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FRANCE - EUROPE

Bloomberg

Macron Tackles French Labor Law in First Push to Fix Economy

Gregory Viscusi

Emmanuel Macron begins work on Tuesday on what may be one of the defining issues of his presidency: simplifying France's labor code.

On his 10th day in office, Macron and Labor Minister Muriel Penicaud are starting a round of meetings with France's unions and business organizations to see if there's any common ground for distilling the country's byzantine labor rules and letting individual companies negotiate wages rather than being subject to industrywide agreements. The draft text of any new law isn't expected until after legislative elections in June.

The issue has frustrated French presidents for at least two decades as the country's powerful unions opposed efforts to reduce job protection for their members. Yet Macron has signaled that shifting the French labor market onto a more flexible footing will be central to his strategy for boosting growth, keeping populism in check in the long term and winning the trust of the German government in shorter order.

France needs to "improve the access to the labor market for job seekers, notably the less qualified workers and people with a migrant background," the European Commission said Monday in its

annual economic-policy recommendations. The government should "further reduce the regulatory burden for firms," it added.

Hollande's Attempt

The French Labor Code runs some 3,000 pages and beyond issues such as labor negotiations and firing procedures, includes statutes on bathroom breaks and the dimensions of windows in work spaces. Penicaud, named to Macron's first government last week, is a former head of human resources at food company Danone.

"I'm delighted to see the president fully take on this issue that has been left to fester for far too long," Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said at a press conference in Brussels Monday, after his first meeting with his European counterparts. "We all know that reforming the labor code is the key to allowing companies create more jobs."

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As economy minister under former President Francois Hollande, Macron helped write a labor law that would have limited severance payments and made it easier for companies to fire workers during a downturn. The law was watered

down after protests from unions and Macron ended up leaving the government in August 2016 to create his own political movement, the jumping off point for his presidential campaign.

The law, now called the El Khomri law after Hollande's labor minister, was pushed through by decree that same month. The government of former President Jacques Chirac in 2006 also backed down on a proposed law that would have made it easier to fire young workers after street protests.

Government by Decree

Philippe Martinez, head of France's second largest union, the CGT, on Monday signaled that Macron's ambitions are again going to face opposition.

"For the moment we've just had the comments the president made during the campaign, but to discuss you need a text and we have no text," Martinez said on Europe1. "If he wants salaries to be negotiated at the company level, then we are against."

Thibault Lanxade, vice-president of business lobby Medef, said the restrictions on firing workers made entrepreneurs reluctant to take on staff, even if that mean passing up opportunities to expand.

"Small company owners want to be able to hire but not when it's very difficult to let people go when the economic situation changes," Lanxade said on France Inter. "Growth is there, and we can benefit from this dynamic with a labor code that is more flexible."

Macron has said he plans to discuss the labor bill with union and business leaders, but will then enact the resulting laws via decree to avoid parliamentary debate and amendments. Martinez said he has no opposition to using decrees, as long as it's for measures that the unions have agreed to.

"Using decrees is not the problem in itself," he said. "But you can't say you want dialogue, and then say you want to go fast, and during the vacations."

The French government spokesman Christophe Castaner said Tuesday he doesn't expect the same level of opposition that Hollande faced when he tried to loosen labor laws.

"The Khomri Law came at the end of the term, and was never part of his mandate," Castaner said on France2 television. "Emmanuel Macron was elected with a plan to free up labor in this country."



REUTERS
and Adrian Croft

France's Macron seeks extended emergency powers after Manchester attack | Reuters

By Brian Love

PARIS The French parliament will be asked to extend by several months emergency powers introduced in 2015 to counter the threat of terrorist attacks, President Emmanuel Macron said on Wednesday after talks with security chiefs.

Emergency rules giving French police wider search and arrest powers were introduced after Islamist gunmen and suicide bombers killed 130 people in and around Paris in November 2015.

Macron, who reviewed national security with defense chiefs following Monday night's suicide

bomb attack on a concert venue in northern England, said he would ask lawmakers to extend the special powers - due to expire in mid-July - until Nov. 1.

The attack in Manchester, claimed by Islamic State, killed 22 people and wounded dozens more. It struck a chord in France where more than 230 people have died in the past two years in attacks by Islamist militants.

Three weeks into his presidency, and facing parliamentary elections in June, Macron will want to be seen as being decisive in dealing with the threat of attacks after his presidential rivals portrayed him as weak on security matters.

A statement by the Elysee palace said Macron told his government to devise additional measures for countering the security threats beyond the emergency powers and produce a draft bill to put to parliament in the coming weeks.

He also gave instructions for a task force comprised of all the French security services to be swiftly established to coordinate actions against attacks.

Earlier, Interior Minister Gerard Collomb said French authorities had learned from British investigators that the suspect in the Manchester bombing, British-born Salman Abedi, had traveled to Libya and probably Syria. [nL8N1IP5HV]

"Today we only know what British investigators have told us - that someone of British nationality, of Libyan origin, suddenly, after a trip to Libya and then probably to Syria, becomes radicalized and decides to carry out this attack," Collomb told BFMTV.

Asked if he believed Abedi was supported by a network, Collomb said: "That is not known yet - but maybe. In any case, (he had) links with Daesh (Islamic State) that are proven."

The Manchester attack had parallels with the November 2015 Islamist attack on the Bataclan concert hall in Paris - one of several bombings and shootings on the same night in the French capital. Islamic State

also claimed responsibility for the Paris attacks.

The performance of France's intelligence services have come under close scrutiny since the November 2015 attacks, and Collomb said that Britain could just

as easily have been the target then as well.

"What people say is that they hesitated to strike in France or Britain and that, at the time, Daesh's (Islamic state's) target was not yet completely decided and so it could

have happened in Britain then," he said.

Collomb said security had been stepped up at the star-studded Cannes Film Festival being held in the south of France.

"We are taking special measures everywhere," the minister said.

(Reporting by Brian Love and Adrian Croft; Editing by Richard Balmforth and Richard Lough)

**The
Washington
Post**

Editorial : The best response to the tragedy in Manchester

THE FIRST fatality identified Tuesday in the horrific bombing of an arena in Manchester, England, was an 18-year-old woman who had been studying health and social care in college. The second was an 8-year-old girl, whose teacher said she was "simply a beautiful little girl in every aspect of the word." A dozen other children were among the 59 people wounded in the attack, while others were likely among the 22 killed. That these innocent young people, fans of the pop singer Ariana Grande, would have been targeted by a suicide bomber allegedly affiliated with the Islamic State is as incomprehensible as it is sickening. It should redouble the determination of civilized nations to combat the evil that imbues the Islamic State and its followers.

It's not yet known precisely what role the shrinking terrorist state in Syria and Iraq may have played in the attack, though it claimed responsibility. On Tuesday police identified the attacker as 22-year-old Salman Abedi, who the BBC reported was born in Manchester to a family of Libyan origin. Police were conducting searches in the city and said it was possible accomplices would be identified; one 23-year-old man was reported detained. But defenders of vulnerable immigrants and asylum seekers, who in Britain as elsewhere in the West remain the targets of populist demagogues, could take some comfort from the fact that the assault apparently did not originate with those communities.

Britain had not suffered such a serious terrorist act since July 2005, when bombs exploded in the London subway and on a bus .

Effective policing and intelligence operations have stopped or deterred other plots. But the Manchester strike bore signs of a sophisticated operation, including the apparent use of a suicide belt packed with bolts and other improvised shrapnel. Such weapons are frequently used by Islamic State attackers in the Middle East. A key question for investigators will be how the alleged attacker obtained such a device, and whether he had help in constructing it.

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The tactics of the bombing were coldly calculated. Ms. Grande can be counted on to attract a crowd of younger fans; some were said to be attending their first concert. The bomber positioned himself near a

box office just outside the arena hall and detonated explosives as people were streaming out following the performance.

As nations across the West have learned, it is not possible to prevent all such terrorist attacks, especially when they are staged by homegrown militants. What is possible is a response that focuses on uniting rather than dividing a diverse society. That's what was happening in Manchester on Tuesday, as thousands of people of all races and faiths gathered for a vigil in the city's Albert Square. "I'm not here as a person with brown skin or someone born Muslim," a man named Amir Shah told a Guardian reporter. "I'm here as a Mancunian." If that spirit prevails, the terrorists will have failed.

**The
New York
Times**

Editorial : When Terrorists Target Children

Every victim of terrorism is innocent, and every one is to be mourned. But the bombing in Manchester, England, on Monday night that killed teenage or even younger fans of the pop star Ariana Grande, many accompanied by their parents and some clutching the pink balloons Ms. Grande had sent sweetly raining down at the end of her concert, is particularly wrenching.

By Tuesday, 22 people had died, and 59 others had been hospitalized, some with life-threatening injuries. The dead included 8-year-old Saffie Rose Roussos, who had come with her mother and older sister, and 18-year-old Georgina Bethany Callander, who had posted an image of her brand new driver's license on Instagram.

The Islamic State said one of its "soldiers" had carried out the bombing, which took the life of the man British police officials believe was behind it, Salman Abedi, a 22-year-old whose

parents emigrated from Libya. It is still unclear whether Mr. Abedi acted alone or as part of a network. No one yet knows what motivated him to commit such a horrific deed. It is also unclear whether the Islamic State's claim is legitimate. Only further investigation can answer these questions.

Meanwhile, as hard as it is amid the shock and the mourning, it is important to recognize this attack for what it is: an attempt to shake Britain — and, by extension, the rest of Europe and the West — to its core, and to provoke a thirst for vengeance and a desire for absolute safety so intense, it will sweep away the most cherished democratic values and the inclusiveness of diverse societies.

The Islamic State wants nothing more than to watch Western democracies embrace its mad version of a holy war pitting Muslims against Christians, the newly arrived against others. This has been the goal of other attacks in Europe. With cold calculation, extremists have ripped apart the lives of people

simply out enjoying themselves — whether at a concert or sitting around cafe tables in Paris in November 2015, or gathering for Bastille Day fireworks in Nice last year, or shopping at a Christmas market in Berlin in December.

Maximum vigilance is needed, and Britain raised its threat level from severe to critical. Public spaces must be made as safe as possible, even as people recognize that more attacks will very likely occur, despite our best defenses. In Britain, as in the rest of Europe and in the United States, it is critical that immigrants, especially Muslims, are not stigmatized. As Richard Barrett, former director of global counterterrorism operations at MI6, Britain's foreign intelligence agency, said, "engaging the community and letting the community inform us" is one way "to understand why people do this" and to prevent future attacks.

Understanding is critical. The quickest way for open societies to lose the freedoms they enjoy and the Islamic State seeks to destroy

would be to whip up divisive ethnic, racist and religious hatreds. But there will be those who try. The Daily Telegraph columnist Allison Pearson tweeted on Tuesday: "We need a State of Emergency as France has. We need internment of thousands of terror suspects now to protect our children." Then there was the unbelievably vile tweet by Katie Hopkins, a British commentator: "We need a final solution." She later changed "final" to "true" in a new tweet after her original was widely condemned.

President Trump, who traveled to Europe on Tuesday after stops in Saudi Arabia and Israel, spoke to the British prime minister, Theresa May, and said what the world needs to hear: The United States stands with Britain. That spirit should bring together all citizens, of all countries, who — whatever their faith or birthplace — grieve now for the innocents cut down Monday night in Manchester.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Editorial : Jihad in Manchester

British police on Tuesday identified the terrorist bomber who blew himself up outside Manchester

Arena on Monday night as Salman Abedi, a 22-year-old born in Manchester. This means Britain has been terrorized again by a native-

born Muslim who became radicalized while enjoying the freedoms of Western society.

Islamic State took credit for the attack, and we'll learn more in the days ahead about how Abedi turned to jihad. But the Manchester

bombing follows the vehicular assault near Parliament in March that was also perpetrated by a native British Muslim.

This is the devilish challenge Western officials face as they attempt to stop attacks like Monday's on teenage and preteen girls attending a show by pop star Ariana Grande. At least 22 were killed and 58 wounded in the deadliest attack in Britain since the London Underground bombings of July 7, 2005.

British security forces have a better record than many European governments in foiling terror. Prosecutors convicted 264 people on Islamism-related terror offenses

between 1998 and 2015, according to an open-source study by the London-based Henry Jackson Society. The figures don't include cases that don't end in convictions and often remain classified.

Yet the homegrown radical who is increasingly recruited by groups like Islamic State is hard to identify and stop. This is why governments must tackle the problem at its roots in Muslim communities that are isolated from mainstream society in major cities such as Manchester, Paris and Brussels.

British opinion surveys consistently find gaps between the attitudes of Muslims and the liberal ethos of the wider culture, on everything from

homosexuality to women's rights to anti-Semitism. One survey last year found that 7% of British Muslims support an Islamic caliphate while 4% believe terrorism is an acceptable form of protest—a large pool of potential jihadists. Promoting integration involves deeper questions about belonging and identity that don't have easy answers. But one way to start is to consistently enforce British laws in all communities.

Prime Minister Theresa May on Tuesday halted her re-election campaign and vowed "to take on and defeat the ideology that often fuels this violence." Speaking in the West Bank, President Trump condemned the "evil losers in life"

who carry out such violence. That note about "losers" is welcome even as it's jarringly colloquial, since Islamists see themselves at the vanguard of a triumphant millenarian ideology. Leaders should look for opportunities to undermine that narrative.

Muslims will have to take ultimate responsibility for rooting out radicals in their midst. British Muslim groups such as the counterterror Quilliam Foundation have made strides, but they are often in the minority among imams and community leaders. As long as that continues, the failure of integration will pose a mortal threat to Europe.

**The
Washington
Post**

British prime minister raises nation's threat level, saying another attack 'may be imminent' (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/griff.witte>

MANCHESTER, England — British Prime Minister Theresa May on Tuesday night raised the nation's threat level and deployed the military to guard concerts, sports matches and other public events, saying another attack "may be imminent" following a bombing Monday night that left 22 people dead.

The announcement, which takes Britain's alert level from "severe" to its highest rating, "critical," clears the way for thousands of British troops to take to the streets and replace police officers in guarding key sites.

May announced the move after chairing an emergency meeting of her security cabinet and concluding that the attacker who carried out Monday's bombing may have been part of a wider network that is poised to strike again. The decision, she said, was "a proportionate and sensible response to the threat that our security experts judge we face."

The worst terrorist attack on British soil in over a decade was carried out by a 22-year-old British citizen who lived a short drive from the concert hall that he transformed from a scene of youthful merriment into a tableau of horror.

But whether Salman Abedi acted alone or with accomplices remained a question that British investigators were urgently trying to answer Tuesday night as they reckoned with an attack more sophisticated and worrisome than any seen here in years.

The prospect of a wider plot, May said, was "a possibility we cannot ignore."

The killing of 22 people — many of them teens — following a concert in this northern English city by American pop star Ariana Grande was claimed Tuesday by the Islamic State, which said one of its "soldiers" was responsible.

Even as officials and experts cast doubt on the terrorist group's assertion, however, authorities were scrambling to execute searches, arrest potential accomplices and reinforce security systems at a spectrum of public events that look newly vulnerable to attacks like Monday's.

After years of successfully fending off more-sophisticated strikes even as countries across continental Europe have fallen victim to bombings, Monday night's carnage underscored that Britain is not immune amid a rising tide of extremist violence.

The highest priority for police, said Greater Manchester Chief Constable Ian Hopkins, was to "establish whether [Abedi] was acting alone or as part of a network."

Earlier he had said that Abedi executed the bombing alone and that he "was carrying an improvised explosive device, which he detonated, causing this atrocity."

But unlike in previous high-profile attacks — including one in March in which an assailant driving a speeding car ran down pedestrians on a London bridge, then stabbed to death a British police officer — experts said it was unlikely that Monday's attack had been carried out without help.

[Three seconds of silence, then a scream: How the attack unfolded]

"Getting a car or a knife is easy," said Raffaello Pantucci, a terrorism

expert at the London-based Royal United Services Institute. "Making a bomb that works and goes off when you want it to go off takes preparation and practice. And it usually involves other people."

Pantucci said British authorities "are going to try to figure out who [Abedi] knows, who he's linked to. Did he build the bomb itself, or did someone build it and give it to him?"

Young victims

If police have an answer, they did not say so publicly Tuesday. But there was ample evidence of a widening security operation, with the arrest of a 23-year-old from south Manchester in connection with the bombing. Police also carried out searches at two homes, including the house in the leafy suburban neighborhood where Abedi was registered as having lived.

A senior European intelligence official said the attacker was a British citizen of Libyan descent. The official, who was not authorized to speak on the record and thus spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the suspect's brother has been taken into custody.

A family friend said Abedi traveled frequently between Libya and Britain. "We have an ISIS problem in Libya. We wonder whether he met people there who trained him," said the friend, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. ISIS is another name for the Islamic State.

Even before May's announcement of a "critical" threat level for just the third time ever — the first two came in 2006 and 2007 — authorities from London to Scotland said that they would be reviewing security plans for upcoming public events. Even smaller gatherings that would not

have been policed in the past may now get protection, they said.

[The targeting of women and girls in Manchester may have been intentional]

"Over the coming days as you go to a music venue, go shopping, travel to work or head off to the fantastic sporting events, you will see more officers, including armed officers," said Commander Jane Connors of London's Metropolitan Police Department.

May's decision to deploy the military means the public may now see soldiers rather than police. May said the military would operate under police command.

The escalation came as the nation grieved for the young victims, with thousands of people converging on Manchester's graceful Albert Square for a vigil that was part solemn remembrance and part rally against extremism.

To roaring applause, Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham vowed that the city — which has seen hardship, having been bombed relentlessly during World War II — would not succumb to division or anger. A poet named Tony Walsh delivered an ode to the city titled "This Is the Place." And in what has become a dark mainstay of life in Western Europe, passersby left candles, flowers and cards for the dead.

The casualties included children as young as elementary school students. Police said that among the 59 people injured, a dozen were younger than 16.

Among the dead was Saffie Rose Roussos, who was just 8 years old. The first victim to be publicly identified was Georgina Callander, an 18-year-old student.

[An 8-year-old was separated from her family. She never made it out.]

Other names were expected to be released Wednesday, with authorities bracing the public for deaths among the teens and tweens who form the core of Grande's enthusiastic fan base.

The Islamic State did not give any details about the attacker or how the blast was carried out, raising doubts about the truth of its claim. Its statement was posted on the online messaging service Telegram and later noted by the SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors militant websites.

The Islamic State often quickly proclaims links to attacks, but some previous boasts have not been proved.

In Washington, Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats said Tuesday that despite the group's statement, "we have not verified yet the connection." He noted in a Senate hearing that "they claim responsibility for virtually every attack."

Wave of revulsion

In a speech outside 10 Downing Street, where flags were lowered to half-staff, May called the Manchester killings a "callous terrorist attack."

"This attack stands out for its appalling, sickening cowardice deliberately targeting innocent, defenseless children and young people who should have been enjoying one of the most memorable

nights of their lives," she said.

May later visited Manchester, meeting with local authorities and signing a condolence book honoring the victims.

Queen Elizabeth II, meanwhile, led guests of a garden party at Buckingham Palace in a moment of silence and issued a statement expressing her "deepest sympathies."

"The whole nation has been shocked by the death and injury in Manchester last night of so many people, adults and children, who had just been enjoying a concert," she said.

Across the world, other leaders expressed revulsion and scorn toward the bomber.

[The Manchester attack was exactly what many had long feared]

During a visit to the West Bank city of Bethlehem, President Trump pledged "absolute solidarity" with Britain and called those responsible for the attack "evil losers in life."

Organizers of the Cannes Film Festival denounced the bombing as an "attack on culture, youth and joyfulness" and observed a minute of silence Tuesday. Cannes is 15 miles from Nice, where an attacker driving a truck plowed into crowds celebrating Bastille Day in July, killing 86 people.

[In the midst of Manchester's terror, strangers reach out — through Twitter]

The New York Times Terror Alert in Britain Is Raised to Maximum as ISIS Claims Manchester Attack (UNE)

Katrin Bennhold, Steven Erlanger and Ceylan Yeginsu

MANCHESTER, England — Britain's prime minister put the nation on its highest level of alert on Tuesday and deployed the military to work with the police over fears that another terrorist attack was imminent.

The announcement came as the police continued to investigate whether the Monday night bombing at a pop music concert in Manchester that killed 22 people, including children, was part of a broader conspiracy.

"It is a possibility we cannot ignore that there is a wider group of individuals linked to this attack," Prime Minister Theresa May said in Manchester after a meeting of her top security officials.

Earlier in the day, the police raided the home of Salman Abedi, the man

they identified as the bomber; he died in the blast. Chief Constable Ian Hopkins of the Greater Manchester Police said that the investigation was focusing on determining "whether Mr. Abedi was acting alone or as part of a network."

A senior United States official said on Tuesday night that Mr. Abedi had traveled multiple times to Libya, where his parents immigrated from, but did not know the timing of his last trip. The official was not authorized to discuss the information publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

By raising the national threat level from severe to critical, Ms. May suggested "not only that an attack remains highly likely, but that a further attack may be imminent."

The government's actions on Tuesday night came hours after the authorities began the gruesome task of identifying the dead. An 8-year-

The Monday night attack was the worst terrorist strike on British soil since 2005, when Islamist extremists bombed the London subway and a bus, killing 54 people.

And as with that attack, Monday's bombing prompted desperate searches for missing loved ones that continued through the night and into Tuesday.

Charlotte Campbell told the BBC that she was "phoning everybody," including hospitals, trying to locate her 15-year-old daughter, Olivia. She last spoke to her daughter Monday night while she was at the concert.

"She'd just seen the support act and said she was having an amazing time, and thanking me for letting her go," Campbell said in an emotional interview.

The attack occurred near one of the exits of the arena, in a public space connected to a bustling train station.

Jake Taylor, a former security guard at the arena, said its layout makes absolute safety impossible.

"You can't stop people from getting through the train station," Taylor said.

Mark Harrison, who accompanied his 12-year-old daughter to the concert from Cumbria in northern England, said there were no metal detectors or body checks at the arena's entrance, although bags were inspected and items such as water bottles had to be discarded.

"There was definitely a security presence, but anyone can come through the train station," said Harrison, 44.

[Trump decries the 'losers' who wage terrorism]

In France, the scene of several terrorist attacks in recent years, Prime Minister Édouard Philippe called on people to be vigilant in the face of "a threat which is more present than ever before."

World News Alerts

Breaking news from around the world.

Britain's threat level had been classified as "severe" since the summer of 2014, meaning the chance of an attack at any given time was highly likely.

Pantucci, the security expert, said that authorities had disrupted several plots in recent months but that Monday's attack somehow slipped through. Understanding why, he said, will be crucial.

"They've been dealing with a very high threat tempo," he said. "But this is one they weren't able to stop."

Adam reported from London. Isaac Stanley-Becker, James McAuley and Rick Noack in Manchester; Paul Schemm in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; and Devlin Barrett, Brian Murphy and Ellen Nakashima in Washington contributed to this report.

old girl who had attended the Ariana Grande concert with her mother and older sister and a college student who chronicled on Instagram her encounters with her pop-music idols like Ms. Grande were among those killed.

As the authorities bolstered the nation's defenses, investigators set out to learn as much as they could about Mr. Abedi, 22, who lived with his family only a few miles from where he detonated a homemade bomb on a public concourse crowded with Ms. Grande's adoring teenage fans leaving the arena.

Royston Court(police raid)

Outsidesupermarket(arrest)

Rescue workers sifting through the carnage outside the arena on Monday night discovered Mr. Abedi's identification card. That clue led the police to the home he shared with his family on Elsmore Road, in

the Fallowfield district. The police blew the house's door off its frame, to safeguard against booby traps, as shocked neighbors watched.

"We've been watching this kind of attack happen in Paris," said a neighbor, Thomas Coull, 17. "We didn't expect it to happen on our doorstep, literally."

Mr. Abedi was born in 1994 in Britain, according to a law enforcement official speaking on the condition of anonymity because the investigation was still underway.

Witnesses Describe Manchester Attack

Children, teenagers and adults tell of seeing bodies on the ground and of scrambling to escape the Manchester Arena when a bomb exploded after an Ariana Grande performance.

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS and REUTERS. Photo by Zach Bruce,

via Press Association. Watch in Times Video »

The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, saying in one post on social media that “one of the soldiers of the caliphate was able to place an explosive device within a gathering of the crusaders in the city of Manchester.” It was one of several Islamic State statements, some contradictory, posted on different social media accounts.

A neighbor of the Abedi family in the Fallowfield district, southwest of the Manchester city center, said the family “didn’t really speak to anyone.” The neighbor, Lina Ahmed, added, “They were nice people if you walked past.” She said the family occasionally displayed a Libyan flag outside the home.

Another neighbor, Farzana Kosur, said that the mother, who taught the Quran, had been abroad for about two months. A trustee of the Manchester Islamic Center said Mr. Abedi’s father and his brother Ismael attended the mosque, but the trustee, Fawzi Haffar, did not know if Mr. Abedi worshiped there.

Panic After Terrorist Bombing at Ariana Grande Concert

ISIS has claimed responsibility for the deadly explosion at an arena in Manchester, England, where the American pop singer Ariana Grande had been performing on Monday night.

By ROBIN LINDSAY, MALACHY BROWNE, MARK SCHEFFLER and ELSA BUTLER on May 22, 2017. Photo by Rex Features, via Associated Press. Watch in Times



Britain Raises Terror Alert Level After ISIS Claims Deadly Suicide Bombing (UNE)

Georgi Kantchev, Mike Bird and David Gauthier-Villars

MANCHESTER, England—The British government raised its terrorism threat level to “critical” on Tuesday, suggesting fears of another attack as police identified the suicide bomber who killed 22 people and injured dozens of others in an attack on concertgoers here.

British police gave the suspect’s name as Salman Abedi and said he was 22 years old, but declined to provide other details about him. A U.S. law-enforcement official said Abedi was a British citizen of Libyan descent.

Prime Minister Theresa May said security forces were exploring the possibility that “a wider group of people” were involved in the attack. The higher threat level, she said,

Video »

A senior member of the Muslim community in Manchester and a law enforcement official who requested anonymity said Mr. Abedi had been barred from the mosque in 2015 for expressing his support for the Islamic State, and he came to the attention of intelligence agencies at the time as “a person of interest.”

In raising the threat level, Mrs. May cited information gathered Tuesday in the investigation into the Manchester bombing and said the Joint Terrorism Analysis Center, the body responsible for setting the level, would continue to review the situation.

“The change in the threat level means that there will be additional resources and support made available to the police as they work to keep us all safe,” Mrs. May said.

“I do not want the public to feel unduly alarmed,” she said. “We have faced a serious terrorist threat in our country for many years, and the operational response I have just outlined is a proportionate and sensible response to the threat that our security experts judge we face.”

It was only the third time that Britain had raised the threat level to critical.

The first was on Aug. 10, 2006, after the government foiled a plot to blow up trans-Atlantic airliners with liquid bombs. The second was on June 30, 2007, after two men slammed an S.U.V. into entrance doors at Glasgow Airport and turned the vehicle into a potentially lethal fireball.

After the prime minister’s announcement, Assistant

means “not only that an attack remains highly likely, but that a further attack may be imminent.”

Under the heightened alert level, she said, military personnel would replace police officers guarding key places and big events around the country, in an emergency plan called Operation Temperer. “Members of the armed forces deployed in this way will be under the command of police officers,” she said.

Britain’s threat level has been at the “severe” level since 2014. It has only been at a “critical” level twice before, in 2006 and 2007.

British counterterrorism chief Mark Rowley said late Tuesday that police raised the threat level because of concern about several investigative leads related to the attack.

Commissioner Mark Rowley, the head of National Counter Terrorism Policing, said in a statement that “we are flexing our resources to increase police presence at key sites, such as transport and other crowded places, and we are reviewing key events over the coming weeks.”

“I have asked for support from the military to be deployed alongside the police,” Commissioner Rowley added. “This will free up armed officers from certain guarding duties to release our officers to support the wider response.”

As part of their investigation into the Manchester bombing, the police arrested a 23-year-old man outside a supermarket near Mr. Abedi’s home, but it was not immediately clear if that man was connected in some way to the attack.

The terrorist attack was the worst in the history of Manchester, a city of a half-million people, and the worst in Britain since July 7, 2005, when 52 people died, along with four assailants, in coordinated attacks on London’s transit system.

Security experts suggested that the use of an improvised explosive device in Manchester displayed a level of sophistication that implied collaborators — and the possibility that other bombs had been made at the same time.

Chris Phillips, a former leader of the National Counter Terrorism Security Office in Britain, told the BBC: “It has involved a lot of planning — it’s a bit of a step up. This is a much more professional-style attack.”

“At this stage it is still not possible to be certain if there was a wider group involved in the attack; 24 hours in we have a number of investigative leads that we are pursuing to manage the ongoing threat,” he said.

Security officials and experts said the use of explosives in Monday’s attack required a higher level of skills and collaboration than in the recent string of vehicle rampages, whether Abedi manufactured the bomb himself or received it from an accomplice.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, the deadliest in the U.K. since 2005. British police had no comment on the Islamist extremist group’s assertion, and U.S. officials cautioned they hadn’t verified any connection between Islamic State and the attack.

The Islamic State also claimed responsibility for the March 22 attack near Parliament in which a British man fatally struck four pedestrians on Westminster Bridge before killing a police officer. British authorities say they have also broken up terrorist cells operating in the country.

But investigators fear the Manchester attack indicates a higher level of sophistication, requiring more planning and the possibility of more attacks, prompting the national threat level to be raised.

The bombing came in the final stretch of campaigning before a general election on June 8 in Britain, and the country’s political parties agreed on Tuesday to suspend campaigning. Opposition politicians — Jeremy Corbyn of the Labour Party, Tim Farron of the Liberal Democrats and Nicola Sturgeon of the Scottish National Party — joined Mrs. May in expressing their grief and condolences.

It was unclear what effect the attack might have on the election. Some political experts suggested it would help Mrs. May, who, in her previous role as home secretary, was in charge of Britain’s domestic security and is generally perceived as a tough leader. But difficult questions are already being asked about what security gaps might have abetted the assault, and what could have been done to prevent it.

Abedi, who grew up in Manchester, lived just miles from the scene of the attack, according to electoral records and neighbors, in a red brick house in a working-class area of south Manchester. Neighbors described him as an aggressive man who didn’t mix much with others in the community.

Monday’s bombing was a strike on one of the softest of targets: a crowd pouring out after a pop-music performance by a singer especially popular with teenage girls.

As fans of American singer Ariana Grande streamed out of the Manchester Arena, Abedi detonated an explosive device and unleashed carnage, police said, sending survivors fleeing as panicked parents searched for their children amid the chaos.

School officials confirmed the deaths of two young people, an 18-year-old and an 8-year-old. At least 12 children under the age of 16 were seriously injured, authorities said, and others were among the walking wounded. A total of 59 people, adults and children, were hospitalized, some in critical condition, authorities said.

In a televised address, Mrs. May said the attack stood out for its “appalling, sickening cowardice, deliberately targeting innocent, defenseless children and young people” and declared that “terrorists will never win.”

U.S. President Donald Trump expressed “absolute solidarity” with the British people. “So many young, beautiful innocent people living and enjoying their lives murdered by evil losers in life,” he said.

As police probed Abedi’s past and connections, they cordoned off a street in a south Manchester neighborhood and carried out what they called a controlled explosion to enter a home there. They also raided another apartment and arrested a 23-year-old man whom they didn’t identify.

“I saw someone face down on the floor, and saw men struggling and cuffing him,” said Majid Novin, proprietor of a nearby cafe.

A neighbor said Abedi’s family flew a Libyan flag above their house after the fall of Moammar Gadhafi’s regime in 2011. Eventually, Abedi’s parents returned to the country, according to neighbors, a Libyan counterterrorism official and another person familiar with the family.

While living in Manchester, which is a center of the

Libyan diaspora in Britain, Abedi’s father would perform the call to prayer at a local mosque, a person at the mosque said.

“We’re very sad and devastated at what we’ve heard. We’re just praying for the victims and the innocent people,” said a woman in Manchester who identified herself as one of Abedi’s relatives. “I heard from his sister that he became religious.”

One of Abedi’s neighbors, Sandra Locke, said he was an “aggressive man with too much mouth.”

“He shouted at us, at my daughter when we wanted to park our cars and he was playing football with his mates on the street,” she said.

Libya became a magnet for Islamic State fighters when a U.S.-led coalition began retaking territory captured by the group in Iraq and Syria. The fighters were targeted in Libya by U.S. bombers in January, during the last days of the Obama administration.

In an online statement, Islamic State said the attack was revenge for “aggression toward Muslim countries” and identified the assailant as a “soldier of the caliphate.”

As the extremist organization suffers defeats on the battlefield in Syria and Iraq, it has been trying to spur individuals to launch attacks that aren’t centrally organized, particularly in Western countries. Its literature has said killing women and children is justified as part of jihad against nonbelievers.

Monday night’s terrorist attack was the second in the U.K. this year and the deadliest since suicide bombers

attacked the London transport system nearly 12 years ago, killing 52 people. It took place four years to the day after two Islamic extremists hacked a British soldier to death in the capital city.

In March, an attacker authorities said was inspired by Islamist extremism targeted the Parliament, killing five people. The man mowed down pedestrians on a London bridge and fatally stabbed a police officer outside the Parliament before he was shot dead.

Recent terror investigations have focused more heavily on Birmingham and Luton, north of London, which had at one time been home to Khalid Masood, the 52-year-old perpetrator of the March attack. But Manchester has also been in the headlines in recent years.

The northwestern city was long a destination for radical Libyan Islamists during the Ghadafi era, according to records of Libya’s intelligence services reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.

At least 25 members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group—an Islamist guerrilla group that pledged allegiance to al Qaeda—sought political asylum in Britain and settled in Manchester, the files show.

Two of the members of the Islamic State cell that struck Brussels and Paris in 2015 and 2016 were in Manchester months before those attacks, but a spokesman for the Belgian federal prosecutor said the cases were unrelated to Monday’s bombing.

In 2014, teenage sisters Zahra and Salma Halane, who attended Manchester’s Whalley Range High

School—just a few minutes’ walk from Abedi’s house—became known as the “terror twins” in the U.K. after leaving to Islamic State-controlled territory in Syria.

On Tuesday evening, thousands gathered for a vigil in front of Manchester’s imposing gothic town hall. David Walker, the Anglican bishop of Manchester, called on the crowd, some in tears, to “go to build and rebuild this city.”

Holly Atkinson said the gathering was needed. “Tonight shows that we in Manchester can come together when it counts,” she said. “When you knock us down we stand back up. And tonight we do it for those who can no longer stand up.”

—Del Quentin Wilber, Benoit Faucon, Hassan Morajea, Max Colchester, Riva Gold and Laurence Fletcher contributed to this article.

Corrections & Amplifications

The U.K. is raising the terrorism threat level and putting Military personnel at key locations across the country under Operation Temperer. An earlier version of this article incorrectly called it Operation Tempura. Also, Britain’s threat level has been at the “severe” level since 2014. It has only been at a “critical” level twice before, in 2006 and 2007. An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated both instances occurred in 2006. Khalid Masood, the perpetrator of an attack targeting Britain’s Parliament in March, was 52. An earlier version of this article incorrectly said he was 54. (May 23, 2017)



Three seconds of silence, then a scream: How the Manchester suicide attack unfolded (UNE)

Becker

MANCHESTER, England — The final lines of the star’s provocative pop anthem, “Dangerous Woman,” still rang in Stacey Brown’s ears. It was her first Ariana Grande concert, a surprise for her 11th birthday.

She had traveled here Monday from Aberdeen, Scotland, with her parents. The concert, she said, had fulfilled her wildest dreams — “the songs, the background, the stage, the lights. It was all so good.”

The 23-year-old singer left the stage, and the lights came up. Concertgoers reached for their bags and coats as others made an early start for the doors, including Stacey and her mother, Sharon Moir, 43.

By Isaac Stanley-

A bang was heard.

An explosion at an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, England, on May 22 left at least 22 people dead and around 59 others injured, according to police. An explosion at an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, England, on May 22 left at least 22 people dead and around 59 others injured, according to police. (The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

“There was silence for like three seconds, then someone screamed,” recalled Mark Harrison, who had brought his 12-year-old daughter, Arin, to the concert from Cumbria, in northern England.

It was the beginning of a night of panic and carnage, as a homemade

explosive detonated in the entrance hall of the Manchester Arena, one of the world’s largest indoor venues, with a capacity of 21,000. The bombing, in which the attacker himself was killed, was the deadliest terrorist strike in Britain since 2005.

[*Evil losers: Trump joins world leaders in condemning Manchester terrorist attack*]

Twenty-two concertgoers died, and dozens more were injured. On Tuesday, the Islamic State asserted responsibility, though similar claims after past attacks have not been proved.

Eyewitness accounts, police statements, photos and video footage paint a grisly scene of chaos and gore, in which the glee of music fans — many of them teenagers,

some younger still — turned to horror.

A recording from inside the concert hall captures the moment the bomb detonated, leading to gasps and, seconds later, screams. Disbelief and confusion reigned. “Oh my God,” a woman exclaimed. Audience members scanned the arena. Suddenly sensing danger, they darted from the aisles.

As they fled, some parents assured their children that the noise had just been the popping of a balloon. Or an equipment malfunction. Or pyrotechnics.

“Stick together — let’s get out, get out,” Heidi Hemblys, 43, told her two young daughters. They followed a train of people through a fire exit. She saw one man clutching his

head, tears streaming down his cheeks, after he saw bodies dismembered by the blast in the arena's foyer.

"We heard people say it was a bomb, and so I couldn't lie to my kids," Hemblys said. "It was supposed to be a fun night. It's absolutely terrifying."

More than 240 calls came in for emergency services beginning at 10:33 p.m. Monday, according to the Manchester police. Immediately, the police presence in the Victoria train station, which adjoins the concert hall, was immense, said Moir, who rushed to meet her partner on the curb outside. She had to make it through "absolute mayhem" to get there.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Colchester

LONDON—The Manchester suicide bombing has led to the suspension of the campaign for the U.K. general election, as Prime Minister Theresa May's party saw its sizable lead in the polls eroding.

Political parties said they would pause their campaigning for the June 8 vote, with Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn announcing it "will be suspended until further notice." The Scottish National Party was scheduled to launch its manifesto on Tuesday but postponed it following the attack.

Mrs. May called the election on April 18, hoping her ruling Conservative Party would benefit from the huge lead in the opinion polls they were enjoying over the main opposition Labour Party.

But in the past week, support for her party eroded following publication of its manifesto. On Monday, she backtracked on a proposal in the manifesto to levy

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

President Trump was wrong to say Germany "owes" the U.S. for its defense. But Berlin is paying nothing like its fair share for the defense of Europe.

Last July, in response to Russia's aggressions in Ukraine, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization agreed to deploy four multinational mechanized battalions of roughly 1,000 men each to the Baltic states and Poland. These units—led in Estonia by the U.K., in Latvia by Canada, in Lithuania by Germany and in Poland by the U.S.—are "tripwire" forces. They'll be stationed

"There were people everywhere with cuts, people crying, people trying to call their kids, screaming for their kids," she said.

By 10:46, emergency health workers were on the scene, said David Ratcliff, director of the ambulance services. Most victims were taken to Royal Manchester Children's Hospital, said Ratcliff, who estimated that there were more than a dozen children among the injured.

[The fake 'missing' teens who went viral after the Manchester attack]

Meanwhile, desperate calls went out on social media from family members and friends of those still missing. "Please just somebody get ahold of her. I'm worried sick," Charlotte Campbell told the BBC of

her daughter, Olivia, 15, who was not answering her phone. "We've not slept."

Those whose young children made it safely home said they were thankful, inexpressibly so, but they wondered how they would explain this sort of violence to them. They feared for their innocence.

World News Alerts

Breaking news from around the world.

"You just don't want to believe it at first," said Gina Bhairst, 43, who attended the concert with her 14-year-old son, who is autistic. "Noise affects him, and so that's why we got up to leave the concert slightly early. He's going to be in bits now."

Manchester Bombing Refocuses U.K. Election Campaign

Stephen Fidler
and Max

a charge on people's houses after they died to pay for their social care.

Opposition politicians had described the proposal as a "dementia tax." The manifesto was also criticized for not laying out the costs of its proposals.

Heading into the campaign, Mrs. May had a double-digit lead over Labour's Mr. Corbyn in the polls. That lead shrunk to a nine-point gap over the weekend as voters fretted over the proposal on health care for the elderly, YouGov said.

"She has had the most difficult week since the publication of the manifesto and has looked at her most vulnerable since arriving in Downing Street in July," said Mujtaba Rahman, head of the Europe practice of the Eurasia Group consulting firm.

"All of that will now be overtaken by yesterday's events and will refocus the campaign on the issue of leadership," he said.

That new focus will allow Mrs. May to draw attention back to her

campaign mantra of "strong and stable leadership" and emphasize the supposed contrast with Mr. Corbyn.

The campaign pause could give the prime minister an opportunity to regain her footing and burnish her leadership credentials, pollsters say.

"When one has crises of this kind, they tend to favor the government in office," said Wyn Grant, professor of politics at the University of Warwick. "They can reassure people and show people they are in control."

Mrs. May previously dealt with terrorism matters as head of the U.K.'s Home Office, giving her experience that can "equip her to deal with this," he added.

Still, analysts cautioned much would depend on how Mrs. May handles the fallout of the attack, details of which still remain unknown. She said she would travel to Manchester and host an emergency meeting on the bombing on Tuesday.

The bombing in Manchester came two months after Khalid Masood, a

On Tuesday, Stacey Brown's 11th birthday, she sat white-faced in the lobby of a downtown hotel, getting ready to leave for home. She thought she was going to spend the rest of her life reliving the show, only her second pop concert. Now she was afraid to remember its aftermath.

"I haven't seen anything like this," she said, gripping her bag.

James McAuley contributed to this report.

52-year-old British-born man, drove a car into a crowd of people near the British parliament and stabbed a policeman, leaving five dead.

Past examples of British elections being disrupted by violence are rare. In 1979, Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary Airey Neave was killed by a car bomb just weeks before a general election in which Margaret Thatcher came to power.

Before the Brexit referendum last June, British lawmaker Jo Cox was shot dead by a man motivated by Nazism. Both sides halted campaigning as a mark of respect. Pollsters, however, say the attack had little influence on the end result, which saw the country vote to leave the European Union. Then the campaign was suspended for a day.

Mr. Rahman said he expected the campaign to be suspended for longer than a day but certainly less than a week.

Dinerman : What Germany Owes Its Neighbors

Taylor Dinerman

in a forward area where Russia, according to one German expert, has a 5-to-1 military advantage. The idea is to reassure these four nations that NATO will protect them from attack.

Add the American brigade now stationed in Poland on a rotating basis, and the U.S. is deploying four battalions in the region. The Western European NATO nations, including Britain, are deploying only two. That's the kind of imbalance Mr. Trump complains about. Why should the U.S. and Canada bear a greater burden for the security of

Germany's neighbors than Germany does?

After the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991, European leaders were convinced that direct threats to their homelands were a thing of the past and that all they needed were "projection" forces. Countries like the Netherlands, Italy and especially Germany spent their reduced defense budgets on forces designed to intervene in Third World nations. They built amphibious landing ships and heavy transport aircraft instead of tanks and self-propelled artillery.

As a result, the European military powers—which were all ready to

support American, British, French and U.S. humanitarian interventions in Africa, or post-9/11 operations in Afghanistan and the Middle East—are unable to provide protection to their allies in Eastern and Central Europe. Not only have these nations failed to reach the 2% of gross domestic product they'd agreed to spend on defense, but the money they allocated went to hardware irrelevant to Europe's needs.

Germany has recently agreed to a slow buildup of its tank forces, but even that will still leave NATO with far too small an armored force to defend its Eastern European

members. If, as seems likely, the current German coalition government is re-elected, Berlin will continue to resist paying its share of Europe's defense budget.

The U.S. shares the blame for encouraging Europe to develop a more "expeditionary" mind-set. "Out

of area or out of business," was, alas, an American slogan. Mr. Trump should not hesitate to say we were wrong. NATO's European members have to take responsibility for collective security in their own neighborhood.

Mr. Trump is also asking NATO allies to do more in Afghanistan and against Islamic State. It would be nice if they did—but for now it would make more sense if they prioritized protecting their fellow NATO members in Central and Eastern Europe.

Mr. Dinerman writes on space policy and national security.

INTERNATIONAL

Los
Angeles
Times

Editorial : The Manchester bombing and Trump's dubious Middle Eastern strategy

The sight of thousands of teenagers, mostly girls, fleeing in panic from the blood and smoke of a concert hall in the northern English city of Manchester may have warmed the hearts of Islamic State commanders, who tweeted victoriously that the "crusaders" — i.e., the girls — had been targeted by a "soldier of the caliphate."

But to most of the world, Monday's attack served as further evidence, where none was needed, of the organization's utter depravity. For President Trump, that evidence arrived at an opportune moment, coming as he crossed the Middle East from Riyadh to Jerusalem calling for a new crackdown on Islamic radicalism and extremism.

And Trump is right, as far as that goes. Islamic State desperately needs to be stopped. Manchester, of course, was only

the most recent in a long list of vicious and appalling attacks inspired or directed by the organization: the Bataclan shootings in Paris, the Quetta killings in Pakistan, the Bastille Day truck massacre in Nice, the Orlando nightclub shootings, the Palm Sunday bombings in Egypt, to name just a few.

As for the worldwide caliphate that Islamic State likes to boast about, one needs only read Patrick McDonnell's moving article about the Syrian city of Palmyra in these pages this week to have a sense of what life would be like there. Unsurprisingly, a year of Islamic State occupation in Palmyra was characterized by fatal stonings, repression of women, destruction and desecration of ancient monuments and public beheadings.

But condemning Islamic State is easy. More difficult is figuring out

how to fight it. Trump's view, as laid out during his Middle East visit, is that the Sunni Arab states must come together, make common cause with Israel over their mutual hostility toward Iran, allow that shared interest to help catalyze a Palestinian-Israeli peace deal and then move on to rid the world of violent extremists.

But making Iran the enemy — a strategic turnaround from the Obama years — is not necessarily a great idea, especially when the Islamic Republic has just reelected a relatively moderate president, when it has signed on to a nuclear deal which, while far from perfect, is widely seen as a significant step forward, and when it is actively involved in fighting Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

For their part, the Sunni states of the Persian Gulf — Trump's new best friends — are not exactly delightful

company either. Saudi Arabia, for instance, is a repressive and undemocratic country and is waging a troubling, brutal war against the Houthis in Yemen. It is hardly a natural ally for the United States.

Middle East diplomacy, like healthcare and other issues which may seem simple from the hustings, is actually quite complicated. In the ruins of Palmyra, in the century-long hostility between Israel and the Palestinians, in the ongoing mistreatment of women, in the dogged militancy and fundamentalism of certain elements of Islam, the Middle East has proved itself complex terrain for American leaders. The usual Trump soundbites, simplistic policies and hollow phrases won't suffice to defeat our antagonists there — or bring them to the table.

USA
TODAY

Editorial : On the front line with Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan

Witnesses to Monday night's horrific attack in Manchester, England, described the confusion, the smoke, the blood splattered all over the floor. After a suicide bomber detonated his device following a concert, people mentioned the empty shoes: Blasts tend to blow victims right out of their footwear.

Most of all, survivors remembered the children killed or maimed. The bomber coldly calculated that pop star Ariana Grande would draw young teenage girls, and the venue was indeed packed. An 8-year-old girl named Saffie Rose Roussos was the youngest to die.

The more than 20 deaths and dozens of hospitalizations made the Manchester attack, for which the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria has claimed responsibility, England's

worst since 2005 and the fourth deadliest in Western Europe since 2015. "We struggle to comprehend the warped and twisted mind that sees a room packed with young children ... as an opportunity for carnage," British Prime Minister Theresa May said.

Suicide bombings are among terrorists' most insidious tactics and one for which Western nations have mostly and fortunately been spared since 9/11. They are, by contrast, a cruel fact of life in the Middle East and South Asia.

Just this year, dozens died when two suicide bombers detonated explosives near the Afghanistan parliament; at least 36 were killed when a driver exploded a bomb-laden truck in Iraq; and a suicide bomber at a Pakistan religious shrine killed 75 people.

After Manchester, there will be calls to harden "soft targets." Bags were searched at the Manchester Arena on Monday, though witnesses say without much diligence. Even so, heightened security is an imperfect response to suicide bombers. An evil, suicidal zealot willing to sacrifice himself — or herself — in a crowded place is almost impossible to stop in real time. If denied access to a concert, there is always a bustling train station or a shopping mall.

Other reactions are worse than imperfect. People will clamor for more "extreme vetting" of immigrants. But the bomber in Manchester, identified as 22-year-old Salman Abedi, was born in that city, the child of Libyan immigrants.

So how to better defend against these attacks?

One way is to remember that citizens are on the front lines, and that their roles are essential. Before a suicide bomber straps on an explosive, there's a troubled life that must be lived out to the point of radicalism. Friends, neighbors and relatives are the witnesses to this behavioral change and are subsequently suspicious. Only to the extent they share what they know with a trusted police department can lives be saved.

But this also cuts both ways. Law enforcement and community leaders have to make it easy for first- or second-generation immigrants to step forward with their valuable insights about people who've become radicalized. Inflammatory rhetoric about banning all Muslims, or labeling Islam a hateful religion, only makes this more difficult.

Even with the right intelligence, law enforcement needs the resources to monitor threats. This was difficult in Britain. *The Economist* reported the domestic intelligence service knew of 3,000 potential extremists, but only had the manpower to monitor

about 40 at a time.

As we've said after previous terror attacks, the war against violent Islamist extremism is not one that will be over soon. It can't be won by playing defense or "containing" the threat. The

international community must take the fight to ISIS, which has established strongholds in Syria and Iraq.

Yet even as a U.S.-led coalition closes in on Raqqa in Syria, the de facto capital of ISIS, the kind

of twisted ideology that motivated the Manchester attack will continue to fester in the shadows and erupt in places as joyful and innocent as a pop star's performance.

**The
New York
Times**

Kershner

Trump Leaves Israel With Hope for Peace, but No Plan for It

Ian Fisher, Peter Baker and Isabel

"This is a visit that has no substance," said Khalil Shikaki, a Palestinian pollster and political analyst.

That does not mean, he and others were quick to add, that the quick trip to Israel and the occupied territories, on Mr. Trump's first foray abroad, was not useful in building bridges, in setting a different tone, in showing Israelis full support and Palestinians respect.

Mr. Trump made clear that the new relationship Israel seeks with its Sunni Arab neighbors, some of whom he met earlier in Saudi Arabia, was linked to progress with the Palestinians. Mr. Trump seemed to accomplish all of this, most experts here agreed, with few of the missteps that have dogged him at home.

Mr. Netanyahu, pressed by conservatives in his coalition, got much of what he wanted in a speech delivered Tuesday by Mr. Trump at the Israel Museum that adopted much of the prime minister's own worldview of a dynamic, democratic Israel courageously defending itself against enemies like Iran.

"Through it all, they have endured and, in fact, they have thrived," Mr. Trump said. "I stand in awe of the accomplishments of the Jewish people, and I make this promise to you: My administration will always stand with Israel."

That prompted a standing ovation, and Mr. Netanyahu to shake his hand.

Mr. Trump went on to note that Iran has committed itself to Israel's destruction.

"Not with Donald J. Trump, believe me," he declared, and again the audience responded vigorously.

"Thank you," Mr. Trump said. "I like you, too."

And though the trip was largely focused on Israel, Mr. Abbas, struggling to maintain sway after years in power, got at least some of what he wanted as he hosted Mr. Trump in Bethlehem as a seeming equal. Mr. Trump's trip and hourlong meeting with Mr. Abbas had all the pomp of a state visit — a quickly corrected public schedule from the White House even referred to "Palestine," which many Israelis object to as a recognition of a Palestinian state — with little of the public chiding Israelis might have liked.

Mr. Abbas, who met with Mr. Trump this month in Washington, repeated "our commitment to cooperate with you in order to make peace and forge a historic peace deal."

In the byzantine world of Middle East peacemaking, the White House calculation appears to be that lack of clarity may be a good thing at this early stage. Mr. Trump's advisers say that instead of pressuring and dictating, the way former Secretary of State John Kerry did during past failed peace efforts, ambiguity leaves them room to maneuver.

The question is whether the gauzy talk of hope and optimism can break through monstrously tall barriers to peace. Neither of Mr. Trump's partners moved even an inch from their long-held positions and used their American guest in separate meetings to lash out at each other.

Some analysts suspected that they simply told Mr. Trump what he wanted to hear about working for peace, smiled as they showed him to the door and sent him on his way

while they returned to the status quo at home.

But Isaac Herzog, the opposition leader and the head of Israel's Labor Party, said that Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump's son-in-law and adviser on the Middle East, had told him that the United States intended to follow up quickly with a process moving toward an agreement. Israeli and Palestinian officials were mum about private talks.

"Is anything behind all of this? That, only the prime minister knows," said Mitchell Barak, an Israeli pollster and former political adviser.

Of Mr. Trump, he said: "This is probably the way he did business. From what I can see, he goes into a meeting, he puts on a show. He's the Liberace of world leaders."

"Then he leaves it to Greenblatt, Friedman and Kushner and says, 'Close it,'" Mr. Barak said, referring to two of Mr. Trump's private lawyers, Jason Greenblatt and David M. Friedman, whom he has made, respectively, his main envoy to the region and the American ambassador to Israel.

Decades of American-led peacemaking has resulted in little when it comes to a deal with the Palestinians. But there is precedent for strict secrecy in the early stages, if that is what is happening.

Israeli and Palestine Liberation Organization officials met secretly in hotel rooms and country estates and came up with the principles that led to the Oslo Accords in the early 1990s, with the Norwegians acting as a conduit. The Americans were not actively involved. The Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty signed in 1994 was also the culmination of decades of secret bilateral contacts.

Mr. Trump's speech at the Israel Museum was so friendly and considerate of Israeli emotions that one right-wing Israeli legislator described it as deeply expressive of the "Zionist narrative." But some Israeli analysts say such a warm embrace can be conducive to building the trust necessary for a meaningful process.

"The message that comes out of this speech reflects the whole goal of the trip," Prof. Avi Ben-Zvi, an expert on Israeli-American relations at Haifa University, said in a radio interview. If a regional peace initiative does begin to crystallize, he said, "Israel will have to pay a price, a painful, harsh compromise. Israel will only be able to make such a compromise from a position of confidence — confidence in Trump's leadership and the confidence that the United States will be behind it."

If there is any substance, secrecy may be all the more essential for Mr. Netanyahu because most of his current cabinet members oppose any far-reaching concessions to the Palestinians or the establishment of a Palestinian state. And several were gleeful that Mr. Trump pointedly avoided referring to a two-state solution that most of the prime minister's allies oppose.

"The president spoke about peace six times, and in all, he avoided supporting a Palestinian state, which would undoubtedly be an obstacle to achieving that goal," said Naftali Bennett, Israel's education minister, who advocates going so far as to annex areas of the West Bank.

"A good visit," said Michael Oren, a former Israeli ambassador to the United States and a historian. "Now we will see how we will build on it."

**The
Washington
Post**

Palestinians welcome Trump's talk of peace but offer lessons in two-state demands

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"This trip is focused on that goal," he said.

Trump recognized that Israeli-Palestinian peace is a key component of cooperation in the

region, although he has not outlined how he hopes to achieve an agreement that has eluded many presidents before him.

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Noting that Jerusalem is a "sacred city," and that "the ties of the Jewish people to this holy land are ancient and eternal," Trump recalled his Monday visits to the Western Wall and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, sites sacred to Jews and Christians in East Jerusalem, part of the West Bank, and claimed by Palestinians as the capital of their envisioned state.

To sustained applause, Trump cited the "unbreakable bond" between the United States and Israel, a place he called "a testament to the unbreakable spirit of the Jewish people." He spoke of "a future where Jewish, Christian and Muslim children can grow up together in peace."

"America's security partnership with Israel is stronger than ever," he said. "Under my administration, you see the difference. Big, big beautiful difference, including the Iron Dome missile defense program ... [and] David's Sling," an aircraft interception system. The former was established here under the Obama administration, the latter under President George W. Bush.

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Before his speech, Trump and his delegation visited the World Holocaust Remembrance Center at Yad Vashem, where he said the Jewish people had built the state of Israel out of the "depths of suffering" as "a testament to [their] unbreakable spirit."

[The huge contrast between Obama's and Trump's visits to Israel's Holocaust memorial]

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[In Israel, Trump urges new attitudes but faces old suspicions]

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[Trump's peace talk met by shrugs and cynicism on streets]

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"My good friend Benjamin [Netanyahu], he wants peace." Both sides, he said, "will face tough decisions. But with determination and compromise ... Israelis and Palestinians can make a deal."

There was no applause from the audience.

Ruth Eglash in Jerusalem contributed to this article.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Trump Says U.S. Committed to Israeli and Palestinian Peace

Carol E. Lee and Rory Jones

JERUSALEM—President Donald Trump wrapped up a three-day Middle East tour by declaring Tuesday that Israeli and Palestinian leaders are ready to strike a peace

agreement, though both sides used the president's visit to highlight the daunting obstacles that stand in the way.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took aim at Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud

Abbas, castigating him for his condemnation of Monday night's bombing in Manchester, England, while the authority helps administer a longstanding welfare program for families of Palestinian suicide

bombers and those of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

"Well I hope this heralds a new change because if the attacker had been Palestinian and the victims had been Israeli children, the suicide bomber's family would have

received a stipend from the Palestinian Authority," Mr. Netanyahu said.

Standing in the West Bank town of Bethlehem beside Mr. Trump, Mr. Abbas reiterated longtime Palestinian demands for a Palestinian state alongside Israel, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Many lawmakers in Mr. Netanyahu's parliamentary majority reject that position, even as a starting point for negotiations.

Like Mr. Netanyahu, whom Mr. Trump met Monday for talks, Mr. Abbas was blunt in stating Palestinian grievances: "Our fundamental problem is with the occupation and settlements and failure of Israel to recognize the state of Palestine."

As he did throughout his visit to Israel and the West Bank, Mr. Trump sought to strike a note of optimism, saying at the Israel Museum—his last scheduled appearance here before his departure for Rome—that he is "personally committed to helping both sides reach a peace agreement."

Both Mr. Netanyahu and the Palestinians, the president said, want peace, adding: "Making peace, however, will not be easy. We all know that. Both sides will face tough decisions."

Mr. Trump hasn't committed his administration to the longstanding U.S. policy of a two-state solution to the conflict.

His refusal to do so—which White House officials have said is designed to give the two sides maximum room to negotiate—is an omission that frustrates Palestinians while buoying right-wing Israelis.

He did, however, deliver a veiled criticism of the Palestinian welfare program, the Netanyahu government's latest bone of contention with the Palestinian Authority and the reason, it says, why it has no Palestinian partner for peace.

"Peace can never take root in an environment where violence is tolerated, funded and even rewarded," Mr. Trump said alongside Mr. Abbas in Bethlehem. "We must be resolute in our

condemning such acts in a single unified voice."

Israeli officials have been pressuring the U.S. to cut funding for the authority while it continues to participate in the program.

Palestinian officials argue that the payments are a social benefit to families and have so far appeared unwilling to restructure the system.

In meetings in Israel on Monday and with regional leaders over the weekend in Saudi Arabia, Mr. Trump has attempted to advance his aim of reaching not only a peace agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians but also a regional alliance between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

"This trip is focused on that goal: bringing nations together around the goal of defeating the terrorism that threatens the world and crushing the hateful ideology that drives it," he said at the Israel Museum.

Following his meeting with Mr. Abbas in Bethlehem, Mr. Trump visited Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust museum and memorial, where he laid a wreath and in public

comments described the Holocaust as "history's darkest hour."

In the memorial's guest book, he wrote: "IT IS A GREAT HONOR TO BE HERE WITH ALL OF MY FRIENDS—SO AMAZING AND WILL NEVER FORGET!" The entry was signed by him and Melania Trump.

In offering his condolences to victims of Monday's bombing in Manchester, Mr. Trump said that many of the fans at the concert by American pop singer Ariana Grande were "beautiful young children."

"So many young, beautiful innocent people living and enjoying their lives murdered by evil losers in life," Mr. Trump said. "I won't call them monsters because they would like that term. They would think that's a great name. I will call them from now on losers, because that's what they are. They're losers."

Mr. Trump arrived in Rome later Tuesday, and planned to meet Pope Francis at the Vatican on Wednesday.

The New York Times Trump's Saudi Arabia Trip Figures Into Plan for Palestinian Deal (UNE)

Ben Hubbard and Ian Fisher

Breaking with precedent, Mr. Trump chose the Saudi capital, Riyadh, as the first foreign destination of his presidency and told leaders of dozens of Muslim countries gathered there that he considered the kingdom a crucial ally in fighting terrorism and confronting Iran.

This reliance on Saudi Arabia recognizes the kingdom's unique place in the Arab and Islamic worlds, which Mr. Trump hopes to leverage. Saudi Arabia's oil wealth gives it wide-ranging influence and makes it one of the few states that could have hosted such an ornate, international gathering on such short notice. And its status as the birthplace of Islam and home to its holiest sites gives it religious legitimacy in much of the Muslim world.

The kingdom had also already proposed a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, named the Arab Peace Initiative, which the 22 members of the Arab League adopted in 2002. It called for peace between Arab states and Israel in exchange for Israel's withdrawal to truce lines before the 1967 war; the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital; and a "just" solution to the Palestinian refugee issue.

Skepticism remains high in the gulf nations that Mr. Trump can achieve a breakthrough. But proponents of the effort argue that recent shifts in the Arab world may have made the prospect of a regional peace less remote.

The Palestinian cause, once among the most resonant in the Arab world, has dropped down the priority list as chaos has engulfed Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, and as the gulf states are consumed with low oil prices and their rivalry with Iran.

Still, though gulf leaders publicly keep their distance from the Jewish state, they have increasingly realized Israel's value against their shared enemies and have pursued limited behind-the-scenes security and commercial ties.

"Despite their frustration with Israeli behavior regarding the Palestinians, the gulf states recognize that Israel is a strong, advanced country with a military that could act against their common foes and that has intelligence capabilities that could mesh very well with the needs and capabilities of gulf agencies," said Jason Isaacson, an associate executive director of the American Jewish Committee, who has been visiting Arab countries for two decades.

He doubted, though, that such links would develop much without concrete moves toward peace.

"Small, additional steps might be possible, but I don't see anything dramatic unless there is a true Israeli-Palestinian peace process that is sufficient to satisfy the naysayers," Mr. Isaacson said.

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Mr. Trump sought to build new momentum for a regional grand bargain by claiming the Arabs were already on board.

"King Salman feels very strongly and, I can tell you, would love to see peace with Israel and the Palestinians," Mr. Trump said. "There is a growing realization among your Arab neighbors that they have common cause with you in the threat posed by Iran."

Saudi officials say the offer is still on the table, but warn that Israel cannot sidestep the Palestinian issue.

"It is undeniable that there is an overlap of interests between Israel and the gulf states," said Mohammed Alyahya, a Saudi political analyst and nonresident fellow at the Atlantic Council in Washington, who was in Riyadh for Mr. Trump's visit. "But there is just no way that diplomatic dialogue, much less relations, can be established unless the issue of the Palestinians is acknowledged."

Israel dismissed the Arab proposal as soon as it was announced in 2002, and the violence of the

second Palestinian uprising, which was raging at the time, put neither side in the mood to negotiate and further ingrained the view of Israel in the Arab world as an aggressive usurper of Palestinian rights.

Subsequent Israeli governments have spoken positively of parts of the initiative, and in 2015, Mr. Netanyahu offered a partial endorsement, saying that the "general idea — to try and reach understandings with leading Arab countries — is a good idea."

Both the attraction and the limits of a regional approach were clear in the negotiations for a new Israeli government last year. Mr. Netanyahu and the head of the opposition Labor Party, Isaac Herzog, nearly formed a government based on a regional peace initiative, although an investigation by the newspaper Ha'aretz said Mr. Netanyahu pulled out late in the talks.

But a stark, rightward drift in Israeli politics and society stands as a significant obstacle to any two-state peace deal, and Mr. Netanyahu has shown little inclination toward concessions, especially on the status of East Jerusalem, an emotional issue for many Arabs and Muslims because of its holy sites. At the same time, the Palestinians are profoundly divided, with a weakened Palestinian Authority administering

parts of the occupied West Bank and Hamas, which the United States and Israel consider a terrorist organization, controlling the Gaza Strip.

Jordan and Egypt have longstanding peace agreements with Israel, and both have stepped up their coordination with Israel against terrorist groups on the Sinai Peninsula and in Syria. But the most significant changes in recent years have been in gulf countries, where a younger generation of leaders, like Mohammed bin Salman, the deputy crown prince of Saudi Arabia, and Mohammed bin Zayed, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, have recognized the role Israel could play in their economic

and security policies.

"This younger generation sees Israel much more in terms of practical alliances," said Stephen A. Seche, a former United States ambassador to Yemen and the executive vice president of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. "So suddenly Israel is not seen in that one-dimensional term of being the occupier of Palestinian land, but rather as a potential partner against the greater evil, if you will, which is Iran."

Analysts who meet with leaders on both sides say some links have already been formed. The United Arab Emirates has allowed an Israeli diplomatic presence at the United

Nations' International Renewable Energy Agency in Abu Dhabi, and former Saudi officials have attended academic conferences in Israel.

Below the radar, gulf countries have purchased Israeli security, agricultural and medical technology through transactions routed through third countries to hide their origin, according to people with knowledge of the deals who spoke on condition of anonymity so as not to anger the gulf states involved.

But Israel remains unpopular among Arabs, so formalizing relations with Israel without concessions for the Palestinians could expose Arab leaders to opposition from their people.

Some experts argue that they may not need official relations anyway.

"The gulf states essentially get what they need from the Israelis under the table, and the risk that they assume and the heat that they would get from their publics and from Iran without progress on the key Israeli-Palestinian front is probably too high for them to open up pathways to normalization," said Brian Katulis, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress who has recently met with senior gulf officials.

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Ruth Eglash in Jerusalem contributed to this article.

**The
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Milbank : A not-so-innocent abroad: Trump bumbles across the Middle East

President Trump arrived in Jerusalem this week with a most curious bit of information for Israeli President Reuven Rivlin.

"We just got back from the Middle East," Trump announced. "We just got back from Saudi Arabia."

At this, the Israeli ambassador to Washington, Ron Dermer, put his forehead in his palm.

Read These Comments

The best conversations on The Washington Post

Did Trump not know Israel is in the Middle East? Did he not know he was in Israel? There was little time to contemplate this mystery, because Trump was moving on to generate more puzzlement at his meeting with Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister.

The two men had wrapped up a news conference and reporters were shouting questions when Trump volunteered a confession. "Just so you understand," he announced, "I never mentioned the word or the name Israel in conversation. Never mentioned it during that conversation. They are all saying I did. So you had another story wrong. Never mentioned the word Israel."

Speaking to reporters beside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, May 22, President Trump denied ever mentioning Israel in a meeting with Russian officials in the Oval Office on May 10. President Trump denies ever mentioning Israel in a meeting with Russian officials in the

Oval Office on May 10. (The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

Thus did Trump apparently confirm that Israel was the unnamed ally that had provided sensitive intelligence to the United States that Trump then handed over to Russia. U.S. officials were concerned that if the ally were identified, Russia might try to disrupt the source.

Mark Twain wrote "The Innocents Abroad" in 1869 while traveling through the Holy Land and Europe. This week, Trump wrote his own chapter as he bumbled his way through Saudi Arabia and Israel before heading for Rome. Americans by now have become accustomed to perpetual chaos. Now lucky friends and allies are seeing the Trump tornado firsthand.

After Monday night's attack at a concert in Manchester, England, Trump reacted with outrage and sorrow for those "murdered by evil losers in life." But then he made this aside: "I won't call them monsters because they would like that term. ... I will call them from now on losers because that's what's they are. They're losers."

Thus did the president apply the same label to murderous terrorists that he had previously bestowed on Rosie O'Donnell, Cher, Rihanna, Mark Cuban, George Will, Charles Krauthammer, Bill Maher, Ana Navarro, Chuck Todd, the attorney general of New York, an astrologer in Cleveland, Gwyneth Paltrow, Howard Stern, Jeb Bush, John McCain, Marco Rubio, Karl Rove,

Megyn Kelly, the Huffington Post and the New York Daily News — among many others.

Beyond that, did Trump run a focus group to find out terrorists prefer being called "monsters" to "losers"? And does he suppose that taunting them as losers will be an effective counterterrorism strategy? If so, he might form an "L" on his forehead with thumb and forefinger when he invokes terrorist losers.

Presumably Trump didn't think it through. Likewise, he didn't mean to offend his hosts in Saudi Arabia by referring to "Islamic terror" rather than "Islamist terror." He was "exhausted," an aide explained. Perhaps fatigue also made him turn Saudi Arabia's King Salman into "King Solomon" — he was off by 3,000 years — and expand the Strait of Hormuz into the "Straits of Hormuz." Less clear is what made him leave a cheerful message in the guestbook at the Holocaust memorial Yad Vashem: "so amazing and will never forget!"

Trump, who once scolded President Barack Obama for bowing before a Saudi ruler, executed a similar stoop in Saudi Arabia. Trump, who once criticized Michelle Obama for failing to wear a headscarf in Saudi Arabia, gave a speech there while his bareheaded wife and daughter listened. (Melania Trump struck another blow for women when her husband, ungallantly walking ahead of her on the Tel Aviv tarmac, reached back for her hand; she flicked his away.)

Trump does best when he sticks to the script others have written for

him, as he did in his well-received speech in Saudi Arabia. It's when he ad-libs that he gets in trouble, as when he proclaimed recently that peace is "maybe not as difficult as people have thought over the years." Diplomats of the past 70 years must have been losers.

Problem is, Trump has trouble sticking to the script. The White House distributed Trump's prepared remarks for his meeting with Rivlin, making it possible to identify his ad-libs, a clutter of asides and superlatives. "Amazing." "Very holy." "And that's number one for me." "There's no question about that."

Had the president's predecessors employed such filler, these immortal words might be etched in marble on the Potomac:

"Four score and seven years ago — that's a long time ago, very long — our fathers, who spoke about this at great length, did what perhaps has virtually never been done before: brought forth on this continent, a new nation, a very great new nation — there's no question about that — conceived in liberty — and that is so important! — and dedicated to the amazing proposition — and they felt very strongly about this, I can tell you — that all men are created equal. Number one for me."

The world, hopefully, will not long remember the gaffes Trump made over there. But it can enjoy a good chuckle.

Trump Administration Is Split on Adding Troops in Afghanistan

Mark Landler and
Eric Schmitt

The thornier question is how Mr. Trump will reconcile the split between his war cabinet — led by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, the national security adviser, who both served in Afghanistan — and his political aides, among them his chief strategist, Stephen K. Bannon, who argue that a major deployment would be a slippery slope to nation building, something Mr. Trump has always shunned.

The president's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, has not voiced an opinion on specific troop proposals, officials say. But he is critical of existing American policy in Afghanistan and views his role as making sure his father-in-law gets "credible options."

Mr. Trump has given the military more leeway than his predecessor, President Barack Obama, signing off on aggressive early moves like commando raids in Yemen and the Tomahawk missile strike on Syria. But he has said little about Afghanistan, either as a candidate or as president, and his aides rarely include it on their list of foreign policy priorities.

"The questions they have to ask are: Is that additional force decisive? Are we going to win? Can we force a political settlement?" said Jack Keane, a retired Army vice chief of staff, who said he told Mr. Trump during the transition that the current policy in Afghanistan was failing.

What Saudis Get (or Not) in \$110 Billion Arms Deal With U.S.

The New York Times reporter Mark Landler details the U.S.'s 10-year, \$110 billion weapons deal with the Saudis, and what it means for both sides.

By NATALIE RENEAU on May 19, 2017. Photo by Evan Vucci/Associated Press... Watch in Times Video »

A U.S. troop increase would aim to double the size of Afghanistan's special operations unit

KABUL — As the Trump administration nears a decision on whether to send several thousand more U.S. troops to Afghanistan, a move that could be announced at an upcoming NATO summit in Brussels, U.S. military officials here say the plan would include sending hundreds of American Special Operations troops to train up to

"I don't think it is unusual that they would be having a debate," General Keane continued, "particularly given that we have a 16-year war. U.S. policies have largely driven us to a 16-year war."

Senior Pentagon officials are broadly supportive of the American commanders' request for several thousand additional troops in Afghanistan, but they acknowledge they face persistent questions, if not outright opposition, to the plans from certain corners of the White House.

In addition to the cost and the worries about nation building, critics doubt that President Ashraf Ghani will be any more effective than his predecessors in curbing the rampant corruption in his country that has siphoned off billions of dollars in American aid in the last decade.

On Sunday, Mr. Trump met Mr. Ghani in Saudi Arabia. A White House official said he commended the Afghan president's "leadership in Afghanistan on fighting terrorism and implementing key reforms," and praised the bravery of Afghan troops. But the statement said nothing about more American support.

National Security Council staff members are peppering their Pentagon colleagues with questions, expressing fears of costly, open-ended American troop commitments. Senior White House officials are demanding greater commitments from NATO allies before the United States sends more troops, officials said.

In what is perhaps a sign of this internal wrangling, Mr. Mattis told reporters on Friday that he had not yet sent a formal troop recommendation to the White House. "What I've done is I've gone to Afghanistan," he said. "I've met President Ghani, I've met with the NATO representatives and I've met with our commanders in the field."

With the NATO meeting this week, Mr. Mattis said the recommendations that he and Gen.

Joseph F. Dunford Jr., the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were putting together would be delivered "very, very soon."

The international security force assisting the Afghan army has about 13,000 troops, of which about 8,400 are American soldiers. Pentagon officials said that 3,000 to 5,000 additional troops, including hundreds of Special Operations forces, could be sent.

Such a deployment would allow American advisers to train and assist a greater number of Afghan forces, and place American troops closer to the front lines at lower levels of in the chain of command. Those figures are broadly consistent with advice Gen. John W. Nicholson Jr., the top American commander in Afghanistan, gave Congress in February.

General Nicholson has warned lawmakers that the United States and its NATO allies faced a "stalemate" in Afghanistan, where the general has said he already faced a shortfall of a "few thousand" troops. Other commanders and experts on military planning say even that prognosis is too optimistic.

"The reality is that the Taliban have the initiative," General Keane said. "They have the momentum. They attack when they want, where they want, and the outcome is usually successful for them."

Deploying more troops would cost billions of dollars, and there is no guarantee of a clear victory over the Taliban, which controls much of the territory outside Afghan cities. The United States failed to force successful negotiations when it had 100,000 troops in Afghanistan.

Yet without a strong American military role, the Taliban and more extreme groups like the Islamic State's Afghan wing and the Haqqani Network would most likely gain ground, undermining Mr. Trump's promise to destroy Islamic extremists, according to military officers and analysts.

"The Afghan army is taking the brunt of the fight against these transnational terrorists and the Taliban," General McMaster said in a recent briefing. "And so we are working with our allies to figure out what more we can do to have a more effective strategy."

As a commander in Afghanistan in 2010, General McMaster headed a task force that tried to root out endemic corruption in the government. That experience, former colleagues say, has persuaded him of the need for the United States to stay involved in the country. One of his current aides described his view of Afghanistan as "tempered optimism."

Pulling back would put Mr. Trump at odds with generals he embraced and turned to for national security advice. It would also fly in the face of recommendations for more troops from the State Department, which is seeking to stabilize Mr. Ghani's government, and the nation's spy agencies, which rely on the military for security to carry out their covert missions inside Afghanistan and across the border in Pakistan.

There are echoes, in the current debate, of the first year of the Obama administration, when Mr. Obama's generals — led by David H. Petraeus and Stanley A. McChrystal — pushed for a large troop surge, rankling his political aides including Rahm Emanuel and David Axelrod, who complained that the generals were boxing in their commander in chief.

"Trump has the same challenge Obama did: If you walk away from Afghanistan, it's going to be a strategic disaster," said James Jay Carafano, a senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation who advised Mr. Trump's transition team. "Even if Trump's instincts are to say, 'This isn't the kind of military operation I'd like to do,' he's caught with the strategic reality."

their best assets, could break the current stalemate in the nearly 16-year war and improve chances for a peaceful settlement — without introducing an intrusive foreign military presence just 2½ years after NATO combat troops withdrew.

"The end state is reconciliation with the Taliban, not a return to an ISAF and American combat role against

the Taliban," said U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Patrick J. Donahoe, referring to the International Security Assistance Force, the previous U.S.-led NATO mission in Afghanistan. "We want the Afghan government to be in a position of authority when the talks start," said Donahoe, a senior planner in Kabul for the

current NATO mission, called Resolute Support.

[U.S. watchdog finds major internal flaws hampering Afghanistan war effort]

In describing their plans, U.S. military officials here took pains to emphasize the limited size and role of any forces added to the NATO mission, and they noted that only about half of the new troops would be American. The rest would come from other countries that contribute to Resolute Support.

Currently, the United States contributes about 6,700 of the 12,400 foreign troops here, followed by Germany, Italy, Georgia and 35 other countries. The U.S. portion is not likely to change, meaning that if 3,000 new troops were sent to Afghanistan, about 1,500 would be from the United States.

"This is not going to be even a mini-surge," said Navy Capt. William Salvin, senior spokesman for the U.S. military here. He said that NATO officials have already approved more than 15,000 total slots for Resolute Support this year and that adding 3,000-plus would not pass that ceiling.

Resolute Support is separate from a U.S. counterterrorism mission in which about 2,100 Special Operations troops fight alongside Afghan commandos in raids against Islamic State militants and other international fighters. That force is not expected to grow, and new service members who join Resolute Support would not be permitted to fight.

The current orders for Resolute Support are to "train, advise and assist" Afghan security forces, and that will not change with the addition of more troops, officials here said. Their short-term goal would be to improve the combat ability of Afghanistan's 352,000-member

security forces; the long-term aim would be to make them self-sufficient by 2020, a timetable set by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

The immediate need, officials said, is to push back harder against the Taliban. The Islamist insurgents have been steadily gaining territory since the departure of most foreign troops at the end of 2014, causing record casualties among Afghan civilians and security forces, and repeatedly attacking scattered provincial capitals. Repeated efforts to hold peace talks with the Taliban have foundered.

Some Afghans have objected strongly to the possible deployment of more foreign troops, in part because their presence draws terrorist attacks and their permanent withdrawal has been a major demand by the Taliban. Ghani said recently that there is "no global appetite" and "no Afghan appetite" for the resumption of a large-scale foreign military presence, which peaked at more than 130,000 troops in 2012.

[Return of warlord Hekmatyar adds to Afghan political tensions]

But the Afghan president has been working privately on the plan with Gen. John W. Nicholson, the senior U.S. commander here, who told the Senate Armed Services Committee in February that the Afghan war is "at a stalemate" and that "a few thousand" more troops are needed to help break it. Ghani has since said that the "numbers proposed are the right numbers," and U.S. military officials said key elements of Nicholson's plan closely track Ghani's concerns and suggestions.

There are no plans to build any new foreign military bases or compounds, or to have foreign troops stationed at dangerous remote outposts, as was often the case until 2014. The great majority

would live at existing major U.S. and foreign bases in Kabul and Bagram, a huge American compound and airfield north of the capital.

"We are not expanding the military footprint, we are thickening it," Salvin said, referring to plans to have more trainers and advisers working directly with Afghan troops and officers in lower-level units, rather than being limited to dealing with senior officers. All 11 of the country's military and police academies, he said, are in the capital.

One top priority is to quickly expand the size and capacity of the Afghan special forces — highly trained commandos who have often had to replace or rescue regular Afghan troops in battle crises. About 17,000 regular soldiers would be moved into the special forces, doubling their size. They would be trained by hundreds of international Special Operations forces, mostly Americans, who would account for about 25 percent of all new foreign troops.

A second priority is to improve the effectiveness of regular army and police forces, which have struggled with a variety of problems from illiteracy to corruption, and whose members often fail to reenlist. As with the special forces, the new foreign advisers would be able to work more closely with military and police officers at the brigade level.

[Afghan government disappoints many, but some cling to hope]

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Another continuing job would be to provide air support for ground troops, medical evacuation and troop transport, as well as to improve the effectiveness of the Afghan air force, ultimately allowing

its fighter pilots to totally replace Americans. Afghan officials have repeatedly said that better air support alone would make a critical difference in the war effort, and Nicholson has called it a key "offensive capability."

A new focus would be to attack corruption, incompetence and poor coordination among Afghan security agencies — shortcomings that Ghani and U.S. officials have identified as major problems. New foreign instructors at army and police academies would focus on these issues, and U.S. advisers would work with Afghan officials to weed out corruption, notably by requiring biometric military enrollment to reduce the large number of "ghost soldiers" being paid with U.S. funds.

"The two existential threats to the Afghan state are the Taliban and corruption inside the security forces," said Donahoe. Efforts to professionalize and motivate the country's defense forces, he said, "would be for naught if the leaders are corrupt and inept." Ghani, in a startling speech this month, slammed the Defense and Interior ministries as "the most corrupt" in government, and he recently replaced dozens of senior security officials, including the defense minister.

The additional foreign troops would also fill technical and support roles, especially an aviation brigade that repairs and maintains U.S.-made military helicopters and other aircraft. Most would be rejoining their own military units and replacing highly paid private contractors, who are hired mainly to keep the level of U.S. deployed forces at or below approved levels.

The New York Times Manchester Attack Changes the Conversation for Trump's Trip

Michael D. Shear

In a statement Tuesday morning, Mr. Trump called the bombing at the concert, which killed nearly two dozen people and wounded scores, a "very horrible morning of death." He called on nations around the world to unite against a "tragedy of epic proportions" resulting from terrorist attacks, and to act against those who commit acts of terror.

"This is what I've spent these last few days talking about in our trip overseas," Mr. Trump said after a meeting with Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority. "Our society can have no tolerance for this continuation of

bloodshed. We cannot stand a moment longer for the slaughter of innocent people."

Yaakov Peri, a former head of Shin Bet, the Israeli internal security service, said on Israeli television Tuesday morning, "The tragic attack in Manchester plays favorably for Trump, who in Saudi Arabia said that we will fight terror together."

But the attack also poses some risks for Mr. Trump, whose responses to fast-moving events — sometimes dashed off in a tweet with a hashtag and an exclamation point — can sound off-key. In his first comments Tuesday morning, Mr. Trump used a playground epithet to describe

people like the assailant in the bombing.

"I will call them from now on losers, because that's what they are," Mr. Trump said after the meeting with Mr. Abbas. "They're losers. And we'll have more of them. But they're losers. Just remember that."

The Manchester bombing adds to the distraction that Mr. Trump already faces as he makes his debut as America's ambassador to the world.

At home, his White House is struggling to deal with scandal and chaos because of accusations that he interfered with the investigation

into Russian contacts with his campaign and associates. Mr. Trump left Washington for his nine-day trip on Friday after a barrage of news stories documenting the expanding Russia inquiries, including accusations that he provided classified information to Russian officials in the Oval Office and reports that he tried to pressure the former F.B.I. director investigating the matter.

Terrorist attacks, natural disasters and other crises often interrupt presidents when they are abroad, throwing their highly choreographed diplomatic schedules into flux and forcing them to deal quickly with rapidly changing events.

In November 2015, while on a trip to Asia, President Barack Obama was repeatedly dragged into the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Paris, including Republican demands that the government respond by restricting the entry of Syrian refugees.

The following March, Mr. Obama was in Havana when bombs ripped through Brussels Airport and a subway station in the city, shifting attention away from his historic visit to Cuba and toward a renewed discussion about terrorism.

On Tuesday, it was Mr. Trump's turn to be put on the spot by a grievous event.

In Israel on Tuesday, Mr. Trump began what were supposed to be remarks about his meeting with Mr. Abbas by pledging to support Britain and saying, "This wicked ideology

must be obliterated, and I mean completely obliterated."

His second event of the day — a speech at the Israel Museum about the Middle East peace process — also started with a return to the Manchester bombing and an acknowledgment that the subject of the rest of his trip would be the fight against terror.

"This trip is focused on that goal," he said. "Bringing nations together around that goal."

Mr. Trump began consultations with European leaders even before leaving the Middle East. In a telephone call with Prime Minister Theresa May of Britain, the president said he looked forward to discussing "the ways both countries can work with allies and partners around the world to defeat terrorism," according to a White House summary of the call.

Even though the Manchester attack has the potential to overshadow the rest of Mr. Trump's trip, it also echoed some of the themes the president had sought to emphasize during the first few days.

While visiting Saudi Arabia over the weekend, Mr. Trump urged the leaders of more than 50 Arab and predominantly Muslim nations to take responsibility for purging their lands of "Islamic extremism" and of those who would kill in the name of religion.

"Drive them out," Mr. Trump said in a speech at a summit meeting in Riyadh. "Drive them out of your places of worship. Drive them out of your communities. Drive them out of your holy land. And drive them out of this earth."

And in Israel, the president had planned to try to kick-start the

Israeli-Palestinian peace process in part by arguing that Arab and Muslim nations were united with Israel in fighting against terrorism and containing Iran, a longtime sponsor of terror.

Still, it was clear by the time Mr. Trump wrapped up his discussions in Israel and boarded Air Force One for Rome that the tenor of his trip had changed drastically.

Mr. Trump, who had largely avoided his provocative tweets since leaving on his foreign trip, posted one that included the flags of the United States and Britain.

"We stand in absolute solidarity with the people of the United Kingdom," he wrote.



Lynch : At Odds With Trump, Nikki Haley Charts Her Own Foreign-Policy Path

While President Donald Trump basked in the pomp of state visits to Saudi Arabia and Israel, his U.N. envoy, Nikki Haley, chose a decidedly less glamorous itinerary for her own maiden Middle East trip: Visiting Syrian children in refugee camps in Jordan.

The dueling images of America's president being decorated with a golden necklace by an Arab king and Haley high-fiving displaced Syrian schoolchildren couldn't have drawn a sharper contrast. And for Haley, that may be the point.

Four months into her tenure as the envoy of a president she once denounced as reckless, Haley has carved out a distinct foreign-policy path, one that sees Russia unambiguously as an enemy, touts America's role as a human rights champion, and advocates for continued U.S. leadership on the humanitarian front.

While it may be too early to discern a Haley foreign-policy doctrine, the former South Carolina governor has been building a strikingly independent political brand that distinguishes her from a White House that has veered from one crisis to the next while showing little regard for human rights or the plight of the poor.

In many important ways, her foreign-policy views hew more toward those of Republican Party stalwarts — like Senators Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), the chairman of the appropriations subcommittee

that funds the State Department and international organization — than to the president's.

Haley's early denunciations of Russia and President Vladimir Putin as an unreliable partner has inoculated her from appearing to be cozying up to a historic adversary bent on undermining U.S. democracy. Trump, for his part, has proven reluctant to criticize Moscow or Putin, and took Russian officials into his confidence earlier this month, reportedly sharing sensitive intelligence with them in the Oval Office.

On Monday, Haley broke with the president by endorsing the need for special prosecutor Robert Mueller's investigation into possible collaboration between Russia and Trump campaign aides aimed at securing Trump's election.

"We absolutely need the investigation," she told MSNBC's Craig Melvin. "I think all these questions need to be answered so that the administration can get back to work." Trump, in contrast, dismissed the special prosecutor as a "witch hunt."

But Haley's efforts to champion humanitarian causes and American soft power more broadly took a hit Tuesday, as the White House released a 2018 budget that would cut U.S. international affairs budget by a whopping \$18 billion in 2018, down to around \$41 billion. More even than most presidential budgets, it faces a steep battle in a skeptical Congress; some GOP

lawmakers have pronounced it "dead on arrival."

"We see this budget as making America less safe in the world," said Liz Schryer, the president and CEO of the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, citing a "growing chorus" of opposition to the budget from the U.S. Congress to relief agencies to religious leaders.

"The stakes are too high for the U.S. to retreat from its global leadership role," she said.

Haley defended the cuts, saying the president's budget still "provides strong support for foreign aid while reflecting the reality that resources are not unlimited."

Humanitarian relief advocates say the White House budget proposals don't square with Haley's emphasis on helping the poor.

"The number speaks for themselves," said Eric Schwartz, the incoming president of Refugees International, a leading refugee advocacy group, and former assistant secretary of state for population, refugees, and migration. Schwartz said the budget "zeroes out" a critical food aid program, called Food for Peace, at a time of looming famine in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen.

The food program — which received \$1.6 billion in funding in 2017 — would be shifted from the Agriculture Department's budget to the State Department's international disaster relief account, which Trump wants to slash by around 40 percent, making

large cuts in the food program inevitable.

"If her rhetoric doesn't begin to resemble reality to a greater extent then I think she will be fairly criticized as having good instincts, but not achieving any impact in the administration," he said.

"I hope and trust President Trump and Secretary [of State Rex] Tillerson takes her seriously and acts accordingly," he added. "But this budget coming down the pike is just going to make that very, very hard."

Haley's own record on Syrian refugees has been somewhat mixed.

As governor, Haley reacted to the November 2015 Paris terrorist attack by appealing to then-Secretary of State John Kerry not to resettle Syrian refugees in South Carolina, citing concerns that they couldn't be adequately vetted. She has defended President's Trump's ban on travel to the United States by citizens of six Muslim-majority countries, including Syria. (Federal courts have shot down both the administration's travel bans.)

But in her first weeks on the job, ambassador Haley reached out to career foreign service staff in New York to help identify a handful of pressing issues on which she could focus as ambassador. They proposed humanitarian assistance and human rights — and she ran with it, according to two diplomatic sources.

In April, she hosted a U.N. Security Council meeting to highlight human rights violations, focusing on abuses committed by North Korea, Syria, and Venezuela. In a speech to the Security Council last month, Haley denounced Syria's "slow strangulation of its people" by preventing the U.N. from delivering everything from food and baby formula to vaccines and antibiotics to those in need.

That focus contrasts with Trump and Tillerson, who see promoting human rights as a potential impediment to economic and political cooperation, a sharp departure from decades of U.S. foreign policy. Trump has praised heavy-handed foreign leaders, including Putin, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Philippine President

Rodrigo Duterte, who all have deplorable human rights records. In a speech this week before an audience that include Saudi King Salman, Trump vowed that "America will not seek to impose our way of life on others."

Tillerson, meanwhile, instructed his staff in their first weeks in office not to announce any major new commitments to aid, arguing that would be at odds with the President's "America First" doctrine. And in a recent speech, he suggested that the United States cannot let values dictate its foreign policy.

But Haley has enlisted the support of the president's daughter, Ivanka Trump, to raise awareness about the plight of the world's poorest. Early this month, the two held a

White House meeting to address famine and the Syrian humanitarian crises.

On Sunday, Haley headed out to the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. She also used the trip to promote the work of the United Nations and its myriad humanitarian agencies, principally the World Food Programme, which is headed by a former South Carolina governor, David Beasley, who was appointed on Haley's recommendation. U.S. funding for U.N. programs is in the crosshairs of the Trump administration's budget, but Haley sought to reassure refugees.

"We're the number one donor here through the crisis. That is not going to stop. We're not going to stop funding this," she told refugees at the Zaatari camp, according to the

Associated Press. "The fact that I'm here shows we want to see what else needs to be done."

Even if Haley can't fully deliver on her pledges to resist "slash and burn" cuts to foreign aid spending by the White House — and the full budget released Tuesday follows the same cut-to-the-bone approach laid out in the preliminary budget this spring — she may be charting a path that could ensure her political survival beyond the Trump era.

"What she is doing is carving out a political persona and political story that will stand her in good stead, even if the rest of the administration continues to implode," said Richard Gowan, a U.N. expert with the European Council on Foreign Relations.



Feldman : Lessons From Turkey's Slide Toward Dictatorship

Noah Feldman

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has dropped the final fig leaf of democracy, announcing this week that the state of emergency will continue until Turkey achieves "welfare and peace." The state of emergency, introduced with some justification after the failed coup in July 2016, allows Erdogan to rule by decree, sidelining both the legislature and the constitutional court. By extending it indefinitely, Erdogan is making explicit what had been implicit for months: He's now officially a dictator.

States of emergency are funny things. Many countries keep them on the books, because they are useful in genuine emergencies, and because their presence might, in theory, urge rulers back to democracy when the emergency passes.

QuickTake Turkey's Divide

Even the U.S. Constitution has a version of a state of emergency in the suspension clause, which allows the temporary waiver of the basic right against arbitrary arrest and detention "when in cases of rebellion or invasion the public safety may require it." President Abraham Lincoln invoked the clause unilaterally during the Civil War, even though most constitutional experts then and now think only Congress has that right. That made him, by some lights, a constitutional dictator.

A permanent state of emergency is something else again. Above all, it's a familiar constitutional tool for dictators. Presidents Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak relied on this

model for decades to rule Egypt. In Germany, the famous Article 48 of the Weimar constitution was used after the 1933 Reichstag fire to make Hitler's dictatorial rule formally legal. The decree invoking the state of emergency remained in place until the end of World War II.

Erdogan's move carries with it a number of important lessons for democracy and the rule of law in this highly charged political moment.

First, and most important, democracy isn't a one-way street. In the years before Erdogan's selection as prime minister and during the early part of his leadership, Turkey had made great strides in the direction of meaningful democracy. Regular elections were contested peacefully and for the most part without major corruption.

Free speech wasn't absolute, especially for Kurdish or Islamist groups. But it was far more extensive than it had been in modern Turkish history.

Indeed, without lots of free speech, Erdogan's AK Party wouldn't have been able to run for office. The party's moderate religious stance was outside the bounds of Turkish secularism. Erdogan himself had been banned from politics for his religious views. The system was democratizing simply by letting the AK Party campaign and come to power.

Starting out as prime minister, Erdogan responded to European free speech and democracy. This was in his interest, to be sure. A politician who can win free elections has an interest in avoiding the threat of

military coup by consolidating democratic norms. Erdogan also hoped at first for greater integration into the European Union, and maybe even full membership.

Yet as these incentives have been reduced, Erdogan's democratic tendencies have diminished. The message to Europe and the rest of us should be clear. What's happened in Turkey can happen in Hungary, where President Viktor Orban is increasingly authoritarian. It can happen in Poland, where the ruling PiS party has hamstrung the constitutional court despite ineffectual European protests.

The second major lesson of Erdogan's act is that the failed coup attempt against him turned out to be a godsend, because it allowed him to end the separation of powers. The only institutions capable of counterbalancing Erdogan were the military and the courts.

The failed coup gave Erdogan the opening to purge the judiciary and military of opponents and skeptics, indeed anyone who wasn't a reliable loyalist. That left no one to balance Erdogan -- and no reason for him to stick with democratic rule.

And so the mild, failed attempt was worse than nothing. It gave Erdogan added legitimacy, because the public didn't rise up in support of the coup plotters. Some of the public openly resisted the idea of military takeover.

It probably also helped gain support for Erdogan's constitutional reforms, which won narrow public affirmation in a referendum whose results are contested.

The third lesson relates to that referendum. In retrospect, it wasn't about switching to a U.S.-style presidential system to consolidate Erdogan's power by lawful means, as I and others thought.

We now know it was about Erdogan demonstrating he had some degree of national support. Once he had, he could skip over the constitutional formalities, moving right into rule by decree.

Erdogan didn't need a supermajority for this move, and he didn't come close to getting one. A bare majority was sufficient, at least combined with the weakness of his purged opponents. Erdogan clearly doesn't expect major protests now. If they occurred, he would put them down, probably brutally.

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The cumulative effect of these lessons is to remind us of the fragility of democratic politics. Building democracy is hard, painstaking work; keeping it is just as difficult, sometimes more so. Europe and the U.S. shouldn't view Turkey's slow democratic fall with contempt or pity, but with a sense of recognition. What has happened in Turkey can happen elsewhere, unless government and institutions and people work against it.

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

Editorial : Ending North Korea's Cyber Impunity

The world will have to take Pyongyang's hackers as seriously as its nuclear weapons and missile programs. That's one conclusion from Monday's evidence from a private cybersecurity firm that North Korean hackers are behind the Wannacry ransomware that froze computers and encrypted data around the world on May 12.

Symantec says it found the digital footprints of the Lazarus Group, a hacking syndicate that took data from Sony Entertainment in 2014 and stole \$81 million from Bangladesh's central bank last year. While computer forensics can't finger hackers with 100% certainty,

the code, techniques and servers point to Pyongyang.

The Symantec findings come as Reuters published new details this week about North Korea's growing cyberwarfare capabilities. According to a former computer-science professor who defected in 2004, a unit within the country's spy agency hacks into foreign financial institutions to steal cash. The Wannacry worm demands that victims pay in Bitcoin to get their data back. So far it's extorted about \$100,000. But the North's hackers are capable and persistent. They appear to have built the worm in part with hacking tools stolen from the

U.S. government and released on the internet last month.

State-sponsored hacking for profit is unique to North Korea—a useful reminder that it isn't so much a country as a criminal syndicate operating for the benefit of the Kim family. As sanctions close off other avenues for earning foreign currency, Pyongyang will likely step up its cyberattacks.

Pyongyang has suffered little retaliation for its cyberwarfare, which includes the hacking of a South Korean nuclear plant. After the Sony attack three years ago, Barack Obama promised to retaliate: "We will respond proportionally, and we'll respond in a place and time and

manner that we choose." But the follow-through was underwhelming: A few North Korean institutions and individuals were barred from doing business in the U.S.

Last year Congress passed Rep. Ed Royce's bill to sanction banks facilitating North Korea's finances, and the Trump Administration can move to implement it. This month a new bill from Rep. Royce to toughen sanctions on the North's shipping and exports of slave labor passed the House with bipartisan support. That would be another good way to make Pyongyang pay a price for its criminal acts.

Trump calls Kim Jong Un a 'madman with nuclear weapons,' according to transcript of Duterte call

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

President Trump labeled North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un a "madman with nuclear weapons" during a private phone conversation with Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte last month, just days before stating publicly that he would be "honored" to meet with Kim.

In the April 29 call, Trump sought Duterte's input on whether Kim is "stable or not stable" and expressed some satisfaction in North Korea's recent failed missile tests, noting that "all his rockets are crashing. That's the good news," according to a transcript of the conversation made by the Philippines government on May 2 and obtained Tuesday by The Washington Post.

Duterte responded that Kim is "playing with his bombs, his toys" and offered that "his mind is not working well and he just might go crazy one moment." That prompted Trump to point out that the United States has "a lot of firepower over there," including "two nuclear submarines" sent by the Pentagon to the region last month.

Later in the call, Trump raised the stakes of the escalating tensions on the Korean Peninsula when he observed: "We can't let a madman with nuclear weapons let on the loose like that. We have a lot of firepower, more than he has, times 20 — but we don't want to use it."

The focus between Trump and Duterte on North Korea comports with a brief public readout of the call from the White House on the day it took place. But the details of their

conversation, first reported here, offer a deeper view of the urgency with which Trump is attempting to enlist foreign leaders to ramp up pressure on Pyongyang to halt its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

President Trump has extended an invitation to the White House to Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, despite the bloody drug war Duterte is carrying out in his country. President Trump has extended an invitation to the White House to Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, despite the bloody drug war Duterte is carrying out (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

(Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

[Transcript of call between Trump and Duterte]

A senior Trump administration official acknowledged that the transcript is accurate but declined to speak on the record about "a leaked document from a foreign government." The Post obtained the document from a person who asked not to be identified because the transcript, labeled by the Philippines government as "confidential," is not intended for public release.

Trump is "rallying as much support as he can on North Korea," the administration official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. "Regional support is extremely meaningful. This is how he's trying to proactively manage a very difficult situation."

Trump's call with Duterte, during which he extended an invitation to visit him at the White House, was

met with skepticism from some foreign policy analysts and human rights groups. Since taking office in June, Duterte has moved to hedge on the Philippines' long-standing defense alliance with the United States by establishing closer relations with China. And his administration has overseen a brutal extrajudicial campaign that has resulted in the killings of thousands of suspected drug dealers.

Trump has not spoken out against that strategy, and in their call he praised Duterte for doing an "unbelievable job on the drug problem."

"Many countries have the problem, we have the problem, but what a great job you are doing and I just wanted to call and tell you that," Trump said, according to the transcript.

After Duterte replied that drugs are the "scourge of my nation now and I have to do something to preserve the Filipino nation," Trump appeared to take a swipe at his predecessor, Barack Obama, who had canceled a bilateral meeting with Duterte after the Philippines leader insulted him.

"I understand that and fully understand that and I think we had a previous president who did not understand that," Trump said.

On his first foreign trip this week, Trump said during a speech in Saudi Arabia that his administration will not "lecture" foreign governments on human rights as the United States pursues partnerships to fight terrorism.

The senior Trump administration official said that the president was

not condoning Duterte's "individual tactics" for cracking down on illicit drugs. Rather, this was Trump's "way of expressing solidarity over a common scourge," the official said.

Most of his conversation with Duterte focused on how to deal with North Korea and whether China can exert more leverage on Kim's regime. Trump acknowledged after meeting Chinese President Xi Jinping in mid-April that "it's not so easy" for Beijing to alter Pyongyang's behavior.

But when he asked Duterte whether China has "power over" Kim, the Philippines president responded: "Yes, at the end of the day, the last card, the ace, has to be with China. It's only China."

In an interview with Bloomberg News three days after his call with Duterte, Trump said he would be "honored" to meet Kim "under the right circumstances," opening the possibility of bilateral or multilateral talks. No sitting U.S. president has met with a North Korean leader. In another interview that week with CBS News, Trump called Kim "a pretty smart cookie" and expressed admiration for the North Korean leader having assumed power "at a very young age" after the death of his father, Kim Jong Il.

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Trump told Duterte he hopes "China solves the problem ... But if China doesn't do it, we will do it." Duterte then offered to call Xi and emphasize the importance of altering Pyongyang's behavior.

"You can tell him I am counting on him," Trump replied. "I have a very good relationship with him. I had him in Florida for two days and got to know him well. He is a good guy."

On May 3, the Chinese state media

**The
New York
Times**

Haberman

WASHINGTON — President Trump praised President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines in a phone call last month for doing an "unbelievable job on the drug problem" in the island nation where the government has sanctioned gunning down suspects in the streets. Mr. Trump also boasted that the United States has "two nuclear submarines" off the coast of North Korea but said he does not want to use them.

The comments were part of a Philippine transcript of the April 29 call that was circulated on Tuesday, under a "confidential" cover sheet, by the Americas division of the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs. In Washington, a senior administration official confirmed that the transcript was an accurate representation of the call between the two iconoclastic leaders. The official was not authorized to publicly discuss the call and confirmed it on the condition of anonymity.

The White House also keeps transcripts of such calls, but they are routinely kept secret. The Philippine rendering of the call offers a rare insight into how Mr. Trump talks to

reported that Xi and Duterte spoke about North Korea, among other topics.

Toward the end of the call, Trump switched topics to invite Duterte to

fellow leaders: He sounds much the way he sounds in public, casing issues in largely black-and-white terms, often praising authoritarian leaders, largely unconcerned about human rights violations and genuinely uncertain about the nature of his adversary in North Korea.

Mr. Trump placed the call and began it by congratulating Mr. Duterte for the government-sanctioned attacks on drug suspects. The program has been widely condemned by human rights groups around the world because extrajudicial killings have taken thousands of lives without arrest or trial. In March, the program was criticized in the State Department's annual human rights report, which referred to "apparent governmental disregard for human rights and due process."

Mr. Trump had no such reservations. "I just wanted to congratulate you because I am hearing of the unbelievable job on the drug problem," he said. "Many countries have the problem, we have a problem, but what a great job you are doing and I just wanted to call and tell you that."

Mr. Duterte responded that drugs were "the scourge of my nation now,

the White House, calling him a "good man."

"I will love to have you in the Oval Office," Trump said. "Any time you want to come ... Seriously, if you want to come over, just let us know.

and I have to do something to preserve the Filipino nation." Mr. Trump responded that "we had a previous president who did not understand that," an apparent reference to President Barack Obama, "but I understand that."

But Mr. Duterte had another subject he wanted to discuss: North Korea. He told Mr. Trump that "as long as those rockets and warheads are in the hands of Kim Jong-un we will never be safe as there's not telling what will happen next."

That led Mr. Trump to inquire whether Mr. Kim, the 33-year-old North Korean leader, is "someone who is stable or not stable." Mr. Duterte offered up the opinion that Mr. Kim was unstable, noting that he is always seen laughing in pictures of missile and nuclear tests.

Mr. Trump seemed to try to reassure Mr. Duterte. Mr. Kim, he said, "has got the powder, but he doesn't have the delivery system — all his rockets are crashing." The president said nothing of the American-led program to sabotage the launches, though in some tests both before and after the call, the North has conducted several successful launches.

Just take care of yourself, and we will take care of North Korea."

"We have a lot of firepower over there," Mr. Trump noted. "We have two submarines — the best in the world. We have two nuclear submarines, not that we want to use them at all."

The two men talked about China's potential influence and Mr. Duterte promised to call President Xi Jinping. Mr. Trump noted that the two men had met at his Florida resort, and he called Mr. Xi "a good guy."

The transcript was widely circulated on Tuesday, and The Washington Post and The Intercept both published articles based on the same document.

The end of the conversation centered on a first meeting between the two men, perhaps when Mr. Trump is in Manila later this year. But Mr. Trump twice invited Mr. Duterte to "come to the Oval Office."

"I will love to have you in the Oval Office, anytime you want to come," Mr. Trump said.

"Take care of yourself, Rodrigo," he concluded. "God bless you."

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Pope Francis, Donald Trump to Seek Common Ground at Vatican

Francis X. Rocca
VATICAN CITY—

When President Donald Trump visits Pope Francis on Wednesday, at the halfway point of a trip the White House has cast as a pilgrimage of peace, the two leaders will have a chance to reset an acrimonious public relationship.

Yet the two men, famously divided on the pope's signature issues of migration and climate change, could struggle to find significant areas of agreement.

As of last week, representatives of the White House and the Vatican working on the agenda for the meeting had found few common policy priorities, according to someone familiar with the preparations.

Vatican meetings between pontiffs and heads of state are more stagecraft than hard-nosed politics. Wednesday's meeting carries extra weight given the public sparring

match last year, when the pope said Mr. Trump's opposition to migration made him "not Christian," and Mr. Trump shot back that questioning his faith was "disgraceful."

"They have a little fence-mending to do. They got off to a bad start," said Jim Nicholson, ambassador to the Holy See under President George W. Bush.

"Everyone knows there are areas of disagreement," said Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington. "It's just important that they're getting together to say, 'What are some of the areas where we have common ground?'"

Mr. Trump stands to gain, amid the many controversies besetting him at home, from images of a friendly encounter with the enormously popular pope. The Vatican is sensitive to the White House's concerns and eager to avoid anything that could appear like a

scolding, according to someone familiar with the preparations.

Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Holy See's secretary for relations with states, declined a request for an interview about the meeting.

The pope himself has sought to play down the tensions. When asked about the coming meeting with Mr. Trump, he said that "we need to look for the doors that are at least slightly open, to enter and talk about the things we have in common, and to go on. Step by step."

On the eve of his departure, Mr. Trump said: "I look forward to speaking with the pope about how Christian teachings can help put the world on a path to justice, freedom, and peace."

Abortion, an issue uniting the Trump administration and American Catholic bishops, is a point of common ground, but isn't a priority for the pope.

Pope Francis has made a priority of addressing global warming, describing it as a real threat to life on the planet and calling for cutting fossil fuel use to stem it. The White House, to the contrary, is deciding whether the U.S. should withdraw in full from the Paris Agreement to cap emissions.

A main goal of Mr. Trump's foreign trip—outreach to the Muslim world—is in principle one that could appeal to Pope Francis, who has fervently promoted close relations with Islam. On Sunday in Saudi Arabia, Mr. Trump addressed leaders of dozens of Muslim countries on the need to confront extremist ideologies and promote a peaceful version of Islam.

That could offer a point of convergence with Pope Francis, who issued a forceful call against religiously inspired violence in a speech in Cairo, Egypt last month.

"That's a way to start a conversation," said Ken Hackett,

U.S. ambassador to the Holy See under President Barack Obama. Mr. Trump "can say, 'I just came out of Saudi Arabia and you were just in Egypt.' That sort of thing can lead to common ground."

Pope Francis and Mr. Trump have both voiced concern for besieged Christian minorities in the Middle East, but the Vatican's call to increase aid for displaced Christians and other minorities in the region clashes with the White House's aim to cut budgets. The topic of Mideast peace is a thorny one, with Vatican diplomats wary of what they view as the Trump administration's pro-Israel tilt.

With the two differing on migration, only narrow areas of that theme, such as combating human

trafficking, are likely to bring them together.

"The only way I can see them talking (about migration issues) is perhaps on the human trafficking thing," said Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Ivanka Trump, the president's daughter and one of his White House advisers, has embraced the cause and is scheduled to meet trafficking victims Wednesday at an event sponsored by a Catholic organization in Rome.

Other topics that traditionally unite Republican administrations and the Vatican could prove less fruitful this time.

For instance, the U.S. bishops have welcomed President Trump's antiabortion stance and have expressed cautious optimism about his moves to exempt them from the contraceptive mandate of the Affordable Care Act, which requires employers to provide birth control to their employees, which they consider a violation of religious liberty.

But the two issues aren't likely to figure prominently in Wednesday's meeting. Pope Francis has generally played down such topics in his pontificate.

Abortion and religious liberty came up during President Obama's 2014 visit, following the urging of U.S. bishops. But that was before the departure of a high-ranking

American from the Holy See's Secretariat of State left U.S. bishops without a strong advocate inside the Vatican.

The White House's announcement Friday that the president would nominate Callista Gingrich, wife of former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, as U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, removes one potentially awkward element from the meeting with the pope.

By moving to fill the job while many other ambassadorships and other posts in his administration remain unfilled, Mr. Trump shows the pope that he values Washington's relationship with the Vatican.



Sitman : A Vatican Meeting, and a Clash of Moral Visions

by Matthew Sitman

Pope Francis and Donald Trump have been circling each other for a while now. Ever since Francis first visited the U.S., during the early days of Trump's presidential campaign, it's been hard not to ponder what they make of each other. Sometimes they've invited the comparisons: "A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian," Francis told reporters after visiting Mexico last year, not mentioning Trump by name -- but inevitably bringing to mind one wall in particular. Trump, for his part, has swung between suggesting the Vatican is weak on terrorism and praising Francis for having "a lot of energy."

On Wednesday, Francis and Trump are to actually meet. If all goes according to plan, their encounter will be subdued. Ken Hackett, a former U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, put it this way: "From the Vatican's point of view, it's pretty normal fare for them to deal with heads of state. They've been doing it for centuries." The two leaders probably will spend less than an hour in each other's company, including the exchange of gifts and requisite photo-ops. It seems unlikely the meeting will be anything other than, well, diplomatic.

But the juxtaposition of Trump and Francis, however brief, will be brimming with meaning. They offer nothing less than two competing visions of how humans should live together, two different ways of responding to the anxieties and dilemmas of our time.

The differences between the man in white and the one with the orange scowl may seem obvious. But ever

since Trump shot to the lead in the Republican primaries, a number of conservative critics have argued he and Francis actually are quite similar. Once his nomination seemed a real possibility, Matthew Schmitz claimed in the Washington Post that Francis and Trump have "much in common" because, to take one example, they both are "outsiders bent on shaking up their establishments." New York Times columnist Ross Douthat declared them "strangely alike" -- after all, both "have become leading populists in our increasingly populist moment." And after Trump's surprise victory in November, Rod Dreher at the American Conservative said that the case for "comparing Francis to Trump is even stronger now than it was earlier this year."

The analogies show no signs of abating: Just this week, the Wall Street Journal's William McGurn began a column by plaintively asking, "Is Pope Francis the Donald Trump of popes?" (No surprises here: The leaders are "more alike than commonly supposed," he observes, particularly on global trade.) It's almost enough to make you hope Trump finishes his first term -- who can imagine all the deep resonances between the two that will have been discovered by then?

Many of these arguments focus on style rather than substance; Schmitz, for example, notes supposed "rhetorical similarities" between Francis and Trump, while McGurn underscored that both have a "pendant for insults." It's easy to understand why such airy assertions, or deploying vague formulations like "populist," are necessary. When it comes to actual issues, the two leaders differ dramatically.

On climate change and the environment, for example, Francis is one of the most forceful voices on the world scene; his 2015 encyclical *Laudato si'* urged all people of good will, not just Christians, to care for our common home. Trump, on the other hand, almost is a parody of climate-change denialism, suggesting that the concept was a Chinese-invented hoax; Scott Pruitt, appointed by Trump to run the EPA, contests that carbon-dioxide emissions are a main cause of global warming.

That's not all. When it comes to the economy, the pope assailed trickle-down economics in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*, as having "never been confirmed by the facts," and condemned the "tyranny" of money. Trump's proposals, on the other hand, are breathtakingly pro-rich, especially the massive tax cuts he wants to give the wealthiest Americans, like himself. Francis has urged us to not abandon refugees, while Trump has sought to ban them from entering the United States. Francis believes health care is a human right and not a privilege, but Trump neatly reverses the formulation, moving aggressively to make it unaffordable for all *but* the privileged.

Lurking beneath all these policy particulars, however, is a deeper incompatibility. Francis has made "mercy" the theme of his papacy -- he has called it "the very foundation of the church's life," and has tried to build a "culture of mercy." Mercy sides with the poor, the sick, the failures, the "losers" of this world. While it can only be imperfectly applied to politics, mercy means upholding the dignity of every human being. It means solidarity with prisoners, workers and immigrants. Living mercifully, as Francis has put it, means striving to

"break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness" that mark too much of our lives.

If there is one element that holds together the dominant Republican worldview, perhaps it is a rejection of mercy. In that, the congressional GOP has found a ready ally in Trump -- only consider his just-released "wish list" budget, which proposed massively slashing aid to the poor, the sick, and the disabled. Trump and his allies are only for the winners. If you are struggling to feed your family, you deserve almost no help. If you are an immigrant, you deserve even less. If you are sick, who cares? Trump offers the logic of the GOP in its purest form: a brutal mix of bigotry and cruelty.

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The meeting between Francis and Trump comes at a time not just of political crisis, but of division among U.S. Catholics -- and the two seem deeply connected. A recent Georgetown analysis has shown that the Catholic vote was close to evenly split in November, while white Catholics gave Trump a solid majority of their vote. That fact only affirms the need for Francis's message of solidarity and hope -- both in the church he leads, and in a broader world marked by suffering and fear.

When the photos of Francis and Trump at the Vatican are published, there will be more than a few voices on the right who want to keep blurring the contrast between them. Don't be fooled. The differences are there for all with eyes to see.

Ex-C.I.A. Chief Reveals Mounting Concern Over Trump Campaign and Russia (UNE)

Matt Apuzzo

When he left his post in January, he said, "I had unresolved questions in my mind as to whether or not the Russians had been successful in getting U.S. persons involved in the campaign or not to work on their behalf."

Mr. Brennan acknowledged that he did not know whether the Trump campaign colluded with Russian operatives and said the contacts might have been benign.

American intelligence agencies have concluded that the Russian president, Vladimir V. Putin, tried to damage Hillary Clinton's candidacy and help Mr. Trump. On Aug. 4, as evidence of that campaign mounted, Mr. Brennan warned Alexander V. Bortnikov, the director of Russia's Federal Security Service, known as the F.S.B., not to meddle in the election. Not only would such interference damage relations between the countries, he said, but it was also certain to backfire.

"I said that all Americans, regardless of political affiliation or whom they might support in the election, cherish their ability to elect their own leaders without outside interference or disruption," Mr. Brennan said. "I said American voters would be outraged by any Russian attempt to interfere in the election."

Mr. Brennan's prediction proved inaccurate. Though intelligence agencies are unanimous in their belief that Russia directly interfered in the election, it has become a divisive partisan issue, with Democrats far more likely than Republicans to accept the conclusion. Mr. Trump has declared that "Russia is fake news" and has tried to undermine the conclusions of his own intelligence services.

He has also tried repeatedly to beat back news reports about his campaign's ties to

Russia. White House officials tried to enlist the F.B.I. and C.I.A. to dispute stories early this year. Then, after the F.B.I. publicly confirmed its investigation, Mr. Trump asked Dan Coats, the director of national intelligence, and Michael S. Rogers, the director of the National Security Agency, to publicly deny any collusion between Russia and his campaign, according to two former American officials. The Washington Post first reported Mr. Trump's entreaties.

On the day of the F.B.I.'s confirmation, a call from the White House switchboard came in to Mr. Coats's office with a request to speak to the director, a former intelligence official said. Calls from the switchboard are usually from the highest-ranking officials at the White House — the president, the vice president or the national security adviser.

Mr. Coats took the call. The official would not confirm what was discussed.

Mr. Coats, who testified on Tuesday in a separate congressional hearing, declined to discuss his conversations with the president.

The White House regarded Mr. Brennan's testimony as the latest example of a former official from the Obama administration describing great concern but offering no public proof of wrongdoing.

"This morning's hearings back up what we've been saying all along: that despite a year of investigation, there is still no evidence of any Russia-Trump campaign collusion," the White House said in a statement on Tuesday.

During the campaign, a spokeswoman for Mr. Trump declared that "there was no communication" with foreign entities. And in January, Vice President Mike Pence flatly denied that there had

been any contacts with Russians. Journalists have since reported repeated undisclosed meetings with Russians. Mr. Trump's first national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn, was forced to resign over misstatements about his conversations with the Russian ambassador to the United States, Sergey I. Kislyak.

A Justice Department special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, is investigating whether any collusion took place. A grand jury in Northern Virginia has issued subpoenas for information related to Mr. Flynn's lobbying and businesses. That investigation is separate from multiple congressional investigations into Russian meddling. Mr. Flynn has declined to be interviewed or provide documents to Congress, citing his constitutional right not to incriminate himself.

The Senate Intelligence Committee on Tuesday issued subpoenas for documents from two businesses owned by Mr. Flynn — Flynn Intel L.L.C. and Flynn Intel Inc. — escalating efforts to learn more about his potential business ties to Russia.

Senator Richard M. Burr, Republican of North Carolina and the committee's chairman, left open the possibility of holding Mr. Flynn in contempt of Congress.

"At the end of that option is a contempt charge," he told reporters on Capitol Hill. "And I've said that everything is on the table."

But the committee's members are not ready to take that step, Mr. Burr said, adding that they want to give Mr. Flynn the opportunity he requested to tell his story.

During his testimony on Tuesday, Mr. Brennan described Russia's efforts around the world to use politicians to further Moscow's objectives. "I certainly was

concerned that they were practicing the same types of activities here in the United States," he said.

He added that American targets were often unwitting in such efforts. "Frequently, people who go along a treasonous path do not know they are on a treasonous path until it is too late," he said.

In late July, officials established a group of N.S.A., C.I.A. and F.B.I. officials to investigate the election interference. The information was tightly held, and the F.B.I. took the lead on investigating potential collusion, Mr. Brennan said.

"I made sure that anything that was involving U.S. persons, including anything involving the individuals involved in the Trump campaign, was shared with the bureau," he said.

That investigation was on Mr. Trump's mind this month when he fired James B. Comey, the F.B.I. director, the president has said. And the next day, Mr. Trump told Russian officials during an Oval Office meeting that firing Mr. Comey had eased pressure on him. Such comments, in addition to Mr. Trump's efforts to publicly undermine the F.B.I. investigation, have fueled suspicion among Democrats and some Republicans that Mr. Trump is trying to obstruct the case.

Mr. Brennan said Russia was trying to capitalize on the turmoil in Washington. "Even though the election is over," he said, "I think Mr. Putin and Russian intelligence services are trying to actively exploit what is going on now in Washington to their benefit and to our detriment."

CIA director alerted FBI to pattern of contacts between Russian officials and Trump campaign associates (UNE)

The CIA alerted the FBI to a troubling pattern of contacts between Russian officials and associates of the Trump campaign last year, former agency director John Brennan testified on Tuesday, shedding new light on the origin of a criminal probe that now reaches into the White House.

In testimony before the House Intelligence Committee, Brennan said he became increasingly concerned that Trump associates were being manipulated by Russian intelligence services as part of a broader covert influence campaign that sought to disrupt the election and deliver the presidency to Donald Trump.

"I was worried by a number of the contacts that the Russians had with U.S. persons," Brennan said, adding that he did not see proof of collusion before he left office on Jan. 20, but "felt as though the FBI investigation was certainly well-founded and needed to look into those issues."

Brennan's remarks represent the most detailed public accounting to

date of his tenure as CIA director during the alleged Russian assault on the U.S. presidential race, and the agency's role in triggering an FBI probe that Trump has sought to contain.

[Trump asked intelligence chiefs to push back against FBI collusion probe after Comey revealed its existence]

Team Trump's ties to Russian interests

"It should be clear to everyone that Russia brazenly interfered in our 2016 presidential election process," Brennan said at one point, one of several moments in which his words seemed aimed squarely at the president.

Trump has refused to fully accept the unanimous conclusion of U.S. intelligence agencies that Russia stole thousands of sensitive emails, orchestrated online dumps of damaging information and employed fake news and other means to upend the 2016 race.

GOP lawmakers spent much of Tuesday's hearing trying to get Brennan to concede that he had no conclusive evidence of collusion between the Trump campaign and Moscow. Brennan acknowledged that he still had "unresolved questions" about the purpose of those contacts when he stepped down as CIA director in January.

But, "I know what the Russians try to do," Brennan said. "They try to suborn individuals and they try to get individuals, including U.S. persons, to act on their behalf either wittingly or unwittingly."

Brennan refused to name any of the U.S. individuals who were apparently detected communicating with Russian officials. The FBI investigation, which began last July, has scrutinized Trump associates including Paul Manafort, Trump's former campaign manager; Carter Page, who was once listed as a foreign policy adviser to Trump; and former national security adviser Michael Flynn, who was forced to resign after misleading statements about his contacts with the Russian ambassador were exposed.

The probe has intensified in recent weeks and identified a current White House official as a significant person of interest.

Because Russia uses intermediaries and other measures to disguise its hand, "many times, [U.S. individuals] do not know that the individual they are interacting

with is a Russian," Brennan said.

The Washington Post's Adam Entous explains how President Trump asked two top ranking intelligence officials to publicly deny any connection between his campaign and Russia. The Washington Post's Adam Entous explains how President Trump asked two top ranking intelligence officials to publicly deny any connection between his campaign and Russia. (Whitney Leaming/The Washington Post)

(Whitney Leaming/The Washington Post)

He added that Russian agencies routinely seek to gather compromising information, or "kompromat," to coerce treason from U.S. officials who "do not even realize they are on that path until it gets too late." The remark appeared to be in reference to Flynn.

The Senate Intelligence Committee is issuing two new subpoenas for information from Flynn's companies and challenging his lawyer's refusal to comply with an existing subpoena for documents detailing his contacts with Russian officials, committee leaders announced Tuesday.

"A business does not have the right to take the Fifth," Sen. Mark R. Warner (Va.), the committee's lead Democrat, told reporters as he and Chairman Richard Burr (R-N.C.) pledged to "keep all options on the table."

Brennan was also asked about Trump's disclosure of highly classified information to the Russian foreign minister and ambassador in a White House meeting this month. Brennan said that the CIA at times provided tips about terrorist plots to the Kremlin, but he indicated that Trump violated key protocols.

Sensitive information should only be passed through intelligence services, not divulged to foreign ministers or ambassadors, Brennan said. Referring to the information revealed by Trump, Brennan said it had neither gone through "the proper channels nor did the

originating agency have the opportunity to clear language for it."

Brennan was a key figure in the Obama administration's handling of Russian election interference. As alarm grew, Brennan held classified meetings with top congressional officials in the fall to impress upon them the unprecedented nature of Moscow's interference.

Later, Brennan was among the top officials who briefed then-President-elect Trump on the scale of Russia's intervention, and its assessed goal of helping Trump win.

[FBI in agreement with CIA that Russia aimed to help Trump win White House]

On Tuesday, Brennan testified that he was the first to confront a senior member of the Russian government on the matter, using an August phone conversation with the head of Russia's security service, the FSB, to warn that the meddling would backfire and damage the country's relationship with the United States.

Brennan said he told FSB chief Alexander Bortnikov that "American voters would be outraged by any Russian attempt to interfere in the election" and that such activity "would destroy any near-term prospect of improvement" in relations with the United States.

Bortnikov twice denied that Russia was waging such a campaign, according to Brennan, but said he would carry the message to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

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

"I believe I was the first U.S. official to brace Russia on this matter," Brennan said.

The Obama administration went on to issue statements publicly accusing Moscow of election meddling, and in December announced punitive measures including the expulsion of 35 suspected Russian intelligence operatives from the United States.

Despite those warnings and efforts at retaliation, Brennan said that

Russia was probably not dissuaded from attempting similar interference operations in the future.

The former CIA chief is the latest senior Obama administration official to appear publicly before Congress in hearings that have often produced damaging headlines for Trump.

Earlier this month, former acting attorney general Sally Yates testified that she expected White House officials to "take action" after warning that Flynn had misled administration officials about his contacts with Russia.

At that same hearing, former director of national intelligence James R. Clapper Jr. said that Moscow's leaders "must be congratulating themselves for having exceeded their wildest expectations with a minimal expenditure of resource," a reference not only to the outcome of the 2016 race but also to the chaos that has characterized the early months of the Trump administration.

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Brennan has feuded publicly with Trump over the president's treatment of intelligence agencies. In January, he lashed out at Trump for comparing U.S. spy agencies with Nazi secret police.

Brennan was particularly offended by Trump's remarks during a speech at CIA headquarters on the day after he was inaugurated. Trump used the CIA's Memorial Wall — a collection of engraved stars marking the lives of agency operatives killed in the line of duty — to launch a rambling speech in which he bragged about his election victory.

Brennan called the appearance "despicable" and said that Trump should be "ashamed."

Karoun Demirjian contributed to this report.

The Washington Post

Editorial : Trump pushes the boundaries on the Russia probe — again

FORMER CIA DIRECTOR John Brennan told the House Intelligence Committee on Tuesday that he grew worried last year about communications between the Russians and people in Donald Trump's orbit. "I encountered and am aware of information and intelligence that revealed contacts and interactions between Russian officials and U.S. persons involved in the Trump

campaign that I was concerned about because of known Russian efforts to suborn such individuals," he said, adding, "It raised questions in my mind about whether Russia was able to gain the cooperation of those individuals."

Mr. Brennan's testimony made only more imperative a full investigation of Russia's election-year hacking, any sort of Trump campaign collusion and any after-the-fact

attempt to foil this question-asking. Yet even as the public case for such an investigation continues to strengthen, revelations about Mr. Trump's apparent attempts to challenge the FBI's inquiry into these questions continue to roll in.

The Post reported Monday that President Trump asked two senior intelligence officials, Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats and National Security Agency

Director Michael S. Rogers, to declare publicly that there was no evidence of collusion between the president's campaign and the Russians. Mr. Trump did so after top FBI officials, including now-fired Director James B. Comey, reportedly refused a White House request to knock down news stories on possible Trump campaign-Russia links, and after Mr. Comey reportedly declined Mr. Trump's entreaty to end the investigation into

former national security adviser Michael Flynn. Instead, Mr. Comey subsequently confirmed in public testimony to Congress that the FBI was, indeed, examining any connections between the Trump campaign and Russia. The testimony reportedly incensed the president.

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Turning to Mr. Coats and Mr. Rogers in the wake of Mr. Comey's testimony, according to a senior

intelligence official, was an effort to "muddy the waters" about what the FBI was looking at. In the telling of one former intelligence official, the president was "asking them to issue false statements about an ongoing investigation."

And that is not even the most worrying interpretation. One intelligence official told The Post that the White House asked the intelligence chiefs, "Can we ask him to shut down the investigation? Are you able to assist in this matter?" This questioning could indicate mere confusion — or that the president was trying to pressure Mr. Comey to

drop the FBI's inquiry via intelligence agencies, after direct pressure on the FBI director failed.

Perhaps Mr. Trump knows of no collusion with Russia and was unaware of the proper boundaries between himself and government agencies that must make their own determinations. If that were ever an excuse, it has worn thin. By the time Mr. Trump turned to Mr. Coats and Mr. Rogers, reports suggest Mr. Comey had already impressed upon him the importance of maintaining FBI independence, a sentiment Mr. Comey put into action by keeping the Russia investigation going and

refusing to bow to Mr. Trump in other ways. Now that Mr. Trump has been widely rebuked for firing Mr. Comey and for other actions relating to the Russia investigation, if the president crosses a line, he knows what he's doing.

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Bershidsky : Don't Let the Original Trump-Russia Question Fade

The Trump-Russia scandal has changed. The latest leaks are all about President Donald Trump's acute discomfort with the investigation into his 2016 campaign's possible collusion with the Kremlin, not about the collusion itself. This is a dangerous bit of bait-and-switch: Soon, it may not even matter whether or not Trump or his associates accepted help from President Vladimir Putin or those working for him.

In 2002, a poll revealed that 65 percent of Americans didn't remember enough about Watergate to tell the basic facts to another person. At the same time, 63 percent said Richard Nixon's actions were serious enough to warrant his resignation. Almost two-thirds of the American public would be unable to say exactly what Nixon did, whether he knew in advance about the Democratic National Committee burglary (there's no evidence that he did) and what he undertook to cover it up (schemed to replace the investigating agency and hide evidence).

In today's fast-moving world, it won't take 40 years to get there. No one will care about the major differences between Trump-Russia and Watergate if the basic plot appears similar -- and now, it does.

All the recent leaks are about Trump trying to shake off the Russia investigation. There is the "Comey memo" telling of Trump's suggestion that the former Federal Bureau of Investigation director drop the investigation of former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn. There's Trump's admission that he was thinking about the "Russia thing" when he fired James Comey. There's his alleged remark to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov that firing "nut job" Comey eased the Russia-related pressure on him (Lavrov denies Trump said this). And there are the latest reports

that Trump attempted to get Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats and National Security Agency Director Michael Rogers to say publicly that they had no evidence of Trump-Russia collusion.

That's suddenly sounding like an attempted cover-up, Nixon-style. Next thing we know, special counsel Robert Mueller will be demanding that the White House release recordings of Trump's conversations about the scandal (if they exist, as Trump has hinted), the way Archibald Cox once did with Nixon. And perhaps, who knows, there will be enough evidence to charge Trump with obstruction of justice tied to his trademark impatience or something far more serious.

But where is Russia in this anymore? As a Russian opposed to the current Kremlin regime but interested in the long-term relationship between the U.S. and my country, I don't much care what Trump told members of the U.S. intelligence community and how they replied. Perhaps that's obstruction of justice and perhaps it isn't; we already know that Trump's handling of the situation is clumsy in the extreme. Instead of clearing the way for the investigation, he has been criticizing it, and that makes him look guilty. But I'm far more interested in the original subject of the investigation: Did the Trump campaign actually get help from Moscow, and if so, did they accept it wittingly or unwittingly?

Answering these questions would mean some specific steps on the part of a politically impartial investigation.

It would need to establish who hacked the DNC and Hillary Clinton's campaign officials. I know the U.S. intelligence community thinks it was "the Russians," but that's only an opinion, although, we're told, based on some non-public evidence. In the Watergate case, the burglars were exposed.

It would need to establish who handed over the stolen data to WikiLeaks.

It would need to figure out whether anyone on the Trump campaign was in contact with the hackers, the leakers or those who controlled them; in the latter case, it would also mean establishing a connection between the controllers and the hackers and leakers. The Watergate investigation established a connection between the Nixon campaign and the burglary.

And if it succeeded at that -- and two years passed between the arrest of the plumbers and Nixon's impeachment -- it would need to find out whether Trump knew about the contacts and authorized them or hid them. The Watergate investigation never proved that Nixon had prior knowledge of the plot.

None of the many revelations so far have addressed any of these issues that must be at the core of a serious investigation. Sally Yates, the acting Attorney General fired by Trump for refusing to defend the travel ban, testified to senators that "we believed that Gen. Flynn" -- a top campaign adviser and Trump's first national security adviser -- "was compromised" with the Russians. There are stories about Trump's former campaign chief Paul Manafort's work for deposed Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich and his failed business venture with Russian aluminum magnate Oleg Deripaska; about a Russian state bank helping to fund a Trump-branded project; about a man named Carter Page, whom no one can remember in Moscow or Washington, but who apparently knows some suspicious Russians. But there are no leaks or journalistic investigations that would actually indicate collusion between the Trump campaign and the Kremlin in releasing material that may have helped Trump win the election.

On Tuesday, former CIA Director John Brennan testified to the House Intelligence Committee that he had concerns, without citing specific evidence. "I encountered and am aware of information and intelligence that revealed contacts and interactions between Russian officials and U.S. persons involved in the Trump campaign that I was concerned about," he said.

That's the really important matter to investigate. If Putin and Trump -- or people working for them -- actually made a deal to swing a U.S. election, that calls for impeachment and treason charges. If Trump was complicit in such a plot, he shouldn't be president. If he tried and failed to shut down investigations that later revealed collusion by his underlings without his knowledge, it's a more complicated matter.

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

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For now, the public case against Trump appears to be about his clumsy interactions with U.S. intelligence officials, not about any evidence of collusion. This threatens to further chill delicate and extremely important relations between the U.S. and Russia for petty political reasons. I also fear that Russian people will be stigmatized in the U.S. regardless of whether they have anything to do with Putin's Kremlin. If Trump is undone by this secondary, derivative scandal, soon no one will remember exactly what happened and the collusion story may be validated by default, as far as most Americans are concerned.

I hope Mueller's investigators will remember what they're investigating, and I hope they do an honest job.



Editorial : Trump's Budget Is a Waste of Everybody's Time

President Donald Trump's first budget is truly remarkable in its unseriousness. To see why, try for a moment to take it seriously.

The plan purports to be fiscally responsible, saying that the national debt will fall from 77 percent now to 60 percent in 2027. A worthy goal, to be sure. At the same time, it calls for tax cuts but no changes in spending on the two main entitlement programs, Medicare and (non-disability) Social Security. To square these ambitious pledges, the budget then needs either a close-to-impossible acceleration in economic growth, or an implausibly severe squeeze on most other kinds of spending.

With characteristically Trumpian disdain for reality, the budget proposes both.

The Trump administration has until now said its planned tax cuts would pay for themselves by pushing economic growth to 3 percent a year -- a claim already seen as outlandish by every serious analyst, liberal and conservative alike. The budget appears to go one better: It says this boost in growth will be sufficient not just to maintain revenue (despite the cut in rates) but will actually raise revenue by \$2 trillion over 10 years compared with current policy. Perhaps somebody just made a dumb mistake, counting the revenue from faster growth twice over. With this administration, it's wise not to rule it out.

There's more. The administration's magical tax reform is "in its very early stages," as Budget Director Mick Mulvaney generously put it on Monday. Yet to have even the faintest hope of being revenue-

neutral, let alone revenue-enhancing, the reform would have to revive the idea of "border adjustment" -- in effect, a tax on imports. The idea has aroused strong opposition from U.S. businesses, the White House has blown hot and cold, and few in Congress think it will be implemented.

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

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Turning to the spending side of the budget, things get no better. The plan includes cuts in Medicaid and other welfare programs so severe that many conservative Republicans are wincing. In all it looks for policy savings of more than \$3 trillion over 10 years, without troubling to say how they'll be achieved. Of this

total, \$1.4 trillion is projected to come from the administration's "two-penny plan," which isn't a plan at all, just a declaration that eligible discretionary spending will henceforth be cut by 2 percent a year.

Trump's budget has been almost universally called dead on arrival. That may be an understatement. This plan, if you can call it that, was never capable of life. White House budgets are often set aside, yet still can guide deliberations in Congress, where tax and spending decisions actually get made. This budget serves no such purpose. It is simply an extended tweet, and a waste of everybody's time.



Republicans, Pushing Aside Trump's Budget, Find Few Alternatives (UNE)

Thomas Kaplan

But the drastic reordering of government that Mr. Trump has embraced includes many measures long sought by conservatives on Capitol Hill, including adding work requirements for food-stamp eligibility and opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling. It would also eliminate whole programs, including AmeriCorps, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

The budget would increase military spending by 10 percent and calls for spending \$2.6 billion on border security, including \$1.6 billion to begin funding a wall on the border with Mexico.

Some of the president's proposals are likely to survive.

For Republicans, the stakes of the coming budget season go beyond the intricacies of budgetary minutiae: Republicans want to use their budget to pave the way for an overhaul of the tax code that could skirt a Senate filibuster. If they cannot agree on a budget, Mr. Trump's promised "biggest tax cut" in history will be doomed. A protracted fight over the budget

would also further delay the orderly appropriations process that Republicans have promised to follow after years of neglect.

If congressional Republicans fail to pass spending bills this summer, they again run the risk of funding the government through stopgap resolutions that keep programs on autopilot — and in the shape that President Barack Obama left them in.

"It'll be very difficult in both bodies to pass a budget proposal," Mr. Rogers said.

The next step for Republicans in Congress is to agree on a budget blueprint, which sets spending levels and provides a road map for spending and revenue in the coming years. But first, they must find a way to overcome their diverse views on fiscal policy.

Mr. Trump's budget, drafted by a budget director, Mick Mulvaney, who came from the most conservative corners of the House, starts the conversation on friendly House Republican turf.

Representative Mark Meadows, Republican of North Carolina and the chairman of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, said that was the right starting point. The

budget negotiation "goes from conservative to moderate, and that's the way that it should go," Mr. Meadows said. "If you start in the middle, you make everybody mad when you move one way or another."

Senator Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, who was the lead Democrat on the House Budget Committee for years, was not so sanguine.

"There's always been a divide between the House and Senate Republicans on a lot of these issues, but this looks like it was written by House Republicans on steroids, and I think it will be difficult for them to get it through the Senate," he said.

Republican lawmakers already face a time crunch, given that Mr. Trump offered his budget three months past the statutory deadline in February.

While new presidents routinely take more time to submit their inaugural budgets, Mr. Trump unveiled his unusually late, and in an uncommonly low-key fashion, dispatching his budget director to unveil the plan while he was overseas. That raised questions about whether he would take a

leadership role in the coming spending debates.

The House and Senate budget committees both expect to introduce their proposals in June, according to congressional aides. The House plan is expected to incorporate the significant changes that Speaker Paul D. Ryan, a former budget committee chairman, has long championed for Medicare, a major break with Mr. Trump, who has promised to leave Medicare alone.

For years, Mr. Ryan has tried to shift Medicare away from its open-ended commitment to pay for medical services and toward a fixed government contribution for each beneficiary — a change he has said would inject market forces and competition into the program.

Mr. Ryan told reporters on Tuesday that Congress would take the president's budget "and then work on our own budget, which is the case every single year."

The Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, was equally noncommittal.

"Every president since I've been here, and that covers a good period of time, has made a recommendation, and then we decide what we're going to do with

those recommendations," Mr. McConnell said.

Mr. Mulvaney conceded that the plan would not be embraced in its entirety, but said it was a signal from the president to Congress about his priorities and goals.

"If Congress has a different way to get to that endpoint, God bless them — that's great," Mr. Mulvaney said Monday as he previewed the

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

and Natalie Andrews

President Donald Trump faced swift resistance from Democrats and a range of Republicans on Capitol Hill on Tuesday after offering a 10-year plan to balance the federal budget that depends heavily on cuts to government safety-net programs and expectations of a big gain in economic growth.

The White House budget proposal for the 2018 fiscal year that begins Oct. 1 would cut federal spending by \$4.5 trillion over 10 years. But it leaves mostly untouched the big entitlement programs—Social Security and Medicare for retirees—and proposes increases to infrastructure spending, a new parental leave program and a short-term boost to military spending.

With those priorities set—in addition to the shared Republican goal of cutting taxes—the White House offered up significant reductions in other spending programs to further the aim of reducing budget deficits. But the call for rolling back programs that touched their constituents made lawmakers bristle.

The proposal, which serves as a recommendation to Congress, is likely to be largely rewritten when lawmakers craft their own budget resolutions in the coming months.

"I hate to say it, but I would say the budget was dead before the ink was dry," Rep. Don Young (R., Alaska), who opposes the budget's elimination of two programs in his state.

Payments to Medicaid, the federal-state health program for the poor, would be cut by more than \$600 billion over a decade from levels projected under current law in addition to proposed Medicaid cuts under the House bill repealing and replacing much of the Affordable Care Act.

The food-stamp program would be cut over 10 years by \$193 billion, the student-loan program by \$143 billion, disability payments by \$72

plan. "Do I expect them to adopt this 100 percent, wholeheartedly, without any change? Absolutely not. Do I expect them to work with the administration on trying to figure out places where we're on the same page? Absolutely."

Democrats came out strongly against the budget, saying it would hurt the poor and the working class. They are hoping that Republicans will brush off the White House's

billion and farm subsidies by \$38 billion.

"The proposed cuts to some federal programs are not mere shavings; they are rather deep and harmful to my district spanning Kentucky's Appalachian region and other rural, impoverished parts of the country," Rep. Hal Rogers (R., Ky.), a former chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, said of the proposal.

Democrats blasted the overall budget proposal.

"This is the budget you write if you think working families have it too easy," Sen. Ron Wyden (D., Ore.) said.

Mr. Trump's budget risks alienating at least some of his core voters who rely on programs that he is proposing to cut. Rural white voters are among his staunchest supporters, the latest Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll shows. While the president's overall approval rating was 39%, 52% of rural voters said they approved of his performance.

The budget blueprint calls for scrapping two commissions important to Alaska, a state that Mr. Trump won by 15 points in the November election. The budget would eliminate the Denali Commission, which provides economic development services in Alaska, and an Essential Air Service program, which works to ensure that small communities offer some level of air service.

In all, nondefense spending as a share of the economy would fall to just 1.5% by the end of the next decade, well below the lowest level in records going back to 1962.

Besides wide-ranging spending reductions, the proposal depends on a projection that economic growth will reach 3% by 2021 and stay there through 2027, bolstering government revenue and holding down the need for support programs like unemployment insurance.

That growth projection is more aggressive than the Congressional

requests, much as they did when Mr. Trump sought funding for his border wall as well as billions of dollars in cuts to domestic programs as lawmakers hammered out an agreement to fund the government through September.

The Senate minority leader, Chuck Schumer of New York, said Republicans "dislike this budget almost as much as we do."

Budget Office projection of 1.9% over a decade or the Fed's 1.8% projection. It also assumes the country's economic expansion, already nearly eight years old, won't be interrupted by another economic downturn.

The plan drew praise from some Republicans for proposing to balance the budget over 10 years and boosting military spending. GOP lawmakers have also backed overhauling federal funding for Medicaid in previous congressional budgets. Still, many balked at cuts to foreign aid, farm subsidies, health-care programs for low-income families and other programs that mattered back home.

"It's nothing new—it's just a lot of people who don't know what the hell is going on in farm country," said Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts (R., Kansas), who objected to proposed cuts for farm subsidies and new limits on crop insurance, as well as cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program, also known as food stamps.

Sen. John McCain (R., Ariz.), chair of the Armed Services Committee, said the increase for the military was "a betrayal of the president's commitment to rebuild our military. It's way too low and will not restore our military from the draconian cuts that were the result of eight years of Barack Obama's failed leadership."

With Mr. Trump traveling through the Middle East and Europe, his deputies were left to defend the plan.

Mick Mulvaney, the president's budget director, said Monday the plan will boost economic growth by adding workers to the labor force, in part by requiring them to have jobs to qualify for assistance programs such as food stamps, in addition to funding a new parental-leave program.

The 2018 budget blueprint is especially important this year because Republicans plan to use it as a vehicle to advance an overhaul of the tax code. The party, which has 52 seats in the Senate, will

"And so the likelihood is what happened with the 2017 budget will happen here," Mr. Schumer said. "Democrats and Republicans will tell President Trump and his minions to stay at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue. Let us work out a budget together that will make America a better place."

need to hold together most of its coalition to proceed, but party fractures became apparent with the budget proposal.

House Freedom Caucus Chairman Mark Meadows praised the Trump budget's proposed cuts. But the North Carolina Republican said he was given pause by the budget's cuts to community programs that help fund Meals on Wheels, which provides free food service daily to homebound individuals.

"Meals on Wheels, even for some of us who are considered to be fiscal hawks, may be a bridge too far," said Mr. Meadows, noting that he himself has delivered meals.

Deficit hawks also took swipes at the plan, arguing it does virtually nothing to address the two biggest drivers of government spending: Medicare and Social Security.

"This is not sustainable over the long-run because Social Security and Medicare costs will continue growing rapidly even after lawmakers have run out of other offsets," said Brian Riedl, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and former chief economist for Sen. Rob Portman (R., Ohio).

Despite the resistance he will surely face, the president has important allies in Congress; most notably House and Senate leadership with a mutual incentive to ensure the Republican economic agenda doesn't stall in Congress.

"We finally have a president who is willing to actually balance the budget," said House Speaker Paul Ryan. Echoing the president's promise, he said, "clearly getting to regulatory reform and tax reform will help us grow the economy."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) said the budget reflected "recommendations" from Mr. Trump that Republicans would take into consideration as they write their own budgets. "We'll be taking into account what the president recommended. They will not be determinative," he said.

Moreover, it's by no means clear that Trump voters themselves will

Bipartisan Pushback Greets Trump's Proposed Budget (UNE)

Kate Davidson,
Kristina Peterson

abandon him even if they dislike pieces of his budget plan.

"It takes a helluva lot to move Trump supporters away from Donald Trump, as we've seen," said

Neil Newhouse, a GOP pollster. "So I don't think a preliminary budget proposal will do the trick."

—Peter Nicholas contributed to this article.

The
Washington
Post

Even some Republicans balk at Trump's plan for steep budget cuts (UNE)

President Trump's proposal to cut federal spending by more than \$3.6 trillion over the next decade — including deep reductions for programs that help the poor — faced harsh criticism in Congress on Tuesday, where even many Republicans said the White House had gone too far.

While some fiscally conservative lawmakers, particularly in the House, found a lot to praise in Trump's plan to balance the budget within 10 years, most Republicans flatly rejected the White House proposal. The divide sets up a clash between House conservatives and a growing number of Senate Republicans who would rather work with Democrats on a spending deal than entertain Trump's deep cuts.

"This is kind of the game," said Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Tex.). "We know that the president's budget won't pass as proposed."

Instead, Cornyn said he believes conversations are already underway about how Republicans can negotiate with Democrats to avoid across-the-board spending cuts that are scheduled to go into effect in October. Those talks could include broad spending increases for domestic and military programs that break from Trump's plan for deep cuts in education, housing, research and health care.

"I think that's the only way," Cornyn said of working with Democrats on spending. "It would be good to get that done so we can get the Appropriations Committee to get to work."

What Trump's budget cuts from the social safety net

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said such spending talks would be inevitable.

"We'll have to negotiate the top line with Senate Democrats, we know that," McConnell told reporters Tuesday. "They will not be irrelevant in the process, and at some point, here in the near future, those discussions will begin."

As Senate Republicans were discussing a bipartisan spending agreement, White House budget director Mick Mulvaney stood across town pitching Trump's proposal to dramatically alter the role of government in society,

shrinking the federal workforce, scaling back anti-poverty programs and cutting spending on things like disease research and job training. The \$4.094 trillion proposal for fiscal 2018 includes \$1 trillion in cuts over 10 years to anti-poverty programs including Medicaid, food assistance and health insurance for low-income children.

It would slightly increase spending on the military, immigration control and border security and provide an additional \$200 billion for infrastructure projects over 10 years. It would also allocate \$1.6 billion for the creation of a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico.

Budget experts questioned many of the economic assumptions that the White House put into its plan, saying it was preposterous to claim that massive tax cuts and spending reductions will lead to a surge in economic growth. The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, for example, said that using normal economic projections, the White House's proposal would not eliminate the deficit and would allow U.S. debt to continue growing into the next decade.

"Rather than making unrealistic assumptions, the president must make the hard tax and spending choices needed to truly bring the national debt under control," it said.

The White House proposals represent a defiant blueprint for a government realignment that closely follows proposals made in recent years by some of the most conservative members of the House, a group that once included Mulvaney himself. Trump has alleged that safety net programs create a welfare state that pull people out of the workforce, and his budget would cull these programs back.

Mulvaney pointed specifically to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the modern version of food stamps. The White House plans to propose forcing states to pay a portion of the benefits in the program, which reached more than 44 million beneficiaries in 2016.

"We are not kicking anybody off of any program who really needs it," Mulvaney said. "We have plenty of money in this country to take care of the people who need help. ... We

don't have enough money to take care of ... everybody who doesn't need help."

Mulvaney, who served in the House from 2011 until earlier this year, is a co-founder of the House Freedom Caucus. Many of the provisions in Trump's first budget reflect long-standing priorities of the Republican Party's far right in cutting back federal spending to get the nation's long-term fiscal picture under control — largely by cutting entitlement programs that mainly benefit the poor.

Republicans are keenly interested in passing a budget this year because they hope to use that legislation to lay the groundwork for a GOP-friendly rewrite of the tax code. Many GOP members hope to attach the tax reform to the budget process in order to advantage of special Senate rules that would allow both the budget and tax rewrite to pass with 51 votes, rather than the 60 that are needed to pass most other legislation. That special treatment could be critical to the success of the GOP tax effort in the Senate, where Republicans control a slim 52-to-48 majority.

White House officials knew their budget proposal would be jarring and launch a political fight, but they think it is a necessary debate given a wing of the Republican Party that wants the government to shrink.

But the cuts were met with intense criticism even among the majority of GOP members who hailed Trump's desire to pare back spending, including many who worried about the size of some of the proposed cuts.

Rep. Mark Meadows (N.C.), chairman of the hard-line Freedom Caucus, said he was encouraged by early reports of new curbs on food stamps, family welfare and other spending. But he said he draws the line on cuts to Meals on Wheels, a charity that Mulvaney earlier this year suggested was ineffective.

"I've delivered meals to a lot of people that perhaps it's their only hot meal of the day," Meadows said. "And so I'm sure there's going to be some give and take, but to throw out the entire budget just because you disagree with some of the principles would be inappropriate."

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said he backs Trump's proposal for a temporary burst of new defense spending, which White House officials say would allow them to add 56,400 service members in 2018. But he worries that Trump would finance those increases by cutting critical programs like the National Institutes of Health.

"My number one goal is to have a more balanced budget," said Graham, who also endorsed the idea of entering into spending talks with Democrats. "NIH is a national treasure, and it would be hurt, too."

Graham is part of a long-standing alliance between defense hawks who want increased military spending and Democrats who are willing to back military programs in exchange for more spending on domestic priorities. The two sides have forged several past agreements, including a two-year plan for increased spending that is set to expire at the end of September.

Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) said that formal spending discussions have not yet begun but that he is prepared to work with GOP leaders when the time is right.

"The idea that we'll work on a bipartisan budget independent from the president's is ripe in the air," Schumer said.

The Energy 202 newsletter

Your daily guide to the energy and environment debate.

But such a deal is sure to anger conservatives in the House, where many of the most hard-line members staunchly defended aspects of Trump's proposal.

Although Meadows said Meals on Wheels cuts might be "a bridge too far," he praised much of the rest of the Trump budget. "It probably is the most conservative budget that we've had under Republican or Democrat administrations in decades," he said.

Rep. Scott DesJarlais (Tenn.), a Freedom Caucus member, rejected the argument that Trump's budget represented a betrayal of some of his populist campaign promises, notably to protect Medicaid spending.

"If we don't do something to protect the program for the people who really need it, then they're not going to have access to that, so I think we can't continue to ignore these big-ticket items," he said. "If we're ever

going to get our budget to balance and pay down our debt, we're going to have to make these tough choices and have these tough votes."

Read more at PowerPost

Kelsey Snell covers Congress with a focus on budget and fiscal issues for the Washington Post. She

previously covered tax, trade and budget policy.

**The
Washington
Post**

Trump advisers call for privatizing some public assets to build new infrastructure (UNE)

By Michael Laris

The Trump administration, determined to overhaul and modernize the nation's infrastructure, is drafting plans to privatize some public assets such as airports, bridges, highway rest stops and other facilities, according to top officials and advisers.

In his proposed budget released Tuesday, President Trump called for spending \$200 billion over 10 years to "incentivize" private, state and local spending on infrastructure.

Trump advisers said that to entice state and local governments to sell some of their assets, the administration is considering paying them a bonus. The proceeds of the sales would then go to other infrastructure projects. Australia has pursued a similar policy, which it calls "asset recycling," prompting the 99-year lease of a state-owned electrical grid to pay for improvements to the Sydney Metro, among other projects.

In the United States, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel (D) explored privatizing Midway International Airport several years ago but dropped the idea in 2013, after a key bidder backed away. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao says such projects should be encouraged.

[Parking meter deal undercut effort to privatize Chicago's Midway airport]

President Trump wants less federal spending and more private investment to fix American infrastructure. This is what he's asking for in his transportation budget. This is what President Trump is proposing in his transportation budget. (Claritza Jimenez/The Washington Post)

(Claritza Jimenez/The Washington Post)

"You take the proceeds from the airport, from the sale of a government asset, and put it into financing infrastructure," Chao said. St. Louis is working with federal officials to try to privatize Lambert International Airport, she said.

Officials are crafting Trump's initiative, and he has yet to decide which ideas will make the final cut.

But two driving themes are clear: Government practices are stalling the nation's progress; and private companies should fund, build and run more of the basic infrastructure of American life.

A far-reaching proposal from the Trump administration earlier this year to take the nation's air-traffic control system out of government hands was fueled, in part, by frustration at sluggish efforts to modernize technology.

To speed up infrastructure projects, officials are preparing to overhaul the federal environmental review and permitting system, which they blame for costly delays. Trump asked advisers whether they could collapse that process, which he said takes at least 10 years, down to four months. "But we'll be satisfied with a year," Trump said. "It won't be more than a year."

In a bid for broader support, Trump and some of his advisers have also signaled an openness to raising the gas tax to pay for needed projects. The 18.4-cent-per-gallon levy is the federal government's main source of highway funds and was last raised in 1993.

The infrastructure initiative is being shaped by White House officials and a task force representing 16 federal departments and agencies. In addition, there is a committee of outside advisers co-chaired by billionaire developer Richard LeFrak, a Trump friend.

LeFrak said the administration's effort, which is being led by Gary Cohn, director of the National Economic Council, Chao and others, is a sweeping attempt to rethink how infrastructure gets built. LeFrak said the issues are intensely personal for Trump, who spent his career in real estate and sees this as an area where he can make a lasting impact.

"He does think he's the president to rebuild America. He's a builder. It's just logical," LeFrak said. "He's highly enthusiastic about this idea and getting it done."

Critics said Trump and his advisers are putting ideology ahead of the national interest and oversimplifying how the process works.

Public stewards should not be "trying to figure out how to extract maximum value" by selling off government assets or "making huge, multibillion-dollar wagers" that span decades, said Kevin DeGood, director of infrastructure policy at the Center for American Progress, a liberal advocacy group. "Building infrastructure faster and without adequate study or time for community input may be good for developers, but it's lousy for everyone else."

Still, there are bipartisan concerns that important projects have been stymied by politics and bureaucracy, and that Washington has been unwilling to allocate the money for needed improvements. A civil-engineering group in March tallied a "\$2 trillion, 10-year investment gap" in the nation's roads, transit systems, bridges, water systems, power grids, parks, ports and schools.

In February, Trump told Congress that he would seek legislation "that produces a \$1 trillion investment" in infrastructure and creates "millions of new jobs." Officials have since said that the plan will probably include \$200 billion in direct federal funds, which would be used to "leverage" the larger figure over a decade. LeFrak sees the chance for a deal, noting that Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) also "wants a trillion-dollar program."

"So you've already got two important people — one very, very important person and one very important person — both from different sides of the aisle, who come in favor of this," LeFrak said.

But on Tuesday, when Trump's budget proposal was released, Schumer condemned the president's "180-degree turn away from his repeated promise of a trillion-dollar infrastructure plan," saying the budget contains deep cuts in spending on roads, transit projects, public housing and more.

"The fuzzy math and sleight of hand can't hide the fact that the President's \$200 billion plan is more than wiped out by other cuts to key infrastructure programs," Schumer said in a statement.

Trump administration officials disputed Schumer's calculations,

saying they included budget items that should not be considered cuts. They cited a projected "drop-off" in federal highway funds that could be eliminated as part of the broader infrastructure agreement.

The budget places a heavy emphasis on market solutions, such as making it easier for states to toll interstates, saying that the federal government has become "a complicated, costly middleman." The budget also talks about leasing vacant space in Veterans Affairs facilities and selling off major power facilities as ways of "disposing underused capital assets."

[Senate Democrats unveil Trump-sized infrastructure plan]

Faster is always better

At a recent White House event, Trump stood alongside one of his top infrastructure aides, DJ Gribbin, who held up a seven-foot-long flow chart illustrating the highway permitting process. The colorful boxes and baffling array of crisscrossing lines were meant to drive home a point about regulatory overreach.

The chart also could have been a graphic representation of the difficulty of crafting a \$1 trillion package capable of making it through Congress at a time beset with political division.

Democrats, including Schumer, and some Republicans favor a heavy reliance on federal spending, while others in the GOP want to cut that spending and push more responsibility onto states. Agreeing on ways to better manage arcane state and federal regulations would be tough in even the most forgiving of climates.

Add in the priorities of numerous government agencies, and the puzzle becomes even more complex.

"This is a democracy," Chao said. "They're not easy questions."

So Chao and others crafting the president's plan have cut the problem into smaller, more digestible pieces: regulation and permitting; government procurement, which Trump officials say is too clunky and doesn't make enough use of private options;

government revenue and private capital; and lessons from abroad.

They also are trying to account for dizzying technological advances. How do you plan for a 10-year broadband expansion, for example, when the technology could easily shift in five years? Chao asked.

LeFrak, who co-chairs the advisory committee with another Trump friend, Vornado Realty Trust Chairman Steven Roth, said they have also been wrestling with another challenge, the controversy over high-speed rail, "which is one of the things people dream about."

But he has seen studies showing a much lower per-mile cost for using driverless cars instead. So should the government invest in rail, which takes passengers station to station, or in "some kind of road network which is going to allow these cars to travel at relatively high speeds" and take a passenger door to door? he asked.

The administration's focus on shortening the environmental-review process has concerned environmental groups that point to Trump's moves to reverse efforts to fight climate change.

Trump's advisers say it's possible to speed up projects that have clear support and a good business case — while also doing more to protect the environment. But Trump's push for strict new deadlines would require major changes to environmental laws, which would face fierce opposition.

"There's no reason why the U.S. cannot function as efficiently as other Western-style democracies in getting worthy projects through the system and permitted," LeFrak said. "The math speaks for itself. What we're doing in six years, seven years, eight years, 10 years, these other countries get done in a year or two."

DeGood said Trump's team is relying on exaggerated figures and playing down recent reforms to speed approvals. Administration officials cited a report saying it took

the Federal Highway Administration more than six years to approve major environmental reviews for projects that need them. While that was true in 2011, DeGood said, that figure has since dropped to 3.6 years.

Chao said that things still move too slowly and that many permitting processes can be done simultaneously rather than sequentially. Officials will cut "duplicative or wasteful steps," she said.

"If we can make these construction projects come online faster without compromising the environmental concerns, it's good for the quality of life of a community. . . . It helps people. It creates more jobs. It creates less congestion," Chao said. And faster approvals create less-risky, more-attractive opportunities to invest in America. "What I heard from the private sector is there's lots of money available, but there are not enough projects."

Partnership pros and cons

The administration plans to push states to use public-private partnerships — P3s in industry jargon.

In such arrangements, a private firm might bring together investors and low-cost federal loans to expand a highway, for example, then collect tolls from motorists to recoup costs and earn a profit. Companies can more nimbly tap technology and other innovations in building and maintaining such projects, advocates say. Critics say relying on tolls will not work in rural or distressed communities.

Some of those partnerships have worked as intended, such as the Washington region's Interstate 495 Express Lanes — 14 miles of toll and carpool lanes that opened in 2012. Although the tolls are unpopular, the partnership gave drivers more options for faster travel. Maryland's proposed Purple Line light-rail system also would be built with a public-private partnership.

Other such arrangements have failed, with ill-prepared governments saddling themselves with bad deals. Chicago's inspector general cited the 75-year lease of city parking meters to a private firm for \$1.16 billion in 2008. Under the same terms, the city would have earned at least \$974 million more by keeping the meters, the IG said.

'Asset recycling' in Australia

Australia, which has long advocated privatization, launched its "asset recycling initiative" in 2014. Cohn, a former president of Goldman Sachs, said officials are looking at importing the idea.

"Instead of people in cities and states and municipalities coming to us and saying, 'Please give us money to build a project,' and not knowing if it will get maintained, and not knowing if it will get built, we say, 'Hey, take a project you have right now, sell it off, privatize it, we know it will get maintained, and we'll reward you for privatizing it,'" Cohn told executives at the White House. "The bigger the thing you privatize, the more money we'll give you."

So far, one Australian state and two territories have chosen public resources to sell off. The central government kicks in 15 percent of the value of what's sold.

The Australian treasury said the central government has reached agreements to pay out \$1.7 billion in "incentive payments" that will "unlock" \$12.6 billion in spending, including for a light-rail line in Canberra. For that project, the Australian Capital Territory sold public housing projects, a tourism information center and a public gambling operation, according to government documents.

Some critics called the moves shortsighted.

"You can't perform that deal again," said John Quiggin, a professor of economics at the University of Queensland.

The program has at times been a lightning rod, as when the Northern

Territory government leased the Port of Darwin to a Chinese-owned firm for 99 years, sparking a debate over national security.

Big-ticket possibilities

That still leaves the question: How do you get to \$1 trillion?

"Everything's on the table," Chao said.

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Administration officials are putting together a menu of options to hit that total, including big-ticket possibilities such as "repatriating" funds parked overseas by U.S. firms, and smaller ideas such as privatizing highway service plazas, Chao said.

Chao said congressional leaders — she is married to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) — have made clear "the administration has to have a bill with pay-fors before they will accept it. So we understand that."

LeFrak says that there is money lying around in government assets that can be privatized, and that people can get "socialized" to paying tolls. He said uncollected Internet sales taxes could go to states to help pay the infrastructure bill. He also thinks Washington should borrow large sums at today's low interest rates.

He also noted that the federal gas tax hasn't been raised in nearly a quarter-century, and that more than 20 states have raised or indexed their gas taxes since 2013. For federal officials, that presents "a test in political courage," LeFrak said.

"I've come to the conclusion that the wish of everybody is we have divine intervention, that somehow a bridge gets floated down from on high. People say, 'Wow, we got a free bridge!'" he said. "But the answer is, it's an expensive investment."



Ignatius : Get ready for the 'impeachment election'

President Richard Nixon was heading for a big reelection victory in November that would confound his critics. He had just returned from a pathbreaking visit to China and had big, transformative ideas for foreign policy. Yet he felt hounded by his enemies and a media elite that opposed him at every turn.

And there was that pesky FBI investigation into a "third-rate

burglary" at the Watergate office building, about which the media were asking meddlesome questions. Nixon wrote in his diary after a later, revelatory Post scoop about Watergate that this was "the last burp of the Eastern Establishment," recalls Evan Thomas in a recent book. Nixon was trying to do the people's business, but he felt angry, isolated and embattled.

Then Nixon did something very stupid. On June 23, 1972, he instructed his chief of staff to contact the CIA and have its deputy director, Vernon Walters, tell the FBI to back off on its investigation: "They should call the FBI in and say that we wish for the country, don't go any further into this case, period." The tape recording of this conversation became known as "the smoking gun."

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President Trump, it's said, doesn't read presidential biographies. That's a shame. For he appears to be making the same mistakes that destroyed Nixon's presidency. That's the thrust of The Post's big story Monday night reporting that Trump asked U.S. intelligence chiefs to challenge the FBI's investigation of possible links between his campaign and Russia.

"History does not repeat, but it does instruct," writes Timothy Snyder in his new book, "On Tyranny." Some people, apparently including Trump, just don't learn.

Democrats are openly suggesting President Trump could be impeached. Here's how it would actually happen. Will Trump be impeached? It's far less likely than some Democrats are suggesting (Peter Stevenson/The Washington Post)

(Peter Stevenson/The Washington Post)

The world is probably baffled by Washington's obsession with the Russia scandal. Trump seems popular abroad, as Nixon was. That's especially true in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and China where leaders are tired of being lectured by the United States and the public is fascinated by the cartoon-like "big man" character that Trump projects.

Give Trump credit for the unlikely foreign policy success he's had: His

trip to Saudi Arabia embraced a Muslim monarchy that is trying to break with its intolerant past. He persuaded the Saudis and other Persian Gulf states to ban financing of terrorists, even by private citizens. That's a win for good policy. Earlier, he cajoled China into playing a stronger role in dealing with North Korea. Yes, these are "flip-flops" — reversing his earlier, inflammatory anti-Muslim and anti-Beijing rhetoric — but so what? They're smart moves.

Yet no foreign or domestic success will stop the slow unfolding of the investigation that is now underway. That's the importance of last week's appointment of the impeccable Robert S. Mueller III as special counsel to investigate the Russia matter. The process can't be derailed now. If the president or his associates are guilty of wrongdoing, Mueller will find out. If they're innocent, he'll discover that, too. From what we know about the former FBI director, he won't tolerate leaks about his investigation.

For all Mueller's probity, this investigation has an inescapable political destination. Mueller must refer any evidence of wrongdoing by Trump himself to the House of Representatives as evidence of possible "high crimes and misdemeanors" that might warrant impeachment. Would this GOP-dominated House begin impeachment proceedings, even on strong evidence of obstruction? Right now, you'd have to guess no.

The real collision point ahead is the 2018 midterm election. This will be the "impeachment election," and it may be as bitterly contested as any in decades. Trump seems unlikely to take Nixon's course of resigning before the House votes on impeachment. He'll fight all the way — a combative president trying to save his mandate from what he has described as a "witch hunt." This appeal would resonate with a populist base that already feels disenfranchised by jurists and journalists.

As Mueller proceeds with his investigation, the world of

Washington needs to be level-headed. The politics of polarization is only beginning. Trump's war on the media and its sources will get nastier. How do citizens hold Trump accountable without the process seeming like vengeful payback from media and political elites? Graham Allison, director of Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, notes that elite opinion may already regard Trump as "unfit for office," but he cautions: "When I contrast this with what many fellow citizens believe about elites, yikes."

Under our Constitution, the House and Senate are prosecutor and jury, respectively, for serious presidential misconduct. But this legal process probably won't be triggered without a poisonously divisive election. If recent history teaches anything, it's unfortunately this harsh fact: In the battle for America's soul, Trump could win.