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FRANCE – EUROPE

THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.

William Horobin

5-7 minutes

Updated May 3, 2017 8:04 p.m. ET

PARIS—A live head-to-head debate Wednesday between French presidential candidates Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen rapidly descended into a tit-for-tat battle in which both struggled to land a knockout punch.

Seeking to close a 20-percentage-point gap in the polls before Sunday's vote, Ms. Le Pen quickly went on the offensive in the live prime-time event with a blistering attack on Mr. Macron, centering on his past as an investment banker and a minister in the government of incumbent President François Hollande.

Over the course of the two-and-a-half-hour marathon, however, Ms. Le Pen's barrage failed to deliver a destabilizing blow to the front-runner. Mr. Macron stood his ground, wearing his opponent down by highlighting what he said were technical holes in her sweeping plans to pull France out of the euro.

"Mr. Macron is the candidate of wild globalization," Ms. Le Pen said.

Mr. Macron shot back that Ms. Le Pen was preaching isolationism.

"Confronted with this mind-set of defeat, I represent the mind-set of conquest," Mr. Macron said.

A snap poll of 1,314 viewers by Elabe for BFMTV showed that 63% found Mr. Macron the most convincing and 34% Ms. Le Pen.

The
New York
Times

5-6 minutes

PARIS — He said she was telling lies. She called him arrogant. He accused her of repeating "stupidities." She cut him off and told him not to lecture her. He shook his

French Presidential Candidates Emmanuel Macron, Marine Le Pen Face Off in Debate

For Mr. Macron, who is running for elected office for the first time, the debate was a test of whether he can hold his footing under pressure from a battle-hardened National Front candidate who is tapping into deep resentment of globalization and the European Union.

The debate was watched closely by investors, who sold French assets when Ms. Le Pen polled high ahead of the April 23 first-round vote. If Ms. Le Pen can turn the table on Mr. Macron during the debate, it could cast renewed doubt over the outcome of an election that is crucial for the future of the EU.

Ms. Le Pen proposes pulling France from the euro and a radical overhaul of the EU to repatriate powers in Paris and implement protectionist trade policies. On Wednesday, Ms. Le Pen sought to paint Mr. Macron as a crony of the EU establishment who lacks the gravitas to stand up to Germany. She also characterized him as weak on terrorism.

Mr. Macron parried the attacks by questioning Ms. Le Pen's mastery of the radical policy changes she espouses.

In one exchange, Mr. Macron highlighted Ms. Le Pen's recent ambivalence over her proposed exit from the EU's common currency. Over the weekend, Ms. Le Pen appeared to backtrack on her vow to swiftly shepherd France out of the euro, saying negotiations wouldn't be rushed and that France would revive a basket of EU currencies to soften the transition to a franc.

"We need to get our national currency back. It's essential, essential," Ms. Le Pen said.

"So, we're going back to the franc? You propose we actually leave the euro?" Mr. Macron said.

"No, I want to renegotiate so we free ourselves from it and transform it into a common currency—what it was before it became the currency of France," Ms. Le Pen said.

Mr. Macron said that no such system ever existed and companies couldn't pay their bills in two different currencies. "It's nonsense," Mr. Macron said.

Unlike Ms. Le Pen, Mr. Macron embraces the EU and prescribes labor overhauls to help France compete in global markets.

The debate, which started at 9 p.m. local time, was expected to draw millions of viewers, as 34% of France's 47.6 million registered voters said they were sure to tune in and a further 31% said they probably would, according to a survey by polling company BVA.

In the 2012 election, more than 17 million watched the duel between current President Hollande and his predecessor, Nicolas Sarkozy.

With polls consistently showing Mr. Macron on track to win 60% of votes Sunday, Ms. Le Pen had a mountain to climb in the debate.

To stand a chance of rivaling Mr. Macron, the National Front candidate needs to pick up supporters from both conservative and far-left candidates who were knocked out in the first round of voting.

In an attempt to cross the political spectrum, Ms. Le Pen went after blue-collar votes last week by

making an impromptu appearance at a factory scheduled for closure just before her rival was due there. She also has attempted to tap center-right voters by lifting sections on French identity from a speech by mainstream conservative François Fillon, who was knocked out in the first round.

Beyond the result itself, Sunday's vote will be key to determining the strength of the two candidates' parties in legislative elections in mid-June.

Even as Mr. Macron is likely to win on Sunday, a margin below 20 points would sap the momentum his upstart party En Marche—On the Move—needs to win a majority, said Adélaïde Zulfikarpasic, an analyst at BVA.

Around a third of voters intending to cast their ballot for Mr. Macron are doing so because he is seen as the "least bad" of the candidates and another third to block the path of Ms. Le Pen, according to a survey by BVA.

"Macron tonight faces the challenge not only of securing his election but getting well elected to push a dynamic that is favorable for his presidency," Ms. Zulfikarpasic said before the debate.

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Le Pen and Macron Clash in Vicious Presidential Debate in France

Adam Nossiter

head sadly, and she laughed sarcastically.

The debate on Wednesday night between France's two presidential candidates, Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Front and the centrist former economy minister Emmanuel Macron, was more like an angry American-style television

shoutfest than the reasoned discussion of issues the French have become accustomed to. It was a study in violent verbal combat: The two talked angrily over each other, cut each other off, shook fists and pointed fingers, leaving the moderators bewildered and helpless.

Marine Le Pen to Emmanuel Macron: "We now call you Hollande Junior!" Video by FRANCE 24 English

But it was also a stark demonstration of two radically different visions of France that voters will have to choose between on Sunday in the election's final

round. Mr. Macron, 39, the former banker and cool technocrat, educated at France's finest schools and the beneficiary of a meteoric rise, faced off against Ms. Le Pen, 48, the scion of one of the country's most notorious political families, the inheritor of a far-right party who has tried to move it toward the center.

The two candidates did not hide their disdain for each other, and their total divergence on all the issues — Europe, terrorism, France's stagnant economy, Russia — explained why.

"The high priestess of fear is sitting in front of me," Mr. Macron said derisively, having cast his opponent as a dangerous extremist with deep ties to her party's dark past. He made a point of repeating her name, to remind viewers of her parental filiation: her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, founded the National Front and is associated with its historical posture of anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial and stigmatization of immigrants.

"You are the France of submission," Ms. Le Pen said with scorn; Mr. Macron was merely a heartless banker, in her view. "We've seen the choice you've made, the cynical choices, that reveal the coldness of the investment banker you have never ceased being."

Marine Le Pen: "Emmanuel Macron is the candidate of wild globalization, social brutality!" Video by FRANCE 24 English

He leads her by 20 points in polls and is considered likely to win on Sunday. The debate is expected to move some voters, but not enough

to make up for Ms. Le Pen's substantial polling deficit. She has seen some slight improvement in recent polls and was clearly hoping to destabilize her younger opponent as she did in the first-round debates, when other candidates were present. With nothing to lose and everything to gain, she went for direct frontal attacks.

But Mr. Macron generally kept his cool, laying out his program point by point through the shouting, while Ms. Le Pen, true to the scrappy, guerrilla-style party that she leads — it is stronger on combat than on policy — spent much of the two-and-a-half-hour contest attacking him. What policy proposals she offered appeared sketchy.

Mr. Macron offered his view of a France open to Europe and free trade, staying in the common currency, reinforcing its ties with European nations, dealing firmly with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, and overhauling its stultifying and voluminous labor code in order, he said, to generate more jobs.

"We are in the world," Mr. Macron said. "France is not a closed country."

France Presidential Debate: How would Macron deal with Trump and Putin? Video by FRANCE 24 English

Ms. Le Pen depicted a France with a "total collapse of our industries," preyed upon by Islamist extremists, demanding ever more government protection from economic vicissitudes and urgently needing to close its borders. "I'm the candidate

of that France that we love, who will protect our frontiers, who will protect us from savage globalization," she said at the outset.

Mr. Macron was a ruthless capitalist in Ms. Le Pen's familiar neo-populist depiction, ready to sell French industry down the river to hurt workers and help employers. She repeatedly tied Mr. Macron to the failed government of the incumbent Socialist president, François Hollande, in which Mr. Macron served for two years before quitting to start his own political movement.

"You defend private interests," Ms. Le Pen sneered. "And behind that there is social ruin."

Mr. Macron replied evenly, "What's extraordinary is that your strategy is simply to say a lot of lies and propose nothing to help the country." He pointed out the weaknesses in her generous spending plans, noting the lack of revenue-raising measures to back them. "France and the French deserve better," he said. "Don't say stupid things. You are saying a lot of them."

Some of the sharpest exchanges came over terrorism, which polls show is a major preoccupation for the French. Ms. Le Pen cast herself as tougher on the issue, reeling off a series of antiterrorism measures — experts have suggested that they are either impractical or ineffective — and saying Mr. Macron was a weakling on security. Nonetheless, it is one of her signature issues, always drawing a thunderous response when she invokes it at rallies. "You are for laxism," Ms. Le Pen said.

"You are complaisant toward Islamist fundamentalism," she said. "We've got to eradicate fundamentalist ideologies. You won't do it, because they support you."

Bristling, Mr. Macron pointed out the impracticality of expelling the thousands of people who are in the government's so-called S-files because they are considered to constitute some potential danger to the country's security. "The S-files are just information files," Mr. Macron said. "You can be an S-filer merely for having crossed paths with a jihadist."

"You've got to be much more surgical than Ms. Le Pen," he added. "What you are proposing, as usual, is merely powder," he said, pointing out that as a member of the European Parliament, Ms. Le Pen voted repeatedly against antiterrorism measures.

She dismissed these criticisms, as she did the entire European Union project. Under her, she said, "French laws will be superior to laws given out by some commissioner whose name we don't even know."

Mr. Macron posited a diametrically opposed view, insisting that France's place was in a stronger Europe that could stand up to Mr. Putin's Russia and President Trump's United States. Ms. Le Pen's idea is that "we're going to leave Europe because the others can make it, but we can't," he said. "In the face of this spirit of defeat, I am for the spirit of conquest, because France has always succeeded."



Emmanuel Macron is 39 and his wife is 64. French women say it's about time.

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

6-8 minutes

PARIS — Emmanuel Macron, the front-runner in Sunday's French presidential election, shares something with President Trump: a 24-year age gap with his wife. The difference is that Macron's wife is the older one.

That cliché-busting fact — a candidate young enough to be his wife's son, rather than old enough to be her father — is a little social "revenge" that delights many French women, including Martine Bergossi.

"Why can't we marry younger men? I date them all the time," said Bergossi, the stylish owner of Alternatives, a secondhand-couture

shop in Paris, who prefers to leave her exact age to the imagination.

"It's normal to see men with younger women," she said. "So it's rather great to see the opposite."

France is famous for its laissez-faire attitude toward sex and love, yet the May-December romance between Emmanuel and Brigitte Macron has added a little ooh-la-la to a presidential campaign that is otherwise a deadly serious matter.

Macron, a pro-European Union centrist, is facing off against far-right candidate Marine Le Pen, a blunt populist who rails darkly against immigration and threatens to yank France out of the European Union and NATO.

Macron, a former investment banker, is 39, and his wife just turned 64.

Emmanuel Macron, former economy minister in the cabinet of French President François Hollande, advanced on April 23 to the runoff of France's presidential election. Here's what you need to know about him. Emmanuel Macron, a French former economy minister, advanced on April 23 to the runoff of France's presidential election. Here's what you need to know about him. (Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

Macron was only 15 when he met Brigitte Trogneux, a married teacher at his high school in northern France who had three children. Macron's parents sent him to Paris to put distance between the teacher who ran the drama club and their precocious son, but their bond

lasted, she divorced, and 10 years ago they were married.

[Le Pen rarely mentions gender, unless she's talking about Muslims]

Most of the French women interviewed said a politician's private life is not a reason to vote for or against him or her. In the United States, too, Trump's two divorces, considerable age gap with his third wife, and even a recorded conversation in which he lewdly discussed groping women did not prevent his electoral victory.

But just days before the French vote, nearly all women interviewed did say they were more interested in Macron, who was a virtual unknown until recently, because his marriage breaks the mold.

French politics has long been dominated by men with younger lovers.

François Hollande, the current president, separated from his partner, Valerie Trierweiler, after a very public affair with an actress 18 years his junior. Former president François Mitterrand took a mistress half his age when he was in his 40s, a younger woman who famously stood near his wife at his funeral in 1996.

"Did men ask anybody when they started marrying younger women?" asked Karin Lewin, an artist with a studio in Montmartre. "Who sets the rules?"

She likes that Macron is shaking up the men's political club.

So do others. "Every single day, I see an older man with a woman his kids' age coming into the hotel," said Chloe Tournadre, 26, who works at a luxury hotel in Paris.

Lilach Eliyahu, a fashion designer, said the fact that Macron has a wife who "has wrinkles and cellulite

makes me think of him as a feminist. He is the opposite of Donald Trump."

Brigitte Macron is a grandmother and her husband has boyish looks. Melania Trump, who used to model here in Paris, is young enough to be the U.S. president's daughter. The couples have nearly the same age gap: the Trumps were born 23 years and 10 months apart and the Macrons 24 years and eight months.

Le Pen, if elected, would make history as France's first female president, but men turned out in greater numbers for her than women did in the first round of the election, according to polls. In interviews, many women said that although they would like to see a female president, they were deeply concerned about Le Pen's anti-immigrant, antiglobalist views and her party's conservative views on women's reproductive rights. Le Pen, 48, has been married twice. Her partner, a politician who has kept a much lower profile than Brigitte Macron, is 47.

Cécile Alduy, a French professor at Stanford University who is in Paris this semester following the election, said that political spouses in France do not have the same public role as they do in the United States.

"It was so unusual and commented on" when Brigitte Macron joined her husband on stage after he won the first-round vote, Alduy said. Many women find it interesting that Macron is putting his wife in the spotlight, posing for photos with her, even appearing on the cover of a magazine with her in a bathing suit at the beach.

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Carla Bruni, the wife of former president Nicolas Sarkozy, was also high-profile. But she was a special case, a former model and singer who had dated Mick Jagger and other stars.

The Macrons have also been the subject of jokes, and political critics have seized on the age difference to

paint Brigitte as a controlling force over "a schoolboy" candidate. Many declare on social media that he is gay — which Macron has publicly denied. A widely circulated mock photo on the Internet purports to show the couple's "first date": a woman walking hand in hand at the beach with a toddler.

But Alduy said Macron may get a boost from women at the polls on Sunday, not because of his wife's age, but because he talks about women's issues, including gender equality in wages.

"There is a visible difference between them, that's for sure," said Martine Dumestre, a physical therapist who, at 65, is one year older than Macron's wife. She said that many voters do not like either candidate but that she at least appreciated that Brigitte Macron commented that this election is her husband's only shot at the presidency, even though he is only 39 — because she will soon look too old.

Forbes : Meet Brigitte Trogneux: The Woman Who Could Be France's Next First Lady

Cecilia Rodriguez

Always there, at his side, in every photo, at every occasion. She's called "the indispensable other half," deeply involved in his career and credited with inspiring his run for the presidency.

Brigitte Trogneux was the first person that her husband, Emmanuel Macron, the front runner in France's presidential election, thanked after he won the first round: "To Brigitte, always present and even more, without whom I wouldn't be who I am," he said as his supporters shouted her name: "Brigitte! Brigitte!"

"Emmanuel Macron wouldn't have been able to embark on this adventure without her," Marc Ferracci, a campaign adviser and a witness at the couple's 2007 wedding, told *The Independent*. "Her presence is essential for him."

Inseparable, the unusual team arriving at the Elysee presidential palace in Paris. She was his high school teacher, 25 years his senior, who is breaking with French tradition and fiercely campaigning by his side
Photo: Jacques Brinon/AP

He's already announced that if elected, he will create for her both a formal governmental role and the official status of First Lady, which doesn't exist in the country's constitution. "She is not going to be behind or hidden or become a

tweet," he said. "She will be next to me because she has always been next to me."

Brigitte Macron, who could become France's first official first lady, not only lives a singular love story with her much younger husband but is also his closest collaborator and has played a major role in his career. Photo: Eric Feferberg/AP

Outspoken, slender, blonde and tanned, she's chic and glamorous, frequently present in the front row of fashion shows and pictured in stylish French magazines. "Not for a second does she say, 'I cannot wear short skirts, ultra-high heels, sleeveless dresses, leather trousers,'" the newspaper *L'Express* wrote. "She dares everything."

Brigitte Macron at a campaign event in Marseille, last month
Photo: AP/Claude Paris

"A menopausal Barbie," sniff her detractors - mainly because she's 64 to his 39, the same age difference as that of President Donald Trump and his wife, Melania. The difference, of course, is that when a man has a younger wife, it appears to be an advantage while the reverse, with such large age difference, lays them open to insults, jokes, mistrust, and criticism.

French presidential candidate for the En Marche! movement, Emmanuel Macron kisses his wife Brigitte Trogneux on stage after he won the

first round of the Presidential election. Photo: Eric Feferberg/AFP/Getty Images

"Oh, he came with his mom?"

"But, she's too old for him, right?"

"It's a little weird, this relationship, don't you think?"

"What does he see in her?"

"He must be gay"

"No man can desire an older woman; that doesn't happen"

"That's it, he must be homo. There can be no other explanation."

These are comments frequently heard among the public, the media and especially in social media, recently published by *Elle* magazine in an article denouncing French misogyny emerging from dark corners about the atypical potential presidential couple.

They also call her "cougar" and him "chouchou" which means teacher's pet.

She has been described as omnipresent in his campaign and he listen to her advice Photo: Christophe Petit Tesson/Pool via AP

"This visibly frightening societal abnormality of a younger man with an older woman happens while for millennia the opposite seems to thrill the whole Earth," *Elle* ponders. "Are we going to have to endure this

macho, nerdy and rancid humor for a long time?"

Very probably. After all, according to polls that have so far been accurate about the French election, the result of the second round on Sunday, May 9, "will propel this 64-year-old teacher of French and Latin, three-time mother and seven-time grandmother, to the post of First Lady of France," as reported by *MidiLibre*.

Described as omnipresent in his life and his campaign, albeit discreetly, Brigitte Macron, the youngest of six children, was born on April 13, 1953, in the northern French town of Amiens in a bourgeois family of well-known chocolate makers.

They met in 1992 when Macron was 15 and a student at a private Jesuit school. Brigitte Auziere was his 40-year-old, married literature teacher and the person who ran the theater club in which he was an avid participant.

The romance blossomed as they worked together in school plays and she coached him. "Writing brought us together," she has explained. "It unleashed an incredible closeness and I was totally charmed by his intelligence. He wasn't like the others. Nobody will ever know at what moment our story became a love story. That belongs to us. That is our secret."

Their age difference fascinates people and has been the subject of many debates in social networks as well as in the French media

Photo: Loic Venance/AFP/Getty Images

When he told his parents about his feelings for Brigitte, they weren't thrilled. They asked them to wait until he was 18 and sent him to finish his studies in Paris. What he told her before leaving is now part of the legend: "You won't get rid of me. Whatever you do, I will marry you."

Macron has said that their relationship became official when he turned 18, although they kept in touch through those years. "We'd call each other all the time and spend hours on the phone," she told *Paris Match*. "Bit by bit, he defeated all my resistance, in an amazing way, with patience."

By then she had left her husband and moved to Paris, where she took a job teaching. They have been together since then.

At their wedding, Macron thanked her children for accepting their

relationship, adding that they were "not a normal couple – but a couple that exists."

From his high school romance with his teacher to his recent ambition to become president, Macron is known for his intelligence, understanding and tenacity Photo: Jacques Brinon, AP

Their love story and age difference fascinate many people in social networks all around the world. The Chinese - in "a country more used to seeing older men courting young women," writes *Le Figaro* - are

particularly taken with the romantic side. "The comment 'This man married a teacher who is 25-year his senior, became a grandfather at 30 and now makes Europe crazy' was read more than nine million times over Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter."

"This man is so beautiful and extraordinary," another viral entry read. "In China, a man would not want a woman older than him, but when men get rich, they like to find women very young."

**The
New York
Times**

Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron: Where the French Candidates Stand (online)

Liz Alderman and Elian Peltier

4-5 minutes

PARIS — As Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen prepare to face off in a presidential election on Sunday that will determine the future of France — and of Europe — the candidates are presenting vastly different views on core issues.

Ms. Le Pen, the far-right candidate of the National Front, is campaigning on an anti-immigration, anti-European Union, anti-globalization platform. Mr. Macron, a former economy minister and investment banker, is pro-business, in favor of free trade, and open to reinforcing economic and security ties with Europe.

With many French voters still undecided, we look at the candidates' views on some of the major issues.

The State of Europe

"The European Union is going to die, because the people don't want it anymore." — Ms. Le Pen

"We won't make our influence greater without making Europe a stand-alone global power." — Mr. Macron

Ms. Le Pen sees the European Union as the root of many of France's ills, and argues that France would be better off outside the bloc. She has pledged to start negotiations with Brussels to overhaul European institutions as soon as she is elected, and to hold a national referendum on taking France out of the union. She also wants France to abandon the euro

and bring back a national currency — an idea that has rattled business leaders and financial markets. She would also pull France out of European trade agreements that, in her view, harm its interests.

Mr. Macron says all that would be a disaster from which France — and Europe — might never recover. He wants more integration and cooperation with the European Union on fiscal, trade and social legislation, and he has called for a dedicated budget for the eurozone. He says he would also negotiate a deal between the European Union and China on economic, environmental and security issues.

Economic Agenda

"Rampant globalization leads to mass unemployment. We want to rearm in the face of globalization." — Ms. Le Pen

"We must give our businesses the opportunity to create jobs." — Mr. Macron

As other European countries recover from the financial crisis, France's economy has remained stagnant, with unemployment stuck around 10 percent for four years.

Mr. Macron, who wants to keep France open to globalization, says he would jump-start stagnant growth with a business-friendly labor and tax overhaul that would make it easier for companies to hire and fire workers. He has vowed to cut taxes for workers and corporations and to invest 50 billion euros, or about \$55 billion, in training, the environment, agriculture and infrastructure, while cutting €60 billion in public spending.

Ms. Le Pen says the types of deregulatory policies that Mr. Macron embraces would only make the position of workers more precarious. She calls for "intelligent protectionism" and backs nationalistic economic policies, such as favoring French businesses for public contracts. She would cut taxes for small businesses and put a 35 percent tax on products made by French companies abroad, while raising taxes on foreign workers to try to ensure "priority hiring of French people."

Immigration

"Massive immigration is an oppression. It isn't a chance for France; it's a tragedy." — Ms. Le Pen

"The French people shouldn't be worried about immigration. From an economic, cultural and social point of view, immigration is a chance." — Mr. Macron

Ms. Le Pen has seized on recent terrorist attacks and the influx of refugees into Europe to make immigration one of the hot-button issues of the campaign. She says she would restore national border controls and pull France from Schengen, an agreement that allows citizens of European countries to move freely among signatory nations. Legal immigration would be capped at 10,000 people a year, and refugees could apply for asylum only from outside France.

Mr. Macron says he would make France more attractive to skilled immigrants by shortening the visa application process, promoting "talent" visas and financing programs to help immigrants

become more fluent in French. He would strengthen border security by hiring 5,000 more border guards, and would speed the process for asylum requests so that those who are denied could not linger in the country.

Security Measures

"We have to eradicate the ideology of Islamism in France." — Ms. Le Pen

"The fight against terrorism is the priority for the coming years." — Mr. Macron

Tackling what Ms. Le Pen calls Islamic fundamentalism is a central axis of her campaign. She plans to dismantle organizations suspected of falling under extremist influence, deport foreigners suspected of having ties with Islamist extremist groups, and strip binational extremists of citizenship. To maintain security, she says she would add 50,000 military posts and 15,000 police jobs, and increase prison capacity by 40,000.

Mr. Macron wants to strengthen counterterrorism activity at the European level and reinforce French security and intelligence services. He hopes to recruit 10,000 additional police officers and increase prison capacity by 15,000. Cybersecurity and cyberdefense would be a national priority. He also favors creating a European defense fund and a European security council to help combat terrorism. And he would maintain a state of emergency put in place after the Paris terrorist attacks of November 2015.

**The
New York
Times**

French Savers Are Likely to Reject Le Pen's Anti-Euro Message

Swaha Pattanaik

2-3 minutes

Marine Le Pen, the presidential candidate of the National Front in France, wants to reintroduce a

national currency alongside the euro. Philippe Wojazer/Reuters

French savers are a good bulwark against Marine Le Pen winning the presidential election on Sunday.

Ms. Le Pen, the far-right presidential hopeful, has a strong core of supporters who back her euroskeptic manifesto. And her spendthrift economic policies may appeal to voters whose jobs and personal finances are precarious. But a vow to abandon the single currency is likely to repel undecided voters in a country with the third-highest savings rate in the eurozone.

French households stash away more than 14 percent of their gross

disposable income, according to the European Union's statistics office. Only Germans and Slovenes are bigger savers in the eurozone, while outside the bloc, the British save less than half that amount. Thriftiness brings with it a wariness of anything that might erode the value of such nest eggs, like Ms. Le Pen's plan to reintroduce a national currency alongside the euro.

Critics say the euro would slump in value, money would flow out of France and financial and economic

chaos would ensue. With her presidential rival, the centrist Emmanuel Macron, around 20 percentage points ahead of her in the polls, Ms. Le Pen is trying to reassure voters this wouldn't be the case. She said on April 29 that there was no rush to dump the euro and that other policy changes might take precedence. And in a Reuters interview published on Tuesday, she said capital controls could be imposed if there were a run on banks while she was negotiating an exit from the European Union,

though they were unlikely to be needed.

Such efforts to appeal to a wider range of voters are unlikely to succeed. After all, Ms. Le Pen's anti-euro creed is far from the only reason that voters are expected to pick Mr. Macron as president.

But in a nation of savers, this is a policy that the National Front will have to dilute if the party wants to improve its score in the future.



French Voter Abstentions Are Key to Le Pen's Gains in Ballot

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Gregory Viscusi

8-10 minutes

3 mai 2017 à 23:01 UTC-4 4 mai 2017 à 07:41 UTC-4

- Some Melenchon, Fillon voters don't want to vote for Macron
- Abstentions may strengthen Le Pen, who has committed voters

Jean Gardon and Agathe Michallet are the sort of voters far-right candidate Marine Le Pen is banking on.

Born half a century apart, living in different cities and from opposing sides of the political spectrum, they have one thing in common: They are so unhappy with the choice in France's presidential election, they may not vote.

Gardon, a 70-year-old retired physical therapist in the bourgeois city of Nice, voted for the center-right's Francois Fillon in the first round on April 23, while Michallet, a 22-year-old art student in the gritty port of Marseille, opted for the far-left's Jean-Luc Melenchon.

Faced now with a choice in the May 7 runoff between centrist Emmanuel Macron, who was an economy minister in President Francois Hollande's government, and the far-right National Front's Marine Le Pen, they feel no urge to go vote.

"I feel I'm in a total dilemma," said Michallet. "One helped fuel the rise of the National Front with his anti-social and anti-labor policies, the other is from a fascist, racist, xenophobe party. That doesn't seem like a choice we should be facing."

The decision of voters like Michallet to stay home may have far-reaching consequences in what has been the most turbulent election in recent French history. Pollsters see high abstention levels aiding Le Pen

since her supporters are more committed and likely to come out to vote. The actions of Melenchon and Fillon voters provide Le Pen a chance -- albeit slim -- for victory. Failing that, she could garner enough votes to give the National Front greater legitimacy and an incontrovertible place in France's political landscape.

Best Chance

"Le Pen's best chance still lies in a substantial number of Melenchon voters staying home, coupled with the potential support of some of Francois Fillon's voters," said Antonio Barroso, an analyst at Teneo Intelligence in London.

The closely watched election has dramatic repercussions for France's place in Europe. Le Pen's plans to take France out of the European Union, reimpose borders, and tax non-French workers has driven most of the country's establishment, including President Francois Hollande and his predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy to swing behind Macron.

In the first and only one-on-one debate between the two candidates on Wednesday night, Le Pen reached out to supporters of both Melenchon and Fillon, labeling Macron a "neo-liberal" who will push France toward "savage capitalism," while at the same time branding him a Socialist.

Macron Leads

Polls before the debate showed Macron's lead stabilizing at about 20 percentage points, though it had been close to 30 points before the first round. An Elabe poll after the debate showed that 64 percent of those surveyed found Macron more convincing in the face-off than Le Pen.

Still, conversations with Fillon voters in Nice and Melenchon voters in Marseille show an uphill battle for the independent candidate to convince many voters of the defeated candidates to back him. That may leave him far short of the

record 82 percent with which Jacques Chirac saw off the National Front's founder Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2002.

According to pollster OpinionWay, 43 percent of Fillon's first-round voters would cast their ballots for Macron, 29 percent would support Le Pen and 28 percent would abstain. Of those who voted Melenchon, 45 percent will abstain, 40 percent will vote Macron, and 15 percent Le Pen.

Fillon, who took the most votes in Nice and in adjacent towns, home to many wealthy retirees, has endorsed Macron. Melenchon, who won in Marseille -- one of France's most multi-cultural cities -- has said he will not vote for Le Pen while refusing to endorse Macron. In an April 28 video, the Communist-backed candidate fustigated Macron as an agent of "extreme finance."

Voters who cast their ballots for Fillon or Melenchon in the first round are less certain of the choice they'll make.

Fillon-backer Gardon says he thinks Le Pen is a risk because of her plans to leave the EU. But he doesn't think he can bring himself to vote for Macron.

"Macron doesn't inspire me," he said as he picked up a package at a variety shop a block away from Nice's waterfront. "He's the son of Hollande, the choice of the big banks and big companies."

Blank Vote

At Casa Consolat, a co-op restaurant and performance center in Marseille with a graffiti decorated exterior, Sebastien Guerlais, a Melenchon-supporting 41-year-old nurse who works with addicts, said he'll travel for an hour to his voting center to cast a blank vote. In the final tally to determine the winner, a blank vote -- used in France as a protest tool -- is not counted. It is not considered an abstention.

"I do care, I just can't vote for either one," Guerlais said. "Of course

she's a racist and xenophobe, but the neo-liberal policies that he'd put in place are just as frightening."

The need to lure supporters of Fillon and Melenchon, who between them took almost 40 percent of the ballots in the first round, isn't lost on Le Pen. At a April 28 rally in Nice, she never mentioned her plans to take France out of the euro, an unpopular plank with Fillon voters, and instead concentrated on things that do matter to them, such as patriotism and limiting immigration.

She's sought to appeal to Melenchon voters by attacking Macron as the candidate of the establishment. An unofficial group backing Le Pen has posted on Facebook and Twitter a list of positions she and Melenchon have in common, such as leaving NATO, opposing trade pacts, and reducing the retirement age.

'Guilt Trip'

Michallet rejects suggestions that Le Pen and Melenchon share some positions. "Their visions of society have nothing in common," she said. "Le Pen's economy is based on national identity and rejecting others." Michallet is also bothered by the "guilt trip" she feels the pro-Macron media has put on those planning to abstain.

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But some other Melenchon voters have no qualms about backing Le Pen. Constantino Raymond runs a kiosk a stone's throw from Casa Consolat. "I voted Melenchon because I liked his style, his energy, his dynamism," the 78-year-old said. "I thought he'd be best for workers. That's why I'm voting Le Pen. She defends the French. They have many of the same views, on Europe, on the economy. Macron, he's just for the bankers."

In Nice, the two local leaders of Fillon's Republicans party, have split over what to do in the second round.

Christian Estrosi, president of the region around the city, called immediately to vote for Macron. Local lawmaker Eric Ciotti, who was Estrosi's deputy when the latter was the mayor of Nice, hasn't taken a stand.

At the variety store, Gardon argued with his friend Hubert Michel, an 88-year-old retired jeweller, who also voted Fillon in the first round. "I will vote Marine," Michel said. "Macron is too close to big business."

When Gardon said it was too big a risk to leave the EU, Michel responded: "Sadly, perfect doesn't exist. I don't like her views on Europe, but it's better than someone who represents big banks and big finance."

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Breitbart : Le Pen Blasts Macron On Terror Issues and Globalism In Final French Presidential Debate

by Chris Tomlinson 3 May 2017 396

5-6 minutes

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The final debate between French presidential candidates Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron was a tense affair with constant back and forth between the two candidates on a range of issues. Le Pen slammed Macron for his position on terrorism, claiming that he had no policy and his support for globalisation which she blamed for French unemployment.

At the start of the debate, the two candidates spoke on economic issues from the age of retirement to the effect of globalisation on French workers. Le Pen, who is an opponent of globalisation, said that Macron, who was previously an investment banker, was only interested in buying and selling, which was often "not in the national interest."

Macron attempted to talk about the incident at the Whirlpool factory last week in which he was greeted with boos by the workers hours after Le Pen had made a surprise visit. Macron accused Le Pen of using the workers for a photo op, while Le Pen blasted Macron's support for globalisation saying that was the reason for the

factory's closure and relocation to Poland.

Macron argued that Le Pen's protectionist economic policies would lead to high costs for products like pharmaceuticals, though Le Pen fired back saying that France could make their own drugs.

The moderators then brought up the subject of radical Islamic terrorism and Le Pen accused Macron of not having any plan for tackling the problem. Le Pen also pointed out that Macron has received endorsements from Islamist organisations like the UOIF with ultra-conservative Islamic ideology that includes killing homosexuals and systematically repressing women.

"11,000 terrorists on the watch list is the record of your government. It is shameful!" Le Pen said continuing to accuse Macron of being the heir to President Francois Hollande and asking why he had not been able to solve the various problems while he was in government.

On the subject of the European Union, Le Pen said that the political union has become an authoritarian regime that imposes economic measures without nation states consent. Le Pen has vowed to hold a referendum on EU membership to "wrench Europe from the hands of

the EU that is killing it," if she wins the presidency on Sunday.

"Anyway, France will be led by a woman: it's me or Mrs Merkel," Le Pen said.

Regarding the euro currency, Le Pen once again affirmed her stance on restoring the French Franc. She advocated for a mixed system in which ordinary Frenchmen would be able to get the Franc back in their pocket, while large companies would be free to pay their global bills in any currency their liked, which could include the Euro if that's what suited them. Macron responded saying, "my Europe is the opposite of Le Pen's". Companies would not be able to pay internationally in Euros and their employees in Francs."

On social media, many were talking about a statement from Le Pen during a heated exchange in which she said, "I see you want to play to the student and the teacher with me, this is not my thing." Many interpreted the remark as a not so subtle jab at Macron's wife Brigitte, who was his former teacher and formed a relationship with Macron when he was under 18-years-old.

On France's relationship with the United States, Macron said that he would like to see the same relationship continues since World War Two but said he would stand up

to Russia in Ukraine and said that France does not share the values of the Russian government.

Le Pen said earlier this week that she would be a better leader to negotiate with U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin because she shared similar views against globalisation. She said: "I think we need to be equidistant between USA and Russia... we don't need to wage Cold War on Russia... they haven't shown any hostility towards us".

"I am the best placed to speak to the Russia of Putin, the America of Trump, the Britain of Theresa May".

In his final two moments, Macron accuses Le Pen of having no real vision for France, but rather is a member of the "extreme right" and is campaigning on smearing others. Calling Le Pen a "parasite" living off hate, Macron said anger "nourishes the Front National."

In her final statement Le Pen said, "People may say I'm old fashioned but I like France as it is, with its culture, language, history... not a country thrown into a fratricidal war that will allow some to obtain maximum profits for themselves."

Follow Chris Tomlinson on Twitter at @TomlinsonCJ or email at ctomlinson@breitbart.com



Matthew Dalton

5-7 minutes

PARIS—Imane Laribi is like many young people in France: fresh out of school, struggling to start a career, and discontent with the choices before her in Sunday's presidential election.

Facing a tough labor market, she and other young voters led the country's revolt against its political establishment in the first-round of the election. Voters age 18 to 24 overwhelmingly supported candidates coming from outside France's mainstream political parties: the far-left Jean-Luc

In French Election, Youth Reject Establishment in Search for Jobs Cure (online)

Melenchon, Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Front and Emmanuel Macron, a centrist who founded his own party last year.

Ahead of Sunday's final-round vote, polls show Mr. Macron consolidating the support of most young people behind him, garnering about 60% of the 18-to-24-year-old vote. That backing, however, masks deep skepticism among young people over his plans to address their most vexing challenge: landing a steady job.

Ms. Laribi, 22, doesn't like Ms. Le Pen and her hard-edge stances against immigration and the European Union. But Ms. Laribi is uncomfortable casting a vote for Mr.

Macron, the pro-Europe candidate, because she doesn't trust his background as an investment banker at Rothschild & Cie.

"We all know the reputation of bankers," said Ms. Laribi, a recent business-school graduate, "It's complicated for young people now across France. I hope not, but I think he's going to sink us."

She voted for Mr. Melenchon in the first round, but with little enthusiasm. "I voted for him by default," Ms. Laribi says.

Because people under 35 are less likely to go to the polls, their exact impact on Sunday's vote is difficult to estimate.

Mr. Melenchon's supporters are another wild card in Sunday's runoff: 44% of them are expected to vote for Mr. Macron, 23% for Ms. Le Pen but 33% won't say who they will pick, according to a poll this week by public opinion firm Elabe.

On the campaign trail, Mr. Macron has proposed relaxing France's strict labor-market rules to fight unemployment. He has promised to go further than a meek overhaul passed last year—over violent youth protests while he was economy minister—that made it somewhat easier to hire and fire workers. His plans for an even deeper revamp are likely to face more resistance.

"I don't understand how people can vote for him after that," said Julien Breton, a 19-year-old who voted for Mr. Melenchon in the first round. "I think the laws should be changed, but not like that."

Other young people say Mr. Macron's free-market experience will make him a more effective reformer.

Clementine Dillard, a 24-year-old biology graduate student, cited Mr. Macron's investment-banking career as a "strong point," adding: "He perhaps knows more about the economy than the others."

The unemployment rate among people younger than 25 stands at 24%, up from 18% before the financial crisis in 2008. Across the Rhine, the German youth unemployment rate is just 7%.

Joblessness remains elevated for somewhat older French workers: The unemployment rate for those

ages 25 to 29 is 14% compared with an overall rate of 10%.

Mr. Macron is seeking to address what many economists say is the main cause of the country's youth unemployment. Its labor market is plagued by a sharp division between workers on indefinite contracts that contain strong legal protections against being fired and people on temporary contracts that last for as little as a few weeks.

If young people find work, it is increasingly through these temporary contracts. That makes it hard for them to qualify for loans or rent apartments.

"The integration of youth into the workforce has deteriorated over a number of years," says Bruno Ducoudré, a labor-market economist at Sciences Po, a political-sciences university in Paris. "It's taking longer and longer to find a nontemporary work contract."



Marine Le Pen, Emmanuel Macron spar in France presidential debate

PARIS –
5-7 minutes

The only face-to-face televised debate between France's presidential candidates turned into an uncivil, no-holds-barred head-on clash of styles, politics and personalities Wednesday, with Emmanuel Macron describing his far-right opponent Marine Le Pen as a "parasite" who would lead the country to civil war. She painted the former banker as a lackey of big business who is soft on Islamic extremism.

Neither landed a knockout blow in the 2-hour, 30-minute prime-time slugfest -- but not for lack of trying. The tone was ill-tempered from the get-go, with no common ground or love lost between the two candidates and their polar opposite plans and visions for France. Both sought to destabilize each other; neither really succeeded. For the large cohort of voters who remain undecided, the debate at least had the merit of making abundantly clear the stark choice facing them at the ballot box on Sunday.

Neither candidate announced major shifts in their policy platforms. They instead spent much of their carefully monitored allotments of time attacking each other -- often personally.

Le Pen's choicest barb: that Macron, if elected, would be in the pocket of German Chancellor Angela Merkel. "Either way France will be led by a woman; either me or Madame Merkel," she said derisively.

Macron gave as good as he got and, at times, got the upper hand with his pithy sleights and repeated suggestions that Le Pen didn't have a good grasp of facts. He saved his choicest attack for the closing minutes, in a sharp-tongued monologue that targeted one of Le Pen's biggest vulnerabilities: her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the extreme-right former presidential candidate repeatedly convicted for hate speech and who founded her party, the National Front.

Throughout, Macron portrayed Marine Le Pen as an empty shell, shaky on details, seeking to profit politically by stirring up hatred and the anger of French voters -- a dominant theme of the campaign -- without feasible proposals. He called her "the high priestess of fear."

"Your project consists of telling the French people, 'This person is horrible.' It's to cast dirt. It's to lead a campaign of lies and falsifications. Your project lives off fear and lies. That's what sustains you. That's what sustained your father for decades. That's what nourished the extreme right and that is what created you," Macron said. "You are its parasite."

"What class!" Le Pen retorted.

One of the most heated exchanges was on terrorism -- a top concern for Le Pen's voters and many French in the wake of repeated attacks since 2015. Saying that Islamic extremists must be "eradicated," Le Pen charged that Macron wouldn't be up to the task.

"You won't do that," she charged.

Mr. Macron has proposed a suite of measures to alleviate the problem, including financial penalties for businesses that hire too many workers on temporary contracts and new training programs to prepare young people for the workforce.

But economists caution that such programs will have only limited effects without stronger economic growth overall to create jobs for young and old.

"We finish our studies, and we know that it's not easy to find a job, even if we have lots of degrees," Ms. Laribi says, standing outside an employment office in the north of Paris. "I want to open my own company, but it's really difficult."

Ms. Le Pen has attracted a strong following among young people outside of France's big urban centers, another sign of the sharp geographical divide that is shaping French politics. In Flixecourt, a town in France's economically struggling

north, French youth are voting overwhelmingly for Ms. Le Pen.

The message of leaving the EU, stopping immigration and imposing tariffs at the French border resonates strongly here. National Front, Ms. Le Pen's party, argues that closing France's borders would protect young and older workers from low-wage immigrant labor and manufacturers in Eastern Europe.

"We have to change the system," said Romain Hemery, 25, "Strangers are coming to France, taking our work."

Mr. Hemery, a carpenter, was let go from his job a few years and is now working for his father, who is also a carpenter.

"We have degrees and still nothing," he says.

Write to Matthew Dalton at Matthew.Dalton@wsj.com

Saying France's fight against terror would be his priority if elected, Macron countered that Le Pen's anti-terror plans would play into the hands of the extremists and divide France. This is "what the terrorists expect. It's civil war, it's division, it's heinous speech," he said.

Sitting opposite one another at a round table, the debate quickly became a shouting match. She had piles of notes in colored folders, and referred to them occasionally. His side of the table was sparser, with just a few sheets of paper. He at times rested his chin on his hands as she spoke, fixing her in his gaze and smiling wryly at her barbs.

They clashed over France's finances, its future and their respective proposals for tackling its ills. He scoffed at her monetary plans, saying reintroducing a franc for purchases within France but allowing big firms to continue using the shared euro currency that Le Pen wants to abandon made no sense.

She dismissed his economic proposals with sweeping critiques and bristled at his suggestions that she didn't understand how finance and business works.

"You're trying to play with me like a professor with a pupil," she said.

They also clashed over foreign policy. Macron said he wants to work with U.S. President Donald Trump on intelligence-sharing, at the United Nations and on climate change. He spoke less favorably of Russian President Vladimir Putin, saying on many subjects "we don't

have the same values and priorities."

"We have no reason to be in a cold war with Russia," Le Pen said.

He said that her election would harm France's image abroad, charging: "The world won't look favorably on us."

While Macron was borderline patronizing at times, she sought to make it seem like he has trouble controlling his temper.

"You're interrupting me about every 10 seconds. I sense you're a bit exasperated," she said.

The debate offered risk and reward for both. A major trip-up or meltdown beamed direct into the homes of millions of electors could have dented their presidential ambitions in the closing stages of the intense campaign that has already steered France into uncharted territory. The first round of voting on April 23 eliminated mainstream parties from the left and right and propelled the 39-year-old Macron, who has no major party backing, and the 48-year-old Le Pen into the winner-takes-all runoff on Sunday.

Trailing in polls, Le Pen needed to land a knockout blow in the debate to erode the seemingly comfortable lead of Macron, the front-runner who topped round one, nearly three points ahead of Le Pen.

For Macron, the priority was to prevent Le Pen from making up ground in the race's final days.

Vanessa
Friedman and

Guy Trebay

8-10 minutes

With Clothing, Marine Le Pen Casts
Herself as Mother of France

By Vanessa Friedman

On Wednesday, when the far-right presidential candidate of France Marine Le Pen took the stage in the circular television studio in La Plaine Saint-Denis north of Paris for a potentially decisive debate against her centrist rival, Emmanuel Macron, she did so in a neat navy jacket, collarless V-neck white blouse, pegged trousers and spiky heels. Her makeup was soft, her signature blond flip gently curled at the edges. The classic C-suite palette telegraphed a pulled-together professionalism (she almost matched with Mr. Macron), the shoes suggested an unapologetic femininity and the hair added a motherly halo.

For the country glued to the TV, it made for a strategic statement, even before she said a word.

And it underscored the point made by Samir Hammal, a professor of constitutional law at Sciences Po (the Paris Institute of Political Studies), who said that while “our male presidents have traditionally cast themselves as the fathers of the nation, she has cast herself as the mother.” To this end, she has been a master at dressing the part.

Ms. Le Pen, shown in 2010 on a beach in northern France, has adjusted her look over the years to cast an image of herself as the mother of the country, one political observer said. Credit Martin Bureau/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

After all, one of the things the 48-year-old lawyer and mother understood from the very beginning of her political career was just how large a role her own style could play in reshaping perception, not just of herself and her family, but of their party itself. Whatever you think of her politics, and the broader implications of her rise and that of the far right in Europe, that she has gotten so far means it is important to consider the way she has gone about normalizing what was once dismissed as fringe. In this, clothes have played a central role.

Just because they did so in a country where dress is not deemed an unseemly consideration for serious people, and self-expression

through fashion is practically a sacrament, does not make her tactical use of her wardrobe any less resonant for us all.

Since 2011, when Ms. Le Pen took over the party her father built and moved it away from its anti-Semitic, racist and xenophobic roots to make it a palpable, if uncomfortable, force in French politics, she has been deft about using her own image as a tool in separating herself from the French elites, and about making her formerly toxic party look ... well, like everybody else. Literally.

She has transformed herself, as Mr. Hammal said, from the extremist next door to the “woman next door.”

“All past leaders, from Louis XIV to Napoleon, have used costume to create legitimacy for their power,” Mr. Hammal said. “But Marine Le Pen is one of the best.” She realized early on, he said, that dress could be a tool to help legitimize her party. And that as a woman, with all the greater wardrobe choice and freedom that suggests, she was the ideal person to wield it.

Ms. Le Pen’s much-discussed campaign poster. Michel Euler/Associated Press

It began with a haircut. In 2007, when Ms. Le Pen became the director of strategy for her father’s presidential campaign, she lopped off her Farrah Fawcett locks and adopted her shoulder-grazing flip, going from seductive to Doris Day with a touch of the curling iron. Like Hillary Clinton and Angela Merkel, she adopted a uniform of basic pantsuits, though she alternates them with straight, above-the-knee skirts to emphasize her femininity (see her much-discussed campaign poster with its flash of thigh) and the occasional jeans and trench coat. The message was generic female executive with a patriotic color palette: red, blue and white, the tones of the tricolor, set off against black and white.

She has made something of a signature out of being unbranded, abandoning her Dior sunglasses along with the couture trappings of the patrimony that have long been embraced by the French female political establishment.

Christine Lagarde, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund and a former finance minister, for example, is known for her Chanel jackets and Hermès bags. Rachida Dati, a former justice minister in Nicolas Sarkozy’s cabinet, was shown in a Dior dress on the cover of Paris Match. And Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, a

former mayoral candidate in Paris, wore Dior when she attended the Céline show during her campaign. (She lost, which may have been a signal that things were changing.) Even Brigitte Macron, the wife of Mr. Macron, recently came under fire for borrowing clothes from Louis Vuitton, a practice she began when her husband was finance minister.

By contrast, Ms. Le Pen went so far as to rent a caped, halter-neck blue gown (designer: who knows?) to wear to the Time 100 gala in 2015. Though there was some head-scratching about the choice, the message was meant to resonate with her base at home, not her fellow partygoers.

Indeed, she has been adept at adopting her clothes to her constituencies: wearing a bright red jacket, navy shirt and pumps at a party rally; wrinkled black trousers and a zip-up jacket on the streets of Amiens while talking to striking factory workers.

Mr. Hammal calls this “mirroring,” and for a politician running on a populist ticket, claiming to feel the pain of marginalized working men and women, it has been indubitably effective.

“If you listened to the same speech coming out of the mouth of a man, it would not have the same effect,” he said. “But because of how she looks when she says it, how maternal she seems, it’s much easier to hear.”

After all, in the encyclopedia of political tactics, makeover comes just after Machiavelli. Or, perhaps it should from now on.

Emmanuel Macron’s Sober Suit, Modified as His Numbers Shifted

By Guy Trebay

He is the teacher’s pet, or chouchou, who once dressed like the big kid who literally married his high school instructor. He is an economics geek with a degree in philosophy who headed a government finance ministry while clad in the strictly-tailored power suits favored by members of the Grandes Écoles elite.

He is athletic and mediagenic, a Kennedy-style maverick, a candidate for the digital age and also one whose pretty-boy looks helped propel him onto GQ France’s best-dressed list just as his pragmatic and business-friendly rhetoric carried him to the head of a field of seasoned politicians in the French elections.

He is Emmanuel Macron, the centrist candidate who faces off this

week in the second and final round of voting for the presidency against his rival, the far-right candidate Marine Le Pen. As a 39-year-old political novice, Mr. Macron has repeatedly demonstrated that a lack of experience running for public office is no deterrent to an ability to manipulate image and shift shape on a dime. His clothes have been one of the many platforms he has used to convey his message to the divided population.

Emmanuel Macron, an adviser to President François Hollande of France, heading to a meeting in 2012. Pool photo by Bertrand Langlois

“His style and self-presentation reek of health, vigor and physical prowess,” Anja Aronowsky Cronberg, a senior research fellow at the London School of Fashion and an expert on fashion semiotics, said in an email.

“The sharp suits make him look disciplined, but also energetic,” Ms. Cronberg added, and they offer a defining visual contrast with the rumpled and often fumbling appearance of the departing president, the Socialist François Hollande.

Superficially, Mr. Macron’s sober two-button suits are all but indistinguishable from those favored by most high-level French businessmen and politicians. Yet they have been modified and altered repeatedly as his poll numbers shifted and he sought to look more — although never too baldly — presidential.

In other words, when the dapper tailored suits the candidate wore in both his ministry days and at the start of his campaign — invariably with a sky-blue shirt and Windsor-knotted, solid-color four-in-hand tie — first drew attention for their obvious price tags, he promptly ditched them. “No ordinary person wears suits that cost 1,000 euros,” Mr. Macron’s right-hand aide, Ismaël Emelien, said. “That’s too expensive.”

When his natty midnight-blue suits began attracting the perhaps unwanted attention of the French fashion news media, the candidate immediately lowered his sartorial profile and his expenses. Soon he was spotted dressed as a midprice version of his former self, clad in clothes made for him by Jean-Claude and Laurent Toubol, whose small tailoring shop in the Paris garment district has become a default outfitter of French tyro politicians, from Guillaume Larrivé, 40, a member of the French

National Assembly, to Patrice Bessac, 39, the Communist mayor of Montreuil.

Other youthful politicians have faced the challenge Mr. Macron now does: to balance an image representative of the entrepreneurial France he imagines driving into a digital future

**The
New York
Times**

In French Elections, Alt-Right Messages and Memes Don't Translate (online)

Mark Scott

5-6 minutes

The digital call to arms came shortly after the first round of the French presidential election.

On an online message board frequented by extremists in the United States, an anonymous user last month urged others to bombard social media sites in France in support of Marine Le Pen, the far-right French candidate, by using memes, hashtags and other digital tricks that they successfully employed during last year's American presidential election. Within days, the online thread — and similar discussions across the internet — was flooded with hundreds of users in the United States offering to help the digital campaign.

But the American tactics have not translated overseas.

Despite such efforts, the far right in the United States and elsewhere has so far failed to reach much of the French electorate ahead of the country's vote this weekend, according to a review of social media activity done for The New York Times. The analysis, which was based on a review of millions of Twitter messages related to the election since last summer, showed that more than one-third of posts linked to certain political hashtags originated from the United States, although few went viral in France.

"There's a big cultural gap that these groups have to jump over to expand their message," said Ben Nimmo, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, a think tank, who has studied the far right's recent efforts in France. "The language and iconography of the alt-right is pretty specific. Most of it just isn't going to translate well."

The French presidential election is the latest front in the digital assault by the American far right or alt-right, a diverse and loosely connected group of internet-based radicals who

and a hidebound traditional one. The open-neck shirts of Tony Blair, the former prime minister of Britain, were an image fail. So, too, would a vision of Mr. Macron be in the hoodies and jeans favored by the tech wizards he sees as vital to a French economic future stoked by

have garnered attention by using memes — online satirical photographs with often biting captions — and other tactics to further their views worldwide. The activists, a combination of white supremacists, anti-Semitic campaigners and other far-right types, were closely linked to the presidential campaign of Donald J. Trump, although the extent of their influence remains unclear.

Their efforts have fallen flat in France, with memes often written in English and extremist photos and images that do not resonate with the French electorate. American-style fake news and other digital misinformation have also failed to gain traction in France, where its own domestic issues and ways of campaigning still dominate.

The muted response in France could portend a similar response by voters in Britain and Germany when they head to the polls later this year in their own national elections.

"There has been an effort to spread fake news, but not to the same extent as we what saw in the U.S. campaign," said Tommaso Venturini, a researcher at the médialab of Sciences Po Paris. "So far, it's hard to see any evidence of the impact of fake news on the potential outcome."

While international activists have found it difficult to break into the French political discourse, local campaigners, often from the country's own far right, have had more success.

Ms. Le Pen's social media team has fought a guerrilla-style war to spread its message online, including a dedicated group that shares videos and photos online that attack her political foes. A loose network of Facebook and Twitter users has similarly backed her campaign while disparaging Emmanuel Macron, Ms. Le Pen's opponent and the front-runner to be France's next president. Many of these social media messages have been shared by the supporters of more traditional

start-ups like the ride-sharing app BlaBlaCar or the niche internet retailer Vente-privee.

Still, that he elects to wear suits in almost every setting, outside the ski slopes, is both strategic and a necessity, Ms. Cronberg said. "Those perennial dark suits," she

politicians, including those of François Fillon, a right-wing candidate who finished third in last month's first-round election.

While muted, American-style fake news has also made an appearance.

Ahead of last month's vote, for instance, a fake news site masquerading as Le Soir, a Belgian newspaper, tried to spread rumors that Saudi Arabia was financing Mr. Macron's campaign. Marion Marechal-Le Pen, a niece of Ms. Le Pen, posted the piece on Twitter before quickly removing the link after local media outlets debunked the claim.

Still, for many in France, such outright fake news stories have been met merely with Gallic shrugs. And the digital tactics of international campaigners have been even less effective.

In part, that is because alt-right activists from the United States and beyond have copied the movement's American extremist images and language without tweaking them to entice the French electorate.

After the anonymous internet user called on others on 4Chan, an online message board favored by the alt-right, to start a "Total Meme War" to help Ms. Le Pen, he warned against mimicking American-style attacks. Yet international supporters repeatedly used Pepe the Frog, a cartoon tied to anti-Semitism and racism that has become an unofficial mascot of the alt-right movement. Many did so without realizing the amphibian is often used as a slur against French people.

In the last two weeks, far-right activists have created multiple memes attacking Mr. Macron — complete with captions and hashtags written in English. Ahead of this weekend's election, some of these images on Facebook and Twitter portrayed Mr. Macron as a 21st century equivalent to Marie Antoinette, the out-of-touch last

explained, continue to serve an important function, despite the widespread abandonment of the suit by the wider fashion world. "They speak of respectability and tradition and of how powerful men control others by controlling themselves."

queen of France, while others linked him with false allegations of an extramarital affair.

But such moves have barely registered with French-speaking Twitter users, particularly local nationalists who already bristle at English overtaking French as the world's most popular language. Almost two-thirds of Twitter messages using the hashtag MFGA — or Make France Great Again — have originated from the United States, according to David Chavalarias, a French academic, who created a digital tool to analyze more than 80 million Twitter messages about the French election.

"Tweets written in English don't have much impact," said Mr. Chavalarias, who conducted the social media analysis for The Times. "But if they are posted with photos, then that can have more of an impact."

The online campaigns have also failed to go viral because they have not been picked up by larger media outlets, a fundamental part of the playbook in spreading these messages in the United States.

American news organizations like Breitbart News, the far-right media outlet that supported Mr. Trump's presidential campaign and whose executive chairman, Stephen K. Bannon, is now a senior White House official, helped to share messages with a wider audience in the United States. But in France, no outlet has similarly embraced the international alt-right during the recent election.

"These trolls are trying to make a difference globally," said Whitney Phillips, an assistant professor at the Mercer University who has studied the rise of the far right online in the United States. "But their inability to do so shows how limited of an impact they are actually having."

Far From France, Island Outpost Is Never Far From French Politics (online)

Dan Levin
6-8 minutes

ST. PIERRE, St. Pierre and Miquelon — Christine Hamel remembers when the island of St. Pierre, a foggy French outpost a dozen miles off the coast of Newfoundland, once thronged with boisterous fishermen from Europe, Russia and Canada. The bars were full, ships in the harbor shimmered with a scaly bounty, and life was a contented pastiche of French habits, from fresh morning croissants to nightly digestifs.

The fishing industry is long gone from this speck of French territory in North America, home to 6,000 French citizens. Overfishing and geographic disputes with Canada have left these tiny islands clinging like barnacles to France's vast bureaucratic hull to survive.

So when the French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen alighted on St. Pierre last year and promised to revive its fishing industry and strengthen economic ties to France, Ms. Hamel, 57, a retired police officer, decided to vote for the far-right firebrand.

"France has ignored St. Pierre for too long," she said on a chilly evening in late April, echoing the accusation Ms. Le Pen leveled during her visit here last March, an extremely rare stop for a French politician.

Claude Gautier, 53, a butcher, serving customers at his shop. Mr. Gautier said he was not swayed by Marine Le Pen's nationalist campaign or by her rival's promises of economic deregulation. Credit Aaron Vincent Elkaim for The New York Times

"Why not try Le Pen? Macron won't do anything for us. He's just twisting and turning like a flag in the wind," she added, referring to Emmanuel Macron, the centrist candidate. Mr. Macron, the favorite, and Ms. Le Pen will face each other in a runoff election on Sunday.

For the people of St. Pierre and its sister island of Miquelon, mostly descendants of fishermen from Normandy and Brittany who came in the 19th century for the abundant

cod, the electoral battle in France is a pressing reminder of their relationship with the distant republic.

More than 4,000 miles from France and its struggles with terrorism and cultural identity, the islands are a self-governing "overseas collectivity" bound by the French Constitution. The people vote in French elections, are represented in the French Parliament, use euros and rely on millions of euros in subsidies from France and the European Union, even as most goods are imported from Canada. About 40 percent of residents are on the public payroll. Most young people leave for universities and careers in France or Canada, and many don't return.

"We're French but far away, and we have our own ideas," Jean-Pierre Jezequel, 63, a retired technician, said as he sipped an aperitif at Le Baratin, a bar not far from Général de Gaulle square.

"We're French but far away, and we have our own ideas," said Jean-Pierre Jezequel, 63, a retired technician. Aaron Vincent Elkaim for The New York Times

Over the din of a televised soccer game, Mr. Jezequel said that the European Union, which a few years ago gave the archipelago 26 million euros spent on new ferry boats to Newfoundland and other infrastructure, has a big impact on their daily lives.

Mr. Jezequel voted for Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the far-left candidate who won the first electoral round in the islands, but said he planned to vote for Mr. Macron — who favors keeping France in the European Union — in the second. "Le Pen wants out of Europe and that can be dangerous for us." Ms. Le Pen finished second and Mr. Macron third.

He has little hope the next government will be able to steady St. Pierre's listing fortunes. Efforts to boost tourism from Canada have been thwarted by a stronger euro and exorbitant travel costs that often make flights to Quebec and beyond more expensive than those from Montreal to Paris, given the lack of demand or competition.

Yet Mr. Jezequel is proud of the French culture etched into St. Pierre's old bones. "We have good

food and good wine, so it's still paradise," he said.

Posters of the presidential candidates lining the streets, which have names like Rue Louis Pasteur and Rue de Paris. Few people speak English, and everyone greets each other with a double kiss on the cheeks. Aaron Vincent Elkaim for The New York Times

Nobody here needs reminding that St. Pierre is a part of France. On a recent afternoon, posters of the presidential candidates and Miss France contestants graced windows around the town, a rainbow of colorfully painted clapboard houses lining narrow streets with names like Rue Louis Pasteur and Rue de Paris.

On a recent morning, bakeries were redolent with the scent of warm baguettes. One shop displayed a sign emblazoned, "Je Suis Charlie," a popular slogan of solidarity for the victims of the 2015 attack on the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris. A group of men tossed steel balls in a lively round of pétanque, a lawn bowling game played mostly in Provence. Few people speak English, and everyone greets each other with a double kiss on the cheeks.

Many residents are temporary transplants from France lured by hefty government bonuses to work as police officers, teachers or administrators. But Roman Bourgeois, 33, a native of Burgundy, arrived last year on his own to share his passion for wine. These days he works in the main imported-goods store, which sells more than 250 kinds of French wines and numerous types of pâté de foie gras.

"I'm very happy to be disconnected from France's problems with security and unemployment," he said, holding a \$1,635 bottle of Château Margaux 2005. "Here people know how to live together. In France we're losing that."

The shoreline of St. Pierre. The fishing industry is long gone because of overfishing and geographic disputes with Canada. Aaron Vincent Elkaim for The New York Times

Claimed by France in 1536, the archipelago spent the next few centuries in a colonial tug of war

with Britain before becoming French for good in the early 1800s, the result of negotiations to preserve France's access to the cod then teeming in its surrounding waters. During Prohibition, Americans bootleggers used these shores as a hub for Canadian liquor smuggled into the United States. In World War II, supporters of the French Resistance seized the islands, which were then a colony under Vichy rule.

In the 1970s, Canada and France established a maritime boundary between Newfoundland and the archipelago. But they continued to dispute fishing rights until 1992, leaving a baguette-shaped corridor to international waters. An international moratorium on cod and flounder that year cost hundreds of jobs, which have not returned.

"We are still looking for our economic future but haven't found it," Karine Claireaux, St. Pierre's mayor and a French senator, said in an interview at her office as the tricolor flapped outside. The islands have developed a small scallop farming industry, and each summer, up to 15,000 tourists arrive, often by cruise ship. A few years ago, the European Union installed a ground sensor station for its Galileo global satellite navigation system on St. Pierre.

Ms. Claireaux said she has tried to emphasize the islands' geographic importance to the candidates. "Thanks to St. Pierre and Miquelon, the sun never sets on France," she said.

Still, some locals would prefer to get less attention from their biggest benefactor. "Before we were more free, but now the administrators are trying to push all the French regulations on us," said Claude Gautier, 53, the latest in a family line of St. Pierre butchers going back more than 150 years. Mr. Gautier said he was not swayed by Ms. Le Pen's nationalist campaign, or by her rival's promises of economic deregulation.

"We have to choose between two sicknesses," he said. "At least in St. Pierre there's less chance of catching something."

Le Pen vs. Macron: A guide to France's presidential run-off vote (online)

7-9 minutes

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

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

May 4 at 1:00 AM

This weekend, French voters will return to the polls for the second round of voting in the country's presidential election.

The election is being watched closely around the world for more reasons than one. Marine Le Pen, perhaps the most visible figure on the European far right, is one of two contenders for the top French political spot, but her rival, centrist Emmanuel Macron, also represents a significant break from the past.

Here is a WorldViews guide to the big vote.

What happens Sunday?

Voters will head to the polls Sunday to cast a vote for the next president of France. Polls will be open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. local time (voting is extended to 8 p.m. in some areas). Exit polls will be released shortly afterward, with final results expected within a few hours. Whichever candidate has the most votes on that day will be inaugurated within approximately 10 days.

There are two candidates in this, the second round of the French election:

- *Le Pen of the National Front*: A high-profile figure in the race internationally, Le Pen is expected to lead the party her father founded in 1972 to one of its best election results. Le Pen, 48, has struggled to move the National Front past its far-right core, but she has seen new support from young voters and female voters. Her policies include pulling out of the euro currency and major

restrictions on immigration and free movement across borders.

- *Macron of the En Marche (Onward) movement*: In the face of what initially seemed to be a polarized political landscape, Macron — a former investment banker who was educated at elite schools and became a Socialist economy minister — has managed to become the voice of “radical centrism.” The 39-year-old is hoping to become the youngest president in French history, and he aims to do so without the backing of a major party. Voters seem to have been enticed by his moderate rhetoric and plans to lower taxes and expand health care, but critics argue that his policies may fail to entice embittered voters to the polls.

What do the polls say?

The polls show Macron as a clear favorite over Le Pen, with a lead of as much as 20 percent. It's worth noting that the polls were also remarkably accurate in the first round of voting -- which bodes well for the second round, which is generally easier to estimate.

Claire Durand, president of the World Association for Public Opinion Research and a professor at the University of Montreal, told WorldViews last month that she thought the second-round votes would be accurate. “They've never missed the second-round vote,” Durand said. “In fact, they usually have it perfectly.”

However, it is possible that Le Pen is undervalued. Notably, there seems to be little appetite among leftist voters to back Macron, despite concerns about a potential far-right presidency.

How did the candidates do in the first round?

There were 11 candidates in the first round of voting, held April 23.

Macron came first with 24.01 percent of the vote, followed by Le Pen with 21.30 percent, Francois Fillon of the center-right Republicans with 20.01 percent, leftist Jean-Luc Mélenchon of the Unsubmissive France movement with 19.58 percent and Benoît Hamon of the center-left Socialist Party with 6.36 percent. As no single candidate got more than 50 percent of the vote (far from unusual in France), Macron and Le Pen were selected for the second round.

Post-vote analysis has shown that Macron performed best in urban areas, including big cities such as Paris, Bordeaux and Lyon. Le Pen's support was more often in rural areas, including the south and the northeast, where deindustrialization had helped grow National Front support.

Why is this year's election so unusual?

This year, neither of France's major parties — the Republicans or the Socialists — made it through to the second round of voting.

This is a major shift. Since the current voting system was introduced in 1965, at least one of these two wings of mainstream French politics has been in the runoff; usually both were. This is partly because of some unique circumstances in 2017. Republican Fillon had been seriously tarnished by corruption allegations, while the record unpopularity of Hollande is a big factor in Socialist Hamon's slim odds.

However, it also seems to tie into a growing dissatisfaction with mainstream political parties that can be seen in other parts of Europe, too.

What happened the last time a far-right candidate got this far in France?

Marine Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, unexpectedly entered the runoff in the 2002 election, confounding experts who had widely been expecting him to lose out to two mainstream politicians. The surprise and shock prompted voters of all stripes to come out in the second round of votes against Le Pen, ultimately handing him easily

the biggest runoff defeat in the history of the French Fifth Republic.

But history may not repeat itself. Under the younger Le Pen's leadership, the party has notably outperformed her father in regional and European elections.

Additionally, in 2002, the diverse political world united in what was called a “Republican Front” against the older Le Pen. Nearly 2 million people took part in protests, while French politicians of all stripes asked their supporters to vote for conservative Jacques Chirac. This year, a united front is nowhere to be seen; some prominent figures such as Mélenchon have refrained from endorsing Macron.

What happens next?

Even after the results come out Sunday, the election won't really be over. There will also be an election to select the French Parliament in June — and that vote also has two rounds.

The parliamentary elections are important in France's semi-presidential system: Although a French president is the head of state, the prime minister is the head of government and much of the day-to-day work of policymaking happens in France's parliament, the National Assembly. Generally, the president and the premier are of the same party but sometimes they are not. This is known as “cohabitation” in France, and when it has happened in the past, French premiers have gained significant control over the policymaking process.

This is especially important this year, as neither Macron nor Le Pen is likely to have significant parliamentary backing (Le Pen in particular would struggle, as mainstream parties have vowed not to work with her). The end result may be uncertainty, instability, or both.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington



5-7 minutes

(Reuters)

Supporters of centrist French presidential candidate Emmanuel

In French debate, insults fly (online)

By James McAuley

Macron gathered in Paris to watch him clash with far-right candidate Marine Le Pen during a heated televised debate that covered their two visions of France's future. Supporters of centrist French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron gather in Paris to watch him clash with far-right candidate Marine Le Pen during a heated televised

debate that covered their two visions of France's future, the euro and how to fight terrorism. (Reuters)

PARIS — At the end of France's contentious presidential campaign, Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen faced off Wednesday in a televised debate marked by hostility and insult.

The event was intended as a final exchange between the two candidates left standing before the second and final round of the vote — a contest that, this year, could determine the future of the European Union.

But despite the stakes, the event rarely reached the level of the highly

detailed policy discussions that typically characterize French political discourse. In a spectacle that mirrored the interactions between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in the U.S. election last fall, Macron and Le Pen went for the jugular.

"Your project is to live off fear and lies — that is what your father lived off," Macron said to his opponent, scoffing across the table. He was referring to Jean-Marie Le Pen, the father of the Marine Le Pen who co-founded the National Front in the mid-1970s and who has repeatedly referred to the Nazi gas chambers as a "detail" of history. Throughout the campaign, Marine Le Pen, in an attempt to "de-demonize" her party, has struggled to shirk the association with her father.

For her part, Le Pen wasted no time in going after Macron, a former investment banker running under an independent banner, as the epitome of the financial elite that she, as an advocate of economic protectionism, has railed against for months. "I hope we won't learn that you have an offshore bank account in the Bahamas," she

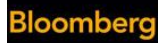
said to her opponent. "I hope."

(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)

She also targeted Macron as the embodiment of the globalized, open society guaranteed by the European Union from which she has said she would remove France if elected. In a remark that played on the concept of gender, which she has been careful to employ throughout the campaign, Le Pen said: "In any case, France will be headed by a woman — either me, or Madame Merkel."

Le Pen has repeatedly used German Chancellor Angela Merkel as a lightning rod in the election, claiming that the latter represents the European Union's threat to France's national sovereignty, now in jeopardy thanks to austerity and the migrant crisis.



Le Pen Tirade Meets Logic of Macron in Brutal French TV Duel

@HeleneFouquet

More stories by Helene Fouquet

6-7 minutes

by , , and

3 mai 2017 à 15:55 UTC-4 4 mai 2017 à 07:28 UTC-4

- Macron calls her fear-monger, she brands him global capitalist
- Centrist Macron leads by about 20 points before Sunday runoff

Marine Le Pen unleashed a barrage of attacks on her presidential rival Emmanuel Macron as she tried to close a gap of some 20 percentage points in the only head-to-head debate of the French election campaign.

Le Pen, 48, said her centrist opponent was the candidate of the capitalist elite, and a friend to terrorists, who planned to shut down factories, schools and hospitals. Macron said Le Pen's broadsides against state bodies meant she was unfit to lead the country as she struggled to defend her plans to leave the euro.

French Election: Full Coverage

Candidates clash as debate turns personal.

Source: Bloomberg

"You have threatened public employees," Macron, 39, said as his opponent chuckled on the other side of the table during the almost three-hour debate Wednesday night. "Your words show that you are not worthy to be the defender of our institutions."

A snap survey of 1,314 likely voters by polling firm Elabe showed that 63 percent of respondents rated Macron as the winner and 34 percent picked Le Pen.

With just three days to go before French voters settle the most turbulent election in the country's modern history, Le Pen argued for new border restrictions to protect the French people from foreign competition and terrorism, and an exit from euro, reversing 60 years of European integration.

Brutal Clash

The clash was brutal from the get-go, and the general consensus from commentators was that it wasn't a particularly dignified debate. "It was like a schoolyard brawl," said Emmanuel Riviere, managing director of pollster Kantar Public France. "The candidates went straight for the jugular. Le Pen started it. But Macron also played his part."

Both candidates justified the nasty tone on Thursday. "It was severe, but that's because for the first time ever the French have a real choice,"

"You are not standing up to Madame Merkel — you are with her," she continued, likely referencing Macron's visit to Berlin earlier this year, where he appeared alongside the chancellor and where he spoke in English — a sign, for Le Pen and other critics, of his cosmopolitanism.

Macron was relentless in his references to French history, and especially the Le Pen family's role in denying it. Jean-Marie Le Pen is a convicted Holocaust denier and has been accused of committing acts of torture in France's bloody Algerian War, fought between 1954 and 1962. Despite distancing herself from her father, Marine Le Pen recently denied that France was responsible for an infamous deportation of Jews from Paris in World War II, even though French police had carried out their arrests.

"What you propose is an exit from history," Macron said.

"Madame Le Pen, France deserves better than you."

At the same time, the presence of a National Front candidate in a presidential debate of this kind was

Le Pen said on RMC Radio. "Before, the candidates agreed on everything. I want to wake up the French people."

Macron said on France Inter that "at a certain moment you feel dirtied being in a debate like that, but you have to confront the lies. On the economy, it's important that our citizens understand the dangers of what she proposes."

Le Pen's father said she lacked stature in the debate, describing the outcome of the confrontation as a tie.

"I found the first half hour pretty boring and probably incomprehensible for the big majority of viewers," Jean-Marie Le Pen, founder of the far-right National Front party, told RTL radio on Thursday. "That's perhaps good for Emmanuel Macron, but it wasn't good for Marine Le Pen who lacked stature."

Fear Mongering

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During the debate at St. Denis outside Paris, Le Pen told Macron he has "a soft spot for Islamic fundamentalism." More than 200 people have been killed by terrorists in France since the start of 2015, and Le Pen said her rival was supported by an imam expelled from

historic. In 2002, when Jean-Marie Le Pen shocked pollsters by landing in the second and final round of the vote, Jacques Chirac, France's incumbent conservative president, refused to debate him. The practice was standard even in basic television interviews: no air time was to be given to candidates from an extremist, right-wing fringe.

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"Faced with intolerance and hatred, no debate is possible," Chirac said at the time.

In 2017, however, Marine Le Pen has been more than present on the airwaves as well as on social media.

"It's time to put France back in order," she said Wednesday, during the debate. "It's time to make the choice of France."

Although the most recent poll still place Macron ahead in the race with a comfortable lead — roughly 59 percent of the vote — Le Pen is still expected to win 41 percent.

France last month for posing a threat to public order. Macron countered that she was playing politics with the insecurities of the French people and lying to her supporters.

"I'm looking at the high priestess of fear-mongering," he said. "You are a product of the system that you denounce, you live off it. You are a parasite."

After early exchanges about security and retirement, as each played to their base without scoring points, Le Pen ran into trouble when Macron mockingly cross-examined her plans to replace the euro with two separate currencies. Things got worse for her when she raised his personal finances, only for Macron to counter by bringing up a court probe into her party funding.

"Marine Le Pen went into this as the favorite to win the debate, but it was Macron who came closer and that may have electoral consequences," said Bernard Sananes, a pollster at Elabe.

'Merkel's Blessing'

Macron said Le Pen's policy proposals were full of holes, both on security and economics, and she was unprepared to govern the country. While the nationalist arrived on set carrying a ream of notes, her younger rival spoke without prompts.

For more on how the presidential race has played out on social media, check out the *Decrypted* podcast:

"Look in your files," Macron told Le Pen over and over as she mixed up the details of her arguments. "The French people will understand that

you have nothing to propose."

Le Pen made multiple attempts to dismiss Macron for his record as a former investment banker and a minister in the unpopular outgoing government of Francois Hollande. She called him "Mister Economy Minister," "the candidate of savage

globalization" and labeled the euro "the bankers' currency."

"The France you are defending, isn't France," she said. "It's a trading floor."

She told him he'd traveled to Berlin to get the blessing of German Chancellor Angela Merkel for his policy plans, playing on French

concerns that their country plays second fiddle within the European Union.

"France will be run by a woman whatever happens," Le Pen said. "Either by me or by Mrs. Merkel."

The two journalists hosting the debate barely got a word in.



French election: Le Pen, Macron trade jabs in final TV debate

By Ray Sanchez, Melissa Bell and

James Masters, CNN

- Presidential candidates debate ahead of Sunday's runoff
- Le Pen, Macron argue over economics and leadership

(CNN)Far-right nationalist Marine Le Pen and independent centrist Emmanuel Macron came out swinging from the start of Wednesday's only televised head-to-head debate of the presidential election.

Le Pen immediately blasted Macron as a cold banker who would worsen unemployment levels and allow the finance sector to plunder the economy. She called herself the "candidate of the people, of the France we love."

Macron shot back that Le Pen lacked finesse and, for many years, has profited on the anger of the French people and promoted the "spirit of defeatism."

What to know about Emmanuel Macron 01:26

For more than two hours they sparred in the last chance to convince voters ahead of Sunday's election that they are qualified to lead a nation, which has become increasingly fractured over the current government's inability to cope with concerns around immigration, integration and an ailing economy.

In the end, 63% of those who participated in survey after the debate found Macron more convincing than Le Pen, according to pollster Elabe, which provided results for CNN affiliate BFMTV.

Lots of accusations, little moderation

The candidates sat across from each other at the Paris event -- often speaking over each other as moderators tried unsuccessfully to interrupt them.

All night, Le Pen portrayed her opponent as out of touch and elitist. Macron dismissed his rival as a divisive figure with no political

platform beyond her extremist views.

At one point, Le Pen chastised her younger opponent.

"Don't play with me," she said. "Don't play teacher and pupil. It's not my thing."

Macron, she said, was the candidate of corporate interests. "You defend private interests," she said. Macron accused Le Pen of lacking a strategy to turn the economy around.

"We must give our small and medium-sized enterprises the opportunity to create more jobs," Macron said.

He added, "Your strategy is simply to say a lot of lies and say everything that is wrong."

Terrorism among hot topics

The candidates traded barbs on the highly charged issue of terrorism.

Le Pen accused Macron of lacking firmness and of being "indulgent against Islamic terrorism." She vowed to immediately expel all foreigners identified on a terror watch list and to strip people suspected of Islamic extremism of their French nationality.

"We have to make sure the territory is protected," she said. "That is something I would do immediately once in power."

She added, "We have to eradicate ideology of Islamism in France."

Who is Marine Le Pen? 01:47

Macron said the fight against terrorism would be his first priority, which he would address by increasing the resources of police and security forces and strengthening the enforcement of watch lists "even if it deprives people of some of their freedoms."

"Putting everyone in prison or sending them abroad does not make any sense to me," he said.

Debate covers ties to Europe, US, Russia

An anti-European Union, anti-NATO candidate, Le Pen has previously pushed for closer ties with Russia and has said she would drop the

sanctions imposed on Moscow by the EU.

Macron, a pro-EU, pro-integration politician, favors closer ties with Europe and has said France should do more to solve the migrant crisis.

On Wednesday night, they voiced divergent views on diplomatic relations with Russia and the United States.

Le Pen called Russia a "great nation" and said there is "no reason to wage Cold War" again.

"I think we need to keep our distance from both Russia and US," she said.

Macron expressed his willingness to work with both on issues such as the Syria conflict.

"I will not accept to have my behavior dictated by Mr. Putin, and that's the difference with Mrs. Le Pen," he said. "We will not submit to Russia or Mr. Putin's values, as they are not the same values as ours."

He called the United States a working partner on a number of regional issues.

Macron used the night to attack Le Pen's far-right National Front Party, which he said promoted hatred and "generously dispenses brutality everywhere."

Polls suggest Macron will triumph in the election, but the specter of a mass voting boycott remains.

The debate marked the first time a French presidential runoff candidate has accepted an invitation to debate a far-right opponent.

In 2002, Le Pen's father and founder of the National Front, was denied the opportunity to debate Jacques Chirac after the eventual president refused to appear on stage with him, citing his opponent's extremist views.

If successful, Macron would become the youngest ever president of France.

How in touch are they with voters?

Most had expected that Le Pen, a former lawyer, would shine in the debates, yet, it has been Macron,

the lesser experienced of the two, who has outshone his opponent in larger format events to date.

French election: Is it Emmanuel Macron's to lose?

Macron, at 39, if successful would become the youngest president in the history of France and the nation's youngest leader since Napoleon.

Many see him as a millionaire, former investment banker and economy minister, who remains very much part of the "elite." They are unsure as to how Macron will actually govern given he is not backed by a political party.

He has struggled to connect with those living in rural France and the former industrialized areas which are now suffering with high unemployment.

Both Macron and Le Pen will be attempting to persuade the seven million or so voters who backed Jean-Luc Mélenchon in the first round. The far-left firebrand has so far refused to endorse either candidate.

However there are plenty of people who say they could never vote for Le Pen and since the conclusion of the first round of voting, she has been attempting to widen her appeal.

Last month, she announced that she had temporarily stepped down as leader of the National Front, painting herself as an independent candidate.

Related: Macron, Le Pen, or neither?

What the first round results showed is that she needs to reach out and perhaps play down more extreme parts of her campaign.

She has toned down the prospect of "Frexit" -- France's departure from the European Union -- and has also courted the voters of failed Republican candidate Francois Fillon.

Le Pen smiles with people in front of the Whirlpool factory in Amiens, northern France.

On Tuesday, she gave a speech, which drew accusations of

plagiarism. Her camp defended it saying it was "a nod to Fillon" rather than Le Pen ripping him off, but she can ill afford any further slip-ups.

She has also been outspoken on immigration, insisting she would

curb migration to a net 10,000 people a year.

Her stance contrasts markedly with Macron, a pro-EU, pro-integration politician, who wants closer ties with Europe and has said France should do more to solve the migrant crisis.

The debate will take in 10 different areas of policy including the economy, security and Europe.

Head to head: How Le Pen and Macron compare

CNN's Sebastian Shukla in London and Saskya Vandoorne in Paris contributed to this report.

CNBC : Macron vs. Le Pen — meet the next president of France

Silvia Amaro

4-5 minutes

Eric Feferberg, Joel Saget | AFP | Getty Images

Investors may have started pricing in a victory for centrist Emmanuel Macron in the runoff of the French presidency but the battle against the far-right leader Marine Le Pen is yet to be concluded.

CNBC takes a look at what separates Macron from Le Pen, and why a victory for the former might not be so straight forward.

Who are they?

The far-right candidate has taken on the leadership of the party founded by her father – Jean-Marie Le Pen. Marine Le Pen managed to get through to the second round of the French presidential election as voters have grown concerned with immigration, terrorism and security matters. This is only the second time in French history when the far-right has managed to reach the second round of the presidential vote. Jean-Marie Le Pen disputed the presidency against Jacques Chirac in 2002 but lost the runoff with a difference of about 65 percentage

points. Marine Le Pen graduated from Panthéon-Assas University in Paris with a degree in law.

Meanwhile, Emmanuel Macron would be the youngest ever French president if elected. The 39-year-old politician began his career as an investment banker and though he has served as an economy minister for two years, in the last Socialist government, he has never run for public office until now. At the start of the campaign, most analysts said Macron was running in the 2017 presidential race as preparation for the election in five years' time. But the centrist, independent candidate decided to take his chances even without the backing of the Socialist Party.

What do they want to achieve?

"Regarding Mrs Le Pen's program, the clear primary focus would be on European policy (open negotiation with other member states to bring sovereignty back in member states, including monetary policies), putting an end to the independence of the Bank of France and putting in place economic protectionism," Barclays said in a note after the first round of the election.

Le Pen's platform has been based on a closed-door policy to

immigration and has called for a tax on companies hiring foreign workers.

On the other hand, the bank added that Macron's plan includes "a further labor law, (aimed at making it less rigid) to be implemented before the Summer... Measures to improve governance (ministers will be assessed, and will be renewed every year; insistence on no criminal record) an audit of public finances; proposals on the future of Europe (euro area budget)."

The former investment banker has promised a Nordic-style economic model for France — making government spending cuts of 60 billion euros (\$64.4 billion) while also implementing a stimulus package of 50 billion euros.

What are polls indicating?

The latest polls indicate that Macron will win the runoff this Sunday, but some have shown a narrowing in the gap with Le Pen. An Elabe poll released Tuesday showed Macron winning the second round with 59 percent of support against 41 percent given to Le Pen.

Looking at polls released by Ifop-Fiducial, voting intentions for Macron have dropped from 60.5

percent on April 25 to 59.50 percent on May 2.

Macron is expected to gather most of the votes from the previous contestants, including the socialist Benoit Hamon. However, it is important to take into account that voters from the far left won't necessarily support Macron, after the far-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon, who placed fourth in the first round, refused to support him.

"A number of left-wing figures have expressed scepticism towards Macron's policies on election night, providing only a lukewarm endorsement of the former economy minister," Antonio Barroso, deputy director of research at Teneo Intelligence, said after the first round of the presidential vote.

Furthermore, right-wing voters, who opted for the conservative candidate Francois Fillon could choose Le Pen if their main concern is immigration and, another key factor, is the possibility of a third event, such as a terrorist attack or financial scandal, he added. Fillon started the election as the frontrunner but fell to third place after investigations into the misuse of public funds.

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CBS : Marine Le Pen down in polls for French election vs. Emmanuel Macron, but Facebook data says otherwise

CBS/AP May 4, 2017, 6:02 AM

7-8 minutes

Marine Le Pen, the embodiment of far-right populist discontent in France who has drawn comparisons to Donald Trump, is trailing her opponent in national opinion polls ahead of Sunday's presidential election by a significant margin.

But as Brexit proved in Britain and the election of Donald Trump reinforced in the U.S., opinion polls get it wrong sometimes, and a very different of measure of support suggests Le Pen could give her centrist opponent Emmanuel Macron a real run for his money this weekend.

Hours before the rivals faced off in a heated, personality-bashing TV debate on Wednesday evening, a

social media company released data showing the diametrically opposed candidates with near equal support.

SocialFlow co-founder Frank Speiser says data examining mentions of both candidates on Facebook and other social media platforms in the week leading up to the election suggest they are running in a "virtual dead heat," and thus "any attempts to call an early victor in the election now would be absolute conjecture."

While SocialFlow's data do not discern between positive and negative mentions on Facebook, Speiser says the company used similar methodology to accurately predict Britain's vote to break away from the European Union (Brexit), "to the exact percentage," and Mr. Trump's landslide win in November - both of which took most traditional pollsters by surprise.

Nevertheless, the most recent polling in France gives Macron an advantage of about 20 points heading into the vote, and his performance in the fiery Wednesday night debate -- the only live televised debate to take place before the election -- appeared to bolster his standing.

A snap poll conducted immediately after the debate for France's BFMTV network showed 63 percent of viewers believed Macron had bettered his rival.

Le Pen has long-dismissed polls suggesting she cannot win the election, pointing out to Anderson Cooper in an interview for "60 Minutes" earlier this year that they "also said that Brexit wasn't going to happen, and that Donald Trump wasn't going to be elected -- wasn't even going to be his party's

nominee. Well, they're saying that less and less now."

The Wednesday night debate turned into an uncivil, no-holds-barred head-on clash of styles, politics and personalities.

Macron called his far-right opponent a "parasite" who would lead the country into civil war. She painted the former banker as a lackey of big business who is soft on Islamic extremism.

Candidates for the 2017 presidential election, Emmanuel Macron (R), head of the political movement En Marche!, or Onwards!, and Marine Le Pen, of the French National Front (FN) party, pose prior to the start of a live prime-time debate in the studios of French television station France 2, and French private station TF1 in La Plaine-Saint-Denis, near Paris, France, May 3, 2017.

REUTERS

Neither landed a knockout blow in the 2½-hour prime-time slugfest -- but not for lack of trying. The tone was ill-tempered from the get-go, with no common ground or love lost between the two candidates and their polar opposite plans and visions for France. Both sought to destabilize each other and neither really succeeded.

For the large cohort of voters who remain undecided, the debate at least had the merit of making abundantly clear the stark choice facing them at the ballot box Sunday.

Neither candidate announced major shifts in their policy platforms. They instead spent much of their carefully monitored allotments of time attacking each other -- often personally.

Le Pen's choicest barb came as she argued that Macron, if elected, would be in the pocket of German Chancellor Angela Merkel. "Either way France will be led by a woman; either me or Madame Merkel," she said derisively.

Macron gave as good as he got and, at times, got the upper hand with his pithy slights. In the closing minutes, he used a sharp-tongued monologue to target one of Le Pen's biggest vulnerabilities: her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the extreme-right former presidential candidate repeatedly convicted for hate speech and who founded her party, the National Front.

Throughout, Macron portrayed Marine Le Pen as an empty shell, shaky on details and facts, seeking to profit politically by stirring up hatred and the anger of French voters -- a dominant theme of the campaign -- without feasible proposals. He called her "the high priestess of fear."

"Your project consists of telling the French people, 'This person is horrible.' It's to cast dirt. It's to lead a campaign of lies and falsifications. Your project lives off fear and lies. That's what sustains you. That's what sustained your father for decades. That's what nourished the extreme right and that is what created you," Macron said. "You are its parasite."

"What class!" Le Pen retorted.

One of the most heated exchanges was on terrorism -- a top concern for Le Pen's voters and many French in the wake of repeated attacks since 2015. Saying that Islamic extremists must be "eradicated," Le Pen said Macron wouldn't be up to the task.

"You won't do that," she charged.

Saying France's fight against terror would be his priority if elected, Macron countered that Le Pen's anti-terror plans would play into extremists' hands and divide France.

"The trap they're setting for us, the one that you're proposing, is civil war. What the terrorists expect is division among ourselves. What the terrorists expect is heinous speech," Macron said.

They clashed over France's finances, its future and their respective proposals for tackling its ills. He scoffed at her monetary plans, saying reintroducing a franc for purchases within France but allowing big firms to continue using the shared euro currency that Le Pen wants to abandon made no sense.

She dismissed his economic proposals with sweeping critiques

and bristled at his suggestions that she didn't understand how finance and business work.

"You're trying to play with me like a professor with a pupil," she said.

They also clashed over foreign policy. Macron said he wants to work with U.S. President Donald Trump on intelligence-sharing, at the United Nations and on climate change. He spoke less favorably of Russian President Vladimir Putin, saying on many subjects "we don't have the same values and priorities."

"We have no reason to be in a cold war with Russia," Le Pen said.

He said that her election would harm France's image abroad, charging: "The world won't look favorably on us."

Trailing in polls, Le Pen needed but failed to land a knockout blow in the debate to erode the seemingly comfortable lead of Macron.

For Macron, the priority was to prevent Le Pen from making up ground in the race's final days, and it appears he accomplished that mission -- unless the polls are to be proven wrong, yet again.

Newsweek : French Election: Emmanuel Macron Pulls Ahead of Rival Marine Le Pen After Insult-Filled Debate

By Callum Paton On 5/4/17 at 4:48 AM

3-4 minutes

The two remaining candidates in France's presidential election were expected to come out swinging in the final televised debate and neither disappointed. Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron edged ahead of his rival, the far-right leader Marine Le Pen, after a heated debate filled with more personal jabs than policy.

Over the course of the two-hour-long televised debate the two independent candidates exchanged blows over immigration, security and the European Union ahead of the final round of voting on Sunday.

However, the strongest attacks were personal as Macron called his challenger "the high priestess of fear" and Le Pen called the

frontrunner a "darling of the system and the elite."

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Le Pen, a stalwart of France's National Front (NF) who believes she can replicate the electoral success of President Donald Trump and upset the polls, called Macron "complacent" over Islamic extremism, *Le Monde* reported. She sought to brand the 39-year-old leader of the independent *En Marche!* ("Onwards!") party as the inheritor of the deeply unpopular outgoing Socialist government and an advocate of "wild globalization."

Read More: Marine Le Pen to appoint nationalist, euroskeptic prime minister if she wins

At intervals Le Pen referred to Macron as "Mr. Hollande" and "Hollande Junior," a reference to the sitting President Francois Hollande under whom Macron served as economy minister from 2014 to

2016. Candidates for the 2017 presidential election, Emmanuel Macron (R), head of the political movement *En Marche!*, or *Onwards!*, and Marine Le Pen, of the French National Front (FN) party, pose prior to the start of a live prime-time debate in the studios of French television station France 2, and French private station TF1 in La Plaine-Saint-Denis, near Paris, France, May 3. Eric Feferberg/Reuters

Macron also used Le Pen's own past in his attacks. Addressing "Madame Le Pen," Macron drew attention to Le Pen's far-right father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who stood as a presidential candidate in 2003 and lost in the second round. Macron called the 48-year-old "the heir of a system that has prospered from the fury of the French people for decades," and said that she played on people's fears and would start a "civil war" if elected.

The En Marche! leader scored points against the NF policy of withdrawing from the European single currency, the euro—Le Pen looked uncomfortable discussing the subject, and Macron called the policy "nonsense." Le Pen looked stronger attacking Macron over his closeness to Europe. "France will be led by a woman, either me or Mrs Merkel," she said, accusing Macron of being "submissive" to the German leader.

According to a poll by the Elabe group for the BFM television channel, 63 percent of those interviewed in the immediate aftermath of the debate found Macron more convincing, versus 34 percent for Le Pen, AFP reported.

An average of national polls after the debate showed Macron ahead with around 59 percent of the vote, with Le Pen on 41 percent.



Marine Le Pen, Emmanuel Macron Debate Before French Election

John Leicester / AP

5-7 minutes

(PARIS) — The only face-to-face televised debate between France's presidential candidates turned into an uncivil, no-holds-barred head-on clash of styles, politics and personalities Wednesday.

Emmanuel Macron called his far-right opponent Marine Le Pen a "parasite" who would lead the country into civil war. She painted the former banker as a lackey of big

business who is soft on Islamic extremism.

Neither landed a knockout blow in the 2½-hour prime-time slugfest — but not for lack of trying. The tone

was ill-tempered from the get-go, with no common ground or love lost between the two candidates and their polar opposite plans and visions for France. Both sought to destabilize each other and neither really succeeded.

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Macron gave as good as he got and, at times, got the upper hand with his pithy slights. In the closing minutes, he used a sharp-tongued monologue to target one of Le Pen's biggest vulnerabilities: her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the extreme-right former presidential candidate repeatedly convicted for hate speech and who founded her party, the National Front.

Throughout, Macron portrayed Marine Le Pen as an empty shell, shaky on details and facts, seeking to profit politically by stirring up hatred and the anger of French voters — a dominant theme of the campaign — without feasible proposals. He called her "the high priestess of fear."

"Your project consists of telling the French people, 'This person is horrible.' It's to cast dirt. It's to lead a campaign of lies and falsifications. Your project lives off fear and lies. That's what sustains you. That's what sustained your father for decades. That's what nourished the extreme right and that is what created you," Macron said. "You are its parasite."

"What class!" Le Pen retorted.

One of the most heated exchanges was on terrorism — a top concern for Le Pen's voters and many French in the wake of repeated attacks since 2015. Saying that Islamic extremists must be "eradicated," Le Pen said Macron wouldn't be up to the task.

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"The trap they're setting for us, the one that you're proposing, is civil war. What the terrorists expect is division among ourselves. What the

terrorists expect is heinous speech," Macron said.

Sitting opposite one another at a round table, the debate quickly became a shouting match. She had piles of notes in colored folders, and referred to them occasionally. His side of the table was sparser, with just a few sheets of paper. He at times rested his chin on his hands as she spoke, fixing her in his gaze and smiling wryly at her barbs.

They clashed over France's finances, its future and their respective proposals for tackling its ills. He scoffed at her monetary plans, saying reintroducing a franc for purchases within France but allowing big firms to continue using the shared euro currency that Le Pen wants to abandon made no sense.

She dismissed his economic proposals with sweeping critiques and bristled at his suggestions that she didn't understand how finance and business work.

"You're trying to play with me like a professor with a pupil," she said.

They also clashed over foreign policy. Macron said he wants to work with U.S. President Donald Trump on intelligence-sharing, at the United Nations and on climate change. He spoke less favorably of Russian President Vladimir Putin, saying on many subjects "we don't have the same values and priorities."

"We have no reason to be in a cold war with Russia," Le Pen said.

He said that her election would harm France's image abroad, charging: "The world won't look favorably on us."

While Macron was borderline patronizing at times, she sought — but failed — to make it seem like he has trouble controlling his temper, which stayed fairly even throughout.

"You're interrupting me about every 10 seconds. I sense you're a bit exasperated," she said.

The debate offered risk and reward for both. A major trip-up or meltdown beamed direct into the homes of millions of electors could have dented their presidential ambitions in the closing stages of the intense campaign that has already steered France into uncharted territory. The first round of voting on April 23 eliminated mainstream parties from the left and right and propelled the 39-year-old Macron, who has no major party backing, and the 48-year-old Le Pen into the winner-takes-all runoff on Sunday.

Trailing in polls, Le Pen needed but failed to land a knockout blow in the debate to erode the seemingly comfortable lead of Macron, the front-runner who topped round one, nearly three points ahead of Le Pen.

For Macron, the priority was to prevent Le Pen from making up ground in the race's final days. Mission accomplished.



France's Macron and Le Pen slug it out in no-holds-barred debate before Sunday's presidential election

Kim Willsher

6-7 minutes

French presidential candidates Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen faced off in a combative live television debate that veered into ill-tempered exchanges on Wednesday evening.

Finding no subject on which they could agree, the pair clashed over how to deal with unemployment, terrorism, taxes and health provisions.

Le Pen, the candidate of the far-right National Front, accused the centrist Macron of being soft on terrorism. Macron said the terrorist threat was the priority for years to come. She insisted those on security lists for having fundamentalist sympathies must be immediately expelled, and those with dual nationality should be stripped of their French citizenship. Macron responded that those with

suicidal intentions did not care much about their nationality.

Macron repeated several times that Le Pen was "talking nonsense."

At one point, when Le Pen called for cheaper medicines, Macron retorted that 80% of drugs were made abroad and since she wanted to tax imports, this would make them more expensive.

The pair continued to snipe at each other in a fractious display of opposing views.

Summing up, the nationalist Le Pen said: "People may say I'm old-fashioned, but I like France as it is, with its culture, heritage, language and borders. Without these borders we aren't free and independent. Mr Macron, you want France to be open to mass immigration just so you can put downward pressure on wages. ... That's your plan to weaken France."

In a blistering response in which he called Le Pen "a parasite," Macron

responded: "Marine Le Pen, your tactic is to sully the reputation of your adversary. You don't care about the country. It is all falsification and lying. ... I want a real renewal of France, a new face for France, and one that is not extreme right. The country deserves better."

Just four days from Sunday's second-round runoff, both candidates were hoping the face-to-face debate — the only one planned — would persuade the 18% of French voters who are still undecided or said they would not bother to vote, according to an Elabe opinion poll.

Various opinion polls concur that Macron is on track to win. Heading into the debate, he was favored by about 60% of voters, with Le Pen trailing at 40%, figures that have remained stable since the first-round vote on April 23.

Both candidates are looking to pick up support from the two main

defeated candidates, conservative Francois Fillon and the hard left's Jean-Luc Melenchon. The candidate of the ruling Socialist Party, Benoit Hamon, came fifth in the first round vote. Fillon and Hamon have endorsed Macron. Melenchon, regarded as a French Bernie Sanders, has been fiercely criticized for refusing to support either candidate, although he has urged his supporters not to give "one single vote" to Le Pen.

Macron vs. Le Pen: The French presidential candidates in their own words »

Macron, an independent running with the En Marche! (Onward!) political movement, had promised the debate would be "hand-to-hand combat," with the aim of exposing the holes in Le Pen's anti-Europe, anti-euro, anti-immigration program that he has described as "dangerous."

In recent days, Le Pen has appeared backtrack on pledges to

pull France out of the euro currency and return to the French franc, and to organize a Brexit-style referendum on France leaving the European Union. These proposals are popular with her National Front supporters, but have alienated her from mainstream conservative voters whose ballots she needs to win on Sunday.

Le Pen's avowed aim was to portray her rival, who has never held an elected post, as naive, inexperienced and a clone of the deeply unpopular François Hollande, France's outgoing president, in whose government Macron served as finance minister. Since the first-round vote 10 days

ago, Le Pen has launched increasingly aggressive attacks on Macron, who supports the EU and the global economy, accusing him of representing the "Paris elite" against the ordinary French person.

Every aspect of the debate, which ran longer than 2 1/2 hours in prime time, had been agreed to by the candidates or subject to a random draw. Macron sat to the left of the screen, Le Pen to the right, exactly 8.2 feet apart; she drew to speak first and Macron to conclude.

It was broadcast on the state television station France 2 and the private channel TF1. It had stiff competition from a major European soccer final, the Champions Cup,

between Monaco and the Italian club Juventus that was being broadcast at the same time.

Before the debate, Le Pen went on the offensive with an acerbic tweet.

"If Mr Macron doesn't feel comfortable, he can always ask François Hollande to come and hold his hand. I wouldn't object," she wrote.

Throughout the campaign she has frequently referred to Macron's background as a former Rothschild banker. Nicolas Lebourg, an expert on European far-right parties and member of the Jean-Jaurès political think tank, said she was using the

usual "spoken codes of anti-Semitism."

His colleague, Jean-Yves Camus, said he had been shocked by the "rhetorical violence" of the election campaign, particularly from Le Pen.

"The way she describes her rivals shows she regards him not just a political adversary but someone who is her enemy," he said.

If Macron, 39, wins as expected, he will become France's youngest president. His first challenge will be to form a political party and find candidates across the country to stand for legislative elections to the French parliament.

Newsweek : French Election: Emmanuel Macron's En Marche! Would Win Parliamentary Vote: Poll

By Josh Lowe On 5/4/17 at 7:35 AM
3-4 minutes

French presidential frontrunner Emmanuel Macron's new party could storm to victory with as many as 286 parliamentary seats in the June elections, according to a poll.

But the survey, which is the first to cover the parliamentary race since 2014, found that neither party represented by the presidential candidates would win an absolute majority by itself in Parliament.

The poll by Opinionway projects 240-286 seats for En Marche!, 200-210 for the center-right Republicans and their allies the Union of Democrats and Independents (UDI), 15 to 25 seats for the far-right National Front, and a collapse for the Socialist Party, which, it says,

will fall to between 28 and 43 seats from its current 280.

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The final round of the French presidential election is set for Sunday. Macron, the liberal centrist candidate, is expected to win with about 60 percent support from voters, but his far-right rival Marine Le Pen, from the National Front, is registering about 40 percent of support in polls and could still pull off a surprise victory.

Whoever wins will need the support of a prime minister in the National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament, to govern. That makes the June 11 and 18 parliamentary elections crucial.

The prime minister is normally chosen from the dominant party in the assembly: Lawmakers (known as "Deputies") have the power to

sack a prime minister, so the dominant party needs to win a majority (289 or more of the assembly's 577 seats) or make deals with other parties in order to shore up their prime minister.

As the Opinionway poll suggests that neither presidential candidate's party would win a majority, it raises questions about their ability to govern smoothly—though it shows that Macron would find it significantly easier to broker a deal than Le Pen.

Both have run as reformers, albeit of different kinds: Le Pen wants to take France out of the Euro currency and introduce new protectionist economic policies, while Macron hopes to liberalize the labor market and slash public spending while expanding some welfare programmes.

Being forced to deal with other parties could restrict either's ability

to enact their ambitious programmes. For example, if Macron has to rely on left-wing Socialist support, he might find it harder to push through liberal labor policies.

Both candidates will be especially keen to avoid the nightmare scenario for a French president: "cohabitation," where the prime minister in the assembly comes from a different party to the president.

The right-wing premier Jacques Chirac governed from 1997 to 2002 with a Socialist prime minister, Lionel Jospin, which he found exasperating.

But it is important to treat a poll released so early with caution: Parliamentary campaigns are only just beginning, and the result of the presidential race is also likely to have a major impact.

Forbes - Michelson : French Presidential Debate Turns Into Slugfest And Will Not Change Much

Marcel Michelson
3 minutes

The two remaining candidates for the French presidential election sparred in a televised debate on Wednesday evening in what is traditionally a high-light of political life but this time turned into a mud-slinging contest far below the dignity of the office the two contestants are applying for.

The tone was set from the start by extreme-right candidate Marine Le Pen who set out to "pull the mask off" her centrist rival Emmanuel Macron and used insults to try to unseat her opponent who also rolled up his sleeves and, while trying to

remain calm, accused her of lying. Fact checkers found at least 19 false statements by Le Pen, versus one and a half incorrect statements by Macron. It was the first time that the extreme right's candidate participated in the televised debate, as Jaques Chirac had refused to spar with her father Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2002.

The media and a quick poll declared Macron the winner but most people were aghast by the tone of the debate.

With Le Pen fans likely to applaud her combativeness and Macron followers pleased about the way he could show points of his program

and point at the weaknesses in the plans of his rival, the debate is unlikely to change much in the voting intentions.

Polls give Macron a 64-60 percent lead over Le Pen who tried to seduce voters of former center-right candidate François Fillon as well as leftist populist Jean-Luc Mélenchon.

Leading newspaper Le Monde wrote a scathing editorial on Le Pen, stating that "her project is nothing but a demolition plan".

Macron got another boost by an opinion poll showing that his En Marche movement could even obtain a majority in the parliamentary elections in June,

against expectations that he may have to face a majority opposition in the right of the Republicans as well as the extreme right Front National.

An OpinionWay-SLPV Analytics poll for the Les Echos financial newspaper poll found Macron's En Marche! (Onwards!) movement on track to win 249 to 286 seats. Centrist and conservative parties would win around 200-210 seats, the far-right National Front would win 15 to 25 seats and the Socialist left 28 to 43 seats.

Ronchi : Macron's Pyrrhic Win?

Francesco
Ronchi

4-5 minutes

Updated May 3, 2017 2:18 p.m. ET

With Emmanuel Macron's breakthrough in France's first-round presidential vote and his likely victory on Sunday, observers may be forgiven for thinking that the French still support free flows of people and goods across borders. *Au contraire*, Mr. Macron's victory will not represent the triumph of liberalism. France's 2017 presidential election may be remembered as the moment the country's traditional left-right political divide entered into its death throes.

According to a Yougov poll conducted just five weeks before last month's vote, an overwhelming majority of French voters see globalization as a threat to France. Support for the European Union has plummeted in recent years. What's more, the sum of first-round votes for the far-right candidate Marine Le Pen, the radical left's Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the nationalist Nicolas Dupont-Aignan and other anticapitalist candidates approached

50%, the most impressive showing for political extremists in the history of the Fifth Republic.

Sociologically, these candidates represent the French working class. Almost 65% of blue-collar voters supported Ms. Le Pen and Mr. Mélenchon. Culturally, they all bear witness to what political scientist Jan Zielonka defined as the "counterrevolutionary insurgency," or the rejection of the post Cold war, liberal revolution. Their supporters are hostile to free markets and dislike European integration and trade liberalization. More broadly, they stand opposed to globalization and liberal immigration policies.

Mr. Mélenchon's evolving stance on migration illustrates this shift in French politics. While his 2012 presidential campaign focused on a traditional left-wing, multicultural vision of society based on the concept of diversity, in the months before this year's election Mr. Mélenchon developed a more nuanced approach. In July, he accused foreign workers posted to France of stealing local workers' "bread." In his latest book, roughly translated as "The Rebel's Choice," he states "if we don't want people

coming in, it is better if they don't leave" their country.

Thus the French could soon face a thorny contradiction: They may elect a liberal, pro-European, pro-globalization president to govern a country shifting toward antiglobalization, anti-Europeanism and more protectionist preferences.

Mr. Macron's likely victory would by no means be an accident of history. A large majority of French voters support democratic renewal and the rejuvenation of French politics, which the young, former economy minister touts. But Mr. Macron's victory could also be attributed to voters' dislike of Ms. Le Pen's National Front party, which has a history of illiberal views that still horrify many voters, even if they agree with some of the party's ideas.

Should Mr. Macron end up with a mandate from voters who don't fully share his vision for France, he can at least rely on the country's political institutions for support. Unlike other European parliamentary systems with fragile majorities, France's presidential system is relatively stable. Barring an exceptional circumstance, the president is

virtually assured to serve his entire five-year term. Mr. Macron could use that time at the Elysée to push for big reforms.

But what kind of reforms, exactly? If Mr. Macron wins the presidency, he should make the economy more competitive by reforming France's generous welfare state, while also showing that he's ready to fight to protect French workers. That means putting an end to unregulated movement of workers from Central and Eastern European countries to France, and advocating in Brussels to deny China "market economy" status, which would open France's domestic economy further to Chinese competition and disrupt the country's industrial base.

France's growing dislike for globalization can't be discounted. Mr. Macron should pay heed, otherwise he'll find himself the wrong man to lead the country during turbulent times. That would be very bad news for France, and for Europe too.

Mr. Ronchi is a lecturer in political science at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris.



Andelman : France's election is ending in a Trump v Clinton style cage fight

David A. Andelman

6-7 minutes

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

*Paris (CNN)*The French presidential campaign, watched across Europe and across the Atlantic for its potential impact on the future of a united continent, went screaming into its final 48 hours on the heels of a bitter, 140-minute, nationally-televised debate that at times degenerated into a verbal cage-match, leaving both sides claiming victory and the nation exhausted.

It was the first time that center-left candidate Emmanuel Macron and right-wing leader Marine Le Pen had met face-to-face.

The campaign ends, under French law, on Friday evening -- the final 24 hours before Sunday's voting

serving as a day of rest and reflection as both sides return to their corner and lick their wounds. Indeed, many voters having cast their ballots in the first round for candidates who did not make it to the final, at least half the country is going to have to settle for someone they don't want.

Many voters are not happy with the two choices, and it seemed unlikely that many could wind up reassured after Wednesday night's marathon confrontation, watched by an estimated 16.5 million people.

The leading French daily *Le Monde*, which described the exchanges as "brutal and messy," likened the performance to the Clinton-Trump debates: "virulent and punctuated by numerous false affirmations," with Le Pen assuming the style of Trump, pointing out "19 of her lies" that its editors noted, while adding that "Macron did not totally respect facts."

In the end, Macron effectively came out on top since he did himself no harm, apparently maintaining the polling lead he held going in. At the same time, Le Pen may have reassured some fence straddlers

who were wavering over her radical right-wing pedigree.

An instant poll by Elabe for BFMTV

found some 63% of viewers found Macron more convincing than Le Pen in the debate.

This seemed to mirror the 60-40 advantage Macron held going into the evening -- polls that were remarkably accurate in predicting the results of the first-round balloting and that now also show that some

75% of all voters have already made up their mind

. But it is the undecideds and especially the abstentions that could determine the results. These are the people the two sides hoped to convince.

There were few new ideas presented. Both candidates tried from the get-go to paint the other in the least favorable light. Le Pen sought to tie Macron closely to the policies of the current Socialist President François Hollande who he'd served as minister of finance and who failed to run for re-election when his popularity as president plunged to single digits. "Why didn't

you do any of this while you were minister?" Le Pen asked, calling him "Hollande Junior," and an "arrogant candidate of the elite."

Macron sought repeatedly to tie her to the deeply anti-Semitic, bigoted views of her father Jean-Marie Le Pen, who founded the National Front party that she's led for years. "Your strategy is to lie a lot," he snapped at several points. "Exploiting lying and fear, that's what your father represented for years and that is not what I want for France," Macron summed up his view of the contest.

The moderators tried, with limited success, to bring some order out of the chaos of the debate by asking them to discuss central issues of the campaign, to provide a snapshot of programs they sought to spell out when they were not being interrupted by their opponent.

On the economy, Macron wants even closer ties with the European Union to encourage growth and build his globalized vision of the world. He wants to continue to support the euro as the currency and reform the tax code, which Le Pen promptly seized on, saying it

would be a means Macron would use to enrich the corporate titans and financiers who have supported Macron, who once served as a banker with Rothschild Bank. Le Pen in turn pressed her proposal to ease France out of the European Union with an eventual Brexit referendum, while moving France toward exiting the euro as its national currency.

On terrorism and security, there is a substantial difference between the two. Le Pen wants to close French

borders to all further immigration, to thin out the terror watch list of the 11,000 names that security forces are unable to monitor -- stripping all those on the list with dual nationality of their French citizenship, then deporting them; adding 40,000 prison cells; and outlawing organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood. Macron countered, looking directly into Le Pen's eyes: "You are going to spread fear among the people," then pointed out that 70,000 have already been arrested and that closing borders is

useless in an era when terrorists so often use the Internet as a weapon.

On France's international relations, Macron challenged Le Pen on her closeness to Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin. Le Pen countered, saying that France needs to be equidistant between Russia and the United States, adding that she is the "best placed to talk with Trump, with Putin, with Theresa May," the British Prime Minister who is leading Britain out of the European Union.

The conclusion was simply put by Le Monde within minutes after the debate closed. "Two opposing perceptions of the world to come,"

the paper headlined on its website

. "Marked by tensions and false affirmations."

Now French voters will decide -- or at least all of those who can find the enthusiasm to come out and vote.



Air France Shows Signs of Recovery on Improved Bookings, Fares

@_benkatz More stories by

Benjamin D Katz

4-5 minutes

by

4 mai 2017 à 01:15 UTC-4 4 mai 2017 à 03:14 UTC-4

- Business fares jump and Asian demand revives from terror spree
- Group's first-quarter loss narrows at constant currencies

Air France-KLM Group showed signs of a turnaround, with ticket-price declines almost halted in the first quarter as bookings increased and business-class fares surged.

The positive demand-trend continued into April, and Europe's biggest carrier is also benefiting from an increase in cash flow, reduced costs and a declining fuel bill, it said in a statement Thursday. The advances build on an announcement in February that the

group would relax capacity curbs and seek to win back long-haul travelers after full-year earnings rose by more than a third.

"We were among the first to announce that commercial conditions were improving," Chief Financial Officer Frederic Gagey said on a conference call. "What we indicated then has been confirmed since. We have seen a much less negative evolution of the unit revenues from last year."

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Air France-KLM is only just recovering from the collapse in travel that followed terrorist attacks on cities including Paris and Nice. Its cautiousness is reflected in the fact that it provided no forecast for full-year earnings. After years of labor strife, the company is also pushing ahead with plans to start a lower-cost subsidiary, known as Boost, with a fleet of 28 medium- and long-haul planes.

Air France shares rose 0.2 percent to 7.64 euros at 9:08 a.m. in Paris trading. The stock has surged 47 percent this year, valuing the company at 2.3 billion euros (\$2.5 billion).

Lower Costs

Unit revenues, which reflect average fares, rose 4.9 percent in premium classes in the traditionally weak first quarter at constant currencies, while traffic increased 4.2 percent, outstripping capacity gains and boosting seat-occupancy levels to 85 percent. Asian revenues improved and trans-Atlantic bookings were boosted by an easing of the economic situation in Latin America.

Unit costs decreased 1.7 percent in the three months, better than the 1.5 percent reduction forecast for the full year. Cash flow improved by 133 million euros from a year ago. While Air France-KLM's three-month operating loss widened to 143 million euros, the figure was burdened by exchange-rate fluctuations.

Fuel expenses should be "slightly down" over the 12 months, compared with earlier predictions for a 100 million-euro gain. Still, there's a high degree of uncertainty tied to the geopolitical environment, said the Franco-Dutch company.

Air France-KLM said Wednesday that it had submitted proposals for the establishment of the new Boost unit to its pilot representatives. Open for signature until May 31, the plan builds on an outline deal with the SNPL union in February, though Gagey declined to say on the call whether the labor group had backed the final draft.

Chief Executive Officer Jean-Marc Janailac plans to use Boost and low-cost European unit Transavia to lower expenses as Air France-KLM seeks to better compete with long-haul rivals based in the Persian Gulf and discounters led by Ryanair Holdings Plc closer to home. Clashes over cost cuts led to the exit of his predecessor Alexandre de Juniac last year.

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



Retracing a WWI Soldier's Fate in Rural France: The Rise of Ancestry Travel (online)

Laurence Fletcher

8-10 minutes

May 3, 2017 11:28 a.m. ET

A DISTINCTLY un-gallic mural greets visitors entering the small French town of Villers-Bretonneux. Driving into the tree-lined main square you can spot a wall drawing of a young boy gently resting on top of a kangaroo, while next to it a girl cuddles another kangaroo. Nearby, a signpost directs you to the town's Franco-Australian museum. These are some of the many indications that, 100 years ago, this quiet corner of the northern French countryside emerged front and center in a global

conflict that united some unlikely allies.

We (that's me, my Australian wife, mother-in-law and son) were in the area around the Somme River, two hours' drive north of Paris, on the trail of my wife's great-grandfather. Robert Miller, a sergeant in the Australian Imperial Force, fought through most of World War I, taking part in some of its most famous battles, including ones in this part of France.

Like hundreds of thousands of visitors from the U.K., U.S., Canada and elsewhere who are descending on this area to mark the war's centenary (2014-2018), we were turning family hearsay about a relative's war record into a personal-

history tour in the very fields where he fought. Americans head to monuments such as Chateau-Thierry or Belleau Wood to commemorate their approximately 110,000 countrymen who died in the war, while Canadians mourn at Vimy-Ridge or Beaumont-Hamel. Australians flock to Villers-Bretonneux, the site of a huge memorial. "The ties go back to the battle on 25 April 1918," said Lorraine Elyaboure, who works at the town's museum. She told us that Australian troops liberated the town from the Germans and later helped rebuild it. Outside, we noticed children at a local school playing under a huge sign that read "Do not forget Australia."

In the Somme area, patches of dense woodland and quiet villages sit amid open, undulating fields. The river itself, with its swans and water lilies, winds its way lazily west toward Amiens. We drove along narrow, sunken roads and raised causeways between fields, marveling at the region's surprising beauty.

For this personal pilgrimage, we based ourselves in an Airbnb rental a short drive east of the battlefields in the hamlet of Montecourt. Our hosts, Serge and Florence Demeulemeester-Lefol, have spent the past five years converting a derelict barn into a two-story cottage for guests. In our bedroom hung a photograph of Indian soldiers on horseback who took part in World

War I. Outside, the garden and orchard run down to a small tributary of the Somme River.

Northern France, the setting for heavy fighting in both world wars, is today often unfairly associated with flat, industrial wastelands. But it's surely one of the most-overlooked and underrated places in Europe, even if it's not always visitor-friendly. Driving around the Somme area on a Monday we found most shops closed. Where a brasserie is open, woe betide you if you want to eat outside normal mealtime hours. But there's plenty to do. Before we visited the sites where Robert fought, we took some time to scout out the environs. In the pretty port town of Honfleur, about an hour and 45 minutes west of the Somme, we spent a day wandering among the town's brightly painted houses, as street musicians played folk and jazz to celebrate Honfleur's "Festival of Shrimps." We ordered oysters and Belgian beers at Café L'Albatross on the bustling quayside.

Reims, the center of the Champagne-growing region, lies little more than an hour's drive away from the Somme. Its stupendous gothic cathedral was the coronation site for the kings of France. I stood on the spot commemorating the baptism around AD 500 of Clovis, king of the Franks, a key moment in establishing Catholic Christianity in Western Europe.

We took a tour of the cellars of Champagne house Taittinger, followed by a tasting. The warren of tunnels, holding some 3 million bottles of bubbly,

was once part of a Benedictine monastery's cellar. But even here the traces of war aren't far away. A heart carved on the cellar wall, containing a flower and the initials R.F., is dated 1914, when the city's residents sheltered there from the war above ground.

Back in the Somme region, we picked up fresh croissants and a pain aux raisins at a boulangerie a short drive from our Airbnb. They went perfectly with Florence's homemade rhubarb jam and fortified us for the day ahead.

Thanks to a simple online search of Australian Red Cross, conducted a few weeks before our trip, we uncovered an account of the day in August 1918 when Robert was shot and wounded during an attack on German positions. I also found incredible detail in his official war records, including the army oath he signed to "truly serve our Sovereign Lord the King."

The digital trail led us to Pozieres, a village where Robert fought in July 1916 before being injured and evacuated to the U.K. A German bunker captured by Australian forces lay partially intact, opposite a memorial to Robert's division. "Sorry it's taken us 100 years. However, we have never forgotten you," reads a handwritten dedication to one Aussie soldier. This isn't history in glass cases or cordoned off by ropes. It's history you can walk on, touch and relive.

At nearby Mametz Wood, for instance, we paused to stand on the ridge from which Welsh soldiers began a July 7, 1916 attack on

German positions. I crossed the same "no-man's-land"—around 100 yards of bare earth where many Welsh troops were cut down by machine gun fire—into the wood itself. Suddenly the rush of the wind was replaced by the hum of insects and the tap of a woodpecker. I was immediately disorientated among the towering trees, just as the Welsh soldiers must have been.

Trailing our relative then took us south of the Somme River. After a hospitalization in England, Robert returned to France, taking part in the Allied offensive of the summer of 1918 that brought about the war's end (in November). On August 23, he was wounded once again. Red Cross accounts, combined with military history, show his battalion was based between the villages of Proyard and Chuignolles, and was preparing to attack German positions to the east. The troops went "over the top" between 4:30 a.m. and 5:15 a.m., and Robert was hit several hours later, just before reaching the battalion's final objective.

It's strange to think the sleepy villages we passed through are the same ones Robert would have seen a century ago, under very different circumstances. As we drove we tried to imagine his battalion advancing, either along the roads or across the flowering fields.

One final stop remained. Robert Miller died shortly afterward from the wounds sustained in that August attack. Had he survived another month he would likely have outlasted the war, as his unit was soon withdrawn for recuperation.

One comrade, Corporal V. Woodhouse, described him in accounts as "one of his best coppers" (Australian slang for friend).

By dusk we reached his grave, in an immaculately kept cemetery just south of where he was shot. Tracing the footsteps of a man we never met moved us all far more than we expected—and ensured that at least one more soldier's story is no longer forgotten.

ROOT AROUND // 3 AMERICAN RESOURCES TO HELP YOU PLAN YOUR OWN PILGRIMAGE

Americans looking to trace ancestors killed in World War I can search on the **American Battle Monuments Commission's** website, which lists the locations of cemeteries and of individual graves (abmc.gov). **Family Search** lets you view free digitized images of the cards your ancestor filled in when registering for military service, detailing information such as his trade, place of work, physical description and marital status (familysearch.org). The **National Archives** also has images of draft cards for the likes of Louis Armstrong, Fred Astaire and Al Capone (which anyone can view). Many military records were destroyed in a 1973 fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis. However, you can request a copy of the records, if they still survive, in writing or make the request online if you are a next-of-kin of a deceased veteran (archives.gov).



Something to Smile About in Northern France (online)

David W. Dunlap
4-5 minutes

<https://nyti.ms/2p6Xzw3>

"These young French soldiers, residents of one of the French cities long under German rule and reoccupied after the recent retreat, have obtained leave to visit their families and friends. The joyful reunion under the tricolor is here pictured." American Press Association/The New York Times Mid-Week Pictorial, May 3, 1917

Even in this stiffly staged picture, made decades before candid photography was possible, unfeigned joy comes through in the faces of the women we might assume to be Mère (center) and Grand-Mère (right). The devastation

of this unnamed French town by three years of military occupation is equally evident. Neighboring houses have been reduced to rubble.

"Soldiers All: The men and the women who devote their thought and their energy to these things (productive work) will be serving the country and conducting the fight for peace and freedom just as truly and just as effectively as the men on the battlefield and in the trenches." — President Wilson. The photographs show (below) a member of the British 'Women's Land Army'; (above) the first British troops to cross the Somme, at Peronne." British Official Photo — Central News Service/The New York Times Mid-Week Pictorial, May 3, 1917

Elsewhere in The New York Times Mid-Week Pictorial this week was a two-page essay, "Petrograd During

the Russian Revolution as Shown by First Photographs to Reach America." (That would have been the February Revolution that overthrew the monarchy. The October Revolution was yet to come. Petrograd, or St. Petersburg, was then the capital.)

The photograph below, which looks like a moth specimen pinned to a cork board, must have astonished readers who were just getting accustomed to the idea of heavier-than-air flight. The vantage was higher in the sky even than the aircraft being pictured. And it was already clear that aviation, even in its infancy, would change the way war was waged.

"German Trenches Photographed From a Height of 3,000 Feet Showing Another British Air Scout Lower Down: Prior to the beginning

of the British drive from Arras [France] it was announced that the air scouts of [Field Marshal Douglas] Haig's army had thoroughly reconnoitered the German positions and that more than 1,700 negatives had been taken showing the enemy's dispositions along the Hindenburg line. When the British struck it was with the knowledge gained from these photographs before them." Central News/The New York Times Mid-Week Pictorial, May 3, 1917

Times Insider is offering glimpses of some of the most memorable wartime illustrations that appeared in The New York Times Mid-Week Pictorial, on the 100th anniversary of each issue:

Donnelly and Cunningham : The Troops Train to Reassure Europe

Thomas Donnelly
and James

biggest of them is people—having enough and having the right kind. In particular, he needs leaders, from the squad and platoon level up through his principal staff.

Fort Riley, Kan.

The Pentagon has confirmed it will send the Army's Dagger Brigade—the Second Armored Brigade of the First Infantry Division—to Europe this September in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve, the American military's response to Russian meddling in Ukraine.

The announcement signals that President Trump has embraced President Obama's expansion of the U.S. commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. That's good, but unless Mr. Trump delivers on his promise to restore America's military readiness, the brigade will have a hard time carrying out its mission.

Dagger Brigade has long known the assignment was coming and has trained nonstop to prepare for it. The brigade's commander, Col. David Gardner, is a lifetime infantryman with a shaved head and an office packed with dumbbells and protein powder. With six tours in the Middle East and another in Kosovo, he does not excite easily. Dagger, he says, is stretched thin.

Col. Gardner first opened Fort Riley's gates to us late last year. He faces many challenges, which we outline in a just-published study. The

Turnover is the main problem. With 4% of the brigade's personnel changing every month, Col. Gardner and his subordinates work tirelessly to keep troops trained and personnel slots filled. He may have enough crews to drive the tanks, but he has given up hope of having a full complement of dismounted infantry.

At full strength, Dagger has a little more than 4,000 troops. On the day before the brigade loads onto buses for a 1,400-mile drive to the Army's National Training Center in California's Mojave Desert, Col. Gardner has almost as many people as he needs. In reality, when one subtracts the soldiers who are sick, hurt, lame, pregnant, criminally charged, or about to transfer or leave the Army, Dagger is only at 80%. And Col. Gardner knows he'll be lucky to have that when he takes the brigade to Europe.

Dagger's equipment is on the thin edge of readiness, too. More than 90% of the brigade's tanks and infantry vehicles will be taken to the training center, but Col. Gardner expects to deal with a steady stream of major repairs. The M1 tank, in particular, is an old system. It's been repeatedly upgraded, but in relatively small numbers, making maintenance a constant headache.

When parts break, spares are hard to come by and regularly take up to six months to be delivered. To prepare for the training center, Dagger conducted a three-week-plus field exercise at Fort Riley, but the time needed to repair tanks and other equipment cut a week out of the exercise. Of course, there are no timeouts in combat.

How did we get to this point? During the Cold War, the massive U.S. forces that patrolled the West German border—nearly a quarter-million soldiers strong—were the best-equipped and readiest in the Army. Today the "frontier of freedom" in Europe has moved 1,000 miles east and runs from the Baltic to the Black Sea, but U.S. forces have neither moved with it nor retained their size. Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, who commands U.S. Army Europe, says his job is to make 30,000 troops "look like 300,000" to the Russians.

President Obama announced the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) in 2014 to "reassure allies of the U.S. commitment to their security and territorial integrity as members of the NATO alliance." The initiative promised increasingly large summer exercises with allied militaries and new "heel to toe" rotations of Army heavy brigade combat teams.

As usual, however, the Obama administration sent mixed messages. Even while trumpeting the ERI, it continued drawing down

the permanent U.S. garrison in Europe and funding it through the Defense Department's Overseas Contingency Operations account. Even more telling, the administration reduced the overall size of the Army from its Iraq-surge strength of about 560,000 to today's approximately 470,000, without measurably reducing U.S. military commitments world-wide.

Today, the Trump administration is keeping Mr. Obama's pledges but without seriously reversing course on defense spending. Mr. Trump promised the "biggest defense buildup in history," but his Pentagon budget proposal does not provide the funding required to address the personnel and equipment shortfalls that plague units like Dagger Brigade.

When defense experts talk of "strategic insolvency" or generals chart "an ends-means mismatch," they're describing day-to-day life for Col. Gardner and the soldiers of the Dagger Brigade. They're tough people. They know their trade and are too busy to whine. But our country is not giving them the support they need to do their job.

Messrs. Donnelly and Cunningham are, respectively, a co-director and senior research associate at the American Enterprise Institute's Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies.

Appeared in the May. 04, 2017, print edition.

Far Right Vies With Center Left for German Workers

Anton Troianovski
6-7 minutes

Updated May 3, 2017 8:37 a.m. ET

ESSEN, Germany—Guido Reil, a foreman in a coal mine and longtime union member, has been marching on May Day for better pay and working conditions for three decades.

But as soon as he arrived at this week's parade, dozens of fellow marchers surrounded him to try to separate him from the column, chanting "Shut up!" and "Get out!"

The reason: Mr. Reil, for years a member of the labor-aligned Social Democrats, quit the party last year to join the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany. As elections approach here, he and others like him are at the focal point of an intensifying battle between left and right for the votes of the German working class.

"We do not want to provoke," Mr. Reil said, referring to himself and a handful of other AfD backers accompanying him. "We simply want to show that we are normal people."

A protester right behind him held aloft a sign: "Voting AfD is so 1933."

In Germany, exit polls from recent state elections show that working-class voters are more likely than the rest of the population to vote for the AfD, mirroring the preferences of their peers in America's Rust Belt for President Donald Trump and in France for nationalist Marine Le Pen.

"We must recognize that we have AfD sympathizers and AfD voters in our own ranks in rather large numbers," said Alfons Rütger, secretary for Essen of Germany's main metalworkers union, IG Metall. "We aren't reaching them... The fear of losing one's job and the fear of foreigners are more powerful."

Much of the recent political upheaval in Western Europe has stemmed from the weakness of the center-left as working-class voters forge new allegiances. In March, the Dutch Labor Party withered in national elections, drawing less than 6% of the vote and coming in fourth. Last month, 39% of factory workers in France sided with Ms. Le Pen in the first-round presidential election, compared with 21% of all voters, according to pollster Ifop. In Britain's June referendum on membership in the European Union, many working-class voters defied the Labour Party's recommendation to stay in the bloc and voted for Brexit. A similar pattern was apparent in the U.S. last November, when Mr. Trump won 66% of white voters with no college degree, according to CNN exit poll data.

For now the phenomenon has been more muted in Germany, with the Social Democrats—the traditional party of the working class—still near

30% support and the AfD below 10% overall. But here in the Ruhr region, dotted with the relics of coal mines and steel plants that once provided hundreds of thousands of jobs, the traditional left is being challenged.

On May 14, the Ruhr will vote in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia's regional election, where Mr. Reil is a candidate. Ahead of the vote, seen as a preview of the Sept. 24 national election, the AfD is targeting blue-collar workers disappointed with the center-left's past support for pro-business economic reforms and immigration.

"He represents the interests of the little people rather than betraying them," Mr. Reil's campaign poster says.

Mr. Reil, a foreman in the region's last operating coal mine, is at the forefront of the AfD's campaign for working-class votes, having switched to the party last year after

26 years with the Social Democrats. In the city council, he represents Essen's hardscrabble north end, where opposition to immigration is driving people away from the center-left.

"I want all this scum that's washing up here to flow back out," said one 61-year-old electrician who used to vote for the Social Democrats but now backs the AfD. "The foreigners bother me. That's it, really."

Social Democratic officials acknowledge concern about their working-class base drifting to the AfD but say they are confident their chancellor candidate, former European Parliament President Martin Schulz, will minimize those losses. Mr. Schulz has pledged to address "unfairness" in the

economy and to fight "for the Germany of the hardworking people rather than the Germany of the self-appointed elites." He promises improved retirement benefits and new labor protections.

In the Ruhr, officials hope heavy investment in redeveloping hard-hit neighborhoods and a modernizing economy will help them avoid the political fate of the American Rust Belt. But with the unemployment rate at 11.7%—double the national average—Essen Mayor Thomas Kufen acknowledges the risk.

"There are people who have the feeling that no one needs what they can do and no one is interested in what moves them," Mr. Kufen said. "This can indeed provide a breeding ground for right-wing populism or extremism, from the left or the right."

German labor unions, which have close ties to the Social Democrats, are leaving nothing to chance. IG Metall has organized workshops to train functionaries on how to respond to workers in their ranks who sympathize with the AfD. An internal slide presentation earlier this year warned that the AfD "is NOT a workers' party." And yet, the presentation noted, "above average numbers of union members" vote for it.

"There is real bitterness, and very great disappointment, among some of our members with regard to the Social Democrats," said Sebastian Wertmüller, a local head of service-sector union Verdi in Lower Saxony. "Some of these people entered the camp of the non-voters, and now

they think they see a social alternative in the AfD."

At Monday's parade, Mr. Reil got a strong message of anger from his fellow union members. At one point, he ducked under a "Refugees Welcome" banner marchers held inches from his face to hold him back from the main column and dashed ahead, provoking a footrace down the rain-soaked street. It took a few minutes for the group to catch up with him. As the march continued, Mr. Reil was flanked by nine police officers for his own protection.

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**The
Washington
Post**

4-5 minutes

Theresa May says E.U. is interfering in British election

By Karla Adam

these talks are likely to be," May said. "Britain's negotiating position in Europe has been misrepresented in the continental press."

LONDON — Prime Minister Theresa May made an explosive charge Wednesday that European Union officials are meddling in Britain's June election as tensions escalated over looming talks about British withdrawal from the European Union.

Speaking outside her Downing Street offices, the British leader accused E.U. politicians and officials of issuing "threats" that have been "deliberately timed to affect the result of the general election that will take place on the 8th of June."

Tensions between the continent and the United Kingdom have ratcheted up after a German press report about a dinner last week at which May and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker discussed Britain's exit. The leaked account painted an unflattering portrait of May.

May initially dismissed the report as "Brussels gossip," but by Wednesday her tune had changed.

"In the last few days, we have seen just how tough

British Prime Minister Theresa May faced off against opposition Labour party leader Jeremy Corbyn in the final Prime Minister's Questions session in parliament on April 26 before the country's general election on June 8. Prime Minister Theresa May and Leader of the Opposition Jeremy Corbyn clash in the final Prime Minister's Questions in parliament before Britain's general election (Reuters)

(Reuters)

In March, Britain triggered Article 50, the formal mechanism for leaving the E.U., setting in motion a two-year negotiation process between London and the bloc's other 27 members.

May's strong language highlights how poisonous the negotiations have already become. But her remarks also signal a deliberate domestic strategy as May seeks to cast herself in the British election as someone who can go toe-to-toe with European officials.

[Theresa May calls for elections in June amid Brexit fallout]

Earlier in the week, May said she would be a "bloody difficult woman" in the negotiations with the E.U.

Responding to May's speech, Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the opposition Labour Party, said, "Theresa May is playing party games with Brexit in the hope of winning advantage for the Tories in the general election."

Nicola Sturgeon, leader of the Scottish National Party, said that May was "playing a dangerous game" and that her comments could "poison" the atmosphere in future Brexit talks.

May's statement Wednesday came shortly after she met with Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace to officially start the election campaign.

According to a leaked account in a leading German newspaper, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Juncker left last week's dinner with May "10 times more skeptical" that a deal could be achieved.

The two reportedly clashed over the "divorce bill," the rights of E.U. citizens and the timing of trade talks. After the meeting, Juncker was said to have told German Chancellor

Angela Merkel that May was living in another "galaxy."

Merkel then warned that some British officials harbor "illusions" about what is possible in the forthcoming Brexit negotiations.

One of the major sticking points in the early discussions is the size of the divorce bill that Britain will pay the E.U.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

David Davis, Britain's Brexit minister, strongly disputed a report Wednesday in the Financial Times that 100 billion euros (\$109 billion) would be the price tag demanded by the bloc.

"We will not be paying 100 billion," Davis said.

The E.U.'s chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, refused to put a figure on Britain's exit bill. But he did say Wednesday that Britain must settle its accounts before it can begin talks about a future trading relationship with the E.U.

"The clock is ticking," he said.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May Hits Out at EU officials on Brexit

Laurence Norman and Valentina Pop in Brussels and Jason Douglas in London

6-8 minutes

Wednesday after British Prime Minister Theresa May accused European politicians and officials of issuing threats against Britain.

Hours after the EU's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, detailed far-reaching demands for the Brexit divorce deal, Mrs. May said they represented a hardening of the bloc's negotiating stance.

In a televised speech to voters ahead of a June 8 general election, she accused "some in Brussels" of willing the Brexit talks to fail. "Threats against Britain have been issued by European politicians and officials," she said, without being specific.

Those threats "have been deliberately timed to affect the result of the general election," she said.

The heightened tensions followed a dinner between Mrs. May and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker a week ago.

After the meeting, EU officials warned that the British government still had illusions about what it could gain from the Brexit negotiations, and reports of what was described as a disastrous meeting appeared in the German press. Mrs. May said

Updated May 3, 2017 1:13 p.m. ET

Tensions between the U.K. and the European Union escalated

European press reports had misrepresented the British negotiating position.

The ratcheting-up of the rhetoric shows how the negotiations over Brexit, which have yet to formally begin, have the capacity to fall prey to sour relations between the two sides. Nonetheless, Mrs. May may see an electoral advantage in depicting the impending negotiations as requiring a unyielding response.

Earlier, in his first news conference since EU leaders last Saturday agreed to negotiating guidelines for him, Mr. Barnier repeatedly emphasized that Brexit would be painful and complicated.

He laid out new details of the bloc's opening negotiating stance that were in some respects tougher than previously advertised, including ensuring that EU citizens in the U.K. keep their welfare benefits and residency rights for their lifetimes. The more detailed stance must be signed off by EU governments later this month.

Wednesday's negotiating directives weigh in on the three key issues the EU wants settled upfront in the Brexit talks: EU citizens' rights, a British payment to cover past EU financial commitments and the status of the Northern Ireland border. They specifically avoid giving Mr. Barnier a mandate to discuss a future EU-U.K. trade agreement or even a transitional

deal to smooth the economic disruption caused by Britain leaving the bloc.

The EU has insisted there can be no talks on these issues until the key divorce issues are tackled. Mr. Barnier said he hoped that could be done by October or November but that was in the U.K.'s hands.

"Some have created the illusion that Brexit would have no material impact on our lives or that negotiations can be concluded quickly and painlessly," Mr. Barnier said. "This is not the case."

Wednesday's paper said EU citizens in the U.K. and British citizens in the bloc should be guaranteed lifetime residency if they meet the EU's five-year residency requirement.

Those rights should be enforceable for EU citizens who have previously lived in the U.K. but since left and should continue to allow family members of an EU citizen residing in the U.K. to move to Britain in the future, it says. EU citizens should also get the current broad range of housing, tax and other welfare benefits available, the paper argues.

Mr. Barnier said such rights should be directly enforced by the European Court of Justice, the EU's top court, giving it a role in Britain until "well after the U.K. leaves." Mr. Barnier said the court should also have a direct say over other aspects of the divorce deal, setting up a

potential clash with the U.K. government which wants to be rid of EU courts' jurisdiction after leaving the bloc, due in March 2019.

The document also underscores the differences between the EU and the U.K. on the Brexit bill, or the sum the EU wants the U.K. to pay to honor its past spending pledges. It says the U.K. will need to agree on an annual payments schedule, established in euros, meaning Britain will carry the exchange-rate risk. There will need to be specific arrangements on the U.K.'s contingent liabilities with the EU—for example, guarantees on loans made by EU bodies while the U.K. was a member—and Britain will need to continue to make payments for specific funds like the EU's refugee payments to Turkey, the document says.

Also among the U.K. liabilities, the document says, are the full cost of relocating two U.K.-based EU agencies, the European Banking Authority and the European Medicines Agency, to elsewhere in the remaining bloc. EU officials also said on Wednesday that there is no legal basis for the U.K. to be repaid a share of EU assets like property or buildings.

In the past, EU officials have said the U.K.'s exit bill could total €60 billion (\$65.5 billion) but now say it could be significantly higher. Mr. Barnier declined to give any figure.

On Wednesday morning, U.K. Brexit Secretary David Davis pushed back on one latest assessment of the bill, saying it echoed Mrs. May's point that no Brexit deal could be better than a bad one.

"We will not be paying €100 billion," Mr. Davis told ITV News.

In his press conference, Mr. Barnier warned time was running short to ensure a successful deal, which will require burrowing down into details like the correct labeling of EU goods on British supermarket shelves in the days after Britain leaves.

Mr. Barnier welcomed that by calling an early election for June 8, Mrs. May had ensured the next British government would have five years of stability in front of it. He also played down reports that the dinner meeting with Mrs. May, his first with the prime minister, had been frosty.

It was a "very cordial meeting," he said, despite what he said were sometimes "very different" positions on the issues.

—Jenny Gross in London contributed to this article.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Marcus Walker in Berlin, Jeannette Neumann in Madrid and Nick Kostov in Paris

8-9 minutes

Strong Growth Propels Europe's Economy Toward Health

Signs of economic revival in the euro currency zone are multiplying, indicating that Europe is finally healing from a crisis-racked decade.

The 19-country eurozone enjoyed a second successive quarter of strong growth in early 2017, outpacing the U.S. Business surveys point to a further acceleration in the current quarter. Markets are rising strongly as confidence in the economic outlook swells. Corporate earnings are rising briskly from a year ago.

Eurozone politics also appear headed for greater stability than looked likely only a few months ago, although the outcome of Sunday's French presidential election remains a risk. Investors, however, are confident that pro-European Union centrist Emmanuel Macron will beat anti-EU nationalist Marine Le Pen.

Mr. Macron is leading in opinion polls.

Gross domestic product in Europe's single-currency bloc grew at an annualized pace of 1.8% in the first quarter, the EU said, maintaining an acceleration over the past year. The purchasing-managers index in April hit a six-year high, suggesting more improvement to come. Economists say the eurozone could grow by close to 2% this year, a fast pace by the region's standards, especially if France joins Spain and Germany in a more vigorous recovery.

Stronger eurozone growth bodes well for the global economy, which has had to carry a sluggish, export-dependent Europe in recent years. Crucially, the improvement stems mainly from domestic demand, which should benefit companies in the U.S., Asia and elsewhere that sell to the eurozone's nearly \$12 trillion economy. The broadening recovery could also help Europe's political establishment in its contest for popularity against anti-euro nationalists and populists.

At advertising giant Publicis Groupe SA, sales in France grew 12% in the

first quarter. The company tends to be a useful bellwether for the French economy, because its clients are diverse set of French businesses that boost or cut marketing budgets depending on how they are performing.

Publicis Chief Executive Maurice Lévy said the "excellent growth" in early 2017 was particularly surprising given that companies tend to withhold ad spending in the run-up to presidential elections. "This time we didn't have a period where clients adopted a wait-and-see attitude towards investment because of the uncertainty," he said.

Growth is spread unevenly, with Italy in particular still struggling. Scars from the crisis years linger in swaths of the eurozone, ranging from high debts and unemployment to weak banks and a legacy of mistrust between creditor and debtor countries.

Still, fears that Europe had forgotten how to grow—widespread in recent years—are quickly receding.

"The recovery feels broad based, it feels resilient, and the pace is

decent," says Greg Fuzesi, an economist at J.P. Morgan in London.

Persistently low oil prices have helped a continent that imports the bulk of its fuel. Eurozone governments, apart from Greece, have broadly stopped fiscal belt-tightening as bond markets have recovered from the eurozone crisis. Germany's government has raised spending to deal with the influx of refugees. Households and companies have paid down debt, opening the door to more consumption and investment.

And the European Central Bank's assorted measures to cut the cost of credit, including large-scale bond buying, appear to have made a difference, giving governments and other debtors breathing room, economists say.

Financial markets are embracing Europe's upbeat growth outlook.

In dollar terms, the Euro Stoxx 50 index is up almost 12.7% this year, nearly double the S&P 500's gains. The euro has also climbed against the dollar, trading at \$1.09

compared with \$1.05 at the start of the year, surprising analysts who predicted that the common currency would fall to parity with the greenback.

First-quarter earnings in the Stoxx Europe 600, excluding the volatile energy sector, are expected to increase 6.2% from the same quarter last year, according to Thomson Reuters data.

Helping to drive this increase is a more-confident consumer. Andrea Le Pera, a 37-year-old who lives in Milan and works at a doctors' pension fund, recently bought a new BMW 2 Series Gran Tourer for his family. "I'm expecting a salary increase later this year, so I was sure I could take on the monthly payments," he said.

Car sales are rising. Italian-American car maker Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV reported an 11% rise in first-quarter profit, aided by sales growth in Europe.

Germany's economy, the eurozone's biggest, hasn't published first-quarter growth data yet. Based on the overall eurozone figure, Germany probably grew at an annualized rate of around 2.4%, according to the Kiel Institute for the

World Economy, a German think tank.

"Early indicators suggest that the German economy will maintain its momentum...and expand at high rates also in coming quarters," the institute said.

France is still struggling for liftoff. The economy grew at an annualized 1% in the first quarter. Economists say that a warm winter reduced energy consumption and that the current quarter will show higher growth.

A French acceleration would come too late to affect the election. Years of sluggish growth and stubbornly high unemployment have fed a longstanding sense of national malaise, boosting voter support for populists of the far right and far left.

Many smaller businesses, which make up the backbone of France's economy, are still struggling to adapt to rising global competition. At Groupe Roux-Jourfier, a 160-employee engineering company that makes components for sectors including aerospace and energy, first-quarter sales were down over 5% from a year earlier. "It's getting harder and harder to make sales," said CEO Fabrice Roux. "I have

incredible competition from countries that are considered low cost. That includes Spain, four hours' drive from me."

In Italy, output remains more than 7% below its level before the 2008 financial crisis. The lack of growth and jobs has sapped voter support for mainstream parties and made the antiestablishment 5 Star Movement, which wants a referendum on the euro, the most popular party ahead of elections due next year. Many observers view Italy as the biggest political risk to the euro's survival.

Spain's rebound from its deep slump, however, suggests even crisis-hit Southern Europe can grow inside the euro. Spain's GDP grew at an annualized 3.2% last quarter, maintaining the same pace as the last two years. The country's output is expected to surpass its precrisis level in the current quarter.

Spain's biggest scar from the crisis remains unemployment. At over 18%, it is the highest in the eurozone after Greece. But Spanish employers now are hiring workers rapidly after quickly laying them off during the downturn.

"The Spanish economy is recovering from the great crisis," said Christian Morales, a 33-year-old who is planning to open a restaurant in Madrid. He is building on the success of his food stall, called Cultura Café Creperie, in a buzzing indoor market in the city.

Mr. Morales is among the beneficiaries of Spain's tourism boom. A record 75.6 million people visited Spain last year, more than 1.5 times the country's population. Terrorism and other safety concerns have led travelers to shift their vacations to Spain from other Mediterranean destinations such as Turkey, Tunisia and Algeria in recent years.

—Georgi Kantchev and Eric Sylvers contributed to this article.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. INTERNATIONAL

Tillerson Points to Shift in U.S. Foreign Policy Priorities

Felicia Schwartz

6-7 minutes

Updated May 3, 2017 10:28 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the U.S. will pursue national security and economic interests before turning to human rights concerns in its relationships with other countries, signalling a shift in Washington's global outlook.

Mr. Tillerson's remarks, to U.S. diplomats and employees at the State Department on Wednesday, amounted to the clearest expression yet of President Donald Trump's "America First" foreign policy doctrine, in which the U.S. won't condition its approach to other countries based on "how they treat people," he said.

"We really have to understand, in each country or each region of the world that we're dealing with, what are our national security interests, what are our economic prosperity

interests, and then, as we can advocate and advance our values, we should," he said.

In separating U.S. policies from values such as human rights, democracy, press freedom and the treatment of minorities, Mr. Tillerson appeared to outline a departure from priorities pursued during both the Bush and Obama administrations.

Since taking office, Mr. Trump has sought to strengthen ties with leaders who have drawn criticism for their human rights records. He hosted Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi last month at the White House for his first state visit since he took power in 2014 and has invited the Philippines' President Rodrigo Duterte to Washington.

Human rights groups and some lawmakers have raised concerns about what they've described as a U.S. turn away from an emphasis on human rights and basic freedoms. On Wednesday, Amnesty International USA director Margaret Huang said the Trump

administration is "literally trying to erase human rights before our own eyes."

But Mr. Tillerson said emphasizing rights can impede other imperatives.

"In some circumstances, if you condition our national security efforts on someone adopting our values, we probably can't achieve our national security goals or our national security interests," Mr. Tillerson said. "If we condition too heavily that others must adopt this value that we've come to over a long history of our own, it really creates obstacles to our ability to advance our national security interests, our economic interests."

Such an approach "doesn't mean that we don't advocate for and aspire to freedom, human dignity and the treatment of people the world over," he said.

Philip Zelikow, who was a senior State Department official during the Bush administration, said "values and interests blend together" on big issues. He pointed to Islamic State's

ability to easily seize the city of Mosul from the Iraqi military as an example of how the value of good governance blended with U.S. security priorities.

"In how many countries around the world can I tell such a story?" said Mr. Zelikow, now a professor at the University of Virginia. "That's why this whole way of approaching the issue that thinks values are in one set and interests are in another is a fundamental category mistake."

Former President George W. Bush declared as his second-term foreign policy goal that he would seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions, which he called "the freedom agenda." Former President Barack Obama said in a 2011 speech that American support for political and economic rights isn't "a secondary interest," but "a top priority that must be translated into concrete actions and supported by all of the diplomatic, economic and strategic tools at our disposal."

Mr. Tillerson skipped the annual presentation of the U.S.' human-

rights assessment in March, drawing criticism from lawmakers and advocacy groups.

"Trump has elevated non-ideology to an ideology," said Aaron David Miller, a former adviser to Republican and Democratic secretaries of State, now at The Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, a Washington-based think tank. "Obama in the beginning sought transformation. Bush 43 sought transformation," Mr. Miller said. "Trump I don't think, thinks in transformative terms."

Mr. Tillerson also said he and Mr. Trump would aim to recalibrate ties with American allies and partners. He said U.S. relations with other countries had

become unbalanced in the post Cold War years as Washington sought diplomatic and trade relations with emerging economies.

"We were promoting relations, we were promoting economic activity, we were promoting trade with a lot of these emerging economies, and we just kind of lost track of how we were doing," he said. "We've got to bring that back into balance because it's not serving the interests of the American people well."

His remarks Tuesday were his first to State Department employees since February, when he addressed the rank and file on his first day in government after more than 40

years as an Exxon Mobil Corp. executive.

Mr. Tillerson made no mention of State Department budget cuts that the Trump administration is seeking, but said employees would benefit from a restructuring effort he is undertaking.

He rattled off policy priorities in a series of global hot spots.

To deal with North Korea's nuclear threat, he said, the U.S. is "leaning hard into China" to test its willingness to use its influence with Pyongyang and that it would work with other countries to increase pressure on North Korea.

The U.S. is also pursuing a re-engagement with Russia, where

during a visit in April he said he told President Vladimir Putin that ties were at a post-Cold War low. He said he would see if he can work with Russia first to resolve the Syria conflict and in other areas as he seeks to rebuild trust.

"I don't want to say we're off to a great start on this, because it's very early stages. I don't know where it will go," he said.

Write to Felicia Schwartz at Felicia.Schwartz@wsj.com

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**The
New York
Times**

Tillerson: It's Time to Restore 'Balance' With Other Countries

Gardiner Harris

4-5 minutes

WASHINGTON — In his first address laying out his vision as secretary of state, Rex W. Tillerson said Wednesday that the United States had been far too accommodating to emerging nations and longtime allies and that "things have gotten out of balance."

Righting those imbalances, he said, will be the mission of the State Department as it fulfills President Trump's promise to put "America first."

"We were promoting relations. We were promoting economic activity. We were promoting trade with a lot of these emerging economies, and we just kind of lost track of how we were doing," Mr. Tillerson said. "And as a result, things got a little bit out of balance."

Pacing around a stage in the department's auditorium, Mr. Tillerson then discussed a series of specific challenges facing the United States.

On reining in the nuclear program in North Korea, he described the effort to apply international pressure to further isolate Pyongyang as "a

pressure campaign that has a knob on it."

"I'd say we're at about dial setting 5 or 6 right now, with a strong call of countries all over the world to fully implement the U.N. Security Council resolutions regarding sanctions, because no one has ever fully implemented those," he said.

He said the next higher settings could involve penalizing countries that continue to defy United Nations sanctions on trade with North Korea. But he said a big part of the campaign is "leaning hard into" China, and testing how much influence China has on Pyongyang.

As for speaking directly with Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader, as President Trump recently suggested he would be willing to do, Mr. Tillerson said North Korea needed to demonstrate its readiness for such a dialogue.

Mr. Tillerson's speech offered few specifics for a staff that is anxious about a proposed budget that would cut spending by 31 percent. *Al Drago/The New York Times*

Mr. Tillerson said the United States and China would soon begin a high-level dialogue. Mr. Tillerson said he and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis would lead negotiations in June with high-level Chinese officials on diplomatic and security issues, and

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross would oversee talks on economic and trade issues after that.

"We want to take a fresh look at where's this relationship going to be 50 years from now," Mr. Tillerson said.

On Russia, Mr. Tillerson was far less optimistic, describing a relationship that has reached a low ebb. Speaking less than 24 hours after Mr. Trump spoke on the phone with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia about working together to broker a cease-fire in Syria, Mr. Tillerson set his sights low, saying that resolving even small irritants would be progress.

"Today, there's almost no trust between us," he said.

Mr. Tillerson said many global organizations had not truly adjusted to the end of the Cold War — and he seemed to include the State Department on the list of institutions stuck in the past.

He urged employees to help him streamline the department so it could deal better with the world today, rather than as it was during the Cold War.

But Mr. Tillerson offered few specifics for a staff deeply anxious about a proposed budget that would

cut outlays 31 percent and that aides to Mr. Tillerson have said could eliminate about 2,300 jobs, or about 3 percent of the department's 75,000 employees. The reductions are expected to be achieved through attrition.

Mr. Tillerson said he had yet to settle on even a basic organizational structure. An employee survey and hundreds of employee interviews over the coming weeks will be needed before he can begin filling the department's top leadership positions, he said.

Mr. Tillerson, a former chief executive of Exxon Mobil, has suffered embarrassing stumbles and surprising reversals in his brief tenure at the State Department. But on Wednesday, he touched on a range of issues as he walked confidently around the stage, and he received thunderous applause when he was done.

The remarks were the bookend to his first speech to the department, which he delivered the first time he entered its Foggy Bottom headquarters after being confirmed. In that address, Mr. Tillerson promised to explore ways to make the department more efficient.



The Christian Science Monitor

7-8 minutes

May 3, 2017 —When President Trump withdrew the United States from the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, he pulled the rug out from under the Obama

administration's much-vaunted but still largely aspirational "pivot to Asia."

With the stroke of a pen, Mr. Trump made clear what US relations with Southeast Asian nations are NOT going to be — a strategic alliance built on the framework of a

multilateral trade and investment partnership with the US economy.

But beyond the symbolism of pounding a nail in TPP's coffin, little has emerged from the "America First" president about how he envisions business and trade relations with the most economically dynamic region of the globe.

The Trump administration will have the opportunity to start sketching out what will replace President Obama's Asia pivot, particularly when it comes to economic relations, when the foreign ministers of the nine-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meet Thursday with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson in Washington.

And with America's jilted Southeast Asian TPP partners tempted to look elsewhere for big-power partnership – to China, but even to Japan and Canada, which recently have expressed growing interest in leading TPP into implementation without the US – that “opportunity” is coming none too soon, some regional experts say.

The Southeast Asian countries “will definitely be looking for what [the US] Plan B is,” says Walter Lohman, director of the Heritage Foundation's Asian Studies Center in Washington.

“Withdrawing from TPP was a blow to our engagement in the region, and it has tempted our Asian partners to contemplate looking elsewhere” for leadership, he adds. “Either we come up with that Plan B to engage the region, or we may risk being marginalized.”

Campaign promise

Only four of the ASEAN countries are also TPP members – Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam – but a number of others, including Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, aspire to membership as their economies conform to TPP standards.

Trump fulfilled a campaign promise and pulled the US out of TPP – signed by the US under Mr. Obama – calling it another in a string of bad trade deals that allowed countries unfair access to the US economy without giving much of anything in return.

But since taking office, Trump has shifted his focus in regards to Asia largely to security concerns and in particular to North Korea's nuclear threat. He has even told China, which he blasted

during the campaign as an economic predator, that it can count on a better trade deal with the US if it acts to rein in its belligerent Korean ally.

The problem is, analysts say, that a sustained focus on security challenges over economic ties to the region could help perpetuate the “unfair” dynamic candidate Trump lambasted whereby the US provides much of the expensive security structure that has allowed the Asian-Pacific to prosper – without reaping a fair share of the economic benefits.

“We're seeing that the administration is going to stay involved militarily, and we see them defend the right to access to and to navigate the [international] waters,” Mr. Lohman says. “What is needed is a broad-based approach that includes the economic side with the security interests.”

Competition for leadership role

Whether the ASEAN foreign ministers meeting with Mr. Tillerson will get a preview of such a comprehensive Asia policy – essentially Trump's replacement of the Asia pivot – remains to be seen. But analysts say Tillerson should be mindful that while partnership with the US is highly desirable for Asian countries, US leadership is not the only game in town.

“There is competition for leadership in the region,” says Philip Levy, a senior fellow on the global economy at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. The region's smaller countries are wary of China's increasingly aggressive and expansionist stance on a number of territorial disputes, particularly in the South China Sea, he notes. But that

has not deterred them from exploring closer economic associations with the Asian behemoth.

With the US out of TPP, Asian countries see the China-promoted (though less ambitious) Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, or RCEP, as the only game in town.

“I think the feeling for many of these countries is that while RCEP is less attractive and less ambitious than TPP, something beats nothing – and at the moment, the US has nothing on the table,” Dr. Levy says.

Even TPP, once thought dead without the US, may have new life. Canada is holding talks this week with partners to see how the remaining 11 TPP countries might proceed, and Japan – the largest economy still in the deal – is expressing interest in keeping the trade pact alive.

In the meantime, advocates of a robust and comprehensive US partnership with Asian Pacific countries say they are seeing signs the Trump administration is looking to move beyond a rocky start with the region.

'Reset' with Australia

Even as Tillerson meets Thursday with ASEAN ministers in Washington, Trump will meet in New York with Australia's prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, on the sidelines of a commemoration of the World War II Coral Sea battle – a battle (against Japan) that cemented the US-Australia strategic partnership.

The meeting is being portrayed in Australia as a “reset” of bilateral relations after a newly inaugurated

Trump had an angry phone call with the Australian leader over an Obama agreement to resettle a number of refugees held in Australian camps.

The Trump administration has since agreed to honor the accord – a sign to some that the president now understands the broader importance of close relations with Australia, a faithful contributor to US-led security coalitions.

“This is all part of them [in the administration] getting their act together and putting things with important partners back on track,” Lohman says. “Australia is one of the more vocal advocates of the freedom of the seas,” he adds, “so I think we're seeing recognition of their solidarity with us in the Pacific.”

What worries some is that the emergence of a comprehensive Asia policy – whatever Trump envisions to replace the Asia pivot – may take too long for some countries, like the ASEAN states.

“Before, US trade strategy followed a predictable pattern, there was pretty much a template that told partners where we were going and the obligations they'd have to fulfill,” Levy says.

“That's a template Trump seems to have rejected, but we don't know yet how he plans to replace it, other than to suggest that he prefers bilateral deals over multilateral arrangements,” he says. “But many bilateral negotiations would take a lot of time, and that could leave smaller countries like in ASEAN thinking they are at the end of a long line.”



This Isn't Realpolitik. This Is Amateur Hour.

Paul McLeary | 54 mins ago

6-8 minutes

To a casual observer, Donald Trump's invitation to Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte to visit the White House might appear to be a classic example of hard-nosed realpolitik. Never mind Duterte's murderous anti-drug campaign, his boasting of having personally killed alleged criminals, or his other questionable statements, all of which have alarmed human rights advocates. The more important issue, some might think, is that Duterte is the leader of an important U.S. ally. From this perspective, it looks like Trump is simply subordinating moral concerns to strategic imperatives (as all of his

predecessors have done) and pursuing an essentially realist policy toward this critical region.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

For realists, the key to U.S. security is maintaining dominance in the Western Hemisphere and preventing any peer competitor from dominating the vital power centers of Europe or Asia or controlling key energy resources in the Persian Gulf. Apart from the United States itself, there is only one potential “regional hegemon” in the world today: China.

Accordingly, a realist policy in Asia would first and foremost seek to prevent China from consolidating a dominant position in Asia and eventually persuading its neighbors to abandon their present security

ties with the United States. Were that to occur, the United States would be unable to sustain a major military presence in the Western Pacific or Southeast Asia, and China would be a de facto regional hegemon. Over time, China would be increasingly free to project power into other areas of the world, much as America does today, and maybe even try to establish security ties here in the Western Hemisphere.

It follows that a realist approach in Asia calls for the United States to keep a wary eye on China and manage a sometimes delicate balancing coalition of Asian partners. This task is a tricky one that requires consistency, prudent judgment, and smart diplomacy, as well as credible military power. The latter quality is still abundant; the former, not so much.

Consider what Trump has done so far. He started out by taking an imprudent congratulatory phone call from the president of Taiwan and questioning the well-established “One China” policy, only to backtrack a few days later. He abandoned the Trans-Pacific Partnership on his third day in office, thereby destroying a key institution that would have bound a number of Asian countries more tightly to the United States and undermining local leaders who had spent political capital of their own in order to reach an agreement. He berated Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on a “get-acquainted” phone call, reinforcing growing Australian doubts about the merits of their long association with the United States.

On the Korean Peninsula, Trump has jeopardized relations with another key ally by saying South Korea would have to pay for the controversial THAAD anti-missile defense system that is now being deployed there and by suggesting the existing free trade deal between the two countries has to be renegotiated or abrogated. The Defense Department quickly corrected him and said the United States would pay for THAAD as agreed, but these episodes hardly reinforced confidence in Washington's consistency or judgment. Trump has also raised the prospect of war with North Korea — which could have disastrous effects on the South — yet followed that up by suggesting, bizarrely, that he would be "honored" to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Coming on the heels of that misplaced aircraft carrier, is it any wonder South Koreans have doubts about following the U.S. lead (whatever it might turn out to be)?

It gets worse: Instead of seeing China as a peer competitor whose rising power

needs to be checked, Trump has been kissing up to Beijing in the hope of securing its help on North Korea and a number of issues. There's nothing inherently wrong with collaborating with Beijing when our national interests (as opposed to Trump's business interests) align, but such an approach inevitably raises doubts in the minds of China's neighbors. It also reinforces the perception that Beijing is calling the shots in Asia. If that were in fact the case, why would anyone there want to remain closely tied to the United States?

Even Trump's impulsive outreach to Duterte shows that it is still amateur hour at the White House. One can make a pragmatic case for trying to smooth a strained relationship with a key ally; the problem is that Trump did not consult anyone about it and didn't know if Duterte was likely to accept when he extended the invitation. Here's a pro tip: An invitation to visit the White House is a serious matter that needs to be vetted beforehand and agreed to by both parties before it is made public. As it happens, Duterte responded by saying he might be too busy to

pay a visit, thereby making Trump look foolish and desperate.

Needless to say, this entire approach is the antithesis of foreign-policy realism. Realists see international politics as a deadly serious business, especially when dealing with critical regions and potential peer competitors. Realism focuses on preserving favorable balances of power, managing critical alliances adroitly, and above all acting in ways that allow both friends and foes to tailor their actions to ours. A country whose leader understood this wouldn't be relying on an understaffed State Department, an unqualified first daughter and son-in-law, and wouldn't be trying to manage key relations via an uncensored Twitter account. Trump's approach to foreign policy would make a great sitcom, *opéra bouffe*, or a Marx Brothers movie, but it is both disastrous and demeaning for the United States.

Where we seem to be headed, alas, is the worst of all possible worlds. Trump is gradually being captured, co-opted, and contained by the

foreign-policy establishment (aka the "Blob"), and the radical restructuring he promised during the campaign is gradually being discarded along with goofballs like Michael Flynn and Sebastian Gorka. The result? The United States will continue to pursue an overly ambitious foreign policy and continue to try to manage events in nearly every corner of the world, much as we have for the past 25 years. But instead of having serious people in charge, we'll now be doing it with an inexperienced, impulsive, and inept skipper at the helm.

This unhappy situation may give people like me plenty to write about, but it isn't good for the country and it sure as hell ain't realism. Those who wish America ill could hardly ask for more.

Photo credit: CHIP SOMODEVILLA/Getty Images

The New York Times

Christopher Ruddy

4-5 minutes

There are also signs that Mr. Trump's style is resonating with ordinary Chinese. Considering the harshness of his past statements about China, I was surprised by the number of people I met there who expressed respect for him. "He is a very successful businessman," one said. "He is strong," another said. One person noted, "I think in the past your country respected such people."

Apparently, the Chinese never took Mr. Trump's campaign rhetoric personally. They saw it as his starting point — a "negotiating position," as Mr. Trump himself might say.

At home, President Trump is garnering far less reverence. Our political and media elites, along with Democratic critics, see Mr. Trump as overly provocative, unbalanced and lacking in any real results. They point to his thin legislative record.

But those critics have failed to appreciate how Mr. Trump's strong positions on foreign policy have had

Ruddy: Don't Like Trump's Bluster? Sometimes It Works.

a positive impact. The president has put North Korea on notice while bolstering South Korea with the Thaad missile defense system. Even as he has voiced support for NATO, he has continued to demand that its members pay their fair share for defense — likely a factor in Germany's decision to increase its troop strength.

Struck by the inhumanity of Syria's use of chemical weapons on innocent civilians, the president struck back in a measured way, ordering a strike of 59 Tomahawk missiles. Rogue actors like President Bashar al-Assad of Syria and his Iranian benefactors have been warned.

Mr. Trump has also shown the ability to learn on the job, having become a realist toward Russia and shown new caution in dealings with two allies, Turkey and Israel. On Iran, he has expressed flexibility regarding the nuclear deal he once denounced.

Mr. Trump has also used his White House platform to begin changing sclerotic domestic policies and politics. In shaking the tree, he is causing old leaves to fall even as healthy ones remain in place, still strong.

Simply by stepping up enforcement against undocumented workers, he has caused word to spread south of the border. Today, apprehensions of people crossing the southwest border illegally from Mexico are down 61 percent from January.

The president's policies have created a virtual wall, one that may obviate the need for the \$20 billion eyesore after all.

Mr. Trump has also already forced American companies to think twice about exporting jobs. And one conservative organization estimates his efforts to eliminate onerous and expensive regulations could save American businesses and consumers \$60 billion or more.

I know some of Mr. Trump's proposals seem frightening to many people. His budget calls for draconian cuts, such as reducing State Department spending by 28 percent and eliminating federal support for beloved programs like PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts.

His tax plan also might look as if it benefits mainly wealthy individuals and businesses, slashing the corporate tax rate to just 15 percent, from 35 percent.

But remember, for Mr. Trump these things are opening bids. Knowing him as I do, as a friend, I can imagine a more modest final budget that leaves most programs intact and compromises on a corporate tax rate of 25 percent. At the end of the day, Donald Trump is a dealmaker.

At 70, he is also not about to change. He won't stop saying things that rub people the wrong way. And he will not stop tweeting — nor should he (though perhaps there should be a process for reviewing his tweets before posting). His theatrical persona, his rallies and his hyperbolic tweets have become the "big stick" he waves from his transformed bully pulpit.

Through his message he has moved markets, steered global business in a better direction for American companies and defended American workers. He has also put bad actors, domestic and foreign, on notice.

Even I do not agree with everything the president says or does. But we should be willing to recognize that, at times, he can be very effective. The Chinese have.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Trump Meets Abbas, Says of Peace: 'We Will Get It Done'

Carol E. Lee in Washington and

Rory Jones in Tel Aviv

6-7 minutes

Updated May 3, 2017 6:55 p.m. ET

President Donald Trump raised expectations for a peace agreement

between Israelis and Palestinians as he met with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas on Wednesday, saying he would do whatever is necessary to broker a deal and pledging, "We will get it done."

Mr. Trump was dismissive of the notion that a foreign-policy knot that has vexed his predecessors for decades is the "toughest deal to make." He said he hoped to invite Mr. Abbas back to the White House to mark progress in an effort that Mr. Trump's administration has been working on only for a few months.

"Let's see if we can find the solution," Mr. Trump said. "It's something that I think is, frankly, maybe not as difficult as people have thought over the years."

Mr. Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, which rules the West Bank, said he looked forward to working with Mr. Trump to achieve a "historic deal to bring about peace." But his remarks also underscored challenges faced by the effort. Palestinians, he said, are "the only remaining people in the world that still live under occupation," a term Israeli officials dislike.

Mr. Trump's confidence drew skepticism, as former Israeli-Palestinian mediators believe the two sides are as far apart as they have ever been.

"I'm an optimist by nature. But goodness gracious!" Daniel Shapiro, former U.S. ambassador to Israel in the Obama administration, tweeted from his official account in response to Mr. Trump's comments.

Fundamental differences between Israelis and

Palestinians have prevented a peace deal from being reached for decades. "In my mind, as someone that has worked on this for the last 30 years, I don't think we have ever been at a lower point," Dennis Ross, former peace negotiator for multiple U.S. administrations, said Monday. "The level of disbelief between the two sides has never been greater."

White House press secretary Sean Spicer argued that the difference between previous attempts to reach a peace deal and the one undertaken by the Trump administration is "the man." He said Mr. Trump's style of building relationships with world leaders gives the process more of a chance for success.

Under Mr. Trump, the U.S. has smoothed over ties with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that had become strained during former President Barack Obama's time in office.

Mr. Trump also is considering moving the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a move that would be welcomed by Israelis as effectively recognizing the city as their capital. Palestinians have said the status of Jerusalem should be determined in negotiations.

However, Mr. Trump also has made clear that it is up to the Israelis and Palestinians to reach a peace deal, and was harshly critical of Mr. Obama for trying to pressure the Israelis into policy concessions.

He continued with that stance on Wednesday, saying the U.S. would only serve as a mediator for talks.

Mr. Abbas said he envisions a deal that includes the creation of a

Palestinian state based on Israel's borders before the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, with its capital in East Jerusalem. Mr. Trump has said he would favor a two-state solution if that is the outcome chosen by Israelis and Palestinians as part of a settlement.

Mr. Abbas's call for a Palestinian state based on 1967 borders is the idea endorsed by much of the international community as the basis for a two-state solution.

But Mr. Netanyahu has said he won't support the establishment of a Palestinian state based on those lines. At a news conference with Mr. Trump in February, the Israeli leader avoided committing to a two-state solution.

Members of Mr. Netanyahu's coalition government, including large parts of his own Likud party, have called on the leader to reject the notion of a Palestinian state, which he has previously advocated.

Israel recently committed to building settlements inside the main boundaries of current Jewish communities in the West Bank. But it rejected a full settlement freeze in the West Bank, a key Palestinian demand.

Israeli officials have lobbied the U.S. to urge the Palestinians to stop paying social benefits to the families of prisoners and to Palestinians killed while attacking Israelis. They argue the practice creates incentives to violence.

Mr. Spicer said that Mr. Trump raised the issue of payments in his meeting with Mr. Abbas and "emphasized the need to resolve this issue."

Mr. Abbas's ability to make the compromises necessary to reach an agreement with Israel is also limited, due to his unpopularity at home. The Palestinian leader is facing calls to step down, as two-thirds of the Palestinian public wants him to resign, according to a March poll by the Ramallah-based Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research.

The Palestinian leadership is divided between the Abbas-led Palestinian Authority and the Islamist movement Hamas, which governs the Gaza Strip. Hamas this week issued a new set of principles that softened the group's stance against Israel, dropping a call for its enemy's destruction.

Hamas accepted the notion of a Palestinian state in the pre-1967 borders but said it wanted to ultimately take over the entirety of historic Palestine and didn't recognize Israel's right to exist.

The revised set of principles was rejected by Israel as an attempt by Hamas to remake its image and cozy up to Arab states that have increasingly isolated the group. The U.S. and Israel both designate Hamas a terrorist organization.

"Abbas does not represent the whole Palestinian people," Hamas said in a statement after the Wednesday meeting with Mr. Trump.

Write to Carol E. Lee at carol.lee@wsj.com and Rory Jones at rory.jones@wsj.com

Appeared in the May. 04, 2017, print edition as 'Trump Strikes Confident Tone on Mideast.'



Confident Trump says he wants to 'prove them wrong' and get a Mideast peace deal

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

7-9 minutes

President Trump expressed optimism Wednesday that he can succeed where past American presidents have failed and secure a deal between Israel and the Palestinians, but he made no promises that peace would mean an independent Palestinian state.

With Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas by his side, Trump confidently said that if the two parties are willing, he wants to help.

"I'm committed to working with Israel and the Palestinians to reach an agreement. But any agreement

cannot be imposed by the United States or by any other nation," Trump said. "The Palestinians and Israelis must work together to reach an agreement that allows both peoples to live, worship, and thrive and prosper in peace."

Absent was any mention of a sovereign Palestine, long a bedrock of American and international peacemaking efforts, or how he would address other festering issues that have sundered past efforts at negotiations such as the fate of Jerusalem.

Abbas ticked through the usual list of Palestinian demands for peace, including a sovereign state based on the borders as they existed in 1967 before Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

(The Washington Post)

President Trump hosted a lunch with President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority and said finding peace between Israel and the Palestinians will be easier than most people think. Trump said achieving peace between Israel and the Palestinians will be easier than most people think. (The Washington Post)

Peace based on a "two-state solution" would allow wider Arab diplomatic recognition of Israel and aid in the fight against extremist movements such as the Islamic State, Abbas asserted.

"Our strategic option, our strategic choice, is to bring about peace based on the vision of the two states, a Palestinian state, with its

capital of East Jerusalem, that lives in peace and stability with the state of Israel," Abbas said through an interpreter.

In his brief public remarks with Abbas, Trump did not mention Jewish home-building in the occupied West Bank, something past presidents have made sure to reference, if only obliquely, as an impediment to peace. And he said nothing about his pledge to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a symbolic shift that Arab leaders including Jordan's King Abdullah II have warned Trump could wreck a chance for peace.

Trump must notify Congress by June 1 if he, like past U.S. presidents, intends to seek a

deferral of a U.S. law mandating the embassy move. Former U.S. officials and analysts in the United States and Israel said Trump is nearly certain to seek the delay.

For Abbas, a White House invitation so early in the administration is seen as a coup and a sign that Trump is serious about negotiations that would help give the veteran Palestinian leader credibility at home and a mandate abroad.

"This is a lifesaver," said Ghaith al-Omari, a former Palestinian peace negotiator who is now a scholar at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"Since the collapse of the last talks, Abbas has been marginalized and the Palestinian issue is seen as not relevant," as other conflicts and crises took precedence, Omari said. "He needs this for his own centrality."

The 82-year-old leader heads the moderate Palestinian government in the West Bank but claims to also speak for Palestinians under the rule of the militant group Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Trump has spoken with Abbas by phone, but their White House meeting was their first face-to-face encounter. "We believe that we are capable and able to bring about success to our efforts, because, Mr. President, you have

the determination and you have the desire," Abbas said.

White House press secretary Sean Spicer later said that Trump had raised the issue of Palestinian payments to the families of suicide bombers and prisoners who harm Israeli civilians. Israel has recently highlighted the issue as an obstacle to talks, and a group of Republican senators has introduced legislation to cut off American aid.

The Trump administration has yet to articulate a clear strategy for engaging in any negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, leaving vague whether the goal of peace might be defined as a version of the de facto Israeli control that now exists.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was among the first foreign leaders to visit Trump this spring, and the new U.S. administration has repeatedly underscored its close bond with the Israeli leader. Trump may visit Israel later this month, Israeli and former U.S. officials said.

The administration has also signaled that it will not denounce Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank, although Trump told Netanyahu publicly that he would prefer a hiatus as a way to foster peace talks.

But the biggest sign of change in the Trump approach to Israel and potential peace is the omission of formerly rote language promising Palestinian sovereignty as the goal of negotiations.

"The Jedi mind trick here is to shift the definition of peace away from the conventional notion of a two-state solution," said Frank Lowenstein, a chief U.S. negotiator during the last failed peace effort in 2013 and 2014. "Redefining peace so you say you are 100 percent in support of peace ... but the Palestinians don't have their own state in the traditional sense."

When Netanyahu visited the White House earlier this year, Trump mused about either a one- or two-state outcome, saying that he "could live with" either.

On Wednesday, Trump cast the United States in a more intermediary role.

"I will do whatever is necessary to facilitate the agreement, to mediate, to arbitrate anything they'd like to do, but I would be a mediator or an arbitrator or a facilitator," Trump said.

Trump sent his Middle East envoy, former real estate lawyer Jason Greenblatt, to Jerusalem and Ramallah in March to explore the

possibility of a U.S. role in a peace process. The visit appeared to be well received by both sides. Trump also named his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, as his point man for peace efforts in the Middle East.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

"Over the course of my lifetime, I've always heard that perhaps the toughest deal to make is the deal between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Let's see if we can prove them wrong, okay?" he said.

Jeremy Ben Ami, president of J Street, which describes itself as pro-Israel and pro-peace, said American leadership can help, but is not enough.

"The biggest roadblock is the lack of political will," said Ben Ami. "It's not just the Palestinians. It's the Israelis as well. There's a real question of whether or not the government of Israel is ready and willing to move to two states, and whether the Palestinian government has the capacity and the will to do it."

Carol Morello and Ashley Parker contributed to this report.

The New York Times

Russia, Feeling Slighted by Trump, Seeks a Reset

Neil MacFarquhar

6-8 minutes

MOSCOW — Given the spotlight focused on Russia during the American presidential campaign and Donald J. Trump's warm words as candidate for President Vladimir V. Putin, the Kremlin anticipated a starring role as foreign policy partner No. 1 under the Trump administration.

Instead, while President Trump has been feting every Theresa, Justin and Abdel Fattah at the White House or at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, including a high-profile dinner with President Xi Jinping of China, Mr. Putin has had to content himself with three measly telephone calls since the inauguration.

"They feel slighted," Vladimir Frolov, a prominent foreign policy analyst and columnist, said of the Russian leadership.

For one thing, it looks bad at home. Mr. Putin, after all, sold Russian interventions in Ukraine and especially Syria as proof that Moscow was back on the global stage as the indispensable equal to

the United States in world affairs, just as in the Soviet days.

Second, it has left the Kremlin perplexed as to how it can move forward in its relations with Washington, especially as Russia slouches toward a presidential election campaign in March 2018, although Mr. Putin has not yet officially declared his candidacy for a fourth term.

Worse, instead of heralding a new chapter in relations, Washington seems to be piling on the demands. Even anticipated friends like Rex W. Tillerson, the secretary of state awarded a medal by Mr. Putin when he was head of Exxon Mobil, have proved disappointing.

Mr. Tillerson showed up in Moscow for his first trip as secretary of state last month only to start resurrecting positions that Moscow thought had been laid to rest with the Obama administration.

Mr. Tillerson endorsed the idea that President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, Russia's main friend in the Middle East, had to go, for example. The Trump administration has also made clear it wants Russia out of Ukraine, and an end to what it calls violations of a key missile treaty. It

even dredged up Afghanistan again as an issue.

Asked about Russia in an appearance on Fox News last Sunday, the national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, said he thought Mr. Putin was not serving Russia's best interests. "We need changes in words and the nature of the relationship," he said, "but what we really need to see is change in behavior."

Aleksei Pushkov, a well-known voice in foreign affairs in the Federation Council, tweeted in response that Mr. McMaster's remarks were reminiscent of the Obama administration. "Counterproductive approach," he wrote.

The chain of similar statements from Washington has pretty much curdled the idea that there will be a grand bargain on global issues with Washington.

Furthermore, according to some analysts, while Russia is eager for improved relations, the Trump administration has not exactly made clear what reward Russia might get for executing a major, across-the-board reversal in its foreign policy.

"It has not detailed the definition in terms of what an improved relationship would be, in other words what is the bag of goodies in exchange for a dramatic U-turn in their foreign policy," Mr. Frolov said.

He added, "The Russians are basically scratching their heads and asking, 'What are we going to get from this?'"

In the third Trump-Putin call, on Tuesday night, the two presidents agreed to coordinate more closely on Syria and Korea, and possibly to meet on the sidelines of the G-20 summit meeting in Hamburg, Germany, in early July.

The standard explanation in Russian circles for the cold shoulder from President Trump is that American foreign policy mandarins will not let Trump be Trump when it comes to Russia.

"Trump rejected the idea of holding a separate meeting early due to fear of hysteria by his enemies in the USA," Mr. Pushkov wrote on Twitter after the latest telephone call.

Naturally, the idea that Presidents Trump and Putin are equals has not died entirely, either. "The third contact between the two presidents

has confirmed that the Russian-American dialogue is not at a standstill, that both sides are interested in its development, and that it can proceed only on an equal footing," Konstantin Kosachev, the head of the foreign affairs committee in the Federation Council, told Russian reporters on Wednesday, according to RIA Novosti, the state-operated news agency.

Sergey V. Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, is expected to hold talks with Mr. Tillerson on the sidelines of an Arctic conference in Alaska next week, talks that the Russians are hoping might bring some clarity.

There are things the Russians want, like the withdrawal of the American missile defense system in Romania and Poland, but nothing so specific has been broached. Mr. Trump's effusive praise of the Russian leader while running for president has slowly faded as other issues

have come to the fore, including multiple investigations into Russian meddling in last year's presidential campaign and the stark differences over Syria's use of chemical weapons against its own people again in April.

On the other hand, Mr. Frolov noted, the Kremlin appreciates that the Trump administration has been largely silent on Russian domestic issues like violence against opposition leaders, arrests of political protesters and the persecution and torture of homosexuals in Chechnya.

Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, was not so reticent in her joint news conference with Mr. Putin on Tuesday, questioning the prosecution of civil society groups, homosexuals and religious sects while pooh-poohing Mr. Putin's stance that the change of government in neighboring Ukraine had been undemocratic.

The more discreet American approach indicates that Washington wants to keep channels open, Mr. Frolov said, so the Kremlin will most likely welcome a one-by-one approach to foreign policy issues rather than a grand bargain.

Russia is looking for an agreement in Syria in particular, because Mr. Putin wants to avoid any violent surprises from there once the Russian presidential campaign begins in earnest at the end of 2017.

Both sides are aware of the dangers of letting any confrontations between them overheat. There remains the risk of a collision in Syria, noted Dmitri V. Trenin, the head of the Carnegie Moscow Center, but there is also room for a deal on a diplomatic solution there.

Mr. Putin repeated at news conferences two days running that the United States would be instrumental in solving the Syria problem, noting on Wednesday that

Mr. Trump had endorsed the idea of safety zones that Russia began formally pushing as part of a new round of Syrian peace talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Wednesday. Mr. Trump dispatched a high-level American diplomat to the talks.

"Optimists in Moscow and Washington hope that the U.S.-Russian relationship wouldn't decline any further," Mr. Trenin wrote in a piece on the Carnegie website.

It is premature to expect outright cooperation, he and others said, predicting that relations might remain where they are until the terms of engagement are hammered out. That might take a meeting between the two presidents in Hamburg, they noted, assuming that Mr. Trump finally stops shunning Mr. Putin there.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

4-5 minutes

Updated May 3, 2017 6:01 p.m. ET

MOSCOW—Russian President Vladimir Putin called Wednesday for the creation of so-called "safe zones" in Syria following talks with U.S. President Donald Trump and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a move aimed at strengthening the fragile peace process in the six-year conflict.

"It is our shared position, that the creation of safe zones should lead to further peace making and strengthen the cease-fire regime," he said in a news conference in the Black Sea resort city of Sochi with Mr. Erdogan, who said he supported the idea.

Mr. Putin said he had spoken to Mr. Trump on Tuesday about the idea of safe zones, or de-escalation zones, in a telephone conversation to alleviate suffering and help solidify local cease-fires already in place.

Those cease-fires, guaranteed

**The
New York
Times**

To Freeze Syria War, Russia Proposes Setting Up 'De-escalation Zones'

Anne Barnard and Hwaida Saad

5-6 minutes

by Russia, Turkey and Iran, form the foundation for peace talks that began Wednesday in the Kazakh capital of Astana. Mr. Putin said he had spoken also to Iran and Syria about the idea.

Russia's diplomacy around Syria, while using air force to support Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces against rebels fighting against him, has given Moscow significant leverage over other international players who have sought to influence the conflict.

Alignment between Messrs. Trump and Putin over the creation of safe zones in Syria would help promote the desire expressed by both leaders to work more closely together on international terrorism. The potential for cooperation, however, has narrowed significantly in part because of suspicions over Russia's alleged interference in the 2016 presidential elections.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Wednesday that despite frayed relations, the U.S. would try to work with Russia to resolve the Syria conflict. He didn't mention the safe-zone proposal. Mr. Tillerson said he and his Russian counterpart, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov,

would meet in Alaska next week as the U.S. and Moscow seek ways to work together.

Mr. Putin said the creation of the zones would in effect be "no-fly" zones, provided no military operations were taking place in the restricted areas. The restricted areas, however, wouldn't give haven to terrorists from organizations such as Islamic State and the Syria Conquest Front, a group previously affiliated with al Qaeda, he said.

In a nod to Damascus' fears that greater Kurdish cooperation with both U.S. and Russian forces could help foster Kurdish autonomy in the country, Mr. Putin said the safe zones would be implemented in full respect of Syria's territorial integrity.

Further details about the zones would likely be decided at Astana, he said. However, talks began on Wednesday with the opposition walking out of the first meeting in protest over continued airstrikes being carried out by the regime and Russia on rebel-held areas.

The delegation issued a list of conditions under which they would return including a cessation of all

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Russia is circulating a draft proposal to Syrian rebel groups and diplomats that envisions pausing the war in Syria through the creation of safe "de-

escalation zones," with outside troops possibly acting as buffers between the antagonists.

The draft proposal, shared with The New York Times on Wednesday by

ground and airstrikes on opposition areas.

Airstrikes have increased in recent weeks with many attacks targeting hospitals in opposition areas, activists and human rights groups have reported.

United Nations envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura said at a news conference at Astana that the U.N. "is very concerned at the reports of escalation in Syria, including alleged reports of airstrikes."

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told Interfax earlier in the day that at talks there four potential safe zones were under discussion.

—Raja Abdulrahim in Beirut contributed to this article.

Write to Thomas Grove at thomas.grove@wsj.com

Appeared in the May. 04, 2017, print edition as 'Putin Recommends Safe Zones to Boost Syria Peace Efforts.'

participants at Syria talks held in Astana, Kazakhstan, is one of the most detailed suggestions to emerge in recent months in the

rocky negotiations to halt the war, now in its seventh year.

The proposal would apply to Syrian government and rebel forces in the four main areas of the country where insurgents unaffiliated with the Islamic State still hold significant territory.

But it faces a number of challenges, most notably acceptance by the Syrian government and the insurgent groups attending the talks.

The insurgent groups suspended participation in the talks on Wednesday to protest what they described as heavy bombing by the Syrian government's Russian-backed forces the day before that killed dozens, including civilians.

The Russian proposal does not specify measures to prevent government warplanes from carrying out such bombings. Rebels said they remained suspicious of Russian guarantees, regardless, because Russia has been unable or unwilling to curb government attacks on civilians.

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia said on Wednesday that the proposal had the backing not only of Russia but also of Iran, another ally of President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, and Turkey, which backs some anti-Assad groups.

"We as guarantors — Turkey, Iran, Russia — will do everything for this to work," Mr. Putin said in remarks carried on Russian television, speaking in Sochi, Russia, after meeting with President Recep

Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey.

The proposal was made as the United States, another supporter of some anti-Assad groups, appeared to be re-engaging in the negotiations after a prolonged absence.

Stuart E. Jones, the acting assistant secretary of state, was in Astana, the most senior American official to participate in Syria talks since President Trump took office.

Syrians on Monday surveyed damage to a hospital after an airstrike in the rebel-controlled area of Eastern Ghouta, on the outskirts of Damascus. Sameer Al-Doumy/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

He arrived after Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin held a phone conversation on Tuesday about renewing efforts to resolve the conflict, which has left hundreds of thousands dead and half the population displaced.

The draft proposal calls for "de-escalation zones" of safety to be established in four areas: Idlib Province, almost entirely held by jihadist and other rebel groups; Eastern Ghouta, a large area of the Damascus suburbs besieged by government forces; a besieged pocket north of the central city of Homs; and southern Syria along the Jordanian border, where rebel groups backed by the United States and its allies have made gains in recent months against both Islamic State and government forces.

Under the proposal, checkpoints ringing those areas would be maintained by both government and

rebel forces to allow the free movement of civilians and relief aid. That provision could offer respite from siege warfare, which has been a main weapon of the government.

The proposal also says rebel groups would be required to fight the Islamic State and the formerly Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front, now called Tahrir al-Sham, which are not part of any peace process.

But the proposal offers few details on how fighting would be thwarted inside the secure zones.

An earlier draft circulated by some opposition members included a provision that Syria's air force would be grounded in those zones — but no mention is made of that provision in a longer draft. It was removed, participants said, because of Syrian government objections. But without that provision, rebels would probably reject the proposal.

Analysts in Damascus close to the government of Mr. Assad said the government had rejected any proposal that would accept rebel control of any area, even temporarily. The government has long insisted that it aims to take back all of the country, and it has so far refused any territorial or political compromise with its opponents.

The proposal raises the possibility of outside forces' helping to guarantee a cease-fire. It says military units or "guarantors" would be deployed as monitors.

Rebel representatives said they would not accept any from Iran or Russia. Russian news outlets, including the Interfax news agency,

said the forces could be from former Soviet states — Kazakhstan was floated as a possibility — or members of the bloc of emerging economies that include Russia, Brazil and India. Those reports also mentioned Arab countries, leading to speculation that Egypt could contribute. Egyptian officials have denied any intention of sending forces to Syria.

Changes on the ground in Syria have given credence to the possibility of cease-fire zones as outlined in the Russian proposal. On Tuesday, pro-government militias opened a new commercial corridor between government and rebel-held areas in the town of Khirbet Ghazaleh in southern Syria, imposing a tax of 20 percent. The tax essentially formalized smuggling routes that have profited militants on both sides and could presage the opening of routes in other areas.

Hisham Skeif, a former member of the opposition council in Aleppo and now a political spokesman for a rebel faction, was skeptical of the Russian proposal, saying it needed clarification on the precise boundaries of the cease-fire zones and the identities of the monitoring forces.

"It was thrown by the Russians as a step in the air," he said. Russia and the government have typically described rebel fighters as jihadists as a justification to bomb them, he said, "so we are back to the same vortex."



Bershidsky : The Best Bet for Syria: Freeze the Conflict

Leonid Bershidsky

6-7 minutes

Something appears to be shifting in the interaction between major powers in the Syrian conflict. Tuesday's phone call between U.S. President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, as well as Putin's remarks after a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, show that a partition of Syria into spheres of influence may be in the cards.

The Russian and U.S. readouts of the call differ. The Kremlin version talks about "boosting dialog between the two countries' foreign policy agencies to find ways to strengthen the ceasefire regime, making it stable and controlled." The U.S. description appears to be more specific:

The conversation was a very good one, and included the discussion of safe, or de-escalation, zones to achieve lasting peace for humanitarian and many other reasons. The United States will be sending a representative to the cease-fire talks in Astana, Kazakhstan on May 3-4.

Putin provided a glimpse of his vision at Tuesday's press conference with Merkel. "The Syrian people have the greatest influence on President Assad," Putin said. "They are, quite obviously, split." He added that "without the participation of a party such as the United States, it is impossible to solve these problems effectively."

Put this together and a changing picture is emerging.

Putin is acknowledging that there's no way to achieve peace in Syria without the U.S., though late last year he and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attempted to

do just that by brokering a ceasefire between Assad's forces and rebel groups and trying to mediate talks between them in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. The talks haven't been effective because the U.S.-backed Syrian opposition has been encouraged by increased U.S. commitment, reflected in airstrikes and a growing American military presence. The Astana process, which restarted on Wednesday, needs U.S. participation to be relevant, which is why Putin apparently raised the issue with Trump. Formerly, Ambassador to Kazakhstan George Krol served as the U.S. observer at the talks; this time around it's Stuart Jones, acting assistant secretary of state for the Middle East. The mention in the White House readout also raises the status of the U.S. participation.

Putin also appears to acknowledge that the divide between his ally Assad and the rebels who oppose them is impossible to bridge. That's

a curious semi-departure from Russia's official insistence that Syria should remain a united country.

United Nations' Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura has suggested the federalization of Syria as a path toward peace, but last year, both the Assad regime and the opposition rejected the proposal. So neither Russia, as Assad's ally, nor the U.S. can talk openly about dividing the country. They don't have to, though. Trump's plan for "safe, or de-escalation, zones," which he discussed with Putin on Tuesday, presents an opportunity to freeze the conflict, leaving the warring sides to administer the areas they control today under, respectively, Russian and U.S. protection.

The plan can be sold to U.S. voters as a humanitarian solution and a way to curb the outflow of refugees. Russians would accept it as a

graceful finishing touch to Putin's relatively inexpensive military adventure, confirming Russia's status as a major player in the Middle East.

Such a scenario would be akin to the geopolitical division of the Korean peninsula -- only an informal one. Putin has lots of experience with such arrangements. As far as the Kremlin is concerned, Ukraine today is divided into a Russian-controlled zone (the separatist "people's republics" in the east) and a U.S.-controlled one (the rest of the country). So is Georgia, with a pro-Western government in Tbilisi, on the one hand, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two dwarf splinter states recognized by Russia and only a handful of

others. And so is Moldova, with the government in Chisinau slowly treading a path to the West and unrecognized Transnistria keeping its pro-Russian orientation.

A deal between Putin and Trump may involve freezing the conflict in a similar way by convincing the warring sides that none of them can win immediately, maybe not for a long time. Of course, that would entail the rebels abandoning for now their goal of ousting Assad; so far they have been unwilling to do that.

The other problem with such an arrangement is that it leaves little room for Turkey, another country with a strong interest in Syria. It would provide long-term U.S.

protection to the Kurdish-controlled areas of Syria, something that Erdogan would view as a source of danger. Erdogan, who is meeting with Trump on May 16, intends to offer Turkish help in beating Islamic State out of Raqqa as an alternative to U.S. cooperation with the Kurds.

On Wednesday, Erdogan was scheduled to meet with Putin; Syria was announced as the main subject of the meeting. The two countries' interests in the conflict have lately diverged more widely than last year, and it's not clear what Putin can do for Erdogan -- he may be more interested in a deal with Trump at this point.

If a "safe zone" or frozen-conflict scheme can be worked out, Putin

will have every reason to be happy with the Trump presidency. And it may even be in U.S. interest. Though maintaining the safe zones can be costly, so is a continued conflict with no solution in sight.

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Editorial : Let Middle Eastern Allies Help Win the Drone War

The Editors

4 minutes

Selling weapons is and should be a fraught enterprise, even for the world's biggest arms supplier. Yet the U.S. is making it needlessly difficult for its allies to purchase armed drones -- with potentially dangerous consequences for both.

A bipartisan group of 22 members of the House of Representatives is urging the State Department to approve a sale of armed drones worth up to \$1 billion to Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. Given the vital support these nations give to the fight against terrorists, the sale should go through.

Foreign military sales are approved by the State Department under a system called Third Party Transfer. Under President Barack Obama, the U.S. blocked sales of armed drones to Middle

East allies -- although it sold unarmed ones to the U.A.E.

If the Trump administration wants to loosen restrictions on weapons exports, as it has said, then these unmanned aircraft sales could be an opportunity to show how they can be expanded responsibly. There are reasonable objections to selling more armed drones, but few stand up to scrutiny, especially when it comes to Jordan and the U.A.E.

One general objection is that drone technology may fall into the hands of potentially hostile nations. When it comes to drones, however, global expertise is advancing so quickly that this is far less a concern than exports of, say, fifth-generation fighter jets loaded with highly classified technology. At any rate, the truly hard part of a drone system is developing the necessary satellite systems, data uplinks and remote operating stations, along with training pilots -- all of which are far

beyond the capabilities and budgets of, say, Islamic State or North Korea.

Another argument is that armed drones would make some U.S. allies, especially those with poor human-rights records, more inclined to reckless action. But a Predator drone can fire only two Hellfire missiles, which cost more than \$100,000 apiece. If the U.A.E. wanted to start bombing indiscriminately, it could do so far more efficiently and effectively with its fighters and bombers.

Finally, there are the economic and geopolitical concerns: The global market in military drones is about to boom, and there's no reason U.S. companies should be left out of it. Indeed, shut out by the U.S., Jordan and the U.A.E. have already turned to China for armed drones.

Yes, any deadly weapon carries the potential for abuse. But the buyers of these drones will continue to be

dependent on the U.S. for parts, missiles, software updates and the like (and it makes sense for the U.S. military and its allies in counterterrorism to be on the same technological platforms). The sales can be made on the condition that if the drones are used for human-rights violations, indiscriminate bombings or illegal surveillance, the U.S. would cut off all such necessary support.

The argument is not that U.S. manufacturers should be free to sell sophisticated arms willy-nilly across the globe. The government should continue to deal with every sale on a case-by-case basis. But the process can and should be approached with the presumption that trust in its allies requires some level of trust in their use of sophisticated military equipment.

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Science Monitor

11-13 minutes

US missile defense: Getting to 'ready' on North Korea threat

The Christian

Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) arsenals produced by North Korea, or (possibly) Iran.

Now that nascent missile defense faces an important inflection point, as does the overall effort to block Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions. Increasingly it seems a matter of when, not if, North Korea will develop the means to target the continental US with a nuclear-tipped ICBM.

That moment might be reached in three to five years, according to current and former US defense officials. And by 2020, North Korea could have as many as 100 nuclear warheads, according to a 2015 Johns Hopkins University report.

At that point, will US missile defense be adequate for its task? Even supporters describe the current system as more of an advanced prototype than a finished product. It might be able to protect against an initial North Korean nuclear capability, but if Pyongyang establishes and maintains serial production of missiles, today's US defensive capabilities might soon become inadequate.

"We're not willing to accept a strategic relationship of vulnerability to North Korean missiles, in the way we have, de facto, with Russia and China.... This is important. We have to get this right," says Thomas Karako, a senior fellow and director of the Missile Defense Project at the

Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington.

More modest than Reagan's 'Star Wars' dream

The US has been working on various anti-missile programs almost since the dawn of the ICBM age. In terms of funding and prominence, this effort perhaps reached its apogee with President Reagan's "Star Wars" Strategic Defense Initiative. SDI envisioned a multi-layered system able to target and attack ballistic missiles from launch to warhead descent. Today's deployed system is not nearly as broad as that dream.

The current US missile defense is aimed instead at shielding the nation from nuclear blackmail or terrorism or threats from a rogue state. (Both China and Russia oppose US defenses, saying it is possible they will destabilize the mutual deterrence that currently exists between big nuclear powers.)

On the list of today's "rogue states", North Korea sits at No. 1. The US intelligence community assesses that North Korea is currently in the process of fielding an ICBM capability to strike the American homeland with a nuclear warhead. Such a system hasn't been tested, nor is it clear whether any North Korean ballistic missiles of shorter range have yet been tipped with nuclear warheads.

After all, this is rocket science, meaning very difficult – as Pyongyang's many failed missile tests show.

Defenses from Hawaii

The first line of US ballistic missile defense is a global network of sea-, land-, and space-based sensors to detect and track any launch against American targets.

These range from an ocean-going X-Band radar at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, to early-warning radars strung across Alaska, Greenland, Britain, and other northern spots, and SPY-1 radars on Navy Aegis missile defense ships at sea. Data is fed to a central fire control system at Schriever Air Force Base in Colorado Springs.

Since 2004, the US has deployed rocket interceptors at Ft. Greeley, Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. Currently there are 36; that number is scheduled to rise to 44 by the end of 2017.

The three-stage interceptors are intended to target missile warheads in the middle of their ballistic course from launch to target. They carry "kill vehicle" warheads of their own, which separate from the launcher and maneuver towards the coasting nuclear warheads. An upgraded Redesigned Kill Vehicle is in the works. Testing won't begin for a few years; deployment is currently scheduled for 2020.

Testing record: 9 of 17 attempts successful

The US has some mobile defense assets that can augment this basic system. The Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) is a rapidly deployable battery of interceptor missiles designed to shoot down short- or medium-range ballistic missiles in the final stages of its flight. It is intended to protect

defined areas, such as cities or military forces, as opposed to entire countries. The US and South Korea have recently set up a THAAD system on a former golf course in South Korea.

The Navy's Aegis cruisers and destroyers also carry interceptor missiles that are designed to give them the ability to defend regions against short and medium-range missile attack. The Aegis defense has the advantage of easy mobility – but the number of ships is limited, and they sometimes have other missions to fulfill.

Is this integrated system effective? After all, in essence it is attempting to hit a bullet with a bullet – not an easy thing to do. Since 1997, the payload has destroyed its target in nine of 17 full-blown intercept tests, or just over 50 percent of the time.

Some scientists harshly criticize the US missile defense program, saying that interceptors could be easily spoofed.

"The ground-based defense system 'is not on a credible path to achieving an operationally useful capability,'" charged the Union of Concerned Scientists in a 2016 report on the effort.

But officials of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency and other proponents say the system is a capable one that is being refined to meet a threat which itself is still developing. They say its testing record should be seen in that light.

A Congressional Research Service report on the system drawn up in late 2016 attempts to strike a balance between these points of view.

"Although the [ground-based missile defense] system is praised by senior military leaders and is generally viewed in successful terms, it does have a somewhat mixed flight test record," writes CRS analyst Steven Hildreth.

Alaskan senator pushes for more robust missile defense

Meanwhile, North Korea grinds ahead with its military programs. That is the military and political reality facing the US, note defense proponents. Holding a nuclear threat over the United States seems a core goal of Kim Jong-Un's worldview. Is that a situation the US can endure?

"Each of the last four administrations has looked at the North Korean threat and said this is not the sort of thing in which we can live, in a state of vulnerability," says Dr. Karako of CSIS, a principal author of a new "Missile Defense

2020" report that urges devoting more money and effort to outpacing the ballistic missile threat.

Among other recommendations, the CSIS study urges fielding upward of 80 ground-based interceptors by 2020, and completing readiness efforts studying a possible East Coast deployment site.

Some lawmakers are already on board. Alaska, closer to North Korea than the lower 48 states, could be an early target for attack. Sen. Dan Sullivan (R) of Alaska says that in his view the US needs to significantly step up its missile defense system. But "nobody's talking about that," he said in a Monitor interview last week.

The senator, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, says he hopes to soon introduce a bipartisan bill to significantly boost America's ability to shoot down rogue missiles from North Korea or Iran.

Senator Sullivan proposes 28 more interceptors, as well as requiring the military to study having up to 100 interceptors distributed across the country.

Should North Korea successfully develop a nuclear-tipped ballistic missile, "the pressure on the president will be enormous to do something 'militarily,'" says Sullivan. But if the US has a system that can, with 99.9 percent certainty, shoot down rogue missiles, with the expectation of "massive" US retaliation, then Kim Jong-un will have to "think really hard" about that, the senator says.

"Having a robust missile defense will give the president more options and breathing room," Sullivan contends.

Cyber sabotage?

But here's something the Pentagon doesn't talk about: ramping up investments in interceptor rockets might not be the only US option to blunt North Korean missile development. Secret cyberattacks to disrupt Pyongyang's missile tests might be an option as well.

In February, *The New York Times* reported that the Trump administration planned to continue work on an Obama-era program that charged the Pentagon with developing hacking tools to disable or misdirect launched North Korean missiles. That capability, if confirmed, could give the Defense Department a Digital Age tool to deal with the rogue state.

"[Missiles] have to be linked to a network and to a computer. That's your entry point," says James

Lewis, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and a former rapporteur for United Nations cybersecurity talks in 2015. "Breaking into somebody's weapons systems and trying to interfere with their operations, that's just part of warfare now."

Indeed, the US appeared to have expanded its visibility into North Korean computer networks even before the damaging Sony Pictures hack that leaked private emails and the unreleased film *The Interview* in 2014, which the FBI attributed to Pyongyang's hackers.

Classified documents disclosed to the press in 2015 indicated that the National Security Agency, with help from US allies in Asia, penetrated into North Korean networks, including devices and systems used by the country's top hacking teams and spies. The Defense Department could also target North Korea's suspected suppliers, such as Iran, with digital attacks.

But while the Pentagon and other military agencies may be using cyberattacks to probe digitally connected weapons networks, it's not clear that it has been the driving factor in Pyongyang's recent spike in failed missile launches.

Even for elite hackers, targeting North Korea's missile program would be particularly complex. Unlike the Stuxnet computer worm – widely believed to have been developed by the US and Israel – that targeted Iran's central nuclear enrichment facility, a digital attack against North Korea's missile program would have to target multiple test sites and mobile batteries that Pyongyang uses to fire missiles.

"Missiles tend to blow up anyway just given how hard rocket science is," says Adam Segal, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. "To do it seconds or minutes after the launch would suggest a kind of pervasiveness in the networks and an all-seeing ability that would be very expensive and very difficult to maintain."

Even optimists about using hacking tools against North Korea's missile program see as one piece of a broader solution – not a silver bullet.

"The question is always probability," says CSIS's Mr. Lewis. "If they shot 100 missiles, you could probably disable some of them. You probably couldn't disable all of them."

North Korea Says China Is 'Dancing to the Tune of the U.S.'

Jonathan Cheng
4-5 minutes

weapons programs, amid pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump and other United Nations members.

be sacrificed for the interests of China."

Last month, Mr. Trump met Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, where Mr. Trump says that he offered China more favorable trade terms in exchange for help on confronting the threat from North Korea.

In February, China said that it would suspend coal imports from North Korea until the end of the year, potentially depriving Pyongyang of a key source of revenue, a move that Mr. Trump has pointed to as a sign of China's willingness to turn the screws on North Korea.

Mr. Trump has said that China holds the key to halting the North Korean weapons programs, citing the two countries' close economic and historical ties.

Beijing in return has said its leverage is limited and has pressed the U.S. to enter into unconditional talks with Pyongyang.

China and North Korea have enjoyed friendly ties since the years immediately following World War II, when Communist parties in both

countries took power and fought in one another's wars. The two countries have described their ties as being as close as that of "lips and teeth."

In recent decades, however, bilateral ties have become increasingly strained, as China opened its economy while North Korea grew more isolated and pursued a nuclear-weapons program that antagonized the region.

Wednesday's article wasn't the first time North Korea took rhetorical aim at China. In February, North Korea published a similar broadside, though in that case the commentary took a softer tone and didn't call out Beijing by name, referring to China only as "a neighboring country, which often claims itself to be a 'friendly neighbor.'"

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Appeared in the May. 04, 2017, print edition as 'Pyongyang Slams China's 'Betrayal'.'

May 3, 2017 10:36 a.m. ET

SEOUL—North Korea slammed China's "insincerity and betrayal" in a commentary published late Wednesday, calling statements in the official Chinese media "an undisguised threat" to Pyongyang, as it sought to stave off pressure from Beijing on its nuclear and missile programs.

"China should no longer try to test the limits of the DPRK's patience," North Korea said in the commentary published by the official Korean Central News Agency, using the acronym for its formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "China had better ponder over the grave consequences to be entailed by its reckless act of chopping down the pillar of the DPRK-China relations."

The commentary, which was attributed to a person identified only as Kim Chol, comes as China seeks to get North Korea to curb its

North Korea's latest statements referred to recent articles in two official Chinese publications, the People's Daily and the Global Times, that apparently alluded to the possibility of Beijing confronting North Korea militarily, or ending friendly ties between the two neighbors and Cold War allies, if it didn't halt its weapons programs.

The commentary also referred to Chinese press statements about North Korea's weapons programs threatening China's northeast, which borders North Korea, and about how Pyongyang's actions were giving the U.S. an excuse to deploy more strategic assets to the region. The article said that the U.S. military buildup in Asia was aimed at China, not North Korea.

China's hardening line on North Korea, the commentary said, showed that Beijing was "dancing to the tune of the U.S.," and that China was exercising "big-power chauvinism" that meant "the dignity and vital rights of the DPRK should

Shinzo Abe Announces Plan to Revise Japan's Pacifist Constitution

Motoko Rich
3-4 minutes

Pacifism is enshrined in the Constitution, with a clause known as Article 9 calling for the complete renunciation of war. That clause represents a cherished part of the country's postwar identity, and Mr. Abe has long made clear his desire to amend it. Previous calls to revise it have been met with skepticism in Japan and in countries including China and South Korea that object to any signs of Japan's remilitarization.

Successive Japanese governments, as well as scholars, have argued that the military is constitutional because the charter allows the country to defend itself.

But Mr. Abe has pushed for a much broader interpretation, and two years ago he helped secure passage of security legislation that authorized overseas combat missions by the military in the name of "collective self-defense" and alongside allied troops. The passage of the laws came after a grinding political battle and days of public demonstrations.

Acknowledging the politically delicate nature of the latest proposal to revise the Constitution, Mr. Abe said on Wednesday that the country "must hold fast to the idea of pacifism."

Analysts said it was a shrewd calculation intended to reassure skeptics and set a precedent for revision. Mr. Abe and his cabinet "are aware that Article 9 is very popular, and revising Article 9 is going to be alarming to many countries around them," said Koichi Nakano, a political scientist at Sophia University in Tokyo. Just last week, a survey by the public broadcaster NHK found that 82 percent of respondents were "proud of the current Constitution that advocates pacifism."

Mr. Nakano said that Mr. Abe's proposal "could be a convincing idea, but it could also bring forth inevitable criticism that you've broken the Constitution first, and you are ex post facto trying to make it O.K."

About 55,000 people attended a meeting in Tokyo opposing the amendment, and opposition was strong on social media.

"Is there an earnest desire among people to change the current Constitution at all costs? I've never heard that there are many such voices," wrote Tomo Kimura on Twitter.

But others suggested that Mr. Abe was merely trying to align the Constitution with current practice. "I think the Constitution should be

amended corresponding to the reality in which Japan's security environment has dramatically changed," someone wrote on Twitter under the handle @_500 yen.

Toru Hashimoto, former governor and mayor of Osaka, told the Yomiuri Shimbun, Japan's largest daily, that it was time to clearly make the self-defense forces legal.

"It might have been unconstitutional right after the war," he said, "but there is no doubt that the S.D.F. are constitutional now."

Jun Okumura, a former government official and now a visiting researcher at the Meiji Institute for Global Affairs, said he thought Mr. Abe would be able to pass the amendment. In a July election, the governing coalition and its allies captured two-thirds of the seats in the upper house of Parliament, the amount required to proceed with a constitutional revision.

Any revision would also be subject to approval in a referendum. A poll published this week by Kyodo News showed that respondents were nearly equally split on the question of whether the pacifist clause should be revised.

TOKYO — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan announced on Wednesday a plan to revise a pacifist Constitution that has been in place since it was enacted by American occupiers in 1947.

In a video message delivered at a celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Constitution, Mr. Abe said he wanted to make "explicit the status" of the country's self-defense forces, as Japan's military is known, by amending the Constitution by 2020.

As Japan faces continuing security threats from North Korea, Mr. Abe said that there should be no room for arguing that the military, with just over 227,000 active-duty troops, "may be unconstitutional."

Japan has stepped up its show of military force amid concerns about North Korea's provocative behavior, sending two naval destroyers to join the American aircraft carrier Carl Vinson in exercises off the Korean Peninsula. And on Monday, a Japanese warship accompanied a United States Navy supply ship headed to join the Carl Vinson and three other warships in a strike group.

Editorial : Venezuela is heading toward cataclysm

<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).

May 3 at 7:14 PM

FOR A month, Venezuela has been rocked by massive popular demonstrations against the regime of Nicolás Maduro, which has led the country into a dystopia of economic dysfunction and criminality while blatantly violating democratic and constitutional norms. The demands of the

opposition have been echoed by the majority of Venezuela's neighbors in the Organization of American States: release political prisoners, hold democratic elections, and take steps to remedy drastic shortages of food and medicine, including by accepting humanitarian aid.

The regime's response has been brutally uncompromising. It has pounded opposition marchers with rubber bullets and enveloped them in tear gas; 29 people have been reported killed in the demonstrations. It has announced its intention to withdraw from the OAS, where it has faced demands to abide by a democratic charter that requires free assembly and free elections. On Monday, Mr. Maduro announced his most radical response yet: the calling of a constituent assembly to rewrite the constitution, a maneuver clearly intended to avoid future elections and formally convert Venezuela into an authoritarian state.

It's easy to see why Mr. Maduro would want to avoid a democratic resolution of the crisis. Polls show the government has the support of less than a quarter of the

population, which is afflicted by one of the world's highest rates of violent crime and shortages of food so severe that a large majority say they have lost weight. The opposition won the last election, for the National Assembly, by a landslide in December 2015; since then the regime has used its control of the Supreme Court to strip the legislature of power while refusing to schedule either local elections or a recall referendum on Mr. Maduro.

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Now Mr. Maduro is suggesting that a constituent assembly will be chosen, but not by a free and fair vote. Half its members would come from social organizations controlled by the ruling party. Once convoked, the assembly would likely be used to dissolve the opposition-controlled congress and hand power to regime structures; it could remake Venezuela along the lines of Cuba, whose Castro regime has been Mr. Maduro's tutor.

The prospect of this coup has led the opposition to redouble its

protests. Roads in much of Caracas have been blocked with demonstrators' barricades. But Mr. Maduro and the corrupt clique that surrounds him, including generals accused of drug trafficking and profiteering on food shipments, are calculating they can win the battle in the streets — and that they will lose everything if they agree to elections.

The result is that one of Latin America's most important countries, a major oil producer with a population of 30 million, is headed toward a cataclysm greater than any the hemisphere has witnessed since the Central American wars of the 1980s. It is not clear what can now stop Mr. Maduro, but a bill introduced Wednesday in the U.S. Senate by a broad bipartisan coalition offers a way forward, including \$10 million to seed a U.S.-led humanitarian aid initiative, strengthened sanctions on senior officials and the compilation of a public report on those officials' involvement in drug trafficking and corruption. U.S. efforts to rescue Venezuela have long been sporadic and halfhearted; this is the moment to step them up.

Editorial : China Wants Fish, So Africa Goes Hungry

The Editorial Board

5-6 minutes

Boats in Zhoushan harbor, China's largest fishery. Gilles Sabrie for The New York Times

Of all the stresses that humans have inflicted on the world's oceans, including pollution and global warming, industrial fishing ranks high. For years, trawlers capable of scouring the ocean floor, and factory ships trailing driftnets and longlines baited with thousands of hooks, have damaged once-abundant fisheries to the point where, the United Nations says, 90 percent of them are now fully exploited or facing collapse.

The damage is not just to the fish and the ecosystem but also to people who depend on them for food and income. This is particularly true in Africa. In 2008, in two striking articles, The Times reported that mechanized fleets from the European Union, Russia and China had nearly picked clean the oceans off Senegal and other northwest African countries, ruining coastal economies.

It's still happening, but now, according to a report by The Times's Andrew Jacobs, China stands alone as the major predator.

With its own waters heavily overfished, and being forced to forage elsewhere to feed its people, the Chinese government commands a fleet of nearly 2,600 vessels, 10 times larger than the United States fleet, all heavily subsidized. As Zhang Hongzhou of Singapore's Nanyang Technological University observes, "For China's leaders, ensuring a steady supply of aquatic products is not just about good economics but social stability and political legitimacy."

The result: The Chinese government is basically snatching fish out of the nets of poor fishermen in Africa in order to keep fish on plates in China. A new study published by the journal *Frontiers in Marine Science* says that most Chinese ships are so large that they scoop up as many fish in a week as Senegalese boats catch in a year, costing West African economies some \$2 billion.

Further, many Chinese ships don't hesitate to break the law to meet soaring demand. In 2015, Greenpeace found numerous cases of illegal Chinese fishing in West

African waters, including ships that misreported their coordinates or underreported their tonnage: known ploys to fish in prohibited areas. Yet this presents nations like Senegal with a difficult choice, because China is also pumping \$60 billion into African development. As Alassane Samba, the former head of Senegal's Oceanic Research Institute, put it, "It's hard to say no to China when they are building your roads."

China isn't the only player in this drama. The European Union cuts deals with African nations to catch fish to meet global demand it can no longer satisfy with fish from its own waters. American companies, which have seen some remarkable recovery of once-threatened coastal fish stocks after limiting catches, buy fish taken from far-off waters by Chinese and other vessels, much of it processed into pet food. Russia and Japan reap the world's fish bounty as well.

The good news, such as it is, is that some nations whose waters are at risk are rebelling, and the Chinese may slowly be getting the message. Indonesia has impounded scores of Chinese boats caught poaching in its waters, and Argentina sunk a Chinese vessel after it tried to ram a coast guard ship. There have been

clashes between Chinese fishermen and the authorities in South Korea.

China has pledged to cut fuel subsidies to its fleet by 60 percent by 2019. "The era of fishing any way you want, wherever you want, has passed," says Liu Xinzhong, deputy general director of the Bureau of Fisheries in Beijing. In January, China's Ministry of Agriculture announced measures aimed at protecting China's own fisheries, including possible catch limits.

That could eventually take some pressure off African and other international waters. So could the international compact known formally as the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, which went into effect last year. The treaty seeks to identify fishing vessels, tracking where they fish and how much fish they are harvesting. The United States ratified the agreement in 2016. As of last week, 44 other countries and the European Union had also signed on.

China, regrettably, has yet to do so. Beijing may be feeling the world's censure. But it has a very long way to go before it becomes a responsible steward of the oceans'

threatened and not inexhaustible resources.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Taube : U.S., Canada Both Practice Protectionism

Michael Taube
4-5 minutes

In February, President Trump appeared to put the brakes on a possible trade war with Canada. During a meeting with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Mr. Trump praised the “outstanding trade relationship” and said any changes to the North American Free Trade Agreement—which he once called “the single worst trade deal ever approved in this country”—would involve only minor tweaks.

But things have dramatically shifted. Mr. Trump recently criticized “supply management”—governmentally imposed quotas and price controls—in Canada’s dairy sector. He called it “another typical one-sided deal against the United States” and said it has harmed Wisconsin and New York farmers. (The president was also reportedly considering an executive order last week to start pulling out of Nafta, but the administration disavowed that threat less than 24 hours later.)

Mr. Trump’s is correct: Canada’s policy of placing strict controls on

the availability and prices of dairy—and also poultry—products is flatly protectionist. Mr. Trudeau, a left-leaning Liberal, is wrong to back this anti-free-market policy, which should be eliminated posthaste.

Yet it’s a bit rich for Mr. Trump to criticize Canadian-style protectionism when he’s regularly pitching and imposing American-style protectionism. He uses economic nationalist rhetoric, insisting on “fairness” in trade, proposing restrictive tariffs and subsidies, threatening to tear up trade deals and favoring U.S. companies in government purchasing. He also seems content to keep fighting the decades-old dispute over softwood lumber, in which the American position is as protectionist as Canada’s dairy policy.

So we’re currently experiencing an economic standoff between protectionist Canada and protectionist America. The important commercial relationship—U.S. merchandise trade with Canada in 2015 amounted to \$295.2 billion in imports and \$280.3 billion in exports—stands in the balance. A

collapse would hurt businesses and jobs on both sides of the border.

It’s important for Messrs. Trump and Trudeau not only to get along in front of the cameras, but to get past this hurdle and keep the North American economy strong and vibrant. Here are three ways to kick-start the process.

First, the U.S. and Canada should eliminate regulations in sectors like dairy, softwood lumber, automobiles and electronics, while reducing tariffs by 25% or more this year. Although it’s important to protect economic interests, creating artificially high prices and limiting consumer choice in the marketplace aren’t the ways to do it. Cutting back on nationalist fervor would allow a more prosperous trade environment to blossom.

Second, Canada should eliminate its archaic system of foreign-ownership restrictions. While there are American companies in Canada, from Wal-Mart to McDonald’s, it’s nearly impossible for an international investor to become the majority owner of a Canadian bank, life-insurance company, telecom or airline. This

protectionist policy ought to be tossed aside, once and for all.

Third, Mr. Trump should commit to building a real free-trade arrangement with Canada (and Mexico) that will rev the economic engine of North America. It should include lower taxes and reduced regulations for all three countries, trade liberalization for existing and budding industries alike, and more-efficient routes of travel to ensure quicker delivery of products, among other things. That’s the best way to build a strong trade deal for the U.S. that puts (North) America first.

Protectionism in Canada-U.S. relations has gained far too much momentum as of late. What’s needed is a resurgence in free trade and competition to heal these wounds and rebuild trust. The trick will be convincing Mr. Trump that the latter strategy is, and has always been, the right route toward economic growth and financial prosperity.

Mr. Taube, a syndicated columnist, was a speechwriter for former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

ETATS-UNIS

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

U.S. House to Vote Thursday on Health-Care Bill (UNE)

Kristina Peterson,
Michelle Hackman and Louise Radnofsky

8-10 minutes

Updated May 3, 2017 10:21 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—House Republican leaders said the chamber would vote Thursday on their bill to replace most of the Affordable Care Act, in a show of confidence that they can lock down enough Republican support for a bill that sparked a nationwide debate.

House GOP leaders have spent weeks working to rack up enough votes for their bill and came up short twice—once in late March, when they were forced to pull the bill from the floor, and more recently last week, when they opted not to risk a vote.

Their decision Wednesday night to schedule a vote for Thursday

suggests GOP leaders expect they finally have pinned down the 216 GOP votes needed for it to pass, or are willing to gamble that they are close enough that the pressure of a vote will carry them across the finish line of at least one chamber.

“We will be voting on the health care bill tomorrow,” House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R., Calif.) told reporters Wednesday evening, “because we have enough votes.”

Thursday’s vote could redeem House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) and deliver President Donald Trump his first major legislative win, coming just after the 100-day mark of his tenure passed with little accomplished on Capitol Hill. But it also will cast a long political shadow for House Republicans in the months leading up to next year’s midterm elections. Already, many GOP lawmakers face constituents back home incensed over the prospect of changes to health-care benefits that affect millions.

“Tomorrow, House Republicans are going to tattoo this moral monstrosity to their foreheads, and the American people will hold them accountable,” House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.) said in a statement Wednesday night.

Even if the bill passes the House Thursday, it faces uncertain prospects in the Senate, where many Republicans have already voiced concerns over its major tenets.

The House GOP bill would dismantle much of the ACA’s taxes and subsidies and replace them with tax credits, largely tied to age, to help people buy insurance if they don’t get it through employers. The bill would also reduce funding for Medicaid, the health program for low-income and disabled Americans.

Last week, GOP leaders added a measure aimed at bringing down premium costs that would allow states to apply for waivers to opt out

of certain regulations established by the ACA. That measure won over conservatives who had balked at an earlier version of the bill, but alarmed many centrist Republicans over whether it would lead to higher costs for those with pre-existing conditions.

On Wednesday, Rep. Fred Upton (R., Mich.), an influential former committee chairman, introduced a new proposal aimed at easing those concerns. His measure would add \$8 billion over five years to help cover premiums and other out-of-pocket costs for people with pre-existing conditions.

House Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R., La.) credited Mr. Upton’s last-minute amendment with drawing new support to the bill.

“Some members came together and made some final changes that first and foremost helped people with pre-existing conditions even more and helps lower premiums for people across the board,” Mr.

Scalise said. "It helped a number of members get there that weren't yet."

Although most of the House Republicans firmly opposed to the bill remained unmoved Wednesday, some GOP lawmakers who had been publicly undecided or leaning against the bill signed on to Mr. Upton's amendment. When the measure's text formally arrived at the Rules Committee Wednesday night, it was backed by GOP Reps. Jeff Denham, Steve Knight and David Valadao of California, David Young of Iowa, and Billy Long of Missouri, all of whom had voiced concerns. Mr. Long had announced his support at the White House on Wednesday morning with Mr. Upton after meeting with Mr. Trump.

The amendment's extra \$8 billion would only be available to states seeking waivers to undo an ACA regulation banning insurers from charging higher premiums for people with costly pre-existing conditions.

Those states could use the money to set up high-risk pools or other risk-sharing programs designed to shift some of the cost of those patients to the government, rather than spreading them among healthy customers. Insurance experts across the ideological spectrum said that \$8 billion wouldn't be enough to cover the number of people whose costs, they said, would rise as a result of the state waivers.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer compared it to "administering

cough medicine to someone with stage-four cancer." AARP, the seniors' lobby, called the \$8 billion fund a "giveaway to insurance companies," while the American Medical Association said it would not remedy the group's concern "that millions of Americans will lose their health insurance as a direct result of this proposal."

But the measure appeared to get GOP leaders closer to the 216 votes needed to pass the bill. Given that no Democrats are expected to support the legislation, Republican leaders can lose no more than 22 GOP votes if all lawmakers are present.

"We will pass this bill," Mr. McCarthy said.

Still, the vote count is expected to be tight, as more than a dozen House Republicans remain opposed to the bill, even after the 11th-hour alterations.

"Nothing that they've proposed, none of the amendments changed the things that were hurting the people I represent," said Rep. Dan Donovan (R., N.Y.), who listed the bill's cuts to Medicaid among his concerns.

Thursday's vote could rescue House GOP leaders after weeks of uncomfortable glare in the spotlight as they faltered repeatedly to secure support for the bill. Its passage could thrust the political controversy over to the Senate, where Republicans are deeply divided over issues such as the bills' changes to Medicaid. Senate

Republicans have even less room for error: they control 52 of the chamber's 100 seats, meaning they can lose no more than two votes.

Top White House officials flooded Capitol Hill this week, with Vice President Mike Pence and Seema Verma, who oversees the Medicare and Medicaid programs, meeting with lawmakers Wednesday. Mr. Trump met with Messrs. Upton and Long, and he dialed up other lawmakers, including Rep. Steve King (R., Iowa), who said the president assured him that legislation taking steps to ease the sale of insurance across state lines would later come up for a Senate vote.

Still, the administration has taken a far more circumspect approach in recent days than it did in March, when the president dialed dozens of lawmakers late into the night and invited cameras to Oval Office meetings to secure commitments from House legislators, and the vice president held group meetings and taped radio interviews aimed at specific lawmakers' districts.

Republicans said that recent announcements from insurers showed that the ACA was failing and that a substitute was urgently needed. On Wednesday, Medica, a nonprofit insurer, said it was considering pulling out of the marketplace in Iowa next year, a move that would leave most of the state without any company offering exchange plans.

In addition, Aetna said on Wednesday that it will withdraw

from the exchange in Virginia next year, though that move won't leave any counties there without plans.

At the White House, press secretary Sean Spicer cited the developments as reasons to pass the GOP effort soon, and to bat down criticisms of its provisions addressing people with pre-existing conditions. The bill was "strengthening" their protections, he said.

"We are actually at a point where if we don't do something, some people in this country will have no options for coverage," he said.

The bill's critics have pointed to estimates that it will leave more people in the country without health care than the ACA would. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated in March that the number of Americans without health insurance would grow by 24 million under an early version of the bill, compared with the ACA, over a decade. CBO hasn't yet released estimates based on the latest version of the bill.

—Natalie Andrews and Anna Wilde Mathews contributed to this article.

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**The
New York
Times**

With \$8 Billion Deal on Health Bill, House G.O.P. Leader Says 'We Have Enough Votes' (UNE)

Thomas Kaplan and Robert Pear

7-8 minutes

WASHINGTON — House Republican leaders planned to hold a showdown vote Thursday on their bill to repeal and replace large portions of the Affordable Care Act after adding \$8 billion to the measure to help cover insurance costs for people with pre-existing conditions.

"We have enough votes," Representative Kevin McCarthy of California, the House majority leader, said Wednesday night. "It'll pass."

A breakthrough came earlier Wednesday thanks to an amendment proposed by Representative Fred Upton of Michigan, with the support of Representative Billy Long of Missouri, to add the money to the

bill. The two Republican lawmakers had come out against the health care legislation, warning that it did not do enough to protect the sick, but they threw their support behind it on Wednesday.

President Trump blessed Mr. Upton's proposal at a White House meeting with the two lawmakers as he pressed hard for a vote that could at least ensure House approval of the bill, which embodies one of his central campaign promises. The vote Thursday will carry enormous potential consequences — for millions of patients, for Mr. Trump's legislative agenda and for Speaker Paul D. Ryan, who has failed twice in recent weeks to bring the bill to the House floor.

The measure faces a wall of opposition from health care providers, patient advocates and retirees, and has been derided by many Senate Republicans, who are

all but certain to reject vast portions of it should it clear the House. But clearing the House is a necessary step to keep alive the Republican promise — seven years in the making — to dismantle President Barack Obama's signature domestic achievement.

Mr. Upton predicted that the bill was "likely" to pass the House, a tremendous reversal of momentum for a measure that has twice been pulled back from a vote for lack of support.

Their announcement gave a big lift to Mr. Ryan and other Republican leaders as they tried to round up enough votes to push the bill through the House this week.

"We've got some momentum," Mr. Ryan told a Wisconsin radio station on Wednesday morning.

Democrats and health care groups tried to slow that momentum. The

liberal health advocacy group Families USA said another \$8 billion would do little to improve the "high-risk pools" that could be set up by states to provide coverage to people with pre-existing medical conditions who could not find affordable insurance in the open market.

The American Medical Association and 10 organizations representing patients, including the American Heart Association and the advocacy arm of the American Cancer Society, reiterated their opposition to the House Republican bill on Wednesday, as did the retirees' lobby AARP.

"None of the legislative tweaks under consideration changes the serious harm to patients and the health care delivery system" that the bill would cause, said Dr. Andrew W. Gurman, the president of the American Medical Association. The latest changes, he said, "tinker at

the edges without remedying the fundamental failing of the bill — that millions of Americans will lose their health insurance as a direct result of this proposal.”

Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the Democratic leader, also criticized the latest version of the legislation. “The proposed Upton amendment is like administering cough medicine to someone with stage-four cancer,” he said in a statement. “This Republican amendment leaves Americans with pre-existing conditions as vulnerable as they were before under this bill.”

If House Republicans can pass the bill, it would be a moment of redemption for both Mr. Ryan and Mr. Trump, who suffered a resounding political defeat in March when they failed to muster the votes to win approval of an earlier version.

Speaker Paul D. Ryan at a news conference in the Capitol on Tuesday. Win McNamee/Getty Images

The Affordable Care Act generally requires insurers to accept all applicants and prohibits them from charging higher premiums because of a person’s medical condition. Conservatives argue that this and other requirements of the 2010 health law drive up insurance costs.

At the insistence of conservative lawmakers, House Republican leaders agreed to let states apply

for waivers allowing insurers to charge higher rates based on a person’s “health status.”

The original version of the Republican repeal bill would have established a \$100 billion fund that states could use to help people pay for health care and insurance from 2018 to 2026. House leaders added \$15 billion last month to help insurers pay claims for their sickest customers. Mr. Upton’s proposal would provide \$8 billion over five years on top of that.

How far that \$8 billion would go in providing coverage for people with pre-existing conditions is not clear. Mr. Upton’s proposal does not specify who would be eligible, how much of their costs would be covered or how much they would be expected to contribute in premiums.

How many states would seek waivers is difficult to predict.

But the fight over pre-existing conditions overshadowed a major reason the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the original bill would leave 24 million more Americans without health insurance after a decade: a rollback of the Affordable Care Act’s Medicaid expansion in states that adopted it. The House plans to vote for the latest version before the budget office can finish a fresh assessment of its cost and impact.

Representative Joe L. Barton, Republican of Texas, predicted his

state “would lead the parade to opt out of all the federal mandates” in the Affordable Care Act.

But Representative Carlos Curbelo, Republican of Florida, said: “I would highly doubt that any governor, especially the governor of a large state like Florida, would seek a waiver. I just don’t think that any state would want to carry the burden of managing health care more than they already do, through Medicaid.”

Mr. Curbelo illustrated the fluid politics swirling around the repeal bill. In a Twitter post on Thursday morning, he said he had just told House Republican leaders that the bill “in its current form fails to sufficiently protect Americans with pre-existing conditions.” In a late afternoon interview, he said, “I do not yet have a position on the bill.” He wanted to hear more from Mr. Upton, a respected Republican voice on health care.

The Affordable Care Act set up a special health insurance program for people with cancer, heart disease and other serious illnesses, to provide coverage until 2014, when insurers were forbidden to discriminate against people based on their health status. Claims far exceeded Obama administration estimates, exhausting most of the \$5 billion provided by Congress.

The average cost per enrollee was more than \$32,000 a year in 2012,

according to a federal report on the program, and the cost varied widely among states, from a low of \$4,300 to a high of \$171,900 per enrollee.

Mr. Upton and Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, said they believed that the money in the bill would be adequate. “It’s our understanding that the \$8 billion over the five years will more than cover those that might be impacted and, as a consequence, keeps our pledge for those that, in fact, would be otherwise denied because of pre-existing illnesses,” Mr. Upton said at the White House.

To qualify for assistance under the Upton proposal, a person would have to live in a state with an approved waiver, have a pre-existing condition and be uninsured because of a failure to maintain “continuous coverage.”

The House Democratic leader, Nancy Pelosi of California, said the money was a pittance compared with the likely need. “It’s a joke,” she said. “It’s a very sad, deadly joke.”

The latest amendments to the bill amount to “a hoax on pre-existing conditions,” Ms. Pelosi said. “If Republicans have their way, Americans with pre-existing conditions will be pushed off their insurance and segregated into high-risk pools where they face soaring cost, worse coverage and restricted care.”

POLITICO Decision day for Obamacare repeal

Kyle Cheney

5-7 minutes

House Republicans are trying to rally together as a vote over their health care bill looms. | Getty

House Republicans barrel ahead with few votes to spare and no assessment of how much the bill would cost.

It’s judgment day for the Republican plan to repeal and replace Obamacare.

House Republicans will huddle Thursday morning for what amounts to a last-minute pep rally to buck up colleagues as they prepare to take a vote to remake health insurance for millions of Americans. If recent history is a guide, it’s a vote that will be career-changing — and perhaps career-ending — for many of the lawmakers who take it.

Story Continued Below

“I’ll take around 2,000 votes this Congress. Most of them will be forgotten,” Rep. Ted Budd (R-N.C.)

said in late Wednesday. “This is not one of those votes. This vote marks the beginning of the end of Obamacare as we know it.”

Though Republican leaders insisted Wednesday they’ve secured the 216 votes needed to pass their bill, the roll call will still be nerve-racking. At least 16 Republicans are still on record rejecting the proposal and about a dozen more are undecided. House leaders can only afford 22 defections, since Democrats will vote en masse against the proposal.

The House has scheduled votes at 10:15 a.m. and 1:15 p.m., with the repeal vote likely in the afternoon series.

Democrats complained that Republicans are jamming a vote without knowing how much the plan will cost or how many people would lose their insurance. GOP leaders are refusing to wait for a formal assessment from the Congressional Budget Office. Instead, they’re racing to capitalize on momentum a day earlier, when a handful of holdouts came on board after a few

final changes were made to the long-stalled bill.

The legislation, the American Health Care Act, would slash Obamacare’s taxes, phase out its generous Medicaid expansion, cuts down on its tax credits and — thanks to some last-minute maneuvering to win conservative support — allow states to opt out of many of Obamacare’s protections and coverage requirements.

To backers, it’s a chance to throw off the regulatory yoke of the Democrat-passed law and create greater competition in health insurance. But critics, including Republican opponents, say the bill would undercut protections for the most vulnerable Americans — people with preexisting conditions who could be subject to premium spikes and reduced benefits if states opt out of the Obamacare framework.

The move to vote without a CBO assessment comes despite years of scolding attack ads from Republicans accusing Democrats of ramming through Obamacare

without understanding its impacts. The CBO scored the Affordable Care Act before it was voted on.

An assessment of an earlier version of the AHCA estimated that as many as 24 million more people could go without coverage under the AHCA.

The vote will be particularly wrenching for Republicans who reside in districts won by Hillary Clinton. Members like Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.), Mike Coffman (R-Colo.) and Kevin Yoder (R-Kansas) are still publicly undecided on the measure.

“Undecided and still reviewing changes,” Issa wrote in a late Wednesday tweet. “Always like to actually read legislation and review its impact before taking a position!”

The stakes are also soaring for President Donald Trump, who spent weeks leaning on House members to revive the AHCA after multiple versions saw a collapse in Republican support. Trump spent the week dialing reluctant Republicans and pleading for their votes. When two prominent

lawmakers defected, threatening the latest version of the bill, Trump hosted them at the White House on Wednesday and blessed a last-minute change to the bill in order to bring them back.

"He has been an aerobic listener through this entire process," said Rep. Michael Burgess (R-Texas), one of the health law's top boosters in Congress, who joined Trump in

the Oval Office Wednesday to help broker the final amendment to win support for the measure.

One daunting reality for lawmakers reluctantly backing the bill is the near-certainty that many of its most controversial provisions could be dropped by the Senate, leaving only House members on the hook for the political costs. Senate Republicans

have signaled little interest in the House version of the bill.

In a sign of the convoluted process Republican leaders are taking to try to unwind Obamacare, the House bill includes one provision that most members hate: an exemption from the law's impacts for members of Congress and their staff. Though Republicans insist they don't want an exemption, technical Senate

budgetary rules prohibit them from removing it without dramatically diminishing the chances of getting the bill through the Senate.

So House leaders have also scheduled a vote on a separate bill to eliminate the exemption. But Democrats have pounced on the procedural snafu to highlight the fact that the AHCA itself still includes the exemption.

The
Washington
Post

Republicans plan health-care vote on Thursday, capping weeks of fits and starts (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/kelsey.snell.3>

10-12 minutes

House Republican leaders said Wednesday that they plan to bring their controversial plan to revise key parts of the Affordable Care Act to a vote on Thursday, capping weeks of fits and starts in their attempt to fulfill a signature campaign promise.

The flagging Republican effort to reshape the nation's health-care system picked up steam Wednesday as GOP leaders tried to address concerns about people with preexisting medical conditions. But independent analysts remained skeptical that the new proposal would fully address the needs of at-risk patients who receive coverage guarantees under the Affordable Care Act, underscoring the contentious nature of the Republican effort.

[Which Republicans are putting the health-care bill in jeopardy this time]

Republican leaders huddled in the office of House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) on Wednesday evening to figure out the next steps after a whirlwind day at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. Several said they would hold a vote this week only if they felt certain it could pass — meaning they now think they have the votes.

Exiting the relatively brief leadership meeting, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) guaranteed victory. "Do we have the votes? Yes. Will we pass it? Yes," he told reporters.

(The Washington Post)

Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.) lambasted Republicans' plan to revise key parts of the Affordable Care Act, calling it "indefensible." Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.) lambasted Republicans' plan to revise key parts of the Affordable Care Act, calling it "indefensible." (The Washington Post)

Several Republicans said a vote is expected by lunchtime on Thursday. The House Rules Committee met late Wednesday to take procedural steps in advance of the floor vote, approving final GOP adjustments to the measure.

If the bill passes, it will face a steep climb in the Senate, where widespread disagreement remains among Republicans about how to proceed on health care.

Rep. Fred Upton, an influential Republican from Michigan, introduced the amendment that was key to resolving a major sticking point this week. It provides more financial assistance — \$8 billion over five years — to help people with preexisting conditions pay for medical costs. Those people are at risk of losing protections under the GOP plan, which seeks to repeal and replace major parts of the ACA.

Just a day earlier, Upton said he could not support the Republican plan because of its stance on preexisting conditions. But he sounded an optimistic note after sketching out his fix Wednesday and meeting with President Trump at the White House.

[House GOP's health-care legislation adds \$8 billion for preexisting conditions]

Upton said Trump called him Tuesday afternoon. The two had a "good give and take," he said, and Trump grew "a little angry" when Upton said he could not support the bill. But eventually, he said, they came to an agreement on his amendment.

Rep. Billy Long (R-Mo.), who like Upton was against the bill earlier this week over the issue of coverage for preexisting conditions, was also in the White House meeting.

A Washington Post analysis showed 20 House Republicans either opposed to or leaning against the bill late Wednesday, and 36 more either undecided or unclear in their positions. If no Democrats support the measure, House

Republicans can lose no more than 22 GOP votes to pass their bill.

Upton's amendment was not met with resistance by the House Freedom Caucus, a key bloc of conservatives whose opposition to an earlier version of the health-care bill led GOP leaders to yank the measure.

"I don't see any defections because of this particular amendment from our previous whip count," said Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), the chairman of the group. Meadows and Upton both said they had been in touch.

Documents filed with the House Rules Committee showed the Upton amendment was co-sponsored by Long and four other Republicans who had been previously undecided, suggesting that the quartet would support Ryan's bill on final passage.

Under the GOP plan, states could opt out of parts of the ACA, meaning people with preexisting conditions could be denied coverage or charged more. Such states would have to set up "high-risk pools" to absorb some of the costs.

Upton's amendment would help some patients with expensive conditions, such as cancer or diabetes, pay premiums and out-of-pocket costs.

Some experts doubted that \$8 billion was enough to aggressively address those costs over a five-year period. According to an analysis from the Kaiser Family Foundation, the temporary high-risk pool created by the ACA covered just 100,000 people; the government paid out \$2 billion in subsidies to that pool in one year.

Far more people with preexisting conditions are likely to lose health coverage under the GOP health-care plan — some estimate about 5 million individuals. Depending on how many states apply for the funds, \$1.6 billion a year could be spread thin.

"For subsidies to cover 68 percent of enrollees' premium costs, as ACA tax credits do now in the individual market exchanges, the government would have to put up \$32.7 billion annually," Emily Gee, a health economist at the progressive Center for American Progress, wrote in an analysis of the plan. "Even after applying that subsidy, high-cost consumers would still owe \$10,000 annually toward premiums."

After meeting with Trump, Upton said his amendment would "more than cover those who might be impacted."

There was also uncertainty about how the bill would be scored by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, which measures how much the legislation will cost and how many people stand to lose coverage.

Republican leaders were willing to move ahead with a vote even before obtaining an updated score. Speaking on the House floor Wednesday afternoon, McCarthy brushed off a Democrat's concerns about a new score, noting that a previous version of the bill had already been reviewed by the CBO.

The CBO projected in late March that a revised GOP health-care plan would result in 14 million more people being uninsured in 2018 than under current law. It projected the plan would slash the federal deficit by \$150 billion between 2017 and 2026.

The House is slated to go on recess Thursday until May 16, which forced GOP leaders to make a quick decision about whether to try to hold a vote before leaving town.

The White House has been putting heavy pressure on Ryan to swiftly pass a health-care bill, amid fears that Republicans will lose their opportunity if the effort continues to drag out.

Trump dispatched top administration officials to the Capitol on Wednesday, including Vice President Pence; White House

budget director Mick Mulvaney; Seema Verma, administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; and Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price.

Democrats, who have held firm against the GOP's revision push, said they were not impressed by the newly proposed changes.

"Trumpcare means heart-stopping premium increases for people with preexisting conditions, and no Band-Aid amendment will fix it," said House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), who like many in her party has sought to associate the bill closely with Trump.

At the House Rules Committee meeting Wednesday night, Democrats expressed displeasure with both the substance of the Republican bill and the process by which it was brought up.

"We've been forced to rely on press reports to figure out what the hell's even in this bill," snapped Rep. Jim

McGovern (D-Mass.).

The Upton change is the latest fix Republicans have added to their measure as they've tried to keep it viable. Last month, they added \$15 billion for a program to reimburse insurers who cover patients with preexisting conditions — an effort to appease conservatives worried about lowering premiums.

It remained unclear whether all states would be able to apply for the newly proposed funding, or just states where patients with preexisting conditions could be charged higher premiums. Under a separate proposed amendment to the bill from Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-N.J.), which persuaded many conservatives to sign on to the bill, states could apply for a federal waiver from a ban on insurers charging those patients more.

Several prominent health-care and advocacy organizations voiced their unequivocal opposition to the legislation.

Andrew Gurman, president of the American Medical Association, warned in a statement that "none of the latest legislative tweaks under consideration changes the serious harm to patients and the health care delivery system" should the bill pass. Millions would still lose coverage or have to pay far higher insurance costs "as a direct result," Gurman said.

And in a letter to lawmakers, AARP said the changes to be voted on Thursday "would make a bad bill even worse," increasing out-of-pocket costs for Americans ages 50-64 and weakening the fiscal stability of Medicare, which covers people 65 and older.

Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-Fla.), a moderate seen as a top Democratic target in 2018, was pressed several times by party whips and told reporters that he could be persuaded to move from no to yes.

The Daily 202 newsletter

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"The easiest thing to do in this town is to say no," he said. "That's usually the politically expedient thing to do. If I believe this legislation can be improved by the time it comes back to the House, I will be supporting it."

Rep. Mike Coffman (R-Colo.), who represents a swing district in suburban Denver that voted for Hillary Clinton, offered mixed reviews in a written statement.

"If House Leadership will work to tighten protections for those with preexisting conditions, I'm a yes on sending this bill to the Senate for further consideration," he said Wednesday. "If not, I'm a no, and we'll go back to the drawing board."

Paul Kane, John Wagner, Ed O'Keefe, Amber Phillips and Paige Winfield Cunningham contributed to this report.

Read more at PowerPost.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

COMMENTS

5-7 minutes

Editorial : Health Reform's House Breakout

May 3, 2017 7:09 p.m. ET 97

Against the odds, House Republicans have regained momentum on health-care reform, and they're nearing a majority coalition. While there may be more swerves before a vote, they ought to appreciate the importance of demonstrating that a center-right Congress—working with President Trump—can govern.

There are still holdouts and others are undecided in the GOP's moderate and conservative wings, but their differences are narrowing. More members are also recognizing their political mistake in trashing the original ObamaCare repeal and replace bill. The House now has a rare second chance, and a generational opportunity to start to solve some U.S. problems.

On Wednesday Fred Upton of Michigan and Billy Long of Missouri worked out the latest compromise, meant to assuage concerns about insurance for pre-existing medical conditions. The amendment would add \$8 billion over five years to a 10-year, \$130 billion fund to create risk pools to protect people in the individual insurance market who need high-cost treatments.

Pre-existing conditions are an understandable concern, but the critics traffick in demagoguery, not

substance. Their opposition has less to do with vulnerable patients than preserving ObamaCare. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer claimed that risk pools are "like administering cough medicine to someone with stage 4 cancer," which exploits cancer victims and shows he knows nothing about risk pools.

By targeting funds at the sickest patients, states can make insurance markets more affordable and stable. These subsidies siphon off some of the costs that contribute to rising premiums in the overall market, and the idea is that the resulting cheaper plans for everyone else will encourage more people to enroll.

In Alaska, ObamaCare premiums rose 40% annually over multiple years, one of the two participating insurers exited the business, and the other was on the brink. So the state received a federal waiver last year to create a risk pool. Premiums rose 7.3% on average for 2017.

Opponents say risk pools are underfunded, but the Alaska rescue mission cost merely \$55 million (albeit in a low-population state). The results came despite ObamaCare's restraints, and the GOP's American Health Care Act promises more regulatory flexibility to experiment. Opponents also argue that risk pools are ghettos for the sick, but the Alaska payments are "invisible," meaning that all consumers use regular insurance.

We'll learn soon if risk pools are enough to win over GOP

moderates, but they should know that Democrats will demagogue the pre-existing conditions issue in the 2018 election whether the bill passes or not. Better to pass the bill, and explain to their voters why their reform is better for patients, than defend a failure. HillaryCare's crash didn't save vulnerable Democrats in 1994—though unlike Democrats, this time Republicans have a good product to sell.

The pre-existing conditions furor also shows that conservatives were wrong to oppose the original House bill. They achieved little beyond opening up a politically toxic debate. Risk pools require government spending but they're a proven tool that can mitigate some of ObamaCare's damage, and time and money are needed to repair insurance markets. Rejecting a replacement over this or that provision means preserving the ObamaCare status quo.

This political reality applies to all corners of the GOP. Republicans—conservatives and moderates—have campaigned for more than seven years on repealing and replacing ObamaCare, and voters in 2016 gave them control of government. If Republicans can't follow through now, the public will conclude that they're either dishonest or feckless, and then wonder if they deserve their jobs.

Another failure would add to the dysfunction narrative of the Trump Administration, and there's no

telling how the President would react. For now the White House is invested in a fairly conventional center-right economic agenda. One reason the health bill was raised from the dead has been the President's backstage leadership and his personal, member-by-member appeals.

But Mr. Trump wants above all to be a "winner" and he's likely to align himself with whatever majority he can find. If Speaker Paul Ryan and Mitch McConnell in the Senate can't deliver, this least ideological of Presidents may turn in 2018 or sooner to Nancy Pelosi and Mr. Schumer to make deals—on roads, bridges and airports, or trade tariffs, or who knows what else. You can bet the results won't please conservatives.

More important than the configurations of Beltway power is showing that center-right reforms can improve American lives. Republicans haven't been in charge for a decade and the failures of the progressive project—flat incomes, above all—explain much of the country's current political distemper.

Mr. Trump and the GOP need to follow through on their pledges of economic growth and government reform, and convince Americans that a better future awaits. Health-care progress will lift the rest of their program. It is only a minor exaggeration to think that health-care reform is a do-or-die moment for the GOP Congress.

Editorial : The GOP insists its healthcare bill will protect people with pre-existing conditions. It won't

The Times Editorial Board

3-4 minutes

The Times Editorial Board

About half of American adults under age 65 have at least one preexisting medical condition, by the federal government's count. According to a Kaiser Family Foundation analysis, more than half of those adults could have been denied coverage by health insurers in the days before Obamacare if they weren't included in a large employer's plan.

That's why one of the most popular and humane features of the 2010 Affordable Care Act is the provision barring insurers from discriminating against Americans with preexisting conditions. This provision not only

saved many Americans from being bankrupted by medical bills, it relieved the anxiety that trapped people in jobs they would not leave for fear of losing coverage.

But now, House Republicans are proposing to let states punch a gaping hole in that safeguard as part of a bill to partially repeal and replace the ACA.

GOP leaders insist that their bill would continue to bar insurers from denying coverage to anyone, and that it would prevent them from jacking up the premiums for anyone who'd maintained continuous coverage even in states that waived the ACA's protections for those with preexisting conditions. Consumers using those states' insurance exchanges who did not maintain coverage would be eligible for subsidized state "high risk pools,"

where high premiums would be offset by billions of dollars in federal aid.

But far more people would be likely to face huge premium increases than the bill's supporters acknowledge. Millions of people enter and leave the state insurance exchanges annually — the turnover at Covered California is 40% to 50% — which means there may be millions of people going briefly uninsured and then facing enormous premium surcharges, if enough states dumped the ACA's protection for preexisting conditions. According to one estimate, those surcharges could range from \$4,000 per year for asthmatics to \$17,000 for women seeking maternity coverage to \$143,000 for those with a history of metastatic cancer.

The bill's sponsors ponied up more aid Wednesday in an effort to make insurance affordable for all those Americans, but the measure's funding would fall far short of the amount needed to do so — almost \$200 billion short over 10 years, even if only 5% of those in the state exchanges fell into the high risk pool, the Center for American Progress has projected. No surprise there — exorbitant costs sunk the high-risk pools that states used before the ACA, even though they excluded many applicants and denied coverage for some costly conditions.

This is the history that we left behind when the ACA was adopted, and rightly so. It would be foolish to go back now.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Henninger : What Is A Republican For?

Daniel Henninger
5-7 minutes

Trump-Ryan American Health Care Act.

This desertion popped eyes open because Mr. Upton has worked for years with the House leadership to fashion an ObamaCare alternative.

But by noon the next day, Mr. Upton was supporting the health bill, presumably because he'd gotten another \$8 billion into it for the fake-news issue known as pre-existing health conditions.

Why fake? It's fake because the AHCA already commits a staggering \$100 billion to help states pay for virtually every imaginable health nightmare that falls beyond the reach of normal insurance.

House Republicans should get the health-care vote behind them before it kills them—if it hasn't already.

A book could be written about how Republicans arrived at this stalemate, whose origins go back long before many Americans discovered Donald Trump.

Ideological tensions have existed between conservatives and moderates at least since the 1950s. Rockefeller, Goldwater, Reagan, Ford and Bush are all one-word signposts on this long odyssey. Then came Ted Cruz.

Elected to the Senate in 2012, Mr. Cruz brought with him a plan to divide Republicans along lines that would carry him to victories in the 2016 GOP presidential primaries.

He and his allies drove a wedge between "real conservatives" like himself and a vague lump dismissed as "the establishment," which included pretty much every other Senate member.

In the event, Donald Trump swallowed Mr. Cruz, his strategy and the Republican Party. But they or any Republican president was heading inevitably toward the same problem when trying to repeal and replace ObamaCare. One notable difference is that the Republican moderates negotiating now with Mr. Trump would not have picked up the phone to talk to Mr. Cruz after years of being vilified as sellouts.

There currently are some 200 million voters in the U.S. For the purposes of governance, the U.S. House of Representatives is divided into 435 congressional districts. Of these, 238 are now Republican districts.

Believe it or not, those 238 House Republicans are not all from Texas or Alabama. They are from everywhere else in America, and those districts—whether in Ohio, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, North Carolina or Arizona—are not alike in terms of their political self-identity, gerrymanders notwithstanding.

Modern media and much political writing blands out these distinctions. Hillary Clinton didn't lose because of misogyny or James Comey. She lost because Democrats lulled themselves into thinking they could impose a homogenized, politically

correct liberalism on a resisting Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

The first significant Republican moderate to bolt from the health bill was Appropriations Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen. Mr. Frelinghuysen's New Jersey district in Morris County is not close to being like Freedom Caucuser Jim Jordan's district in Central Ohio. That's the maddening wonder of the U.S. system, a product of the country's complex history and for which inconsolable partisans can blame the Founders.

The original ObamaCare reform, assembled over months by the House leadership, was constructed explicitly to avoid opening this Pandora's box of political interests inside the GOP. It was written so that a North Carolina Republican and a Pennsylvania Republican could be on the same page for one big vote.

For some "real conservatives," the bill had the stench of compromise, an anathema in their world. One all-American reality that no amount of ranting will reverse is this: Unless you get more votes than the other guy, you lose. You will lose on health care, spending and taxes.

The cost of losing is high. If this Congress's Republican moderates and conservatives are seen as incapable of working their way through political realities evident to the average American voter or campaign donor, then a resurrected

May 3, 2017 6:59 p.m. ET

Republicans may be close to turning their party into fake news.

"Fake news" is a phrase open to many meanings, but in my recent experience people watching the melodrama of the Trump presidency unspool aren't sure who or what they should trust or believe these days.

The mainstream media, no matter how many righteous speeches got delivered at the White House Correspondents' Dinner, is on a bigger credibility bubble with the American public than it imagines. Now a Republican Party fantastically unable to deliver on its promise to repeal and replace ObamaCare is close to creating its own credibility bubble.

If, after voters delivered control of Congress to them in 2016, these same Republicans can't—or will not—produce an ObamaCare reform, those voters may reasonably ask in 2018: Why do we need these people? What is a Republican for? Even by current bread-and-circuses standards, the GOP elephants are losing their entertainment value.

On Tuesday, Congressman Fred Upton of Michigan, who Donald Trump won, flamboyantly announced he could not support the

Speaker Nancy Pelosi will be smiling through her weekends at Mar-a-Lago after 2018. That will not

be fake news.

Write henninger@wsj.com.

Appeared in the May. 04, 2017, print edition as 'What Is a Republican For?.'



6-7 minutes

Dionne Jr. : How Jimmy Kimmel transformed the health-care debate

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

coverage?

Here is the policy core of Kimmel's monologue that those who advocate health care for all might consider memorizing like a catechism answer, a Torah portion or a favorite verse of scripture or poetry:

(Amber Ferguson/The Washington Post)

Late-night host Jimmy Kimmel made an emotional plea to lawmakers to fund health-care spending for preexisting conditions on May 1. Kimmel teared up while discussing his newborn son Billy's heart condition on his show. Late-night host Jimmy Kimmel makes a tearful plea over his son's heart condition on his show on May 1. (Amber Ferguson/The Washington Post)

"Before 2014, if you were born with congenital heart disease like my son was, there was a good chance you would never be able to get health insurance because you had a preexisting condition. You were born with a preexisting condition, and if your parents didn't have medical insurance, you might not live long enough to even get denied because of a preexisting condition.

"If your baby is going to die, and it doesn't have to, it shouldn't matter how much money you make. I think that's something now, whether you're a Republican or Democrat or something else, we all agree on that, right? I mean, we do. Whatever your party, whatever you believe, whoever you support, we need to make sure that the people who are supposed to represent us — people who are meeting about

this right now in Washington — understand that very clearly."

What makes this especially powerful is what appears to be the political naivete that underlies Kimmel's sentiment: that regardless of party, we all think everyone is entitled to equal medical treatment.

If Kimmel were describing politics in just about any other economically advanced democracy, he would be absolutely right. Conservative parties elsewhere routinely support a very large role for government in guaranteeing health care. Britain's Conservative prime minister, Theresa May, who faces an election next month, brags about funding the National Health Service at record levels. Her opponents challenge her on what this means in practice, but that's not the point: She wants voters to know she supports Britain's essentially socialized system.

But Kimmel's assertion is *not* accepted by right-leaning politicians in the United States. It is not, alas, something "we all agree on." This is why Republicans are trying to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

A few honest ideologues are willing to admit this. "I do not believe that health care is a basic right," Rep. Raúl R. Labrador (R-Idaho) said at a town-hall meeting this year. The crowd reacted angrily, suggesting they're with Kimmel.

Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.) likes the idea of requiring those "who have higher health-care costs to contribute more to the insurance pool," which would have the effect of "reducing the cost to those

people who lead good lives, they're healthy."

Let's count the problems here. What, exactly, did Billy Kimmel do wrong to have a heart problem on his first day of life? What should we do about all those Americans who lead "good lives" by Brooks's exacting definition but don't earn enough to afford good insurance? Why should rich people who live "bad lives" have a huge health-care edge over lower-income people who jog every day?

Republicans are having trouble with their repeal bill because the gut response of most Americans is that Kimmel is right and right-wing ideologues are wrong. Any parent who has had a child get very sick knows this. That is why President Trump and GOP leaders try to pretend that a cruel bill threatening the health coverage of millions is far less damaging than it is.

Kimmel's critics have argued that hospital emergency rooms have a legal duty to treat patients whether they have insurance or not. But even with that requirement, a 2009 study published in the *Journal of Public Health* showed that children without health insurance were 37.8 percent more likely to die in the hospital than kids with insurance.

After Kimmel's intervention, we have to face the fact that either we pay the public cost of covering everyone, or kids like his son will die when they could have lived.

Read more from E.J. Dionne's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.

Those of us in the world of column-writing and policy wonkery ought to be humbled: It often takes a celebrity, preferably a comedian, to break through with an argument that transforms public understanding.

In particularly successful cases, the celebrity demolishes conventions and blurts out a deep truth that only occasionally makes it into the day-to-day arguments and journalistic accounts.

So here's hoping that Jimmy Kimmel wins some humanitarian awards for his 13-minute monologue about the recent birth of his son Billy. He described how emergency heart surgery days after Billy was born saved his child's very new life.

Read These Comments

The best conversations on The Washington Post

Kimmel used his personal experience to ask the philosophical questions that need to animate every debate over whether health care is a right that ought to be underwritten by government: Why should being born with any sort of defect raise your insurance costs all your life? Why should the babies of well-off people, including comedians, have a better shot at surviving than newborns whose parents lack the money to buy health insurance? More generally, why should anyone be denied



Rove : Be Careful What You Wish For, Washington

Karl Rove

5-6 minutes

applauded at their annual dinner as the organization's president rebuked Mr. Trump. "We are not 'fake news,'" Jeff Mason of Reuters proclaimed. "We are not failing news organizations."

Then there's the Freedom Caucus, which negotiated a deal on the GOP bill to repeal and replace ObamaCare. The compromise, struck with one of the three chairmen of the Tuesday Group of moderate Republicans, allows states to opt out of some ObamaCare provisions if that lowers premiums, increases enrollment, stabilizes the insurance market or broadens consumers' choice of plans.

Then, when Congress considered the continuing resolution to fund the government through the end of this fiscal year, Democrats blocked money for Mr. Trump's border wall and denied half his defense-spending increase. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer crowed this was "a big win for Democrats" and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi hailed the success in "securing key victories for Democratic priorities."

Still, the lesson from all this is to be careful what you wish for, because you might get it.

How wise was it for Mr. Trump to open his Pennsylvania speech by

assaulting the media? Axios reported that West Wing officials "conceived of a split-screen effect" for the event, with "Trump in full-blown nationalist populist mode, connecting viscerally with 'forgotten' Rust Belt Americans," while the other side of the picture showed elite Washington reporters dining in elegance.

But spending his first 11 minutes attacking the press prevented Mr. Trump from focusing on what he's doing to create jobs and fatten paychecks. Which do Mr. Trump's "forgotten Americans" care about more—his attacks on the press, or their own prosperity? Trashing the Times may keep his core

Everyone in Washington seems to be getting what he wants.

Start with President Trump: On his 100th day in office, he brought a huge crowd in Harrisburg, Pa., to its feet by attacking CNN and MSNBC for "fake news" and charging that "the totally failing New York Times" was run by "incompetent, dishonest people."

That same night, members of the White House Correspondents' Association, in gowns and tuxedos,

supporters energized, but it does almost nothing to expand his appeal.

White House journalists reveled in their night as defenders of the First Amendment, but public trust in the media is at the lowest level in Gallup polling history. Saturday's garden brunches, preprandial cocktails, banquet and after-parties won't help restore that lost confidence.

In finding a face-saving way to get behind the GOP health-care measure, the members of the Freedom Caucus figured out how to shift blame if the bill stalls again in the House, but they also showed their hypocrisy. Every objection they had to the original bill—that it protects those with pre-existing

conditions, that premiums on the exchanges will keep rising for two years, that it represents a tax to charge more when people don't keep themselves insured and then show up sick and demand coverage—is still in the draft.

For their part, Democrats might have shown their hostility to securing the borders and strengthening the military, but is that wise? And since President Obama was unable to win congressional approval for a full year's budget last fall, Mr. Trump is that rare new chief executive who can put his imprint on the budget three months into his term, spending more on his priorities and less on Democratic concerns.

In the process, Mr. Trump killed Mr. Obama's demand that domestic

programs or initiatives. spending be increased \$1 for each new \$1 in military spending. The deal boosts spending on homeland security and defense by 3.5% each, compared with 0.6% for labor, human services and education and 0.4% for interior and environment.

Rather than risk a government shutdown over the last five months of this fiscal year, Mr. Trump wisely kept his powder dry for this fall's budget battle over next year's spending. Democrats will find it difficult then to stall individual appropriations bills, and Republicans will have greater control over the outcome.

All this shows is that Washington, while not completely broken, is more dysfunctional than normal. Nobody—the president, Congress, either political party—is hitting on all

cylinders. Quite the opposite. Governing rarely looks focused, disciplined and efficient, but it almost never looks this unfocused, undisciplined and inefficient. Americans are thirsting for signs of statesmanship, glimmers of leadership, evidence of proficiency. These days, even Washington's best weeks aren't that good.

Mr. Rove helped organize the political-action committee American Crossroads and is the author of "The Triumph of William McKinley" (Simon & Schuster, 2015).

Appeared in the May. 04, 2017, print edition.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

House Passes \$1.1 Trillion Spending Bill That Excludes Some Trump Priorities

Natalie Andrews

5-6 minutes

Updated May 3, 2017 7:51 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—The House on Wednesday passed a \$1.1 trillion bill to fund the government through Sept. 30, a big step toward avoiding a government shutdown on Saturday.

The Senate is expected to vote on the bill before current government funding expires at 12:01 a.m. Saturday, and it is expected to pass the legislation.

The must-pass bill, which passed on a 309-118 vote, was crafted by Republican and Democratic leadership in Congress and is being touted as a win by both parties. But it excludes a number of President Donald Trump's top priorities.

The measure increases military spending by \$19.9 billion over the fiscal year 2016 enacted level, less than Mr. Trump requested. GOP lawmakers claimed wins in what are called policy riders, or unrelated provisions tacked into the spending bill. The bill retains a block on using federal funds to transfer or release detainees from Guantanamo Bay into the U.S. or its territories. It also terminates or combines more than 150 government

programs or initiatives.

Democratic lawmakers also see the bill as a success. They staved off cuts to domestic programs that Mr. Trump had wanted, and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) said his party persuaded Republicans to remove 160 policy riders from the bill. The bill ensures that funding for Planned Parenthood Federation of America will continue through the fiscal year.

It also increases the budget for the National Institutes of Health by \$2 billion, a provision favored by lawmakers in both parties, but not by Mr. Trump.

Deputy Majority Whip Tom Cole (R., Okla.) said the increase in military spending was a major win for Mr. Trump and Republicans. On the policy points, he said, "I don't think we gave up anything that mattered."

Republicans hold a majority in the House but needed Democratic support to pass the spending bill, because some fiscal conservatives said the legislation called for too much spending. Republican Rep. Justin Amash of Michigan tweeted his opposition to the bill, saying "Imagine you & your spouse are hugely in debt from overspending, so you call a meeting & agree each of you will spend more. That's Congress."

Administration officials, including Mr. Trump, Office of Management and Budget director Mick Mulvaney and press secretary Sean Spicer, touted the bill's military spending boosts, lack of equivalent boosts for nondefense spending and health-insurance payment appropriations, as well as provisions for coal miners.

Mr. Trump has indicated that he would sign the bill, though several of his top priorities were left out of the legislation, denying him an opportunity to put his policies into action.

The president's top request of funding for a wall along the border with Mexico was left out of the bill. The \$1.5 billion total amount for border security, which will fund technology and repair existing fencing along the border, is half of what Mr. Trump requested.

The White House has described the bill's border provisions as "a good first step."

The White House said the deal was needed to keep the government open and is deferring the fight over its priorities until the next spending bill, this fall. At the same time, Mr. Trump has seemed to criticize the five-month deal, writing Tuesday on Twitter that the Senate should change its rule requiring 60 votes to move most legislation through the

chamber. "The reason for the plan negotiated between the Republicans and Democrats is that we need 60 votes in the Senate which are not there! We either elect more Republican Senators in 2018 or change the rules now to 51%," he tweeted.

He also wrote that "our country needs a good 'shutdown' in September to fix this mess!"

In an interview Wednesday, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.) called the president's response "pathetic" and said that "it's such a statement of poverty of knowledge on what it means to shut down government."

—Louise Radnofsky contributed to this article.

Write to Natalie Andrews at Natalie.Andrews@wsj.com

Corrections & Amplifications On Tuesday, President Donald Trump wrote on Twitter that the Senate should change its rule requiring 60 votes to move most legislation through the chamber. An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that his Twitter post was on Monday. (May 3, 2017)

Appeared in the May. 04, 2017, print edition as 'House Passes Bill in Move to Avert Shutdown.'

The New York Times

7-9 minutes

WASHINGTON — James B. Comey, the F.B.I. director, sharply

James Comey 'Mildly Nauseous' Over Idea He Swayed the Election

Adam Goldman

defended his decision to notify Congress about new emails in the Hillary Clinton investigation just before Election Day, reopening on Wednesday the still-raw debate over whether he cost her the presidency.

Mr. Comey's remarks at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing were his first public explanation for his actions, which roiled the campaign in its final days and cast a harsh spotlight on him. He acknowledged that revealing the renewed inquiry

and enduring the torrent of criticism that followed had taken a toll.

"It makes me mildly nauseous to think that we might have had some impact on the election," he told the

senators. "But honestly, it wouldn't change the decision."

Mr. Comey's handling of the Clinton investigation is likely to be as crucial to his legacy as his 2004 standoff at a hospital bedside over the Bush administration's wiretapping. He was then the acting attorney general, and with his ailing boss, John Ashcroft, nearby, he refused the request of White House aides to reauthorize a program for eavesdropping without warrants.

But while the hospital showdown earned him bipartisan praise, Mr. Comey has been widely criticized for his decisions in the final days of the 2016 campaign.

He displayed unusual emotion Wednesday in explaining his motives. By turns animated and defensive, at one point throwing his arms up to punctuate a point, the typically unflappable Mr. Comey argued that he had been left with no choice when he sent a letter to Congress on Oct. 28 disclosing that his agents had just uncovered emails that might have been relevant to the Clinton investigation.

"Concealment, in my view, would have been catastrophic," he said, adding later that he knew the decision would be "disastrous for me personally."

Senator Dianne Feinstein of California, the ranking Democrat on the panel, pounced on Mr. Comey, saying he had taken a huge gamble in sending the letter to Congress without knowing how the newly discovered emails might shape the investigation.

"We need to hear how the F.B.I. will regain that faith and trust," she said. "We need straightforward answers to our questions, and we want to hear how you're going to lead the F.B.I. going forward. We never, ever want anything like this to happen again."

She demanded to know why his treatment of the Clinton investigation had been so "dramatically different" from his treatment of an investigation into Russian efforts to meddle in the election.

Mr. Comey rejected her claim.

He said that the F.B.I. had confirmed the existence of the

investigation into Mrs. Clinton's emails months after it began, and said nothing more until after it was closed. Similarly, Mr. Comey said, the F.B.I. revealed its Russia investigation months after it was opened in the summer, and only after it had been widely reported in the news media. And, as with the Clinton inquiry while it was still underway, the bureau has refused to talk about what it has found with regard to Russia.

"We're not going to say another peep about it until we're done," Mr. Comey said, acknowledging that the inquiry was continuing. "And I don't know what will be said when we're done, but that's the way we handled the Clinton investigation, as well."

The tone of the opening statements from both Ms. Feinstein and the Republican chairman of the committee, Senator Charles E. Grassley of Iowa, made clear that they wanted answers from Mr. Comey on a number of issues: Mrs. Clinton's emails, the Russia investigation, leaks to the news media and the use of wiretapping as an investigative tool.

"We need the F.B.I. to be accountable because we need the F.B.I. to be effective," Mr. Grassley said.

Wednesday's proceeding, unlike a hearing in March in which Mr. Comey took the rare step of confirming the existence of an investigation into Russian election interference, was supposed to be routine congressional oversight. But little has been routine for the F.B.I. over the past 10 months, as the dramatic moment from Mr. Comey showed.

Mr. Comey plunged himself into the campaign when he announced in July that the F.B.I. was closing the Clinton email investigation. Though he said he would not recommend charging Mrs. Clinton or her aides, he also criticized her for how she had handled government information. So when the new messages emerged in October, he felt he had to inform lawmakers.

"Somehow, her emails were being forwarded to Anthony Weiner, including classified information," Mr. Comey said. Later, he added, "His then-spouse Huma Abedin appears to have had a regular practice of

forwarding emails to him for him to print out for her so she could deliver them to the secretary of state."

But several current and former government officials familiar with the investigation said that while some emails had been forwarded, the vast majority had instead been backed up to Mr. Weiner's computer.

What Mr. Comey saw as concealing, Justice Department officials saw as following the rules. The F.B.I. does not normally confirm open investigations. Senior departmental officials urged him not to tell Congress.

His decision continues to weigh on the nominees themselves, as they made apparent in comments less than a day before Mr. Comey's testimony on Capitol Hill. Mrs. Clinton spoke of her efforts to grapple with her loss, heaping blame on the F.B.I. and Russian-backed hackers.

"The reason why, I believe, we lost were the intervening events in the last 10 days," she said Tuesday at an event in New York.

"If the election had been on Oct. 27," she said, meaning before Mr. Comey's revelation, "I'd be your president."

President Trump seemed keener to forget the decisions the F.B.I. director made during the election. Hours after Mrs. Clinton spoke, he said on Twitter that Mr. Comey was "the best thing that ever happened to Hillary Clinton in that he gave her a free pass for many bad deeds!"

Complete Testimony: F.B.I. Chief Comey

The F.B.I. director, James B. Comey, spoke before the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing.

Photo by Gabriella Demczuk for The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

Mr. Trump also played down the F.B.I.'s investigation into Russian efforts to help his campaign.

"The phony Trump/Russia story was an excuse used by the Democrats as justification for losing the election," he wrote.

In his daily briefing for reporters Wednesday, the White House press

secretary, Sean Spicer, said the president remained confident in Mr. Comey. Asked whether Mr. Comey had made the right decision in writing to lawmakers on Oct. 28, Mr. Spicer did not answer.

He also dismissed Mrs. Clinton's comments.

"With all due respect to her, that's not how it works," he said. "You don't get to pick the day the election's on."

"It's somewhat sad that we're still debating why the president won in the fashion that he did," he added, without addressing Mr. Trump's messages on Twitter.

Mr. Comey was also pressed Wednesday about leaks to journalists, and about whether F.B.I. agents in New York had revealed information during the election to former federal law enforcement and elected officials, including Rudolph W. Giuliani, the onetime New York City mayor. Three days before Mr. Comey's announcement in October, Mr. Giuliani, an adviser to Mr. Trump, said on Fox News that the campaign had "a couple of surprises" in store.

After Mr. Comey sent his letter, putting Mr. Giuliani's comments in a new light, a Trump campaign spokesman said the former mayor had simply been "having fun." But Mr. Giuliani undermined that assertion, saying he had known in advance that the F.B.I. had found new Clinton-related emails.

"If I find out that people were leaking information about our investigations, whether to reporters or private parties, there will be severe consequences," Mr. Comey told the questioner, Senator Patrick J. Leahy, Democrat of Vermont.

Mr. Comey did find some support on the committee. Senator John Cornyn, Republican of Texas, sympathized with his actions.

"You were given an impossible choice to make, and you did the best you could in light of the situation that you were presented with," Mr. Cornyn said. "It strikes me as somewhat sad for people here and elsewhere to condemn you for notifying Congress."



FBI director says he feels 'mildly nauseous' about possibility he affected election, but has no regrets (UNE)

By Devlin Barrett and Karoun Demirjian

8-10 minutes

FBI Director James B. Comey gave his most exhaustive defense yet Wednesday of his role in politically sensitive investigations, telling a Senate panel that he has no regrets — despite feeling "mildly nauseous"

at the thought that his decisions about a probe into Hillary Clinton might have affected the outcome of the election.

He also said he was confident in the FBI's handling of an ongoing probe of any contacts between Russian officials and associates of President Trump.

Through nearly four hours of sometimes combative questioning from Democrats and Republicans on the Senate Judiciary Committee, Comey offered his most full-throated explanation of his actions to date, and he never wavered from his core contention — that the FBI has stayed above the political fray even as its investigators probed senior aides to both the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates.

“Lordy, has this been painful,” he said. “I’ve gotten all kinds of rocks thrown at me and this has been really hard, but I think I’ve done the right thing at each turn.”

Comey appeared to win few new converts to his way of thinking, given the intense partisanship still swirling around the now-closed probe of Clinton’s use of a private email server while she was secretary of state, as well as the current investigation into whether any Trump associates may have coordinated with Russian officials to interfere with the election campaign.

Here is the opening statement from FBI Director James B. Comey at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on May 3. Here is the opening statement from FBI Director James B. Comey at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on May 3. (Photo: AP/Reuters)

(Reuters)

After the hearing, Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) said he was unswayed and that he still believed Comey did the wrong thing by telling Congress days before the election that he was reopening the Clinton probe to examine thousands of emails found on the laptop of a spouse of a senior Clinton aide.

“I would have been satisfied if he had done what all Republican and Democratic administrations have done in the past,” Leahy said. “The Justice Department has a procedure. You do not release information like that just before an election.”

In defending his decisions, Comey offered some new details about what FBI agents found last fall, after they realized a laptop belonging to former New York congressman Anthony Weiner (D) contained

thousands of work emails involving Clinton. At the time, Weiner was married to Huma Abedin, who was a senior aide to Clinton. Agents were looking at Weiner’s laptop because he was under investigation for possibly inappropriate communications with a minor.

“Somehow, her emails were being forwarded to Anthony Weiner, including classified information,” Comey said, adding later, “His then-spouse Huma Abedin appears to have had a regular practice of forwarding emails to him for him to print out for her so she could deliver them to the secretary of state.”

After Comey notified Congress of the Weiner laptop issue on Oct. 28, the Justice Department got a search warrant to examine some 3,000 messages that were work-related, Comey said. Of those, agents found a dozen that contained classified information, but they were messages investigators had already seen.

Abedin and Weiner were investigated for the potential mishandling of classified material, but the FBI ultimately dropped the matter.

“Really the central problem we had with the whole email investigation was proving people ... had some sense they were doing something unlawful. That was our burden, and we were unable to meet it,” he said.

FBI Director James B. Comey described the difference between investigative journalism and what he called “intelligence porn” released by WikiLeaks, speaking to the Senate Judiciary Committee on May 3 at the Capitol. Comey calls WikiLeaks ‘intelligence porn’ (Reuters)

(Reuters)

Three days before Election Day, Comey notified Congress that the emails on the laptop did not change the FBI’s view of the case.

Democrats argued that by that point, Comey had critically damaged the Clinton campaign. At an appearance Tuesday, Clinton said that if the election had been held the day before Comey’s first letter, she would have been elected president.

At Wednesday’s hearing, Comey said he was confronted with a difficult choice to “speak or conceal” and that the first was a really bad choice, while the second was “catastrophic,” because when voters learned of the issue after the election, they would have suspected a government coverup.

He added: “It makes me mildly nauseous to think we might have had some impact on the election. But honestly it wouldn’t change the decision.”

Comey said he has been interviewed by the Justice Department’s inspector general as part of an internal investigation into how he, his top deputy and the FBI handled the Clinton case.

“I want that inspection. I want my story told,” he said. “If I did something wrong, I want to hear that.”

But he added that he thinks he behaved appropriately and had no regrets about his decisions.

The chairman of the committee, Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa), opened the hearing by saying that “a cloud of doubt hangs over the FBI.” Grassley demanded that the bureau reveal more about how it has handled the probes, and at one point he exclaimed “ye gads!” in frustration at his inability to get more information from the FBI.

“We need to know whether there was anything improper going on between the Trump campaign and the Russians, or if these allegations are just a partisan smear campaign that manipulated our government into chasing conspiracy theories,” Grassley said.

Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) asked Comey what threat Russia posed to future U.S. elections. “In my view the greatest threat of any nation on earth given their intention and their capability,” Comey answered, adding that although Russia did not alter vote tallies in 2016, it has tried to do so in other countries and U.S. officials should expect Russia to replicate that effort in future U.S. elections.

Democrats repeatedly contrasted Comey’s decision to talk about the Clinton email investigation while not disclosing that the FBI had begun

secretly investigating in late July whether any Trump associates might be working with Russian officials to meddle with the presidential campaign.

“It’s still very unclear — and I hope, Director, that you will clear this up — why the FBI’s treatment of these two investigations was so dramatically different,” said the top Democrat on the committee, Sen. Dianne Feinstein (Calif.).

Comey said he treated both cases consistently and that the biggest difference was that one investigation was over or nearly over, and the other was just beginning.

The FBI has concluded that Russian intelligence hacked into Democratic computer systems and email accounts, stealing information that was published by WikiLeaks during the campaign.

Asked about WikiLeaks, Comey said he thought the anti-secrecy group was engaged in something more sinister than journalism.

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“To my mind, it crosses a line when it moves from being trying to educate the public and instead becomes about intelligence porn, quite frankly,” Comey said. A “huge portion” of WikiLeaks’ activities “has nothing to do with legitimate news activity,” he said, “... but is simply about releasing classified information to damage the United States of America.”

The Washington Post reported last month that the Justice Department is trying to determine whether it can bring criminal charges against those working for the anti-secrecy group.

During his testimony, Comey also disputed a claim from Trump on Tuesday night that the FBI director “was the best thing that ever happened to Hillary Clinton in that he gave her a free pass for many bad deeds.”

Asked whether he gave Clinton “a free pass,” Comey said: “No, that was not my intention certainly. ... We conducted a competent, honest and independent investigation.”

he sent Congress on Oct. 28 regarding potential new evidence in the probe of Mrs. Clinton’s private email arrangement when she was secretary of state.

In the end, that evidence didn’t change the FBI’s previous

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Byron Tau

7-8 minutes

Updated May 3, 2017 7:30 p.m. ET

James Comey Defends Handling of Clinton Email Investigation

Aruna Viswanatha and

WASHINGTON—Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James Comey on Wednesday defended in highly emotional terms his decision to alert Congress about a renewed investigation involving Democratic presidential candidate Hillary

Clinton shortly before Election Day, saying he still believed it was right to do so.

“If I were not to speak about this, it would be disastrous, catastrophic concealment,” Mr. Comey said, returning again and again to a letter

conclusion that no charges should be brought. Many Democrats have said Mr. Comey's letter violated Justice Department guidelines and caused Mrs. Clinton's defeat to President Donald Trump.

"It makes me mildly nauseous to think we might have had some impact on the election," Mr. Comey said, his voice rising as he spoke before the Senate Judiciary Committee. "But honestly, it wouldn't change the decision. Everybody who disagrees with me has to come back to October 28th with me and stare at this, and tell me—what you would do?"

The director's testimony came as senators of both parties questioned his handling of two sensitive matters involving the 2016 presidential candidates. Mr. Comey both oversaw the probe of Mrs. Clinton and now is investigating whether members of Mr. Trump's campaign collaborated with Russia to influence the election. Both Mr. Trump and Russian officials have rejected the allegations.

Mr. Comey largely declined to answer questions about the Russia investigation, noting that it was continuing. He said there was no discrepancy between that silence and his repeated comments on the Clinton probe, as the latter has been completed.

"With respect to the Russian investigation, we treated it like we did with the Clinton investigation," Mr. Comey said. "We didn't say a word about it until months into it, and then the only thing we've confirmed so far about this is the same thing with the Clinton investigation—that we are investigating," he said.

Still, Mr. Comey's handling of the Clinton probe was unusual by his own account.

Last July, he held a press conference to announce that while Mrs. Clinton's handling of national secrets had been "reckless," she had committed no prosecutable offenses. At the time, some Democrats criticized Mr. Comey's critique of her behavior as inappropriate.

The announcement of no charges would ordinarily be left to the Justice Department, and making the statement was "disastrous for me personally," Mr. Comey said Wednesday. But he suggested that the department's leadership had lost credibility, in part due to a meeting between then-Attorney General Loretta Lynch and Mrs. Clinton's husband, former President Bill Clinton.

The Clinton probe was reopened in the fall after additional emails were discovered on a laptop belonging to former Rep. Anthony Weiner, then-husband of top Clinton aide Huma Abedin; Mr. Weiner was being investigated in an unrelated matter. At that point, Mr. Comey said, he had little choice but to let Congress know about the new development, even though it was 11 days before the election.

"One of my junior lawyers said, 'Should you consider that what you're about to do may help elect Donald Trump president?' " Mr. Comey said. "And I said, 'Thank you for raising that. Not for a moment. Because down that path lies the death of the FBI as an independent institution in America. I can't consider for a second whose political fortunes will be affected in what way.' "

Mr. Comey said he viewed his choices as whether to speak about the new discovery, which would be "really bad," or conceal the information from Congress, which

would be "catastrophic." He chose the former because "I could not see a door labeled 'no action here,'" he told senators.

The director's critics weren't likely to be persuaded by his explanation. "This explosive announcement—and it was—came unprompted and without knowing whether a single email warranted a new investigation," said Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D., Calif.), the committee's top Democrat. "It was, in fact, a big October surprise. But, in fact, as it turned out, not one email on the laptop changed the FBI's original conclusion that no prosecution was warranted."

The incident remains a sore point on both sides of the aisle, especially among Democrats, who say Mr. Comey violated Justice Department guidelines by speaking publicly about an inquiry close to an election, costing Mrs. Clinton the election. This week, Mrs. Clinton herself partially blamed Mr. Comey for her defeat, saying she was "on the way to winning" until his 11th-hour disclosure of new emails.

Republicans, to the contrary, claim the Obama Justice Department offered Mrs. Clinton political cover, and that its decision not to prosecute her was misguided. Mr. Trump tweeted Tuesday that Mr. Comey was "the best thing that ever happened to Hillary Clinton in that he gave her a free pass for many bad deeds!"

Asked whether he had indeed given her a "free pass," Mr. Comey on Wednesday stood by his previous statements that no reasonable prosecutor would have brought charges.

Mr. Comey also said classified email from Mrs. Clinton's email account appears to have been forwarded to Mr. Weiner. Ms.

Abedin, who announced she was separating from Mr. Weiner in August 2016, would often forward him emails to print for her, Mr. Comey said.

"Somehow, her emails were being forwarded to Anthony Weiner, including classified information," Mr. Comey told the senators.

Neither Mr. Weiner nor Ms. Abedin has been charged with any crime. The FBI determined in early November that nothing new was discovered in the emails on the laptop.

Mr. Comey also discussed the website Wikileaks, which published emails allegedly obtained by Russian hackers from Mrs. Clinton's aides that also damaged her candidacy. He said he viewed Wikileaks as different from a news organization. That could potentially pave the way for charges against members of the group, and The Wall Street Journal and others reported last week prosecutors are weighing potential criminal charges.

Mr. Comey said Wednesday that he expects foreign governments to continue targeting U.S. elections. "One of the lessons the Russians may have drawn from this is that this works," he said. "I expect to see them back in 2018, especially in 2020."

Despite the criticism of his handling of the Clinton probe, Mr. Comey said, "I wouldn't have done it any differently. I don't have any regrets."

Write to Aruna Viswanatha at Aruna.Viswanatha@wsj.com and Byron Tau at byron.tau@wsj.com

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Milbank : Now we know: Bill Clinton cost his wife the presidency

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

6-8 minutes

(Women for Women International)

Hillary Clinton tells CNN Chief International Correspondent Christiane Amanpour her victory in the 2016 presidential election would have been "a really big deal" for women. Hillary Clinton tells CNN Chief International Correspondent Christiane Amanpour her victory in the election would have been "a really big deal." (Women for Women International)

So now it can be told: Bill Clinton cost his wife the presidency.

Almost three hours into a hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee on Wednesday, FBI Director James Comey shed new light on his decision to go public about his agency's investigations into Hillary Clinton's emails, first in July 2016 and again, with devastating effect, in late October, 11 days before the election.

The specific reason he cited: Bill Clinton's decision to board Attorney General Loretta Lynch's plane in late June, when their planes were both on a tarmac in Phoenix. "The capper was — and I'm not picking on Attorney General Loretta Lynch, who I like very much — but her

meeting with President Clinton on that airplane was the capper for me," Comey said. Comey decided to "step away" and announce, without consulting the Justice Department, that Hillary Clinton shouldn't be charged.

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In Comey's telling, this public announcement in turn required Comey to speak up again in October, when more emails were found. "Having done that [the public announcement] and then having testified repeatedly under oath that we're done," he said, "it would be a disastrous, catastrophic

concealment" not to go public on Oct. 28 with the newly discovered emails.

It's a tragic chain of events: If Bill Clinton hadn't boarded that plane in June, Comey might not have spoken out in July, which means he wouldn't have felt compelled to speak up again in October, which means Hillary Clinton would have won the election in November.

(Reuters)

FBI Director James Comey responded, May 3, before the Senate Judiciary Committee to a question from Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) on his announcement about re-opening the probe into Hillary Clinton's use

of a private email server days before the election. FBI Director James Comey talks about his announcement about re-opening the probe into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server days before the election. (Reuters)

These were Comey's fullest comments to date on his indefensible decision to announce on the eve of the election that he was reopening the investigation into Clinton, almost certainly handing the election to Donald Trump. It wasn't a compelling explanation, but, knowing the self-righteousness and independence that drives the FBI director, it seemed genuine. He made a disastrous decision but for reasons that weren't entirely wrong: Bill Clinton's clumsiness created a vacuum of credibility, and Comey, self-appointed guardian of the justice system, stepped in to fill the void.

Comey said he was physically ill over his role in the election, which Trump and Hillary Clinton are again arguing about



Bernstein : It's Never Too Early for Democrats to Care About 2020

Jonathan

Bernstein

4-5 minutes

It's on. So far this week, we've had the first major (albeit mostly speculative) listing of the contenders for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2020; the first candidate (Kirsten Gillibrand) to declare herself out of the contest; and the helpful article to correctly remind us that claims of noncandidacy three years from the Iowa caucuses aren't exactly binding. All that, and Joe Biden in New Hampshire, as he continues, more or less, his 30-plus year quest for the White House.

So is this all just clickbait and hack journalism?

Nope. Like it or not, the presidential nomination contest really does start this early. And while of course there's plenty of substance-free speculation at this point, the media would be irresponsible if it didn't cover very real maneuvering so far. Remember: Hillary Clinton probably wrapped up the Democratic nomination, or at least moved into a commanding position, by around the 2014

this week. "Look, this is terrible," he told the senators. "It makes me mildly nauseous to think that we might have had some impact on the election."

If Comey is mildly nauseated by the thought that he had "some impact," he should have his face over the toilet bowl when he considers that he handed Trump the presidency. Certainly, there were many factors behind Clinton's loss. But in an election this close there can be no doubt that Comey's action was enough to swing the outcome.

Comey's performance Wednesday was maddening at times. He was unfailingly pious. "Lordy this has been painful," he pleaded. "But I think I have done the right thing at each turn. . . . The honest answer — I don't mean to sound arrogant — is I wouldn't have done anything differently."

And Comey was full of inconsistencies when he tried to explain why he spoke out about Clinton's case during the campaign

yet remained adamantly silent about the FBI's investigation into Trump's Russia ties. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (Calif.), top Democrat on the panel, shook her head in disbelief when Comey maintained that "I didn't make a public announcement" on Oct. 28 that he was reopening the Clinton investigation. "I sent a private letter" to Congress, he said — as if it wouldn't immediately leak.

Comey proclaimed that "I've lived my entire career by the tradition that if you can possibly avoid it, you avoid any action in the run-up to an election that might have an impact." Yet he acknowledged an aide told him "what you're about to do may help elect Donald Trump president," and Comey said he considered "not for a moment" that huge impact.

The director asserted that he had only "two doors" on Oct. 28 — speak or "conceal." Thus did he ignore the obvious third option: Let his agents find out whether there was anything worthwhile in the new batch of emails (there wasn't)

before throwing the election into chaos.

But there was something that rang true in Comey's account. Dating back to his showdown at John Ashcroft's hospital bed during the Bush administration, he has been the incorruptible exemplar of justice. "I have lived my whole life caring about the credibility and the integrity of the criminal-justice process," he proclaimed Wednesday.

His time as FBI director, a position independent by design, no doubt reinforced his instincts. And after Bill Clinton climbed onto Lynch's plane last year, Comey told the senators, he decided "the best chance of the American people believing in the system" was for him to go public.

Comey's intervention ultimately did the justice system worse harm. But at least we now know why he did it.

midterms, which means she was busy nailing it down months before that (see also: George W. Bush and Al Gore in 2000). Or, to look at it from the other end, there are in most cycles quite a few candidates who quietly test the waters and find little or no interest, and then aren't even listed as contenders once the "real" campaign starts. That's news, too.

But in this age of strong parties and what is usually a partisan presidency -- present occupant excepted -- a party-centered point of view is even more important. Parties are defined by their nominations. That's true in the sense that the winning candidate will affect how the party is perceived and even how it acts going forward, especially if he or she wins the general election. But it's even more importantly true in the sense that groups within the party compete and cooperate over the party's agenda in the course of nomination politics. That is, party actors -- the politicians, campaign and governing professionals, formal party officials and staff, donors and activists, and party-aligned interest groups and media who have the most at stake in the party and work hard to influence it -- start working, early, to

bind presidential candidates to the party's consensus positions and to use candidate support for contested issues to hash those policies out.

To put it another way: Even more important than Hillary Clinton's early domination of the 2016 nomination was the fact that in 2008 all of the frontrunners for the Democratic nomination had come to fully support the health care reform that became the Affordable Care Act.

Granted, all of this collapsed in the 2016 Republican nomination contest, which wound up selecting a candidate who wasn't really a contender until 2015 and who was weakly committed at best to Republican Party policy positions and priorities. But even there, the failure of the party to rally behind one of the conventional candidates is partly what gave Donald Trump his opportunity, and that's a story which began in 2013. And besides, we're talking at this point about the Democratic nomination, and so far at least that party doesn't appear to be dysfunctional enough to do anything like that.

The most important caveat about the importance of (very) early

nomination politics is that we're also in the middle of nomination politics for all the offices with 2018 (and 2017!) elections, and those choices define the parties, too. After all, not only are those offices important in their own right, but the winners of 2018 elections, and even in some cases the nominees who fall short in general elections, will become important party actors who will have a larger say in the 2020 presidential nomination. So neither party actors nor the media should get so carried away with 2020 that they ignore all the other important elections going on now.

But, yes, the 2020 nomination fight probably started within days of the November 2016 elections. And visible or not, the early skirmishing really does have important effects.

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In the Trump White House, the momentum has turned against the Paris climate agreement

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

8-10 minutes

Foes of the Paris climate agreement have gained the upper hand in the ongoing debate at the White House

over whether the United States should pull out of the historic pact, although President Trump has

yet to make a final decision, according to participants in the discussions and those briefed on the deliberations.

Senior administration officials have met twice since Thursday to discuss whether the United States should abandon the U.N. accord struck in December 2015, under which the Obama administration pledged to cut U.S. greenhouse gas emissions 26 percent to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025.

The president's aides remain divided over the international and domestic legal implications of remaining party to the agreement, which has provided a critical political opening for those pushing for an exit. At this point officials are considering whether the United States should stay in the agreement but renegotiate it in some form, or opt out entirely. Even if Trump decides to abandon the agreement — which is not a treaty, and therefore did not undergo Senate ratification — it may take three years for the United States to formally withdraw from it.

On Thursday several Cabinet members — including Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt, who's called for exiting the accord; Energy Secretary Rick Perry, who wants it renegotiated; and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who advocates remaining a party to it — met with top White House advisers, including Trump's daughter Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner, and Chief of Staff Reince Priebus. Both Ivanka Trump and Kushner advocate remaining part of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, even though the president has repeatedly criticized the global warming deal.

During that meeting, according to several people who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, White House counsel Don McGahn informed participants that the United States could not remain in the agreement and lower the level of carbon cuts it would make by 2025.

The Trump administration is working to

unravel many Obama-era policies underpinning that pledge, and the economic consulting firm Rhodium Group has estimated that the elimination of those policies would mean the United States would cut its emissions by 14 percent by 2025 compared with 21 percent if they remained in place.

This interpretation represented a change from the White House counsel's earlier analysis and is at odds with the State Department's view of the agreement.

[Trump puts critic of renewable energy in charge of Energy Department's renewable energy office]

Susan Biniiaz, who served as the State Department's lead climate lawyer from 1989 until earlier this year, said in an interview Tuesday that the agreement reached by nearly 200 nations in Paris allows for countries to alter their commitments in either direction.

"The Paris agreement provides for contributions to be nationally determined and it encourages countries, if they decide to change their targets, to make them more ambitious," Biniiaz said. "But it doesn't legally prohibit them from changing them in another direction."

Ivanka Trump urged White House staff secretary Rob Porter to convene a second meeting Monday with lawyers from both the White House and the State Department. That session addressed the question of America's obligations under the 2015 deal as well as whether remaining in the agreement would make it more difficult for the administration to legally defend the changes it was making to the federal government's existing climate policies, but it did not reach a final decision. Pruitt, who is spearheading the effort to rewrite several Obama-era rules aimed at curbing greenhouse gas emissions, has argued that exiting the agreement will make it easier to fend off the numerous legal lawsuits he will face in the months ahead.

However an internal Sierra Club memo dated May 1, written by John Coequet, who heads the group's

federal and international climate campaigns, concludes that even if environmentalists sue to challenge the administration's lowering climate targets or withdrawal from the Paris accord, "it would be extremely difficult to prevail on the merits of either argument."

Writing to Steve Herz, the senior attorney for the Sierra Club's international climate program, Coequet wrote that the group will still be able to sue over the administration's push to rewrite current climate regulations, "the question will be whether the administration is properly exercising its domestic regulatory authority. The Paris agreement, and its enforceability in U.S. courts, will have no bearing on this issue."

At a rally with supporters on Saturday, Trump said he would make a "big decision" on Paris within the next two weeks and vowed to end "a broken system of global plunder at American expense."

Administration advisers on both sides of the political spectrum, however, emphasized that the president himself would decide what path to pursue when it came to the climate agreement.

"In the end, President Trump will make the final decision, regardless of where the staff conversations end up," Thomas J. Pyle, who heads the conservative Institute for Energy Research and led the Trump transition team for the Energy Department, said in an email. "The environmental lobby is going to cause litigation problems on nearly every aspect of President Trump's energy and environmental agenda whether or not the administration stays in the Paris agreement. Staying in Paris only gives them another target to shoot at."

Energy and Environment newsletter

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But Paul Bledsoe, who served as a White House climate adviser under Bill Clinton and is now a lecturer at American University's Center for Environmental Policy, warned that

the administration might face serious pushback from abroad if Trump seeks to withdraw from the agreement.

"The Trump team seems oblivious to the fact that climate protection is now viewed by leading allies and nations around the world as a key measure of moral and diplomatic standing," Bledsoe said in an email. "The U.S. would be risking pariah status on the international stage by withdrawing from Paris, and even a fig leaf approach of technically staying in the agreement while ignoring most of its provisions would be better than pulling out altogether."

Even as private deliberations continued this week, groups on both sides of the debate lobbied the president publicly. The governors of California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia and Washington state, all Democrats, sent a letter to Trump on Wednesday saying they "stand ready as state leaders to continue to support the achievement of the existing" U.S. international climate commitment "and if possible to go further, faster."

Meanwhile the libertarian Competitive Enterprise Institute published a paper laying out the legal and economic case for exiting the agreement, stating, "Failure to withdraw from the agreement would entrench a constitutionally damaging precedent, set President Trump's domestic and foreign policies in conflict, and ensure decades of diplomatic blowback."

Juliet Eilperin is The Washington Post's senior national affairs correspondent, covering how the new administration is transforming a range of U.S. policies and the federal government itself. She is the author of two books—one on sharks, and another on Congress, not to be confused with each other—and has worked for the Post since 1998.



Editorial : Trump wants to leave the Paris agreement. That would be a huge mistake.

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4 minutes

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).

May 3 at 7:16 PM

PRESIDENT TRUMP is getting closer to exiting the Paris climate

agreement. According to reports emanating from the White House, the president's top lawyer shifted the internal debate last week. More meetings are to come. Yet the choice ought to be an easy one: Staying in the Paris accord is cost-free, but pulling out is not.

Paris exiters argue that the United States cannot remain in and revise downward the international commitment President Barack Obama made to cut U.S. emissions by 26 to 28 percent by 2025 — a pledge that, no matter how important for the planet, Mr. Trump does not want to keep. The White

House counsel's office reportedly lent its voice to this argument in a meeting last Thursday.

This is nonsense. World negotiators considered making the agreement's climate commitment language stronger, preventing countries from backtracking on their pledges. They purposely declined to do so. The envoys who hammered out the agreement insist that they wanted to keep nations' options open, in part because countries would otherwise lowball their international emissions commitments in fear of never being able to reduce their stated goals.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Ian Lovett

7-9 minutes

Updated May 3, 2017 10:24 p.m. ET

President Donald Trump will sign an expansion of religious rights in a Rose Garden ceremony Thursday morning, ending the three-month delay of a prized goal of social conservatives but offering only some of the affirmations they had sought.

Mr. Trump will roll back restrictions on political activity by houses of worship and declare "that it is the policy of the administration to protect and vigorously promote religious liberty" in an executive order, the White House said Wednesday night.

People familiar with the White House deliberations say they hope that will take the form of instructing Attorney General Jeff Sessions to begin the process of setting new guidelines for how federal agencies must accommodate religious beliefs.

The executive order also will instruct agencies to waive for religiously affiliated employers a requirement that their health insurance plans include coverage for contraception, which was established by the Department of Health and Human Services during the Obama administration and taken to the Supreme Court twice, without a conclusive resolution. But there will be few other specific issues addressed, in a potential blow for some activists.

"Tomorrow is another example of the president fulfilling his campaign promises. He promised the

Arguments claiming otherwise reflect a grave — or purposeful — misunderstanding of the nature of the Paris agreement. At its core, it is a political pact among sovereign nations based on nonbinding "nationally determined contributions." It does not and was never meant to formally bind countries to specific emissions commitments; instead it is intended to encourage voluntary cooperation and government-to-government pressure.

Moreover, the parties, not least the United States, get to decide what its terms mean. If the Trump administration is worried that a line in the agreement could be interpreted as improperly binding the U.S. government, U.S. officials

can shape how countries understand the agreement's language.

Or the president could simply ignore it. Nothing in the Paris agreement could stop him from keeping the United States in the system and Mr. Obama's pledge on the books, and then simply declining to meet the pledge. It is fanciful to imagine that U.S. courts would interpret Paris, an agreement with almost no legal requirements, otherwise. Even this path would be better than pulling out entirely. Staying in keeps the Trump administration at the international table as potentially significant decisions are made on technology and decarbonization. Even some major coal interests have asked the president to remain

in so that his administration can advocate coal-friendly carbon capture and sequestration technology.

Meanwhile, the president must not underestimate the cost of pulling out. Only two countries — Syria and Nicaragua — have declined to join the Paris agreement. Climate diplomacy has become a cornerstone of international engagement. By leaving Paris, the United States would surrender a huge amount of diplomatic capital and reputation — much more than it is already set to lose by unwisely reversing Obama-era emissions-cutting policies. Mr. Trump would hear about it for the rest of his presidency. And for good reason.

Trump to Ease Restrictions on Religious Groups

Louise Radnofsky and Ian Lovett

American people that he would protect their religious liberties," a White House official said Wednesday night. "We're not getting into all the details about what will come in the executive order tonight."

The White House is almost certain to face pushback from liberal groups, which said, after a draft order leaked in February, that such a move would pave the way for discrimination against gays and lesbians.

One of Mr. Trump's executive actions will instruct his administration to "exercise maximum enforcement discretion to alleviate the burden of the Johnson Amendment," a decades-old section of the federal tax code named after former President Lyndon B. Johnson that bans tax-exempt organizations like churches from endorsing political candidates.

"Politicians and unelected bureaucrats shouldn't have the power to shut up their critics," the White House official said. "[The president] thinks that's intolerant and un-American."

Though the ban has seldom been enforced, it has riled conservative Christians who consider it a government incursion into their houses of worship. Since 2008, the Alliance Defending Freedom, a conservative legal organization, has led a campaign to overturn the amendment, which the group says allows the IRS "to tell pastors what they can and cannot preach."

The president's order also is expected to require that the Department of Defense ensure greater religious rights for service members, another hot-button issue in recent years, although the military won't be singled out.

A Marine is suing over a supervisor's insistence that she take down a verse of scripture that she had taped on her computer monitor. She was court-martialed for her refusal, lawyers trying to take her case to the Supreme Court say. Advocates have raised other concerns about chaplains, in particular, and the rights of other men and women in uniform to adhere to their faith.

The executive action, which will take place on the National Day of Prayer, ends weeks of speculation over the breadth of the president's actions.

As a candidate, Mr. Trump committed to establishing a sweeping set of rights for religiously affiliated charities and employers that wanted to hew to their beliefs as they worked, when faced with issues such as abortion, gay marriage and contraception.

Liberal groups have long argued that gay rights or women's rights to access contraception outweigh religiously affiliated employers' rights to apply their beliefs in the workplace.

Some gay-rights activists, including the Lambda Legal group, say they had already lined up individuals to sue the administration if it attempted to tilt the balance further toward the rights of adherents to particular religious beliefs.

Among the potential areas of contention: whether religiously affiliated health-care providers and social-services agencies must allow adoptions by same-sex couples, provide access to abortion, or allow transgender people to use facilities for the gender with which they identify, rather than the one assigned to them at birth.

Camilla Taylor, senior counsel for Lambda Legal, said the organization had begun readying a legal strategy based on the draft order, with potential plaintiffs including gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people who felt they had been discriminated against by religiously affiliated social-services agencies.

Thursday's signing ceremony at the White House is expected to include clergy members and activists for religious liberty who aren't ordained, such as Ralph Reed, head of the Faith and Freedom coalition.

"The executive order, taken in total, lifts a cloud from over the faith community in this country to make sure they will not be subjected again to litigation, harassment and persecution for nothing more than expressing their religious faith," Mr. Reed said Wednesday night.

"We're extremely thrilled," he said, though he added that he would continue pushing for the statutory repeal of the Johnson Amendment.

The ceremony will take place amid a series of events this week showcasing the state of the relationship between the Trump administration and social conservatives.

On Wednesday night, Mr. Trump dined, prayed and talked at the White House with his evangelical advisory board, a group formed during the campaign that he kept after taking office. Members include church pastors, former members of Congress and the leaders of socially conservative groups, including Jerry Falwell Jr., president of Liberty University; Robert Jeffress, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas; and ex-Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann.

Later Wednesday, Vice President Mike Pence was set to address the gala for the Susan B. Anthony List, an antiabortion group focused on electing candidates to federal office that backed Mr. Trump during the campaign despite misgivings about his commitment to their cause and remarks that he made about women. Mr. Pence had addressed the March for Life in January, the highest ranking federal official to ever do so at the antiabortion rally.

The
Washington
Post

will

6-7 minutes

It is urgent for Americans to think and speak clearly about President Trump's inability to do either. This seems to be not a mere disinclination but a disability. It is not merely the result of intellectual sloth but of an untrained mind bereft of information and married to stratospheric self-confidence.

In February, acknowledging Black History Month, Trump said that "Frederick Douglass is an example of somebody who's done an amazing job and is getting recognized more and more, I notice." Because Trump is syntactically challenged, it was possible and tempting to see this not as a historical howler about a man who died 122 years ago, but as just another of Trump's verbal fender benders, this one involving verb tenses.

Now, however, he has instructed us that Andrew Jackson was angry about the Civil War that began 16 years after Jackson's death. Having, let us fancifully imagine, considered and found unconvincing William Seward's 1858 judgment that the approaching Civil War was "an irrepressible conflict," Trump says:

Social conservative allies of the administration had pushed for the president to follow through on his campaign promises, making clear that their patience was dimming and that a failure to deliver could damp enthusiasm for Mr. Trump and other Republicans.

The administration had started to hear rumblings from conservatives on Capitol Hill as well. Sen. James Lankford (R., Okla.) sent an open letter to the president in April calling for the order to be issued. "My

biggest issue is this is a promise," Mr. Lankford told The Wall Street Journal.

The White House official attributed the delay to the large number of activities the president had undertaken in his first 100 days in office.

"There's only so much we can do. Every week we've been on a mad EO rush. Every week. So I think the president's been very busy," the official said. "I think he would say,

'It's only been a few months, we're doing our best, as fast as we can.'"

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Will : Trump has a dangerous disability

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

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"People don't realize, you know, the Civil War, if you think about it, why? People don't ask that question, but why was there the Civil War? Why could that one not have been worked out?"

Library shelves groan beneath the weight of books asking questions about that war's origins, so who, one wonders, are these "people" who don't ask the questions that Trump evidently thinks have occurred to him uniquely? Presumably they are not the astute "lot of," or at least "some," people Trump referred to when speaking about his February address to a joint session of Congress: "A lot of people have said that, some people said it was the single best speech ever made in that chamber." Which demotes Winston Churchill, among many others.

During an interview with the Washington Examiner's Salena Zito on May 1, President Trump suggested the Civil War wouldn't have happened had Andrew Jackson been president. "Why could that one not have been worked out?" Trump asked. "People don't ask that question, but why was there the Civil War?" he asked. "Why could that one not have been worked out?" (Sirius XM, Mainstream Meets the Beltway)

(Sirius XM, Mainstream Meets the Beltway)

What is most alarming (and mortifying to the University of Pennsylvania, from which he graduated) is not that Trump has entered his eighth decade unscathed by even elementary knowledge about the nation's history. As this column has said before, the problem isn't that he does not know this or that, or that he does not know that he does not know this or that. Rather, the dangerous thing is that he does not know what it is to know something.

The United States is rightly worried that a strange and callow leader controls North Korea's nuclear arsenal. North Korea should reciprocate this worry. Yes, a 70-year-old can be callow if he speaks as sophomorically as Trump did when explaining his solution to Middle Eastern terrorism: "I would bomb the s--- out of them. . . . I'd blow up the pipes, I'd blow up the refineries, I'd blow up every single inch, there would be nothing left."

As a candidate, Trump did not know what the nuclear triad is. Asked about it, he said: "We have to be extremely vigilant and extremely careful when it comes to nuclear. Nuclear changes the whole ballgame." Invited to elaborate, he said: "I think — I think, for me, nuclear is just the power, the devastation is very important to me." Someone Trump deemed fit to be a spokesman for him appeared

on television to put a tasty dressing on her employer's word salad: "What good does it do to have a good nuclear triad if you're afraid to use it?" To which a retired Army colonel appearing on the same program replied with amazed asperity: "The point of the nuclear triad is to be afraid to use the damn thing."

As president-elect, Trump did not know the pedigree and importance of the one-China policy. About such things he can be, if he is willing to be, tutored. It is, however, too late to rectify this defect: He lacks what T.S. Eliot called a sense "not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence." His fathomless lack of interest in America's path to the present and his limitless gullibility leave him susceptible to being blown about by gusts of factoids that cling like lint to a disorderly mind.

Americans have placed vast military power at the discretion of this mind, a presidential discretion that is largely immune to restraint by the Madisonian system of institutional checks and balances. So, it is up to the public to quarantine this presidency by insistently communicating to its elected representatives a steady, rational fear of this man whose combination of impulsivity and credulity render him uniquely unfit to take the nation into a military conflict.

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USA
TODAY

Garner : Donald Trump's malignant narcissism is toxic

John Garner
Published 3:16
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minutes ago

6-8 minutes

President Trump (Photo: Jim Watson, AFP/Getty Images)

If you take President Trump's words literally, you have no choice but to conclude that he is psychotic. A

delusion is "a fixed false belief that is resistant to reason or confrontation with actual fact." Despite all evidence to the contrary, Trump asserts that his New York office was bugged by President Obama, and that his inauguration had the biggest crowd size in history. Before the election, *Right Wing Watch* published a list of 58 conspiracies proclaimed by Trump.

Is it all for effect, to rile up his base, deflect blame and distract from his shortcomings, or does Trump really believe the insane things he says? It's often hard to know, because as Harvard psychoanalyst Lance Dodes put it, Trump tells two kinds of lies: the ones he tells others to scam them, and those he tells himself. "He lies because of his sociopathic tendencies," Dodes said. "There's also the kind of lying he has that is in a way more

serious, that he has a loose grip on reality." Is he crazy like a fox or just plain crazy? Not a question we want to be asking about our president.

Much has been written about Trump having narcissistic personality disorder. As critics have pointed out, merely saying a leader is narcissistic is hardly disqualifying. But malignant narcissism is like a malignant tumor: toxic.

Psychoanalyst and Holocaust survivor Erich Fromm, who invented the diagnosis of malignant narcissism, argues that it "lies on the borderline between sanity and insanity." Otto Kernberg, a psychoanalyst specializing in borderline personalities, defined malignant narcissism as having four components: narcissism, paranoia, antisocial personality and sadism. Trump exhibits all four.

His narcissism is evident in his "grandiose sense of self-importance ... without commensurate achievements." From viewing cable news, he knows "more about ISIS than the generals" and believes that among all human beings on the planet, "I alone can fix it." His "repeated lying," "disregard for and violation of the rights of others" (Trump University fraud and multiple sexual assault allegations) and "lack of remorse" meet the clinical criteria for anti-social personality. His bizarre conspiracy theories, false sense of victimization, and demonization of the press, minorities and anyone who opposes him are textbook paranoia. Like most sadists, Trump has been a bully since childhood, and his thousands of vicious tweets make him perhaps the most prolific cyber bully in history.

A year ago, I warned that "the idea that Trump is going to settle down

and become presidential when he achieves power is wishful thinking." Trump, like many successful people, shows biological signs of hypomania — a mild and more functional expression of bipolar genes that manifest in energy, confidence, creativity, little need for sleep, as well as arrogance, impulsivity, irritability and diminished judgment. As is often typical, when Trump has achieved great success, his hypomania has increased with disastrous consequences.

In Michael Kruse's article "1988: the Year Donald Lost his Mind," he wrote, "His response to his surging celebrity" after the publication of *The Art of The Deal* "was a series of manic, ill-advised ventures" that led to bankruptcy and divorce.

Last year, after Trump became the Republican presidential nominee, *New York Times* columnist David Brooks noted a similar deterioration: "With each passing week, he displays the classic symptoms of medium-grade mania in more disturbing forms: inflated self-esteem, sleeplessness, impulsivity, aggression and a compulsion to offer advice on subjects he knows nothing about." Much has been said about Trump's disjointed Associated Press interview last month. As Brooks wrote, "Manics display

something called 'flight of ideas.' It's a formal thought disorder in which ideas tumble forth through a disordered chain of associations. One word sparks another, which sparks another ..."

One symptom of hypomania is impulsivity. Seventy-two hours after Trump saw upsetting pictures of gassed Syrian children, he launched 59 Tomahawk missiles at the Assad regime. Whether Trump guessed right or wrong, sudden lethal moves that reverse his longstanding policy are disturbing. "Acting on instinct, Trump upends his own Syria policy" was the headline in *The Times*. Its analysis said the president's advisers "were clearly uncomfortable with the suggestion that Mr. Trump was acting impulsively." As Ezra Klein put it, "A foreign policy based on Trump's gut reactions to the images flashing before him on cable news" is "dangerous."

Now Trump is ratcheting up tensions to create a crisis with North Korea.

POLICING THE USA: A look at race, justice, media

Some say it is unethical to dare to diagnose the president, but hundreds of mental health professionals have come together to found Duty To Warn. We believe

that just as we are ethically and legally obligated to break confidentiality to warn a potential victim of violence, our duty to warn the public trumps all other considerations.

More than 53,000 people have signed our petition, aimed at mental health professionals, stating Trump should be removed under the 25th Amendment because he is too mentally ill to competently serve. At a conference on the Duty To Warn last month at Yale medical school, psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton warned against creeping "malignant normality." Under a malignantly narcissistic leader, alternate facts, conspiracy theories, racism, science denial and delegitimization of the press become not only acceptable but also the new normal. If we do not confront this evil, it will consume us.

Duty to Warn is planning a multicity March for Sanity on Oct. 7 to "make America sane again." Hope to see you there, assuming we're all still here.

Psychologist John Gartner, the founder of Duty To Warn, taught in the Department of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine for 28 years. He is the author of In Search of Bill Clinton: A Psychological Biography.



Schneider : Ivanka Trump needs prayers, not scorn: Christian Schneider

Christian Schneider, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

5-6 minutes

USA Today Network 5:05 a.m. ET May 4, 2017

A Trump Tower billboard in Manila featuring Ivanka in July 2012. (Photo: Jay Directo, AFP/Getty Images)

When Ambrose Bierce defined politics in his *Devil's Dictionary* as "the conduct of public affairs for private advantage," he might have been foretelling the reign of President Trump.

Trump's critics are frequently quick to charge him with trying to use his office to enrich his name brand. On Monday, they began tweeting a picture of a billboard that featured Trump's daughter Ivanka modeling for Trump Tower in Manila. As it turns out, the photo was taken in 2012 and the billboard since removed.

But for many Trump opponents, the story was too good to pass up (or

apparently check out), as it had the perfect recipe of complaints about his administration: a dash of nepotism, a pinch of self-enrichment and a cup of bribery (the murderous president of the Philippines was recently invited to the White House).

At the center of all these charges is Trump's daughter Ivanka, 35, who has curiously drawn the scorn of many of those who'd normally claim to welcome a level-headed woman in the White House. When Ivanka was jeered for standing up for her father's record on women's issues at a public roundtable discussion in Germany last week, her detractors pounced.

"On stage: the chancellor of Germany, the managing director of the IMF & an unqualified jewelry designer who is included because of nepotism," tweeted Brian Klaas, an observation that garnered more than 17,000 retweets. In March, *Saturday Night Live* mocked the idea that Ivanka could separate herself from her father's odious treatment of women, suggesting she endorse a new fragrance called Complicit. (Her critics once again

pounced when she was asked about the ad and she said she didn't know "what it means to be complicit," as if she didn't know what the word meant.)

These critiques, however, have moved us into a new era when people are now on the hook for their parents' behavior. It is no surprise that Ivanka likely loves her dad and wants to see him succeed. But the scorn she has received for refusing to condemn him publicly holds her to a standard that rarely has been applied to anyone else. (Especially males.)

And while it is certainly a novel arrangement to grant the first daughter an official office in the White House, there is nothing wrong with the president having a related confidante close by. More traditionally, presidents have used first ladies as confidential sounding boards for policy (Edith Wilson pretty much ran the country after Woodrow Wilson suffered a stroke). But if Melania Trump has no interest in the job, we should encourage Ivanka to fill that role.

Of course, nepotism laws are meant to prevent the president from hiring people who can't be fired, but in this case that seems like a bonus. Ivanka's public persona is one of being measured, level-headed and articulate; and if she is the one that can deliver commonsense advice to the president without fear of job recrimination, then more power to her. During the campaign, many people joked that Ivanka should be the president over her father. But that is no longer a joke. Seriously, the closer we can get to this scenario, the better.

POLICING THE USA: A look at race, justice, media

Contrast the particular enmity leveled at Ivanka Trump with the nauseating praise heaped on another first daughter. Despite speaking publicly in tweets arid of wisdom yet dripping with self-regard, Chelsea Clinton has parlayed her former first daughter status into an industry all its own. Glossy magazines are clamoring more for Clinton to start her own political career than Snoop Dogg is for weed to be legalized.

But of course, given her place in Democratic Party royalty, Chelsea Clinton will have to answer questions about her own father's conduct toward women right about the time she starts getting asked about the Franco-Prussian War.

Last month, word leaked that Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared

Kushner, had staged an intra-White House "velvet coup" against cantankerous chief strategist Steve Bannon. Sources indicated that Ivanka was troubled by the damage being done to the family name during her father's tumultuous first weeks in office.

Yet while this action looks self-serving, it helps us all. Trump could be president for over 1,350 more days. The more Ivanka can help him embarrass himself less, the greater America's standing will remain in the world. We should encourage her continued involvement — especially if she can

sit down and explain to her father why the Civil War started.

Christian Schneider, member of USA TODAY's Board of Contributors, is a columnist for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, where this piece was first published. Follow him on Twitter @Schneider_CM

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Puerto Rico Skids Into Bankruptcy After Years of Economic Distress (UNE)

Andrew Scurria and Heather Gillers
8-10 minutes

Updated May 3, 2017 7:47 p.m. ET

Puerto Rico was placed under court protection on Wednesday in what amounts to the largest-ever U.S. municipal bankruptcy, a stark illustration of the depth of the economic crisis afflicting a U.S. territory with more than three million inhabitants.

Puerto Rico and its agencies owe \$73 billion to creditors, dwarfing the roughly \$9 billion in bond debt owed by the city of Detroit when it entered what was previously the largest municipal bankruptcy in 2013.

The move by a federal oversight board installed by Congress is the culmination of years of economic distress and heavy borrowing that more recently has pitted Wall Street creditors, hungry for payments, against the struggling island.

The officials' decision sets up a showdown with Wall Street firms, including mutual-fund giants Franklin Resources Inc. and OppenheimerFunds Inc., hedge funds Aurelius Capital Management LP and Monarch Alternative Capital LP and some bond insurers. The federal action could mean deeper losses on bonds than analysts have anticipated, though some investors purchased bonds at lower prices and Puerto Rico bond prices were largely unchanged on Wednesday.

It also further complicates the island's bid to improve its relationship with Washington lawmakers, which has grown more fraught as Puerto Rico officials sought aid critical to ending a decadelong economic swoon—aid U.S. officials were loath to provide. Analysts said the bankruptcy could provide a forum for the orderly allocation of Puerto Rico's potential resources.

The Puerto Rico Financial Oversight and Management Board, installed last year by Congress, on Wednesday invoked a law that puts the standoff with creditors before a

federal judge in San Juan in a restructuring process known as Title III that doesn't involve the U.S. bankruptcy court system.

The maneuver itself is unlikely to immediately change day-to-day life in Puerto Rico—an island already beset by an unemployment rate above 12%—more than twice the national average.

Sprawling bureaucracy and high electricity costs have stunted business investment, while government cutbacks have closed everything from schools to social-service providers. The departure of some citizens has sapped its tax base, further squeezing budgets.

"What I see all around me is uncertainty. People sometimes just leave the key in the house or the car in the airport and just go," said Nancy Madden, founding director of an educational nonprofit in Humacao, Puerto Rico.

The territory has been in recession for most of the past decade. For years, federal tax credits helped cultivate a robust manufacturing sector and steer the island away from agriculture after World War II. But Congress ended those incentives in 2006, and the economy fell into a recession. Puerto Rico has struggled to create jobs ever since.

As the loss of jobs damped the economy, local leaders strained to cut spending and boost tax collections. Instead, they borrowed to make up for recurring revenue shortfalls.

For over a decade, Puerto Rico's government and its municipal corporations borrowed more to buy time to stave off deeper economic overhauls. With government payrolls down over the past decade, pension funds have fewer workers contributing and the plans are now underfunded by an estimated \$45 billion.

For years, investors overlooked these fiscal and demographic problems because Puerto Rico's bonds offered high yields and because they believed the island's economy would eventually recover.

Puerto Rico can issue debt exempt from federal, state and local taxes, unlike U.S. states, which made these bonds attractive to many mutual-fund investors and more recently, hedge funds.

But Puerto Rico began to lose access to the credit markets three years ago, when its ratings were downgraded. The door closed for good in 2015 when the island's governor declared the debts unpayable.

Unrest has been growing on the island over installation of the oversight board and cutbacks by government. A massive blackout last year left half the island without power at one point. When the Zika virus landed on Puerto Rico last summer, the government had limited funds to fight back. Also last year, the Santa Rosa Hospital in the southern coastal town of Guayama had its power cut off suddenly after failing to pay millions of dollars in utility bills. A court eventually ordered the power to be turned back on.

When the board first convened last year, about 50 demonstrators surrounded the entrance to the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House in downtown Manhattan, where the meeting was held. Several people were later escorted out of the meeting room after shouting "down with colonialism."

Protests continued as recently as Monday, affecting services at Puerto Rico's largest public hospital, paralyzing the bus system and forcing many businesses to close, the Associated Press reported.

Puerto Rico was in marathon closed-door talks this month toward a global deal with various groups of creditors battling for top repayment priority in a restructuring. Hedge-fund creditors holding defaulted general obligation bonds were on the verge of completing an agreement late Tuesday before the oversight board intervened to stop negotiations, a spokesman for those creditors said.

Federal officials last month approved a wide-ranging framework for government spending that would scale back expenditures and allocations to creditors. Wednesday's move represents a step toward implementing the plan.

The plan "imposes pain everywhere," said Ignacio Alvarez, president and chief operating officer of Banco Popular de Puerto Rico in San Juan. "The cuts to the health system are massive. The cuts to the universities are large."

The Trump administration has largely embraced the oversight-board framework established by the Obama administration. Following a meeting with Gov. Ricardo Rosselló in February, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Puerto Rico should continue to work with the oversight board, and a Treasury spokeswoman on Wednesday said the department supported the board's decision to invoke its Title III authority.

The decision marks the start to what could be a lengthy legal fight as Wall Street watches closely to see how other indebted municipal governments, including Chicago and Illinois, may fare in confrontations with investors.

Any write-downs also would hit bond insurers Assured Guaranty Ltd., MBI Assured and Ambac Financial Group, which have guaranteed billions of dollars of Puerto Rico's bonds.

The Title III request, while unprecedented, isn't unexpected. The board signaled in negotiations this month it wouldn't consider paying creditors more than the roughly \$800 million in annual sums allocated to debt service, according to people familiar with the matter.

A legal stay protecting Puerto Rico from lawsuits expired Monday night without standstill agreements with creditors in place. Hedge funds holding general obligation and sales-tax bonds filed lawsuits on Tuesday, naming Gov. Rosselló as a defendant.

The slide into bankruptcy marks a new low in Wall Street's relations

with Mr. Rosselló, a political newcomer who pledged as a candidate to repay the territory's debts, shrink the government and strengthen ties with the U.S. Creditors clashed with the previous administration of Alejandro Garcia Padilla but considered Gov. Rosselló a likely ally, said Chas

Tyson, vice president at investment banking firm Keefe, Bruyette & Woods Inc.

Mr. Rosselló on Wednesday said he requested the bankruptcy move.

"Now it seems like the honeymoon's over," Mr. Tyson said. "It seems that we're back where we used to be."

—Kate Davidson contributed to this article.

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