear path to make that happen.

The International Criminal Court, which was created for such a purpose, cannot open a case on Syria without a referral from the Security Council, where Russia — Syria's ally — would almost certainly block it.

"The prospect of an I.C.C. referral is zero," Mr. Pinheiro said.

But Mr. Reddy said the commission had supplied some information to judicial authorities in approximately 10 countries where legal cases

related to the Syrian war were underway.

He declined to identify the countries or any of the cases.

Mr. Pinheiro's commission also received a new source of support last December, when the United Nations General Assembly voted to create a separate panel to help lay the groundwork for possible prosecutions of Syria war crimes. The panel will "closely cooperate" with Mr. Pinheiro's commission, the General Assembly's resolution said.

Mr. Pinheiro said that when he agreed to lead the effort in 2011, he believed it would last a year.

The commission is already the longest-serving inquiry at the United Nations.

"The war is not winding down," he said.



Al-Qaida leader tells fighters to prepare for long Syria war

By Associated Press

3-4 minutes

By Associated Press April 24 at 3:54 PM

BEIRUT — The leader of al-Qaeda urged his followers and other militants in Syria to unite ranks and prepare for protracted jihad, or holy war, in a recording released through the global terrorism network's media arm.

Ayman al-Zawahiri told the fighters, who control Syria's northwestern Idlib province and other territory, to remain steadfast and change tactics to wage guerrilla war.

Al-Qaeda began fighting alongside Syria's rebels early in the civil war and won allies among the

opposition because of its military prowess. Al-Qaeda's former official branch in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra, changed its name to Jabhat Fatah al-Sham and formally cut ties with al-Qaeda last year but is still widely seen as being linked to it.

In Sunday night's message, released through al-Qaeda's As-Sahab media arm, Zawahiri cast the Syrian conflict as being part of a wider struggle aimed at imposing Islamist rule on the region and beyond. The leaders of Jabhat Fatah al-Sham have tended to portray its struggle as being confined to Syria.

Zawahiri said an "international satanic alliance" would never accept Islamist rule in Syria, apparently referring to the Syrian government, its ally Russia and the United States, which are actively targeting the group.

Jabhat Fatah al-Sham is perhaps the most powerful rebel-aligned faction, but dozens of other factions — both hard-line Islamists and more mainstream groups — are battling Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces.

Today's Headlines newsletter

The day's most important stories.

Zawahiri, who succeeded Osama bin Laden as the global leader of al-Qaeda after he was killed in a U.S. raid in 2011, made his last public broadcast in May 2016, when he issued an audio message calling for unity among fighters in Syria.

Meanwhile, authorities began a sixth round of evacuations Monday for civilians and fighters from the opposition-held neighborhood of Waer in Homs, Syria's third-largest city, activists and state media reported.

Government forces have besieged the neighborhood since 2013, according to the Washington-based monitoring group Siege Watch. Rebels, opposition activists and their families agreed to vacate the district in an agreement signed in March in exchange for the end of hostilities.

In northern Syria, warplanes struck the town where a chemical attack killed scores of people this month. The airstrikes in the opposition-held town of Khan Sheikhoun killed at least four people and wounded 10, according to the activist-run Thiqa News Agency and Idlib Media Center.

It was not clear who carried out the strike.



Wald and Makovsky : The Two Faces of Qatar, a Dubious Mideast Ally

Charles Wald and Michael

Makovsky

4-5 minutes

April 24, 2017 7:14 p.m. ET

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis visited several of America's Middle Eastern partners last week—including a dubious one. Qatar hosts an important air base but also undermines American security by sponsoring Islamic radicalism.

Nearly all coalition airstrikes against Islamic State are commanded from America's nerve center at Qatar's al-Udeid Air Base, which also supports missions in Afghanistan. The U.S. Air Force stations many of its larger aircraft there—refueling tankers, advanced surveillance and early-warning aircraft, and heavy bombers. Al-Udeid also houses the Combined Air and Space Operations Center, which commands all coalition air operations in the region. With all these key assets in one place, the Pentagon expects to stay through 2024.

But the host nation supports some of the groups the base is used to bomb. According to the State Department, "entities and individuals within Qatar continue to serve as a source of financial support for terrorist and violent extremist groups," including al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate. Qatar has also supplied advanced weaponry to militants in Syria and Libya.

Doha poured billions into the radical Muslim Brotherhood government of former Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, who urged supporters "to nurse our children

and our grandchildren on hatred for them: for Zionists, for Jews." The Brotherhood's supreme guide, Mohammed Badie, has called jihad against Israel and America "a commandment of Allah that cannot be disregarded."

After Mr. Morsi's government fell in 2013, Qatar offered safe harbor to many Brotherhood leaders. Pressure from neighbors eventually forced Doha to eject them, but Qatar still hosts Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a Brotherhood-affiliated preacher who once declared, "Those killed fighting the American forces are

martyrs." Qatar is also a key financier of Hamas, a Palestinian spinoff of the Muslim Brotherhood, which has repeatedly attacked Israel with rockets.

Qatar wields tremendous soft power on behalf of radical Islam through its state-funded Al Jazeera news channel. Mr. Qaradawi has a weekly show, and the network became notorious in America for broadcasting Osama bin Laden's videos, repeatedly and uncut, far exceeding their news value.

Given President Trump's forthright opposition to radical Islamic terrorism, it makes sense to ask whether the U.S. should continue leasing crucial military assets from a government that supports such ideology. If Qatar won't change its behavior, the U.S. should consider relocating assets from the base. The United Arab Emirates would be a logical destination. It is an active partner in American efforts to combat ISIS, pacify Afghanistan and counter Iran. U.S. officials consider the U.A.E. one of their

strongest Arab partners. Mr. Mattis has called it "Little Sparta."

Emirati air bases could accommodate U.S.-led operations currently run from al-Udeid, without putting U.S. aircraft farther from their targets. The Combined Air and Space Operations Center would need to be replaced, but the cost would be easily outweighed by the security benefits. The U.A.E. is a far more responsible actor than Qatar, and it already works with the U.S. military to train pilots from our other Gulf allies and coordinate coalition air operations.

If the Trump White House hopes to end the free-riding of American allies, it can start by sending a clear message to Doha: The benefits of al-Udeid do not outweigh Qatar's support for extremism.

Mr. Wald was deputy commander of U.S. European Command and is a fellow at the Jewish Institute for National Security of America. Mr. Makovsky, a former Pentagon official, is the institute's president.

Appeared in the Apr. 25, 2017, print edition.



U.S. defense chief arrives in Kabul as his Afghan counterpart resigns in disgrace (UNE)

https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100011342442800&ref=br_rs

7-9 minutes

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis says he sees 2017 as "another tough year for the valiant Afghan security forces and the international troops." Defense Secretary Jim Mattis says he sees 2017 as "another tough year for the valiant Afghan security forces and the international troops." (Reuters)

(Reuters)

KABUL — A devastating Taliban attack on an Afghan army base last week has shaken up the government here, forcing the resignations of the country's defense minister and army chief on Monday as Defense Secretary Jim Mattis arrived in a surprise visit to survey the deteriorating situation.

The Taliban, which is contesting control of one-third of Afghanistan, has continued to steadily gain territory and inflict record casualties on civilians and troops since most NATO troops withdrew from the country in 2014. The assault Friday — following a winter of repeated Taliban attacks on strategic cities and towns — adds to concerns that Afghanistan will not be able to defend itself without a major commitment of U.S. support.

With the conflict at a stalemate and no sign that peace talks will resume after several years of failed attempts, it is far from clear whether the Trump administration will decide to make a significant contribution in troops and money.

But the continued weakness of the Afghan military adds urgency to a request from Gen. John Nicholson, in charge of U.S. forces here, for additional troops. Nicholson has told Congress that about 3,000 more

troops are needed to prop up the security forces in Afghanistan. The White House is conducting a review of the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan, including troop levels, headed by national security adviser H.R. McMaster.

About 8,400 U.S. troops are currently advising and training local forces, conducting counterinsurgency operations and providing air combat and evacuation support. By comparison, at the height of the war, more than 100,000 U.S. forces were stationed here.

In an assault Friday marked by ruthlessness and stealth, a handful of Taliban fighters managed to enter a base teeming with soldiers and kill at least 140 of them shortly after the weekly prayer service there.

The attack at a base in northern Balkh province, the deadliest carried out by the Taliban against the military in 16 years of fighting, belied Afghan insistence that the country's troubled defense forces are moving toward self-sufficiency after years of relying on Western allies to fund, train and equip them.

The attackers, who penetrated the base wearing army uniforms and kept fighting for more than five hours, were finally quelled by an Afghan commando force. That scenario has been repeated in numerous other battlefronts, where the elite units replaced police and regular troops who were unable to fend off insurgent fighters.

While the commandos were singled out for praise Saturday by Nicholson, the defense forces overall, totaling more than 700,000 men, remain plagued by poor coordination, illiteracy, high rates of attrition, defections to the Taliban, ethnic infighting, and widespread corruption that includes the theft and resale of combat supplies meant for front-line troops.

The weaknesses that have left heavily subsidized Afghan forces struggling to fend off much smaller numbers of insurgents have become increasingly difficult to excuse, as indicated by the highly unusual resignations of Defense Minister Abdullah Habibi and Army Chief of Staff Qadam Shah Shahim on Monday.

"No one has put pressure on me. I have resigned for the national interest of the country," Habibi told reporters. Shahim also said he stepped down voluntarily. President Ashraf Ghani accepted both resignations immediately and replaced three other army commanders, a move that some analysts praised as necessary to boost military morale and public trust.

Other recent major attacks claimed by the Taliban or Islamic State include the invasion of a military hospital in Kabul on Mar. 8 that left at least 30 people dead, and a one-day spate of scattered bombings Jan. 10 that killed 65 people, including three Emirati diplomats at a government guesthouse in Kandahar.

An adviser to the governor of Balkh, Tahir Qaderi, said the death toll from Friday's attack could be as high as 200. He said most of those who died were fresh recruits, and he attributed the high casualty numbers to incompetence and ignorance. "Some of them had not taken a rifle in their hand in their lifetime," he said.

Nicholson said Monday that the Taliban appears to be receiving weapons from Russia, further complicating the war and the Trump administration's relationship with the Kremlin.

"We support anyone who wants to help us advance the reconciliation process," said Nicholson, speaking to reporters alongside Mattis on

Monday. "But anyone who arms belligerents who perpetuate attacks like the one we saw two days ago ... is not the best way forward to a peaceful reconciliation."

In addition, the two-sided role of next-door Pakistan in the conflict remains a major frustration for Washington as President Trump and his aides develop a policy toward the longtime Cold War and anti-terrorism ally.

Nicholson said the sophistication of Friday's attack suggested it was "quite possible" that the gunmen were linked to the Haqqani network, a Taliban splinter faction based in Pakistan. Nicholson and other U.S. military leaders have strongly criticized Pakistan for harboring the Haqqani group, which Pakistan denies.

In another apparent Taliban strike Monday, a car bomb exploded outside Camp Chapman, a base used by the U.S. military and others. A U.S. military spokesman here, Capt. William Salvin, said there were some Afghan casualties, but none among U.S. or coalition personnel, the Associated Press reported.

Camp Chapman, near the Pakistani border south of Kabul, was the scene of a suicide bombing in 2009 that killed seven CIA officers and contractors.

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Mattis, who last visited Afghanistan in 2013 when he was a Marine general and leader of the U.S. Central Command, is wrapping up his six-nation trip through the Middle East and the Horn of Africa.

The deterioration in security has been partly blamed on protracted rivalry and paralysis within the Afghan government, a power-

sharing arrangement between Ghani and his former election rival, chief executive

Abdullah Abdullah. Their national unity government came to power in 2014.

Constable reported from Islamabad. Sharif Walid in Kabul and Missy

Ryan in Washington contributed to this report.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Totakhil

5-6 minutes

U.S. Suspects Russia Supplying Small Arms to Taliban in Afghanistan

Gordon Lubold and Habib Khan

Asked on Monday if the Russians were providing such weapons, Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, said, "I'm not refuting that."

Mr. Mattis arrived in Afghanistan hours after the resignations of his Afghan counterpart and the army chief of staff following the deadliest attack by insurgents on government forces since the war began in 2001.

Ghani had no immediate comment on the departures of the defense minister, Abdullah Habibi, and the army chief of staff, Qadam Shah Shahim, and no reasons were given for the moves. Gen. Dawlat Waziri, the Defense Ministry spokesman, said only that Mr. Ghani had accepted their resignations.

Updated April 24, 2017 6:39 p.m. ET

KABUL—U.S. military officials said they have seen an increasing number of small arms provided by the Russian government, including machine guns and antiaircraft weapons, in the hands of Taliban fighters in Afghanistan over the past 18 months.

Russia has acknowledged sharing information with Taliban groups in an effort to combat Islamic State, but has denied sending weaponry. Russian officials didn't respond on Monday to a request for comment on the U.S. charges.

It was Mr. Mattis's first visit to Afghanistan as defense chief but, as a former Marine general, he was the first commander of American troops here following the U.S.-led invasion after the 2001 terror attacks.

Friday's Taliban attack on a government army base in Balkh province left about 170 people dead, Afghan officials said, after six Taliban fighters infiltrated the heavily guarded base aboard military vehicles and opened fire in what became a five-hour battle. Five of the militants were killed and a sixth was captured alive by Afghan commandos who had been rushed to join the battle, Afghan military officials said.

U.S. officials have complained that the Kremlin has interfered on the Afghan battlefield on the Taliban's side, but Monday's comments marked the most serious U.S. charges yet.

The senior U.S. military official said heavier weaponry that could change battlefield dynamics, such as surface-to-air missiles, hadn't appeared in Afghanistan.

During his visit here, Mr. Mattis and the head of the U.S.-led international military force, Gen. John Nicholson, plan to discuss whether to recommend that President Donald Trump order additional troop deployments.

Mr. Mattis is winding up an eight-day trip that has taken him to Riyadh, Cairo, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, as well as Doha and Djibouti. His talks with officials have focused on fighting terrorism and countering what the Trump administration says is Iran's destabilizing influence in the Middle East and North Africa.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who arrived in Kabul on an unannounced visit on Monday, said it would be a violation of international law for Russia to provide the Taliban with weapons.

"The Russians seem to be choosing to be strategic competitors in a number of areas," Mr. Mattis said, adding that as far as "the level of granularity and the level of success they are achieving, I think the jury is still out on that."

In testimony to Congress in February, Gen. Nicholson said a few thousand additional American troops were needed to advise and train Afghan forces.

—Ehsanullah Amiri in Kabul contributed to this article.

Military officials have long suspected Russia may be sending weapons to Afghanistan, but have noticed an increase recently, a senior U.S. military official said. The weapons are showing up in Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan provinces.

Mr. Mattis said the U.S. would address the issue diplomatically, but would confront Russia if necessary.

Currently, there are about 8,500 U.S. personnel, along with around 6,000 soldiers from other members of the international coalition, in Afghanistan in support of the central government in Kabul, which is fighting both the Taliban, the largest insurgency, and the local Islamic State affiliate.

Write to Gordon Lubold at Gordon.Lubold@wsj.com

The New York Times

The Editorial Board

4-5 minutes

Editorial : Chechnya's Crackdown on Gays

Then came the baffling denial. "If such people existed in Chechnya, law enforcement would not have to worry about them, as their own relatives would have sent them to where they could never return," Alvi Karimov, a spokesman for the Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, told the Russian news agency Interfax.

protection from discrimination and violence.

Moscow is unlikely to take meaningful action against Chechnya, or to rethink its broader policy toward gay rights, in the absence of strong and sustained international pressure. In recent years several countries from the Americas and Europe have promoted equality for gay and transgender people as universal human rights. The Obama administration, and in particular former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, deserves much credit for making this a diplomatic priority.

Gay men who fled persecution in Chechnya in their Moscow apartment this month. Naira Davlashyan/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

This abominable crime by a Russian republic and its reprehensible cover-up warrant a strong response from Moscow and the international community. That would be a stretch for the Russian government, which is denying that there is evidence of any crimes and has sought to keep its own gay population invisible. In 2013, it enacted a so-called anti-propaganda law that criminalizes promoting or celebrating non-straight conduct and identity — while government officials claimed that all Russians were entitled to

Moscow's "reaction to the allegations of systematic human rights violations against gay men in Chechnya constitutes a litmus test on whether this rhetoric was disingenuous," said Fabrice Houdart, a human rights expert at the United Nations who specializes in issues of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The crimes in Chechnya have presented the Trump administration with its first major test on this issue on the international stage. Last Monday, Nikki Haley, the American ambassador to the United Nations, issued a strong statement calling for a prompt investigation and accountability for the culprits.

The first reports about the arbitrary detention and possible extrajudicial killings of men suspected of being gay in Chechnya were bloodcurdling. The authorities began rounding up men after activists had sought permission to hold gay pride parades in other parts of the North Caucasus region, which is predominantly Muslim, according to a newspaper report and activists. At least three turned up dead. Some people reported being tortured.

Moreover, it should force a debate about how that kind of out-of-sight, out-of-mind approach contributes to the stigmatization and victimization of vulnerable communities. Gay and transgender people have gained societal acceptance and legal rights in several countries over the past two decades by demanding to be seen and heard. The Russian government persists in forcing its gay citizens to remain largely underground.

"We are against all forms of discrimination, including against

people based on sexual orientation," Ms. Haley said. "When left unchecked, discrimination and human rights abuses can lead to destabilization and conflict."

It would be encouraging to see Ms. Haley take on this cause with as much passion and perseverance as her predecessor, Samantha Power. Without American leadership,

forging a global consensus that gay rights are human rights will take longer. Time is not on the side of gay people living in terror in places like Chechnya.



Editorial : As Chechnya tortures and kills gay men, Putin shrugs

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

4-5 minutes

The Post's View

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

By Editorial Board

The Post's View

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

April 24 at 7:44 PM

CHECHNYA'S STRONGMAN, Ramzan Kadyrov, hardly skipped a beat when it was revealed that his security forces were kidnapping and torturing gay men in the republic. Instead of investigating and punishing those who inflicted the horrors, Mr. Kadyrov, a violent provincial boss who enjoys the blessings of Russian President Vladimir Putin, immediately went

after the Moscow newspaper that brought the situation to light. Reporters have been threatened and denounced, and forced to flee Russia.

On April 1, Novaya Gazeta, known for digging into sensitive topics, published an exposé showing that Mr. Kadyrov's security services were detaining and executing gay men, holding them in squalid conditions and outing them to families for suggested "honor killing." Three are known to have died, and more than 100 are believed to have been seized and held in a prison near the town of Argun. Since the story broke, further corroboration has come from gay men who escaped captivity and reported they were tortured, harassed and threatened. The purge has been confirmed by Human Rights Watch, which quoted one victim as saying, "They treated us like animals."

Russia put down secessionist rebels in Chechnya in two wars that wreaked havoc on the republic. Today, Mr. Kadyrov rules by brute force and with Kremlin backing. Chechen society is traditionally conservative, and homosexuality is viewed as taboo. The newspaper

report was immediately greeted with jeers in the republic. On April 3, at a gathering of Chechnya's religious and political leaders in the capital Grozny, an adviser to Mr. Kadyrov accused the newspaper of defamation and called its journalists "enemies of our faith and our motherland." There was talk of retribution.

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On April 15, Chechnya's press and information minister called the newspaper's report a "filthy provocation." On April 19, Mr. Kadyrov appeared in a photo opportunity with Mr. Putin in the Kremlin and denounced the article as a "provocation." Mr. Putin was impassive.

Mr. Kadyrov appears to enjoy a certain impunity. His men are suspected of carrying out the murder of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov in 2015, but somehow Russian law enforcement is unable to bring to justice whoever ordered the killing.

The anti-gay purge in Chechnya has been widely condemned by the

United States and others. But Russia's human rights commissioner, Tatiana Moskalkova, told a parliamentary committee that it was probably just a "provocation," a "false denunciation." Indeed, very few people in Russia seem willing to stand up to Mr. Kadyrov. Novaya Gazeta has expressed fear for the lives of its reporters.

In an open and free society, this chain of events would be cause for alarm: secret torture chambers, runaway authority, intimidation of the press. But Russia is not free, and Mr. Putin hardly seems perturbed. He tolerates brutality and coercion as instruments of state power, deaf to the cries of anguish from its victims.

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Editorial : Israeli president's advice on Holocaust remembrance

The Christian Science Monitor

3-4 minutes

April 24, 2017 —In a Middle East taut with tension between nations, it is rare when a leader engages in deep reflection about his country's identity. Yet Israel's president, Reuven Rivlin, decided to use this year's annual Holocaust Remembrance Day on April 23 to deliver a thoughtful speech on Jewish identity. If his talk can inspire Israel and its neighbors to live in peace someday, perhaps it will be remembered as long as the Holocaust will be.

Mr. Rivlin's current position as president is largely ceremonial, but he has a long

history as a hawkish politician with family roots in Jerusalem as far back as 1809. He said the continuing loss of Holocaust survivors makes it crucial for Israeli society to deal with how it relates to the Holocaust and the remembrance of it. He then laid out three approaches, with the third one as his preference.

The first, he said, looks at the Shoah (the Hebrew word used for the Nazi killing of 6 million Jews) as not unique in the history of genocide and violent racism. This "universalist" perspective sees the event as one of many human tragedies. This distorts the anti-Semitism and systemic targeting of Jews, he said, and "denies the right and the obligation of the Jewish people to a history of its own, and to a state of its own."

"The gas chambers were not built 'as a crime against humanity.' They were built for the purpose of annihilating the Jewish people, and specifically that nation," he said. Jews must help prevent genocide in the world but never forget the uniqueness of the Shoah.

The second approach views the Holocaust as a lens on the present and future, always looking to prevent it happening again to the Jews. It sees every threat to Israel as an existential threat and every enemy as a Hitler. This view obscures the richness of Jewish history before the Shoah. "It was not fear that kept us going through 2,000 years of exile, it was our spiritual assets, our shared creativity," he said. That view can also damage the ability of Israel to

talk to its critics and develop good relations with other nations.

The third way accepts the need for Jewish solidarity and the goal of preventing genocide but adopts the Jewish value of respecting all men and women, regardless of their religion or race. "Man is beloved, every man, created in God's image," he said. This truth informs a sacred obligation that the Jewish people cannot remain silent to horrors around the world. "Maintaining one's humanity: this is the immense courage bequeathed to us by the victims — and by ... the survivors of the Shoah."

And with that, Israel's president offered up a prayer, asking that the memory of Holocaust victims bind up Jews "in the bond of life."



Venezuela Opposition Aims to Keep Protests Peaceful, but Violence Erupts (UNE)

Nicholas Casey

3-4 minutes

Venezuelan government officials blamed the opposition for attacks

against pro-government demonstrators on Monday during

sit-ins organized by the opposition that gathered thousands in support of elections.

Officials said the casualties included two dead in gunfire in Mérida and Barinas States, among the places where opposition protesters gathered against President Nicolás Maduro.

The sit-ins were the latest in a series of large demonstrations over the past three weeks. They became almost daily occurrences after security forces last Wednesday attacked crowds of peaceful protesters with rubber bullets and water cannons. The toll has mounted, with more than 20 deaths in looting and clashes with the security forces.

Monday's sit-ins had aimed to scale back the violence. Crowds with umbrellas and blankets closed a main highway in Caracas, singing songs, reading books and playing dominoes and cards.

"I'm calling on the country, on all of Venezuela, to go out into the streets until we have a democratic country with social justice, where there's progress for all," Julio Borges, an opposition politician who leads the National Assembly, said on the Venezuelan television channel Globovision.

Mr. Maduro's government countered with calls to mount its own demonstrations. Diosdado Cabello, a top lawmaker in the country's ruling Socialist party, said he would call a pro-government rally

on May 1, International Workers' Day.

The events showed that Venezuela may be girding for a long war of attrition on the streets as the opposition calls for sustained civil disobedience against Mr. Maduro's accumulation of power. The challenge is the biggest threat to leftists since protests rocked Caracas and other cities in 2014.

The most recent discontent arose on March 29 when the Venezuelan Supreme Court, controlled by leftist stalwarts, essentially dissolved the country's National Assembly and took on lawmaking powers for itself. The legislature is controlled by the opposition and is widely considered the last remaining institution independent of Mr. Maduro.

After the move was condemned internationally — and even by some in Mr. Maduro's own party — the president told the court to undo parts of its ruling. But the lawmakers, whose decisions have repeatedly been overturned by judges, remain powerless, according to legal experts.

Mr. Maduro initially responded to the protests with a heavy hand. In recent days, security forces have been less aggressive. The president has also said he is interested in scheduling elections, though he has not offered a date.

On Sunday, Mr. Maduro went further, saying the Constitution should be rewritten to resolve the crisis. He offered no time frame for such a process.

ETATS-UNIS

**The
New York
Times**

Trump Wants It Known: Grading 100 Days Is 'Ridiculous' (but His Were the Best) (UNE)

Peter Baker

6-7 minutes

WASHINGTON — In case anyone was wondering, President Trump wants it known that he does not care about the false judgment of his administration after just 100 days. "It's an artificial barrier," he sniffed the other day. "Not very meaningful," he scoffed. A "ridiculous standard," he added on Twitter.

So how is Mr. Trump spending his final week before the artificial and ridiculous 100-day point of his presidency? With a flurry of action on health care, taxes and the border wall to show just how much he has done in the first 100 days — amplified by a White House program of first-100-days briefings, first-100-days receptions, a first-100-days website and a first-100-days rally.

It may not be meaningful, but Mr. Trump has invested quite a lot of meaning in the 100-day grading period, deeply anxious that he be judged a success at this early stage. And not just a success, but one with plenty of superlatives: the most successful president with the most executive orders and bills signed and the best relationships with foreign leaders and the most action taken by any president ever in the first 100 days. Even though it's an artificial barrier.

"As with so much else, Trump is a study in inconsistency," said Robert Dallek, the presidential historian. "One minute he says his 100 days have been the best of any president, and the next minute he decries the idea of measuring a president by the 100 days."

And lest anyone say otherwise, Mr. Trump has already told supporters not to believe contrary assessments, anticipating more critical evaluations by journalists, not to mention partisan attacks by Democrats. "No administration has accomplished more in the first 90 days," Mr. Trump boasted in Wisconsin last week, not waiting for the final 10 days to grade himself.

Hoping to pad the report card, he announced suddenly late last week that he would unveil a sweeping tax plan on Wednesday and pressed House Republicans to hold a vote by the end of this week on a revised plan to replace former President Barack Obama's health care program, even as lawmakers were trying to avert a government shutdown.

If nothing else, Mr. Trump's first 100 days have certainly been eventful. Whether they have accomplished much is more a subject of debate. He nominated a Supreme Court justice and got him confirmed, abandoned the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, launched a missile strike against Syria and reversed many of Mr.

Obama's regulations, most notably on the environment.

He has signed a spate of executive orders — 25 are listed on the White House website — numerically surpassing most modern presidents, depending on how they are counted. But some of them are more aspirational: One, for instance, ordered a study on steel dumping without actually taking action on steel dumping yet.

Likewise, he has signed 28 bills into law, according to the White House, the most of any president in nearly seven decades. Some of them were aimed at unraveling regulations enacted late in Mr. Obama's presidency in areas like teacher preparation, land management and federal procurement. Others were less weighty, like one officially naming a veterans' health center in Butler County, Pa., the "Abie Abraham V.A. Clinic."

Many of the more high-profile promises he made on the campaign trail are stalled or incomplete, like building a border wall, renegotiating or scrapping the North American Free Trade Agreement, temporarily barring visitors from predominantly Muslim countries and revamping health care. Moreover, he has done nothing to build public support, and his approval ratings are still hovering around 40 percent, far lower than any other modern president at this point in his tenure.

To the extent that he is being held to a measurement he disdains, he has no one to blame but himself. In October, he issued a "Contract With the American Voter," which he called "my 100-day action plan to Make America Great Again." He has begun many of the executive actions he promised in that plan. But of the 10 major pieces of legislation whose passage he vowed to fight for "within the first 100 days," only one has even been introduced.

"None have been passed — not a single one — and nine haven't even been sent to the Congress," said Ronald A. Klain, who was a top White House aide under Mr. Obama and President Bill Clinton. "If Trump finds himself hoisted on the 100-day test, it is a petard that he erected for himself."

Asked about the 100-day plan by The Associated Press last Friday, Mr. Trump brushed it off, saying, "Somebody put out the concept of a 100-day plan." He seemed to have forgotten that he personally recorded a video during the transition repeating the 100-day promises.

"We feel very proud of what we've been able to accomplish and fulfill the promises that he made to the American people," Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, said. "But I think it's got to be kept in context." The context, he added, "is it's 100 days, and you've got four

years in your first term and eight years for two terms.”

Asked why the White House was making such a production if it was an artificial measure, Mr. Spicer said it was an inevitable concession to the reality that every news organization is busily preparing an assessment.

The fixation with the first 100 days traces its history back to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who took office in the Great Depression and passed 15 major pieces of legislation in short order. Ever since, presidents have bristled at what they considered an impossible standard.

“It is hard to judge any of these other presidents after that, and I think all of them are cursing the idea that this got started,” said Doris Kearns Goodwin, author of “No Ordinary Time,” a book about Roosevelt. “That’s the one thing they might all agree on, the post-F.D.R. presidents: ‘No way; this isn’t fair.’”

John F. Kennedy tried to reset expectations on his Inauguration Day when he proclaimed, “All this will not be finished in the first 100 days, nor will it be finished in the first 1,000 days.” Mr. Obama echoed this argument on the night he was elected, saying, “We may not get there in one year or even one term.”

Aides to President George W. Bush argued that he should be given extra time because his transition was cut short by the Florida recount. But, failing to convince anyone of that, he ended up inviting members of Congress to the White House to “celebrate our 100 days of working together.” Mr. Obama resisted what his senior adviser, David Axelrod, called “a Hallmark holiday,” but he had passed the largest economic stimulus package in history by that point and ended up holding a town-hall-style meeting and prime-time news conference.

To be sure, the first 100 days of the Bush and Clinton presidencies bore only a modest resemblance to the rest of their tenures. Less important

than a scorecard of accomplishments, Ms. Goodwin said, is the leadership style demonstrated in the early days.

Jonathan Alter, author of “The Defining Moment: F.D.R.’s Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope,” said Mr. Trump did not come close to any modern president in meaningful accomplishments so far. But he agreed that the first 100 days tell only part of the story.

“I don’t think the first 100 days are by themselves that important,” he said. “The first year is critically important, and the first 100 days set the tone for the first year.”



Trump’s first 100 days have been rocky at home. Abroad, they’re cause for relief.

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

7-9 minutes

For President Trump, his fellow Republicans and his supporters, his failure to yet deliver on many campaign promises has become a source of consternation. But for many of the foreign leaders who descended on Washington this weekend for one of the first international meetings of Trump’s presidency, those setbacks come as relief — and a reason for hope.

The polyglot business leaders, government workers and researchers gathered for the annual spring meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund seemed reassured by the Trump administration’s actions thus far, though still anxious about what coming months could hold.

“I believe that the current administration after 100 days has been more moderate than was expected. And I think we need to reinforce such behavior,” said Felipe Calderón, the former president of Mexico.

Speaking on Friday from the House of Sweden, an airy glass building on the Georgetown waterfront adjacent to the Swedish embassy, Calderón said he was sure that there were “rational people” inside the Trump administration and that he believed “several of them are listening.”

“They are struggling each other. But our role is to put the right arguments to prevail,” he said.

It was an attitude shared by many of the bureaucrats, business people, economists and aid workers who gathered at the IMF and World

Bank buildings in downtown D.C. to attend seminars, pore over Excel spreadsheets and sip wine as the days drew to a close.

While the attendees were a diverse group, they largely belonged to the class of “global elite” maligned by far left and far right political campaigns, including Trump’s. And they were deeply uneasy about how the recent surge of nationalist and protectionist movements in wealthy countries might affect them and their organizations.

Trump’s own campaign platform of stronger borders, protectionist economic policies and a retreat from international institutions has been mirrored in populist movements in Europe. Many have blamed the agenda of free trade and global integration backed by organizations like the World Bank and IMF for their countries’ economic malaise.

Global markets surged on Monday as investors perceived the results of a runoff election in France as dealing a blow against the economic threat of populism after centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron gained the largest share of the votes. European and Asian stock markets soared on Monday, with France’s CAC up more than 4 percent at close. Wall Street stocks also closed on a high note, with the tech-heavy Nasdaq reaching record highs and the Dow Jones Industrial average and Standard & Poor’s Index both rising roughly 1.1 percent.

Yet far-right candidate Marine Le Pen, who supports withdrawing France from the euro zone, was not far behind. Macron and Le Pen will face off in the election’s deciding round in two weeks. Meanwhile, Britain is forging ahead with its

decision to leave the European Union, and Germany and Italy are facing upcoming elections that could further disrupt Europe’s integration.

In the United States at least, the Trump administration has not yet translated much of the isolationism and protectionism espoused on the campaign trail into policy.

Congressional opposition — including from Trump’s fellow Republicans — has so far stymied the administration’s plans for health care and tax revision. Trump also appears to be adopting a more conventional foreign policy, despite his pledges to withdraw the U.S. from its role on the international stage and concentrate on rebuilding at home. In recent weeks, he reversed his opposition to international institutions like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Export-Import Bank, and presided over military strikes in Syria and Afghanistan.

When asked Thursday about his previous support for Brexit in a news conference with the visiting prime minister of Italy, Trump said that a strong Europe was “very, very important to me as president of the United States” and “very much to everybody’s advantage.”

Short of a few steps — like the decision Thursday to launch an investigation into whether steel imports compromise U.S. national security — Trump’s pledges to renegotiate trade deals and slap tariffs on disagreeable trading partners also have not materialized.

In an interview on Saturday, IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde asked Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to describe the administration’s trade policy. She

received a much more muted version than Trump touted on the campaign trail.

“The president believes in reciprocal trade deals and reciprocal free trade,” Mnuchin said, adding that if U.S. markets are open, other countries’ markets should be open as well. “What’s not free and fair is if our market is open and other people either have high tariffs or have high import barriers.”

“The bite has been way less intense than the bark,” said Mário Mesquita, chief economist at Itaú Unibanco, one of Brazil’s largest banks. “Things may change ... but as yet they have been more cautious and more moderate than people feared right after the election.”

Vincenzo Boccia, the president of an Italian manufacturing and service industry association called Confindustria, said his group was in a wait-and-see mode about the futures of both Europe and the United States.

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Speaking through an interpreter in a cavernous backroom of the Italian embassy in Washington, Boccia called the United States “a symbol of economic freedom” for Italians, and warned that a protectionist turn could lead to less competition and innovation worldwide and spur other countries to follow suit in closing off their economies. “It will have a domino effect, and nobody will win,” he said.

Erik Berglöf, an economist and the director of the Institute of Global Affairs at the London School of Economics who was in town for the spring meetings, worried that the

administration could do the most damage by degrading or destroying international institutions like the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organization, which the United States played the leading role in building in the decades after World War II.

"Institutions like the World Bank and the IMF would amount to very little without the U.S. standing behind them," said

Berglof. "The U.S. used to effectively stand up for these core principles, but it can now equally powerfully undermine them."

Berglof noted that, compared with past spring meetings, the IMF and World Bank appeared to be "hunkering down" to avoid attracting negative attention from the Trump administration. He said they appeared to be "suppressing the use of words like 'protectionism' and

'openness,'" as well as "documents that can provoke discussions of these topics."

In a news conference Thursday, Lagarde had urged countries to "guard against what I have called self-inflicted wounds, such as restrictions, subsidies and other trade distortions that reduce competition and economic openness." However, she also echoed the Trump administration in

arguing that the global trading system had room for improvement.

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POLITICO 100 days of Democratic rage

By Gabriel DeBenedetti

7-9 minutes

By most traditional measures, the Democratic Party hit rock bottom at the outset of Donald Trump's presidency.

The Democratic National Committee was leaderless and in shambles. Congress and the White House were under Republican control, as were about two-thirds of the statehouses. Perhaps the most popular national figure associated with the party, Sen. Bernie Sanders, refused to even call himself a Democrat.

Story Continued Below

Yet Trump's first 100 days in office appear to have resuscitated the party, if for no reason other than the rank-and-file loathe him so deeply and furiously. Grassroots activism and organizing is surging. Irate Democrats are flooding GOP town halls even in conservative states like Idaho and South Carolina. Small-dollar fundraising is also on fire — six of the 10 Senate Democrats up for re-election in states Trump won collected over \$2 million in the first three months of the year. For some of them, that represented more than had ever been raised in their state this early in the election cycle.

But while the president has generated a vibrant culture of resistance on the left, it's obscuring the depth of the hole that the Democratic Party still finds itself in. A new NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll shows more Americans view the party negatively than positively.

"We have a new energy but we don't have a new brand," said Ohio Rep. Tim Ryan, who gained national attention in November for unsuccessfully challenging House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi for her leadership role. "I would think that if the Democratic Party had a halfway decent national brand or an exciting, affirmative agenda, that we would have been able to get at least

a couple more percentage points in the Georgia [special election where Democrat Jon Ossoff fell just short of 50 percent last week]. We had a great candidate and great energy running under a very negative brand."

The brand is only part of the problem — the party's central infrastructure itself is in need of an overhaul. Democrats got dragged back into a redux of the presidential primary fight between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders during the first month of Trump's presidency in the race for the DNC chairmanship between former Labor Secretary Tom Perez and Minnesota Rep. Keith Ellison. That divisive fight appears poised to resurface in May, with the beginning of the DNC's "Unity Commission" meetings to reform the presidential primary process, featuring representatives hand-picked by Clinton and Sanders themselves.

While many individual Democratic officeholders are cash-flush — Sen. Elizabeth Warren, for example, brought in more than \$5 million from January through March on her way to building out a campaign account of more than \$9 million — the national party itself raised just \$23.6 million in the first three months of the year. Compare that to the RNC's \$41 million-plus, powered by Trump. And while new DNC Chairman Perez is criss-crossing the country trying to restore trust in his institution and heal the raw wounds from 2016's presidential primary, party leaders acknowledge that their rebuilding project — both at the DNC and at the state level — needs to be a comprehensive one after November's shocking losses and the down-ballot massacre of the previous eight years.

They're still in the beginning stages of mapping out that path: the DNC has yet to announce the hire of an executive director or senior staff in many prominent units of the building, and no plan to conduct any sort of autopsy or accounting of the 2016 election cycle has been circulated.

It all adds up to a Democratic Party suddenly fueled by a massive outpouring of energy but without the established power structures to channel and amplify it. Recent Democratic special election candidates in traditionally conservative House districts in Kansas and Georgia performed over 20 points better than the party's nominee had in November, yet they still fell short of picking up the seats.

At the moment, it's a party in which Washington is learning to follow the grassroots' lead. On Capitol Hill, Democratic senators' practice of rejecting as many of Trump's nominees as possible started once protesters and constituents began to demand it with massive letter-writing campaigns, organizing nationwide resistance to new Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and even forcing Warren, the liberal hero, to apologize for her initial move to allow a vote on new Housing Secretary Ben Carson to proceed.

National party committees, meanwhile, started funneling campaign cash to special election candidates in Kansas, Georgia, and Montana only after the liberal Daily Kos site put them on the map by focusing attention on them.

Indivisible, a group that came together after Trump was elected, has provided much of the fuel for town hall protests and local organizing around the country. Run For Something, another new organization formed in opposition to the president, is also stepping into the void, one of a handful now providing individuals with resources and information they need to run for office.

"It's clear in this moment where the center of political gravity is. You don't get the 20-point swing in deep red Congressional districts without a genuine, very organic grassroots surge of energy and attention," said MoveOn.org executive director Anna Galland, referring to the pair of recent votes. And that energy, she said, is slowly translating to Washington — not the other way

around. "What I see is a grassroots hurricane of bold, principled, opposition from our elected officials to the unprecedented threats posed by this administration."

Trump's attempts to push an Obamacare repeal, a border wall, and various iterations of his travel ban have also motivated a drove of new candidates to jump into the fray ahead of 2018's elections, including in a handful of deep-red states where some Democrats now feel like they might — just maybe — be able to compete, against all odds.

Rep. Beto O'Rourke, for one, is challenging GOP Sen. Ted Cruz in Texas — as Republican a state as there is, but one where a recent poll showed a tied race, even as the national party largely ignores O'Rourke's bid.

At the presidential level, Trump has had an equally catalytic effect: Up to 30 Democrats are in preliminary considerations — or the subject of preliminary conversations — about possible 2020 presidential runs.

"The first 100 days has been Dickensian: the best of times, the worst of times," said ACLU political director Faiz Shakir, whose group raised an eye-popping \$24 million online during the weekend after Trump announced his initial ban on entry from citizens of a handful of Muslim-majority countries. The 97-year-old organization subsequently launched its first organizing push. "On the one hand, we've experienced a tremendous rebirth of civic activism on a mass scale. But on the other hand, we've seen such harm unnecessarily inflicted on so many lives because of Trump's policies. The civic activism can and will be sustained if political leaders demonstrate that they are able to meaningfully resist the worst of Trump's excesses. And so far, the good news is that it's working."

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Trump 100 Days: SurveyMonkey Poll Says 'Keeps Promises' Down

Beckwith

Ryan Teague

3-4 minutes

As President Trump approaches his 100th day in office, Americans are losing faith in his ability to keep his promises, though his supporters remain firmly behind him.

According to a TIME-SurveyMonkey poll conducted last week, just 25% of Americans believe that Trump "keeps his promises," down from 31% in a similar poll in early February.

During the campaign, Trump made a number of bold promises for his first 100 days, even releasing a 10-point plan that included repealing the Affordable Care Act, passing tax reform and boosting infrastructure spending.

That proved difficult, however, with House Republicans splintering over a health care bill

avored by Trump and Speaker Paul Ryan, tax reform delayed until later this year and infrastructure possibly pushed off until next year.

At the same time, virtually all respondents who said they voted for Trump approve of his performance as President, with only 3% saying they regret their decision.

Conducted between April 18-23, the online survey showed that Trump's struggles in his first months in office have eroded confidence that he can get things done.

Just 26% of Americans said that Trump accomplished most or almost all of the things he said he would do in his first 100 days, down from the 40% who expected that he would do so in a similar survey just after his inauguration.

As he nears the 100-day mark—an arbitrary milestone that began under President Franklin Roosevelt in 1933—Trump has become more skeptical of the concept, calling it a

"ridiculous standard" and an "arbitrary barrier." At the same time, the White House made renewed pushes on funding a border wall, repealing Obamacare and boosting defense spending to try to meet the deadline.

Overall, Americans remain almost evenly split on Trump's competence, with 47% saying he is "somewhat" or "very competent," while 49% say he is "not too competent" or "not competent at all." But the number who said Trump is "very competent" slid from 30% in early February to just 22% in the April poll.

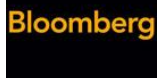
The poll also showed that Trump continues to struggle with his job approval—just 47% in this survey, with 52% disapproving—due to overwhelmingly negative numbers among Democrats and independents.

While the Republican base remains largely supportive, Trump's disapproval among Democrats is

87%, with virtually all saying they "strongly disapprove" of his performance. Among independents who don't lean toward either party, Trump has a 61% disapproval rating.

The survey was conducted of a national sample of 3,912 adults ages 18 and up selected from nearly 3 million people who take polls on the SurveyMonkey platform each day. Data were weighted for age, race, sex, education and geography using the Census Bureau's American Community Survey to reflect U.S. demographics.

The modeled error estimate for the survey is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points.



Lake : At 100 Days, Trump's No Russian Stooge or Fascist

Eli Lake

6-7 minutes

Before Donald Trump won the election in November we were warned: He is a Russian stooge. He is a fascist. He will upend the protocols and traditions that make governing possible. This is not normal.

Now that we are approaching the 100-day mark, it's worth noting that the president is defying the expectations of his resistance. And while there is plenty to oppose in Trump's young presidency, he is neither the Siberian Candidate nor the second coming of Mussolini.

Let's start with Russia. The FBI is still investigating whether and how his campaign may have colluded with Moscow's efforts to influence the presidential election. And yet in terms of actual policy, Trump has settled on a much tougher line with Russia than how he campaigned or in his first few weeks.

In the first month of Trump's presidency, there were legitimate concerns he would attempt a grand bargain with Russia. He boasted that it was an asset that Russian president Vladimir Putin liked him. And he went out of his way to spare Putin from the harsh criticism he reserved for just about everyone else.

But there has been no reset. In fact it's fair to say that Trump has been much kinder to China, Russia's traditional Asian rival. Trump ended any chance for the multilateral trade deal with China's neighbors known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership. He dropped his threat to revisit the One-China Policy that requires the U.S. not to recognize Taiwan's sovereignty. More recently, he has said he won't pursue China for currency manipulation, and tells us he is pleased by China's cooperation against North Korea during the current nuclear crisis.

Instead, Trump is treating Russia in practice the way he promised in the campaign to deal with China. His government has supported Montenegro's membership into NATO. Russia not only opposed this, but in October Russian agents were involved in a failed coup against the country's prime minister who supported Montenegro's accession to the treaty organization, according to a Montenegrin prosecutor.

The Trump administration last week rejected a request from Exxon-Mobil to get a waiver to explore energy exploration in the Black Sea with a Russia concern, despite the fact that he chose Exxon-Mobil's chief executive officer, Rex Tillerson as his secretary of state. You may remember him as the guy who won the Russian Order of Friendship in 2013.

Then there was the decision this month to fire 59 tomahawk missiles at a Syrian airbase, following the Syrian gas attack on rebel populations. Those strikes against Russia's only real client state in the Middle East caught Moscow by surprise, and further unraveled the relationship the Kremlin had hoped to reset with Trump. A few days after the missile strike, Trump's White House released a dossier calling out Russia's own fake news about the Syrian gas attack.

Now, U.S.-Russian relations are cratering. Both sides say they are at a historic low point. Russian bombers in the last week have been flying into Alaskan airspace, testing Trump's resolve. Meanwhile, one of America's top generals just suggested Russia was arming the Taliban in Afghanistan. If Trump is a Russian mole, it looks like a very long con.

This gets to the second resistance narrative about Trump, that he is an authoritarian or fascist in waiting. To be sure, Trump during the campaign gave his critics something to work with on this front. He at times encouraged his supporters at rallies to do violence to protesters. He promised to bring back waterboarding "and much worse," for terrorists captured on the battlefield. He campaigned on banning Muslims from entering the country and he promised to build a wall on the Mexican border. More recently, Trump has cozied up to

the strong men ruling Egypt and Turkey. His semi-endorsement of the far-right French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen is part of this theme as well.

All of that is alarming. That said, real fascists are much better at consolidating power and implementing an agenda. On this score, Trump has been no Caesar. The courts have rebuked him twice on the much-modified travel ban that would apply to Muslim-majority countries. His first effort to repeal and replace Obamacare failed miserably. He has yet to offer an infrastructure spending bill, tax reform or a plan to build the wall.

An added irony is that the bete noir of the anti-Trumpists, senior strategist and former Breitbart publisher Steve Bannon, is currently out of favor. Trump's new inner circle is comprised of people like investment banker Gary Cohn, the kind of globalists the president campaigned against. The other set of advisers are retired generals like National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster, who is seen as a check on the nationalist ideologues that so worry most of Trump's opposition.

Traditionally, fascism is the marriage of corporate and military elites with an authoritarian leader. For Trump's White House, however, his corporate and military advisers are steering Trump to a more traditional presidential agenda.

None of this is to say Trump is doing a great job. He has shown himself to be entirely unfamiliar with the intricacies of policy. His hostility to the press is dangerous and counterproductive. Trump continues to say outrageous falsehoods and is prone to extreme hyperbole. He has failed to address

in a meaningful way the many conflicts of interest posed by the business empire

But these flaws have not yet posed an existential threat to the republic. He has obeyed the courts, even as he has derided their decisions on twitter. He has reversed himself on

Russia. And slowly but surely, he has begun to resemble something less menacing and more normal than his foes predicted.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

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The New York Times (UNE)

With Ally in Oval Office, Immigration Hard-Liners Ascend to Power

Nicholas Kulish

9-12 minutes

After sending more than 13,000 Twitter messages in less than three years, Jon Feere, an outspoken opponent of illegal immigration, suddenly went silent after Inauguration Day.

As a legal policy analyst at the Center for Immigration Studies, a Washington-based group that favors significant reductions in immigration, Mr. Feere had staked out tough positions on the subject, including pushing for an end to automatic citizenship for children born in the United States.

Mr. Feere's newfound reticence reflected not a change of heart but a new employer. He now works for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the agency tasked with finding and deporting people living in the United States illegally.

His last Twitter post, on Jan. 20, read simply: "It's time to make immigration policy great again."

For years, a network of immigration hard-liners in Washington was known chiefly for fending off proposals to legalize the status of more people. But with the election of a like-minded president, these groups have moved unexpectedly from defense to offense, with some of their leaders now in positions to carry out their agenda on a national scale.

"We've worked closely with lots of people, who are now very well placed in his administration, for a long time," said Dan Stein, president of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, another hard-line group.

Julie Kirchner, who served for a decade as executive director of the organization, also known as FAIR, is now working as an adviser to the commissioner of Customs and Border Protection. Kellyanne Conway, before she was known for campaign work and spirited defenses of Mr. Trump on cable television, worked regularly as a pollster for FAIR.

Mr. Trump's senior White House adviser, Stephen Miller, worked tirelessly to defeat immigration reform as a staff member for Senator Jeff Sessions, now the attorney general. Gene P. Hamilton, who worked on illegal immigration as Mr. Sessions's counsel on the Judiciary Committee, is now a senior counselor at the Department of Homeland Security, the parent agency of the Border Patrol and ICE, where Mr. Feere is working. Julia Hahn, who wrote about immigration for Breitbart — with headlines like "Republican-Led Congress Oversees Large-Scale Importation of Somali Migrants" — has followed her former boss, Stephen K. Bannon, to the White House as a deputy policy strategist.

Jon Feere, an outspoken opponent of illegal immigration, on C-Span. He now works for Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Daniel Tichenor, an immigration politics scholar at the University of Oregon, called it "highly unusual" in the post-World War II era to have proponents of sharply reduced immigration in such high-ranking positions.

"You would have to go to the 1920s and 1930s to find a comparable period in which you could point to people within the executive agencies and the White House who favored significant restrictions," Mr. Tichenor said.

Their influence is already being felt. Mr. Trump is known for his sound-bite-ready pledges to deport millions of people here illegally and to build a border wall, but some of the administration's more technical yet critical changes to immigration procedures came directly from officials with long ties to the hard-line groups.

These include expanding cooperation between immigration agents and local law enforcement officials; cracking down on "sanctuary cities"; making it more difficult for migrants to successfully claim asylum; allowing the Border Patrol access to all federal lands; and curtailing the practice of "catch and release," in which undocumented immigrants are

released from detention while their cases plod through the courts.

Although his proposed budget slashed \$1 billion from the Justice Department, Mr. Trump included \$80 million to hire new judges to accelerate deportation proceedings. Mr. Sessions said at an event at the border in Arizona this month that 50 would be added to the bench this year and 75 more next year.

"Trump has put together the people who are taking this thing down to the operating-instruction level," Mr. Stein said.

Even those who have labored for decades to scale back immigration did not expect such a dramatic change. "This is inconceivable a year ago," said Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies. "Frankly, it's almost inconceivable six months ago."

When Mr. Feere asked him for a leave of absence to work on the Trump campaign, Mr. Krikorian said he granted it without necessarily expecting it to lead anywhere. "Honestly, I didn't think that would pan out," he said, but recalled telling Mr. Feere, "Look, you know we've always got a job for you if it doesn't work out."

Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, testifying in 2013 before a Senate committee. Jacquelyn Martin/Associated Press

The groups' growing influence has also brought renewed scrutiny to their inflammatory statements and shared nativist roots. The Center for Immigration Studies, FAIR and another group, the grass-roots organizer NumbersUSA, all were founded or fostered in their early stages by the activist John Tanton, a Michigan ophthalmologist who had an outside influence on the immigration debate through his organizing efforts.

Dr. Tanton came under sharp criticism for corresponding with white nationalists and for couching the fight to reduce immigration as a racial and demographic struggle. "For European-American society and culture to persist requires a

European-American majority, and a clear one at that," Dr. Tanton once wrote to a friend, elsewhere expressing his fear of a "Latin onslaught."

The Southern Poverty Law Center has been quick to point out how the Center for Immigration Studies has circulated articles "penned by white nationalists, Holocaust deniers, and material from explicitly racist websites," and added the immigration center to its list of active hate groups. Mr. Krikorian has spoken out against the label, saying it served only to shut down legitimate debate on immigration.

The Southern Poverty Law Center has long been especially critical of FAIR, which had in the past received money from the Pioneer Fund, a foundation that has financed research on the relationship between race and intelligence. Mr. Stein of FAIR rejected the attacks as politically motivated, prompted by the group's success in helping defeat an immigration overhaul in Congress.

This month, FAIR filed a complaint with the Internal Revenue Service accusing the Southern Poverty Law Center of committing "flagrant and intentional" violations of its tax-exempt status by criticizing Republican candidates during the 2016 presidential race.

Richard Cohen, president of the Southern Poverty Law Center, said it never crossed the line into improper political activity. "I think we have an obligation to expose hate not just in the dark corners of our society but also in the mainstream," Mr. Cohen said. "We've gotten under FAIR's skin many times, and now they feel like they have allies in the administration and they're going for it."

Although immigration advocates call them xenophobic, people at all three groups say they do not like to be labeled anti-immigrant; the Center for Immigration Studies uses the motto "low immigration, pro-immigrant" on its website. They say they just expect to see the nation's immigration laws enforced and that those living here illegally are caught and deported.

They also say they want legal immigration brought down to what they view as more sustainable levels, in particular to help buoy the wages of lower-income Americans who compete with unskilled migrants on the bottom rungs of the work force.

Roy Beck, the founder of NumbersUSA. The group exhorted members to overwhelm senators with faxes during a 2007 debate over a bill offering a path to citizenship for millions of illegal immigrants. Gabriella Demczuk for The New York Times

"The average American basically likes the idea of immigration, maybe loves the concept — it's played an important historic role in our history — but would be perfectly fine if we didn't have another immigrant for 50 years," Mr. Stein said.

FAIR lobbies members of Congress and their staff from its offices on

Massachusetts Avenue, a short walk from Capitol Hill, while maintaining strong contacts with talk-radio hosts. There is even a radio studio in the group's office.

With roughly two dozen staff members and fellows, the Center for Immigration Studies provides research, filling the traditional think-tank role.

NumbersUSA is perhaps best known for exhorting members to overwhelm senators with faxes — more than a million were sent — during an effort in 2007 to pass a bill offering a path to citizenship for millions of illegal immigrants and creating a new temporary worker program. The group likes to point out that it has "activists in every congressional district," as the group's founder, Roy Beck, put it in a recent interview at its office in Arlington, Va. NumbersUSA now claims eight million "participants"

between its Facebook followers and email lists.

All three receive small donations from individuals but also millions of dollars in recent years from the Colcom Foundation, a Pittsburgh-based organization founded by Cordelia Scaife May, a Mellon banking heiress, which has given heavily to anti-immigration causes. Her brother, Richard Mellon Scaife, was well known for bankrolling conservative causes and attacks on Bill and Hillary Clinton.

Despite their recent policy victories, the groups remain wary as to whether the administration will follow through on all its promises. In particular they point to Mr. Trump's failure to immediately end President Barack Obama's policy of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, allowing the so-called Dreamers who came illegally as children to remain in the country, as well as his choice of a pro-immigration

economist to lead his Council of Economic Advisers.

"We feel like we are going to continue to need to bring grassroots influence on this administration because there's a lot of competing interests," said Mr. Beck of NumbersUSA.

At the same time, he pointed to a list of 10 priorities that NumbersUSA put out last summer for strengthening enforcement, and noted that the Trump administration had already addressed eight of them. One of the other two is ending birthright citizenship for children whose parents are not citizens, a controversial idea that would most likely require a constitutional amendment.

"The biggest enemy we face right now is complacency," Mr. Stein of FAIR said, "because Trump's people have our ideas."



The disrupter president and the do-little Congress

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

9-11 minutes

By Dan Balz
Chief correspondent April 24 at 6:31 PM

Will President Trump and congressional Republicans ever understand one another? Over time, they might accomplish things of mutual interest. Big things, perhaps. But the mismatch between the disrupter president and what has been a business-as-usual, do-little Congress seems especially evident as the 100-day mark of the administration nears.

The president came to Washington on a mission to shake up the status quo. He prizes big and bold action and, absent that, a little showmanship. He wants to make this week one of the best of his short tenure, so he's loading up with activities that will keep him visible and in motion. But as of Monday, he has no legislative accomplishment to pin on his wall and the prospects for changing that this week are mixed at best.

No wonder Trump is dissatisfied and impatient. Congress has been mired in status quo politics for years. Now, even with a president of their own party and majorities in the House and Senate, congressional Republicans have been stuck. Trump tries to prod Congress to act, not always forgiving of why things move slowly. Congressional leaders try to educate the president on the limits

and culture of the legislative process.

The past few days have highlighted the disconnect between the two ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. Trump wants to tell the world that he has begun to change Washington and the country big time, that he is moving the government in dramatically new directions. His advisers are armed with talking points to prove it — steps that highlight movement on campaign promises on immigration and trade and business regulation.

To really make good on his promise to change the status quo, however, the president needs help from Congress. He and congressional Republicans suffered an embarrassing setback this spring when House leaders pulled the bill to replace the Affordable Care Act. Trump would like to see the House approve a bill to do that this week. Officials continue to push for that to happen.

(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)

The message from Congress at the beginning of this big week could not be more prosaic or uninspired.

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) indicated over the weekend that the first — and perhaps only — priority for the House this week will be the funding bill, and that health care can wait for a week or a few weeks, if necessary. These funding battles have tied up Congress in the past and in 2013 led to a partial shutdown of the government. Congressional leaders know the damage a shutdown would inflict and want nothing to get in the way of resolving remaining differences.

But the message sent is anything but what Trump would want. Instead of dramatic action, instead of acting on one of the president's big priorities, it's possible that the most Congress might accomplish by the president's 100th day in office is another compromise funding agreement, or perhaps merely a short-term continuing resolution that would keep the machinery of government running while negotiations continue. If the House were to take up health care and pass a bill in the next few days, that action could have a big effect on how the week ultimately is judged.

[*Showdown looms over funding for border wall*]

Trump is doing little to make Ryan's job easier on the funding battle. He wants money for his famous border wall included in the legislation to keep the government funded. The wall is one of Trump's signature issues, and one especially important to his base, so he is loath to get to this 100-day symbolic marker of his presidency without evidence that he has made

progress on acquiring the funds to get it started.

White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus tried to signal Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press" that funding for "border security" was the avenue for a possible face-saving way to keep the government from being shut down. But amid whatever quieter negotiations are underway between lawmakers and White House officials, the president continues to interject himself in all the ways for which he's become famous.

He tweeted twice on Monday about the wall. "The Wall is a very important tool in stopping drugs from pouring into our country and poisoning our youth (and many others!)" he wrote. "If the wall is not built, which it will be, the drug situation will NEVER be fixed the way it should be! #BuildTheWall."

Hours later, he tweeted about health care. "If our healthcare plan is approved, you will see real healthcare and premiums will start tumbling down. ObamaCare is in a death spiral!" About that time, White House press secretary Sean Spicer was briefing reporters, noting that health care will come to a vote when House leaders determine that they have the votes to pass it. In other words, no promises when.

(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

As President Trump nears his 100th day in office, a new Washington Post-ABC News poll found that a historically low 42 percent of Americans approve of his job performance thus far. As Trump

nears his 100th day in office, a new Post-ABC News poll found that a historically low 42 percent of Americans approve of his job performance thus far. (Video: Jenny Starrs/Photo: Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

Trump also disrupted his own team when, on Friday, he declared that he would put his tax plan into public view this week. What's coming appears likely to be little more than principles, rather than proposed legislation. Those principles might not go any further than the tax plans he proposed during the campaign. It will be more motion without real action.

That's the difference between the presidency and Capitol Hill. Trump likes to say things and sign things. And so, day after day, surrounded by aides or people from the outside,

he makes announcements, or he puts his signature — in big strokes — on official documents, whether executive orders or presidential memorandums. These orders are not without impact, symbolically and eventually practically. He signs them and moves on. He will sign more this week ahead of the 100-day mark.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

[Inside Trump's obsession with cable TV]

The legislative process doesn't comport with his approach to governing. There are subcommittees and full committees, hearings and testimony, and eventually the marking up of legislation. Then there is the

process of rounding up votes and holding together what has proved to be as fractured a House majority as existed before Trump arrived. House and Senate versions must be reconciled after each chamber has acted. Only then can Trump affix his signature to real legislation.

It can be slow, slow, as the framers intended. It was not made for the age of Twitter or 24/7 cable punditry, and certainly not for the era and impulses of President Trump. Perhaps he will reconcile himself to the realities, but first he is trying to prod and poke and make clear his displeasure at the pace of things.

Ryan and the president remain at odds, as they've been since Trump became the Republican Party's presidential nominee last year. They have mutual interests but competing

responsibilities, and sometimes competing ideas and priorities. They are as different as they can be, a wonky conservative House leader and a skim-the-surface president with views that range indifferently across the ideological spectrum.

But this is more than a personality difference. The disconnect between the speaker and the president is in microcosm the gap between a president who took down the establishment in both parties last year and lawmakers in the branch of government that most symbolizes what he ran against. Trump hasn't mastered Washington or Congress, and congressional Republicans haven't mastered him. That much is known at the beginning of this notable week.



White House 'confident' of averting shutdown as Trump shows flexibility on wall (UNE)

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

9-12 minutes

The White House sought Monday to calm a jittery Washington ahead of a showdown with Congress over spending, and President Trump softened his demand that a deal to keep the federal government open include money to begin construction on his long-promised border wall.

Despite one-party control at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, the brinkmanship that came to define spending battles in the Obama years has tumbled into the Trump era, as have the factional divisions over strategy and priorities that have gripped the GOP for a decade.

But with a Friday deadline looming to pass a new spending bill, the Trump administration projected confidence that a shutdown would be avoided. In the face of fierce Democratic opposition to funding the wall's construction, White House officials signaled Monday that the president may be open to an agreement that includes money for border security if not specifically for a wall, with an emphasis on technology and border agents rather than a structure.

Trump showed even more flexibility Monday afternoon, telling conservative journalists in a private meeting that he was open to delaying funding for wall construction until September, a White House official confirmed.

"The president is working hard to keep the government open,"

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told reporters Monday. White House press secretary Sean Spicer said he was "very confident" that an agreement would be reached by Friday, but he pointedly said he could not "guarantee" that a government closure would be averted.

(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)

At issue is whether the spending measure will explicitly allocate funds toward building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border — a campaign promise that was a rallying cry for Trump's base and one on which he is eager to demonstrate progress by Saturday, his 100th day in office.

Democrats, meanwhile, gave the White House an opening, saying they would agree to some new money for border security — so long as it did not go toward the creation of a wall, something House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) has called "immoral."

In a speech on the Senate floor, Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) blasted the idea of a wall while suggesting that a combination of smart technology and law enforcement, including the

use of drones, would be "a much more effective way to secure the border" without hitting an impasse in Congress.

[Showdown looms as Trump demands funding for wall on U.S.-Mexico border]

Republicans were working to define Trump's campaign promise down, arguing that any form of border security would fulfill it.

"There will never be a 2,200-mile wall built, period," said Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.), a supporter of immigration reform who challenged Trump in the 2016 primaries. "I think it's become symbolic of better border security. It's a code word for better border security. If you make it about actually building a 2,200-mile wall, that's a bridge too far — but I'm mixing my metaphors."

Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), a key appropriator and member of Senate leadership, said that "there could be a wall in some places and technology in other places," implying that there would not be funding for the wall sketched out in campaign rhetoric. "I think you're going to get a down payment on border security generally," he said.

Trump has asked Congress for \$1.5 billion in new money to start construction on the wall, and he wants an additional \$2.6 billion for the fiscal year that begins in October. The wall, experts say, would cost \$21.6 billion and take 3½ years to construct.

At the White House, Spicer portrayed Trump's position not as a demand but rather as one of two priorities — the other being

additional military funding — in evolving negotiations with Congress. He left open the possibility that the president could agree to funding for border activities generally, such as additional fencing or drones.

"I'm not going to get ahead of the negotiations that are ongoing," Spicer said.

Should lawmakers fail to find consensus by Friday, there are plans ready to quickly pass through the House and Senate what is referred to as a "short-term C.R.," a continuing resolution to keep the government open until discussions are finalized.

The Senate returned Monday night and the House returns Tuesday from a two-week recess, leaving only three days this week when both chambers will be in session.

The more conciliatory language emanating from the White House did not stop Trump from continuing to hammer away on Twitter at what he claims is an urgent need for the wall. In a pair of posts, Trump sought to build public pressure on lawmakers to pass funding for wall construction.

"The Wall is a very important tool in stopping drugs from pouring into our country and poisoning our youth (and many others)!" he wrote in a morning post.

In another message several hours later, Trump wrote that if "the wall is not built, which it will be, the drug situation will NEVER be fixed the way it should be! #BuildTheWall."

Still, Trump has left himself wiggle room to agree to sign a government funding bill that does not include money for the wall.

"My base understands the wall is going to get built, whether I have it funded here or if I get it funded shortly thereafter," Trump said in a recent interview with the Associated Press. "That wall's getting built, okay? One hundred percent."

Asked if he would sign a bill without wall funding, Trump told the news service, "I just don't know yet."

[Trump's AP interview, annotated]

The debate over wall funding is just one of several moving pieces congressional leaders are trying to address this week to avoid a partial government shutdown. In 2015, President Barack Obama made a deal with congressional lawmakers to fund government operations through April 28, 2017. If a new agreement isn't reached by then, many federal employees will stop being paid, national parks will close, and a number of other changes will kick in — as in 2013, the last time the government shut down.

Since new rules about spending bills went into place after Jimmy Carter's administration, a government shutdown has never occurred when a single political

party has controlled the White House and both chambers of Congress.

Paramount for many Republican lawmakers is funding the government, as opposed to the wall specifically. If the government shuts down, they fear, voters could blame the GOP for failing to govern, and the party could suffer the consequences in the 2018 midterm elections.

"I'd like to make it as clean as we can and fund the government," said Sen. Richard C. Shelby (R-Ala.). "I wouldn't mind funding the wall, but it's a question of what we can do. The question is, what's doable and will we make the deadline?"

Sen. James E. Risch (R-Idaho) said that an effective "wall" along the border had been "authorized years and years and years ago," in the Secure Fence Act of 2006.

"It's been partially built and partially funded. He wants to fund the rest of it and build it — perfectly legitimate debate that should take place on that," Risch said.

Asked if that debate could happen in three days, Risch chuckled. "Things get done quickly around here when they want it to get done," he said.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Ballhaus

6-8 minutes

Updated April 24, 2017 10:41 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump is open to waiting until later this year to secure funding for a wall along the border with Mexico, White House officials said Monday night, in a shift that could clear the way for lawmakers to strike a deal to avoid a government shutdown on Saturday.

Mr. Trump and top administration officials previously indicated the president wanted to include money to begin building a wall along the southern border in the bill to keep the government running after its current funding expires at 12:01 a.m. Saturday, which is also the president's 100th day in office.

The president addressed the issue at a reception with conservative media at the White House on Monday night. The president's new flexibility over whether the wall is funded in this spending bill or one that will be needed in late

September could remove one of the last remaining hurdles facing congressional Democrats and Republicans hammering out the five-month bill they must pass this week to avoid a partial government shutdown.

Without the debate over the border wall, lawmakers may be able to come to an agreement on the spending bill relatively quickly. Both Democrats and Republicans had signaled they were willing to increase money for the military and for broader border security before administration officials last week indicated that Mr. Trump would press for money to begin building the wall.

There had been little appetite among Republicans on Capitol Hill to demand funding now for the border wall specifically, rather than offer a general boost for tighter border security. Democrats, whose votes will be needed to pass the spending legislation in the Senate, had said they would oppose a spending bill that included money to start building the border wall.

"It's good for the country that President Trump is taking the wall off the table in these negotiations,"

Even when Republicans controlled the House during the Obama administration, they could rarely pass spending bills without Democratic support. That is because a number of the House's most conservative members often refused to support such bills, making a bipartisan majority coalition a necessity. In addition, 60 votes are needed to pass a requisite procedural vote in the Senate. With just 52 seats, Senate Republicans will need bipartisan support in that chamber as well.

Among other guarantees, Democrats want assurances that insurance subsidies through the Affordable Care Act will continue to be funded. There have been discussions among Republicans that Democrats could agree to provide money for the construction of the wall in exchange for those health funds, but Democrats have refused.

Sunday morning, congressional Democrats submitted to Republicans a compromise spending plan, which included some new money for border security but only if it did not go toward a wall. Democrats also asked for assurances that the health insurance subsidies would continue to be funded, language that would shore up benefits for coal miners

and a change that would expand Medicaid benefits to people in Puerto Rico, according to a senior Democratic congressional aide.

The Daily 202 newsletter

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Pelosi told reporters on a conference call Monday that Congress was "on the path to get it done until [Trump] did intervene" and that the administration's actions so far belied his campaign promise to "make Mexico pay" for the border wall.

James Norton, a former deputy assistant undersecretary for homeland security under President George W. Bush, said funding for technologies, such as cameras and radars, on the border has dropped off since the early 2000s. He said to get money for the wall or other border security measures, the administration will have to "sell specifics" to lawmakers.

"Each part is going to need to be sold in a specific way to Congress, and they're going to have to hit the Hill hard," Norton said. "It won't be easy."

Damian Paletta and Sean Sullivan contributed to this report.

Read more at PowerPost

Trump Willing to Hold Off on Border-Wall Funding (UNE)

Kristina Peterson and Rebecca

Ballhaus

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement Monday night. Earlier Monday, Mr. Schumer had said the wall was a "nonstarter" for Democrats. "Now the bipartisan and bicameral negotiators can continue working on the outstanding issues," he said.

Democratic votes will be needed, because Republicans hold just 52 seats in the Senate, where spending bills need 60 votes to clear procedural hurdles. House GOP leaders will also likely have to rely on some Democratic help, since some conservative Republicans are expected to oppose it.

Many Republicans had indicated they would be satisfied with a spending bill that included money to strengthen security along the border in ways other than building a wall.

"Border security's the main issue—whether that includes a wall or technology, drones, or repairing what we have," Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R., W. Va.) said Monday evening. Ms. Capito said she wasn't interested in risking a shutdown over the border wall. "I'm not going

to risk a shutdown over anything," she said.

Other Republicans echoed that their top priority was making sure they crafted a spending bill that could clear both chambers before the government runs out of money. "I wouldn't mind funding the wall, but it's a question of what we can do up here, what's doable," said Sen. Richard Shelby (R., Ala.), a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

In March, the administration asked Congress for \$1.4 billion in spending for the current fiscal year for the wall, 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.

One issue that remains unresolved is whether the five-month spending bill under negotiation would include payments to health insurers known as "cost-sharing reductions," as requested by Democrats.

The payments support Affordable Care Act insurance 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 midway.

Write to Kristina Peterson at kristina.peterson@wsj.com and Rebecca Ballhaus at Rebecca.Ballhaus@wsj.com

Appeared in the Apr. 25, 2017, print edition as 'Trump Now Open to Delay in Wall Funding.'

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Senate Confirms Sonny Perdue to Lead Agriculture Department

Jacob Bunge
5-7 minutes

April 24, 2017 6:50 p.m. ET

The U.S. Senate on Monday confirmed former Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue as secretary of the Agriculture Department, ending a three-month vacancy atop the sprawling agency as the food sector confronts potential changes to U.S. trade policy and farm-level regulations.

Mr. Perdue, a Republican who grew up on a dairy farm and has managed agribusinesses, was confirmed in an 87-11 vote, garnering significant support from Democratic senators who saw him as an experienced manager who will maintain supports for U.S. farmers navigating a crop-price slump.

Awaiting Mr. Perdue is the worst

farm-economy slump in decades, with U.S. net farm income projected to fall for a fourth consecutive year to \$62.3 billion, half the record \$123 billion farmers earned in 2013, according to USDA projections. The agricultural sector, which heavily relies on exports, has also watched warily as President Trump's administration has moved ahead with an overhaul of U.S. trade policy, including withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which farm groups generally had backed.

The vote makes Mr. Perdue among the last members of Mr. Trump's cabinet to be confirmed, though many other senior vacancies remain. Robert Lighthizer, Mr. Trump's nominee for U.S. trade representative, and Alexander Acosta, nominated to head the Labor Department, still await confirmation. It also fills a gap that troubled some crop and livestock producers across U.S. farm states, which heavily factored into Mr.

Trump's electoral victory in November. The president's focus on deregulation resonated with farmers and ranchers who chafed under federal environmental and regulatory restrictions that some saw as onerous.

Mr. Perdue is expected to start work at the USDA, which employs around 100,000, by addressing employees Tuesday. The agency has a hand in promoting U.S. grain, meat and fiber to foreign buyers, regulates genetically engineered crops, inspects meatpacking plants and oversees the \$71 billion Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as the food stamp program. He also needs to fill senior positions at the USDA to oversee areas such as trade, food safety and rural development.

Mr. Perdue also will step into a growing trade dispute with Canada over U.S.-produced milk used to make cheese, which some U.S.

producers have argued is unfairly shut out of the Canadian market. Separately, U.S. ranchers also lost pastures and animals in March to wildfires, while chicken farmers have ratcheted up defense amid new cases of avian influenza.

And Mr. Perdue may have to address those challenges on a smaller budget, after Mr. Trump in March outlined a budget proposal that would reduce the USDA's discretionary funding by about one-fifth to \$17.9 billion.

"It's just going to be very good to have a secretary finally," said Bill Northey, Iowa's secretary of agriculture.

Mr. Perdue is unrelated to the family that owns the poultry company Perdue Farms Inc.

Write to Jacob Bunge at jacob.bunge@wsj.com

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

How an Alternative Donald Trump Opening Act Might Have Unfolded

Gerald F. Seib
5-6 minutes

April 24, 2017 11:54 a.m. ET

Let's imagine an alternative opening act to the Trump presidency.

Specifically, let's imagine a presidency that attempted from the outset to take advantage of the fact that Donald Trump isn't an ideological conservative or a traditional Republican, but rather a radical centrist who should be able to create unconventional, bipartisan coalitions.

Imagine this new president had given a different kind of inaugural address, one in which he didn't accuse the capital's political leaders of flourishing at the expense of its citizens but rather sketched out a vision of a new way of working with those leaders.

This presidency wouldn't have started with polarizing issues guaranteed to back both parties further into their corners: aiming to repeal the Democrats' signature health-care law and imposing a ban on travel from a set of Muslim-majority countries as the first step in fighting terrorism. Rather, it would have opened with two big initiatives in which at least a few Democrats

would have been willing—maybe even eager in some cases—to cooperate: rebuilding American infrastructure and changing the nation's inefficient tax code.

This alternative presidency would have set out from the beginning to build bridges to the 10 Democratic senators up for re-election in 2018 from states Mr. Trump carried, and the 12 House members who represent districts Mr. Trump carried in 2016. In this Trump presidency, the cabinet he chose would have been populated with fewer ideological conservatives and instead would have included some moderate Democrats.

As the Trump presidency approaches its 100-day mark Saturday, it's easy to imagine that Mr. Trump, given a do-over, might choose this kind of opening act. It would have capitalized on his strongest single asset, which is the fact that he isn't the product of the traditional party system but rather that rarest of things in Washington, a genuine free agent.

The suspicion that Mr. Trump might wish he had chosen a different opening path is buttressed by the fact that the figures now ascendant in the administration's power structure—son-in-law Jared Kushner, daughter Ivanka Trump,

National Economic Council director Gary Cohn, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin—all fit into this kind of nonpartisan mold.

On more practical terms, such an opening would have diminished rather than accentuated the power and leverage of the House Freedom Caucus, the band of the House's most conservative members who dealt the president his most grievous early blow in the collapse of the effort to repeal and replace Obamacare.

In a narrowly divided, highly partisan environment, the power of any such small group is enhanced because even a few votes spell the difference between success and failure. A president with a broader power base can't be held hostage by any one faction.

Mr. Trump's populist appeal isn't rooted in partisanship but, in many ways, actually should transcend partisanship and ideology. That is seen in a new Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll. The survey shows that basic economic issues are more important to Americans right now than are other domestic issues, including health care. Americans are inclined to think the government should be doing more, not less, to help solve them.

Only one in 10 Americans in the poll sees Mr. Trump as a typical Republican. The vast majority in both parties consider him a different kind of Republican, and they are more likely to say that's a good thing rather than a bad thing.

This picture raises a couple of pertinent questions. The first is whether it really was possible to move down a nonpartisan path—or whether anti-Trump passions at the base of the Democratic Party would have made it impossible to do so. In other words, did Mr. Trump drive away Democrats, or did Democrats drive him further into the arms of fellow Republicans?

It's impossible to know for sure, of course, and certainly both forces were at work to some extent. The one thing that seems clear is that some of Mr. Trump's more divisive early actions, decisions and priorities made it easier for Democratic activists to create pressure on their representatives to take a never-cooperate position.

The more important question is whether it's too late to adopt a different approach. The answer: Of course not, after fewer than 100 days have passed. As noted, the president and his team already are pivoting toward a more centrist approach on some fronts.

Tax reform, infrastructure and national security all give Mr. Trump openings to become that builder of unconventional coalitions. The new

Journal/NBC News poll indicates the most significant erosion in the president's standing since taking office has been among political

independents. There's plenty of time to give them the kind of president they are looking for.

Write to Gerald F. Seib at jerry.seib@wsj.com

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Trump Wants Tax Plan to Cut Corporate Rate to 15%

Michael C. Bender, Richard Rubin and Nick Timiraos

9-11 minutes

Updated April 24, 2017 7:23 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump has ordered White House aides to draft a tax plan that slashes the corporate tax rate to 15%, even if that means a loss of revenue, according to people familiar with the directive.

During a meeting in the Oval Office last week, Mr. Trump told staff he wants a massive tax cut to sell to the American public, these people said. He told aides it was less important to him that such a plan could add to the federal budget deficit, though that might make it difficult to sell to GOP lawmakers who are wary of such a large tax cut. Mr. Trump told his team to "get it done" in time to release a plan by Wednesday, the people said.

Mr. Trump's willingness to let deficits run higher also could hinder the passage of tax cuts that are permanent. Congressional Republicans plan on using a procedural tool known as reconciliation that would allow the tax legislation to pass with a 51-vote majority in the Senate, instead of the usual 60 votes. Under those rules, changes can't add to deficits beyond a decade.

"It's the same discussion they had about the Bush tax cuts in the previous administration: Are you better off having a smaller cut that is permanent, or a larger cut that is temporary?" said Mick Mulvaney, the president's budget director, in an interview last week.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn are scheduled to meet Tuesday to discuss Mr. Trump's tax proposals with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.), House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.), Senate Finance Chairman Orrin Hatch (R., Utah) and House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady (R., Texas). The meeting comes in advance of a

Wednesday announcement by Mr. Trump about his principles for tax policy.

"This is part of our continuing dialogue with the Trump administration on tax reform," said AshLee Strong, a spokeswoman for Mr. Ryan.

During the campaign, Mr. Trump proposed to cut corporate rates to 15% from 35%. There likely aren't enough business tax breaks that could be repealed to offset the fiscal cost, meaning such a move would increase budget deficits. Roughly, each percentage-point cut in the tax rate lowers federal revenue by \$100 billion over a decade, so a 20-point cut would cost the government \$2 trillion over a decade, according to the congressional Joint Committee on Taxation.

If such a deficit-financed tax cut passed under reconciliation, the provisions would expire after 10 years, because bills passed that way can't increase deficits beyond the typical 10-year time frame against which tax and spending policies are projected.

Some White House advisers have warned that changes that aren't permanent would undercut the rationale for a corporate-tax cut, which is to boost business investment. Businesses are "making long-term capital decisions. People are deciding to move this to the United States, and...they need some permanence of the tax code," Mr. Cohn said at a conference last week.

Democrats are against large tax cuts for corporations, especially when Mr. Trump is already proposing cuts to government spending programs that Democrats prioritize, such as housing, arts and the environment.

"They will lose a boatload of revenue that we can't afford to lose and far more than this team will offset by closing loopholes," said Jared Bernstein, who was an economic adviser to former Vice President Joe Biden. Cutting marginal tax rates for businesses could generate some economic growth, Mr. Bernstein said, but not

nearly enough to pay for itself with increased revenue.

"These promises about all kinds of growth and investment that are going to be triggered by these tax cuts never appear, and the empirical historical record is clear on that," Mr. Bernstein said.

Mr. Trump's call for a 15% corporate tax rate puts him below the low end of recent proposals. Former President Barack Obama sought a 28% rate for most companies. A 2014 Republican plan had a 25% corporate rate. And House Republicans want a 20% rate, with the cost covered by including a border-adjustment feature that taxes imports and exempts exports. Mr. Trump's White House has sent mixed messages about whether it would support the border-adjustment plan.

Asked Monday if the president's tax plan would be revenue-neutral, meaning it wouldn't add to the debt, Mr. Mnuchin told reporters that it would "pay for itself with economic growth." By that, he meant that the administration expects to be able to project faster growth due to tax cuts, which would in turn increase revenue and avert the risk of bigger budget deficits. Many economists say that without a big pickup in productivity and labor-force growth, though, it is uncertain whether the tax-policy changes could drive an economic expansion on a sustained basis.

So far, Mr. Trump is sticking with core elements of his campaign tax plan, showing no signs of molding political promises to legislative dynamics in Congress or any significant fiscal constraints.

Mr. Trump's aides have been working on a detailed tax proposal, but that isn't ready yet. The announcement on Wednesday is expected to focus instead on broader principles, including proposed changes to the individual tax rates. Mr. Trump has said he wants to reduce the number of brackets for individual payers and to deliver tax cuts to the middle class.

Mr. Trump's statement last week that he would announce details of his plan later this week caught his

team off guard, said people familiar with the matter.

In an interview with the Wall Street Journal on April 12, Mr. Trump said he wouldn't release even a set of tax principles before Congress passes major health-care legislation, which hasn't happened.

The timing also was a surprise because, for weeks, top advisers in the White House have said they would like to forge consensus with lawmakers on a single plan before releasing more details.

The U.S. has the developed world's highest statutory corporate tax rate, and advocates for lower corporate rates say the system discourages job creation and investment in the U.S. Including state and local taxes, the U.S.'s corporate rate is 39.1%, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Over the past decade, other countries have been lowering their tax rates to attract corporate investment, while the U.S. has left its federal rate at 35%. American companies have thus increasingly found ways to book their profits in low-tax foreign jurisdictions.

The gap in corporate tax rates between the U.S. and other countries is smaller under a measure that looks at taxes as a share of income after deductions and other breaks, also known as the average rate. In 2012, the U.S. average tax rate was 29%, according to a recently released CBO study. That still ranked third-highest in the G20, and the U.S. rate was more than 10 percentage points above Australia, Canada, Germany and the U.K.

The actual tax rates paid by companies vary widely, with global high-tech and pharmaceutical companies paying relatively low rates and retailers and primarily domestic firms paying higher rates.

Write to Michael C. Bender at Mike.Bender@wsj.com, Richard Rubin at richard.rubin@wsj.com and Nick Timiraos at nick.timiraos@wsj.com

Appeared in the Apr. 25, 2017, print edition as 'President Seeks Corporate Tax Cut.'

The Washington Post

Trump seeks 15 percent corporate tax rate, even if it swells the national debt (UNE)

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

8-10 minutes

President Trump is talking up a "big announcement" on tax reform slated for April 26, after months of pledging to make drastic changes to the tax code. The Post's Damian Paletta explains why tax reform is so complicated. The Post's Damian Paletta explains why tax reform is harder than it looks. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

President Trump is pursuing a drastic cut in the corporate tax rate, a move that is likely to grow the national debt and breach a long-held Republican goal of curbing federal borrowing.

The president has instructed advisers to propose cutting the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 15 percent, according to White House officials who said they were not authorized to speak publicly about the plan. The rate reduction — which independent budget experts say could cost the federal government \$2.4 trillion over a decade — is larger than what House Republicans had proposed in their own plan.

White House officials said the president would make the announcement Wednesday as part of a release of broad principles to overhaul the tax code — days before a 100-day deadline Trump had given himself for achieving most top campaign goals. They are also expected to discuss changes to the personal income tax, among other aspects of the tax code, said two White House officials.

Trump has pledged that the tax cut in total would be the largest in U.S. history, and his advisers have said that the economic growth it stimulates would make up for any shortfall in revenue.

"The tax plan will pay for itself with economic growth," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Monday.

President Trump signed three executive orders on April 21 at the Treasury Department which are meant to spark reviews of tax and financial regulations. President Trump signed three executive orders on April 21 at the Treasury Department which are meant to

spark reviews of tax and financial regulations. (Reuters)

(Reuters)

But any changes would have to be backed by Congress, and passing a sweeping tax cut plan that widens the deficit would be virtually impossible on Capitol Hill without bipartisan support, in the view of key players in both parties. Many Democrats have said they will not support such a plan, making Trump's proposal a tough political sell from the start.

Republicans, meanwhile, have argued for years that curbing the deficit is a top national priority. And even members of the GOP who agree that tax cuts can significantly boost growth have acknowledged that any big tax cut would require raising other revenue or finding budget savings.

A House Republican tax plan endorsed by House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.), for example, would raise nearly \$1 trillion by imposing a new tax on imports, frequently referred to as a border-adjustment tax. The White House flirted with the idea but appears to have moved away from it in recent weeks in the face of opposition from industry groups.

Mnuchin and National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn are set to meet with top Republican lawmakers Wednesday to discuss the administration's tax plan.

"The administration has embarked in a very dangerous direction," said Edward Kleinbard, the former chief of staff for Congress's Joint Committee on Taxation. "If it is going to rely on the principle that tax cuts can pay for themselves, history has demonstrated that tax policies move the growth needle a bit but no more than that."

Trump surprised lawmakers — and even many advisers — last week when he announced he would release details of his tax plan on Wednesday. Advisers said Trump is eager to make a mark on a top issue before the 100-day anniversary of his administration, after being frustrated by House Republicans over the failure to advance legislation to replace the Affordable Care Act.

But several House Republicans close to Ryan said that they were taken aback by the latest tax push. They said the president risked alienating the speaker and his allies

on Capitol Hill if they got behind a proposal that had weak or fragile support in the chamber, and they expressed concern about Congress piling up too many issues this week, such as a revived effort to pass a health-care overhaul and keep the government funded while funneling money toward border security projects.

The Republicans also noted that Ryan has already outlined the House's tax plan over the past year and secured buy-in from members on the general outline of rates and the inclusion of a border tax. Ryan's plan proposed a 20 percent corporate tax rate.

Republicans familiar with the leadership's thinking said Monday that House leaders see the 15 percent corporate rate as an understandable restatement of a pledge Trump made during the presidential campaign. But they cautioned that passing such legislation would be complicated and likely necessitate other tax hikes or spending cuts.

They expected the leadership, however, to agree with the broad points and spirit of Trump's plan this week even as details and a path to passage remain unclear.

The Wall Street Journal first reported Trump's request to cut the corporate tax rate to 15 percent Monday afternoon.

Businesses are projected to pay \$340 billion in corporate taxes in 2018, roughly 10 percent of all revenue collected by the government.

At 35 percent, the United States has one of the highest corporate tax rates in the world, but most companies pay a much lower effective rate because the tax code is riddled with deductions.

Still, lawmakers from both parties have said the corporate tax rate must be reduced to help U.S. companies compete with firms headquartered in other countries and to prevent U.S. firms from moving overseas.

The Tax Policy Center, a nonpartisan tax group affiliated with the Brookings Institution and Urban Institute, has estimated that Trump's corporate tax proposal, as outlined during the campaign, would cost \$2.4 trillion over 10 years.

It also estimated that his entire campaign tax proposal would cost

\$7.2 trillion — figures that Trump aides have sharply criticized as failing to take into account the revenue generated by economic growth spurred by the tax overhaul.

Inside the White House, Trump has faced a debate about how far to go with his tax proposal. Trump also called for cutting the debt during the presidential campaign, and advisers such as budget director Mick Mulvaney was a major proponent of deficit reduction as a hard-line conservative in the House.

"He's not backing away from the supply-side agenda," said Stephen Moore, a senior economic policy expert at the Heritage Foundation who advised the Trump campaign, noting that there are "two competing ways of thinking about taxes inside of the White House."

Moore defined those groups inside the administration as "those who are deficit hawks versus those who don't care about that. And those who don't care about it seem to be winning out. Fifteen percent suggests a turn toward them."

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White House officials have said there are several basic principles to their tax plan. They want to simplify the tax code, cut the corporate tax rate, pass a middle-class tax cut and create a way to punish companies that move overseas and ship goods back into the country. They also want to encourage U.S. companies to move money back into the United States.

Trump's push for unveiling his tax plan began last week during several meetings in the Oval Office during which he expressed his frustration with the slow pace of legislation on several fronts, including taxes, according to two officials who were not authorized to speak publicly.

Trump urged his top economic advisers, including Mnuchin, to ready a rollout for this week and to keep the details of the plan controlled as much as possible by Trump advisers and Cabinet members rather than by GOP lawmakers, the officials said.

As one of the officials described Trump's outlook, "he wants high growth and high employment."

Max Ehrenfreund contributed to this report.

**The
New York
Times**

Editorial : Money Talked Loudest at Trump's Inaugural

The Editorial Board

5-6 minutes

Nicolas Ortega

Bob Murray, one of the coal industry's loudest voices, spent

\$300,000 on President Trump's inauguration and got a lot more than good seats.

Mr. Murray — whose Murray Energy is a serial violator of federal health and safety rules — demanded that Mr. Trump gut regulatory oversight and pull the United States out of the Paris climate agreement in his first three months.

"I'm not a patient man," warned Mr. Murray, who earned infamy when he falsely insisted that the 2007 collapse of his Crandall Canyon mine, which killed six miners, was due to an earthquake, not dodgy mining practices. "I'm going to be watching that things happen as fast as they can."

They did. After Mr. Trump's inauguration Mr. Murray, his son Ryan and Kevin Hughes, Murray Energy's general manager, stood beaming in the White House as Mr. Trump signed a law killing a rule banning coal mining waste from waterways.

Coal, oil, gas and chemical industries, technology and pharmaceutical companies contributed a big chunk of the record \$107 million collected to pay for the inauguration, according to

numbers released by the inaugural committee last week. That's more than double the \$53 million President Obama raised in 2009, for bigger festivities that drew many more attendees. If Mr. Trump had divided his inauguration cash among the Americans who stood on the National Mall for his swearing-in, each one would have gotten about \$699.

The inaugural committee says any money not spent will be given to charity — but Mr. Trump's record of lying about his philanthropy puts that in doubt.

Two presidents before Mr. Trump tried to limit corporate financing of their inaugurations. George W. Bush capped all gifts at \$100,000 in 2001 and \$250,000 in 2005. President Obama capped contributions to his first inaugural at \$50,000 and banned money from lobbyists; he blew through that precedent at his second inaugural, capping individual gifts at \$250,000 but accepting corporate cash of up to \$1 million. Mr. Trump's inaugural committee upped that ante by eliminating limits on individual contributions and retaining the \$1 million cap on corporate money.

Mr. Trump, as a real estate mogul campaigning for president, often

bragged about buying political influence. In office he has dutifully done the bidding of donors who have been brazen in demands for regulatory favors, while failing to make any progress on the health insurance, jobs and middle-class tax cuts he promised to his working-class base.

AT&T gave more than \$2 million in cash, plus in-kind donations; Verizon and Comcast pitched in smaller amounts. They've been rewarded with efforts by the Federal Communications Commission to scuttle net neutrality and other rules they don't like. The pharmaceutical companies Amgen and Pfizer kicked in a total of \$1.5 million. After Mr. Trump's White House meeting with Big Pharma, he backed off his campaign promise that government would negotiate lower drug prices for Americans.

Mr. Murray's contribution was puny compared with the \$1 million apiece from other coal industry giants, including J. Clifford Forrest, who owned Freedom Industries, the company charged with leaking a coal-processing chemical into a river in Charleston, W.Va., poisoning the water supply for thousands of residents.

Days after his inauguration, Mr. Trump named Scott Pruitt, a former Oklahoma attorney general friendly to fossil fuels and skeptical of climate science, to lead the Environmental Protection Agency, and announced plans to gut its budget. He has taken aim at the clean water rule protecting American waterways, and the clean power rule limiting harmful emissions from coal-fired power plants.

Dow Chemical, whose chief executive, Andrew Liveris, is chairman of the president's panel on manufacturing jobs, gave \$1 million. One of Mr. Pruitt's first moves at E.P.A. was to reject its scientists' findings that chlorpyrifos, sold by Dow and banned from homes because of its dangers to the brains of children, should be banned from use on farms.

Last week, Thomas Barrack Jr., a financier who chaired the inaugural committee, maintained that the \$107 million was given "to commemorate the cornerstone of our American democratic process." If the cornerstone of our American democratic process is influence-peddling, he's right.



Editorial : Trump should stop playing his game of budget brinkmanship

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

4 minutes

The Post's View

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

By Editorial Board

The Post's View

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

April 24 at 7:45 PM

PRESIDENT TRUMP campaigned on a promise to build a wall between Mexico and the United States. Now, with Congress having to renew federal spending authority by week's end, he believes he's entitled to a down payment on that wall. What's wrong with that logic?

A number of things, but this above all: No responsible leader would use the possible shutdown of the federal government as a political cudgel. The last time a budget impasse produced a partial shutdown, a 16-day version in 2013, some 850,000 federal employees were put through a wrenching furlough and access to national parks and the Smithsonian was curtailed, with serious consequences for tourism across the country. All told, the economy lost \$24 billion, according to an analysis by Standard & Poor's. Mr. Trump's first priority must be to avoid repeating or doubling down on that debacle.

In a discursive interview with Julie Pace of the Associated Press, Mr. Trump suggested that the responsibility of his job indeed may be sinking in. "It's massive," he said of his new position. "And every agency is, like, bigger than any company. So you know, I really just see the bigness of it all, but also the responsibility. And the human responsibility. You know, the human life that's involved in some of the decisions."

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For a man who campaigned on the notion that he possessed special capabilities that could reduce the challenges facing American government to a series of "wins," which would occur "quickly," as he put it, this epiphany represents progress — but only up to a point. Even as he spoke to Ms. Pace, Mr. Trump was making it more difficult for Congress to reach a deal on extending federal spending authority past its April 28 expiration date.

Specifically, he had injected a demand for an appropriation for his proposed wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, implying that, if he did not get the money, the government might have to shut. A leader truly concerned for "the human life that's involved in some of these decisions" would not risk a repeat of the 2013 mess, especially at a time when top negotiators for his own Republican Party in Congress seemed on their way to an agreement with Democrats that would avoid it.

If he wants to make a case for his wall on its merits, and separate from budget brinkmanship, he is entitled to do so — though as we have said before, he has a weak case. It may be, as Mr. Trump told Ms. Pace, that "my base really wants it," but the project is otherwise unpopular, including with many Republican legislators from the border region, and for good reason. A physical barrier along the entire southern border would be a colossal waste of money and a terrible symbol of American attitudes. That would be true even if, as he repeatedly promised during the campaign, Mexico would foot the bill. And it won't.

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Editorial : Freud's Government Shutdown

April 24, 2017
7:21 p.m. ET 162

Congress returns to work Tuesday, funding for the government runs out Friday, and seemingly all of Washington is promising high drama and an epic budget battle. Don't fall for the hype. A more accurate term for this week's scuffle is Freud's shutdown, because the stakes aren't much higher than the narcissism of small differences.

Congress is debating a stopgap omnibus that will last through Sept. 30, which is presumably when the next fake crisis will arrive. For now, talks between Republican and Democratic leaders in the House and Senate are deadlocked over funding for President Trump's Mexican border wall, the Pentagon and Obama Care subsidies. But the politics on both sides are hotter than the policy details. Democratic obstructionism and Mr. Trump's hyperbole are becoming an unvirtuous cycle.

Take the White House demand for funding border security. "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," Mr. Trump tweeted over the weekend, while Nancy Pelosi averred Sunday that Democrats won't approve a penny for this "immoral, expensive, unwise" exercise.

The House Minority Leader has a point that completing the wall—652 miles of the 1,954-mile U.S.-Mexico border are already fenced—would be wasteful and unnecessary. The full project would run \$15 billion to \$25 billion, and there are better uses of scarce taxpayer dollars than antagonizing a neighbor.

Then again, the White House request is for all of—\$1.5 billion. About \$500 million would finance immigration enforcement with the balance going to the wall. This is pocket change in the \$3.9 trillion federal budget, and in practice it might pay for logistical planning, site reviews and perhaps building a couple miles of fence after years of federal and state permitting and Nimby opposition.

Yet Mr. Trump is portraying these fiscal peanuts as the coming of the "great, great wall" he promised. Democrats have decided they'll defy him anyway—though they know his policy is more moderate than his rhetoric and they were ready to spend \$40 billion to militarize the border in the failed 2013 immigration bill.

Democrats have thus set up a game of political chicken, and Chuck Schumer has an eight-vote Senate margin to filibuster a deal. Either they box Mr. Trump into a retreat that demoralizes his voters, frustrates a White House impatient for legislative success, and energizes the progressive base. Or maybe their true goal is to force a partial shutdown that they can blame on Republicans.

Refusing to negotiate adds to disorder in Washington, which benefits Democrats, and a government work stoppage that Democrats caused would amplify the media narrative that Mr. Trump and the GOP can't govern. Democrats think they can retake the House in 2018, and they'll campaign as the party that at least knows how to run the joint.

Republicans have offered to compromise by passing an appropriation bill for a corner of ObamaCare in return for the border \$1.5 billion and a defense supplemental bill of about \$30 billion. So-called cost-sharing reduction subsidies offset out-of-pocket insurance costs for some individuals, and their spending formula was included in the 2010 law.

But the cost-sharing reductions don't flow automatically like other entitlements. The Obama Administration asked for the money in 2014, Congress refused, and the Administration opened the Treasury spigots anyway. The House sued to stop this unconstitutional usurpation of Congress's Article I spending power—an argument a district court upheld in 2015.

This litigation is now postponed in the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals as the Trump Administration debates the legal merits and the fate of the illegal subsidies. If Congress regularizes the payment with a bill, the move would likely moot the lawsuit and is a significant concession because the case could help restore the proper separation of powers.

The short-term cost of the cost-sharing payments is only about \$7 billion for the rest of this year. The Democratic ultimatum is for a permanent appropriation, which would run about \$90 billion over 10 years.

Amid these passing controversies—and ode to joy, there will be more—Congress ought to ponder how to better use the power of the purse. Most of the government has been on autopilot since 2010, lurching from one short-term funding bill to the next. The author of this dysfunction was the unlamented former Majority Leader Harry Reid, who shut down regular budget order to shield Senate Democrats from having to make spending choices. He carried the practice into the minority after 2014.

Republicans now control both chambers of Congress and the White House, yet the dysfunction is getting worse. Ending the Senate filibuster for appropriations is fast becoming a more appealing solution.

Lowering the threshold to 51 votes from 60 would reduce the incentive for hostage-taking and might even allow Congress to debate matters of more consequence than a billion dollars here, a billion dollars there. Who knows, maybe they'd even set priorities or pass serious reforms that reduced the federal government's claim on the private economy.

Appeared in the Apr. 25, 2017, print edition.

Jindal : ObamaCare Repeal Needs a Direction

Bobby Jindal

6-8 minutes

April 24, 2017 7:14 p.m. ET

Before you start a journey, it helps to know where you are going. That's obvious advice—but instructive as Republicans consider next steps in the effort to repeal ObamaCare. Before getting lost in arcane Senate rules, technical modifications to the existing law, or Congressional Budget Office scores, conservatives must define for themselves and the American people what they are actually trying to accomplish.

Watching the recent debate, one could be forgiven for thinking that simply getting a deal done was the goal. The now-withdrawn American Health Care Act of 2017 was

seemingly written by House leaders with the sole purpose of winning over the most recalcitrant Republican senator. The real goal must be something larger, more inspiring and more important than merely getting to a signing ceremony.

Republicans have historically offered creative proposals for tax reform, foreign policy and defense spending. The GOP's health-care ideas, however, too often have been developed in opposition to Democratic proposals. Republicans want to spend less than Democrats do, but that approach only slows government expansion; it doesn't change government's direction. The GOP has now tried and failed to replace ObamaCare with its own, less expensive entitlement program. Rather than simply tweaking the

previous failure, why not take a completely different approach?

Although I disagreed with the late Sen. Ted Kennedy on policy, I respected him for always keeping his ultimate goal in mind and consistently working toward it. He took small steps toward the single-payer system he wanted when Republicans were in the majority, and larger steps when his party ruled. He helped create the State Children's Health Insurance Program when Newt Gingrich was House speaker, and inspired the Affordable Care Act when Nancy Pelosi had the gavel.

Republicans must be similarly single-minded about taking control of the health-care system from bureaucrats and returning power to patients and doctors. In the current debate, Republicans must choose

between two related goals—lowering costs and increasing coverage. Which will we prioritize?

Putting coverage expansion first, as President Obama did, leads to insurance plans with narrower provider networks, higher deductibles and stingier benefits. Consider the disabled Medicaid beneficiaries on waiting lists for community-based services, or the families on exchange plans who cannot see their children's specialists. The cheapest way to ensure everyone has coverage is to ignore the adequacy of that coverage.

When Republicans debate which ObamaCare regulations to keep, they should remember they are dictating that the private market offer products whose pricing and benefits do not make financial

sense. Many insurance companies are abandoning markets in which it is not sustainable for them to operate.

The next logical step—and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders is already there—is for government to cut out the middleman and simply offer the coverage itself. The populist argument for expanding Medicare (or Medicaid) to all Americans is hard to resist, at least when coverage is the primary goal. But when everyone gets health insurance from the government, doctors will lose their autonomy and patients their choice. America's health-care system will innovate less, and quality and efficiency will deteriorate—as they always do in a top-down, command-and-control system.

Under a single-payer system, special interests—such as large hospitals and medical technology providers—would use the political process to obtain favorable pricing and coverage

decisions while keeping out competitors, and political elites would exempt themselves from the burdens they impose on the rest of us. Politicians would be loath to disrupt entrenched interests, harming instead the dynamism of the market and millions of individual decisions that speed up the development of life-saving cures. But, some will say, at least everyone is covered.

It does not have to be this way. The alternative is to focus on lowering costs, not merely covering them up through subsidies or wealth transfers. Instead of simply offering cheaper versions of Democratic proposals, Republicans should offer principled health-care reform that is bottom-up, not top-down.

A successful ObamaCare replacement should harness the power of choice and competition. Republicans should allow insurance companies to compete across state lines and allow patients to select the benefits and cost-sharing they want.

The GOP should expand the use of health savings accounts, crack down on frivolous lawsuits, and encourage competition among providers by expanding the scope of what they are legally allowed to do and removing barriers to entry.

Republicans should rewrite the tax code to encourage health-care saving (not just spending), make health coverage portable, and create incentives for wellness programs. They should establish voluntary purchasing pools with legal and tax benefits while giving states much more flexibility over their Medicaid programs and grants to increase access for those with pre-existing conditions. They should put pricing and quality information online, speed up the FDA approval process, and crack down on industry abuses to increase generic drug competition.

The main problem with American health care before ObamaCare was cost. ObamaCare has made matters worse—both on the

individual level, with dramatic premium increases, and the corporate level, by driving the country further into debt.

At first glance, the choice I am urging Congress to make between increasing coverage and lowering costs seems like a choice between motherhood and apple pie. Can't health-care reform do both, just as the beer commercials once promised great taste and lower calories? Yes—but as we have seen, prioritizing coverage expansion results in higher costs and lower quality. Focusing on lowering costs is the way to increase coverage in a meaningful and sustainable way.

Mr. Jindal, a Republican, served as governor of Louisiana, 2008-16.

Appeared in the Apr. 25, 2017, print edition.



McGurn : Medicaid and Mr. Monopoly

William McGurn
5-7 minutes

April 24, 2017 7:08 p.m. ET

When progressives think of Republicans, the image that likely comes to mind is Mr. Monopoly, the top-hatted fellow from the popular board game. It helps that his original name was Rich Uncle Pennybags.

In what will be a busy week in Washington, circumstances are ripening for a revival of the Mr. Monopoly caricature. The Republican House hopes to take another whack at ObamaCare reform, a large chunk of which is Medicaid. As if this were not enough to handle, Donald Trump promises a "big announcement" Wednesday about his tax plan, which will likely include cuts in the corporate tax rate.

Let us stipulate that Medicaid reform and corporate tax cuts are both excellent initiatives. Done properly, each would offer Americans, including those at the lower end of the income scale, a better deal than they have now. Unfortunately, pitching health-care reform as the way to help "pay for" corporate tax cuts undermines the best arguments for both.

President Trump inadvertently did this last week when he told a Wall Street Journal reporter that passing the GOP's health-care bill would mean "hundreds of millions of dollars in savings" that would then

make it easier to pass a separate tax-cut bill.

While that may be the spreadsheet reality of today's Congress, it's a self-defeating argument for Republicans. So long as health-care reform, especially Medicaid reform, is touted as a vehicle for tax cuts, especially corporate tax cuts, Republicans will lose the human argument.

Google "tax cuts," "Medicaid" and "Republicans" for examples. The GOP is caricatured as taking funds from Medicaid recipients and funneling them to big business. Take a recent op-ed in Roll Call. Under the headline "Robbing the Poor to Pay Paul Ryan's Pals," it argues that the House Speaker's goal is to use money saved from slashing Medicaid so he can "finance corporations." That's just morally bankrupt."

That's grossly unfair, of course. Still, the great moral claim of ObamaCare isn't that it works well. It's that it's given millions of previously uninsured people coverage (primarily through the Medicaid expansion). In this context, probably all most people know about the proposed Republican fix is that 24 million fellow Americans would lose their coverage.

What might a moral and human Republican argument look like? Start with corporate tax cuts, and what they would do.

Today American companies pay some of the highest taxes in the

world. Cutting these rates would mean that fewer companies shut down and move overseas to reduce their tax burdens. It would also mean more money now parked overseas comes back in the form of investment, and that jobs are created for working Americans from the economic expansion.

While we're at it, what about a little more Republican detail on why and how an economy growing at 3% or 4% would do far more than any government program could to fatten American paychecks and help ordinary working families realize their dreams?

Ditto for Medicaid. Financially, Medicaid is a terrible system, with costs exploding to the point where it has become the largest or second largest item in many state budgets.

But Medicaid is also overly complicated and inadequate for those who use it, in good part because of the sneaky way the program controls costs. Washington's preferred lever here is to reduce payments to doctors and hospitals for services rendered. Often this leads providers to stop accepting Medicaid patients altogether.

As a result, many Medicaid patients can't get access to the doctors they need. Yet as bad as Medicaid is, it isn't unreasonable for people to say, "It's still better than nothing."

The American Enterprise Institute's James Capretta argues that the GOP needs to accept the reality that Americans today require some

form of insurance, that Medicaid has become the de facto safety net, and that the idea of solving its problems by reducing its rolls to pre-ObamaCare levels is probably not going to fly politically.

Mr. Capretta, however, doesn't leave it there. He believes Republicans have good answers for all those struggling to afford health care. The answers begin with explaining three broad principles.

First, Americans need a working health-care market that drives down prices while encouraging innovation. Without it, costs will continue to spiral upward, making programs such as Medicaid ripe targets for cuts or controls.

Second, a real market would make it easier and affordable for some of those now on Medicaid to move to buying their own insurance.

Third, Medicaid ought to be integrated as much as possible into this functioning market, so there is minimum disruption as people move up the economic ladder and into private plans.

In the end, Mr. Monopoly has some important and valid points to make about the fisc. But the health-care argument, at its heart, has always been moral. And Republicans would do better to remember their original promise: not simply to return to the pre-ObamaCare status quo but to offer the American people something better.

Write to mcgurn@wsj.com.

Obama Steps Back Into Public Life, Trying to Avoid One Word: Trump

Michael D. Shear
6-7 minutes

CHICAGO — Former President Barack Obama studiously avoided any mention of President Trump or to assail the Republican agenda, instead became a college seminar on how to engage with a new generation of young people — and urge them to participate in political life.

What might have been a moment for Mr. Obama to challenge Mr. Trump's wiretapping accusations, or to assail the Republican agenda, instead became a college seminar on how to engage with a new generation of young people — and urge them to participate in political life.

"The single most important thing I can do," the former president told an audience of students, is to "help in any way I can prepare the next generation of leadership to take up the baton and to take their own crack at changing the world."

Avoiding Mr. Trump was no accident.

Mr. Obama has decided — for now, at least — to steer clear of any criticism of his successor, in part out of gratitude that former President George W. Bush took that same approach. But Mr. Obama and his advisers also have concluded that confronting Mr. Trump now would be a political mistake.

If Mr. Obama were to challenge the president directly, they believe, the former president would become a foil for Mr. Trump's efforts to rally his supporters. That could end up helping Mr. Trump enact policies that Mr. Obama opposes.

As a result, the session at the University of Chicago, where Mr. Obama once taught constitutional law, was devoid of any Obama-Trump tension. Seated on a stage with six successful young people, Mr. Obama was relaxed and casual, musing about his political life story and offering a few jokes.

"So, what's been going on while I've been gone?" Mr. Obama said, chuckling, at the start. Later, he

hinted at the current political climate by recalling his 2004 observation about there not being a "red" America or a "blue" America during his speech at the Democratic National Convention that year.

"That was an aspirational comment," he acknowledged, prompting laughter from the panel onstage and the audience. "Obviously, it's not true when it comes to our politics and our civic life."

Mr. Obama has spent the three months since Inauguration Day on an extended vacation even as his staff begins setting up an office in Washington and planning continues on his presidential library in Chicago. He is also starting to work on a memoir.

But on Monday, the former president began what will be a series of public appearances in the United States and Europe. His next scheduled public event is a May 7 speech at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston, where he will accept the library's Profile in Courage award.

Mr. Obama spoke with the young people onstage here about civic engagement, community organizing and the importance of not withdrawing from the challenges facing society. For more than an hour, he served as talk show host, asking the questions.

He asked Ayanna Watkins, a senior at Kenwood Academy High School in Chicago, about the importance of access to social studies and civic education. The young woman told the former president, "Awareness is something that holds a lot of our youth back from getting involved."

Mr. Obama wanted to know why Harish Patel, a graduate of the University of Illinois at Chicago, had chosen to run for state representative last year as a young man. The answer, he replied, was in part that he did not see very many Patels in office and wanted to fix that.

"There are lot of Patels in India," Mr. Obama interjected, prompting more laughter from the audience. "There

are lot more Patels than there are Obamas."

And Mr. Obama asked the lone Republican on the panel, Max Freedman, an undergraduate at the University of Chicago, about the issue of political correctness on college campuses. But when Mr. Freedman answered with a personal story from eighth grade — the same time that Mr. Obama was launching his first presidential campaign — the former president interrupted.

"Can I just say? I'm old," Mr. Obama said. "That's — but please, continue. Eighth grade!"

As the event unfolded, the participants were free to ask whatever they wanted, and Mr. Obama invited a couple of questions toward the end of the event. But they steered clear of asking any pointed questions about the current political situation in Washington and anything that might have been interpreted as a critique of Mr. Trump.

Ramuel Figueroa, an undergraduate at Roosevelt University in Chicago, did ask the former president about the challenges of getting day laborers to answer questions for a research project because of their increasing fears of being deported by the current administration.

Mr. Obama hinted at Mr. Trump's aggressive crackdown on undocumented immigrants by saying that Mr. Figueroa needed to find someone the laborers would trust enough to talk to.

"That's hard to do in this current environment, but it's not impossible," Mr. Obama said.

Mr. Obama's choice of Chicago for his return to public life took him back to the place where he began as a community organizer decades ago.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Obama spoke fondly of starting his political career on the city's South Side, where his presidential library will eventually be built.

"This community taught me that ordinary people, when working together, can do extraordinary things," Mr. Obama said. "This community taught me that everybody has a story to tell that is important."

In his final speech as president in January, Mr. Obama also traveled to Chicago and talked about the effect the city had on him as a young man. "It was on these streets where I witnessed the power of faith, and the quiet dignity of working people in the face of struggle and loss," Mr. Obama said on Jan. 10. "This is where I learned that change only happens when ordinary people get involved, and they get engaged, and they come together to demand it."

Mr. Obama's conversation on Monday echoed many of the themes he talked about in that farewell address, including his plea that people not take democracy for granted.

Mr. Obama said he still cared about issues like economic inequality, climate change, justice and the spread of violence. But more than anything, he said, it was a lack of leadership that stopped the country from making inroads on solving those problems.

"All those problems are serious, they are daunting, but they are not insoluble," Mr. Obama said. "What is preventing us from tackling them and making more progress really has to do with our politics and our civic life."

Mr. Obama briefly mentioned his concerns about the news media and the extent to which people are not exposed to ideas that challenge their worldview. He talked about the value of learning from failure and listening to people in order to learn, not just to formulate a response.

"Yeah, I learned that in marriage, by the way," Mr. Obama said, grinning. "That will save you a lot of headache and grief. Sorry, just a little tip there."