

# Revue de presse américaine

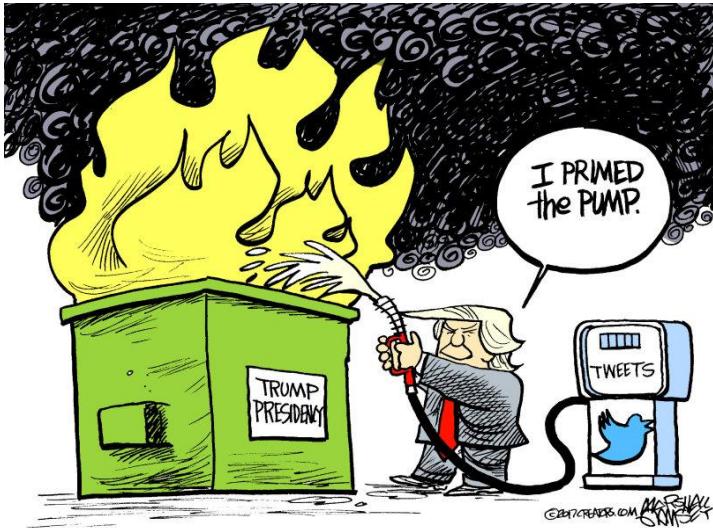
Ambassade de France aux États-Unis

Service de presse et de communication



Liberté • Égalité • Fraternité  
RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Mardi 16 mai 2017, réalisation : Samuel Tribollet



## FRANCE - EUROPE .....3

Macron affirms Franco-German ties, E.U. commitment in meeting with Merkel.....	3
Emmanuel Macron Names Édouard Philippe as French Prime Minister .....	3
Waechter : The French Economy Is Bad in a Crisis .....	4
Angela Merkel Shows Willingness to Join France in Bolstering EU .....	4
Macron and Merkel Meet, Pledging to Save European Unity .....	5
McGurn : How Trump Can Save Europe .....	6
Editorial : Merkel's Election Rally .....	6
State Electoral Win Shows Angela Merkel's Staying Power .....	7
Germany's far right preaches traditional values. Can a lesbian mother be its new voice? (UNE) .....	7
Theresa May, Borrowing from Labour, Vows to Extend Protections for Workers.....	8
Move toward early elections in Austria opens door for far right .....	9
Shaky Coalition in Austria May Give Far-Right Party an Opening.....	9

## INTERNATIONAL.....10

U.S. says Syria built crematorium to handle mass prisoner killings (UNE) .....	10
--	----

U.S. Accuses Syria of Mass Executions, Running Crematorium .....	11
Syrian Crematory Is Hiding Mass Killings of Prisoners, U.S. Says (UNE) .....	11
U.S. Plans to Supply Antitank Weapons to Kurdish Fighters in Syria .....	12
Turow : Assad Avoids Justice With Help From the U.S.....	13
Gulf States Offer Better Relations If Israel Makes New Bid for Peace .....	13
Scientists from enemy nations create a beacon for peace in the Middle East .....	15
Germany Threatens to Pull Forces From Turkey Amid Tensions .....	16
Gulen : The Turkey I no longer know.....	16
Tehran mayor leaves Iran's presidential race to back fellow conservative in bid to unseat Rouhani .....	17
Beheadings and Vengeance: A Cycle of Killing on a Border in Kashmir.....	17
North Korea Missile Test Appears to Tiptoe Over a U.S. Tripwire.....	18
Clues point to possible North Korean involvement in massive cyberattack .....	19
In Computer Attacks, Clues Point to Frequent Culprit: North Korea (UNE).....	20
Editorial : China has a plan to become a global superpower. It probably won't work.....	21
China's Silk Road Initiative Sows European Discomfort .....	21
Editorial : Trump's China trade deal is underwhelming.....	22
NATO Frantically Tries to Trump-Proof President's First Visit.....	23
Trump Revealed Highly Classified Intelligence to Russia, in Break With Ally, Officials Say (UNE).....	24
Trump revealed highly classified information to Russian foreign minister and ambassador (UNE).....	24
Trump Shared Intelligence Secrets With Russians in Oval Office Meeting (UNE).....	26
Lake : Trump's Best Defense on Russia Is Incompetence .....	27
Trump's trust problem .....	27
Russians Actually Are 'Laughing Up Their Sleeves' at the United States .....	28
Trump Just Betrayed America's Intelligence Community.....	29

<b>ETATS-UNIS .....</b>	<b>30</b>
James Traub : Donald Trump Is the President America Deserves.....	30
Zelizer : Trump 'tapes' are an ugly echo .....	30
How Bad Is Disclosing 'Code Word' Information?.....	31

Goldberg : Dear Vice President Pence: What are you thinking?.....	31
Editorial : The FBI needs a nonpartisan director .....	32
Brooks : When the World Is Led by a Child.....	32

# FRANCE - EUROPE

The  
Washington  
Post

## Macron affirms Franco-German ties, E.U. commitment in meeting with Merkel

PARIS — On his first full day on the job, French President Emmanuel Macron appointed a former political foe as prime minister and flew to Berlin to meet with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Domestically and internationally, the moves were seen as attempts by Macron to build a broader base for the untested political movement that brought him to power and to affirm his commitment to restoring the historical Franco-German alliance at the heart of the European Union.

Macron's campaign was marked by its unabashedly pro-E.U. rhetoric, and he was greeted in Berlin by throngs of supporters and a smiling Merkel, who is generally known for her stoic demeanor.

The German leader said in a news conference that the two had agreed on "the historical significance of the Franco-German relationship." She added, "Europe can only prosper when France and Germany prosper."

It is a tradition for French presidents to make their first official trip abroad to Germany, but Macron's visit carried special significance.

Under his predecessor, the historically unpopular François Hollande, the vision of Germany and France as the twin engines of Europe significantly receded. This was largely because of France's economic malaise, which has deepened in recent years.

On Monday in Berlin, Macron — who again called for a renewal of the European project — vowed to confront those domestic issues head-on. He acknowledged that high unemployment remains a problem in France and called for efforts to fight it. He also conceded that Merkel is eager for him to push through important labor and

business reforms at home before major regional projects aimed at boosting Europe's economies can be launched.

"I believe in mutual trust, and in order to reach that, everyone needs to do what they need to do," he said. "In France, I need to apply in-depth reforms."

A key ally for Macron in passing any liberalizing measures — a famously difficult sell in France — will be his prime minister, named Monday as Édouard Philippe.

Picking Philippe — the mayor of Le Havre, a port city in northern France — is viewed as a careful political calculation by Macron, who won the presidency without an established party structure behind him. The mix of a centrist president and a right-leaning prime minister further shakes up France's ossified political establishment, which was uprooted in the course of the two-phase presidential election.

Macron, an independent, on May 7 became the first candidate in modern French history to win the country's top job without belonging to the center-left or center-right parties that have run the country since 1958.

But Philippe, 46, is a member of France's traditional conservative establishment and previously backed Alain Juppé, who was defeated in the presidential primaries last fall. Philippe earlier worked as an assistant to Juppé, a former prime minister. After Juppé's defeat, Philippe opted to back Macron instead of his party's candidate, François Fillon, whose campaign never recovered from a public-spending scandal.

*[Macron won from the middle. Governing from there won't be easy.]*

As a prominent member of France's center-right Republican party, Philippe could attract other conservatives to the new president's coalition.

Macron, who was finance minister under Hollande, a Socialist, left his post last year to found his own party. His campaign sought to transcend the left-right divides with a crossover message in an age when many voters in the West have turned against globalism and establishment politicians.

To a certain extent, the political careers of Macron and Philippe share an affinity for mixed partisan affiliations. Before rallying to Juppé's side in the early 2000s, Philippe was a member of the Socialist Party and a young devotee of Michel Rocard, a Socialist leader and former prime minister. Macron, likewise, served in the Economy Ministry in a variety of capacities during the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy, a conservative.

As the political debate in France and elsewhere has increasingly centered on the issue of national identity in a globalized society, traditional partisan boundaries are being redrawn. In addition to conservatives such as Philippe, leftist heavyweights — such as former Paris mayor Bertrand Delanoë, a Socialist — were early supporters of Macron instead of their own parties' candidates.

*[Video: What Emmanuel Macron's victory means for France and the world]*

In an interview with The Washington Post before the May 7 presidential runoff, Philippe — who had previously criticized Macron — reiterated that Macron "has to implement what he promised, that is to renew the political system, the government, to mix the right and the left."

"I will help him," Philippe added, "because he needs help."

As recently as January, however, he was less convinced of Macron's potential as a leader.

In an op-ed for the newspaper Libération, Philippe wrote: "Who is Macron? For some, impressed by his power of seduction and his reformist rhetoric, he would be the natural son of Kennedy and [former far-left political leader Pierre] Mendès France. We can doubt that. The former had more charisma; the latter more principles."

### Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

In Berlin, Macron and Merkel were slated to discuss several important issues, including Europe's asylum system, job creation, joint European defense, and short- and medium-term measures to cut bureaucracy and reboot the E.U.

In practice, Merkel is likely to insist that Macron at least embark on domestic reforms before she agrees to the sweeping E.U. initiatives he has promoted for months. Nevertheless, on the heels of Britain's departure from the E.U. and the rise of populists across the continent, the leaders' meeting was seen as reassurance for Europe's embattled political establishment.

"I for one am very aware of the responsibility at this critical point for the European Union, when we can and must take the right decision for the benefit of the people in our countries," Merkel said.

Faiola reported from Berlin. Michael Birnbaum in Brussels contributed to this report.

THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL

## Emmanuel Macron Names Édouard Philippe as French Prime Minister

Matthew Dalton

PARIS—French

President Emmanuel Macron on Monday named Le Havre Mayor Édouard Philippe as his prime minister, handing a top position in

his government to a moderate from France's conservative Les Républicains party.

The move shows how Mr. Macron is courting members of Les Républicains to join his new party,

La République En Marche, ahead of next month's legislative elections. Some politicians from the Socialist Party have agreed to run under the banner of the new party, but members of Les Républicains have all refused so far.

Support from a few key conservatives would buttress Mr. Macron's contention that his party is breaking down old differences between left and right. Mr. Macron's political opponents spent much of the campaign arguing that he was

merely the heir of François Hollande, Mr. Macron's unpopular Socialist predecessor and mentor in government.

Mr. Philippe's nomination is a challenge for the leadership of Les Républicains, who are working to maintain party unity in the face of Mr. Macron's landslide victory in this month's presidential election.

"This is an individual decision," said Bernard Accoyer, secretary-general of Les Républicains. "It is not a political agreement."

But Bruno Le Maire, a leading lawmaker in Les Républicains, quickly backed Mr. Philippe's decision to take the job.

"Congratulations," Mr. Le Maire wrote on Twitter, "get past the old divisions to serve France."

In naming Mr. Philippe, Mr. Macron has chosen someone whose biography in some ways mirrors his own. Like Mr. Macron, Mr. Philippe, 46 years old, grew up in a middle-class family in northern France but left as a teenager to attend elite schools in Paris. Both men are graduates of Ecole National d'Administration, the elite school that trains France's leaders.

He now assumes a key role in Mr. Macron's plans to overhaul the country's tightly-regulated economy and fortify the European Union.

Mr. Philippe is a close ally of Alain Juppé, the mayor of Bordeaux who ran for president as a moderate in last year's center-right primary. François Fillon, a more traditional conservative, defeated Mr. Juppé by a wide margin.

Mr. Macron is hoping for support from these moderate conservatives to run the country. But the new president has shown no inclination to compromise his campaign platform to win their backing, says Bruno Cautrès, a political scientist at the Centre for Political Research at Sciences Po, a political-science university in Paris.

"Macron's idea is, you join me and you accept my program," says Mr. Cautrès.

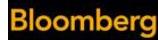
Mr. Macron's party has named only 428 candidates to run in the June 11 legislative elections for 577 seats in the National Assembly. Aside from the difficulties of vetting a whole new slate of candidates, the party is waiting to see whether some high-profile politicians from the center-

right such as Mr. Le Maire decide to join La République En Marche.

Mr. Macron doesn't need the approval of the French legislature to name a prime minister or other ministers in his government. He is due to name other government ministers Tuesday.

But if his party doesn't win an absolute majority in the legislative elections, it is possible he could reshuffle the cabinet to give positions to politicians from minority parties to ensure control over the National Assembly.

Polls show Les Républicains as the party that could prevent La République En Marche from winning a majority.



## Waechter : The French Economy Is Bad in a Crisis

Philippe Waechter

Two measures highlight the seriousness of the economic challenge facing France's new president, Emmanuel Macron, who was inaugurated Sunday. The first is the current growth trend. Before 2008, France and the euro zone had similar growth rates; now France lags the euro zone trend growth rate of 1.6 percent. From 2013 the French economy grew just 1 percent on average, compared to 2 percent before the 2008 crisis.

The other indicator is per capita income. France's per capita income finally returned to pre-crisis levels only in 2016. Compare that to Germany, which hit that level in 2010, Japan in 2013, the U.S. in 2014 and the United Kingdom in 2015. This persistent lack of growth has been a major source of support for populist candidates and especially Marine Le Pen's National Front.

What is clear is that France's economy has become much less able to recover from an economic downturn than it once was. After the last two recessions -- the first oil shock in 1974-1975 and the European Monetary System crisis in 1992-1993 -- France bounced back quickly, as the chart below shows.

### How France Recovers

Cumulative change in GDP per capita after each recession

Source: INSEE, Natixis

The current period is different for several reasons. Part of the problem is that austerity policies, put in place since 2011, triggered uncertainty and limited demand in the manufacturing sector. Companies invested less in the period since the crisis, hence weakening growth momentum.

France's sluggish recovery has had disastrous consequences for public finances, with French debt now close to 100 percent of GDP. It has also prolonged the country's unemployment problem, with youth unemployment now at around 25 percent.

So what's happening here? In general, growth can be held back either by low levels of productivity or insufficient hours worked. But on productivity measures, France has always done well. According to OECD data, France's productivity level is while above the U.S. level. Productivity growth has declined since the 2008 crisis, but it has done so in most other advanced economies as well. Starting from 2007, the productivity profile for France looks similar to those seen in Germany, in the U.S. or in Japan. In other words, the growth difference doesn't arise from a gap in productivity.

A more likely culprit is the labor market. Everywhere, from Germany to Spain to Italy, the number of hours worked has surged recently as overall economic activity picked up. In the United Kingdom, the recent acceleration of GDP per capita was due largely to longer working hours, not on a surge in

productivity. The sole exception is France where there has been no increase in labor activity.

France's rigid labor market may provide a cushion when there is a negative shock, since dismissing workers is difficult and expensive for companies. But it's a problem when the economy is growing as companies fail to adjust quickly enough to rising demand.

Rules aren't the only thing holding back this adjustment. Most of unemployed lack qualifications that fit the labor market's needs. France's unemployment rate, at around 10 percent, suggests that this skills gap runs deep. As the minimum wage is high in France relatively to the median wage, the unemployment level will remain until job-seekers have the skills to match market demand at the prevailing wage level.

The solution is, in part, to make France's education system more inclusive, flexible and adapted to the needs of today's workplace. The recent El Khomri law allows companies, after a discussion with trade unions, to hire and to fire as the business cycle demands. The asymmetry of the law comes from the fact that it creates uncertainty for those employed under it. Those who are let go tend to remain unemployed for an extended period, the result of France's two-tiered labor market, in which there is high levels of security for those with permanent contracts and very little security for others. Since wages don't adjust downwards, even qualified people can remain on the

dole for long periods when the economy is not growing well or there is a downturn in their industries.

The good news is that Macron clearly understands the root problem. His program seeks to provide a better balance between security and flexibility. He wants to reform France's education system to make it less rigid and provide more vocational offerings. Where previous presidents have tinkered with the system, he has promised real structural reform; if he succeeds, it will go a long way toward bridging the divide that made populist candidates so appealing to those who have no opportunities.

Clear thinking from leading voices in business, economics, politics, foreign affairs, culture, and more.

### Share the View

Of course it won't be easy; there is a very large and entrenched bureaucracy that will do its best to hold on to the status quo. That makes timing crucial. Macron must take advantage of the current strong economic momentum -- and his own honeymoon period -- to move quickly with his reforms if he is to lift France out of its low-growth trap and ensure that his own legacy matches the promises he made.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.



## Angela Merkel Shows Willingness to Join France in Bolstering EU

Matthew Dalton in Paris and Anton Troianovski in Berlin

German Chancellor Angela Merkel signaled new openness to far-reaching changes to fortify the European Union as she met with French President Emmanuel Macron on his first full day on the job.

The two leaders said Mr. Macron's victory in France's presidential election could breathe new life into the Franco-German relationship, which has long been the motor for pulling EU member states closer together. Ms. Merkel's relief at having such a staunch pro-European partner in Mr. Macron was palpable: A few weeks ago, she faced the possibility of confronting his since-vanquished rival, far-right nationalist Marine Le Pen, whose political career has for years been devoted to destroying the project of European integration.

"The French elections...have shown the Germans once more what a treasure Europe is and how important German-French cooperation and friendship is for this treasure," Ms. Merkel said in a joint news conference

**The New York Times** Alison Smale

No doubt mindful of those stakes, the two very different leaders — he a 39-year-old novice politician and former investment banker, she a 62-year-old scientist from Communist East Germany, in office since 2005 — immediately sat down to a first round of talks.

At a 25-minute news conference, they both took pains to emphasize that they would cooperate, and that they understood what Mr. Macron called "the message of worry and anger" expressed in the extremist vote in France's presidential election.

Neither leader addressed the other by first name — it apparently being a little too early in their relationship to adopt that European Union custom. But each was scrupulously attentive to the other at what Ms. Merkel termed "a very critical moment for the European Union."

The chancellor did not rule out European Union treaty changes if that proved necessary to push medium-term overhauls. But first "we will work on what we want to reform," she noted with a smile.

Mr. Macron is the fourth French president Ms. Merkel has dealt with since taking office in 2005, and easily the youngest. The Frenchman was met at the airport by his friend Sigmar Gabriel, Ms. Merkel's vice

with Mr. Macron at the Chancellery in Berlin. "So I believe we are at a very sensitive moment in history that we should now also take advantage of—to make something of it that will be understood by the people as a strengthening of Europe."

To that end, Ms. Merkel said she would be ready to discuss changes to the EU treaty to strengthen the bloc "if it makes sense." That was a new tone for the chancellor, sounding more positive about the possibility of treaty changes than she had in recent months. The two leaders left unsaid, however, what kind of treaty change they might seek.

The meeting's warm tone reflected rising hopes in Germany that Mr. Macron may be able to deliver what officials in Berlin have long demanded: a convincing overhaul of France's tightly regulated economy that would jump-start growth in the eurozone's second-largest economy. Mr. Macron ran as a business-friendly centrist, pushing liberal economic policies that previous French leaders have regarded with skepticism.

For his part, Mr. Macron is asking Ms. Merkel to pool eurozone government funds into a shared budget that could be used to support members of the currency area in economic distress. The French leader believes such a step would help address deep flaws in the eurozone that in 2010 exploded into a debt crisis that nearly tore the currency area apart.

The political obstacles to enacting these big changes have for years proved too large to overcome. The two leaders committed to developing a road map for how they wanted to improving the EU but offered few specifics in Monday's news conference.

Ms. Merkel and her government have long been skeptical of proposals to pool more resources, believing that sharing eurozone money could let countries off the hook when it comes to balancing their budgets and making necessary reforms. And in France, opponents of such reforms have already vowed to launch street protests against any attempt by Mr. Macron to liberalize France's highly regulated labor market.

Mr. Macron himself sounded a note of skepticism about the political obstacles standing in the way of such major changes.

"I don't underestimate the difficulty that implies," Mr. Macron said. "Our publics don't feel the same."

"In France, I must lead deep reforms," he added, "which are necessary for our country, but necessary also for the full restoration of Franco-German confidence. And Ms. Merkel has the job of convincing her public opinion and political life in this direction."

Mr. Macron also called on the EU to toughen its policies against countries that flout the rules of international trade. He said the EU should react more quickly to these violations and impose higher tariffs against foreign companies that dump their goods onto European markets.

"Today, Europe defends its companies and workers less well than the United States," he said.

chancellor and foreign minister, an unusual departure from protocol that highlighted the German's desire to push the chancellor into close cooperation with Mr. Macron.

The French president quickly signaled on Monday how seriously he takes the relationship with Germany, appointing Édouard Philippe, a 46-year-old conservative who is said to speak fluent German, as his prime minister. The announcement came shortly before the president left for Berlin, where the French ambassador, Philippe Étienne, will now become Mr. Macron's senior policy adviser.

Analysts and politicians in both countries emphasized the need to make palpable progress on problems like youth unemployment, which European leaders have vowed to address countless times, to little tangible effect. If improvements are not made, the fear is that Marine Le Pen in France, and other populists across Europe, will rise and destroy Europe's hard-won unity.

Although Mr. Macron won handily over Ms. Le Pen in a presidential runoff in France this month, about 11 million people voted for her, and the victor swiftly underlined that France must recover during his five-year term, or open the door to extremism.

Ms. Merkel and her strong-willed finance minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, had indicated before Monday's important talks that they were ready to be flexible in attempts to address France's economic woes, and the chancellor emphasized that Germans must not act superior.

"We should not sit like people who know it all better, but as friends, in partnership, and with great respect for each other," Ms. Merkel said Monday before the meeting.

The inequality between prospering Germany and a more struggling France has marred Europe's key partnership in recent years. That puts the onus on Mr. Macron and Ms. Merkel to find the kind of close cooperation the two say they seek.

If they succeed, noted Thorsten Benner of the Global Public Policy Institute, a Berlin-based think tank, it is not just Mr. Macron and France that would benefit.

"A more balanced relationship between Germany and France would help to put an end to Berlin's reputation as a selfish European hegemon, reducing the anti-German sentiment that is rising across the Continent," Mr. Benner and Thomas Gomart of the Paris-based French Institute of International Relations wrote recently in Foreign Affairs.

For now, Mr. Benner said in an interview, it is enough that both Ms.

Merkel and Mr. Schäuble have signaled they are ready to be flexible and invest in programs to spur development. Mr. Schäuble conceded in an interview with the weekly *Der Spiegel* that Germany's trade surplus — which Mr. Benner said stands at 35 billion euros, or about \$38 billion, with France alone — is too high. "It was very important that Schäuble sent that signal," he said.

For her part, Ms. Merkel said last week that she had been ready in 2013 to contemplate a eurozone budget "with which to help countries who want to reform."

"Here we could add means to the funds we already have in order to temporarily help countries in this area," Ms. Merkel said at a business dinner in Düsseldorf. "I would gladly develop concepts with Emmanuel Macron which can quickly bring hope to people who have no work."

First, however, Mr. Macron needs as much support as he can find in France's legislative elections in June. Then, Ms. Merkel needs to win the fourth term she seeks in Germany's national elections in September.

Mr. Gabriel, the Social Democrat vice chancellor, has pushed hard for Berlin to relax its stance on government spending and the shared euro currency.

If a French leader has the courage to speak of a common budget for the eurozone, then Germany should also have the courage “to think again about some firm positions in the currency and be open to a Franco-German compromise in the currency union,” Mr. Gabriel wrote in a paper published in *Der Spiegel* and said by his Foreign Ministry to

be genuine.

The new scramble in Berlin to be seen as ready for change brought warnings not to try too much and then disappoint European voters once more.

“Pragmatic modesty and patience are advisable,” wrote Christoph von Marschall, the senior editor at the Berlin daily *Der Tagesspiegel*.

“Small steps are necessary and possible,” but anything ambitious that eats away at solidarity is more difficult, he said. “The challenge now is to preserve the good will and the élan until they are really needed, in winter. Macron and Merkel must not begin with the prickly subjects.”

Europe “has just survived a near-death experience,” wrote a Merkel

biographer, Stefan Cornelius of the German daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. “There will not be many more chances. France and Germany should take their time. They do not just need a plan. It must also work.”

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### McGurn : How Trump Can Save Europe

William McGurn

When Donald

Trump boards Air Force One on Friday for his first presidential trip abroad, he will no doubt be glad to leave behind the Nixon allusions and calls for impeachment that have followed his ouster of FBI Director James Comey.

Most attention remains focused on the first part of his trip, which will take Mr. Trump to Saudi Arabia, Israel and the Vatican, seats of three great world religions. But the European leg of the trip—and especially his stop in Brussels May 25 for a North Atlantic Treaty Organization summit—offers the president far more than momentary escape from his domestic political woes. That’s because the disruptions caused by Britain’s exit from the European Union are now working to his advantage.

If he plays his Brexit cards wisely, Mr. Trump could shore up a faithful American ally at a time when it could use the help, reverse an arrogant Obama initiative aimed at intimidating the British public, and nudge the European Union in a better direction. Better yet, he could do it all in a way consistent with his assertions that he’s not against trade, just against America being taken advantage of. The key to everything is reaching a free-trade

deal with British Prime Minister Theresa May.

Not just any deal, either. Over the years trade deals have morphed into beasts, several-thousand-page affairs with side agreements and fine print that too often are exploited for protectionist mischief. Given the considerable ties and trust between Britain and America, it’s hard to imagine another major world economy that offers a better opportunity for a relatively clean and clear agreement that makes trade between the two nations as free and equal as possible.

Surely such a deal would meet the standard Mr. Trump has set for fairness: one that doesn’t give the other side advantages American workers and businesses do not have. In other words, the simpler and freer the terms, the better. Once he had his model deal, Mr. Trump could then announce that America would offer the same terms to anyone else willing to sign.

Alas, Mr. Trump has been busy sending inconsistent signals here. In the days before his inauguration, he promised a trade deal with Britain would come “very quickly.” When Mrs. May visited two weeks later, the new president hailed Brexit as a “wonderful thing” and told her you will now “be able to negotiate your own trade deals” without the burden

of the EU looking over Britain’s shoulders.

But after an April meeting with Germany’s Angela Merkel, news reports quoted White House officials as saying the Trump administration has now put a U.K. trade deal on the back burner in favor of a deal with the EU. If true, it would mean Mr. Trump is making good on Barack Obama’s threat to send a U.S.-U.K. trade deal to the “back of the queue” if Brexit passed.

The irony here is that Europe itself would be better off if Washington opted for a U.K. deal first. That’s because a U.K. trade pact with America would temper the Continental instinct for protectionism. This instinct was in full display during a French election in which the choice was whether protectionism should be enforced at the French border (Marine Le Pen’s position) or by the European Union at its borders (Emmanuel Macron’s position).

The European response to Brexit is likewise illuminating. Given the importance of the British market for European exports and jobs—more Europeans, for example, work in Britain than British in the EU—the sensible approach for Brussels would be to negotiate a generous deal that kept access to each other’s economies as open as possible.

Instead, the mood appears to be to “punish” Britain—which of course would punish Europeans as much as, if not more than, the British.

Enter Mr. Trump. By negotiating a model free-trade agreement with Britain, the president would boost Mrs. May’s chances of getting a better trade deal for Britain out of the EU. In addition, it would almost certainly improve the terms of any subsequent American trade deal with Europe. Not that the Europeans would appreciate it, but these deals would improve opportunities for Europe’s citizens and help save the EU from its worst enemy—itself.

In his address to Congress earlier this year, Mr. Trump declared, “I believe strongly in free trade but it also has to be fair trade.” In addition to insisting he is pro-trade, Mr. Trump has also said he prefers bilateral trade pacts over multilateral deals such as the North American Free Trade Agreement.

What better way to prove it—and push the world in a more hopeful direction—than with a model free-trade deal with Britain, a nation with whom the U.S. has so many ties and so few disputes?

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Editorial : Merkel’s Election Rally

Angela Merkel is back on track to win September’s German election after local elections culminating this weekend delivered big gains for her party. Even better are electoral gains by a free-market party.

Mrs. Merkel’s center-right CDU pulled off a big upset on Sunday in Germany’s most populous state, North Rhein-Westphalia. The state has been governed by the center-left SPD for most of the postwar period, but the CDU took 33% compared to 31.5% for the SPD. This is a crushing defeat for new SPD leader Martin Schulz in his home state.

Along with recent victories in Saarland and Schleswig-Holstein,

the weekend vote shows that Mrs. Merkel is overcoming the bump in support the SPD enjoyed after Mr. Schulz hit the campaign trail this year. Voters still seem not to trust the center-left party. That’s in part because Mr. Schulz is recycling left-wing talking points about inequality, Keynesian stimulus and social spending that are out of touch in an economy that’s been growing since 2010.

The SPD’s other weakness is immigration, which was supposed to be a vulnerability for Mrs. Merkel. North Rhein-Westphalia includes Cologne, the site of sexual assaults on New Year’s Eve 2016 allegedly perpetrated by North African and Middle Eastern immigrants. That

incident undermined support for Mrs. Merkel’s open-door policy, but the SPD’s instincts are more open-door than hers. The CDU has since pulled her further to the right on migration, and voters have greater trust in the CDU’s competence.

The shame is that the CDU and its Bavarian sister party, the CSU, aren’t doing more to earn a mandate if she does win a fourth term. Mrs. Merkel resists tax cuts and other reforms despite 11 years as Chancellor. She and the German economy are still living off reforms made by the last SPD Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder.

So the best news from the weekend is the revival of the centrist, free-market FDP, which won 12.5% of

the vote, its best tally ever in North Rhein-Westphalia. The party is a traditional coalition ally for the CDU, and it tries to pull the bigger parties in a supply-side direction but fell out of the Bundestag in the 2013 election.

The FDP platform this year includes a pledge to cut taxes by at least €30 billion (\$32.8 billion) and sell off the government’s stake in the post office and main telecom company. If the FDP’s weekend comeback presages a return to the national Parliament in the autumn, it could give Mrs. Merkel a needed reform push.

European leaders are simply relieved not to have to face another populist uprising. But it would help the Continent if the German

economy accelerated, and the fact that a growing number of German

voters favor a dose of economic reform is worth cheering.

Appeared in the May 16, 2017, print edition.

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

## State Electoral Win Shows Angela Merkel's Staying Power

Anton Troianovski

BERLIN--German

Chancellor Angela Merkel, buffeted by years of crises that opponents said would usher in her political demise, is savoring signs of renewed strength as a national election campaign approaches.

The country's refugee crisis has receded into the background. Her regular meetings with foreign leaders portray her confidence on the world stage. Four out of five Germans say the economy is doing well.

And on Monday, Ms. Merkel was relishing one of her party's most dramatic electoral victories in her nearly 12 years in office: winning the state election in her opponents' heartland.

The Christian Democrats' victory, by 33% to 31.2%, over the center-left Social Democrats in North Rhine-Westphalia—home to nearly one-quarter of the German population—showed the Sept. 24 national election to be Ms. Merkel's to lose. Sunday's striking result came in the home state of Ms. Merkel's challenger for the chancellorship, Social Democrat Martin Schulz. His party, known as the SPD, has governed the state for all but five of

the last 50 years.

"It is now very hard to argue that the SPD really will be so strong as to be able to push Ms. Merkel from the chancellorship," said Thomas Poguntke, a political scientist at the Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf, said on Monday. "It's not yet completely decided, but it is now significantly less likely than it was before yesterday's election."

The perception of many Germans that Ms. Merkel flung the country's doors open to hundreds of thousands of asylum applicants in 2015 remains the chancellor's Achilles' heel, Mr. Poguntke and other analysts said.

But the SPD, the junior partner in Ms. Merkel's governing coalition since 2013, supported Ms. Merkel's policies, making it difficult for them to attack her for them. The anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany has been consumed by leadership infighting and on Sunday recorded one of its worst state-election results of the past year. And with the number of migrant arrivals declining—to roughly 15,000 asylum applications last month compared to about 60,000 in April 2016—the issue has lost its once-assured spot in the headlines.

Ms. Merkel's position "is more comfortable than it's been at any other point in the two years since the influx of many refugees to Germany," Berlin-based pollster Manfred GÜLLNER wrote on Monday. "While many observers of the political scene back then announced the end of Merkel, today the course is set for another Merkel chancellorship."

Rather than dwell on migration, Ms. Merkel is highlighting Germany's economic strength and her experience in international affairs as the election campaign approaches. In the past month, Ms. Merkel shared the stage with Ivanka Trump in Berlin during her first foreign trip as a White House official; flew to Saudi Arabia for talks with King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud and to Russia to meet President Vladimir Putin; and on Monday welcomed newly elected French President Emmanuel Macron to the German capital with military honors.

In an Infratest Dimap exit poll on Sunday, 70% of all voters in North Rhine-Westphalia said they agreed with the statement: "Angela Merkel makes sure we are doing well in a troubled world."

A nationwide poll by the company last week found 81% of Germans viewed their country's economic

situation positively, and only 18% negatively. When Ms. Merkel was first elected in 2005, those poles were essentially reversed: 85% viewed it negatively and 15% viewed it positively.

That leaves few openings for Mr. Schulz, whose party has dropped back to a roughly 10-point polling gap behind Ms. Merkel's Christian Democrats after surging to a near-tie in the wake of his designation as chancellor candidate in January. On Monday, Mr. Schulz tried to parry criticism that he has failed to offer concrete proposals.

Specific proposals were forthcoming, he promised, hinting that he would try to attack Ms. Merkel on foreign-policy matters. Nodding to President Donald Trump's insistence that Germany raise its defense budget and Ms. Merkel's promises that it would do so, Mr. Schulz said he would follow a different course.

"We must not submit to this increasingly broad debate over some obligatory logic of a military build-up," Mr. Schulz said.

## The Washington Post Germany's far right preaches traditional values. Can a lesbian mother be its new voice? (UNE)

BERLIN — The far right's drubbing in the French election exposed the biggest challenge for European nationalists: convincing voters that they are no longer a bunch of intolerant haters. To argue that point, welcome to the political stage Alice Weidel, the improbable new voice of Germany's far right.

In person, the cardigan-wearing former investment banker eschews fiery rhetoric in favor of almost academic answers. But there's something else that distinguishes her from the populist pack. After days spent campaigning for the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, the 38-year-old lesbian goes home to her partner and two sons.

"My election and my high acceptance within the party show that, contrary to public perception, my party is tolerant," said Weidel, one of two politicians elected last month to lead the AfD into Germany's national elections in September.

Weidel's rise is the latest expression of a growing, if seemingly ironic, trend. In their policies, nationalist movements in the West often oppose full gay rights, including same-sex marriage. But many such parties are increasingly trying to portray themselves as more tolerant than their images suggest, in part by making space for gay men and lesbians.

*[With Le Pen defeat, Europe's far-right surge stalls]*

This, observers say, amounts to an attempt to broaden their appeal—not only to gays but also to voters who view such movements as overtly bigoted and exclusionary.

Weidel "is a signpost; she is there to say, 'Look, we're not only old, angry white men,'" said Cornelius Adebahr, a fellow at Carnegie Europe.

The efforts in Europe echo the moment last year when Donald Trump held up a rainbow flag, a symbol of the gay community, at a

presidential campaign stop in Colorado. In doing so, he took a page from far-right Dutch firebrand Geert Wilders, who has for years portrayed his campaign against Muslim immigration as a way to protect gays from bashing by religious zealots.

Opponents, however, call such efforts disingenuous—optics that do not gel with nationalist voting patterns, actions and internal musings on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights. In France, for instance, the National Front's Marine Le Pen, despite equivocating on the issue at first, in February included a repeal of same-sex marriage—legalized in France in 2013—in her campaign pledges.

More recently, however, gays have been promoted to the party's highest ranks. National Front leaders Florian Philippot and Steeve Briois were outed by French journalists in recent years. Nevertheless, Philippot is now Le Pen's right-hand man, and

two weeks ago, Briois was named the party's interim chief.

*[How the far right is trying to woo an unlikely ally—Jews]*

Le Pen's views are a far cry from those of her father, party founder Jean-Marie Le Pen. In the 1980s, the elder Le Pen—an anti-Semite who referred to the Nazi gas chambers as a "detail" of history—was as outspoken about gays as he was about Jews. During the AIDS crisis, he advocated for the creation of concentration camps for those infected with HIV.

Despite her massive loss, Marine Le Pen's different strategy may be gradually working. Although the party opposes same-sex marriage, a 2015 poll showed that support for her party among gay couples rose from 19 percent in 2012 to 32 percent in 2015—right after the November terrorist attacks in Paris.

*[If you look at the history of the National Front, it was always a homophobic party—but with lots of*

homosexuals," said Frédéric Martel, author of "The Pink and the Black: Homosexuals in France since 1968."

Enter Germany's Weidel, who last month was selected to help lead the AfD and is now tasked with helping the party avoid political implosion.

Founded in 2013 on the back of German angst over bailouts for Greece, the AfD morphed during the refugee crisis into an anti-immigrant nationalist movement that has opposed the building of new mosques and advocates leaving the euro currency union. Should the AfD crash and burn following losses by nationalists in the Netherlands and France, it would amount to a massive setback for the far right in Europe.

*[In Germany, right-wing violence flourishing amid surge in online hate]*

After strong gains last year in local elections, the AfD has taken a severe hit in recent months, with its poll numbers falling to single digits. Its problems came after explosive remarks by one of its prominent politicians, Björn Höcke, who appeared to play down Germany's World War II guilt and Adolf Hitler's atrocities.

Besides turning off potential supporters, his

comments fueled a tug of war between moderates and hard-liners for the soul of the party. Caught up in the dispute, Frauke Petry, the face of the party, abruptly announced last month that she would step aside as its lead candidate.

In her place, the AfD elected two replacements: the more moderate Weidel and a hard-liner, Alexander Gauland, 76. Weidel concedes that it was an attempt to appease both sides of the movement.

Since then, some of her fiercest critics have been German gay groups. Markus Ulrich, spokesman for the Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany, dismissed Weidel's election as a "clever strategy" meant to distract from the AfD's hard-line platform.

"Does the AfD stand for equal rights? For respect? For diversity? Definitely not," Ulrich said.

Yet Weidel's appeal also stems from a characteristic that has helped her rise in the AfD: She is not a traditional politician. An economist, she graduated best in class at the University of Bayreuth and earned her doctorate in 2011. She worked in China for six years and speaks Mandarin. Her day job is consulting for start-ups.

In an interview with The Washington Post, she said she saw no contradiction between her party's stated stance in favor of "traditional families" with "a father and mother" and her life with her female partner and children. Germany offers civil partnerships, she said, and she and her party remain in favor "of keeping the status quo."

*[Islam is Europe's 'new fascism,' and other things European politicians say about Muslims]*

The pushback within the AfD against a lesbian as one of its leading voices, meanwhile, has been surprisingly muted. Some far-right websites have jabbed at Weidel. But for the most part, even fervent nationalists in the party appear to be backing her.

"We are fostering traditional values but aren't ostracizing anyone," said AfD politician Andreas Gehlmann, who once heckled a colleague from another party speaking about gay issues. "We also have black people in the AfD."

Weidel condemns AfD politicians such as Höcke. Although she was initially attracted to the party because of its anti-euro stance, she also fiercely defends its anti-immigrant position — particularly against the decision by Chancellor Angela Merkel to welcome hundreds

of thousands of refugees, many fleeing the Syrian war.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

She says that neither she nor her party is "anti-Islamic." But she described some conservative Muslims as "enemies of freedom" and said that those who do not integrate pose a risk to German culture.

She generally dismisses the criticism by fellow gays and lesbians.

"I was labeled by a gay magazine as the most dangerous homosexual in Germany," Weidel said. "I called up my partner and said, 'In Germany, especially in Berlin, we cannot show up at gay parties anymore.' She was like, 'We've never done that, and we won't do that,' so I have no problem."

James McAuley in Paris, Stephanie Kirchner in Berlin and Annabell Van den Berghe in Brussels contributed to this report.

## The New York Times Theresa May, Borrowing from Labour, Vows to Extend Protections for Workers

Stephen Castle

This is not the first time Mrs. May has entered political territory traditionally occupied by her rivals, who trail her badly in the opinion polls. The Conservatives, or Tories, had already copied Labour's plans from the 2015 general election to cap energy costs.

Mrs. May's emerging credo seems to combine interventionist instincts on some economic and social issues with a hard-line stance on cutting immigration and withdrawing from the European Union, known as Brexit.

"We are seeing a willingness to think of intervention that would have been seen as anathema by hard-core Thatcherites," said Tim Bale, professor of politics at Queen Mary University of London. He was referring to supporters of Margaret Thatcher, the former Conservative prime minister, whose free market philosophy inspired privatization and deregulation in the 1980s.

But Mrs. May "has not overnight become a continental Christian Democrat," Mr. Bale added, noting that "hers is maybe more the view

that, economically, things have got a little out of kilter and that the vote for Brexit was a reflection of that."

Stagnating wages among low earners and resentment at rising immigration were thought to be the principal driving force behind last year's vote to leave the European Union. Mrs. May seems now to be addressing those pro-Brexit voters, many of whom once supported the Labour Party, while also trying to occupy some of the ground in the political center vacated by Labour's shift to the left.

The Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, has accused her of taking working people "for fools," while Mrs. May's critics noted that the Conservatives have resisted European Union legislation protecting workers' rights, arguing that such employment laws stifle the economy.

On Monday, however, Mrs. May promised to keep workplace rights that are currently guaranteed by European Union law.

Britons are due to vote on June 8 and Mrs. May's main election strategy is to argue that she is better placed than her less popular Labour

rival, Mr. Corbyn, to provide the "strong and stable leadership" which has become her mantra. Mrs. May last month unexpectedly called for the early election, seeking a mandate from voters as difficult negotiations over Brexit are about to begin.

Even when the Conservative Party publishes its election manifesto, which is expected later in the week, a comprehensive political philosophy — or embryonic "Mayism" — might not emerge.

Mrs. May remains ideologically enigmatic because she served for six years as Home Secretary, dealing with police, immigration and other internal security issues and making few policy pronouncements outside that area.

Analysts ascribe the intellectual basis of Mrs. May's brand of conservatism to Nick Timothy, one of her two closest aides. Mr. Timothy was raised in Birmingham, one of Britain's industrial heartlands, and is a admirer of the type of municipal politics practiced by Joseph Chamberlain, who transformed the leadership of the city in the 19th century and whose

legacy has also been cited as an inspiration by Mrs. May.

"It is difficult to know where Nick Timothy ends and Theresa May begins, because Theresa May has never given anything much away," Mr. Bale said, "so people make the assumption there is someone else behind it."

Unlike his boss, Mr. Timothy has made much of his thinking public in articles for the ConservativeHome website. In one article published last year, he appealed to his party to "adopt a relentless focus on governing in the interests of ordinary, working people."

Mrs. May, a clergyman's daughter, has also stressed her desire to help the so-called JAMS — those "just about managing" to get by — and presented herself as being more in tune with the values of provincial England than with those of its globalized capital city, London.

However, Mr. Bale believes that Mrs. May's political outreach extends only so far. "She is still, in essence, a Conservative," he said, "and I don't think this is as huge a

departure as the Tory spinners would like us to think."

The latest proposals on workers' rights, he added,

## The Washington Post

BERLIN — Austria appeared headed Monday toward early elections after a breakdown of its coalition government, potentially paving a path to power for the far-right Freedom Party.

The turn of events adds to Europe's already crammed election season while setting up the European far right's best chance for a victory this year after losses in the Netherlands and France.

On Monday, senior Austrian officials were locked in meetings in Vienna, negotiating the timing of new elections after the ruling coalition, made up of the center-left Social Democrats and the center-right People's Party, found itself at a political impasse. Though the coalition was set to govern until 2018, an early vote is now expected no later than autumn.

Austria's anti-Islam, anti-migrant Freedom Party is topping some key opinion polls.

"The people are so fed up with the grand coalition that they prefer anything else," said Peter Hajek, a Vienna-based political scientist.

*[Austrian nationalists hope for a "Trump bump"]*

In recent weeks, the alliance between the Social Democrats and

"are an attractive garnish on what is still a fairly conventional pitch by the Conservatives about being more

competent to run the economy and keeping taxes low."

the People's Party has frayed amid infighting that deepened markedly last week with the resignation of Reinhold Mitterlehner, former chief of the People's Party. The Social Democrats and their junior partners, the People's Party, have argued over a batch of measures, holding up major decisions on education and tax policy.

Meanwhile, the People's Party has been in the throes of a leadership upheaval that resulted in the crowning Sunday of a new chairman: Sebastian Kurz, a 30-year-old rising star who has been serving as Austria's foreign minister.

Kurz has taken a sharp anti-refugee stance in recent months, currying favor with harder-right elements in Austria while also managing to sidestep the aggressive tone of the Freedom Party. Though his People's Party polls in third place overall, Kurz is widely seen as Austria's most popular politician.

When taking over the top job Monday, he won significant concessions for new powers from his party elders — including the right to rename it the "New People's Party" on election ballots. Soon after winning, Kurz reiterated his call for early elections.

*[Austrian president suggests women wear headscarves to fight Islamophobia]*

After Kurz's elevation, Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern of the Social Democrats conceded Sunday that there was no way to prevent a snap vote.

On Monday, Kern said he was aiming for an "orderly process" toward an early vote and expressed hope that a few initiatives on the government's agenda could still be pushed through before and during the summer.

Kern said he would like to see Kurz become vice chancellor. Even if he does, it appears that such a deal would simply create a placeholder cabinet that would usher in new elections.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

Before deciding on taking the job, Kurz told reporters Monday that "in my opinion, it's necessary to first agree on a date for new elections."

Given the distribution of public support for Austria's various parties, a coalition between at least two parties appears almost inevitable. The Freedom Party might actually be hurt by Kurz's rise, analysts say, suggesting that he may poach some of its traditional voters. Nevertheless, the Freedom Party still has a good shot of being asked

to help form a new government with Kurz's People's Party, or possibly even the Social Democrats.

*[Defeat of far-right Austrian presidential candidate boosts E.U.]*

Both mainstream parties campaigned last year against the Freedom Party's Norbert Hofer, who narrowly lost his bid for the ceremonial post of president. Ever since, both parties, already shifting to the right, have begun to sound even more like the Freedom Party on a number of key issues, particularly on immigrants. And neither party appears to be explicitly excluding the possibility of a coalition government with the Freedom Party.

The last time the Freedom Party formed part of the government — in the 2000s — the coalition was considered a failure, leading to a fissure among the party's supporters. But since Hofer's loss, the Freedom Party has moderated its stance on a number of issues. For instance, it has backed off suggestions that it might seek a referendum on leaving the European Union similar to one held last year in Britain.

## The New York Times

Melissa Eddy

Christian Kern, the current chancellor and leader of the governing center-left Social Democrats, and the newly elected head of the center-right People's Party, Sebastian Kurz, agreed to continue their strained alliance until a date for the election is set.

"The interest of Austria as a whole must always, I stress always, stand above party tactics," Alexander Van der Bellen, president of Austria, said on Monday. "The population and I expect clarity as quickly as possible."

Austrians elected Mr. Van der Bellen as president last year after a long and bitter campaign against Norbert Hofer, a young rising star of the Freedom Party.

That party's potential entry into government would, in large part, reverse that setback for the far right.

It also comes as Austria appears to be settling down after the arrival of tens of thousands of migrants in Europe in 2015.

The economy has been on the rise in recent months, with the European Commission predicting growth of 1.7 percent into next year with unemployment projected to dip below 6 percent.

Mr. Kurz insisted he was seeking a "brief, intense" election campaign that would take place over the summer, with elections in the fall, possibly October.

Since the end of World War II, most of Austria's governments have been a coalition of the two main left and right parties, an arrangement credited by many for creating harmony in the republic. Others have criticized it for paving the way for cronyism and an ossified system of politics.

In recent years, the Freedom Party portrayed itself as a fresh, outside force. That has helped propel the party's support ahead of both its traditional rivals, opinion polls show.

But they also show Mr. Kurz enjoying the support of roughly 50 percent of all Austrians, more than double that for the Freedom Party leader, Heinz-Christian Strache.

Early elections have to be approved by all members of Parliament and the opposition. Mr. Strache told reporters on Monday that his party would support balloting in mid- or late October. "We want to ensure the chaos is eased," he said. "Swift elections will lead to orderly circumstances."

Mr. Strache's party is currently the third-strongest in the national Parliament. A new round of voting could leave it poised to enter into government for the first time since 1999.

"It appears hard to imagine that the two could form a joint coalition after a hard campaign," wrote Alexandra Föderl-Schmid in an editorial for the Viennese daily Der Standard. "For both the People's Party, as well as for the Social Democrats, the Freedom Party remains the only coalition partner."

The current political crisis started last Wednesday, when the vice chancellor and previous leader of People's Party, offered his resignation.

That opened the door to Mr. Kurz, the 30-year-old foreign minister, to swiftly move to translate his growing popularity into power by offering to take over leadership of the flagging center-right party in exchange for a series of demands.

Among them were the consolidation of hiring and decision-making powers for the new leader and the

right to refashion itself into a movement bearing his name.

"We are starting a new movement that is based on the proven powers of the People's Party and at the same time attracts new people," Mr.

Kurz said in a statement after his election on Sunday.

His new movement, "List Sebastian Kurz, the New People's Party," appeared to have adopted the statement as a motto for its

campaign on social media, which it wasted no time rolling out. On Monday, less than 24 hours after his election, anyone calling up the People's Party website was redirected to a landing page for the new movement asking users, "Can

Sebastian Kurz count on your support?"

## INTERNATIONAL

The  
Washington  
Post

### U.S. says Syria built crematorium to handle mass prisoner killings (UNE)

By Karen DeYoung

The Syrian government has constructed and is using a crematorium at its notorious Sednaya military prison near Damascus to clandestinely dispose of the bodies of prisoners it continues to execute inside the facility, the State Department said Monday.

Thousands of executed detainees have been dumped in mass graves in recent years, said acting assistant secretary of state Stuart Jones. "What we're assessing is that if you have that level of production of mass murder, then using the crematorium would ... allow the regime to manage that number of corpses ... without evidence."

"We believe that the building of a crematorium is an effort to cover up the extent of mass murders taking place in Sednaya prison," he said in a briefing for reporters.

The Syrian regime, Jones said, "has treated opposition forces and unarmed civilians as one and the same," continuing to "systematically abduct and torture civilian detainees, often beating, electrocuting and raping these victims," and authorizing "the extrajudicial killings of thousands."

The State Department distributed satellite photographs it said documented the gradual construction of the facility outside the main prison complex and its apparent use this year. Jones said that "newly declassified" information on this and other atrocities by the government of President Bashar al-Assad came from "intelligence community assessments," as well as from nongovernmental organizations such as Amnesty International and the media.

"These atrocities have been carried out seemingly with the unconditional support from Russia and Iran,"

Assad's main backers, Jones said. Neither government commented on the new U.S. allegation.

*[How a woman in England tracks civilian deaths in Syria, one bomb at a time]*

Accusations of mass murder and incinerated bodies, evoking the Holocaust, contrasted with last week's Washington visit by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak. They were pictured shaking hands and broadly smiling with President Trump before an Oval Office meeting in which discussions centered on Syria.

The Russians also met with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, and Jones said the release of new intelligence comes at "an opportune time to remind people about the atrocities that are being carried out inside of Syria all the time."

The newly released information included a satellite photo of the snow-covered Sednaya complex with an L-shaped building labeled "probable crematorium." Assessment of the facility, Jones said, included the presence of "the discharge stack, the probable firewall, the probable air intake — this is in the construction phase — this would be consistent if they were building a crematorium." In a photo taken Jan. 15, he said, "we're look[ing] at snowmelt on the roof that would be consistent with a crematorium."

Jones said the information had not been shared with the Russians. He also said he was not suggesting that either Russia or Iran was involved with the facility.

But Tillerson, he said, "was firm and clear with Minister Lavrov. Russia holds tremendous influence over Bashar al-Assad. A key point that took place in that bilateral meeting was telling Russia to use its power to rein in the regime."

Amnesty International says in its newest report that a 'systematic campaign of mass hangings' killed up to 13,000 detainees in Syria's Sednaya prison. Amnesty International report: Syria carried out mass hangings at military prison (Reuters)

(Reuters)

"The regime must stop all attacks on civilians and opposition forces, and Russia must bear responsibility to ensure regime compliance," Jones said.

Jones called Tillerson's meeting with Lavrov "productive." But "I would not say that they mapped out a specific way forward on how to address the issue of Syrian atrocities, or even how to move forward on the Geneva process" on the eve of the next round of years-long United Nations efforts to bring representatives of Assad and the rebels to the negotiating table, due to begin Tuesday.

One of Lavrov's principal goals in last week's meetings was to solicit Trump administration support for a cease-fire and the establishment of safe zones within Syria as part of a May 4 pact signed by Russia, Iran and Turkey. The Turkish government has backed anti-Assad rebels in Syria along with the United States, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is due to meet with Trump at the White House on Tuesday.

*[U.S.-Turkish relations deeply strained ahead of Erdogan's visit to White House]*

Although Trump has also called for safe zones within Syria and said he discussed them early this month in a telephone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the administration more recently has been publicly lukewarm about the Russia-led plan.

"In light of the failures of the past cease-fire agreements, we have

reason to be skeptical," Jones said. Earlier truces negotiated under the Obama administration were violated by both Syria and Russia.

Throughout his presidential campaign, Trump said the United States should concentrate on the fight against the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq and cease involvement in Syria's civil war. But he changed course last month, approving a cruise missile strike on a Syrian government air base after concluding it was used by Assad to launch a chemical weapons attack against civilians.

Jones described "the continued brutality of Assad" as a threat to the region, "as well as to the national security interests of the United States and our allies." Asked if there is consideration of military action to destroy the crematorium, he said, "We're not going to signal what we are going to do and what we're not going to do."

"At this point, we are talking about this evidence and bringing it forward to the international community, which we hope will put pressure on the regime to change its behavior," Jones said.

Cease-fires under the Russia-Iran-Turkey agreement, in designated parts of northwestern, central and southern Syria, have largely held in recent weeks. But violence continues on other fronts not included in the plan, and suggests that Assad's forces are positioning themselves to launch an all-out assault on the largest of the safe zones, Idlib province, when the deal breaks down. If that happens, almost a million displaced civilians could find themselves caught in the crossfire between pro-government forces and an al-Qaeda-linked coalition that appears willing to fight until the end.

More than 400,000 people have died in the Syrian civil war, according to the United Nations,

with at least half the entire prewar population of about 22 million now living as refugees or displaced from their homes. Many of the dead are civilians killed by government action, including, Jones said, "well-documented airstrikes and artillery strikes, chemical weapons attacks, arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, starvation, sexual violence, and denial of essential services such as food, water and medical care."

According to "numerous" - nongovernmental organizations, Jones said, "the regime has abducted and detained between 65,000 and 117,000 people between

2011 and 2015," a period in which Amnesty International has said that nearly 18,000 detainees died. The Syrian Network for Human Rights estimated in March that at least 106,727 people were still arrested or had been forcibly disappeared.

Prisoners are held in a network of prisons across Syria. The Sednaya detention complex, run by Syria's powerful military police about 20 miles outside Damascus, is the most notorious. A recent Amnesty International report described it as a "human slaughterhouse."

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

Jones cited "multiple sources" in saying that "the regime is responsible for killing as many as 50 detainees per day at Sednaya," where he said up to 70 people were packed in cells designed for five. Former prisoners have described mass hangings.

*[A journey into Syria's secret torture wards]*

In interviews with The Washington Post, former detainees described conditions so atrocious that many prisoners died from torture, medical neglect or starvation.

Most political prisoners said they had been held in the "Red Building," a facility the regime largely emptied of mostly Islamist and jihadist prisoners in the early months of the anti-Assad uprising that began in early 2011. Among those taken from the cells and hanged, former prisoners said, were students, engineers, activists and human rights lawyers.

Louisa Loveluck in Beirut contributed to this report.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Felicia Schwartz  
WASHINGTON—

The Trump administration accused the Syrian government of operating a crematorium to cover up what U.S. officials called "mass murders" at the notorious Saydnaya prison outside Damascus.

The State Department's top Middle East diplomat, Stuart Jones, on Monday said the U.S. estimates the Syrian government is hanging as many as 50 detainees a day at the prison and burning some of the remains.

The U.S. released several declassified satellite photos it says reveal the existence of the crematorium near the main prison.

Mr. Jones faulted Syrian allies Russia and Iran for backing the regime of President Bashar al-Assad despite its abuses, including operating the crematorium. "These atrocities have been carried out seemingly with unconditional support from Russia and Iran," Mr. Jones said.

The Iranian mission to the United Nations and the Russian Embassy in Washington didn't respond to requests for comment. The Syrian mission at the U.N. couldn't be reached. Neither Iran nor Syria has an embassy in Washington.

Monday's announcement follows talks last week among President Donald Trump, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. The Trump administration is urging Russia to use its influence with the Assad regime to end attacks on civilians and hold the Syrian government accountable for mass atrocities.

## U.S. Accuses Syria of Mass Executions, Running Crematorium

The Trump administration initially said it wouldn't press for Mr. Assad's removal, but later said he had no place in Syria's future after a deadly chemical-weapons attack. Still, the U.S. is looking to work with Russia on the Syria conflict. Pressing Russia to use its power to rein in Mr. Assad's regime was "a key point" in last week's talks between Messrs. Tillerson and Mr. Lavrov, State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said on Monday. She said they agreed that Russia and Washington want a stable and unified Syria and "the way to bring stability to Syria must come through diplomatic and political means."

"Russia must now with great urgency exercise its influence over the Syrian regime to guarantee that horrific violations stop now," Mr. Jones said, adding that he didn't present the photos released on Monday to Russian officials last week, but that Moscow and Washington have had continuing conversations "about the problem that their failure to condemn Syrian atrocities and their apparent tolerance of Syrian atrocities has created."

Although human-rights groups have complained about the prison and U.S. officials have been aware of alleged abuses there, the disclosure of the likely use of a crematorium was the chief revelation by Mr. Jones. The information was presented on Monday in part because it recently has come to light, but also is timed to the recent visit by Mr. Lavrov.

"This information has been developing, and with the meeting last week between Foreign Minister Lavrov and the secretary, this was

an opportune time to remind people about the atrocities that are being carried out inside of Syria all the time, of which this is one discrete additive piece of evidence," Mr. Jones said.

A report released this year by Amnesty International found that as many as 13,000 people were hanged at Saydnaya prison between 2011 and 2015, in what it described as a secret campaign to target government opponents. According to the U.N., more than 400,000 people have been killed in the more-than-six-year conflict.

"The attempt to cover up mass murders in the Assad crematorium is reminiscent of the 20th century's worst offenses against humanity," U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley said, adding that Russia and Iran also bear a responsibility in the Syrian regime's actions and that they "enable Assad's abductions, torture, extrajudicial killings, airstrikes, barrel bombs and chemical-weapons attacks."

The Syrian regime in 2013 began modifying a building to support a crematorium, Mr. Jones said.

Officials at Amnesty International said they couldn't independently verify the U.S. allegations, but said they hoped they would pressure Russia and the international community to allow independent monitors to obtain access to Saydnaya.

"These allegations should be taken seriously," said Diana Semaan, a Syria researcher at Amnesty International. "Monitors should access the prison and investigate these allegations."

Former prisoners and activists said they had heard rumors of the crematorium's existence.

"There were suspicions about it when the regime stopped giving the detainees' families the bodies, and some news was coming out about it, but no 100% confirmation," said Qutaiba Idlibi, a Syrian activist who was twice detained and tortured by the Syrian regime.

Muneer Al-Fakeer, a former political prisoner at Saydnaya, remembers it was the summer of 2013 when the prisoners at the notorious prison began to smell burning flesh.

"We used to smell the fire and we would smell strange odors," he said. "We would smell things like meat and flesh burning for days."

Mr. Al-Fakeer said the prisoners, crammed into dank and overfilled cells, didn't know the source of odors. Not until he was released from prison in early 2014 did he begin to hear rumors of a crematorium at Saydnaya prison, he said.

Mr. Al-Fakeer was arrested in late 2012 for antigovernment activity and humanitarian work that helped the opposition. Most of his cellmates had also been arrested for challenging the regime.

"They have to take a position against this crematorium and this prison," he said of the State Department's statement on Monday. "Saydnaya is the worst prison in the world."

—Raja Abdulrahim and Dion Nissenbaum



## Syrian Crematory Is Hiding Mass Killings of Prisoners, U.S. Says (UNE)

Gardiner Harris, Anne Barnard and Rick Gladstone

But the Trump administration went further on Monday, contending that

the government was systematically incinerating the corpses of executed

inmates at the Sednaya prison complex north of Damascus to destroy evidence that could be used to prosecute war crimes.

"We now believe that the Syrian regime has installed a crematorium in the Sednaya prison complex, which could dispose of detainees' remains with little evidence," Stuart E. Jones, the acting assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, said at a news conference in Washington. "At this point, we are talking about this evidence and bringing it forward to the international community, which we hope will put pressure on the regime to change its behavior."

Mr. Jones acknowledged that the satellite photographs, taken over the last four years, were not definitive. But in one from 2015, he said, the buildings were covered in snow — except for one, suggesting a significant internal heat source. "That would be consistent with a crematorium," he said.

Officials added that a discharge stack and architectural elements thought to be a firewall and air intake were also suggestive of a place to burn bodies.

The United Nations is scheduled to begin another round of Syria peace talks in Geneva on Tuesday, and the timing of the accusations seemed intended to pressure Russia, Mr. Assad's principal foreign ally, into backing away from him.

"The rest of the world recognizes the horrors of the Syrian regime," Ms. Haley said. "It is time for Russia to join us."

There was no immediate comment from the Russian or Syrian governments. Mr. Assad has repeatedly denied committing

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL.**

## U.S. Plans to Supply Antitank Weapons to Kurdish Fighters in Syria

Dion Nissenbaum

WASHINGTON—

The U.S. military is preparing to provide Kurdish forces in Syria with antitank weapons in their fight against Islamic State, U.S. officials said Monday, a move that would allow them to target armored Islamic State trucks used in suicide bombings but could also give them the ability to strike Turkish tanks operating in Syria.

Trump administration officials have been divided over whether to supply antitank weapons to the Kurdish force known as the YPG. The administration is trying to balance battlefield needs with objections from Turkey, which considers the Kurdish fighters to be a terrorist threat.

crimes in the war, which he has framed as a struggle against terrorism fomented by his Western and Arab enemies.

Human rights groups said they were surprised by the Trump administration's assertions, in part because some of the satellite photographs have existed for years and are not conclusive.

"There still needs to be a lot of research done," said Geoffrey Mock, a Middle East specialist at Amnesty International, which released a report in February detailing other evidence of mass executions at the Sednaya prison, but nothing about a crematory.

Paulo Pinheiro, the chairman of a United Nations tribunal that has been compiling evidence of atrocities in the Syrian war since it began in 2011, said in an email, "I don't have any information concerning this crematorium."

Some Syrian opposition supporters asked why, if the United States had satellite pictures suggesting the existence of the facility for such a long time, they were being publicized only now. Some criticized the Obama administration for sitting on the pictures.

Mr. Jones, the acting assistant secretary of state, said American officials believed the crematory was created in 2013. "Although the regime's many atrocities are well documented, we believe that the building of a crematorium is an effort to cover up the extent of mass murders taking place in Sednaya prison," he said.

Momentum is building in several court cases being prepared in Europe against Syrian officials. Witnesses testified this month in

German federal court in a criminal case that accuses six senior Syrian security officers of responsibility for atrocities.

Throughout the conflict, which has killed roughly 400,000 people, many witnesses have accused pro-government forces of burning or destroying bodies, though not specifically at Sednaya.

At least a half-dozen Syrians have told The New York Times over the past four years that they either witnessed the burning of bodies or smelled odors that made them wonder if bodies were being burned. Several mentioned an unpleasant smell like burning hair near prison or military facilities, or in areas recently taken by pro-government forces.

Several former detainees on the Mezze air base, a government facility on the edge of Damascus, said they had seen bodies being burned. People living nearby said they had smelled something like burning hair but were unsure whether it was from animals, like chicken feathers or sheep's wool.

Jamal, who was displaced from a Damascus suburb and gave only his first name for fear of reprisals, said that while living in the Mezze district several years ago, he regularly saw black smoke and smelled what he thought were burning tires, in addition to other smells he could not identify.

Kassem Eid, a former rebel spokesman and negotiator in the rebel-held Damascus suburb of Moadhamiyeh who is now based in Germany, also said that people living in Damascus suburbs had noticed a smell like burning hair.

On Al Jazeera television in 2015, a defecting soldier who served on the

Mezze air base said detainees' bodies had been taken to a crematory in the Harasta neighborhood.

In April 2013, a middle-aged Syrian told The New York Times that bodies had been burned after an attack on a civilian area outside Damascus. He said that after pro-government militias entered his neighborhood and killed scores of people, he watched from his window as the troops burned bodies while dancing around.

He said he had seen 20 to 30 soldiers in military uniforms burning bodies, including those of townspeople he recognized.

Many other instances of ad hoc burnings of bodies have been reported over the years. A lawyer in Aleppo described seeing two bodies thrown out of a security office. When he and his friends returned a few days later to bury them, he said, they were stopped by security officers who burned the bodies in the street.

The bodies of infants were found half-charred in 2013 after pro-government forces massacred scores of people in the towns of Bayda and Baniyas.

During the news conference on Monday, Mr. Jones acknowledged that the United States had not yet given the satellite images to the Russians.

"But we have an ongoing conversation with the Russians talking about the problem that their failure to condemn Syrian atrocities and their apparent tolerance of Syrian atrocities has created," he said.

course and stop plans to arm the YPG. But the U.S. military is already moving to supply the group with more firepower, including machine guns and other weapons, as well as ammunition.

Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, confirmed that the U.S. plans to supply the Kurdish fighters with antitank weapons. He declined to discuss details of the plan.

U.S. officials say the Pentagon has yet to make a final decision on the type of antitank weapons the U.S. will supply. To address Turkish objections, it is looking at providing the Kurdish forces with an unguided version of an antitank missile instead of the more sophisticated guided kinds, according to U.S. officials.

But even that has been the subject of debate. There are some in the administration who are worried about providing the YPG with any kind of antitank weapons, U.S. officials said.

Until now, the U.S. has restricted arms supplies to the Kurds as a way to assuage Turkish concerns that the weapons could be smuggled into Turkey and used against its own citizens and soldiers.

"That is a big concern for us," one Turkish official said Monday of the plan to provide the YPG with antitank weapons.

Last summer, Kurdish fighters in Syria used an antitank weapon to destroy a Turkish tank, killing one soldier. The fighters likely seized the weapon on the battlefield. That

attack, captured on video, heightened Turkish reservations about U.S. plans to arm the YPG.

The YPG is the largest force in the Syrian Democratic Forces, a coalition of about 50,000 Kurdish and Arab fighters who work with U.S. special operations forces.

Bloomberg

## Turow : Assad Avoids Justice With Help From the U.S.

by Scott Turow

The torrent of violence that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his operatives have rained down on his own people since 2011 -- widespread kidnappings, torture, barrel-bombings and chemical weapons attacks -- have led to mournful discussions of the dim prospects that Assad will ever be brought to trial for his atrocities. Yet the truth is that the U.S., and its stance toward the International Criminal Court at The Hague, have helped create many of the impediments to Assad's prosecution.

The ICC, a permanent war-crimes tribunal, was established through negotiations among most United Nations members in the late 1990s, with the U.S. playing a leading role. Since the Nuremberg trials after World War II, a global consensus had emerged that public trials of war-crimes charges and punishment of those responsible were indispensable to creating a lasting peace in a conflict zone, because dispassionate justice allows survivors to move forward without nursing grievances for generations about horrors that have gone unaddressed.

By the end of 2000, the U.S. and 138 nations had signed the international treaty, called the Rome Statute, that created the court. Then in May 2002, the George W. Bush administration announced that it was "unsigning" the treaty and renouncing America's obligations.

Many arguments were marshaled against membership, some of them understandable. Perhaps the most cogent objection is that no nation is more likely than the U.S. to be drawn into a peacekeeping role around the world. We would be less likely to do so if our soldiers had to bear the risk of a politically inspired prosecution in front of a criminal court thousands of miles from our shores, with procedures very

Aaron Stein, a resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank, said providing antitank weapons to the YPG would fuel anger in Turkey, which launched airstrikes last month on the Kurdish fighters in Syria. Turkey has threatened to carry out more attacks against the YPG

fighters, who often work side-by-side with U.S. forces in Syria.

"The SDF needs heavy weapons to assault Raqqa, but the provision of any of these weapons are certain to elicit a response from Turkey," he said. "There is no threading this needle. The U.S. has simply chosen to elevate the [Islamic State] war

plan over the Turkey relationship in the near term."

—Gordon Lubold contributed to this article.

different than our own.

As an exclamation point, Congress in 2002 passed the American Service-Members Protection Act, which authorized the president to order military action to free any armed forces member called to answer before the ICC. The move was ridiculed in Western Europe as "The Hague Invasion Act," but the U.S. continued to put diplomatic pressure on other nations, including Iraq, where American troops were fighting, not to participate in the Court.

The American turnaround has helped hobble the ICC. Renegade nations such as China, which failed to participate from the outset, have been able to avoid pressure from the global community by noting the U.S. stance. Far more important, America's example made it easier for other nations that had signed the Rome Statute also ultimately to fail to ratify it. Many are countries whose actions have often been alleged to violate international law: Iran, Israel, Russia and, most importantly, Syria.

As a result, the ICC has no jurisdiction over Syria and Assad. The UN Security Council could still refer the matter to the international court, but Syria's ally, Russia, holds veto power there and has so far hindered efforts to call Assad and others to account. The UN has empowered two different bodies to gather evidence about the atrocities in Syria, but they have no forum in which to present it and Assad has said he and his administration "don't care" about the UN efforts.

If U.S. refusal to ratify the Rome Treaty were truly in American national interest, it could be excused, even if it provided shelter to someone like Assad. But Washington's reluctance rests on a variety of assumptions that don't stand up to scrutiny. Foreign prosecutors and investigators are never going to be crawling all over the U.S. trying to imprison our

soldiers. ICC jurisdiction is complementary, meaning it does not violate our sovereignty by supplanting our own justice system. The results of a good faith investigation by national authorities is conclusive on the ICC. The court acts only when the nation in question has refused to.

It is unimaginable that serious war-crimes charges against American troops would go uninvestigated by the Pentagon, once they came to light. Consider the convulsive response to the actions by our soldiers at the Baghdad prison, Abu Ghraib. Furthermore, if membership in the ICC sharpened the need to investigate and, when called for, to prosecute Americans in order to forestall action by the court, that would be a positive development, with our treaty obligations serving as a powerful antidote to the inclination of the military, like other institutions, to protect its own and sweep things under the rug.

Finally, the brute realities are that if the ICC ever mounted a prosecution against Americans that we regarded as biased or corrupt, we could withdraw from the treaty then. No nation on earth is strong enough to force Washington to remain. But the U.S. would be standing on firmer moral ground by voicing principled objections in a particular case, rather than adhering to our current position, which is that Americans can commit crimes against humanity without our government being willing to formally guarantee a response.

In the meantime, the efforts by the U.S. and other nations to undermine the Court have significantly weakened it. Stuck trying to preserve a fragile constituency, the ICC has become bogged down in a rigorous procedural regularity, because its only defense to charges of political motivation is to demonstrate a rigid adherence to its own rules.

That has meant that investigations drag on for years, while the lack of

support from the U.S. and other powerful nations like Russia and China has often left the court toothless in the face of the resistance. Russia, for example, has been under investigation since 2008 for its actions while invading Georgia.

In 13 years, the ICC has charged a mere 33 individuals, convicting only eight. Charges have failed against 10 defendants, with the other cases ongoing, or suspended because the defendants are fugitives or dead. Worse, all 33 defendants have been from Africa, which has led the court to be derided on that continent as a tool of Western imperialism, even though the conduct charged in these cases is appalling and could never be ignored by any responsible prosecutor.

Yet the U.S. can hardly criticize the court for an ineffectiveness that we have done our best to create. Perhaps the most galling aspect of America's refusal to participate is that it undermines our own policies and our frequent claims to be the world's moral leader.

Clear thinking from leading voices in business, economics, politics, foreign affairs, culture, and more.

### Share the View

The military bombed one of Assad's airfields in Syria in April, to express outrage over the April 4 gas attack in Khan Sheikhou, and to demonstrate that there are lines no nation may cross. Thus the Trump Administration chose to crater runways and burn planes, instead of throwing our support behind the one global institution that could actually charge, try and imprison Assad. How many more atrocities will go unpunished because of the unwarranted fears of our military, and the consequent unwillingness of the U.S. to make good on a 20-year-old pledge?

THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL

Jay Solomon and  
Gordon Lubold in  
Washington and Rory Jones in  
Jerusalem

## Gulf States Offer Better Relations If Israel Makes New Bid for Peace

Arab Gulf states have offered to take concrete steps to establish better relations with Israel if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will

make a significant overture aimed at restarting the Middle East peace process, according to people briefed on the discussions.

The offer to the U.S. and Israel comes ahead of President Donald Trump's trip to the Middle East. The potential steps include establishing

direct telecommunications links with Israel, allowing overflight rights to Israeli aircraft, and lifting restrictions on some trade, said these people.

The Gulf countries, in turn, would require Mr. Netanyahu to make what they would consider to be a peace overture to the Palestinians. Such steps could include stopping construction of settlements in certain areas of the West Bank and allowing freer trade into the Gaza Strip.

The Arab states' position, outlined in an unreleased discussion paper shared among several Gulf countries, is aimed in part at aligning them with Mr. Trump, who has stressed his desire to work with the Arab states to forge a Middle East peace agreement, the people said. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have informed the U.S. and Israel of their willingness to take such steps.

Mr. Netanyahu's office declined to comment.

Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan met Mr. Trump on Monday in Washington. The American president will visit Saudi Arabia on Friday, followed by stops in Israel and Europe.

Arab and Palestinian leaders remain deeply skeptical that Mr. Netanyahu is prepared to embrace the peace process. In recent days, members of his government have increased pressure on Mr. Trump to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, a step Arab leaders have warned would set off unrest in their countries and in the Palestinian territories.

"We don't mind a good relationship between Israel and the Arab world," said Husam Zomlot, the Palestine Liberation Organization's representative in Washington. "[But] is this the entry to peace? Or is it the blocker?"

The Gulf states' initiative, according to the people briefed on it, underscores the vastly improved relations between Israel and the Gulf states in recent years, driven by their shared concerns about Iran and Islamic State.

"We no longer see Israel as an enemy, but a potential opportunity," said a senior Arab official involved in the discussions.

The Arab governments involved are Sunni-dominated, while Iran is ruled by Shiite clerics, a Muslim divide fueling the region's potential realignment.

Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E. and Qatar have been major financial backers of the Palestinian Authority, which rules the West Bank, since its

inception in the 1990s. But Qatar also hosts the political leadership of Hamas, a group designated as a terrorist organization by the U.S. and European Union, which presides in the Gaza Strip.

Already, Israel and Gulf countries have secretly stepped-up intelligence sharing, particularly focused on Iranian arms shipments to proxy militias fighting in Yemen and Syria, according to U.S., European and Middle East officials involved in security issues. Iran has denied providing arms to the Houthis.

Israeli officials have also made a number of secret trips to the Persian Gulf, particularly to the U.A.E., despite their countries having no formal diplomatic relations.

"Much more is going on now than any time in the past," said Israel's Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz in an interview, referring to Israel's relations with Gulf states. "It's almost a revolution in the Middle East."

Mr. Steinitz, a close aide to Mr. Netanyahu, visited the U.A.E.'s capital, Abu Dhabi, last year to open an Israeli diplomatic mission tied to an international agency focused on renewable energies. He said Israeli technology companies are sharing high-end equipment, including for surveillance, with Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E.

"Israel has developed cutting-edge technology that allows us to detect terrorist plots in advance," he said. "This enables us to help moderate Arab governments protect themselves."

Israel has formal diplomatic relations with Jordan and Egypt. But little progress has been made on a broader Arab peace initiative put forward by the late Saudi King Abdullah in 2002.

Israel has in the past accused Gulf and Arab states of funding Palestinian terrorism.

Morocco, Oman and Tunisia closed Israeli trade missions in 2000 in the wake of the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising. Qatar suspended trade ties with Israel in 2009 after the Israeli military entered a short war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

But Israel-Arab relations have improved markedly since political uprisings erupted across the Middle East in 2011, according to Arab and Israeli officials. Instability in Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Libya has allowed Iran and Islamic State to significantly expand their presence in the region, said these officials.

Israel in recent months has shared intelligence with a Saudi-led coalition that is fighting Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, according to former U.S. officials. Both Israel and the Gulf states view Iran as their single greatest national security challenge, said these officials.

Last year, alarm bells went off in Israel when an Iranian ship being tracked by Israeli security services began navigating toward Yemen's coast, according to former U.S. officials. Israeli intelligence indicated it was loaded with weapons and other supplies for the Houthis.

The Israelis were "popping flares...[and] got us to act, successfully," said one former U.S. official. "I thought the Israelis might have acted if we didn't."

Israel, the U.A.E., and Saudi Arabia have significantly stepped up support for Egypt in its fight against Islamic State- and al Qaeda-linked militias fighting in Sinai, said U.S. and European officials.

Israel shares intelligence derived from drones and human agents with Cairo while the U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia have provided billions of dollars in aid to President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi's government, according to U.S., Arab and Israeli officials.

Security and technology companies with ties to Israel are also helping Gulf states, particularly in the U.A.E.

Verint Systems Inc., a New York-based cybersecurity firm with operations largely conducted out of Israel, signed a contract with the U.A.E. in 2014 for more than \$100 million to track all data and communications on the country's two state-owned telecoms networks, two people familiar with the company's operations said. Verint's system also looks for malware to identify potential attacks on critical infrastructure, one of these people said.

Israel's NSO Group Technologies Ltd. has sold its surveillance software to the U.A.E., according to a person familiar with company's operations.

Spokespeople for Verint and NSO didn't respond to requests for comment.

The confidence-building steps being considered by Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E. and other Gulf states would be phased in if Israel were to take reciprocal steps to improve relations with the Palestinians.

Among other possible Arab steps are the issuance of visas for Israeli sports teams or trade delegations to take part in events in Arab countries.

Gulf states would also seek to better integrate Israel into regional trade and business bodies.

Arab officials said they understand that a formal peace agreement is unlikely to be reached between Israel and the Palestinians in the near future. But they stressed that Israel has to show good faith to get diplomatic benefits.

Despite the spyware sales and intelligence sharing, Israeli officials would prefer to conduct a more public relationship with Gulf states and deepen economic and commercial ties.

Israel's transportation and intelligence minister, Yisrael Katz, in recent weeks presented a plan to the White House to develop infrastructure ties between Israel and the Arab world, according to an aide.

The minister, a member of Mr. Netanyahu's Likud party, wants the two sides to develop a seaport in the Gaza Strip to boost the enclave's dire economy.

His plan also envisions a railway network that connects Israel's Haifa port with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf via Jordan, mirroring the Hejaz Railway that once connected Damascus with Medina.

"There's a gap between what's on the table and what's under the table," Chagai Tzuriel, director-general of Israel's Intelligence Ministry, said of the relationship with Gulf states. "Everyone understands that when you look at the long run, the deeper relationships are going to be in the civilian area: energy, water, agriculture, medicine, transportation."

Israeli officials have said that they are willing to engage in a peace process involving the White House. But Mr. Netanyahu is limited in his ability to offer concessions to the Palestinians as many of his right-wing coalition members don't want to see the establishment of a Palestinian state. The Israeli prime minister avoided committing to a two-state solution in a press conference with Mr. Trump in February, following pressure from his coalition partners.

In March, at the Arab League Summit in Amman, some 22 Arab nations, including Gulf countries, reiterated their backing for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and support for the Saudi-led Arab Peace Initiative of 2002.

## Scientists from enemy nations create a beacon for peace in the Middle East

They've built a machine in the desert in the heart of the Middle East. Israelis will use it — and so will Iranians, Jordanians, Turks, Pakistanis and many others. Scientists from countries recently at war or without diplomatic relations will work side by side — Muslims, Jews, Christians and atheists sharing the pursuit of knowledge.

This may seem an impossible dream, and indeed the project took decades to materialize and often came close to disintegration. As the saying goes: The difficult we do immediately; the impossible takes longer.

The project is called SESAME — as in "Open, Sesame!" — and it is an acronym for Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East.

The machine functions a bit like an X-ray. About 50 of these "light sources" exist around the world, and they are prized among researchers for their versatility. They can reveal the atomic structure of matter, making them useful for everything from biology to chemistry to archaeology.

The new machine is in Jordan, about a 45-minute drive from the capital of Amman. The leaders of the project and many dignitaries will formally dedicate the facility in a ceremony on Tuesday, with Jordan's King Abdullah II presiding.

"It's a beacon, one lighthouse, in this era where there is killing, beheadings, gassing. We are showing a different way," said Eliezer Rabinovici, 70, a physics professor at Hebrew University of Jerusalem and one of the founders of the endeavor.

The project has been raked by political and financial crosswinds. The internationalism at the core of SESAME had to overcome fierce nationalistic passions. Security remains a concern.

But SESAME shows the centripetal force of the global scientific enterprise. Scientists speak the common language of mathematics, and they search for truths that are almost invariably universal, and not defined by political or cultural boundaries. Science is arguably the most international human endeavor; the only thing that comes close is the Olympic Games, which happen for a couple of weeks every two years and are centered on competition rather than collaboration.

That is one reason the scientific community in the United States was so outraged by President Trump's proposed travel ban affecting a number of Muslim-majority countries.

Scientists depend increasingly on elaborate machines, such as particle accelerators, supercomputers and space telescopes — shared tools on a colossal scale. The premier example of this is CERN, the research facility outside Geneva where physicists used a particle accelerator to search for theoretical Higgs boson (found!). CERN is run by 28 member or associate states.

But science is not immune to political turmoil.

SESAME was roiled in 2010 when two Iranian scientists with connections to the project were killed in separate incidents. This was part of several attacks on Iranian scientists perceived to have connections to Iran's nuclear program. The government in Tehran accused Israel and the United States of involvement in the attacks, which both countries denied. The SESAME council later issued a condemnation of the assassinations.

Tensions also flared at a meeting held in 2010 shortly after Israeli commandos attacked a Turkish-owned ship carrying aid to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, recalled Khaled Toukan, chairman of the Jordan Atomic Energy Commission.

"We were on the verge of withering away," he said. "It has not been easy. But we made it."

Rabinovici said the council resolved not to discuss politics or issue political statements. He said in an email that scientists also never discuss their religious faith.

In an article on the project, Rabinovici noted that there continue to be some "bitter" feelings from things that have happened over the years. Asked to elaborate, he replied, "Let's concentrate on the good feelings."

Money has been and continues to be in short supply for SESAME. And the world's richest country, the United States, has not given money directly to the project.

SESAME traces its origin to an optimistic period in the mid-1990s after the signing of the Oslo accords. One day at CERN, the laboratory in Geneva, an esteemed Italian physicist named Sergio Fubini approached Rabinovici, the

Israeli physics professor, in a corridor and said it was time to test Rabinovici's ideals about Arab-Israeli collaboration.

They decided to join forces with others to found an organization called the Middle Eastern Science Committee.

Rabinovici and Fubini traveled to Egypt and enlisted the support of that country's minister for scientific research, Venise Kamel Gouda, and she helped organize an international meeting in November 1995 in the Red Sea resort of Dahab.

That was only a few weeks after Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had been assassinated. Gouda asked all the scientists present — Arabs and Israelis alike — to stand for a moment of silence in memory of the slain Rabin.

"I will carry that moment of silence with me for as long as I live," Rabinovici says.

Then came a powerful earthquake on Mount Sinai — magnitude 6.9.

"We thus got clear signs from above that something is happening here."

The next major advance was serendipitous, spurred by something happening in Germany. The Germans had a synchrotron-light source, and wanted to build a new and more powerful one.

Synchrotron radiation is a kind of side-effect of high-energy physics experiments that send particles spinning around a ring. These particle accelerators give off light in various wavelengths that "comes off like mud off a spinning tire," says Herman Winick, a physicist at Stanford University and a pioneer in developing light sources. Mirrors and other devices can focus that light into a beam that can be used as a probe of matter.

Winick recalls asking German colleagues in 1997, "What are you going to do with the old machine?" The answer: "We're going to call in a junkyard dealer and sell it for scrap."

Winick says he persuaded the Germans to offer the machine, named Bessy, to scientists in the Middle East.

SESAME began to take shape as an organization. The project initially had nine full members: Israel, Iran, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Bahrain, Cyprus and the Palestinian Authority (Bahrain stopped paying dues and has dropped out). The United States, the European Union

and a number of other countries became "observers," without membership.

The project's leaders decided in 2000 to put the facility in Jordan. ("It's obvious that most of the people involved would not come to Israel," Rabinovici said.) The next challenge would be persuading scientists in the region that this would be a world-class facility.

"When I had first heard about it, I didn't believe that it would work and I didn't want to be involved in it," Zehra Sayers, a Turkish scientist, said in an email to The Washington Post. "This was an old machine donated by Germany, probably it would not work properly when assembled in Jordan, and who was going to use it? Nobody in the Middle East even knew what a synchrotron meant."

But the backers of the project assured her that the key elements would be rebuilt and modernized — they were — and she became a supporter. She's now the chair of the scientific advisory committee, and intends to use the light source for a project to study how a protein in a bacterium latches on to iron.

More troubles lay ahead. The roof fell in during a snowstorm. Egypt's support withered after the revolution of the Arab Spring. Rabinovici feared that the project was collapsing and went to the Finance Ministry of the Israeli government asking for a new infusion of money. The government pledged \$5 million if other countries matched it. Turkey, Jordan and Iran then pledged the same amount each, although Iran so far has given only a fraction of its pledge, leaders of the project say.

The E.U. has also provided funds. Conspicuously, the United States has not, to the frustration of project leaders.

They suspect that one reason is the involvement of Iran. The scientists say that synchrotron technology has nothing to do with nuclear weapons.

In Congress, two physicists, Reps. Rush D. Holt (D-N.J.) and Bill Foster (D-Ill.), pushed for authorization of money for SESAME, but got nowhere.

"It's a shame, an embarrassment, that the United States has not put, as far as I know, a dime into the SESAME project," said Holt, who is now the chief executive of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

"The suspicion is that, because Iran is a member, that's a third rail that nobody wants to touch," Winick said. "I am disappointed and embarrassed."

SESAME is not quite ready for experimental research. The most essential hardware is in place, but the two beam lines of the light source won't be ready for research efforts for another few months.

SESAME magnets spin particles and radiation "comes off like mud off a spinning tire." (Dean Calma/International Atomic Energy Agency)

Gihan Kamel, an infrared beam line scientist from Egypt, works in a

SESAME lab. (Dean Calma/International Atomic Energy Agency)

There ought to be many more beam lines for researchers, project leaders say. And among the immediate logistical challenges is the need for on-site lodging.

But the backers of SESAME are exultant.

Among those traveling to Jordan for the dedication ceremony this week will be Edward Witten, an acclaimed mathematician at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton — Albert Einstein's old haunt. Witten says of SESAME, "It's like news

from another world in which there is peace in the Middle East."

A thousand years ago, during Europe's Dark Ages, the Islamic world was home to many of the greatest scientists on the planet. Today, many young scientists in the Middle East and in developing countries generally will go abroad, to the United States, Europe or Japan, to get advanced degrees, and many never return. SESAME could reverse that brain drain, the promoters hope.

Rabinovici said the key to SESAME's existence is the persistence of the people who believed in it. He notes that

mathematicians have a concept known as "an existence proof." It's a hypothesis proved to be true by the construction, and irrefutable existence, of the thing being hypothesized.

"I'm very persistent," Rabinovici said. "It's not always good in research. Sometimes in research you have to let go. Sometimes your old ideas, which you love, are wrong. But I am persistent, and I thought it was a very important thing — to show that such a thing is possible."

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Germany Threatens to Pull Forces From Turkey Amid Tensions

Ruth Bender

BERLIN—

Germany on Monday said it may pull forces involved in fighting Islamic State from a Turkish air base after Turkey banned lawmakers from visiting German troops, escalating tensions again between the two countries.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Turkey's decision to block a visit to the Incirlik Air Base was "unfortunate" as it was "absolutely essential" for lawmakers to be able to visit the soldiers stationed there. Germany's parliament must authorize all military deployments abroad.

"We will continue talks with Turkey but in parallel we will also do what is set out in the mandate, that means, searching for alternatives," Ms. Merkel said.

The threat to pull forces underlines the growing loss of trust between the two North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies over recent months. The two countries have been clashing over a series of issues—from the detention of German journalists to Turkish government efforts to gain support

among Turks in Germany for a constitutional referendum expanding the presidency's powers.

Turkey didn't immediately comment on the latest turn. But while Turkey and European allies have seen relations deteriorate this year, Ankara has taken a more pro-active path toward strengthening relations with the U.S. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is meeting Tuesday with President Donald Trump in Washington where discussion is expected to focus on deepening intelligence-sharing efforts with Turkey to fight Kurdish terrorists at home and Iraq while the Pentagon implements a plan to arm Kurdish forces in Syria.

In recent months, German officials have studied eight possible alternatives to the Turkish air base in Jordan, Kuwait and Cyprus. But until Monday, officials had publicly stressed that the goal was to stay in Turkey.

That language changed as officials expressed exasperation with Turkey's actions.

Germany has about 250 soldiers, six tornado reconnaissance planes and a refueling aircraft in Incirlik, where

other countries that are part of an international coalition targeting Islamic State in Syria are also represented, including the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Denmark and Qatar.

Last June, Ankara barred German lawmakers from visiting the base after the German parliament voted to label the Ottoman-era massacre of Armenians a genocide. Turkey relented and authorized a visit in early October, but several lawmakers had been waiting for months to be allowed to visit.

"The ban of lawmakers' visits and the reasons for it provided by Turkey are a slap in the face for all those who despite everything continue to search for a dialogue with Turkey," said Christine Lambrecht, a lawmaker with the Social Democrats.

The defense ministry said it would now look more closely at alternatives but added that any move could take months. Jordan is one possibility, but security conditions are less ideal than in Incirlik, said a spokesman for the defense ministry.

According to the German foreign ministry, Turkey told Germany that

the visit, which was due to begin Tuesday and had been known to Ankara for weeks, wasn't possible given the current state of German-Turkish relations.

Ministry spokesman Martin Schäfer said Turkey appeared to be angered by German authorities' granting asylum to some Turkish military personnel amid a post-coup-attempt crackdown by Ankara.

Mr. Schäfer said Germany had expressed its frustration with the ban via different channels. He also said Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel would raise the issue with other members of the anti-Islamic State coalition and NATO, including the U.S., in Washington later this week.

"We think this is a stumbling block in our joint efforts to defeat ISIS," Mr. Schäfer said.

Mr. Schäfer said the ban was especially disappointing as it came just days after the German foreign minister told Turkey's prime minister that Germany wanted to improve relations with Turkey, after the two clashed over the detention of a German journalist in Turkey.

## The Washington Post

Fethullah Gulen is an Islamic scholar, preacher and social advocate.

As the presidents of the United States and Turkey meet at the White House on Tuesday, the leader of the country I have called home for almost two decades comes face to face with the leader of my homeland. The two countries have a lot at stake, including the fight against the Islamic State, the future of Syria and the refugee crisis.

### Gulen : The Turkey I no longer know

But the Turkey that I once knew as a hope-inspiring country on its way to consolidating its democracy and a moderate form of secularism has become the dominion of a president who is doing everything he can to amass power and subjugate dissent.

Opinions newsletter

Thought-provoking opinions and commentary, in your inbox daily.

Rogue officers of Turkey's military declared martial law and attempted to overthrow the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan overnight, but Erdogan a few hours later said his government is in control. (Jason Aldag/The Washington Post)

later said his government is in control. Rogue officers of Turkey's military declared martial law and attempted to overthrow the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan overnight, but Erdogan a few hours later said his government is in control. (Jason Aldag/The Washington Post)

(Jason Aldag/The Washington Post)

The West must help Turkey return to a democratic path. Tuesday's meeting, and the NATO summit next week, should be used as an opportunity to advance this effort.

Since July 15, following a deplorable coup attempt, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has systematically persecuted innocent people — arresting, detaining, firing and otherwise ruining the lives of more than 300,000 Turkish citizens, be they Kurds, Alevis, secularists, leftists, journalists, academics or participants of Hizmet, the peaceful humanitarian movement with which I am associated.

As the coup attempt unfolded, I fiercely denounced it and denied any involvement. Furthermore, I said that anyone who participated in the

putsch betrayed my ideals. Nevertheless, and without evidence, Erdogan immediately accused me of orchestrating it from 5,000 miles away.

The next day, the government produced lists of thousands of individuals whom they tied to Hizmet — for opening a bank account, teaching at a school or reporting for a newspaper — and treated such an affiliation as a crime and began destroying their lives. The lists included people who had been dead for months and people who had been serving at NATO's European headquarters at the time. International watchdogs have reported numerous abductions, in addition to torture and deaths in detention. The government pursued innocent people outside Turkey, pressuring Malaysia, for instance, to deport three Hizmet sympathizers last week, including a school principal who has lived there for more than a decade, to face certain imprisonment and likely torture.

In April, the president won a narrow referendum victory — amid allegations of serious fraud — to

form an “executive presidency” without checks and balances, enabling him to control all three branches of the government. To be sure, through purges and corruption, much of this power was already in his hands. I fear for the Turkish people as they enter this new stage of authoritarianism.

It didn't start this way. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) came into power in 2002 by promising democratic reforms in pursuit of European Union membership. But as time went on, Erdogan became increasingly intolerant of dissent. He facilitated the transfer of many media outlets to his cronies through government regulatory agencies. In June of 2013, he crushed the Gezi Park protesters. In December of that year, when his cabinet members were implicated in a massive graft probe, he responded by subjugating the judiciary and the media. The “temporary” state of emergency declared after last July 15 is still in effect. According to Amnesty International, one-third of all imprisoned journalists in the world are in Turkish prisons.

Erdogan's persecution of his people is not simply a domestic matter. The ongoing pursuit of civil society, journalists, academics and Kurds in Turkey is threatening the long-term stability of the country. The Turkish population already is strongly polarized on the AKP regime. A Turkey under a dictatorial regime, providing haven to violent radicals and pushing its Kurdish citizens into desperation, would be a nightmare for Middle East security.

The people of Turkey need the support of their European allies and the United States to restore their democracy. Turkey initiated true multiparty elections in 1950 to join NATO. As a requirement of its membership, NATO can and should demand that Turkey honor its commitment to the alliance's democratic norms.

Two measures are critical to reversing the democratic regression in Turkey.

First, a new civilian constitution should be drafted through a democratic process involving the input of all segments of society and

that is on par with international legal and humanitarian norms, and drawing lessons from the success of long-term democracies in the West.

Second, a school curriculum that emphasizes democratic and pluralistic values and encourages critical thinking must be developed. Every student must learn the importance of balancing state powers with individual rights, the separation of powers, judicial independence and press freedom, and the dangers of extreme nationalism, politicization of religion and veneration of the state or any leader.

Before either of those things can happen, however, the Turkish government must stop the repression of its people and redress the rights of individuals who have been wronged by Erdogan without due process.

I probably will not live to see Turkey become an exemplary democracy, but I pray that the downward authoritarian drift can be stopped before it is too late.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

ISTANBUL — Iranian presidential hopeful Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf withdrew Monday from the race to unseat the country's moderate leader, in a move to unite conservatives behind fellow hard-liner Ebrahim Raisi in the homestretch for Friday's election.

The two candidates were the top conservative challengers to President Hassan Rouhani, a pragmatist whose government negotiated a 2015 deal with world powers to rein in Iran's nuclear program in exchange for lifting international sanctions.

Ghalibaf and Raisi, who were polling neck and neck, seized on widespread discontent about the slow-growing economy. Although sanctions relief has allowed oil exports to resume, the limited growth has not greatly improved the lives of ordinary Iranians.

Ghalibaf ran on job creation and boosting cash subsidies. But his withdrawal Monday solidified Raisi's status as the front-runner for conservatives, who have struggled in past elections to coalesce around one candidate.

## Tehran mayor leaves Iran's presidential race to back fellow conservative in bid to unseat Rouhani

Recent polls showed Rouhani with a comfortable lead over Raisi, but such surveys are unreliable in Iran, which limits political activity and free expression.

“I ask my supporters throughout the country to use all of their potential” to elect Raisi, Ghalibaf said in a statement carried by state media.

The promise of Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution “can only be achieved by changing the status quo,” he said. He called a vote for Raisi a “crucial decision” to “preserve the unity” of the revolution.

*[Rouhani issues rare criticism of security forces and ruling clerics]*

Ghalibaf's withdrawal “was likely an orchestrated move to shore up support behind a single principlist candidate and pose a potent challenge to Rouhani,” said Behnam Ben Taleblu, an Iran analyst at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a think tank based in Washington. Iran's hard-line conservatives are widely known as “principlists.”

“Iran's political right has been scrambling to field a single candidate” who could counter

Rouhani's coalition of technocrats, pragmatists and reformers, Taleblu said.

Although Rouhani is still favored to win, “it is highly likely that Ghalibaf's voters will flock to Raisi,” Taleblu said.

Raisi, a 56-year-old Shiite cleric, has close ties to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who last year appointed him as head of Iran's largest charitable foundation, the Astan Quds Razavi. He served for years on the judiciary, including on a 1988 panel accused of sentencing thousands of political prisoners to death.

But he has limited political experience and gave weak performances in three televised presidential debates. His links to Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard Corps and hard-line ruling clerics could push undecided voters to the Rouhani camp. Rouhani, 68, is also a Shiite cleric.

“So far, Raisi has received support from the shadowy corners of the Iranian security establishment,” Taleblu said. But he “has failed to touch off a national movement.”

World News Alerts

Breaking news from around the world.

A survey released Monday by the official Islamic Republic News Agency said that about 67 percent of voters plan to cast ballots for president.

High voter turnout has generally favored moderate and reformist candidates in Iran. Over the weekend, Rouhani picked up endorsements from opposition leader Mehdi Karroubi and Academy Award-winning Iranian film director Asghar Farhadi.

Karroubi, a reformist candidate who led protests following the disputed 2009 presidential election, is under house arrest. Rouhani supporters chanted the names of Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi, another reformist leader under house arrest, at rallies nationwide.

As a candidate in 2013, Rouhani had pledged to free Karroubi and Mousavi, as well as Mousavi's wife, Zahra Rahnavard.

**The  
New York  
Times**

Hari Kumar and Ellen Barry

## Beheadings and Vengeance: A Cycle of Killing on a Border in Kashmir

Acts of extreme brutality, including beheadings and mutilations, occur

with some regularity along the Line of Control, the 450-mile disputed

military frontier that divides Kashmir into Indian and Pakistani territory.

Assigned to remote outposts, the soldiers of both countries serve for years in a state of unrelenting tension, near enough to the enemy to exchange shouted obscenities. Heavily armed teams, often a mixture of militants and uniformed troops, will cross the line to ambush an outnumbered post or patrol, with the goal of inflicting maximum casualties in a brief time. Beheadings are seen as a particularly humiliating act.

The gruesome killings often lead the other side to seek vengeance, adding to the volatility of an already tense standoff between the two nuclear-armed nations. Since the beheadings on May 1, that stretch of the Line of Control has been hit by heavy shelling, and thousands of civilians have been evacuated from surrounding villages.

Indian newspapers have reported around two dozen beheadings or mutilations of soldiers on the Pakistani and Indian sides since 1998, typically followed by denials of involvement by the opposing force.

Lt. Gen. H. S. Panag, a former chief of the Indian Army's northern command, described it as a "primordial conflict" in which it was difficult to know which acts were carried out by uniformed forces and which by militants.

"The unit feels bad, and there is a clamor for revenge," General Panag said. "Laymen expect us to adhere to the rules, but these things do happen. There is nothing new about it. It is just human instinct."

Military veterans say such acts occur more often than the public knows, kept under wraps lest they set off a spiral of escalation. But as time goes on, military experts say, concealing these attacks is becoming harder and harder to do, with potentially grave consequences.

"Within the army, we used to keep quiet," General Panag said. "Now the soldiers have mobiles; the porter who works at the post has a mobile. Everyone is in the glare of a camera. Families speak. I don't think such a matter can be hidden today."

The families of those who were beheaded receive intense and focused attention from government officials, but relatives are still often frustrated with the government's response, leading them to speak out.

In 2013, Dharamwati, the widow of a beheaded Indian soldier, went on a hunger strike, demanding that the government return his head, drawing intense attention from reporters and opposition politicians. Army personnel prevented her from viewing his body before it was cremated, something that angers her to this day, she said in an interview.

In 1999, Pakistani officials handed over the body of Capt. Saurabh Kalia of the Indian Army, who had been captured by the Pakistani side and held prisoner for 22 days. His eyes had been punctured, his teeth broken, and his lips and nose cut off, said his father, N. K. Kalia, a retired government scientist. Over the next decade, Mr. Kalia documented his efforts to persuade Indian officials to bring the case to an international war crimes court.

After numerous delays and evasions, Mr. Kalia in 2012 filed a lawsuit against India's Ministries of Defense, Home and External Affairs in India's Supreme Court. It is pending.

"I was promised everything under the sun," Mr. Kalia said, referring to what Indian officials had told him. "But the picture became clear. They will summon the Pakistani high commissioner and give him a protest note. What importance will they give to that protest note? They have accepted it, they tear it, and they throw it out."

Last year, The Hindu, a daily newspaper, printed internal government documents about a 2011 Indian Army raid called Operation Ginger, which was prompted by a Pakistani attack that had killed six Indian soldiers. Two of the dead were beheaded. The response came a month later: an ambush that left at least eight Pakistanis dead, three of them beheaded, according to documents cited by the newspaper.

The newspaper characterized the soldiers' heads as "trophies."

Beheading carries extraordinary emotional power for troops and has for many centuries, said Gen. Ved Prakash Malik, who was chief of the Indian Army during the Kargil conflict, a months-long war the two countries fought along the Line of Control in 1999.

"You know, from the old wars, beheading is being considered, for the victors, a kind of a big thing they had done, and for the loser, a big insult that they have suffered," he said.

Both the Pakistani and Indian Armies also were imprinted by the British military tradition, which puts a "massive emphasis on unit loyalty," said Myra MacDonald, a journalist and author of "Defeat Is an Orphan: How Pakistan Lost the Great South Asian War." According to the Indian Army, more than 4,500 Indian soldiers have been killed or injured along the Line of Control since 2001.

"If you see a couple of your mates killed, you certainly would be in a blind rage to avenge them," she said. "This is what happens when men fight wars. On one hand, you know where the limits are, and on the other hand, you get this ground-level rage when you see the man next to you killed."

Senior officers would be aware of the cross-border raids, which require operational planning and often serve to lift troops' morale. But political leaders would not typically be in the loop, and they are often the ones "keen on ensuring the conflict doesn't escalate," said Arun Mohan Sukumar, an analyst at the Observer Research Foundation, a New Delhi-based policy research group.

"There is a degree of helplessness in not being able to control the consequences when something like this happens," Mr. Sukumar said.

In the latest beheadings, on May 1, two Indian soldiers were part of a team patrolling between two posts when a Pakistani "border action team" — often a combination of militants and regular Pakistani

forces — attacked and killed them, the Indian Army said.

Pakistan has denied any involvement.

"Pakistan Army is a professional army," said Maj. Gen. Asif Ghafoor, a spokesman. "There is no history of Pakistan Army desecrating a dead body, no matter it is from India."

Ishwar Chand, 28, whose father, Prem Sagar, was one of the two men beheaded in that attack, said that his father's body was missing its head and hands.

"There was no neck even," he said. "How can we believe this is the body of our father? We are told by officials that the army will not lie in this situation."

He said he expected a vigorous retaliation.

"The government should take revenge for my father," he said. "There is not much population on the border. The army should be given orders to fire back, to shoot."

The beheaded man's relatives, outraged at what had happened, took a hard line with the government, threatening not to cremate the body unless they received a visit from Prime Minister Narendra Modi or from Yogi Adityanath, the chief minister of their state, Uttar Pradesh.

Ten days later, Mr. Adityanath and his entourage made a 15-minute visit to the village, delivered more than \$9,000 in compensation to the family and promised Mr. Chand a government job.

In advance of the meeting, officials arrived to install air-conditioning, carpets and sofas in the family's home, and a generator was installed to supply uninterrupted power, Mr. Chand said. Within minutes of Mr. Adityanath's departure, all the amenities were removed. Though other relatives grumbled, Mr. Chand said it was good enough.

"I would have been happier if he would have met us as we are," he said. "Whatever it is, he spared time for us. That is a big thing."

roughly 2020. But military and intelligence officials regularly say the lack of a proven capability is different from the absence of a long-range threat to the continental United States, and they say commanders have to assume the worst given the North's progress to date.

"We think they've had enough time to mate a nuclear weapon to a missile," Michael Morell, a Central Intelligence Agency deputy director in the Obama administration, recently told "CBS This Morning." "So the threat is now."

## The New York Times North Korea Missile Test Appears to Tiptoe Over a U.S. Tripwire

William J. Broad and David E. Sanger

John Schilling, an aerospace engineer and an expert on North Korea's missile program, called this relatively low-key experimentation a possible hedge against a military

response. Sunday's unobtrusive test, he said, could nonetheless "represent a substantial advance" that might bring the debut of a working intercontinental missile closer than previously estimated.

The best guess of nongovernmental experts puts an ICBM debut at

Analysts said Sunday's test flight, if conducted on a normal rather than a high trajectory, would have traveled about 3,000 miles. That is well beyond the sprawling American base at Guam, some 2,200 miles away. More important, it would make the flight distance the longest to date for one of the North's military missiles and thus represent a major technical success for the beleaguered nation.

On Monday, the North's official news agency said Mr. Kim hugged rocket officials after Sunday's successful test flight. The isolated nation has recently experienced a large number of failures in its rocket fleets; last October it began an investigation into whether American sabotage was making its missiles explode, veer off course and disintegrate in midair.

The news agency said the missile that was launched Sunday flew to a very high altitude to avoid striking "neighboring countries." The flight also stressed the mock warhead "under the worst re-entry situation," it added.

Charles P. Vick, an expert on the North's missiles at GlobalSecurity.org, a private research group in Alexandria, Va., said the United States had a history of using high missile trajectories as a way to intensify the returning warhead's trial by fire.

#### North Korea's Longest-Range Missile Test

If flown on a normal trajectory, the

missile that North Korea tested Sunday could have flown far enough to reach Guam or apparently even as far as the Aleutian Islands off Alaska.

"Going really high," he said, "gives you a very fast and very brutal re-entry."

Still, he and Dr. Wright of the Union of Concerned Scientists cautioned that the method raised subtle questions that only a longer-range test could answer. For instance, the fiery heating, while as intense as that for an ICBM warhead, was of shorter duration.

"You learn something but not everything," Dr. Wright said. He added that in three or four of the North's recent successful tests, missiles have flown to unusually high altitudes.

Dr. Schilling, the aerospace engineer, posted his comments about the Sunday missile test on 38 North, a website run by the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies that specializes in North Korea analyses.

There, he suggested that the successful missile, which the North Koreans call the Hwasong-12, appeared to be a smaller version of the KN-08, a code name for Korea North Type 8. Identified by analysts as an intercontinental ballistic missile, the KN-08 made its debut in a military parade in 2012 and appears to have never undergone a successful flight test.

Dr. Schilling said the smaller version appeared in a military parade last month, adding that it had been expected to have roughly the same performance as Sunday's test flight. "It clearly shares a common heritage" with the larger missile, he wrote.

Dr. Schilling said the new missile could represent a replacement for the Musudan, an intermediate-range missile. Last year, most flight tests of the Musudan ended in flames, giving it an overall failure rate of 88 percent. That led the North to suspect that the United States was sabotaging its missile programs.

#### Examining North Korea's Missiles

At a military parade in April, North Korea displayed several missiles at a time of heightened tensions with the United States. Here's a closer look at what some of them are designed to do.

By MARK SCHEFFLER and DAPHNE RUSTOW on April 16, 2017. Photo by Wong Maye-E/Associated Press. Watch in Times Video »

The longer range of the new missile, Dr. Schilling wrote, might give it better odds of attacking Guam successfully but would fail to change the strategic balance. "There aren't really any interesting targets" other than the American base, he said.

Dr. Schilling called the most interesting feature of the new vehicle its potential for "demonstrating technologies and systems to be used in future

ICBMs," including the KN-08 and a related long-range missile known as the KN-14.

Repeated flights of the new missile, he wrote, "would allow North Korea to conduct at least some of the testing necessary to develop an operational ICBM, without actually launching ICBMs, particularly if it includes the same rocket engines."

Over all, Dr. Schilling concluded, it seems possible that North Korea with this single test flight of the new missile might already have moved "closer to an operational ICBM than had been previously estimated." American cities will not be at risk tomorrow, or any time this year, he added, since some flight testing would still have to be done with a full-scale system.

Still, he added that the novel situation called for a reassessment of the North's emerging skills in making an intercontinental ballistic missile.

Dr. Wright agreed that the successful test flight represented a major step forward. "If they've got a system with a new engine and can scale that up," he said, "they've got a pretty believable path to an ICBM."

In political signaling, he added, what the North's test is telling the West is: "Hey, we're on our way. If you want to talk, now's the time to do it."

## The Washington Post Clues point to possible North Korean involvement in massive cyberattack

Security researchers have found digital clues in the malware used in last weekend's global ransomware attack that might indicate North Korea is involved, although they caution the evidence is not conclusive.

An early version of the "WannaCry" ransomware that affected more than 150 countries and major businesses and organizations shares a portion of its code with a tool from a hacker group known as Lazarus, which researchers think is linked to the North Korean government.

"This implies there is a common source for that code, which could mean that North Korean actors wrote WannaCry or they both used the same third-party code," said John Bambenek, threat research manager at Fidelis Cybersecurity.

White House homeland security adviser Thomas Bossert said Monday that investigators were still working to determine who was

behind the attack, which infects computers with a virus that encrypted data and is accompanied by a demand that victims pay a ransom to decrypt it. "That's the attribution that we're after right now," he said at a White House briefing. "It will be very satisfying for me and for all of our viewers, I think, that if we find them that we bring them to justice. ... I don't want to say we have no clues. ... The best and the brightest are working on that."

Several security researchers studying "WannaCry" on Monday found evidence of possible connections to, for instance, the crippling hack on Sony Pictures Entertainment in 2014 attributed by the U.S. government to North Korea. That hack occurred in the weeks before Sony released a satiric movie about a plot to kill North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

If your computer is infected, then a message appears saying all of your

files have been encrypted until you pay a ransom. If your computer is infected, then a message appears saying all of your files have been encrypted until you pay a ransom. (Gillian Brockell/The Washington Post)

(Gillian Brockell/The Washington Post)

A Google security researcher tweeted a small bit of computer code Monday afternoon that highlighted similarities between that attack and an earlier version of "WannaCry." The attack was first reported Friday and has hobbled hundreds of thousands of computers by encrypting data on the machines. The hackers offer to unlock the data for bitcoin payments of \$300.

Software company Symantec, maker of popular security software, published a blog post also pointing to the possible connections, writing, "While these findings do not indicate a definite link between Lazarus and

WannaCry, we believe that there are sufficient connections to warrant further investigation."

Kaspersky Lab, a Russian cybersecurity firm, also pointed to similar links, writing, "We believe this might hold the key to solve some of the mysteries around this attack."

However, Bambenek cautioned that the links are circumstantial. "It could be a freak coincidence," he said. "The code in question is not a large portion of the overall WannaCry malware so it's plausible that the attackers got it from somewhere else."

The irony, he noted, is that the ransomware attack was enabled by a leak of National Security Agency hacking tools. "The similar could be true here — that this stuff leaked out from North Korea, but it just hasn't been found yet," he said.

*[Putin blames U.S. cyberspies for developing leaked virus]*

Global markets appeared to largely avoid problems Monday amid worries of digital chaos in the wake of the attack.

The spread of the WannaCry virus has slowed as new cyberdefenses have been put in place, but the malware still found its way into hundreds of thousands more computers while businesses and governments assessed the damage and planned their next moves.

Few problems were reported on stock exchanges and other financial systems Monday. Asian stock markets rose, probably on news of higher oil prices and a new Chinese government spending plan — sending some exchanges to two-year highs.

In Europe, stock markets were generally flat, but no serious hacker-linked disruptions were reported in early trading. Wall Street exchanges closed slightly higher. Among the hot stocks were firms selling online protection services.

In Japan, the government's Computer Emergency Response Team said as many as 2,000 computers at 600 companies were affected by the ransomware, and the government set up a new crisis management office to deal with cyberterrorism.

China's state-run Xinhua News Agency reported that the virus infiltrated a range of networks, including railway operations, mail

delivery, hospitals and government offices.

In France, automaker Renault said one of its plants was closed Monday as a "preventive step" while engineers looked at the fallout from the cyberattack.

*[New hacking tools breed new fears and defenses]*

The virus has mainly infiltrated systems in Europe — particularly Britain's health-care network on Friday — but financial exchanges were closely watched in the first full trading day since the malware surfaced.

Some eight to 10 U.S. entities, including a few in the health-care sector, reported possible WannaCry infections to the Department of Homeland Security, a U.S. official said. But none reported that they had data encrypted or that they suffered significant disruptions.

Bossert said Monday that the situation was "under control" at the moment in the United States.

"We are continuing to monitor the situation around clock ... bringing all the capabilities of the U.S. government to bear," he said, adding that as of Monday, no federal systems were affected.

While factories, hospitals and schools were disrupted in China by the attack, the spread of the virus appeared to be slowing. State media said 29,000 institutions had been hit, along with hundreds of thousands of devices.

"The growth rate of infected institutions on Monday has slowed significantly compared to the previous two days," said Chinese Internet security company Qihoo 360, according to Reuters. "Previous concerns of a wide-scale infection of domestic institutions did not eventuate."

South Korea reported that just five companies were affected, including the country's largest movie chain. In response, the Korea Internet and Security Agency in Seoul raised its warning level to 3, or "cautious," on a scale of 1 to 5.

In the South Korean city of Asan, an electronic panel meant to show bus arrival times instead displayed a message demanding bitcoin payment. The CGV movie chain, South Korea's largest, said that about 50 of its theater complexes were attacked by the ransomware but that films were still running as scheduled.

Researchers discovered a "kill switch" on the virus that stopped its spread from computer to computer, potentially saving tens of thousands of machines from further infection. There were fears, however, that new versions of the worm, without this vulnerability, could eventually be released.

The worm took advantage of a vulnerability in Microsoft's Windows operating system. Although the flaw has been patched by the company, not all users had applied the update.

The vulnerability exploited by the ransomware is believed to have

been first identified by the U.S. National Security Agency and later leaked online.

The ransomware program, which is spread through email, encrypts computer files and then demands the bitcoin equivalent \$300 to unlock them.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

The attack hobbled operations at Russia's Interior Ministry, Spanish telecommunications giant Telefónica and Britain's National Health Service.

Speaking at a news conference after an economic conference in China, Russian President Vladimir Putin told journalists that Russia "had nothing to do" with the WannaCry virus.

"With regard to the source of these threats, then I believe that Microsoft has spoken directly about this," Putin said. "They said that the first sources of this virus were the United States intelligence agencies. Russia has absolutely nothing to do with this."

Brian Murphy in Washington, Anna Fifield in Tokyo and Andrew Roth in Moscow contributed to this report.

**Read more:**

## The New York In Computer Attacks, Clues Point to Frequent Culprit: North Korea Times (UNE)

Nicole Perlroth and David E. Sanger

The computer code used in the ransomware bore some striking similarities to the code used in those three attacks. That code has not been widely used, and has been seen only in attacks by North Korean-linked hackers. Researchers at Google and Kaspersky, a Moscow-based cybersecurity firm, confirmed the coding similarities.

Those clues alone are not definitive, however. Hackers often borrow and retrofit one another's attack methods, and government agencies are known to plant "false flags" in their code to throw off forensic investigators.

"At this time, all we have is a temporal link," said Eric Chien, an investigator at Symantec who was among the first to identify the Stuxnet worm, the American- and Israeli-led attacks on Iran's nuclear program, and North Korea's effort to

steal millions from the Bangladeshi bank. "We want to see more coding similarities," he said, "to give us more confidence."

The new leads about the source of the attacks came as technology executives raised an alarm about another feature of the attacks: They were based on vulnerabilities in Microsoft systems that were found by the N.S.A. and apparently stolen from it.

In a blog post on Microsoft's website over the weekend, Brad Smith, the company's president, asked what would happen if the United States military lost control of "some of its Tomahawk missiles" and discovered that a criminal group was using them to threaten a damaging strike. It was a potent analogy, and an unusually public airing of the newest split in the Silicon Valley-Washington divide.

Over the past few months, it has become clear that the intelligence community's version of Tomahawks — the "vulnerabilities" the N.S.A. and C.I.A. have spent billions of dollars to develop to break into foreign computers and foil Iranian nuclear programs or North Korean missiles — are being turned against everyday computer users around the world.

"We have seen vulnerabilities stored by the C.I.A. show up on WikiLeaks," Mr. Smith wrote, "and now this vulnerability stolen from the N.S.A. has affected customers around the world."

The N.S.A.'s tools were published last month by a hacking group calling itself the Shadow Brokers, which enabled hackers to bake them into their ransomware, which then spread rapidly through unpatched Microsoft computers, locking up everything in its wake.

### The Hackers Who Made the Global Cyberattack Possible

A National Security Agency hacking tool leaked in April by an elite group called the Shadow Brokers has now been used in a cyberattack on computers in more than 150 countries. Intelligence officials say North Korean-linked hackers are likely suspects.

By NATALIE RENEAU and MARK SCHEFFLER on May 15, 2017. Photo by Ritchie B. Tongo/European Pressphoto Agency. Watch in Times Video »

There is no evidence that the North Koreans were involved in the actual theft of the N.S.A. hacking tools. There are many theories, but the favorite hypothesis among intelligence officials is that an insider, probably a contractor, stole the information, much as Edward J. Snowden lifted a different trove of

information from the N.S.A. four years ago.

But hackers quickly seized on the published vulnerabilities to wreak havoc on computer systems that were not "patched" in recent months, after the N.S.A. quietly told Microsoft about the flaw in their systems. The damage wreaked in recent days could well escalate into the billions of dollars, security experts say, particularly now that any criminal, terrorist or nation state has the ability to tease the tools apart and retrofit them into their own hacking tools.

Not surprisingly, government officials say it is not entirely their fault. They will not confirm or deny what Mr. Smith says outright: That these "vulnerabilities" come out of America's growing cyberarsenal. At a news conference at the White House on Monday, Thomas Bossert, President Trump's Homeland Security adviser, told reporters, "This was not an exploit developed by the N.S.A. to hold organizations ransom," he said. "This was a vulnerability exploit that was part of a much larger tool put together by the culpable parties."

"The provenance of the underlying vulnerability is not of as much concern to me," Mr. Bossert said, stepping around the delicate question of the N.S.A.'s role.

The weapons used in the attacks

that started Friday, government officials insist, were cobbled together from many sources. And the fault, they argue, lies with whoever turned them into weapons — or maybe with Microsoft itself, for not having a system in place to make sure that when they issue a patch that neutralizes such attacks, everyone around the world takes the time to fix their systems. Or with the victims, who failed to run their security updates made available two months ago, or who continue to use so-called "legacy" software that Microsoft no longer supports.

When asked about the source of the attack, Mr. Bossert said on Monday, "We don't know." He told reporters at the White House. "Attribution can be difficult. I don't want to say we have no clues. But I stand assured that the best and brightest are working on this hack."

As Mr. Bossert was speaking to reporters, yet another N.S.A. hacking tool, very similar to the one used in the weekend's ransomware attacks, was being retrofitted by cybercriminals and put up for sale on the underground dark web. In private hacking forums, cybercriminals were discussing how to develop more than a dozen other N.S.A. hacking tools for criminal use.

Another round of attacks using the N.S.A. tools could well affect another big issue that the Obama

administration debated and never resolved when it left office: whether the government can demand that all companies assure that investigators can "unlock" encrypted communications. Before he was fired last week, James B. Comey, the F.B.I. director, often complained that the government was "going dark," and that intelligence agencies and local police departments needed a way to crack the encrypted mobile conversations of terrorists or kidnappers.

But the N.S.A.'s loss of its own hacking tools has undercut that argument, executives say. If the N.S.A. and the C.I.A. cannot keep their hacking tools locked up, companies like Apple are asking, why should Americans trust them with the keys to unlock every private communication and bank transfer? Won't those leak, too, meaning that hackers, blackmailers and thieves will all have access to everyone's private email, health records and financial transactions?

Nine years ago, the White House created a process for deciding what unpatched holes to disclose to manufacturers like Microsoft and its competitors, and which to keep in its arsenal.

That process was refined by Mr. Obama and in 2015, Adm. Michael Rogers, the director of the NSA, said the agency had shared 91 percent of the zero-days it had

discovered that year. A zero-day is a previously undisclosed flaw that leaves computer users with zero days to fix the vulnerability.

But Michael Daniel, the White House cybercoordinator in the Obama administration, noted, "We still don't have a good rating system for vulnerabilities in terms of their severity. Not all zero-days are created equal," he said.

The N.S.A.'s wormlike tool was leaked online by the Shadow Brokers last month.

"What happened with the Shadow Brokers in this case is equivalent to a nuclear bomb in cyberspace," said Zohar Pinhasi, a former cybersecurity intelligence officer for the Israeli military, now the chief executive of MonsterCloud, which helps mitigate ransomware attacks. "This is what happens when you give a tiny little criminal a weapon of mass destruction. This will only go bigger. It's only the tip of the iceberg."

#### Correction: May 15, 2017

An earlier version of this article misspelled the given name of the leader of North Korea. He is Kim Jong-un, not Kim Jung-un.

**The Washington Post**

## Editorial : China has a plan to become a global superpower. It probably won't work.

IT HAS BEEN called China's version of the Marshall Plan: a \$1 trillion complex of infrastructure investment and aid stretching from Kyrgyzstan to Central Europe, with extensions to Southeast Asia, Africa and even Latin America. President Xi Jinping, who touted the "belt and road" initiative at a heavily orchestrated two-day summit that concluded in Beijing on Monday, clearly hopes the geopolitical effects will be analogous. China would consolidate a sphere of influence across Eurasia and make itself a superpower with global influence rivaling, if not exceeding, that of the United States.

It's possible that this scheme will realize what Mr. Xi calls "the China dream"; it can be hoped that it will, at least, provide badly needed rail lines, ports and power plants to poor countries such as Pakistan, Laos, Burma and Indonesia, where work is already underway. Those who worry about a Chinese juggernaut,

however, may be comforted by the fact that the top-down, autocratic nature of the belt and road plan and China's self-interested structuring of the projects mean that it is likely to fall short of its aims.

In short, Mr. Xi's Marshall plan is likely to be hamstrung precisely by its differences from the Marshall Plan, which channeled U.S. aid to allied European democracies rebuilding after World War II. There is nothing democratic or transparent about the Chinese initiative. Deals for infrastructure investment are being struck by Chinese companies with elites, some of whom may pocket some of the proceeds even as China gains new means to export its goods or, in the case of ports such as Gwadar in Pakistan, potentially refuel its navy. Some deals, such as the building of a port in Sri Lanka, have already triggered a political backlash.

Read These Comments

The best conversations on The Washington Post

The \$124 billion Mr. Xi pledged to invest on Sunday will help Chinese steel and cement firms struggling with overcapacity. Chinese construction firms will gain business, and tens of thousands of Chinese workers may travel abroad to do much of the work. Most of the money will come in the form of loans from Chinese banks, meaning that poor countries such as Laos and Kenya, where China is completing a railroad, may struggle under the resulting debt burdens.

That's not to say there will be no benefit for China's neighbors. Pakistan, struggling with crippling power shortages, desperately needs the power plants China is building. Railroads in Southeast Asia and east Africa will provide means for Chinese imports, but also exports of commodities. Western companies, for their part, are hoping to get a

piece of the action; envoys from the Trump administration and European Union countries spent their time at the summit lobbying for open procurement processes — something that could lower costs and corruption, if Beijing allows it.

Mr. Xi strikes a pose as a champion of free trade and investment; his propagandists describe belt and road as "globalization 2.0." His neighbors, and Western businesses trying to compete in the Chinese market, know that's not true. But President Trump's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade treaty, which would have bound the United States with 11 Pacific countries, means the United States now lacks an alternative to offer. If Mr. Xi succeeds in creating a Chinese sphere of influence, it will be on ground willingly ceded by Washington.

**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

## China's Silk Road Initiative Sows European Discomfort

Mark Magnier and Chun Han Wong

BEIJING—China's bid to mobilize dozens of countries and billions of dollars for its ambitious Silk Road infrastructure plan bumped into European dissent at a high-profile Beijing forum, underscoring difficulties in marshaling consensus over President Xi Jinping's globalization blueprint.

China received support for most of its proposals over the two-day meeting, but failed to secure European endorsement of a planned statement on trade, diplomats said.

The discord marred an outwardly convivial conclave designed to promote Mr. Xi's signature economic-diplomacy initiative—known as "One Belt, One Road"—a rebooting of ancient Silk Road routes with ports, railways and pipelines backed by Chinese money and industry.

European officials at the forum said the proposed trade statement omitted clauses on transparency and standards in tendering contracts, even though China had endorsed similar clean-governance language at past Group of 20 and Asia-Europe summits.

"We felt this language was going backwards" from what China had previously agreed to, said one European official, who suggested Beijing had drafted the statement to benefit Chinese companies in future Silk Road contracts. "It's about selling their stuff," the official said.

China's foreign and commerce ministries didn't respond to requests for comment. The trade statement wasn't issued at the forum's conclusion on Monday.

**The Washington Post**

PRESIDENT TRUMP wrote in his 1987

bestseller, "The Art of the Deal": "People want to believe that something is the biggest and the greatest and the most spectacular. I call it truthful hyperbole. It's an innocent form of exaggeration—and a very effective form of promotion." That approach seems to have guided administration pronouncements about the new "100-day action plan" on trade with China, agreed on between the Trump administration and President Xi Jinping's representatives May 11—which Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross billed as "the first real breakthrough that we've had with China in decades."

To call that an overstatement would be an understatement. The agreement would allow American beef producers to sell to the

"Transparency about plans and activities of all stakeholders must be the basis for our cooperation, together with open, rules-based public tenders and reciprocal market access," said a statement by the French Embassy in Beijing detailing the European Union's position on the forum.

In Brussels, the EU's spokesman on trade, Daniel Rosario, said the bloc couldn't support China's proposed trade statement as "it was not possible to confirm our joint commitment to international trade rules and to a level playing field for all companies." Beijing presented the statement late in the talks, he said, "and the process to elaborate this paper did not allow for an inclusive solution to be found."

The top U.S. representative at the forum, a National Security Council director, delivered brief remarks on Sunday echoing European attention to fair procurement practices, saying that ensuring transparency in bidding would benefit Silk Road projects. It wasn't clear if the U.S. delegation was involved in discussions over the forum's trade statement.

After European officials protested the proposed trade language, China released a list of countries it said supported the wording. The list included Portugal, but European officials said Portuguese officials told them they didn't support the language and hadn't been consulted.

Beijing's actions appeared to be an attempt to play off individual EU members against the wider bloc, the European officials said.

China's preferred trade language "presented some difficulties that prevented EU members from endorsing it," Portugal's ambassador to China, Jorge Torres-Pereira, told The Wall Street Journal in an email. He didn't elaborate.

European officials say the proposed statement was presented to national delegations on short notice, with little or no consultation. This contrasted with the forum's final communiqué, they said, which went through multiple drafts over weeks and included mutually acceptable trade language.

In that communiqué, issued Monday, Mr. Xi and leaders from 29 countries—including Argentina, Russia, Ethiopia and the Philippines—committed to free trade, respect for national "sovereignty and territorial integrity," and opposition to "all forms of protectionism."

For Mr. Xi, the forum marked an opportunity to present himself as a global statesman and burnish his image at home, with state media featuring blanket coverage of him giving speeches and greeting foreign leaders.

The Silk Road initiative is "an open and inclusive platform for cooperation—an international public good jointly produced by all sides," Mr. Xi told the visiting leaders on Monday.

Some governments, however, worry that the Silk Road initiative mainly serves to advance Beijing's strategic interests and boost Chinese businesses abroad, while China restricts foreign access to its markets.

India skipped the forum, citing Silk Road infrastructure projects in rival Pakistan—including roads, railways and power plants—that run through or near areas New Delhi claims as its territory. Trade groups representing U.S., European and Asian companies on Monday urged China to delay a cybersecurity law due to take effect next month, saying the rules could discriminate against foreign businesses.

The final communiqué featured much of Mr. Xi's earlier remarks but omitted his description of the Silk Road plan as an "international public good"—a phrase suggested in an earlier draft reviewed by The Journal. Instead the project was called an "important international initiative."

Some 1,500 delegates from roughly 130 countries attended the forum, according to Chinese state media. Mr. Xi said China will host another "One Belt, One Road" forum in 2019, citing enthusiasm from participants.

Some governments have appeared cautious in their commitments to the Silk Road initiative, and public resentment has flared against Chinese investments in some Asian countries.

Mr. Xi said Monday that 68 nations and global organizations have signed Silk Road "cooperation agreements" with China. It wasn't clear how binding these were or how much capital was committed.

## Editorial : Trump's China trade deal is underwhelming

People's Republic, expedite rulings on certain American genetically modified seeds and authorize a limited number of American bond rating agencies and underwriters to provide services there, along with U.S. credit-card issuers. At most, the deal, if fully implemented by China's notoriously grudging bureaucracy, would provide a few billion dollars' worth of business for relatively pro-Trump constituencies—red-state agriculture and Wall Street. In granting this market access, however, China would be doing little more than reversing a scientifically obsolete 13-year-old ban on U.S. beef and obeying a five-year-old World Trade Organization ruling against its credit-card protectionism. Additionally, the plan offers China the right to purchase U.S. liquefied natural gas, which is a potentially lucrative area, though China does not actually commit to buy any.

On the whole, Mr. Trump's action plan positions the United States as a supplier of primary products and financial services to a tech-producing nation with which we would still enjoy a massive deficit in manufactured goods. Eliminating the latter was supposedly the Trump administration's top goal with Beijing, but there isn't even a reference in the plan to the United States' most legitimate complaint regarding Chinese industrial mercantilism—its overcapacity in steel and aluminum. In any case, the administration's focus on market-by-market bilateral governmental management, which this plan epitomizes, is economically irrational and plays to state capitalist China's strengths.

Read These Comments

The best conversations on The Washington Post

Alas, Mr. Ross appears to have more of the same in mind for future negotiations with Canada and Mexico. In an important speech to hemispheric diplomats on May 9, the commerce secretary said the U.S. "principal objective" in those talks would be "increasing American exports," and that this could be done by having "our trading partners give us a higher market share of products they already buy both from the U.S. and other countries." The U.S. would impose tariffs or other barriers as a last resort to get its way. This could mean nothing more than a toughening of NAFTA domestic-content rules to require more sourcing of auto parts from within the trade bloc. Or, it could be Mr. Ross's way of saying, "If you want to keep doing business with us, you'll have to squeeze out other countries."

These are the dilemmas inherent in any attempt to manipulate and

manage trade flows, but these recent policy moves suggest that

managed trade is the new administration's preferred option.



## NATO Frantically Tries to Trump-Proof President's First Visit

Robbie Gramer

NATO is scrambling to tailor its upcoming meeting to avoid taxing President Donald Trump's notoriously short attention span. The alliance is telling heads of state to limit talks to two to four minutes at a time during the discussion, several sources inside NATO and former senior U.S. officials tell Foreign Policy. And the alliance scrapped plans to publish the traditional full post-meeting statement meant to crystallize NATO's latest strategic stance.

On May 25, NATO will host the heads of state of all 28 member countries in what will be Trump's first face-to-face summit with an alliance he bashed repeatedly while running for president. NATO traditionally organizes a meeting within the first few months of a new U.S. president's term, but Trump has the alliance more on edge than any previous newcomer, forcing organizers to look for ways to make the staid affair more engaging.

"It's kind of ridiculous how they are preparing to deal with Trump," said one source briefed extensively on the meeting's preparations. "It's like they're preparing to deal with a child — someone with a short attention span and mood who has no knowledge of NATO, no interest in in-depth policy issues, nothing," said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "They're freaking out."

Still, despite these changes, experts are wary of how Trump will react to NATO meetings and their long-winded, diplomatic back-and-forth among dozens of heads of state, which can quickly balloon into hours of meandering discussions. One former senior NATO official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, described these meetings as "important but painfully dull."

Rank-and-file diplomats always try to push for shorter, more efficient meetings at NATO. "It's not so unusual that they strain to try to keep it interesting and short and not dragged down into details," said Jim Townsend, who served as the Pentagon's top NATO envoy until January. But what is unusual is the president.

"Even a brief NATO summit is way too stiff, too formal, and too policy heavy for Trump. Trump is not going to like that," said Jorge Benitez, a NATO expert with the Atlantic Council, a Washington think tank.

Another change: NATO traditionally publishes a formal readout, known

as a declaration, after each major meeting or summit. While they're often lathered in diplomatic drivel, declarations signal new strategies and key policy shifts that come out of closed-door meetings, giving direction to allies and the NATO bureaucracy — and showcasing alliance unity toward rivals like Russia, a former senior NATO official told FP.

This year, NATO has scrapped plans to publish a full formal meeting declaration. One NATO official said that's because it's not a full summit, like past major NATO gatherings in Warsaw in 2016 or Wales in 2014. "It's not necessary to have another full declaration, as it's not a full summit," the official said. "This meeting is just much more focused."

But behind closed doors, other officials are giving a different reason. NATO isn't publishing a full declaration "because they're worried Trump won't like it," another source said.

Experts say a declaration could be invaluable to European allies still struggling to get a read on Trump's stance on Europe. Four months into office, Trump hasn't clarified U.S. policy toward Europe — he cheered Brexit and appeared to endorse anti-Europe candidate Marine Le Pen in the recent French elections — let alone toward NATO.

Trump rattled NATO allies during the campaign by slamming the alliance as "obsolete" and openly praising Russian President Vladimir Putin. Since he became president, top administration officials, including Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Vice President Mike Pence, traveled to Brussels to soothe Europeans' nerves and reiterate customary U.S. commitments to the 68-year-old alliance. Meanwhile, Trump declared in April during a meeting with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg that the alliance is "no longer obsolete."

But the president's erratic policy shifts and surprise Twitter storms on other international issues have NATO jittery, a former senior NATO official told FP. (Trump offered a taste of this during his awkward meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in March, where he refused to shake her hand; German officials also said he handed her a fake "bill" for overdue NATO payments, though the White House swiftly denied those claims.)

"People are scared of his unpredictability, intimidated by how

he might react knowing the president might speak his mind — or tweet his mind," the former official said.

Or, as another current senior NATO official put it before the meeting: "We're bracing for impact."

Beyond nerves over Trump, the May 25 meeting is important in another way. It will be the first visit for newly elected French President Emmanuel Macron. And NATO leaders will use the meeting to unveil their new headquarters — a sleek, modern edifice meant to symbolize a new and modern alliance. But it also embodies the alliance's shortfalls. The building is way behind schedule and over budget.

The senior NATO official who spoke to FP on condition of anonymity expressed concern that this could be a sore spot with Trump as he pushes European countries to spend more on defense. Although Trump may know little about the military alliance, he does profess to know something about getting buildings done on time and on budget.

If they can keep Trump's attention, NATO heads of state are expected to discuss two main issues at the meeting, both catering to the president's priorities: counterterrorism and burden-sharing.

On the counterterrorism front, the United States is pushing NATO to formally join the counter-Islamic State coalition at the meeting, but Germany is pushing back against the idea, multiple sources tell FP. All NATO members are involved at a national level, and while the alliance supports the mission, it's not yet a formal member of the coalition.

"Some members say it's not necessarily the right format," a NATO official told FP. "Since all NATO allies are already members ... the question is what could we do as an alliance we are not already doing."

But beyond that, and potentially sending more troops to Afghanistan, where it has been fighting the Taliban and other terrorists for about 15 years, officials concede that NATO hasn't thought up much more to do.

Part of the issue is staffing. After months of Trump's threatening a radically new approach to global alliances the United States helped create, there's nobody even charting a new course. Trump hasn't

appointed any high-level posts for Europe, including key Pentagon postings, undersecretaries of state, an assistant secretary of state for Europe, or a new ambassador to NATO. With no middle management to give direction on a day-to-day basis, Europeans are struggling to decipher what the new administration wants from them.

"That's where there's a ton of panic in NATO," a source told FP. "The United States put that issue forward, but it has nobody on tap who's doing any sort of fresh thinking on that front."

Trump is also expected to push his Canadian and European allies to pony up more for defense. Burden-sharing has always been a sore spot in U.S.-NATO relations. The United States is by far the largest defense spender in the alliance — its share of NATO spending has skyrocketed in recent decades — and it has long warned other allies to bulk up their military budgets, to little avail.

"His views of burden-sharing seem to be more ambitious than past presidents," and that could become a source of tension at the big NATO confab, said Alexander Vershbow, former deputy secretary-general of NATO. "The burden-sharing conversation may not go entirely smoothly," he told FP.

Only five of the 28 members — the United States, United Kingdom, Poland, Estonia, and Greece — met the NATO guidelines of spending 2 percent of gross domestic product on defense, despite a more aggressive Russia and an unraveling security situation in the Middle East.

Ultimately, to keep Trump on board, NATO will probably set out to sell those recent changes as a concession to Washington, even though "98 percent of the changes NATO undertook are because of Russia, not because of Trump," Benitez said.

That might secure Trump a happy ending to this first meeting, but could spell more trouble down the road.

"They may give Trump credit, but privately many allies feel they're being bullied into it," Benitez said. "Trump's approach to NATO is poisoning the relationship."

One former NATO official said the agenda meant to mollify Trump appeared to amount to repackaging what NATO was already doing — increasing its defense spending and

continuing to support U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and the counter-Islamic State campaign — in a new wrapper for the president.

## The New York Times Trump Revealed Highly Classified Intelligence to Russia, in Break With Ally, Officials Say (UNE)

Matthew Rosenberg and Eric Schmitt

It was not clear whether Mr. Trump wittingly disclosed such highly classified information. He — and possibly other Americans in the room — may have not been aware of the sensitivity of what he was sharing. It was only after the meeting, when notes on the discussion were circulated among National Security Council officials, that it was flagged as too sensitive to be shared, even among many American officials, the former official said.

The Trump administration pushed back on the revelation, with high-ranking officials issuing carefully worded denials, insisting that the president did not discuss intelligence sources and methods or continuing military operations that were not public.

"I was in the room — it didn't happen," Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, Mr. Trump's national security adviser, said in an appearance outside the West Wing, which was sent into chaos on Monday afternoon by reports that the president had disclosed extremely sensitive information about an Islamic State plot.

"At no time — at no time — were intelligence sources or methods discussed, and the president did not disclose any military operations that were not already publicly known," General McMaster said.

He said his account and those of others who were present for the meeting should outweigh those of unnamed officials who have said the president jeopardized national security.

Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson echoed General McMaster's denial that sources or methods were discussed, though he did say that Mr. Trump talked about "the nature of specific threats" in the meeting.

"They think they're fine because they're going to put old wine in new bottles," one former senior U.S.

official told FP. Whether Trump buys it remains to be seen.

But according to the officials, Mr. Trump discussed the contents of the intelligence, not the sources and methods used to collect it. The concern is that knowledge of the information about the Islamic State plot could allow the Russians to figure out those details.

In fact, the current official said that Mr. Trump shared granular details of the intelligence with the Russians. Among the details the president shared was the city in Syria where the ally picked up information about the plot, though Mr. Trump is not believed to have disclosed that the intelligence came from a Middle Eastern ally or precisely how it was gathered.

### H.R. McMaster on Reports of Trump Sharing Classified Data With Russia

The national security adviser discussed reports that President Trump boasted about highly classified intelligence in a meeting with the Russian foreign minister and ambassador.

By THE NEW YORK TIMES. Photo by Doug Mills/The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

General McMaster did not address that in naming the city, in Islamic State-controlled territory, Mr. Trump gave Russia an important clue about the source of the information.

Like the United States, Russia is also fighting in Syria, where it has stationed troops and aircraft. The two countries share some information, but the cooperation is extremely limited, and each has widely divergent goals in the civil war there.

Russia's primary focus has been propping up the government of the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, not directly battling the Islamic State. The United States, in contrast, views the Islamic State as the primary threat, and is aiding rebels who are fighting both the

Islamic State and the Syrian government.

Before The Post's article was published, its impending publication set off a mild panic among White House staff members, with the press secretary, Sean Spicer; the deputy press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders; and the communications director, Mike Dubke, summoned to the Oval Office in the middle of the afternoon.

Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and one of his advisers, was not in the meeting. But internally, Mr. Kushner criticized Mr. Spicer, who has been the target of his ire over bad publicity for the president since Mr. Trump fired the F.B.I. director, James B. Comey, last week.

Once public, the revelation immediately reverberated around Washington, and General McMaster found himself briefly cornered by reporters at the White House.

"This is the last place in the world I wanted to be," he said before walking off without answering any questions.

The news coming on the heels of Mr. Comey's firing prompted concern about the White House, even from within the Republican Party.

"The White House has got to do something soon to bring itself under control and in order," Senator Bob Corker, Republican of Tennessee and the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, told reporters at the Capitol, adding, "It's got to happen."

The Central Intelligence Agency declined to comment. But members of Congress, including some Republicans, were quick to criticize the president for the intelligence breach.

"To compromise a source is something that you just don't do,

and that's why we keep the information that we get from intelligence sources so close as to prevent that from happening," Mr. Corker said, adding that he did not know independently if Mr. Trump had revealed sensitive information to the Russians.

Senator Mark Warner, Democrat of Virginia and the vice chairman of the Intelligence Committee, said on Twitter: "If true, this is a slap in the face to the intel community. Risking sources & methods is inexcusable, particularly with the Russians."

Democrats demanded more information. "The president owes the intelligence community, the American people and Congress a full explanation," said the Senate Democratic leader, Chuck Schumer of New York.

Doug Andres, a spokesman for the House speaker, Paul D. Ryan, said that Mr. Ryan "hopes for a full explanation of the facts from the administration."

"We have no way to know what was said, but protecting our nation's secrets is paramount," Mr. Andres said.

Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the ranking Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, was sharply critical of Mr. Trump.

"President Trump's recklessness with sensitive information is deeply disturbing and clearly problematic," Mr. Reed said in a statement. "The president of the United States has the power to share classified information with whomever they wish, but the American people expect the president to use that power wisely. I don't believe the president intentionally meant to reveal highly secretive information to the Russians."

## The Washington Post Trump revealed highly classified information to Russian foreign minister and ambassador (UNE)

During a May 10 meeting with Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak, Trump began describing details about an Islamic State terror threat, according to current and

former U.S. officials. President Trump revealed highly classified intel in Oval Office meeting with Russians (Photo: Russian Foreign Ministry/The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

President Trump revealed highly classified information to the Russian foreign minister and ambassador in a White House meeting last week, according to current and former U.S. officials, who said Trump's disclosures jeopardized a critical

source of intelligence on the Islamic State.

The information the president relayed had been provided by a U.S. partner through an intelligence-sharing arrangement considered so

sensitive that details have been withheld from allies and tightly restricted even within the U.S. government, officials said.

The partner had not given the United States permission to share the material with Russia, and officials said Trump's decision to do so endangers cooperation from an ally that has access to the inner workings of the Islamic State. After Trump's meeting, senior White House officials took steps to contain the damage, placing calls to the CIA and the National Security Agency.

"This is code-word information," said a U.S. official familiar with the matter, using terminology that refers to one of the highest classification levels used by American spy agencies. Trump "revealed more information to the Russian ambassador than we have shared with our own allies."

The White House and lawmakers reacted May 15 to Washington Post revelations that President Trump disclosed classified information during a meeting with Russian officials. The White House and lawmakers react to President Trump's disclosure of classified information to Russian officials during a meeting on May 10. (Video: Bastien Inzaurralde/Photo: Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

(Bastien Inzaurralde/The Washington Post)

*[Lawmakers express shock and concern about Trump disclosure of classified information]*

The revelation comes as the president faces rising legal and political pressure on multiple Russia-related fronts. Last week, he fired FBI Director James B. Comey in the midst of a bureau investigation into possible links between the Trump campaign and Moscow. Trump's subsequent admission that his decision was driven by "this Russia thing" was seen by critics as attempted obstruction of justice.

One day after dismissing Comey, Trump welcomed Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ambassador Sergey Kislyak — a key figure in earlier Russia controversies — into the Oval Office. It was during that meeting, officials said, that Trump went off script and began describing details of an Islamic State terrorist threat related to the use of laptop computers on aircraft.

For almost anyone in government, discussing such matters with an adversary would be illegal. As president, Trump has broad authority to declassify government secrets, making it unlikely that his disclosures broke the law.

White House officials involved in the meeting said Trump discussed only shared concerns about terrorism.

"The president and the foreign minister reviewed common threats from terrorist organizations to include threats to aviation," said H.R. McMaster, the national security adviser, who participated in the meeting. "At no time were any intelligence sources or methods discussed, and no military operations were disclosed that were not already known publicly."

McMaster reiterated his statement in a subsequent appearance at the White House on Monday and described the Washington Post story as "false," but did not take any questions.

National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster spoke at the White House on May 15 and denied recent reporting that President Trump revealed classified information in a meeting with Russian officials. National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster denied recent reporting that President Trump revealed classified information in a meeting with Russian officials. (Reuters)

(Reuters)

In their statements, White House officials emphasized that Trump had not discussed specific intelligence sources and methods, rather than addressing whether he had disclosed information drawn from sensitive sources.

The CIA declined to comment, and the NSA did not respond to requests for comment.

But officials expressed concern about Trump's handling of sensitive information as well as his grasp of the potential consequences. Exposure of an intelligence stream that has provided critical insight into the Islamic State, they said, could hinder the United States' and its allies' ability to detect future threats.

*[On Russia, Trump and his top national security aides seem to be at odds]*

"It is all kind of shocking," said a former senior U.S. official who is close to current administration officials. "Trump seems to be very reckless and doesn't grasp the gravity of the things he's dealing with, especially when it comes to intelligence and national security. And it's all clouded because of this problem he has with Russia."

In his meeting with Lavrov, Trump seemed to be boasting about his inside knowledge of the looming threat. "I get great intel. I have people brief me on great intel every day," the president said, according

to an official with knowledge of the exchange.

Trump went on to discuss aspects of the threat that the United States learned only through the espionage capabilities of a key partner. He did not reveal the specific intelligence-gathering method, but he described how the Islamic State was pursuing elements of a specific plot and how much harm such an attack could cause under varying circumstances. Most alarmingly, officials said, Trump revealed the city in the Islamic State's territory where the U.S. intelligence partner detected the threat.

Washington Post national security reporter Greg Miller explains what President Trump's potential disclosures to Russian officials means going forward. Washington Post national security reporter Greg Miller explains what President Trump's potential disclosures to Russian officials means going forward. (The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

The Post is withholding most plot details, including the name of the city, at the urging of officials who warned that revealing them would jeopardize important intelligence capabilities.

"Everyone knows this stream is very sensitive, and the idea of sharing it at this level of granularity with the Russians is troubling," said a former senior U.S. counterterrorism official who also worked closely with members of the Trump national security team. He and others spoke on the condition of anonymity, citing the sensitivity of the subject.

The identification of the location was seen as particularly problematic, officials said, because Russia could use that detail to help identify the U.S. ally or intelligence capability involved. Officials said the capability could be useful for other purposes, possibly providing intelligence on Russia's presence in Syria. Moscow would be keenly interested in identifying that source and perhaps disrupting it.

*[Political chaos in Washington is a return on investment in Moscow]*

Russia and the United States both regard the Islamic State as an enemy and share limited information about terrorist threats. But the two nations have competing agendas in Syria, where Moscow has deployed military assets and personnel to support President Bashar al-Assad.

"Russia could identify our sources or techniques," the senior U.S. official said.

A former intelligence official who handled high-level intelligence on

Russia said that given the clues Trump provided, "I don't think that it would be that hard [for Russian spy services] to figure this out."

At a more fundamental level, the information wasn't the United States' to provide to others. Under the rules of espionage, governments — and even individual agencies — are given significant control over whether and how the information they gather is disseminated, even after it has been shared. Violating that practice undercuts trust considered essential to sharing secrets.

The officials declined to identify the ally but said it has previously voiced frustration with Washington's inability to safeguard sensitive information related to Iraq and Syria.

"If that partner learned we'd given this to Russia without their knowledge or asking first, that is a blow to that relationship," the U.S. official said.

Trump also described measures the United States has taken or is contemplating to counter the threat, including military operations in Iraq and Syria, as well as other steps to tighten security, officials said.

The officials would not discuss details of those measures, but the Department of Homeland Security recently disclosed that it is considering banning laptops and other large electronic devices from carry-on bags on flights between Europe and the United States. The United States and Britain imposed a similar ban in March affecting travelers passing through airports in 10 Muslim-majority countries.

Trump cast the countermeasures in wistful terms. "Can you believe the world we live in today?" he said, according to one official. "Isn't it crazy?"

Lavrov and Kislyak were also accompanied by aides.

A Russian photographer took photos of part of the session that were released by the Russian state-owned Tass news agency. No U.S. news organization was allowed to attend any part of the meeting.

Team Trump's ties to Russian interests

Senior White House officials appeared to recognize quickly that Trump had overstepped and moved to contain the potential fallout. Thomas P. Bossert, assistant to the president for homeland security and counterterrorism, placed calls to the directors of the CIA and the NSA, the services most directly involved in the intelligence-sharing arrangement with the partner.

One of Bossert's subordinates also called for the problematic portion of Trump's discussion to be stricken from internal memos and for the full transcript to be limited to a small circle of recipients, efforts to prevent sensitive details from being disseminated further or leaked.

White House officials defended Trump. "This story is false," said Dina Powell, deputy national security adviser for strategy. "The president only discussed the common threats that both countries faced."

But officials could not explain why staff members nevertheless felt it necessary to alert the CIA and the NSA.

Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) said he would rather comment on the revelations in the Post story after "I know a little bit more about it," but added: "Obviously, they are in a downward spiral right now and have got to figure out a way to come to grips with all that's happening. And the shame of it is, there's a really

good national security team in place."

Corker also said, "The chaos that is being created by the lack of discipline is creating an environment that I think makes — it creates a worrisome environment."

Trump has repeatedly gone off-script in his dealings with high-ranking foreign officials, most notably in his contentious introductory conversation with the Australian prime minister earlier this year. He has also faced criticism for seemingly lax attention to security at his Florida retreat, Mar-a-Lago, where he appeared to field preliminary reports of a North Korea missile launch in full view of casual diners.

U.S. officials said that the National Security Council continues to prepare multi-page briefings for Trump to guide him through conversations with foreign leaders, but that he has insisted that the guidance be distilled to a single

page of bullet points — and often ignores those.

"He seems to get in the room or on the phone and just goes with it, and that has big downsides," the second former official said. "Does he understand what's classified and what's not? That's what worries me."

Lavrov's reaction to the Trump disclosures was muted, officials said, calling for the United States to work more closely with Moscow on fighting terrorism.

Kislyak has figured prominently in damaging stories about the Trump administration's ties to Russia. Trump's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, was forced to resign just 24 days into the job over his contacts with Kislyak and his misleading statements about them. Attorney General Jeff Sessions was forced to recuse himself from matters related to the FBI's Russia investigation after it was revealed that he had met and spoke with Kislyak, despite denying

any contact with Russian officials during his confirmation hearing.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

"I'm sure Kislyak was able to fire off a good cable back to the Kremlin with all the details" he gleaned from Trump, said the former U.S. official who handled intelligence on Russia.

The White House readout of the meeting with Lavrov and Kislyak made no mention of the discussion of a terrorist threat.

"Trump emphasized the need to work together to end the conflict in Syria," the summary said. The president also "raised Ukraine" and "emphasized his desire to build a better relationship between the United States and Russia."

Julie Tate and Ellen Nakashima contributed to this report.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL Meeting (UNE) Trump Shared Intelligence Secrets With Russians in Oval Office

Carol E. Lee and Shane Harris

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump shared sensitive intelligence obtained from a close U.S. ally with Russia's foreign minister and ambassador in a meeting last week, according to U.S. officials, potentially jeopardizing critical intelligence-sharing agreements in the fight against Islamic State.

Mr. Trump met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Russian Ambassador Sergei Kislyak in the Oval Office the day after firing Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James Comey.

During the meeting with the Russian officials, Mr. Trump mentioned details about Islamic State in a way that revealed enough information for the Russians to potentially compromise the source, according to the officials, who said the intelligence came from the U.S. ally.

According to one U.S. official, the information shared was highly sensitive and difficult to acquire and was considered extraordinarily valuable. The Wall Street Journal agreed not to identify the ally because another U.S. official said it could jeopardize the source.

The Washington Post reported Mr. Trump's disclosure and said White House officials called the Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency to warn of Mr. Trump's disclosure and its possible consequences.

The White House denied on Monday that Mr. Trump disclosed any sources and methods of U.S. intelligence services or those of U.S. allies.

"I was in the room. It didn't happen," National Security Adviser Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster said in a statement outside the White House.

Gen. McMaster said in his statement that Mr. Trump didn't divulge intelligence sources, methods or military operations, but he stopped short of denying that the president had shared any intelligence or other secrets with the Russians.

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova called the reports "another fake," without addressing their substance.

"Guys, have you been reading too many American newspapers again? Don't read them. You can use them in various ways, but don't read them—recently it is not only harmful, but also dangerous," she wrote in a message on her Facebook page Tuesday.

It was the latest in a string of controversies, all stemming from investigations into Mr. Trump's associates and presidential campaign over ties to Russia. Mr. Trump last week fired Mr. Comey, who was heading up the investigation into the ties between Trump associates and Russia and testified about the probe.

The president's meeting with Messrs. Lavrov and Kislyak came the day after Mr. Comey's firing. The White House didn't provide a photograph or detailed readout about the meeting, although a photographer from the Russian news agency, TASS, was in the room and released photographs.

The latest controversy left lawmakers puzzled and pessimistic about Mr. Trump's administration.

"The White House has got to do something soon to bring itself under control and in order. It's got to happen," Sen. Bob Corker (R., Tenn.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said, referring to the string of recent events at the White House. "Obviously they're in a downward spiral right now and they've got to figure out a way to come to grips with all that's happening."

The latest disclosures stunned Washington's national-security veterans on both sides of the political divide. Although presidents have the legal right to declassify intelligence as they see fit, doing so can put intelligence sources abroad in danger and make them less willing to work with the U.S., several defense officials said.

"These reports, if true, are of the gravest possible concern," said Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat and a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee. "It could harm our national security by cutting

off important sources of intelligence that protect Americans against terrorist acts."

"If it's true, it'd be troubling," said Sen. Lindsey Graham (R., S.C.).

"Giving the Russians intelligence that our counterterrorism partners have asked us to protect is incredibly dangerous," said Jeremy Bash, the former Pentagon chief of staff under President Obama. "It will ensure that those partners don't share with us the information we need to protect ourselves."

"It's so mind-boggling, I don't even know what to say," said Eric Edelman, a former undersecretary of defense during the George W. Bush administration. "I'm completely gobsmacked. It's jeopardizing a human source. It's the one thing you're trained to never do."

On Capitol Hill, the report of Mr. Trump's possible disclosure of classified information to the Russia's top diplomat and its U.S. envoy prompted a chorus of concern from Democrats and Republicans.

A spokesman for House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) released a statement calling for a "full explanation of the facts from the administration."

"We have no way to know what was said, but protecting our nation's secrets is paramount," said Mr. Ryan's spokesman, Doug Andres.

Senate Intelligence Committee Vice Chairman Mark Warner (D., Va.) said on Twitter: "If true, this is a slap in the face to the intel community. Risking sources & methods is inexcusable, particularly with the Russians."

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D., Vt.), a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said he hadn't confirmed the veracity of the Post's report, but told CNN: "You never disclose sources of evidence."

Bloomberg

## Lake : Trump's Best Defense on Russia Is Incompetence

Eli Lake

One way you know the president is in trouble is that, accused of collusion, his best defense is incompetence. Such is the case with Donald Trump's firing of James Comey. And such is the case with the latest scandal to hit this White House, that Trump disclosed highly classified information in his meeting last week with Russia's foreign minister.

It looks terrible. Trump fires the FBI director investigating Russia's influence of the election, and the very next day has the Russian foreign minister in the oval office. He proceeds to divulge to his guests sensitive details about an allied intelligence operation that detected an Islamic State plot against airlines. U.S. officials told the Post that this disclosure was "reckless" and violated the trust of an allied spy service. The implications could be grave. Intelligence cooperation could be chilled. A human source could be in danger. Our efforts to disrupt the Islamic State could be hobbled.

That said, this doesn't look like collusion with the Russians. "Collusion" implies the information should not be shared. The U.S. actually should inform Russia about terrorist threats against airlines, so long as this sharing is done with care. Both of Trump's predecessors pursued sensitive counter-terrorism partnerships with President Vladimir Putin. Also, Russia lost an airliner in 2015 over the Sinai to an Islamic

He continued, "It would be almost inconceivable that any president would allow something of that nature out."

After the initial revelations, reporters flooded the hallway outside press secretary Sean Spicer's West Wing office. At one point, Gen. McMaster walked into the scrum and quickly turned back and walked out, joking that the hallway full of reporters was "the last place" he wanted to be.

Ninety minutes after the Post story was published, Dina Powell, deputy national security adviser for strategy—and who also sat in on the meeting with the Russian officials—denied the story on the record. She called the Post's story "false" and said: "The president only discussed the common threats that both countries faced."

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson also issued a denial of the Post article.

A spokesman for the Post couldn't be immediately reached for comment, but one of the Post reporters said in a television interview that the newspaper stood by the article.

—Paul Sonne, Eli Stokols, Rebecca Ballhaus, Louise Radnofsky and Byron Tau contributed to this article.

State bomb. Putin claims to be fighting the Islamic State in Syria (which his air force has repeatedly failed to distinguish from Syrian civilians).

This leaves us with the president's incompetence. On this score, the Washington Post story is damning. It says that current and former U.S. intelligence officials fear that Russia could reverse engineer the sources and methods of the intelligence Trump shared because he revealed the city from which the Islamic State was plotting laptop bombings against airliners. The error was serious enough that the Post reported the White House briefed the intelligence community and intelligence oversight committees on the breach. Senior Trump administration officials did not dispute those facts in on-the-record statements Monday evening.

In addition to being incompetent in a national security sense, the fub is also politically embarrassing for the president. Remember that Trump campaigned on the idea that Hillary Clinton was unfit to be president because her use of a private email server was evidence of mishandling classified information. Clinton must find in this story a delicious schadenfreude.

But in light of that, it's also important to get some perspective. Let me make a prediction here. Whichever allied intelligence service had its sources and methods endangered will not end intelligence sharing with the U.S. I base this on the fact that

in the last seven years, the U.S. has endured worse. American allies were also exposed by the State Department cables shared with the world by WikiLeaks and the NSA documents provided to journalists by Edward Snowden. The Obama White House blamed a 2012 Associated Press story on another threat to airlines for disclosing a source from an allied intelligence service within al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Today we remember this incident primarily for the extraordinary steps the Justice Department took to monitor the phone records of AP reporters in its subsequent leak investigation.

None of those stories are comparable to the prospect of a sitting president sharing too many details about intelligence with a major adversary like Russia. But it's a reminder that the U.S. intelligence community has suffered greater breaches, and its relationships have survived.

Clear thinking from leading voices in business, economics, politics, foreign affairs, culture, and more.

### Share the View

Finally, the relationship with Russia is complicated. If it were up to me, I would pursue a policy of quarantine against Moscow and treat Putin and his henchmen like the diplomatic equivalent of Ebola. Past U.S. presidents though have disagreed. Barack Obama for example cooperated with Russia on arms control, the Iran agreement and counter-terrorism, while challenging

Russia on cyberwar and Ukraine. On Syria, he did a little of both.

Indeed, it was Obama's secretary of state, John Kerry, who proposed in August a plan by which the U.S. would share sensitive targeting information with Russia in Syria to forge a partnership in fighting the Islamic State. At the time, military leaders balked at the idea of sharing such intelligence with a country that was bombing the rebels the U.S. were ostensibly supporting in Syria.

Trump has said he would like to pursue partnership with Russia as well in Syria. Of course, it's politically much harder for him to do that when his campaign is being investigated by the FBI for its ties to Russia. It's even harder after last week, when he fired the FBI director leading that investigation. This latest blunder sets back this agenda even further.

Perhaps we'll learn eventually that this was all a grand scheme of the Kremlin's. It's also possible that the intelligence breach reported Monday by the Washington Post is less than meets the eye -- a gaffe without huge consequences. The most likely explanation for now is troubling enough: The president is bad at his job. Stupid trumps sinister.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

## POLITICO Trump's trust problem

By Ben Wofford

Senior administration officials have strained their credibility with the public with months of false, misleading or tortured statements.

President Donald Trump was accused of leaking highly classified information to Russian officials, and White House officials wanted to fiercely rebut the charges.

But when senior national security officials issued statements Monday night, including from behind a podium on the West Wing driveway, they spoke for an administration that has strained its credibility by issuing a series of false, misleading or tortured statements on far less important matters. And they spoke for a president who less than a week ago said publicly that his aides and surrogates can't be expected to give

accurate statements, because they don't always know what's going on.

### Story Continued Below

"This story is false," said Dina Powell, a deputy national security adviser. "The story, as reported, is false," said H.R. McMaster, the national security adviser, hedging his words.

News outlets — including The New York Times and Reuters —

confirmed the story reported by The Washington Post and published anyway, seemingly unconcerned about the denials, which came from two officials who have been respected in Washington for decades. The episode underscored Trump's challenge after months of misstatements over far less consequential matters.

Their credibility is completely shattered. They've engaged in serial

lying to the American people on issues big and small — beginning with the crowd size photos. It's unprecedented for an administration, from the top on down, to embrace a strategy of deception and lying," said Steve Schmidt, a Republican consultant and former campaign manager for John McCain.

"Even people who have built up reputations for integrity over a lifetime of public service, they risk squandering it in this administration," Schmidt said.

White House officials note that the media is historically unpopular, and they love combating mistakes in news stories, often posting them on Twitter. "FAKE NEWS!" Trump has posted repeatedly. Senior officials have excoriated media outlets publicly and privately, with chief strategist Steve Bannon calling the media "the opposition party." And they note that polls show their supporters trust Trump more than the media.

Spicer didn't respond to several phone calls seeking comment.

Still, among reporters who cover the White House, on-the-record statements from Trump's White House carry little

weight because Trump has told hundreds of falsehoods, tracked by PolitiFact and other websites. Sometimes, in a single campaign-style rally, the president will say more than a dozen things that are not true — or lack all context. He has made unsubstantiated claims, like saying former President Barack Obama put a "tapp" on his phones at Trump Tower.

Trump publicly, in "The Art of the Deal," has bragged about his ability to exaggerate.

Spicer, the press secretary, has vehemently defended Trump both publicly and privately — sometimes screaming at reporters for their reliance on anonymous sources. But he lost credibility early among reporters for his repeated untruths about the crowd size at Trump's inauguration.

Last week, Spicer told reporters they were incorrect for even suggesting that Trump decided to fire FBI Director James Comey before a memo arrived from Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. Trump said within two days that he would have fired Comey no matter what the memo said, directly contradicting his spokesman and Vice President Mike Pence.

"They started burning through their credibility on Inauguration Day," Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii) told POLITICO. "But they devoured it during the Comey story, so now their attempts to push back are basically being ignored, and rightly so."

Sometimes, White House officials have been given specific talking points by Trump, as when Spicer crowed that Trump had the largest inauguration crowd of all time, which wasn't true. And sometimes Trump just changes his story.

"As a very active President with lots of things happening, it is not possible for my surrogates to stand at podium with perfect accuracy!" Trump wrote on Twitter last week. He added: "Maybe the best thing to do would be to cancel all future 'press briefings' and hand out written responses for the sake of accuracy???"

The factually challenged comments have become something of a joke. On "Saturday Night Live" this weekend, Melissa McCarthy, who plays Sean Spicer on the show, asked whether Trump had ever passed along misleading information for him to share with the media.

"Only since you started working here," Trump, played by Alec Baldwin, said.

For reporters and spokespeople, the dynamics are different in Trump's White House, said Stu Loeser, a longtime press secretary to New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Loeser said spokespeople often spin aggressively or tell small fibs — "like a spokesman saying, 'I haven't seen your story,' even though it's been out there for 11 hours."

But in Trump's White House, the denials or comments are likely to matter far less — which could hurt reporters and spokespeople alike if both sides are interested in the truth.

"You need to reserve credibility for when it matters — when a call comes in late in the day and you need to be able to say to a reporter, all the jousting back and forth aside, 'I've never lied to you about something and this isn't true,'" said Loeser.

"If you've blown your credibility on crowd size or semantics, people say: What else are they going to lie about?"



## Russians Actually Are 'Laughing Up Their Sleeves' at the United States

AMY Ferris  
Rotman

MOSCOW — Last week, while he was in Washington to meet with President Donald Trump and his American counterpart, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov decided to take a moment to crack wise.

The town was up in arms over Trump's recent firing of FBI Director James Comey — there was talk of little else. But during a brief appearance before reporters with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Lavrov pretended to be in the dark about the sacking.

"Was he fired?" Lavrov deadpanned, in response to a question. "You're kidding. You're kidding," he said, his lip slightly curled in a smirk.

It was an unscripted moment, both playful and cutting. But it also served to give Americans a brief window into how Russia views the unfolding chaos of the Trump presidency: Russians, it turns out, think this is all sort of hilarious.

U.S. democracy may be facing one of its toughest challenges in hundreds of years, but for Russia, this is a time for heaping servings of schadenfreude. After decades of hectoring from Washington on issues such as unfair elections, a

clampdown on the press, and widespread corruption, Moscow is happily watching chaos and scandal embroil the Trump administration. The more lawless Washington appears, the more Russians are howling with laughter. When Trump tweeted last week that Russians must be "laughing up their sleeves" at the United States, he wasn't wrong, exactly — though the target of Russian laughter might not be quite what the U.S. president thinks.

Some of the joking comes in the form of *Saturday Night Live*-style political comedy. The Russian comedian Dmitry Grachev, for instance — known for his chillingly accurate impression of President Vladimir Putin — regularly heaps scorn on Trump while in character. In a widely viewed clip mocking the leaders' first telephone conversation, Putin is handed a mobile phone and told Washington is on the line. "The what house? I didn't recognize you," he tells the supposed leader of the free world. Various impersonations of Trump are also beginning to appear on Russian television, which typically depict the U.S. president as a buffoon who gets outfoxed by Moscow. In March, the popular Russian TV show *Comedy Club*, shown on the youth-focused channel TNT, featured an actor as

Trump. The ersatz Trump thinks former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is a type of sushi. He then plays charades against Grachev as Putin. Trump is visibly scared of the Russian president, but proposes expanding NATO in Europe. Putin responds by acting out a missile landing across the ocean and Trump hastily retreats. "Are you threatening me?" Trump asks. "No," Putin replies, maintaining the façade of playing charades. "It's just a grasshopper jumping in a pile of flour."

In Moscow, requests for Trump lookalikes at parties and private events have been flooding in, according to several impersonator-for-hire agencies contacted by Foreign Policy. "So many people have asked for Trump that it may be time to add him to the list," said Maksim Chadkov, director of sales at Artist.ru, which has a database of more than 13,000 actors, lookalikes, and musicians, including doubles of Michael Jackson, Marilyn Monroe, and a slew of Russian pop stars. "We'll show him in a funny light, as a parody. No one wants to take him seriously."

But it isn't just comedy programs. A remarkable number of jokes at America's expense are coming from official Russian sources.

But it isn't just comedy programs. A remarkable number of jokes at America's expense are coming from official Russian sources.

Last week, in a subplot to the Comey firing, Russia's state-run TASS news agency was allowed in the Oval Office to photograph the meeting among Trump, Lavrov, and Russia's ambassador to Washington, Sergey Kislyak — while the U.S. press was excluded. After the meeting, the Russian Embassy in Washington used the social networking service Storify to create a tongue-in-cheek "caption contest" for one of the TASS photos: a large image of Trump shaking hands with Kislyak. Meanwhile, the White House fumed at the Russians' public release of the photos, which Washington claimed were for official use only.

On Sunday, Russia's state-run broadcasters' evening news programs were dripping with sarcasm about the week that was in Washington. "The new action-drama series, tentatively titled 'Secrets of Trump's Oval Office,' becomes more fascinating every day," political commentator Evgeny Baranov said on the major broadcaster Channel One. "Russia's footprint only enhances the intrigues of this bold plotline. ... The latest episode with the unexpected resignation of

Comey promises to be extremely gripping."

Lavrov's zinger in Washington came a few weeks after a particularly trolly April Fools' prank on the part of the Russian Foreign Ministry. On its Facebook page, the ministry posted a fake voicemail recorded by a man who sounded a lot like Lavrov. "To arrange a call from a Russian diplomat to your political opponent, press one," the recording began. For the services of Russian hackers, or aid with election interference, listeners could select options two or three.

Even Putin has gotten in on the fun, telling CBS News on the side of an ice rink that being asked about the impact of the Comey affair on U.S.-

Russian relations was "a funny question." He then told the reporter to go play hockey, before taking to the ice himself.

Of course, it's not all fun and games in Moscow. There have been reports that Russians are unnerved by the apparent instability of the new White House occupant, while hopes for a détente in Russian-U.S. relations after years of strain under the Obama administration have all but vanished in recent weeks. The U.S. bombing of a Syrian air base may have been the final straw in a fraying attempt at a reset.

Still, the current spate of jokes draws, in part, on a long tradition of dark Russian political humor. Soviet citizens often armed themselves

with playful wit against the regime. Jokes about the gulags, Kremlin leadership, and food shortages became part of daily life. (A recently declassified CIA document dump included Soviet-era jokes that American agents would translate and send home in order to gauge the public opinion and mood in the country. A particularly popular Soviet joke goes: A man walks into a shop and asks, "You don't have any meat?" "No," replies the saleslady. "We don't have any fish. It's the store across the street that doesn't have any meat.")

After the collapse of the Soviet Union a quarter-century ago, the jokes petered out for a while after authorities lost their grip on power, said translator and *Moscow Times*

columnist Michele Berdy. But dark humor is back — only this time, even as Russians take snide pokes at their leadership ("Putin shows up at passport control with Poland. 'Nationality?' he's asked. 'Russian,' he says. 'Occupation?' Putin smiles. 'Not this time — just a short business trip") they've turned their humor toward overseas targets. And this time, the Russian elite look as if they're in on the joke — a celebration of their seeming moment of triumph, Berdy said. It's "the kind of cocky joking of people who feel on top and don't care if they offend," she said. "Or are happy to offend."



## Trump Just Betrayed America's Intelligence Community

Clint Watts

When Donald Trump was elected, U.S. intelligence officials feared that allies would stop sharing critical intelligence information for fear that information might be passed on to Russia. European countries in particular rightfully worried their secrets would land in the hands of Vladimir Putin even as he meddled in their elections.

Wednesday, it appears those fears were realized.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and the infamous Ambassador Sergey Kislyak must have giggled inside, maybe even smirked a little as Russia's preferred President bragged to them about how "I get great intel. I have people brief me on great intel every day." Trump's bravado allegedly revealed highly classified specifics about an Islamic State plot to bomb civilian aviation, one that has triggered months of incremental bans on laptops being carried into airplane cabins bound for the U.S.

He gave that information—which came from an ally as part of what the Washington Post describes as "an intelligence-sharing arrangement considered so sensitive that details have been withheld from allies and tightly restricted even within the U.S. government"—to an adversary, Russia. The same adversary under scrutiny for its widespread hacking of American leaders, including the Presidential campaign of Hillary Clinton, the personal emails of former Secretary of State General Colin Powell and former NATO commander General Breedlove, hacking which may have tipped the election in favor of Trump.

By releasing classified intelligence, at best, Trump created a gaffe for which any American other than the commander-in-chief might be imprisoned. At worst, he revealed and put at risk the life of an essential intelligence source of a critical foreign ally.

Above all, Trump further eroded trust in America and amongst Americans at a time when democracy has come under the intense assault of Russian Active Measures to break up the European Union and the NATO military alliance.

Trump's classified disclosures undermine trust in several ways. Most damaged in this ad-hoc information exchange is the partner country and its intelligence service providing such valuable support to America. Greg Miller and Greg Jaffe at the Washington Post suggest the information came from a non-traditional, sensitive intelligence sharing arrangement with "access to the inner workings of the Islamic State." This points to a highly coveted human intelligence source likely provided by a Middle Eastern partner that is quite likely an adversary of Syrian President Bashar Assad—a Syrian regime allied with Russia.

Trump's revelation may well place this rare human source, a type the U.S. intelligence community has struggled to develop after the September 11th attacks, in physical danger. It badly damages a critical intelligence sharing relationship now and well into the future.

If the country sharing intelligence information with the U.S. is an Arab partner, which is likely, this undermines the legitimacy of the country's leadership with their own population by associating them with

a vocal, anti-Muslim Trump administration. Thank You!

Even more complicated is Russia's relationship with the U.S. intelligence sharing partner country. If Russia had not received the same intelligence as the Americans, for example, Russia may wonder why this country was holding out. Or if Russia received a different version of the intelligence from the partner country, Trump's unapproved information dump might undermine or exasperate Russia's relationship with the partner country.

Trump's braggadocio "revealed more information to the Russian ambassador than we have shared with our allies," the Post reported and the news that he's done so will strain trust not just with the country sharing this piece of information, but also among other allies and inside the U.S. intelligence community. America's greatest intelligence sharing comes from its "Five Eyes" partners in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

The U.K. followed the U.S. laptop ban and Canada considered doing the same, but it appears the Five Eyes may not have received all the intelligence from the U.S., and those critical allies may well feel slighted and mistrustful if they didn't get the full scoop.

Get The Beast In Your Inbox!

### Daily Digest

Start and finish your day with the top stories from The Daily Beast.

### Cheat Sheet

A speedy, smart summary of all the news you need to know (and nothing you don't).

You are now subscribed to the Daily Digest and Cheat Sheet. We will not share your email with anyone for any reason.

U.S. government intelligence leaders must also conduct business with the White House using extreme caution. Those compiling the CIA's Presidential Daily Brief must now wrestle with the question: "Can I provide this information to President Trump and still protect and maintain the safety of my sources and support of intelligence partners?"

In answering that, true intelligence professionals might hold back critical information from the Leaker-in-Chief whose ego and desire to impress preclude sound judgment. That in turn means key decisions would be made by a reckless, emotional and volatile President with an incomplete picture of the situation.

One slip-up might be excusable, but Trump's release to the Russians came just one day after his dismissal of FBI Director Comey for pretenses that almost immediately were exposed as false. Two days later, he further eroded trust amongst government leaders by insinuating on Twitter that he had taped his conversations with Comey. America's defense, intelligence and law enforcement officials are now more incentivized to hide information and protect themselves than to share and inform America's top leader—an unprecedented and sad state of affairs.

Talk of some Russia-Trump conspiracy only grows with the American President's leak of classified information. The day following his dismissal of Comey,

Trump held a closed session with Lavrov and where Ambassador Kislyak also appeared—a character whose meetings have been a trademark signature of Russia's influence of the Trump team, having sullied General Michael Flynn, Jared Kushner, Attorney General Sessions and campaign surrogate Carter Page.

When Angela Merkel met with Trump, he treated her with disdain

and allegedly served her and Germany, a more than 50-year ally of the U.S. during and after the Cold War, a bill for perceived unpaid NATO commitments. With Lavrov and Kislyak, representatives of a U.S. adversary, Trump laughed it up as seen in the pictures taken by a Russian photographer after he blocked the U.S. press from observing the event.

The last seven days have forced Americans, including those in the intelligence community, to ask disturbing questions: What is wrong with the President? Is he insane? Incompetent? Why is he furthering Russia's aims by sowing distrust amongst America's allies? Why would he complain of leaks from inside the U.S. government even as he leaks classified information to Russia?

With those questions, loyal Americans serving his administration are searching for ways to sideline or corral the President before the U.S. finds itself devoid of credible intelligence, alone in the world and highly vulnerable to foreign threats.

## ETATS-UNIS



### James Traub : Donald Trump Is the President America Deserves

In the hours after Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen emerged as the finalists in France's presidential election, on April 23, one defeated French politician after another trooped to a microphone to

announce that, whatever their differences with Macron, they would support his candidacy in order to defeat a figure they viewed as a threat to France's cherished republican values. "Extremism can only bring unhappiness and

division," said François Fillon, the nominee for the center-right Les Républicains. Benoît Hamon, the Socialist candidate, and Alain Juppé, who had lost the primary to Fillon, used similar language. Among major candidates, only the

far-left Jean-Luc Mélenchon declined to join the parade.



### Zelizer : Trump 'tapes' are an ugly echo

Julian Zelizer, a history and public affairs professor at Princeton University and a CNN political analyst, is the author of "The Fierce Urgency of Now: Lyndon Johnson, Congress, and the Battle for the Great Society." He's co-host of the "Politics & Polls" podcast. The opinions expressed in this commentary are his own.

(CNN) It feels like President Donald Trump is doing everything in his power to invite the comparison with President Richard Nixon -- and most people don't mean it as a compliment.

President Trump decided to fire the FBI director heading an investigation into the President's campaign and its potential connections to Russia. Historians and political pundits instantly invoked the Saturday Night Massacre, when Nixon ordered the firing of special prosecutor Archibald Cox, who was investigating the Watergate break-in scandal, and the attorney general and his deputy resigned rather than follow orders.

Then, as if President Trump wanted to underline a point, he moved forward with an Oval Office meeting and photo-op with Henry Kissinger, best known as Nixon's national security adviser.

On Friday came the bombshell. In the process of trying to intimidate Comey, Trump warned, via a tweet, that Comey "better hope that there are no 'tapes' of our conversations before he starts leaking to the press."

Nothing is quite as Nixonian as a White House recordings controversy, especially since the impetus for the Saturday Night Massacre was Nixon's refusal to comply with orders to release recordings of White House conversations. Numerous senators from both parties instantly demanded the President release any tapes should they exist. "I am by no means a legal expert," said Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, "but this sure seems to have reverberations of past history."

If any recordings exist, their content and the manner in which the White House handles congressional demands to review them will have a much bigger impact than their mere existence. The truth is that we know several presidents secretly recorded their conversations. Starting with President Franklin Roosevelt and continuing through Richard Nixon, presidents -- motivated by everything from a desire to keep accurate records to counter press attacks to a wish to preserve history -- taped telephone conversations and Oval Office meetings. While experts believed the tradition stopped with Nixon, we learned in 2014 that President Reagan recorded telephone conversations with foreign leaders.

As he moves forward, President Trump might want to think about how the revelation of the tapes in 1973 damaged President Nixon. When White House aide Alexander Butterfield revealed to the Senate

Watergate Committee in July 1973 that President Nixon had been recording conversations, all hell broke loose. The tapes became pivotal to Nixon's downfall.

President Nixon's efforts to prevent Congress or special prosecutors from seeing the tapes based on executive privilege created a sense among the public and in the halls of Congress that the nation faced a constitutional crisis. Judge John Sirica ruled the tapes be turned over to him for use by a grand jury investigating Watergate. The White House asked the US Court of Appeals to overrule the decision. The White House lost. Even after the Saturday Night Massacre, the 1,300 pages of edited transcripts that Nixon voluntarily shared were shocking -- even though they were sanitized. The transcripts revealed how Nixon had used "dirty tricks" in his campaigns. The constant presence of the phrase "expletives deleted" became a running joke and hurt his standing. "Impeach 'Expletives Deleted'" read the sign of one protester.

Sirica, who had been able to hear some of the actual tapes, knew how much the President had left out in the transcripts. Investigators would discover that there was an unexplained 18½ minute gap during a 1972 conversation about the Watergate break-in, which further fueled suspicion of the President. Finally, the "smoking gun" recording that Congress heard on August 5, a few days after the Supreme Court unanimously ruled the President had

to hand over the tapes on July 24, 1974, exposed how President Nixon had attempted to block the FBI investigation. Legislators could hear Nixon tell aide H.R. Haldeman on June 23, 1972, that the CIA "should call the FBI in and say that we wish for the country, don't go any further in this case—period!" That was the final straw for most members of Congress and signaled the end of the Nixon presidency.

The major difference with President Nixon is that no matter how crass the conversations, nothing could be worse than what the current President has already said and tweeted in public. The famous "Access Hollywood" tape did more than anything to push Americans away, but in the end, Trump survived.

At the same time, there is a potentially damaging similarity between Nixon's "smoking gun" tape and what may exist today -- namely, the possibility of attempts to thwart an FBI investigation. If there is evidence President Trump was attempting to obstruct justice in the Russia investigation, this could be devastating. Members of Congress, including Republicans, have become much sharper in their criticism since the President fired Comey and then followed up with comments admitting this was in response to the Russia investigation.

It is still difficult to prove that he intended to obstruct justice. If members were to hear actual conversations with the President

plotting out a way to stifle law enforcement officials and members of Congress, that could be a tipping point that causes many in the GOP to finally break ranks.

Any kind of record that confirms the fears ethics experts in both parties have been raising since his victory could provide enough fodder to turn the conversation toward impeachment. Equally politically devastating would be any kind of recording of President Trump speaking

cynically about the core group of supporters who have kept him afloat; that could be the one thing that erodes the steady support he enjoys within the populist Republican base.

President Trump should remember the political and judicial battles over the tapes in 1973 and 1974 proved to be as politically destructive as the tapes themselves. President Nixon's aggressive effort to block access to the material was a powerful factor causing many Democrats and

Republicans to conclude this was a president who was out of control, and who needed to be removed from office.

Of course, it could well be that there are no tapes and President Trump has simply been fueling the speculation to distract the attention of the media. If so, then we would be talking about a President who used his bully pulpit to issue a direct threat against a potential witness against him. Not exactly presidential behavior.

If President Trump thinks this issue will go away, he's almost certainly wrong. He's the one who changed the story by bashing the investigation about Russia and got people talking about obstruction of justice. Nixon, who also blasted the investigation about him as partisan hogwash, learned that sometimes, a president can turn out to be his own worst enemy.



## How Bad Is Disclosing 'Code Word' Information?

Amy Zegart

Today *The Washington Post* dropped the bombshell that President Trump had revealed classified information about the Islamic State to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak when the three of them met at the White House last week. You know a story is big when it gets as many concurrent visitors as the story about the infamous Access Hollywood video. There was no hiding near bushes in the dark this time to walk back the damage. Deputy National-Security Advisor Dina Powell declared the story "false," and the administration also called out the big guns, with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster dutifully rushing into the breach to discuss the breach, using oh-so-carefully worded statements about how the president did not reveal "sources or methods" or any "military operations" that were not already known publicly.

So just how bad is the damage? On a scale of 1 to 10—and I'm just ball parking here—it's about a billion. The story, which has since been confirmed by *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, Reuters, Buzzfeed, and CNN, notes that the president could have jeopardized a critical source of intelligence on

the Islamic State. Not America's source. Somebody else's. Presumably from an allied intelligence service who now knows that the American president cannot be trusted with sensitive information.

The type of information Trump cavalierly shared fell under a classification known as "code word," according to the *Post*. There are three basic levels of classified information. Confidential information is defined as anything that could reasonably be expected to "cause damage" to American national security if shared without authorization. Secret information is one step up, considered to have the potential to cause "serious damage" if revealed. Top Secret information is a higher classification level still, comprising anything that could reasonably be expected to cause "exceptionally grave damage" to U.S. national security if revealed.

Code word is beyond Top Secret. It limits access to classified information to a much narrower pool of people to provide an extra layer of security. Many secrets are super-secrets—Harry Truman, as vice president, didn't know about the Manhattan project. He learned of it only after Franklin Delano Roosevelt died and Truman was sworn in as president. Code word classification is so far off the scale, even fake spies rarely refer to it in

the movies. Technically, the president can "declassify" anything he wants, so he did not violate any laws. But as *Lawfare* notes, if the president tweeted out the nuclear codes, he also wouldn't violate the law—but he would rightly be considered unfit for office.

Did Trump reveal intelligence crown jewels or just boast about the fact that he liked diamonds? According to the *Post* he revealed information about a purported ISIS plot involving laptops. It's likely, however, that Tillerson, McMaster, the *Post* and the *Times* are ALL correct: The president did not reveal sources or methods or military operations. But that doesn't matter much if he gave away information that will enable the Russians to identify the source or the methods. It looks like he did, since according to the *Post*'s account he talked about the content of a specific plot, the potential harm, and the location of the city in the Islamic State's territory where the allied state's intelligence service detected it. It was almost everything except the GPS coordinates. The denials by Tillerson and McMaster are a classic case of intelligence super-parsing—saying things that are technically and narrowly true but may not be accurate at all. No spin can hide the fact that the breach was deadly serious and reckless in the extreme.

Then there's the impact on America's unnamed ally, whom the *Post* reported was already nervous about sharing such sensitive intelligence with the United States. It is difficult to penetrate the Islamic State, and there is a major risk that this breach will close down a vital source. It's an even bigger deal in the big picture, potentially jeopardizing intelligence cooperation with other U.S. allies around the world. Trump already raised intelligence eyebrows when he turned his Mar-a-Lago dining area into an impromptu Situation Room after the North Koreans decided to launch a ballistic missile. The president and his aides used the lights on cell phones to illuminate field reports, in full view of resort dinner guests snapping photos. If you're known as someone who cannot keep a secret, the world's secret-keepers are not going to tell you much.

"Can you believe the world we live in today?" President Trump said, according to one official in the two Sergeis meeting. "Isn't it crazy?"

Yes, Mr. President. It's crazy.



## Goldberg

Jonah Goldberg

Dear Vice President Pence,

I hope you don't mind me writing to you like this, but as one of those conservatives who was somewhat reassured by Donald Trump's decision to put you on the ticket, I feel compelled to ask: What's the endgame here?

Retired Gen. Michael Flynn, the president's first national security advisor, was reportedly fired for misleading you about his

## : Dear Vice President Pence: What are you thinking?

conversations with the Russians. But last week, you were apparently misled about the president's reasons for firing the FBI director.

In four different instances you said James Comey was terminated on the recommendation of the deputy attorney general, who criticized how Comey handled the Hillary Clinton email investigation during last year's election campaign. Then the president told NBC's Lester Holt that the recommendation had nothing to do with it. It was all about the Russia investigation.

Maybe you weren't misled. Maybe you were part of the deception. But I'd like to think that's not the case.

Either way, is this really what you had in mind when you took the job?

I wouldn't dare appeal to you as a man of devout Christian faith, that's not my job. (It's also particularly awkward for a guy named Goldberg.) Nor do I see much point in blathering on about patriotism. I know you're a patriot with an abiding love for your country.

So let's talk about your ambition.

Ambition is not necessarily a dirty word. The founders thought that ambition more than almost anything else would preserve our system of checks and balances.

I have to assume you accepted your position at least partly for the same reason most of your predecessors did: to get you closer to the top job.

But there's a reason only two vice presidents (Martin Van Buren and George H.W. Bush) have been elected straight to the Oval Office since the passage of the 12th Amendment in 1804: The electorate

tends to get antsy. Voters want to stay the course if they have great confidence in the administration.

It's early yet, but may I ask: How's that going? I'm not privy to what's happening behind the scenes, but from where I'm sitting, it doesn't look like it's going too well.

The Comey fiasco doesn't help the president, and your apparent willingness to abet his misbehavior doesn't help you.

I understand that the vice presidency is an awkward position under the best of circumstances. It's a bit like the Newark Airport of

**The Washington Post**

## PRESIDENT TRUMP'S firing of FBI Director

James B. Comey has rattled Washington. Mr. Trump's admission that the Russia investigation was a motivating factor has legal scholars debating whether he obstructed justice. Fresh polling shows that the public is confused and wary of the direction Mr. Trump is heading. The Democrats are contemplating a scorched-earth war over the Comey firing, using the Senate's many opportunities for obstruction to slow an already lethargic legislative process.

All of which points to the need for a new FBI director who is universally recognized as credible and above partisanship. No matter what you think of their past or current service, that list would not include several politicians reportedly under consideration for the job, such as

constitutional offices, mostly famous for the bad things people say about it. John Nance Garner, Franklin D. Roosevelt's first vice president, said it wasn't "worth a warm bucket of," well, historians debate which bodily byproduct he mentioned. Harry Truman, FDR's third vice president, said the office was "about as useful as a cow's fifth teat."

If that was once true, it isn't any longer. As you like to say, Trump threw away the old playbook. You have a role to play beyond acting like a campaign flunky, praising the president at every turn as a man of

action displaying his "broad-shouldered leadership."

There's room to do more on your own shoulders.

Much of the president's power is derived from what Teddy Roosevelt called the "bully pulpit," or what legendary political scientist Richard Neustadt called the "power to persuade." In today's media landscape, you have an especially potent bully pulpit, because you're the one person the president cannot fire.

Let's assume Trump played you for a patsy. I don't think you should

resign, but threatening to do so if he does it again might — just might — help the president get his act together, which would be good for you, the party and the country. You are also the tie-breaker in the Senate, which means something given the GOP's precariously thin majority.

The president claims to value loyalty, but we know he respects strength. For your sake and the country, maybe it's time to show some.

**The Washington Post**

## Editorial : The FBI needs a nonpartisan director

Sen. John Cornyn (R-Tex.), Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.) and former congressman Mike Rogers (R-Mich.) — or, for that matter, any other current or former elected official of either party.

Replacing the resolutely independent Mr. Comey with someone who has had an "R" next to his or her name would stoke concerns that the president purposefully gutted oversight of his campaign and administration. Even choosing a Democrat would harm the FBI. The suspicion of any partisan inclination at a time when the president's campaign is under investigation would be toxic for the nation's faith in a core federal institution in general and its conclusions regarding Russia's 2016 election hacking in particular.

Opinions newsletter

Thought-provoking opinions and commentary, in your inbox daily.

Even in normal times, elevating a politician to lead the FBI would be contrary to the agency's professional ethos. No permanent FBI director has ever been a partisan elected official. Rather, each has been drawn from the ranks of law-enforcement agents, lawyers and judges. The agency became a pillar of the American criminal-justice system in part because political cronies were purged and professional standards raised in its early days.

The FBI's top post must not become one more partisan prize, swinging back and forth between committed Republicans and Democrats as administrations turn over. Congress granted the FBI director a decade-long term to insulate the FBI's vast police powers from politics. This

alone should have given Mr. Trump pause before he took the extraordinary step of firing Mr. Comey after less than half his allotted term. Now that Mr. Trump has made that fateful choice, the president must refrain from doing even more damage — and, if he does not understand, members of Congress must make clear they will not allow him to make a bad situation worse.

"I think it's now time to pick somebody that comes from within the ranks or has such a reputation that has no political background at all, who can go into the job on day one," Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) said on Sunday's "Meet the Press." Mr. Graham has it just right.

**The New York Times**

David Brooks

His inability to focus his attention makes it hard for him to learn and master facts. He is ill informed about his own policies and tramples his own talking points. It makes it hard to control his mouth. On an impulse, he will promise a tax reform when his staff has done little of the actual work.

Second, most people of drinking age have achieved some accurate sense of themselves, some internal criteria to measure their own merits and demerits. But Trump seems to need perpetual outside approval to stabilize his sense of self, so he is perpetually desperate for approval, telling heroic fabulist tales about himself.

"In a short period of time I understood everything there was to know about health care," he told Time. "A lot of the people have said that, some people said it was the single best speech ever made in

that chamber," he told The Associated Press, referring to his joint session speech.

By Trump's own account, he knows more about aircraft carrier technology than the Navy. According to his interview with The Economist, he invented the phrase "priming the pump" (even though it was famous by 1933). Trump is not only trying to deceive others. His falsehoods are attempts to build a world in which he can feel good for an instant and comfortably deceive himself.

He is thus the all-time record-holder of the Dunning-Kruger effect, the phenomenon in which the incompetent person is too incompetent to understand his own incompetence. Trump thought he'd be celebrated for firing James Comey. He thought his press coverage would grow wildly positive once he won the nomination. He is perpetually surprised because

reality does not comport with his fantasies.

Third, by adulthood most people can perceive how others are thinking. For example, they learn subtle arts such as false modesty so they won't be perceived as obnoxious.

But Trump seems to have not yet developed a theory of mind. Other people are black boxes that supply either affirmation or disapproval. As a result, he is weirdly transparent. He wants people to love him, so he is constantly telling interviewers that he is widely loved. In Trump's telling, every meeting was scheduled for 15 minutes but his guests stayed two hours because they liked him so much.

Which brings us to the reports that Trump betrayed an intelligence source and leaked secrets to his Russian visitors. From all we know so far, Trump didn't do it because he is a Russian agent, or for any

malevolent intent. He did it because he is sloppy, because he lacks all impulse control, and above all because he is a 7-year-old boy desperate for the approval of those he admires.

The Russian leak story reveals one other thing, the dangerousness of a hollow man.

Our institutions depend on people who have enough engraved character traits to fulfill their assigned duties. But there is perpetually less to Trump than it appears. When we analyze a president's utterances we tend to assume that there is some substantive process behind the words, that it's part of some strategic intent.

But Trump's statements don't necessarily come from anywhere, lead anywhere or have a permanent reality beyond his wish to be liked at any given instant.

We've got this perverse situation in which the vast analytic powers of the entire world are being spent trying to understand a guy whose thoughts are often just six fireflies beeping randomly in a jar.

"We badly want to understand Trump, to grasp him," David Roberts writes in Vox. "It might give us some sense of control, or at least an ability to predict what he will do next. But what if there's nothing to

understand? What if there is no *there* there?" betrayed an intelligence source, and endangered a country.

And out of that void comes a carelessness that quite possibly